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Extending Ethos in Digital Rhetorics

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EXTENDING ETHOS IN DIGITAL RHETORICS

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

Extending Ethos in Digital Rhetorics

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This dissertation investigated instantiations of the rhetorical concept of ethos on the social media platform Twitter. It was a mixed methods study, combining critical analysis of example tweets selected through iterative sampling with corpus analysis on six separate corpora of Twitter posts. This project concluded that the affordances and constraints of the Twitter platform placed increased emphasis on the minute textual choices of Twitter users in their construction of ethos. Diction choices and invocations of other figures served to communicate values and group membership. Demonstrations of memetic fluency acted as an appeal to a distinct type of ethos, which operated separately from current polarization trends. Together these findings demonstrate the flexibility of the Aristotelian term ethos to encompass both traditional, static interpretations of the concept as well as the fluid and kairotic nature of digital contexts.

(224 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Extending Ethos in Digital Rhetorics

Andrew J. Hillen

This dissertation researched the concept of ethos, or appeal to authority or trust, on the social media platform, Twitter. Looking at collections of tweets, I found that the characteristics of the Twitter platform, as well as the general qualities of writing online, pushed users to use short cuts to trust, such as focusing in on specific buzz words, or through referencing well known organizations and individuals. Users also used internet culture as its own source of authority. They demonstrated that they were up to date on the latest trends and memes, and so were trustworthy accounts to follow. Users appealed to ethos this way because Twitter conversations occurred faster and farther, and with people who most users were either unfamiliar with or who were completely anonymous. Essentially, Twitter user rely on the short cuts to trust and authority in conversations because they are less often engaging with a stable, known audience. Twitter users must continually reassert and define themselves again as their posts circulate widely across and beyond the platform.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

EVER-HANGING ETHOS: PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, FROM ANCIET ATHENS TO

SOCIAL MEDIA

The line between public and private has seemingly collapsed. This involves not

only the ubiquitous collection and analysis of user data by corporate and governmental

entities, but also users' increased voluntary sharing of parts of their lives with one

another. Social media has added a new public square to communities across the globe,

and users have responded. They share the momentous and the mundane, the ecstatic and

the everyday. Users can engage socially with other users any hour of the day, in

essentially any location. This has brought with it new social mores and social anxieties.

For many, some actions hold no value without an accompanying social media post, and

others judge their own lives by the comparison to their friends' posts (Przybylski et al.

2013; Russett & Waldron, 2017). This new public square has drawn more private

moments into the public, and encouraged users to develop, whether consciously or not, a

persona which they present through social media.

The affordances of social media, and the seeming need to share most aspects of

one's life, are reminiscent of the Athenian public square, the agora. Ancient Athens

valued and promoted engagement between citizens. We cannot ignore that in Athens, this

meant freeborn men, with circumscribed roles for freeborn citizen women. Important

milestones, such as major life events, business transactions, and religious practices all

involved witnessing and being witnessed by fellow community members. Much like a

social media user, ancient Athenians had a preoccupation with the comments and esteem

of their neighbors. This preoccupation was institutionalized in legal and governing

system of the city, which catalyzed the study of rhetoric, or the ability to persuade others

(Ober, 1991).

The centrality of the public to these two communities, the Athenian demos and

modern social media users, has further suggestive parallels. The Athenian preoccupation

with generating witnesses to important moments stems from a concern with the

uncertainty of truth. It was difficult to verify claims in the ancient world, where

documentation, as we think of it, was much less feasible, let alone rigorous, and the

potential benefits of fraud were matters of life and death (Gagarin, 2011; Mirhady, 2002).

In these cases, the community could guard itself against fraud only through consistent

cradle-to-grave witnessing to verify the status of community members. Similarly, in

online spaces, users are drawn to public engagement for different reasons, but the

characteristics of digital rhetorics do reintroduce an element of uncertainty. This has

pushed digital rhetorics to develop new tools to create trust between users, in short: new

methods to construct and appeal to ethos.

The parallel desires in these contexts for certainty in uncertain circumstances

drives my concern with the appeal to ethos. Appeals to ethos represent the rhetor's

attempt to gain credibility in the eyes of the audience. The Athenian context had a certain

set of culturally specific ways of doing this. It is natural that in our contemporary context,

via totally different media, digital rhetors would invent new ways of achieving

credibility. Yet the change in context does extend beyond merely altering the cultural

signifiers. The change in medium, to a social media platform, change the framework in

which rhetor and audience operate. The nature of the uncertainty has shifted, even if the preoccupation with uncertainty is consistent.

In a world with bots (AI accounts designed to mimic a human), sockpuppets (false online identities), and trolls (purposefully provocative users), digital communities and their members rely on new methods of establishing ethos. Appeals to ethos developed in traditional contexts fail to convince in digital spaces since they are relatively easy to forge. The reaction to a message from a Nigerian prince is often met with scorn and ignominy. Digital denizens have been enculturated to view individuals merely claiming an identity with deep suspicion, particularly on financial or similarly sensitive topics. In both the ancient world and in our contemporary digital spaces, uncertainty reigns. The ancient response to this uncertainty was to embrace the public witness.

The centrality of the witness in ancient Athens is illustrated in the defense speech, *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*, also known as *Lysias 1*. In this ancient judicial speech, Euphiletos, purportedly a middle-class farmer, defends himself from the accusation of murder. He claims to have conducted a legal killing since the man he killed, Eratosthenes, was committing adultery with Euphiletos's wife. The murder accusation rests on the idea that Euphiletos entrapped Eratosthenes, and that the murder was premeditated. Euphiletos spends much of the speech establishing his *ethos* through examples of his ordinary, everyday habits (1.6-12). In the narrative of the death of Eratosthenes, Euphiletos stresses his unpreparedness, and the time he wasted collecting witnesses for his righteous killing. He recounts the empty houses he visited, before finally gathering up all available neighbors to act as witness to his confrontation of Eratosthenes, and his "lawful" killing of the man (1.41-42).

I find this insistence on witnesses to this moment striking. It is a situation which in modern society would be counted an embarrassing and painful personal event. In our contemporary moment, inviting witnesses to a personal humiliation is an unusual move. The presence of witnesses in this speech, however, is uncontroversial. The "time wasting" while assembling witnesses is a prominent part of the defense. Athenians wanted witnesses to so many different aspects of life, from birth to death, and from the triumphant to the embarrassing. Legally, many things did not count unless they were witnessed (Mirhady, 2002; O'Connell, 2017). Athenians truly wanted to witness all significant events. For me, this underscores the parallel to contemporary social media users, who post about everything from breakfast to divorce, professional success and failure, political activity and vacations. There is the sense among avid social media users that activities left unrecorded are not 'real,' or are at least, if unrecorded, are unimportant to their lives.

Given these intriguing parallels in rhetorical contexts, it is fitting to re-examine the ancient rhetorical concept of ethos, which Aristotle, resident alien[1] declares is "almost the controlling factor in persuasion" in his handbook *On Rhetoric* (1.2.4). Given research on the importance of trust and identification in the formation and maintenance of opinion (Gauchat, 2012; Ceccarelli, 2011), I find that this Aristotelian intuition holds in digital rhetorics. Across time and in radically varying contexts, credibility and trust play pivotal roles in persuasive discourse. This is especially true on the micro-blogging social media platform, Twitter, which, through its followership model and algorithm, takes a shortcut

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[1] A citizen of the northern city, Stageira, Aristotle moved to the city of Athens, and resided there as a metic, or resident alien. He was first a student of Plato, a prominent Athenian philosopher, before opening his own school in the city, which remained active for several centuries.

to users' trust. The platform itself primes users to give credence to arguments made in their Twitter feeds, while providing very few guardrails on the veracity of any particular tweet.

Yet, the role of ethos in discourse is contextual, and eschews a single way of understanding. Rhetorics across media do not exist in rigidly separate boxes. Rhetorics from one space influence and are influenced by others. Examining the robust and ever-evolving space of Twitter affords rhetoric and technical communication scholars the opportunity to once again extend their understanding of ethos, one established in the exigence of 21st century digital environments.

In this dissertation, I identify some fundamental characteristics for the novel construction of, and appeal to, ethos of Twitter users. These characteristics include a clear articulation of facility with memetic culture, diction choices which convey membership to particular discourse communities, and the prominent use of an 'other' to help define a user's rhetorical ethos. These are driven by the particular affordances of Twitter, including its character limits and streamlined interface, which channel user activity into brevity and interactivity. I exhibit how these characteristics are distinct from the embodied, more stable ethos which alternative theories, such as 'ethos as dwelling' and 'ethos as location' (e.g. Hyde, 2004 and Reynolds, 1993). I further illustrate the utility of big data corpus analytic tools to examine these large, available datasets to aid in the construction and development of rhetorical theory.

In this chapter, I provide the broader context for this dissertation project by offering an overview of digital rhetorics and ethos, their representation in pedagogy, and two case studies that exhibit the strategies I'll use in the remainder of this project to

substantiate my claims. This chapter concludes with an overview of the dissertation

including a synthesis of the six remaining chapters.

DIGITAL RHETORICS AND ETHOS

Traditional scholarship in rhetoric imbues Aristotelian ethos with a stable quality.

It centers on long-term cultivation of a rhetor's reputation with a focus on the ethos

inherent in the context of a given form of communication, e.g. the media, location, and

ideological paradigm. A simple example is a medical professional. In an American

doctor's office, the individual who performs 'doctor,' dressed in lab coat with credentials

on the wall, is understood to demonstrate a specific ethos. This ethos persuades a person

in need of medical attention. Everything from the doctor's professional mannerisms to

the sterile cleanliness of the office contributes to the rhetorical ecology that persuades a

patient to accept the judgement and treatment from the doctor. These things rely on

longstanding cultural tropes, and the doctor themselves have gathered these habits,

credentials, and even the physical space through a decades-long journey. Yet the speed,

disembodied nature, and sheer volume of discourse occurring in digital spaces strains

such traditional definitions of ethos.

Digital users across the globe can instantaneously interact through heavily

mediated spaces where identification is digital and malleable and so the ethos they

project is frequently pliable and unstable. In such environments, traditional gatekeepers

and accrediting institutions are present but weakened. Moreover, new algorithmic

gatekeepers, including the designers of frequently used, international platforms such as

Twitter, privilege novel rhetorical moves, typically rewarding the sensational and

extreme (Bail et al., 2018). Given these variables, a post which claims that the President was in fact born in another country will assuredly earn more engagement, both agreement and disagreement, than one which respectfully talks through perceived differences between the President's current worldview and the political consensus from 1986.

Scholars have recognized the characteristics of digital communication for decades, and these identified characteristics have always strained traditional understandings of ethos. Gurak (2001) lists four principle affordances (and constraints) of digital communication: speed, reach, anonymity, and interactivity. I discuss these affordances in turn, with my own specific examples, to make their ongoing relevance clear to the field of technical communication and rhetoric.

1) Speed: The instantaneous nature of digital communication allows for virality of content. Like the woman who posted an offensive tweet, boarded a plane, and found she was fired when she landed (Nicotra, 2016), digital users are in constant contact, and any one of their posts can "blow up" without warning.

2) Reach: Gurak discusses reach as a lack of gatekeeping, but nearly two decades from her original work, it is clear that different algorithmic gatekeepers exist alongside weakened traditional ones. Algorithmic gatekeepers, such as Google's SEO, Facebooks Newsfeed, or YouTube's suggestion algorithms all reward content which engages users. Controversial or inflammatory rhetoric tends to lead to the most engagement on social media platforms. The algorithms encourage users to adopt more polarized and extreme personae in order to gain more likes and retweets.

3) Anonymity: Prior scholarship has focused on the benefits of identity exploration, and the dangers of reduced social sanction from digital anonymity. For my research, the lack of embodiment means that digital rhetors can construct a novel ethos quickly and easily, such as the Brazilian blogger who impersonated a Californian schoolteacher in the incident discussed below. The anonymity of the internet plays a major role in the instability, and dynamism, of appeals to ethos online.

4) Interactivity: The nascent interactivity of 2005 has become the defining feature of Web 2.0 and is the social media under study in this dissertation. The core product that Twitter, Reddit, or other social media deliver to users is interaction. The interactivity of digital rhetorics seems to mirror the ideological position of Greek cities more than the more tightly contained "public sphere" of the twentieth century. And the sense of publicness that this interaction engenders, and the expectation of a lack of privacy, resonates so deeply with the public nature of discourse and life in the world of ancient Athens. This public consciousness, combined with the three preceding characteristics, drive the distinctiveness found in digital rhetorics.

The characteristics of digital rhetorics push ethos, and the interrelated concepts of trust and reputation, into prominence. The onslaught of information foregrounds trust and branding as a vital mechanism for sifting information sources. In this rhetorical context, rhetors must find ways of gaining an audience's trust before the remainder of their message becomes relevant. This interpretation is complemented by Origgi's (2018) related point: we are truly living in a reputational age, rather than an information one.

In this digital, reputational context, Aristotle's insistence on developing ethos *within* a speech remains compelling. Aristotle makes the statement that a rhetor must disregard outside reputation in the *Rhetoric* (1.4.1), which stands in contrast to his discussion of the concept in his ethical works. Aristotle is probably making this claim to conform his treatment of ethos with his distinction between artistic and inartistic proofs, those created by the rhetor and those which exist outside the rhetor, like witness or documentary evidence. Yet this emphasis on text reminds readers that ethos is crafted not only with references to biography and credentials but also through discourse and genre choices.

At this stage, it is important to emphasize the distinction between ethos as found in Aristotle's ethical works, such as the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Eudemian Ethics*, and the *Politics*, and the use of the term in the *Rhetoric*. The modern English word ethics derives from the Greek word ethos, and the adjective "ethical" as overwhelmingly used to refer to that concept. But this dissertation must insist on a strict separation between the concepts of philosophical ethics, and the rhetorical concept of ethos. This poses a problem as the adjective ethical is also the generally accepted adjectival form of rhetorical "ethos." While the alternative adjective, "ethotic," is in use (Leff, 2009 for example), particularly in communication studies, I plan to stick with "ethical" to describe those arguments pertaining to the speaker's projected self. Therefore, unless explicitly noted, all uses of the adjective "ethical" refer to rhetorical ethos, and not the philosophical field of right and wrong.

Contemporary theories of ethos seek to extend the concept to the physical and cultural surroundings of the rhetor (Hyde, 2004; Ryan et al., 2016); these scholars assert

that the physical space and accoutrements are not merely objects that the rhetor uses in their appeals but hold distinct rhetorical agency in their right. For instance, the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office holds meaning for Americans independent of the current occupant of the White House. A speech given from the Oval Office has power because of this, rather than because it is merely the backdrop of the President.

Yet digital rhetorics operate in an environment of narrowed sensory inputs. Social media platforms dictate the context of the posts within it. I hold that Aristotle's insistence we focus on the text usefully encourages scholars of digital rhetorics to recognize how rhetors appeal to ethos through their language. Particularly in light of the reach and potential anonymity of online discourse, we can use Aristotle's text generatively to develop new understandings of how ethos is developed and deployed in these novel environments. Offering new theory on this topic is of increasing importance as rhetors compete for the limited attention of their audience using novel rhetorical tools.

DIGITAL ETHOS IN PEDAGOGY

Extensions of this theory are crucial, too, because a novel extension of ethos is likewise necessary in the writing classroom. The education system, from primary schools to higher education, has worked to grapple with the proliferation of digital rhetorics. Information literacy is an important topic in our current media environment (Koltay, 2011; Julien & Barker, 2009). This subject matter is rightly taught throughout primary and secondary education, matching the clear necessity for students to understand and interpret digital rhetoric. Higher education, too, is a space for more than just rote

learning; instead, it is a space where students can engage in critical thinking on these issues.

In particular, the identification of deliberately misleading information online is difficult and important work, yet it is only a small, fairly straightforward part of the problem of digital literacy. Digital rhetorics contain both the bots and trolls which confuse and misinform audiences. Yet many more communities of users genuinely hold beliefs which cannot be reconciled with other groups. Students should be working to spot fake or misleading digital rhetoric, but that is not enough. We would serve our students best by helping them develop the critical skills to analyze the rhetorical situation and the character of a given piece of rhetoric to better engage with and understand conversations in digital spaces. Students need to understand the difference between an argument made in bad faith and one made with a different worldview.

Writing pedagogy that incorporates the classical rhetorical appeals provides the analytical tools for this endeavor, but they need to account for contemporary rhetorical practice. There have been many efforts to retool activities and lessons to better address the current digital context most students encounter (Abdelmalak & Mousa, 2015; Meloncon 2017). Yet instructors can be hamstrung by their traditional understanding of ethos, logos, and pathos, and find the concepts to be out of step with the rhetorics that their students are encountering. A project which demonstrates the flexibility of ethical appeals can serve to emphasize the ongoing utility of the rhetorical appeal framework in providing students with useful tool for understanding their contemporary space. The Twitter microblogging platform possesses characteristics which give it advantages over

other social media platforms for drawing out these lessons, both for theory building and in the classroom.

In Chapter Two, I illustrate how textbooks have not adequately accounted for these shifts sufficiently to not only provide guidance for students, but more importantly, offer practice for them to engage with ethos in digital rhetoric in such critical ways.

APPEALING TO ETHOS ON TWITTER

Twitter is an intriguing site of research. First, Twitter is a relatively small, but influential social media platform, with only around one hundred million regular users (Song, 2019). This does not seem significant compared to Facebook's more than two billion regular users (Facebook, 2019); however, major political and journalistic figures use Twitter. It is an important space for conversation, since it is publicly facing. This contrasts with services such as Facebook, Instagram, or Pinterest which support more private conversations between follower networks. The publicly facing, short form of the conversation on Twitter, combined with its homogenized presentation of posts, has created a particular valence to the general characteristics of digital rhetorics. This valence, tending toward the sensational and the extreme, has caused quite a bit of concern among users and non-users.

Twitter is actively trying to adjust its user experience to ameliorate some of the worst excesses of its current metrics heavy environment. The owners of Twitter indicate they want to create a more pleasant experience and de-escalate some of the overt signs of tweet success, such as like and retweet counts. These changes are still in the planning phase and represent an important insight into the power of the platform to shape

conversations. That being said, I want to acknowledge that as the platform changes, certain characteristic elements of the appeals to ethos described in this dissertation may become altered in response to these contextual shifts. Despite this, I hold that underlying principles, and some of the characteristics of ethos, will remain useful to the fields of rhetoric and technical communication moving forward.

To help illustrate some of the characteristics of Twitter rhetorics as a useful site for this exploration of ethos, I will relate the tweets of two individuals who reacted to the video of an incident that occurred during the first annual Indigenous People's March at the steps of the Lincoln memorial. Marchers at the event in Washington DC and a group of students wearing #MAGA hats from a Catholic School in Kentucky were digitally recorded. In one video which was shared and widely circulated, a student stands silently, smiling, while one marcher, veteran Nathan Philips, sings and drums. This incident has reverberated for weeks, with competing narratives of what happened circulating around social media.

My first example of reaction to the incident comes from a verified journalist whose tweets represented only a part of her take on the matter, since her twitter feed is subsidiary to her television appearances. The second example shows an unverified user with 20,000 followers who also weighed in on the topic. This account stands alone and typifies the kinds of rhetoric which bear closer scrutiny.

Sara Sidner is a CNN correspondent who typically covers international news. She presented several segments on the incident at the Lincoln Memorial. Her tweet linked to the video of the incident, which has since been taken down, explained below. She has a clearly critical judgment of the students in #MAGA hats. Sidner has moved toward

editorial in this tweet, but this stands in tension to her ongoing need to maintain journalistic integrity. As seen in the top ranked reply to this tweet, Sidner received considerable criticism for this stance as the details of the incident became more complicated.

Figure 1. Example Tweet from @sarasidnerCNN

Sidner, like a number of journalists, found their early condemnations of the incident to be detrimental to their values and self-presentation when further video appeared which gave greater context to the events at the Lincoln Memorial. Sidner eventually deleted the above tweet but preserved it in a quote tweet which acknowledged the evolving nature of the story. Sidner engaged in damage control, the kind that technical communication scholars have performed extensive research on (Choi & Chung, 2013; Coombs et al. 2010). Sidner's actions are explicable under traditional interpretations of ethos, as discussed further in the literature review in Chapter Two. Sidner sought to maintain her reputation as a journalist and defend against attacks of #fakenews. She clearly has a stable understanding of her role and seeks to maintain it.

This stands in contrast to the direction taken by John Kovalic, @muskrat_john, in his example tweet below. Kovalic, instead of expressing a written disapproval, invoked a popular meme on aging to establish a connection between the student at the center of the recorded incident and the newly installed US Supreme Court Justice, Brett Kavanaugh. The tweet by Kovalic draws on memetic culture. Taking the form of the #TenYearChallenge, this tweet both makes its point about contemporary privilege of white men, while also situating Kovalic in the ongoing conversation. Despite receiving similar criticism for his own apparent jump to conclusions, Kovalic made no attempt to revisit this tweet or the opinion behind it.

Figure 2. Example Tweet from @muskrat_john

Kovalic is an established Twitter presence, with 20,000 followers and over 143,000 tweets as of January 22, 2019. He does not have a verified account (a status denoted by a blue checkmark which signifies that Twitter has verified the identity of the user) but has presumably developed a reputation with thousands of twitter users. When I saw his #TenYearChallenge tweet in my feed, I had no idea who Kovalic was but quickly categorized him on the basis of that one tweet. That tweet performed a socially aware "woke" *ethos*, which connected Kovalic to those who value diversity and maintain ideological commitments to social justice. These sorts of interactions occur constantly, with the only context for a given tweet or other social media post being the platform and algorithm which has placed it in front of specific users.

The platform does not so much decontextualize the tweets but homogenizes the context to the point that the text is the user's primary point of individual expression. Users have their profile picture, screen name, and handle, and these can be used forcefully. Some of the more outlandish shifts in screen names are clearly driven by the stability of the handle, and the relative prominence of screen names in the platform. While maintaining their handle, I personally have witnessed a fellow Sunderland (English soccer team) supporter move through player name pun references (vitosaurus for Vito Minnone, costelspecs for Costel Pantilimon, virgininabottle, for Santiago Virgini and so on) as different players moved in and out of the club, to much more dire names as Sunderland underwent a downward spiral, including references to self-harm and suicide as the club suffered a double relegation. These usernames were matched with profile pictures of the players, and then of the implements of self-harm, such as a jug of bleach. These sorts of moves are striking responses to news events.

The profile images and screen names, particularly within a discourse community, can be quite responsive to norms. Users tend to choose profile images and screen names in line with their peer users and adjust to changing norms. I often noticed that archeologists tend to use images of themselves at their dig sites, either down in a square or holding an artifact in their profile pictures. The text of the microblog, however, the tweet, is both the most prominent element that users experience and often the most expressive.

Returning to Kovalic, in the example I offered, he uses the #TenYearChallenge meme to structure his message. This meme acts as a meditation on aging and change. According to the Vox Explainer on the meme, "At its core, the 10-Year Challenge is a

wholesome, socially acceptable way to brag about how hot you used to be, how hot you

are now, or how hot you were and continue to be. (You can also replace the word "hot"

with other adjectives, like "educated" or "married" or "unfathomably rich.)" (Jennings,

2019). This meme, then, is an often-ironic meditation on aging or change. In early

January 2019, this meme grew from the kairotic moment of the New Year and the hope

and introspection that transition brings.

Through the use of this meme, and the images selected, Kovalic is appealing to

ethos along with the pathetical and logical content of the message. Facility with memetic

culture contributes to a 'very online' persona. On its face, this tweet makes the

connection to the young Catholic School student and Supreme Court Justice, Brett

Kavanaugh, who also attended a private Catholic High School in his youth. Kovalic

connects the perceived white male privilege in the face of the student with the eerily

similar expression on the adult Kavanaugh. The implication is of history repeating itself,

with the student mirroring the life of the privileged Kavanaugh, who was seated on the

Supreme Court despite serious allegations of sexual assault.

Through the popular form of the #TenYearChallenge, Kovalic highlights the

continuity of white male privilege. Kovalic is both making a claim about the world,

which seeks to make a social point, but at the same time he is asserting ethos. The

#TenYearChallenge format demonstrates Kovalic's facility with memetic culture, and the

use of those two images, of the student and Brett Kavanagh, burnish Kovalic's social

justice commitment. With so little text, and so much potentially left open to

interpretation, Kovalic presents a message that clearly identifies him as a digital denizen

with a commitment to social justice.

In contrast to Sidner, Kovalic experiences no visible reconsideration of the events on the Lincoln Memorial after more videos emerged. This tweet was not deleted or referenced again. Kovalic's ethos is not bound up in a role, such as journalist. That kind of accountability is not in effect. Kovalic made his point, and is simply moving on to the next tweet, the next joke, the next thought. There is little holding Kovalic to a stable ethos, and each new tweet could potentially characterize him in a contradictory position.

The characteristics of the internet have changed the nature of public discussion and debate simply by providing a different space for it to occur. The speed and reach of communication have laid bare the disconnection many audiences feel with what used to be thought of as core values, such as whether political leaders should be morally upright in their personal lives. The public opinion polling around the evolving convictions of evangelical voters on the centrality of a politician's morality demonstrates how quickly issues of moral import can shift (Brookings, 2016). Elite opinion has enormous sway on popular opinion on topics which are not directly salient to a non-elite individual (Ciuk & Yost 2016). Given this reality, consistent or reliable sources of information are not privileged in digital contexts.

I focus in on tweets responding to the Covington High School controversy, as it typifies a number of issues with social media today— particularly with publicly facing media. The Twitter account that posted the initial video of the Covington students and Philips, the native protester, which started the online controversy, after the fact, was discovered to be misrepresenting itself. This account, while taking on the persona of a California school teacher, was in fact a Brazilian blogger (O'Sullivan, 2019). The motives of this person remain unknown, yet the situation demonstrates that any person,

within or outside of the American political community, can stoke American political and social divisions. The account, @2020fight, exemplifies how the appeal to ethos can get a rhetor in the door to provoke powerful discourse altering consequences.

Kovalic was taken in by the discussion started by the Brazilian blogger, and tweeted a comment in meme form, which appeared in my feed based on my prior Twitter choices (since I do not follow Kovalic). Much more context about the people depicted in the video was made public in the weeks following the video's emergence, and that context complicates the picture of what happened considerably. This entire episode draws out the tendency of social media to flatten and enflame. The true content of any given controversy is less relevant than what use social media users can make of the controversy.

The existence of the controversy allows digital rhetoricians the opportunity to demonize others and build up themselves. Given my own stances and beliefs, I found the comparison of the Covington student and Kavanaugh compelling. As a person with left of center views and ideological commitments to social justice causes, I was invested in believing the worst about the student, the best about Philips. Therefore, the tweet above spoke to me, and persuaded me of a connection between the student's smile and Kavanaugh's own past privilege, even though Kovalic presumably knew both individuals as well as I do. In addition to galvanizing my sense of injustice, I also felt that Kovalic was a clever fellow passenger.

Social media users have discovered that, as part of its democratizing possibilities, they are fully engaged in information discourse. Comments made on social media do not exist in a separate space but have real world impact. As both anecdotes above

underscores, that impact can be quite negative. Both Sidner and Kovalic reached a judgement based on limited information and contributed to the spread of a narrative which was far from certain. Discourse communities online are developing with a reliance on genre expectations to sort out membership, since this communication is disembodied. Social media group members need to demonstrate their belonging through being fully conversant in group memes and discourse, rather than through physical forms of identification. Prior reputation is more contingent, since the anonymity of the web leaves users less trusting. Many users are essentially appealing to ethos through their text, and their audience interprets what that text implies about the rhetor.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This dissertation examines how traditional appeals to ethos, as would be recognizable to Aristotle, are maintained in digital rhetorics, and where these traditional appeals are expanded, broken, or modified. Twitter users certainly make the kinds of claims to specific identities within some of their tweets, or to a particular relationship to their perceived audience. Yet it is the central tenet of this dissertation that the affordances of twitter, and of the wider digital context, have encouraged the development of new appeals to ethos, which take advantage of the platform's length requirements, public interactivity, and the available indices of success (likes and retweets primarily). To investigate this site I focused on the following research questions:

1. How does the Twitter interface permit and constrain its users to express their identity and appeal to their ethos?

2. What are the context-specific ways in which Twitter users appeal to their ethos?

3. How frequent are those appeals compared to traditional appeals which rely on credentialing or personal narrativizing?

In addition to learning in which ways Twitter rhetorics depart from classical antecedents, this dissertation uses corpus analytics to discern who the primary innovators are, and who are most closely maintaining traditional rhetorical tactics. One would expect the rhetorical pioneers to be those groups which stand the most to gain from a shake-up of the hierarchy of mainstream media sources, however, given the level of co-option that occurs in the digital information space, it is important to determine if novel ethical appeals represent a people-driven democratic shift in language norms, an elite-led shift, or an alternative.

To address these questions, I use big data tools and traditional methods to examine ethos. I use Twitter as a site to test novel approaches toward the old concept of ethos. I use Twitter, as an iteration of web 2.0 social media, because it possesses the key digital characteristics of 1) speed 2) reach 3) anonymity and 4) interactivity (Zappen, 2005). These characteristics drive novel rhetorics, which require retheorization. They also provide an unprecedented opportunity for study, since discourse on Twitter may be gathered whole, and analyzed using big data corpus analytic tools. Moreover, work on Twitter has proven fruitful for the field (Potts, 2013; McIntyre, 2015; Bair, 2016). I develop this context, history, and justification further in Chapter Two, which serves as a literature review for this project.

In Chapter Three, I discuss my methodology and methods and nest these within scholarship in corpus linguistics (Anthony 2018; Maguire & Kampf, 2016) and rhetoric (Foss, 2005). I briefly gloss the wide, multi-disciplinary methods used in rhetoric and technical communication research and focus on my mixed-methods approach. In this chapter, I also address the affordances and limitations of my selected methods (hand-coding and big data analysis).

Through a Python coded API streaming collection tool, I collected a dataset of tweets. In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I offer commentary on the both the dataset as a whole, as well as use individual tweets as exemplars of findings from the large-scale analyses. In offering both quantitative and qualitative data analysis, I aim to provide a balanced discussion of what appeals to ethos are occurring, and under what circumstances. Specifically, I offer close readings to provide examples of ethical appeals on Twitter which represent novel theory in practice. Primarily, but not exclusively, looking at the full text of the tweets, I hand-coded 10% of a subset of tweets for ethical moves, or ethos associated rhetorical approaches. Datasets were also pushed through the two corpus analytic tools: AntConc and RAND-Lex. Together, these methods provided both a birds-eye view, through big data, as well as microcosm glances, at the moves rhetors make to establish ethos.

Chapters Five and Six examine different aspects of digital ethos. Memetic fluency in Chapter Five signals an ethos which is distinct from group identity and relies on the speed and reach of digital interactions. Chapter Six focuses on ethos achieved through interactivity, as individuals present the posts of other users online to define themselves,

while using platform characteristics to facilitate or restrict their interaction with the referenced other user.

Chapter Seven, the last chapter of the dissertation, interprets the findings of the research and proposed next steps for research on ethos, research conducted with big data, and web 2.0 technologies. In the final Chapter, I work to synthesize the seemingly disparate realms of digital rhetorics and Aristotelian ethos to propose a flexible approach to ethos that applies in our classrooms, research, and public life.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The word ethos has both an individual and a collective meaning. It makes sense to speak
of the ethos of this or that person, but it makes equally good sense to speak of the ethos of
a particular type of person, of a professional group, or a culture, or an era in history.

Halloran, 1982, p.62

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethos is an elastic concept. Often rendered as something like "character" or
"credibility," the modern concept of ethos derives from ancient Greek, particularly as
articulated in Aristotle's corpus. Book Two of the *Nicomachean Ethics* defines ethos as
the character of a person. Aristotle says, "ethical virtue (êthos, ἦθος) is the product of
habit (éthos, ἔθος), and has indeed derived its name, with a slight variation of form, from
that word' (2.1.1; Miller, 1974). Scholars have done the sensible thing and integrated the
ethos of the *Ethics* with the ethos of the *Rhetoric*. Yet tying them too closely together has
produced a static understanding of ethos which fails to fully appreciate the fluidity and
speed of digital rhetorics.

In the epigraph quote, Halloran makes an important point regarding the dual
nature of ethos. Yet, ethos's multiplicity goes beyond Halloran's interpretation; ethos is
more complex than even Halloran outlined. Ethos is both individual and collective, moral
and rhetorical, existing in the speaker and the audience. It is asserted by the speaker yet
also distributed into the speaker's environment and only partly in the speaker's control.

While Aristotle conceived of some of these tensions, modern scholars have developed lenses to understand ethos beyond the classical conception.

Ethos has been reconceived as the underlying rhetorical contexts have shifted over time. In this review of literature, I trace the route of this key term – ethos – in the field of rhetoric from the Aristotelian formulation through to contemporary rhetorical understanding. This narrative will demonstrate the frequent intertwining of ethos as both rhetorical appeal and moral concept.

I provide a snapshot of contemporary common usage of the term ethos among rhetoric, technical communication, and writing studies scholars. Given much of our field is pedagogically oriented, this review pays particular attention to the connections of more common usages of ethos in popular introductory rhetorical textbooks. Providing a synthesis from the field's textbooks contrasts with scholarship, which takes ethos as a prime focus or analytical tool. The differing audiences of these two definitional sources of ethos, textbooks and scholarship, drives the contrast. While there is no problem with the average undergraduate student receiving a flatter textbook definition of ethos, scholars for whom ethos is not a central concept in their research too often deploy the term ethos in ways consistent with a flatter understanding espoused in undergraduate textbooks while more dedicated scholarship offers a nuanced, and more useful, interpretation of ethos. A discussion of this scholarship takes up much of the remainder of the chapter.

Finally, in the last section of this chapter I divide the scholarship focused on ethos into three broad, but interconnected, traditions. There are those that look directly back to Aristotle, which I term traditional. A more recent and sustained interpretation is one I

identify as a feminist tradition. Finally, to solidify the importance of this work for digital

rhetorics and the burgeoning movement of the field towards new materialist and object

oriented ontologies, which find their roots in Heidegger and Latour, I identify a third set

of scholarship within the materialist tradition. The chapter concludes with my own

definition of ethos, as informed by the established, ongoing scholarly conversation.

COMPLAINTS ON THE DEPTH OF ETHOS

In the discussion that follows, I demonstrate that while ethos is a key concept in

rhetorical scholarship, it is so widely used that its general meaning has tended to flatten

into a simple substitution for "reputation," or "culture." As Nedra Reynolds, in her

landmark article on ethos, states: "Standard translations of the Greek word *ethos* have not

maintained its complexity" (1993, 327). Indeed, in the analysis provided at the end of this

section, the term may be considered restrictive, unproductive, or perhaps overly

simplistic, due to its close association with First Year Composition curriculum.

In his work to apply the classical rhetorical canon to digital contexts, Brooke

echoes this complaint about the static inflexibility of ethos. He notes that "much of the

advice for evaluating web-based information posits credibility or ethos as a quality that is

decontextualized from the technology, an attitude toward delivery that sees it simply as

transmission" (184). While Brooke suggests that Aristotle's answers to the question

"What is rhetoric?" are "persuasive and pervasive, enduring to the present day" (119),

Brooke is invested, as am I, in the project of finding novel methods and theories to better

and more directly examine digital rhetorical spaces. In this chapter, I propose that

articulating and framing the use of ethos within one of three major frameworks, which I

identify as traditionalist, feminist, and materialist, can support not only scholarly development around the concept in academic conversation, but also guide the production of texts such that their target users better understand the nuance and importance of the term. This, in turn, ensures they are better equipped to engage in public forums, such as Twitter, and vet the materials they're prompted to consume as users of such platforms. As a result, citizens are engaged in more complex and critical thinking on issues of import to our human community.

Before we begin, I must acknowledge that one solution to our issue of flat ethos is to use another term altogether. Eberly & Johnson (2018) look back to Isocrates as their alternative to Aristotle, noting that in most cases Isocrates eschews the term ethos in favor of the word, *tropos*. *Tropos* (τρόπος) is derived from the word for 'turn,' and is used by Isocrates to mean a way, a manner, or a mode of being. Modern scholars are familiar with its English derivative, trope, which is a rhetorical figure, a route of argumentation.

Eberly & Johnson (2018) argue that *tropos* succeeds in emphasizing the instability of self. They suggest that "the theoretical and practical chasms between Aristotelian *ethos* and Isocratic *tropos* span a profound duplicity at the ancient heart of Western conceptions of self" (133). This, in their view, provides a better representation of the appeals to credibility one finds in digital spaces. "Over time and across multiple iterations, possibly in multiple media, character descriptions based on dwelling or constancy become even less accurate" (133). This theory, then, crafts *tropos* as an alternative term to an ethos that is singular and static.

I agree with the instinct. But I believe that jettisoning the term ethos would be throwing the baby out with the bath water. I propose there is much constructive work that can be done with ethos. I propose we maintain strong connections to prior theorizing on ethos and offer further reinterpretation(s). Unlike Eberly and Johnson, I find that rhetoric does not need a new term, but rather a reimagining of the term *ethos* to emphasize its flexibility *in situ.* In this section, I further argue that while some modern non-ethos-centric scholarship tends to read Aristotelian ethos as static, works which focus on ethos generally recognize that ethos is not immutable, but dependent on context and media, i.e. the rhetorical situation. This is of particular import for scholars who reach publics by teaching in classrooms focused on topics such as first year composition and technical writing.

RESPRESENTATIONS OF ETHOS IN COMPOSITION TEXTBOOKS

Textbooks are common culprits in the move to simplify and flatten ethos as a concept. This is sensible given their typical audience, undergraduate students. Added to audience concerns, many textbook publishers aim at the goal of widespread use, and therefore may be averse to novel theory without clear signals of consensus from the scholarly community. In this way, textbooks are a conservative genre, designed to reach a broad, novice audience. The widespread role that first-year composition pedagogy plays in many writing studies scholars' graduate education is an important vector of the field's understanding on the meaning of ethos. In composition classrooms, ethos is typically taught to introductory writers, and the act of teaching that concept partly forms it in the minds of those graduate instructors. Therefore, it is profitable to look at the textbooks

which are involved in the meaning making both in the minds of students but also their instructors.

For this discussion, I reached out to representatives of three major publishers – Pearson, Macmillan, and Routledge – and asked for common textbook requests for English composition courses in the Pacific Northwest region, where I've taught over 300 students in the past 2.5 years. To this, I added textbooks based on recommendations from my dissertation chair and ones which I had used as a FYC instructor. In total, I looked at 13 textbooks, of which 9 introduced students to the concept of ethos. *They Say, I Say*, *Rhetoric of Everyday Things*, *Style*, and *Landmark Essays on Rhetorics of Difference* made no direct mention of the term or concept of ethos.

The following twelve textbooks contained major or minor sections which dealt with the rhetorical triangle, which includes ethos, pathos, and logos: Corbett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (1990), Lunsford et al.'s *Everything is an Argument* (2018), Sommer and Hacker's *Rules for Writers* (2019), Foss's *Rhetorical Criticism* (2017), *Patterns of College Writing* (2011), Borchers and Hundley's *Rhetorical Theory* (2018), Herrick's *History and Theory of Rhetoric* (2015), Johnson-Sheehan & Paine's *Writing Today* (2019), Crowley and Hawhee's *Ancient Rhetorics for the Contemporary Student* (2009), Fahnestock & Secor's *A Rhetoric of Argument* (2004), and Ramage, Bean & Johnson's *Writing Arguments* (2016).

Miller and Devitt's *On Rhetorical Genre Studies* is something of a special case, as they include sections of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as a chapter, but do not directly address ethos in other chapters. As such, I will not be providing quotes from that text. I used the textbooks I had access to, with the year marked in text and the edition articulated in the

bibliography of this dissertation. Some of these textbooks have had large reorganizations between editions.

Most textbooks introduce ethos in a quick schematic discussion of Aristotle's rhetorical theory. A few quote the influential 1991 Kennedy translation of the *Rhetoric*. However, most textbooks offer their own definitions and glosses of the term. Generally, these textbooks are not engaged in the nuanced scholarly debates of the concept of ethos discussed above. Recognizing the audience and purposes of these texts, I posit that issues associated with understanding ethos create problematic contexts for our students as active citizens engaging in public discourse in Web 2.0 communities.

Corbett's text is the earliest of these textbooks, with its first edition published in 1965. It participated in the resurgence of Aristotelian thought in the middle of the 20th century (discussed in the subsequent section). Corbett offers an important section in his second chapter on ethos, laying out the concept in more detail and scholarly prose than is typical for more recent textbooks. Corbett quotes both Quintilian and Aristotle to offer various interpretations of how speakers create credibility with their audience. Corbett summarizes Aristotle as saying "when the speech itself impresses the audience that the speaker is a person of sound sense (*phronesis*), high moral character (*arete*), and benevolence (*eunoia*)" (80). In that same section, Corbett dwells on Aristotle's insistence on the text of the speech appealing to ethos, not merely prior reputation, and concludes by framing Aristotle's use of ethos as an answer to critics who find rhetoric to be too amoral. Corbett states that while later theorists, prominently the Romans, added further moral important to the concept, Aristotle did not neglect this dimension in his initial conception (86).

Corbett's including a chapter focused on rhetorical proofs was followed by more recent texts including *History and Theory of Rhetoric*, *Rhetorical Theory*, *Ancient Rhetorics*, and *Everything is an Argument*. The amount of space these textbooks provide to ethos does indicate the seriousness with which they engage with the material. These textbooks tend to offer the richest, most nuanced interpretations of ethos, as their greater space would lead one to expect. Nevertheless, they are still aimed at an undergraduate audience and tend to take on a traditional interpretation of ethos.

Crowley and Hawhee's *Ancient Rhetorics* is the intellectual heir to Corbett's textbook, with their title a direct allusion to it. Their chapter devoted to ethos, titled "The Ethical Proof," is even more sensitive to the ancient complexity of the term than Corbett. The stated mission of the textbook is a recovery and recontextualization of ancient rhetorics and their painstaking engagement with Aristotle is expected. But they do perform interpretive work, even as they lay out their best rendering of the ancient conception on the topic. To begin their chapter, they state

> we use the terms character and ethical proof in this chapter to refer to proofs that rely on community assessments of a rhetor's character or reputation…for the Greeks, a character was created by a person's habits and reputation rather than by her experiences (195).

They offer an English language shorthand, character, but then follow that up with further definition to emphasize that we should understand character in a different sense to our modern conception.

Distinct from many of the following textbooks, *Ancient Rhetorics* draws readers' attention to the flexibility of ethos. More than acknowledging that there are best practices

to making an ethical[2] appeal, the following quote walks readers through the idea that

ethos is not dependent on an independent notion of who the speaker is.

> Because the ancients thought that character was shaped by one's practices they
>
> considered it to be much more malleable than we do. Within certain limits
>
> imposed by class and gender restrictions, one could become any sort of person
>
> one wished to be, simply by engaging in practices that produced that sort of
>
> character. It followed, then, that playing the roles of respectable characters
>
> enhanced one's chances of developing a respectable character (198).

It may be no accident that my own exposure to this text was early in my Rhetoric

and Composition graduate program. It was not the text I taught with, but peers introduced

me to it due to my own background and training. I cannot help but see many of my own

preoccupations echoed in the interpretations of Crowley and Hawhee, in particular, the

gap between rhetorical ethos as presentation and the ethical ethos of a person's moral

core.

Other textbooks connect ethos to contemporary situations. *Rhetorical Theory*

(2018) first quickly quotes the Kennedy translation on page 37, and then gives the

following paragraph.

> Aristotle devoted much of Book 2 of *Rhetoric* to the study of the character of the
>
> speaker (*ethos*) and emotions (*pathos*). The study of **ethos** is very important
>
> because audiences judge not only the argument presented, but the speaker as well.
>
> He said, 'It is necessary not only to look to the argument, that it may be

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[2] Throughout this dissertation, uses of the adjective "ethical" refers to appeals of ethos, not the adjective
pertaining to moral philosophy, unless explicitly stated.

demonstrative and persuasive but also [for the speaker] to construct a view of himself as a certain kind of person' (p. 120). Three qualities are necessary: 'practical wisdom [*phronesis*], virtue [*arete*], and good will [*eunoia*]' (p. 121). You may recall our opening example of the speech given by New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu. As the son of a former New Orleans mayor and the brother to a former senator, Mitch Landrieu had credibility from his family's past political involvement (44).

History and Theory of Rhetoric is another traditional discussion grounded in Aristotelian quotes. This textbook situates ethos within the rhetorical triangle through the analogy of modern disciplines, stating "Aristotle saw the art of rhetoric as combining a logical study (logos), a psychological study (pathos), and a sociological study (ethos)." Glossing ethos specifically, this textbook asserts the following:

> It is not a sophistic guide to establishing one's credibility with an audience, but a careful study of what Athenians consider to be the qualities of a trustworthy individual. Aristotle discusses the character traits typical of young, middle-aged, and elderly people (1388-1390). This last one, ethos, was potentially the most persuasive. When people are convinced that a speaker is knowledgeable, trustworthy, and has their best interests at heart, they will be very likely to accept as true what that speaker has to say (81).

Everything is an Argument also devotes an entire chapter to ethos. They gloss ethos as "character" (42) but give a good deal of discussion to concepts of credibility and trustworthiness. In this, Lunsford et al. are not typical in the depth of discussion they provide. Yet it is still aimed at an undergraduate audience. The list of examples of how a

writer asserts authority include personal experience and qualifications such as college degrees (46). While the textbook hints at nuance, they do not get into the kinds of advanced theoretical discussions one expects in a graduate school textbook or a scholarly article. Even in a work which gives ethos such space, there is only so much possible depth in the undergraduate classroom.

Moving away from the prior textbooks that each provide a full chapter of focus, Fahnestock & Secor follow the Roman scheme, discussed in the next section of this dissertation chapter. They analyze ethos and pathos together as interrelated proofs. This text offers an English language version of Aristotle's division of ethos (good sense, good will, good moral character) before laying out, as Crowley & Hawhee did (but which most textbooks do not) the distinction between extrinsic (prior reputation) and intrinsic (internal to the speech) ethos (49-51). After a definitional discussion of pathos, Fahnestock & Secor then connect these two appeals to the identification of Kenneth Burke, pairing the two appeals as related to identity in ways which logos is not (55).

Similarly, Ramage, Bean, & Johnson's *Writing Arguments* offers a quick gloss of the rhetorical triangle in an argumentation chapter (47), which they follow up with an audience focused chapter which delves into greater detail on ethos and pathos (88). Glossing ethos as 'character,' the authors give a quick summary of details which can impact an ethical appeal, from the overall perception of trustworthiness, to the professionalism in both language and appearance of the writer, as well as their outside reputation. In the audience chapter, much like the Fahnestock & Secor above, this textbook makes the connection between pathos and ethos, although without the reference to identification. Further, *Writing Arguments* notes that writers construct a persona, with

the actionable advice to help create the most effective person. The authors do this without going into the detail of Crowley & Hawhee, but nevertheless acknowledging the constructed nature of ethos. I feel that this turn is not reinforced, however, and the ultimate recommendations to "Be knowledgable about your issue… Be fair… Build a bridge to your audience… Demonstrate Professionalism" leads students back to the more traditional understanding that ethos is tied to the true nature of the speaker.

Other textbooks include an argumentation chapter, which deals with the whole set of proofs without focusing on individual examples. These textbooks include *Patterns of College Writing*, *Rhetorical Criticism*, *Rules for Writers*, and *Writing Today*. With less focus on the issue, these textbooks offer increasingly brief and shallow glosses of the rhetorical appeals, in favor of more space for different topics.

Patterns of College Writing provides the brief gloss "to persuade an audience, a writer relies on various kinds of appeals – appeals based on emotion (***pathos***), appeals based on logic (***logos***), and appeals based on the character reputation of the writer (***ethos***)" (526). It then follows up that quick definition with the advice "Nevertheless, in your college writing you should use only those appeals that most people would consider fair. To do otherwise will undercut your audience's belief in your trustworthiness and weaken your argument" (527). One's character can persuade, and one should persuade morally or one's reputation might suffer.

Foss's *Rhetorical Criticism*, 2017, offers a bit more language, and contemporary examples in its classical argumentation chapter. Incorporating the rhetorical appeals into invention, Foss states the following:

the second form of artistic proof, *ethos*, is what we today call *credibility*. It deals

with the effect or appeal of the speaker's character on the audience. Your concern

in analyzing ethos is with how the rhetor's character, as known to the audience

prior to the speech and as presented to the audience during the speech, facilitates

the acceptance of the belief on the part of the audience. Credibility is

demonstrated by a rhetor largely through the display of three qualities in the

rhetorical act: (1) moral character or integrity, achieved by linking the message

and rhetor with what the audience considers virtuous; (2) intelligence, evident in

the display of common sense, good taste, and familiarity with the current topics

and interests; and (3) good will, the establishment of rapport with the audience

through means such as identifying with the audience members or praising them.

(34).

Foss provides references to ethos in examples in the Neo-Aristotelian chapter, on Nixon

(46) and Jiang Zemin (54), as reflective of their surrounding context and appeals within

their rhetoric, as proposed in the definition above.

    Rules for Writers (2019), provides the rhetorical appeals in its "Reading and

Writing Arguments" Chapter. Hacker and Sommers, in line with the other

"argumentation chapter" textbooks, offer students their own simple gloss, that "Ethical

arguments call upon a writer's character, knowledge, and authority" (99). They then offer

a series of questions to invite readers to analyze a given writer's ethos. The gloss stands

in for extensive definitional and interpretive work; students are left with the English

language connotations of character, knowledge, and authority to understand the meaning

of ethos.

In *Writing Today* (2018), Chapter 22, titled "Using Argumentative Strategies," dedicates a few pages to the rhetorical proofs. Short-handing ethos as authority, Johnson-Sheehan & Paine offer a definition with what I take to be direct English equivalents to the three Aristotelian constituents of ethos: practicality in place of *phronesis*, ethical principles for *arete*, and goodwill for *eunoia* (429-430). This is in addition to the discussion of ethos on page 333 which offers a list of schematic ethical arguments, giving examples such as personal experience, credentials, moral character, identification with the reader, use of jargon and so on. There are gestures toward the complex theory of ethos in this textbook, but the small space provided and the use of single word glosses for Greek concepts leaves ethos as a flat, static proof with formulaic uses.

Textbooks play a formative role in the education of many scholars in writing studies. Some encountered these concepts through their introduction to rhetorical topics in their undergraduate education. Given the prevalence of FYC instruction in the graduate programs in English, it is in their graduate training that most writing studies scholars encountered and engaged with the static definition of ethos offered in composition textbooks. This common experience, influenced by the fundamentally conservative and broadly targeted textbooks, has helped to inscribe and re-inscribe a narrow, less analytically powerful tool of analysis to the majority of scholars.

In my discussion of these textbooks, I wish to stress that any criticism of these textbooks is made with an eye toward ethos specifically. Many textbooks use a different approach, each with its own emphases. Giving ethos more or less space, and greater or lesser complexity, does not invalidate the whole work. Several of the textbooks did not even mention the term ethos. My point in this section is to emphasize the transmission of

a flatter concept of ethos than is useful to modern scholars. Yet ethos has had a long history, including various expansions and contractions in meaning for different theoretical frameworks.

ETHOS IN HISTORY: EARLY DEFINITIONS AND LINEAGE OF THE TERM

This section of the literature review traces the term *ethos* from Aristotle and his contemporaries through Romans and the nadir of rhetorical studies in the intervening period. It concludes with a return to an embrace of Aristotelian concepts and categories in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's landmark 1969 *New Rhetoric*. This is an extremely abbreviated narrative of the history of the term, with small pauses over prominent examples of new usage. This narrative illustrates how the concept has shifted in meaning, expanding and contracting to include different situations. In each instance, a new cultural context engendered a new reading of the term. These shifts in the framework for ethos offer precedent for the work of contemporary scholars, and this dissertation project, to maintain a core meaning to the term ethos while adjusting the definition to best aid analytical understanding of contemporary rhetorical practice.

While Aristotle did not coin the word or the concept of ethos, his work on the term, in the *Rhetoric* and in his larger body of work, has been widely influential. A strong majority of modern scholarship works within the Aristotelian tradition. Even the innovations that modern scholars of rhetoric have made to the Aristotelian framework still, in some sense, exist within that framework. Therefore, it is a useful exercise to walk through the history of the term, and how contemporary scholars took that tradition and generatively carried it forward.

Alternatives to Aristotle. Before jumping into the history of Aristotelian ethos, it is important to acknowledge alternative frameworks. When scholars look beyond Aristotle, they typically reach for the pre-Socratics or Isocrates, Aristotle's contemporary. Given their fragmentary nature, work on pre-Socratic ethos is patchwork and typically antiquarian in character. The most comprehensive source of pre-Aristotelian ethos is the *Rhetoric to Alexander*, a rhetorical handbook. The primary distinction in these early works is the use of the term ethos to mean not only the character of the speaker, but also the character of the antagonist of speech (Zmavc, 2015). Given the focus of these handbooks – judicial rhetoric – this general focus on each major character of agonistic speeches is natural. Pre-Aristotelian handbooks could take, as one subject, the attempt to establish the speaker's character as well as to define the character of a judicial opponent. Aristotle criticizes these works in the introduction of his *Rhetoric* as overly invested in pathetical appeals, leaving ethos and logos underdeveloped (1.1.3-5). Aristotle believed these early attempts to rationalize discourse to be too jumbled, confusing issues which he felt were better separated out into ethos and pathos. This muddling of ethos and pathos is a recurrent issue in rhetorical theory (Fortenbaugh, 1994).

Isocrates provides a more robust alternative framework than the pre-Socratics. Eberly and Johnson (2018) make a compelling case that Isocrates was not interested in the term ethos, but uses the term *tropos*, with its connotations of quick, contextual reputation, in an analogous way. Isocrates viewed ethos, according to Eberly and Johnson, as the static reputation which one carried into a debate, and one's attempt to earn trust during the delivery of the speech was accomplished through various rhetorical

turns, *tropoi*. In this way, the Isocratean understanding of ethos was akin to the Aristotelian atechnic, or already-existing, rhetorical proofs.

These two examples – pre-Socratic and Isocratean – represent non-Aristotelian frameworks for ethos that invite scholars to examine their assumptions when using the Aristotelian framework. Together, they point to the broadness of Aristotle's intention of the term, even if his follow-through in the second book of the *Rhetoric* was tied to the small context of fourth century Athens. I recognize these alternative frameworks as useful for focusing this literature review. The purpose of comparison is often to shed light on both the familiar and unfamiliar concept, and this is certainly the case here. Because Aristotle sets his conception of ethos in his three-part proofs, it holds the potential to take on considerably more interpretive weight than these early alternatives, which confined ethos to particular situations, rather than to a definitional concept. Isocrates and the Pre-Socratic thinkers offered a useful, but context limited ethos. Their writing both offers an alternative framework, but also underscores how large and flexible Aristotle's framework remains. It is thanks to this conceptual strength that thinkers and scholars continued to return to it millennia after its conception.

Aristotle. Aristotle asserts several key points concerning ethos in the introductory material to the *Rhetoric*. Ethos is one of the three means of persuasion (1.2.3). Ethos is perhaps the dominant of the three. Ethos must arise from the speech itself and does not include prior reputational information (1.2.4). The key quote here for both claims stand together early in the *Rhetoric*. From the Kennedy translation, Aristotle states the following:

For we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we

do others] on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not

exact knowledge but room for doubt. And this should result from the speech, not

from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person; for it is not

the case, as some of the technical writers propose in part of their treatment of the

art, that fair-mindedness [*epieikeia*] on the part of the speaker makes no

contribution to persuasiveness; rather, character is almost, so to speak, the

controlling factor in persuasion (38).

I take this quotation, set against the "technical writers," to be among the most

insightful passages on ethos in the *Rhetoric*. The author of the *Rhetoric to Alexander*,

discussed in the prior section, is surely one of these wrong-headed "technical writers,"

Aristotle is arguing against is a limited view of ethos that encourages the deprecation of

opponents and self-aggrandizement. Aristotle emphasizes in this quote that fair-

mindedness is a strength, which Kennedy helpfully pulls out as *epieikeia*. It may also be

translated as reasonableness or goodness. Therefore, appealing to ethos is not just

referring back to good deeds, but demonstrating one's virtue through the speech itself,

through the selection of arguments and manner of speech.

Effective appeals to ethos are made through demonstrating goodwill toward the

audience (*eunoia*), virtue (*arete*), and practical wisdom (*phronesis*) (2.1.5). In his third

book of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle adds a few further comments which support these

assertions. Aristotle notes that different rhetorical situations call for different styles of

communication, including language conventions when making ethical or pathetical

appeals (3.12.2). This point reinforces the notion that credibility arises from the text, and

not from prior reputation. This accords with a point made in another part of the Aristotelian corpus. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle describes the importance of character (*ethos*) to a successful dramatic work and emphasizes the need for appropriate diction (*lexis*) to successfully convey character, with playwrights encouraged not to add too much brilliance (*lampros*) to their scenes to avoid overshadowing character work (1460b).

In the following sections, I will detail the historical shift away from the Aristotelian framework, before his work makes return in the 20th century. Before moving on, I would like to detail the limits to what is recorded in the Aristotelian corpus. Aristotle follows up the clear and radical definitional work performed in Book One of the *Rhetoric* with an extended account of ethos in Book Two. Yet this account does not elaborate on its more interesting implications. Instead of considering the meaning of ethos arising from arguments in the text, which includes limitless possibilities, Aristotle instead offers a discussion of stock characterizations. He lists what it meant, in ancient Athens, to be an old or young person, a rich or poor person, and so on. As with much of the Aristotelian project, the *Rhetoric* and the appeal to ethos described Aristotle's context, the fourth-century Greek world, and the city of Athens in particular.

Instead of embracing the kairotic elements of rhetoric, Book Two shows the connections that Aristotle makes between the ethical appeal in rhetoric and the term ethos from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Ethos in the *Rhetoric* is a broader concept than the ethos in the *Ethics*, adding other measures of quality such as intelligence to moral quality (Wisse, 1989, 31). However, the entire Book Two discussion of ethos centers on defining stock character types. Aristotle describes the typical outlook of archetypes like the old, the

young, the rich and the poor. He offers a cultural snapshot, rather than embracing the wide applicability of his framework.

This understandable parochialism is accompanied by some odd statements which further constrict a strictly Aristotelian definition of ethos. Near the end of Book Three of the *Rhetoric*, in a section which details the use of narrative in speech (3.16.8-12), Aristotle states that narration should include ethical appeals because well-spoken narration will reveal the speaker's purpose to the audience. Then Aristotle makes the statement that, "Mathematical works do not have moral character because they do not show deliberate choice (for they do not have a [moral] purpose)" (Kennedy, 1991, 271).

This aside narrows the ethical appeal in ways contemporary rhetorical theory does not. The rhetoricity of algorithms, for instance, which are works of mathematics, would fall outside of Aristotelian rhetoric. Yet as I point out in the section on contemporary scholarship and in Chapter 3, algorithms and digital platforms are both rhetorical in the broad sense and make ethical claims in the narrow sense. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the very point Aristotle makes is directly challenged in contemporary mathematics. The ancient Greeks, including Aristotle, embraced the pose that mathematics is a product of pure reason. Current theory embraces mathematics as one more socially constructed field, with culturally determined premises which are then applied logically (Restivo, 2017). Algorithms, working from mathematical principles, rely on an ethos of impartiality in order to claim that results are fair. Aristotle's claim suggests he accepts the general ancient Greek position which held mathematics and other products of reason as beyond the scope of rhetoricity.

Aristotelian rhetoric seems broad since it had a large place in the culture of democratic Athens. However, his theory is in fact limited to public avenues. Ancient Athens had expanded the public sphere to include most aspects of a citizen's life, which is why Aristotle's language is so sweeping, at least in Book One. The Aristotelian framework points the way to a much more comprehensive theory, but it does not (perhaps understandably so) investigate much beyond its own context. But the expansive language for the rhetorical appeals serves as a generative springboard for scholars once they expanded their understanding of rhetoricity.

Roman Traditions. The Roman rhetorical tradition owes deep debts to the thinkers of Greece, yet the Romans adapted rhetorical techniques to their culture. This assimilation and localization of Greek concepts was well-established for the texts which stand as landmark Latin rhetorical texts. In this process, Aristotle was fairly removed. This may be partly explained by the difficult manuscript history of the Aristotelian corpus, which largely rotted away in a cellar for centuries (McAdon, 2004). Despite this, Aristotle loomed large enough in the minds of his contemporaries and their successors that the Romans continued to mention and reckon with elements of Aristotelianism. Nevertheless, the story of Roman rhetorical theory is bound up in their republican political system and the canonization of the figures in the late Republican period.

The Roman writers were aware of, and mentioned, the term ethos. Quintilian felt there was no direct Latin word which captured the concept (6.2.8). Cicero, the earliest Latin author to leave an extensive corpus on rhetorical theory and practice, rarely used the term. But, he had a clear vision of credibility which broke down the Aristotelian concept into Roman ones. The Roman system mirrored the distinction found in Isocrates

between ethos and tropos. Enos and Schnakenberg (1994) demonstrate the nuance of the Latin terminology for the concept of credibility between a speaker and audience. Where Aristotle uses ethos for each situation, Cicero articulates credibility attained during a speech itself as *dignitas*. This is constructed through the demonstration of *ingenium*, *prudentia*, and *diligentia*. These concepts roughly translate to one's nature, prudence, and hard work, which are distinct from the Aristotelian virtue, goodwill, and practical wisdom. The comparison of the trio of component parts of ethos is revealing. Aristotle's are more democratic, since the average person can work to achieve virtue, goodwill, and practical wisdom. Cicero's are accessible to some, but *ingenium* references one's inborn nature. In Cicero's view, orator's were either born with *ingenium*, or not, it could not be learned like Aristotelian virtue.

Cicero, like Isocrates, also accounts for the reputation a speaker brings to a speech. With enough individual instantiations of *dignitas*, a speaker builds *auctoritas*, *honor*, and *gloria* from which English derives the words authority, honor, and glory. So, a reputation is built through many instances of successful speeches, where the speaker demonstrates *dignitas*. But a key component to this is some sort of genetic component, *ingenium*. The scheme is straightforward and makes a kind of sense, but it is very revealing about the kind of society in which this rhetoric was practiced. Both Greek and Roman societies were xenophobic, misogynistic, and classist. Yet ancient Athens was democratic, allowing men of all classes to participate in communal decisions. The Roman political and legal context, where oratory was practiced, was simply more elitist. This, I believe, could not help but drive their whole conception of oratory.

Both Cicero and Quintilian provide a further novel interpretation to ethos, focused on the Roman emphasis on morality in politics (Quintilian, *Institutes*, 12.1.1; Kennedy, 1980, 101-102; Conley, 1994, 34-37). Aristotelian ethos assumed that an effective speaker would appear virtuous and high-minded; the Roman thinkers codified this. For Roman thinkers, the only effective orators were virtuous speakers. To speak unethically was to do something other than orate. This theorizing shows the comparative narrowing of the Roman gaze on rhetoric from an art of persuasion to an art of statesmanship. In this context ethos, or credibility with an audience, necessarily meant being good, rather than merely appearing so.

In this system, which so clearly defined the orator famously as "a good man speaking well" (Quintilian, *Institutes*, 12.1.1), the distinctions between ethos and pathos blurred in ways which are reminiscent of pre-Aristotelian thought. Quintilian, in the *Institutes*, offers a very muddled set of definitions, stating that pathos represents the aggressive range of emotions and ethos corresponds to the gentler, milder emotions to which an orator might appeal (6.2.8-12, Wisse, 1989, 241). Quintilian further muddies the distinction by offering examples of times when pathos is like ethos and vice versa, based on the discussions of unnamed Latin authorities. It is no wonder, then, that the term ethos is referenced, but not used, in the original Aristotelian sense for many centuries after the Roman period.

The Roman perspective is less suited to provide a generative modern springboard, as it is more self-consciously embracing its own hierarchical value system in the architecture of its concepts. An alternative digital rhetoric which attempted to look at individual posts as instantiating *dignitas* and a user's overall reputation as *auctoritas* is

possible, but the remaining terminology would require similar redefinition and theorizing, and detachment from Roman ideological conventions. At its core, Roman rhetorical theory was deeply moral, and this morality is rooted in social conventions. This strain existed in Aristotle and Greek thought, but it dominates Roman theory more than the practice-driven Greek model.

The distinction between the Aristotelian vision and the Roman use of the concept of ethos rests in their placement of moral philosophy in rhetoric. The morality of rhetoric was a contentious question in Greek thought. Plato articulates a clear distaste for rhetoric in both the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*, whose interlocutors so often describe an amoral rhetoric which prizes making the weaker argument into the stronger. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* does not subscribe to this view, and instead seems to include ethos as a way of including character concerns. Yet Aristotle does not abandon traditional Greek rhetorical thinking, which separates substance from appearance. Roman oratory from Cicero to Quintilian does not equivocate on this point. Possessing good character is deemed essential to practicing effective rhetoric.

Looking back over the centuries of Mediterranean antiquity, Aristotle's concept of ethos stands out not for its dominance, but for its power within the Aristotelian system. Credibility and authority were widely important concepts, which different thinkers conceived of in ways contrary to Aristotle's text focused approach. In Isocratean and Roman terms, authority was something built over time and with moral rectitude. Aristotle's lighter, flexible system included a moral element, but diverged from many ancient thinkers in the emphasis on appearing moral in the moment, rather than habitually being good. Aristotle's ethical works suggest that he was fully committed to conventional

virtue ethics, but his *Rhetoric* offered space for more sophisticated rhetorical analysis. In the period following the fall of the Roman Empire the European tradition tended to follow the lead of the moralizing thinkers. The most obvious reason was the ongoing accessibility of Latin sources in western Europe. Yet we must also recognize that the hierarchical values at the core of the Roman system had a distinct appeal to the relatively more egalitarian Greek on.

Further Divergence from Aristotle: Late Antiquiry to the Enlightenment .During the period between the fall of the western Roman Empire and the Renaissance, handbooks on rhetoric referred to Latin sources, most often citing Cicero and Quintilian. Ethos as a useful category of analysis fell into abeyance, along with much of the rhetorical canon. Part of that transition was a change in question. Aristotle's text reflected its context, the radically democratic city state of Athens. Some concepts which he alluded to, but did not systematize, such as stasis theory, became mainstays of late antique and early medieval rhetorical theory, which further lent primacy to the Latin authors (Kennedy, 1991, 266).

Transitional figures, such as St. Augustine and Boethius, synthesized classical rhetoric and philosophy to the emergent Christian intellectual tradition. These writers knew both Greek and Latin, but subsequent rhetoricians in western Europe tended to focus solely on the Latin tradition. One of the new genres of persuasive speech was the sermon and other similar evangelizing practices. In this context, the classical model which operated on probabilities sat uneasily with the arguments which were often infused with notions of faith and revelation (Murphy, 1974, 277; Kennedy, 1980). Christian and classical concepts were frequently bridged, yet the linguistic barrier in western Europe

and the intellectual currents of the Greek-speaking Byzantine empire tended to

foreground Aristotle's logical works rather than the *Rhetoric*.

More direct engagement with ethos occurred in the Islamic world, where Aristotle

was extensively translated and commented upon. There, the *Rhetoric* tended to be read as

part of the whole Aristotelian corpus. The proofs and the enthymeme was more closely

tied to Aristotle's syllogistic logic structure than it was typically treated elsewhere

(Ezzaher, 2008; Woerther, 2008). Al-Farabi's commentary on the *Rhetoric*, for instance,

takes issue with the Aristotelian division of proofs between the inartistic (witnesses,

oaths, and so on) and the artistic (ethos, logos, pathos) holding that both can serve in the

syllogistic system as premises. His commentary is full of references to *Prior Analytics*

against which he compares the rhetorical text. Then, echoing the Roman moves on ethos,

Al-Farabi emphasizes the morality inherent in ethos appeals, approving of the

instantiation of virtue above goodwill and *phronesis* (Woerther, 2008).

Cultural values continued to drive the moral content of the appeal to ethos, but

Al-Farabi's treatment of all proofs as included in persuasion distantly echoes the work of

the 20th and 21st century to recognize the role of non-Classical sources of persuasion.

Today, rhetorical scholars recognize marginalized voices among the human population

and non-human materials. These thinkers in the Islamic world did not go that far down

the analytical path, but Al-Farabi and others worked to apply Aristotle's text to a wider

context, including more factors under the rubric of rhetoric.

Moving into the modern period, rhetoric continued to be taught as a central part of

education. What was meant by "rhetoric," however, tended to mean stylistic training. The

height of this trend was Peter Ramus, a popular rhetorician and educator from the 16th

century (Ong, 2004; Halloran, 1982). During the nadir of rhetorical studies, the concept of credibility existed, but the term ethos, and the theoretical underpinnings that went with it, were out of fashion. A run through Bizzell and Herzberg's (1990) anthology tells the story of a rhetorical resurgence, including the renewed use of the term ethos. Rhetoric increasingly had a functional purpose. It was not merely the ornament of an elite education, but also a tool used to spread reformation, conduct commerce, and even engage in politics.

Thomas Wilson (1523-1581) found the authority of the speaker to be paramount to their rhetorical practice, yet they did not engage with the term ethos, let alone, to our knowledge, the Aristotelian framework (699). As Classical texts continued to resurface and circulate with the printing press, more direct engagement with the term ethos occurred. Hugh Blair derives his understanding of ethos from Quintilian and Cicero, adopting their explicitly moralistic framework (810). Mary Astell takes a similar view to a very different conclusion. Attempting to give voice to women as rhetors, Astell recommends a strong commitment to Christianity as a woman's primary avenue for developing a favorable ethos (846).

The examination and expression of a theory of ethos is traceable to the rhetorical practices of promoting the speaker's character while denigrating the rhetorical adversary's in the Greek cultural context. Aristotle defined the term, narrowing its scope to focus on the credibility of the speaker, but widened it to incorporate a potentially broader set of tropes and appeals than the pre-Socratic rhetorical handbook writers. In practice, Aristotelian ethos focused on his own situation, but offered a framework for interpretation in new cultural contexts. The Romans took the latent moralist connotations

of Aristotle's terminology, and layered a much heavier sense of good, as understood in their cultural framework. The post-Roman world saw a decline of Greek-focused rhetorical training in western Europe, while in the Islamic world thinkers moralized ethos as the Romans did but pushed the range of use for ethical appeals to include what Aristotle termed artistic and inartistic proofs. As rhetoric returned as a focus in western European education, the concept of authority and credibility frequently came up as important, yet without the Aristotelian framework or terminology.

The history of these premodern twists and turns of the history of ethos demonstrate the cultural rootedness of the term. Character, credibility, and authority remained staple concepts of rhetoric, even as the specific term ethos fell in and out of fashion. The character deemed credible remained culturally determined, but also determined by the circumstances of rhetorical action. Rhetoric exists in both democracies and monarchies, but the audience and purpose of rhetoric is radically different. The utility of a widely understood ethos, with enough room to encompass a greater variety of credibility seems to require a participatory social or political system. The further blossoming and extension of the scholarly understanding of ethos may be the result of advances in democratic inclusiveness.

20th century thinkers and rhetoric in the modern university. Rhetorical theory developed in new directions in the first half of the twentieth century, yet following the medieval tradition, scholars neglected the Aristotelian framework. They opted instead to work from other, or build new, frameworks. Kenneth Burke represents a prominent example of these efforts. Burke's place in the rhetorical canon looms large, and he certainly knew Aristotelian rhetoric. But Burke did not use the term ethos. Instead he

developed alternative frames of analysis for rhetoric. His key concept of identification,

for analysis of the relationship between author and audience, represents one such

alternative to Aristotle's rhetorical proofs.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, in their landmark work, *New Rhetoric* (1969),

returned to the Aristotelian framework of rhetoric, altering scholarly currents which had

for the most part followed a line from Roman sources. These scholars returned to

Aristotle to break with rationalist dialectic and to privilege argumentation (Conley, 1994,

297). Yet even as they looked to assert the value of rhetoric, their project only just

touched on ethos. Leff (2009) explores this omission and concludes that Perelman crafted

a project which deliberately focused on argumentative technique, thereby overlooking the

full implications of situated argumentation. The views of the audience are too far out of

bounds for Perelman. The one reference the book makes to ethos is the gloss, "What the

ancients used to call oratorical ethos can be summed up as the impression which the

speaker, by means of his words, gives of himself" (319). Yet this turn, along with

Corbett's textbook which came out only a few years later, set the stage for a full

reckoning with the generative implications of the Aristotelian framework on concepts of

authority and audience trust.

Ethos through western history. This brief history of ethos indicates that there have

been continual reinterpretations of the term ethos along certain dimensions. Thinkers

have generally linked ethos to credibility. Some used an agonistic concept of ethos for

both the speaker and their antagonist. Greek philosophers emphasized a persona of

goodness, while Roman intellectuals insisted on a reality of goodwill, virtue, and

knowledge. This is parallel to their thoughts on pathos, where Cicero notes that it is

useful to *feel* the emotions you are working to elicit in the audience. Then, as rhetorical

theory receded to its nadir, pre-modern orators emphasized the concept of authority in

their own way, demonstrating the ongoing utility of the concept, even as the term

remained absent. This lack was addressed with the re-introduction of classical

terminology in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's *New Rhetoric*. Though ethos was not a

focus of the *New Rhetoric* project, it paved the way for a reintegration and

reconsideration of that concept and term, a mission which this dissertation seeks to carry

forward.

MODERN SCHOLARSHIP ON ETHOS: TRADITIONALIST, FEMINIST, AND

MATERIALIST

   The table below briefly synthesizes the overview this section of the literature

review provides. Specifically, it succinctly identifies the connections amongst of modern

scholarship on ethos, beginning with traditional interpretations, moving through feminist

scholarship, and ending with current materialist discussions.

Theoretical Lens	Traditional	Feminist	Materialist
Key Figure(s)	Aristotle	Reynolds	Heidegger, Hyde
Ethos is/as	Communitarian; draws on existing hierarchies	Location, inclusive of marginalized voices, both in terms of physical and social location	Dwelling; inclusive of non-human actors
Purpose	Interrogate the interaction of a rhetor's character with the audience	Amplify traditionally marginalized voices	Spotlight the agency of non-human actors in generating ethos

Table 1. Summary of three approaches to ethos

The reintegration of Aristotle's concepts into regular scholarly use coincided with the proliferation of the rhetorical proofs in first year composition textbooks. This, in turn, as a result of training in the field for scholars to teach courses such as composition and technical communication, to the association of ethos with a much more basic concept in large sections of the field. In scholarship that investigates ethos directly, or uses it as an important analytical tool, there is naturally greater theoretical nuance. These articles and books tend to follow one of three interrelated, but distinct, traditions. I aim with this section to parse out major approaches so scholars can better identify their theoretical approach and articulate how they deviate or re-inscribe it.

These three frameworks— traditional, feminist, and material— developed from the original Aristotelian frame of ethos. Many look directly back to the classical past and work with the Aristotelian text, which, in part, is the approach of this dissertation. These scholars are situated within what I identify as the traditionalist frame. In the late 20th century, another path interrupted the traditionalist school and proposed we understand ethos in the feminist tradition, centered on the influential 1993 article "Ethos as Location" by Nedra Reynolds. Finally, the latest of these three traditions derives from the posthuman turn. These scholars, when examining ethos, draw from the work of Heidegger starting in the early 21st century alongside concurrent further development of the traditionalist and feminist frameworks. I call this last cohort the materialist framework.

Traditional approaches to ethos. The traditional approach to ethos ultimately derives from the mid twentieth century push to incorporate more rhetorical theory into argumentation and writing studies. The 1969 *The New Rhetoric* by Perelman and

Olbrechts-Tyteca encouraged communication and composition scholars to incorporate

Aristotelian theory into their work. The traditional approach, then, is tied directly to the

text of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and occasionally references additional texts of the

Aristotelian corpus. This includes the widest and most diverse range of scholarship

among the three frameworks discussed in this section of Chapter Two. It also represents

most of the early work, as the feminist and material traditions grew from thoughts on

ethos developed in the 1970s and 1980s. The reflex to return to Aristotle in those decades

of rhetoric's development as a discipline was possibly related to the young field's

legitimation work, in addition to the concept's utility. Its sister disciplines, composition

and technical communication, made use of ancient rhetorical theory to aid in the building

of their own ethos.

The leap to applying Aristotelian ethos to texts came from those scholars who

were already engaged with Aristotelian thought, including the burgeoning field of

technical communication. Carolyn Miller used Aristotle to define the field of technical

communication in her landmark articles (1979, 1989). Miller used the Aristotelian

concept of techne to situate technical writing as a humanistic pursuit and argue for the

legitimacy of that humanistic approach in TC pedagogy. It is then logical that she applied

a traditional Aristotelian framework when looking to analyze ethos in the new digital

spaces of the young internet (2001).

Likewise, Halloran used Aristotle's ethos to justify a broad understanding of

composition's role. In his 1982 article, he specifically calls on Aristotelian ethos to

justify an ethical classroom practice. He begins by situating himself into an earlier

conversation between Milic and Hirsch, which Halloran thought exemplified the limits of

his field's understanding of classical rhetoric. He laid out the connections between

Aristotle's rhetorical proofs and composition pedagogy. Ultimately, he took up the

moralistic connections in the term ethos to offer an example of public failure: the flawed

Frost Nixon interviews. Halloran posited that a failure to properly construe ethos among

college educated citizens had contributed to the reception of Richard Nixon in the

aftermath of his resignation, with the journalist Frost moving quickly from his

inquisitor's role toward framing questions which Nixon used to rehabilitate his image.

Here Halloran, like Corbett, emphasized the potential utility of ethos for moral

instruction.

The traditional approach has remained strong across writing studies, with some

notable recent examples in technical communication. Lerner (2018), in an examination of

a pressing contemporary problem, pulls directly from Aristotle in his use of ethos to best

understand the ethics of researching anti-vaccinationists. Lerner carefully bridges the

space between the ethos of the *Rhetoric* and the ethos of the *Ethics* to assert a very

traditional understanding of ethos helps him to articulate ethical research strategies

conspiracist participants. Lerner even directly invokes the value in community consensus

when assessing ethical action. He states "specific good actions depend on a consensus of

what "good" means" (84). Community consensus is both a strength of the traditionalist

approach and a contentious point of criticism. But on its own terms, this was a doctrinaire

use of the *Rhetoric*. Lerner used it to generatively look at a contemporary rhetorical

problem— how to treat anti-vaccinationists with autonomy and respect— while

acknowledging the scientific consensus around the critical health value of vaccines.

The traditional approach is not confined to traditional objects of rhetorical analysis. Brumberger (2004) uses the traditional lens of ethos to evaluate authority transmitted through font choices. Evans (2011) looks at ethos in the context of game studies and procedurality. He carefully defines the term as laid out in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and investigates two games for their adherence to Aristotelian ethos, moving step by step through the three requirements of ethos discussed above—*phronesis*, *arete*, and *eunoia*. Both articles demonstrate that a traditional framework does not confine scholars to considering only privileged human actors in their studies.

The purpose of this articulation of the traditional approach is to suggest that "traditional" does not suggest outdated. Good work on issues of pressing concern in technical communication, composition, and rhetorical theory use the traditional approach. This dissertation also takes as a starting point the traditional framework, as I conceived of this project with the text of Aristotle as my generative starting place.

Yet, holding too closely to that text does involve an underlying humanism. This in turn involves implicit hierarchies that affect the questions scholars can ask and the kinds of answers they find. Even in the scholarship that relies on objects, which many would call post-human or new materialist, there is a personification of, for instance the game elements or a view toward the human behind the fonts as the ultimate rhetor under a traditional approach. Dissatisfied with the constraints of this approach, in the 1990s, an alternative framework was proposed. It sought to recognize the rhetors whom traditional lenses tended to ignore.

Feminist approaches to ethos. This section demonstrates the coherent feminist reading of ethos as an alternative understanding of the concept. Rooted in Nedra

Reynold's 1993 article, "Ethos as Location," the feminist approach broadened the traditional Aristotelian definition. This broadening is manifold, encompassing both an accounting of the surrounding space of a speaker, the geographic location of the speaker, and the social space occupied by the speaker. There are elements of ethos as location that do encourage scholars to look at the physical space in which rhetoric occurs. But more important to Reynolds are those speakers who find themselves "in between" and unable to assert their authority in the traditional rhetorical structure. Ultimately, the ethos-as-location framework puts a spotlight on marginalized voices.

Reynolds begins her work with a careful engagement with the Aristotle's text. She agrees with several prior theorists that "standard translations of the Greek word *ethos* have not maintained its complexity" (327). After parsing the definitions of ethos, Reynolds points to the deficiencies of the model, which relies on ancient conceptions.

> Even in societies that are extremely homogeneous, individual experiences and material circumstances differ. When Halloran, for example, invokes the "image of people gathering together in a public place, sharing experiences and ideas" ("Aristotle's Concept" 60), we must remember that in classical Greece and Rome, slaves and women were not welcome to share in the public space of experiences and ideas. Thus, it is risky to assume, in a view of ethos as a social act, a speaker who is a unified, moral individual or a community of like minds where opposition is never an issue (329).

This article served as a touchstone for a new, feminist interpretation of the ethical appeal. Reynolds takes the common recognition that rhetoric is a social act and pushes at the

assumptions of stability and autonomy which Aristotle and those using the *Rhetoric* take for granted.

Reynolds's article prompted the publication of a wide variety of scholarship on the topic that aligned with her promotion of ethos as location. This approach allowed for the re-examination of individual marginalized authors (Applegarth, 2011; Skinner, 2009; Pittman, 2006), and marginalized groups (Christoph, 2002). The feminist approach has also been applied to ethos in disability studies, with Molloy (2015) offering examples of the counterintuitive ways which groups who are saddled with poor reputations (*kakethos*) navigate that societally-imposed complication to their rhetorics. In technical communication scholarship, the theory of ethos as location focuses scholars on the instability of rhetorics and the institutional hierarchies in which many writers operate. This has allowed for the recognition of displaced or appropriated ethos for those marginalized voices (Frost & Sharp-Hoskins, 2015), as well as efforts to assert authority within hierarchies: for instance, midwives who worked through newly opened digital spaces to make the case for their competence (Spoel, 2008).

This feminist approach to ethos is part of the larger social justice turn in technical communication. The investigation of the rhetorical authority of individuals in professional and social spaces clearly relates to the feminist critique of harmful power structures. Therefore, the creation of a feminist interpretation of ethos is part of the same project which produced the reinterpretation of other aspects of writing studies through a feminist lens. For instance, Walton, Moore, & Jones (2019) articulate the role of positionality, power, and privilege as structural props to the authority of traditional power structures while offering strategies for dismantling them.

When we return to the work of the traditionalists, we can see how the feminist framework critiques the re-inscription of existing power dynamics inherent in the traditional approach. Halloran (1982) articulated the traditional position best when he stated, "in contrast to modern notions of the person or self, ethos emphasizes the conventional rather than the idiosyncratic, the public rather than the private" (60). Traditional ethos is communitarian in a way that often verges on majoritarian. Feminist interpretations of ethical theory tend to upend that kind of hierarchy of convention and recognize the validity of all voices. Holiday, directly addressing this Halloran quote in her 2009 *Rhetoric Review* article, states the following:

> cultural stratification and inequity underwrite the majority of human interaction and are aspects of the human condition (historically and synchronically) that foreclose simple delineation of not only virtue, but also, as Nancy Fraser would argue, that which constitutes the public domain. (389)

A classical understanding of community, in line with traditional Aristotelianism, is inherently hierarchical, with maleness elevated. Modern scholars aptly note that theory needs to address the full range of voices, or it reinforces such traditional hierarchies.

The feminist approach, which began with Reynold's 1993 article, has continued to develop, with numerous recent articles mentioned above applying this approach to new contexts. Yet the initial Feminist lens remains rooted in the human. Articles of the past decade have begun to work through a new lens which brings more formally unseen objects into the focus of rhetorical theory. Post-human and New Materialist theories have focused on the ecology of rhetoric, and most recent scholarship which uses the feminist lens does also engage with this new theory.

A recent 2016 edited collection represents the clearest and most recent instantiation of this approach and its extension into the materialist approach. Leon & Pigg (2016) draw in concepts of knowing (*conocimiento*) to distribute ethos in both space and experience. In the same collection, Wenger (2016) states that "I examine how the spatial heuristics that govern the theory and practice of yoga change the ways we understand the borders of the self and, therein, how we "dwell" within our bodies" (247). Dwelling, the self and ethos interrelate through Heideggerian theory in these chapters. The development of this approach is discussed in the next section.

Materialist approaches to ethos. Transdisciplinary theorists and philosophers play important roles in developing materialists' scholarship. These scholars look to figures such as Heidegger and Latour, among others, to see rhetorics with new lenses. In Heidegger and those who use his work for their own, ethos is reconceived as 'dwelling,' wherein dwelling encompasses multiple facets of the individual and their environment. Understanding ethos this way expands the concept of ethos once more, to include not just the contents of a speech, or the voices marginalized by oppressive hierarchies, but also the material world which works in connection with rhetors to produce the full ecology of an ethical appeal.

Heidegger's construction of 'ethos as dwelling' has aided scholars in making a broader use of the original Aristotelian term. In "Letters on 'Humanism'" (1998), Heidegger links the concept of 'dwelling' to his key concept of *dasein*, thereby yoking ontology and axiology *qua* ethics. Using evidence from early epic poetry, Heidegger demonstrates that the initial usage of the term *ethos* was closer to 'abode,' or 'dwelling.' Through compilation of early Greek texts, most notably fragments of Heraclitus,

Heidegger articulates the distributed nature of *ethos*, which he clearly links to the habituated self: "The abode of the human being contains and preserves the advent of what belongs to the human being in his essence" (1998, p. 269). Therefore, the environment in which humans dwell plays a critical role in binding and preserving the self. I agree that ethos cannot be constrained to the individual, and that the context and environment of rhetoric is vital for a useful analysis.

Heidegger's observations play a large role in the contributions to Hyde's 2004 collection *The Ethos of Rhetoric*. It permeates Hyde's introduction where he connects existence to self and dwelling. Kenny (2004), in his contribution to the collection, states this position well: "Dwelling, in other words, is something that people *do*; it characterizes, in particular, the project of making a world for the sake of ourselves, other people, and other beings… and this then is the "*ethos* of personhood" (p. 34). Ethos as dwelling is something constructed as we construct our communities, for ourselves and others. Yet in digital spaces, the distinction between rhetoric and action is blurred. Posting, or liking, or retweeting is *doing* in many social media contexts. Hyde first articulated these thoughts while discussing digital rhetorics with Mitra in 1998 (Hyde & Mitra, 1998). Blair & Michel, later in Hyde's 2004 volume, consider the construction of a national (American) ethos through the history of the development and carving of Mt. Rushmore. Their discussion of ethos focuses on the intangible connection to an 'American' ethos which connects to its citizens. Again, the character of the country is this existing mythos which scholars are attempting to elucidate.

The materialist framework to ethos helps to emphasize the fluidity of the concept, rebutting the fixed understanding discussed in most of the textbook chapters. In the

Journal of Advanced Composition, Fleckenstein (2005) conflates the concept of ethos with the impermanence of identity. Self is an inherently unstable concept, and so too are people's sense of ethos. For Fleckenstein, cyberspace accelerates this effervescence, and requires an accounting by contemporary rhetoricians. Fleckenstein's effervescence underscores the large impact that digital platforms have, with their capacity for radical, rapid change.

The materialist approach is not restricted to those who use Heideggerian ethos as dwelling. Rivers (2012) works to succinctly and directly translate the materialist approach to ethos using the prominent new materialist, Latour. In a series of web videos for the journal, *Kairos*, Rivers claims that Latour brings two key points to the theory of ethos:

> The first is his notion of the real, which is a function of alliances and allies. That is, a project or object becomes more real the more allies it has. The second thing Latour brings to ethos is the work of generating interest, and this notion of interest is tightly connected to Latour's interest in associations.

This contribution to the concept of ethos, while not as thoroughly grounded in the larger conversation, does offer an alternative framework, with new vocabulary, for incorporating ethos into new materialism.

The materialist approach is critically distinct from the feminist approach. Reynolds reflects the epistemological groundwork of feminist theory, to arrogate *ethos* to a self-consciously full spectrum of knowers and speakers. Engaging with scholarship on marginalized voices, Reynolds uses the phrase ethos as location not just to acknowledge the etymological connection of the term to "abode" or "haunt," but to think of that

location as both geographic and more importantly social. The location to which Reynolds

refers is the intersectional location of the rhetor, whatever their gender, race, or class. By

contrast, taking Heideggerian 'ethos as dwelling' as an alternative to the human-centered

approach of both traditionalist and feminist readings of ethos, materialist scholars

attribute non-human environmental factors an important role in ethos. Where other

theories look at space and objects as peripheral or ancillary to the rhetor's presentation of

ethos, 'dwelling' encourages scholars to view these non-human objects as equal

participants in the ecology of rhetoric.

ETHOS FRAMEWORK FOR THIS DISSERTATION

The definition of ethos for this dissertation begins in the traditional framework,

but incorporates the important insights of the feminist and new materialist traditions. I

then wish to stretch the term further to recognize the new ways in which ethos is

deployed in digital spaces. Any serious theory of ethos must come to terms with the role

of non-human actors while recognizing the human actors who participate at all levels of

social hierarchy. These insights are further conditioned by the affordances of digital

rhetorics, as discussed in Chapter One: speed, reach, anonymity, and interactivity.

Digital ethos, much like the shifts I have presented in this chapter, must account

for the changed context of rhetoric. For this reason, the extended discussion of the history

of ethos was necessary to keep the term moored. To merely say that there is a new world,

and terms must therefore shift meaning, can lead to an unproductive pluralism of a single

term. Returning to Aristotelian first conceptions, as the traditionalists do, is useful for this

project. Aristotle offers such a rich framework that provides a platform for

reinterpretation. But an uncritical use of traditional ethos can overly focus on humans, and, more specifically, on socially powerful humans. The feminist and materialist lenses draw attention to the problems with the framework which privileges community consensus. That consensus is a fiction in any case, built on the experiences of those high in the hierarchy.

The definition of ethos for this dissertation accounts for these theories so that it can apply to the vast array of diverse conditions in digital spaces. This is why the sensible combination of Aristotelian ethos from the *Rhetoric* and the *Ethics* poses problems. The concept of ethos must stick to its core characteristics of relating to the audience's reception of the rhetor's character. The implied moral implications of the traditional understanding of ethos always beg the question: *who's* morals? Each society discussed in this chapter assumed that a successful appeal to ethos involved embodying that society's conception of the good. This cannot account for digital spaces with its many disembodied voices articulating many mutually exclusive understandings of the good.

When I discuss ethical appeals in the chapters that follow, I am referring to users characterizing themselves through their Twitter posts. These Twitter users operate in the context of a social media platform, with many non-human elements operating to channel their self-presentation. Despite many assertions of values, there is no consensus. There are terms of use, but there is a widespread perception that these are enforced inconsistently. Some users craft personae that would fit into Aristotle's or even Quintilian's definition of the good orator. But the affordances of speed, reach, anonymity, and interactivity have resulted in anonymous or unknown individuals joining discourse communities. Each of these affordances increases the likelihood of what Corbett

described in his textbook as the strange situation where someone "wholly unknown to an audience" speaks (80). When there is no prior reputation, users are left with very little to both craft an ethos and interpret the ethos of others. Text and immediate context crafts ethos in digital spaces; Chapters Three, Four, Five, and Six further develop my definition of ethos in digital spaces in support of engaged, critical audiences in both undergraduate classrooms and the public at large.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation project is a mixed methods study of appeals to ethos on the social media platform Twitter. It pairs close readings of individual tweets, which make ethical arguments, with a corpus analysis of multiple bodies of tweets. Together, these establish how often the individual tropes are made and in what contexts. In this chapter I articulate my methodological framework, discuss my selection of methods, and address the limits of what a project like this can accomplish. I will list my research questions and demonstrate how they are responsive to what I deem is knowable, given my methodological framework. With the theoretical underpinnings in place, I then provide detail on the specific methods I used to answer my research questions for Chapters Four, Five, and Six. I revisit specific methods choices within these chapters but offer a broad articulation of my methodology and methods in this chapter to inform those subsequent discussions.

RESEARCH GOALS AND QUESTIONS

In this dissertation I seek to adapt the flexible framework of Aristotelian proofs, specifically ethos, to the newer context of digital rhetorics, specifically on the Twitter social media platform. Digital rhetorics are defined by their affordances of speed, reach, interactivity, and anonymity (Gurak, 2001; Zappen, 2005), which creates the context for new forms of appeal. While digital rhetorics are defined by affordances, I also seek to

highlight their constraints. On Twitter, the platform itself does much work to constrain and channel the choices of its users— productively decontextualizing user-generated content— such that users must assert their identities through Twitter prescribed venues, such as the bio and user avatar. In this way, Twitter rhetorics represent a distinct type of digital rhetorics. This context, as well as demands on the user, places more emphasis on the text of the tweets than does a face-to-face interaction, which is traditionally believed to supply much more context to a rhetorical situation.

My research questions are as follows:

1. How does the Twitter interface permit and constrain its users to express their identity and appeal to their ethos?

2. What are the context-specific ways in which Twitter users appeal to their ethos?

3. How frequent are those appeals compared to traditional appeals which rely on credentialing or personal narrativizing?

With these questions in mind, I initially considered following a specific case, yet ultimately decided against it. There is significant precedent in the field to follow a specific case, in the form of a discrete time period, hashtag, or search term, to make illustrative points about Twitter rhetorics (Stenberg, 2018; McIntyre 2015). Given the general nature of the questions I wished to answer, gathering reactions to a specific moment in time would not adequately address my research questions. This project does not examine the rhetorics at play in a contingent group or conversation, but rather seeks to understand the effect of the platform, with its set of constraints and affordances, on each conversation occurring on Twitter. Therefore, it was important to build a dataset

which was representative of all active users on Twitter in a given moment. Looking only at reactions to an event or at a particular group or conversation occurring on the platform would foreground certain manifestations of Twitter rhetorics. I did gather my dataset on specific dates, and did note specific groups in conversation, but these choices were incidental. In fact, the dates of data collection were determined by the earliest date when I could collect data, and not tied to a particular moment. In this way, the project examines Twitter rhetorics as a whole and looks closely at individual tweets or conversations only in as much as they shed light on the greater Twitter ecology.

Gruwell (2018) lays out several questions which digital rhetorics scholars should answer as they design their studies. Focused on the power of algorithms to shape research, Gruwell's scholarship offers several prompts to help guide researchers to adequately reflect on their methods. In particular, I find the following of Gruwell's questions to be helpful for this project:[3]

1. Are you triangulating your research by collecting data at different times, and from different computers and accounts? Doing so may draw your attention to any discrepancies that may impact your conclusions.

2. What kind of identity have you created for yourself on the social media platforms you are researching? How is that identity reflected back in your results? Scrutinize the relationship between your positionality and the platform(s) you're using.

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[3] I added the numbers to her questions for the sake of reference, but these questions are bulleted, not numbered, in her original text.

3. How might you account for the possibility of bot accounts on the platforms you're studying?

The first set of questions are a serious concern, as the timing of the dataset will determine which voices will have a larger presence. I collected data during the middle of the afternoon (Pacific Standard Time), which emphasized the American users of the platform since European or East Asian users were either moving to or just waking from sleep at those times. I was comfortable with this choice, but Gruwell's question does remind me of the need to highlight the fact that the hours I chose focus on voices from the Western hemisphere. I chose to select a time when I expected voices from the Western hemisphere to dominate discourse, since they were awake, because I expected to be able to recognize more of the nuance of those tweets, given my background. I will discuss my personal perspective and its unavoidable impact on this research below.

Gruwell's second point directly relates to my choice on the first point. It is important to note that my position drove the selection of example tweets, guided the choice of Chapter Four's word search corpora, and conditioned the memes I was able to recognize during hand coding for Chapter Five's analysis. I examine these in much greater detail below, and I state here that I concur wholeheartedly with Gruwell's point in this question. Researchers who examine social media must be honest concerning their personal perspective since it has such a profound influence on their research.

The final question raises a key theoretical underpinning for the framework of this project. Concerns for the credibility of knowledge drove the inception of this project. I was interested in the ways social media seemed like a vector for misinformation. However, as the project has developed, the specific credibility of an individual user

became less relevant to the analysis this dissertation offers, though I believe this research is responsive to the conversation around fake news and social media. If the account is a bot, sock puppet, or a human user, the posts which constitute the data will still represent evidence of appeals to ethos.[4] Regardless of the T/truth behind that ethos, the representation of character by a bot can be just as illuminating of the rhetorics occurring on Twitter as the representation of character by a human user. As one more element in the ecology of Twitter, the people who program bots or use sock puppet accounts are influenced by, and influence, the rhetorical practice on Twitter. Each category of tweet will together contribute to the picture of how Twitter rhetorics diverge from expectations of what a classical appeal should look like.

METHODS

In line with more traditional hermeneutic approaches in rhetoric and technical communication, close reading precedes big data analysis in this dissertation. In my capacity as a Twitter user, I noticed patterns of rhetoric which were distinct from the forms found in physical media. As I will discuss in the latter half of this chapter, the patterns which were visible to me are restricted by my perspective as an individual user. These observed patterns served as a jumping off point to discern appeals to ethos which were novel and defied traditional expectations.

Harkening to the appeals of Koerber and McMichael (2008), I apply a qualitative textual analysis in a rigorous manner to complement quantitative methods of discourse

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[4] As a reminder, bots are autonomous, routine run accounts. Sock puppets are alias accounts created and operated by human users.

analysis. Theoretical sampling, or iterative sampling, was the most appropriate method for my dataset, since I actively sought to discern patterns which were not clear to me at the start of the project. Each of the following chapters—Four, Five, and Six—though focused on different tropes which appeal to ethos, all follow a similar pattern. For each, I selected several posts which I believe to be particularly exemplary of the type of ethical appeal which I discuss in the chapter. I chose these exemplary posts using the following principles. First, I searched for posts within my social context, i.e., conversations I can recognize. Second, I selected posts which exemplified non-traditional appeals to ethos. Third, when I had multiple options, I took Twitter metrics into consideration. Tweets with more likes or retweets represent more successful tweets under Twitter metrics, as they have a greater level of engagement, and will be prioritized in the feed of other users.

The individual exemplar tweets serve the reader as specific examples of the rhetorical moves which were analyzed in the full dataset. After their iterative selection, I applied generative criticism to these tweets (Foss, 2004, 411-426). Close analysis starts with broad brush interpretations of the example tweets. These broad assertions lead to specific questions and interpretations concerning the smaller elements of the tweets such as images, phrases, individual words, or other novel symbols. Given the wide range of examples used in this dissertation, this generative criticism helped me to think through the examples on their own terms, before connecting to my larger theory of ethos.

This generative approach is intended to be balanced by the quantitative analysis. Through a collected corpus of twenty 5,000-tweet samples taken over the course of two days, I use the total corpus of 100,000 tweets as a representative, random body of posts from the platform. With this corpus, and five word-search corpora (collections of tweets

which only include a search term) of varying sizes, all under 6,000 tweets, I can take the novel tropes which were detected in iterative sampling and test them to determine their overall pattern of use on Twitter. For example, I assert that direct engagement is a form of ethical appeal, since it publicly demonstrates either agreement or disagreement with a prominent figure. I can then quantify the number and ways in which this engagement occurs, measuring replies, @s (defined in Chapter 6), quote tweets, and retweets.

DATA COLLECTION

Drawing from a rich tradition in corpus linguistics (Aull, 2017; Graham et al 2015; Lauer et al. 2018), for each chapter/exhibit I built a corpus of Twitter posts. An initial pilot study for this project used a Python- (an "object-oriented, high-level programming language" [What is Python? 2019]) powered application programming interface (API) code which I built for the purpose. The data used in this dissertation was collected by the FireAnt Twitter collection tool (Anthony, 2018). FireAnt is an open-source tool that provided a superior data organization to my code. The FireAnt tool was designed for Twitter analysis and displayed the embedded information in an individual Tweet's HTML code in a clear fashion.

The FireAnt tool allows for both keyword search and sample collection. Both search functions are real time, due to Twitter's restrictions on largescale searches for historical tweet data.[5] Given these restrictions, the dates were not selected for known characteristics, since data could only be collected in the moment, when its characteristics

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[5] At the time of this writing, Twitter only allows searches of the past 7 days, restricts the total numbers of returned tweets per search, and restricts the number of searches allowed per day.

were yet unknown. Once I found the optimal collection tool and ironed out my user error which resulted in several lost corpora, I began collecting data in 5,000 tweet chunks. Therefore, the data sets used for this dissertation, both the large sample corpora and five word-search corpora, were collected in real time during December 2019. The sample collection tool returns 5,000 randomly collected tweets over a seven-minute period. This sample represents 0.2% of the total volume of tweets. This is based on the average of 6,000 tweets per second (Sayce, 2019).

The keyword search collection tool used for the word-search corpora collects tweets which include the entered search term and includes all instances which occur during the duration of the collection. Since search terms varied in frequency, the word-search corpora varied in size, though I made efforts to keep the search feature running until a comparable corpus was established for the keyword terms.

One of the key difficulties in building a corpus of Twitter data is the distinction between text and extended text. This distinction is rooted in the history of Twitter as a microblogging platform. Formerly, Twitter allowed posts of only up to 140 characters but changed that limit to 280 characters in 2017. In the HTML code, this expansion is treated separately, so all tweets include a section for the text up until 140 characters and a second, later section for the text of any tweets which exceed 140 characters. The first section always contains a value, since all tweets will have text within 140 characters, but the second section is filled only if a tweet goes over 140 characters. The data cleaning for this dissertation project involved carefully sorting tweets shorter and longer than 140 characters, and re-aggregating them so as to not include any duplicate text. FireAnt made this process much easier through the plotting of tweet HTML code elements into

consistent columns. The FireAnt tool provided this project with a useable set of corpora

for analysis, discussed below.

CORPUS ANALYSIS

In this project I use corpus analytic tools to perform discourse analysis on my

dataset. I ran my data through both the open-source tool, AntConc, developed by

Laurence Anthony, as well as the RAND-Lex tool, developed by the RAND corporation.

Given the large number and diverse range of social media users, there is a risk of bias in

results that contain too small a dataset. However, big data requires big data tools, as one

researcher can only do so much 'by hand' (Lauer et al., 2018). To resolve this difficulty, I

used these tools to pull out specific lexical characteristics of tweets. These characteristics

establish how users appeal to ethos on Twitter. For example, word collocation offers

evidence of diction as an ethical appeal, monitors the frequency of certain memetic

forms, and tracks different types of user engagement.

Examining these characteristics establishes a novel interpretation of how ethos is

represented in Web 2.0 spaces. The patterns of usage around of a specific term, such as

"establishment" demonstrates that Twitter users tend to use this term in specific

discussion of politics. For keyword search corpora, I applied two tests which measure the

corpora from two perspectives. I used traditional collocation testing, which examines the

relationship of the selected term to words in a five-word range around the word. This test

delivers results which signal idiomatic usage and closely associated words for the search

term. The keyness test, applied through the RAND-Lex tool, looks at relationships

between words in a whole unit of text, in the case of this study, an individual tweet. The keyness test measures topical associations better than the collocation test. It demonstrates in the case of "establishment" that the political conversation using the term is concentrated among left of center Twitter users. It offers clear evidence that making the diction choice, "establishment" signals an affiliation to an ideological and political movement.

There are important limits to the capabilities of big data corpus analysis, and the largest gap in analytic capacity for my set of tools was accounting for non-text portions of Twitter posts. Images, videos, and gifs were illegible to my tools and required the supplement of hand coding to catch those crucial aspects of Twitter discourse. The majority of memes, central to the analysis in Chapter Five, include images or videos as key to the meaning of the post. The corpus analysis tools cannot read those images, which leaves them outside their scope of analysis. The hand coding complements the capabilities of the corpus analysis tools. Each step of analysis in this project—the close reading, hand coding of a small, but valid, sample sizes and the large corpora—contribute different layers of evidence for my resulting claim that novel appeals to ethos are occurring on Twitter.

An important methodological point which is specific to the Twitter platform is the position of retweets. For the purposes of my analysis, I treat retweets as discrete tweet examples. While retweeting takes less effort than writing out one's own unique post, it still counts as a full tweet. If one tweet is retweeted millions of times, I count that as millions of users adding their contributions to the conversation through the repetition of another user's post. It is not one user repeating themselves. Some of the conversations

will appear skewed due to the prominent place that a single unique post, frequently retweeted, takes in that discussion. However, those discourse effects are precisely the kind of platform specific dynamics which I hope to capture with this dissertation. Twitter has facilitated individuals' ability to repeat the posts of others, and this has changed discourse on the platform. So, retweets will count as distinct tweets during analysis.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAME

Methodological Context: Rhetoric and Technical Communication Across writing studies, which includes technical communication, rhetoric, composition, and other fields, there are a wide array of methodological approaches and options for methods. Given the interrelationships of journals, scholars, graduate programs, and methods, it makes sense to discuss the fields of writing studies as a whole in this context. Many methods in writing studies disciplines are adopted from fields in the social sciences. Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) note that the field of technical communication, in particular, is in many ways a complex amalgamation of methods and methodologies from outside disciplines. Alongside the practices of using methods and tools generated outside of writing studies, North (1987) identifies an internal, ongoing conversation in the field of composition studies. North divides composition studies into three main cultures—scholars, researchers, and practitioners—and further subdivides those into distinct subcultures framed around methodological approaches. Soon after, in 1992, Kirsch claimed that North's approach, a kind of egalitarian view, was insufficient. Rather, methodological pluralism was necessary as we worked to collaboratively build a field.

Since the early 1990s, scholars such as Barton (2000), Winsor (2012), Haswell (2005), and Geisler (2018) have continued the discussion regarding the benefits of empiricism, yet the use of data-driven methods across the fields included in writing studies continues to be an area of growth that remains fraught with epistemological and ontological concerns. For instance, Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) articulated the problems with adopting traditional research practices, given they can further marginalize populations already underserved by the research enterprise.

Yet the necessity of data-driven scholarship in technical communication serves two purposes, which I aim to support with the work of this dissertation. First, data-driven scholarship can establish robust narratives about certain issues that have a broader audience. As a field attuned to audience and purpose, rhetoric and technical communication must recognize the value of telling stories through a variety of media, methods, and narrative styles. Increasingly, as Haswell noted, "in hard times, hard data are a godsend" (2012, 185). Yet I do not propose data-driven methods with a positivist methodology at the core. Rather, I recognize that research in our field, like all work we do, is situated within specific social constructs that value specific knowledges and ways of knowing. Therefore, I subscribe to Herndl and Narhwold's (2000) representation of research as a social practice and opt to amplify both data-driven and traditional hermeneutic research practices to address my research questions.

At the present moment, the burgeoning possibilities of big data have sparked a number of new research possibilities in rhetoric and technical communication. These include work on the ethics of big data research in the rhetoric of health and medicine (Novotny & Hutchison, 2019). It also includes research on the systems and methods

researchers can use, and the resultant data, (Moxley, 2013) and its possibilities for shaping and re-shaping learning spaces and public forums (Gallagher et al., 2019). This dissertation uses methods and tools from the growing body of work on big data to explore ancient concepts. In effect, the aim of deploying such novel tools (e.g., corpus analytics) and traditional practices (e.g., close reading) is to use each method to check and support the other.

My Methodological Commitments & Self-Disclosure Within this broader disciplinary context, I approach research pragmatically (Teddlie & Tashikkori, 2011). A theory-building project such as this dissertation is strengthened in a mixed methods approach. I hold that knowledge is socially constructed (Berlin, 1996). I further embrace the epistemological gulf that exists between the observable and the inaccessible. Specifically, the distance between an individual piece of rhetoric and the intention behind that rhetoric is unbridgeable. This project can observe only the moves which Twitter users are making. It will not, and cannot, ascertain their intentions.

Knowledge is socially constructed, and rhetoric is built in discourse communities. This epistemological position is significant for this project as I am not asserting that all of the appeals to ethos described and cataloged in this project are conscious choices of those making the appeals. I do not rigidly distinguish between a savvy social media user or professional social media team which purposefully builds a persona and the casual user who approaches social media only through enculturated practice. The connection between the actual character of the user and the tweets they post to the platform are not necessarily connected. An athlete with a social media team and a private citizen joining

the discussion are presenting differing levels of their authentic self, but this research cannot measure this.

A significant limiting factor for this project is my own perspective and background. I am a cisgendered, heteronormative, white, middle class male. I studied classical history before switching in graduate school to writing studies. My views tend to be typical of my social peers employed at institutions of higher education: liberal and receptive to causes of social justice. My interests, in as much as I pursued them on social media, include politics, the conversation of anglophone classicists and medievalists, dad jokes, the fortunes of Sunderland Association Football Club, and the conversations of writing studies scholars. Additionally, this project is constrained to Twitter users who post in English. While I use one example Tweet in French, and one of the hand coded tweets was in Spanish, generally speaking, my research is confined to English language posts. My search terms are English, and the memes I recognize are typically in English.

This disclosure is rather long, yet relevant for the context of this project. There are many conversations occurring on Twitter. My personal background limits the conversations I can parse, and some conversations are entirely invisible to me. I take it as a given that there are moments of identity assertion or formation in my dataset that I will miss given my own perspective. There is a long history of erasure in academia (Jordan-Zachery, 2013; Matsuda, 2006), and despite the promises of big data tools in technical communication and rhetoric, scholars have found systematic bias in the kinds of corpus linguistics and algorithmic research which this project will embark upon (Noble, 2018). The perspectives of the program developers and the researchers cannot help but creep into the data collected and the analysis of that data.

I assert that the methods and general theory which this dissertation project develops and employs are broadly applicable for researchers of all perspectives. However, the examples and tropes which I will offer as my results will be limited to those which I have the perspective to recognize and code for. My hope is that these methods are useful to traditionally marginalized scholars looking to amplify their voices in academia, and that in using these novel tools, I can find and amplify their work as well. Despite the constraints of my limited perspective, this dissertation project provides methods to target and analyze ongoing conversations.

THE ETHICS OF TWITTER DATA COLLECTION AND USE IN RESEARCH

Social media and big data projects raise important ethical questions concerning their participants. Is it ethical for researchers to harvest users' data, if they are participating on these platforms with no intention of having their data used for research purposes? And does the social media user have the right to object to the use of their data if these users agree to terms and conditions that include language relinquishing control of their data? How can a social media user effectively control their own data, with the rise of big data tools, such as APIs that glean millions of users' data, and researchers interested in examining social media? Recent controversies, such as the Cambridge Analytica scandal, have heightened these questions. Cambridge Analytica clearly violated the spirit of Facebook users' expectations and perceived rights. A small number of users participated in and consented to the Cambridge Analytica study into psychographic data. The company took this consent as carte blanch to study the data of both their consented population's friends, and the friends of their friends (Confessore,

2018). Through this bending of the spirit of consent, Cambridge Analytica researched on

a much larger dataset than they obtained consent for. Publicly facing social media posts,

however, represent a grey area. Unless a user chooses to make their account private, all

tweets are easily pulled into an API, and many different disciplines are using this data to

generate new knowledge.

I filed a request for determination (RD) with the USU IRB, which rendered a

judgment that the methods used did not constitute human subjects research. In their

review, they noted IRBs are not bound to review research conducted on public data, such

as Twitter feeds. They offered useful resources, but it is worth noting that the ethical

questions about social media research have only murky answers at present.

A recent survey of Twitter users found that a strong majority of them were both

unaware and uncomfortable with the information that researchers were using their posts

in scholarship (Fiesler & Proferes, 2018). US law does not require the consent of these

users, however, and regulation and caselaw support the analysis of publicly available text

(Vitak et al., 2017). It is also true that laws lag behind unethical practice, and that our

society is only beginning to reckon with what the legal and regulatory response should be

to digital communication and commerce. Therefore researchers are left to their own

moral compass to assess what to do concerning the documented gap between the

sentiments of users and the requirements of law.

I spare a moment to engage with the ethical questions surrounding research in

social media to highlight the stakes of doing this research. The datasets for this

dissertation were generated by individuals who may be uncomfortable with their use in

this way; indeed, the API pulls users' information alongside the timestamp of the tweets

as well as the tweets themselves. However, as with any consideration of the ethics of a specific research program, the concern rests in assessing the confluence of autonomy, beneficence, and justice. Autonomy concerns are paramount, since I did not actively engaged in an informed consent with twitter users before collecting their public tweets. However, my independence as a researcher affiliated with a university and not tied to the corporation of Twitter itself provides space for me to examine and critique the use of data in this way. This to say: I am deeply grateful for the individuals who share their insights and post publicly, because they have made this project possible. No thanks is owed to Twitter, which profits off such behaviors.

For me, the value in this project justifies this discomfort, and I hope that the results I garner suggest continued research both in social media spaces, but also in the ethics surrounding such research. The beneficence accrues broadly to the public with such efforts to understand and make decisions concerning social media. Writing studies, to fulfill its purpose, must explore the meaning and contours of new writing contexts. This research can help develop the theory and practical points for successfully addressing user concerns over privacy or the moral and legal obligations of actors on the networks. Understanding how users assert their ethos, their sense of self, and communicate it to others is sensitive, yet necessary to the reckoning discussed above. With trepidation then, this project has used the publicly available tweets of a randomly selected group of users without their explicit consent.

INTERPRETATION OF DATA AND TOOL FUNCTIONALITY

Once the data was collected, I analyzed and interpreted the data in distinct ways for each chapter. Chapter Four, focused on diction choices, used collocation to demonstrate the association of certain terms with specific conversations and discourse communities. Chapter Five required hand coding, due to the limitations of corpus analysis tools regarding attached media. This interpretation relied on traditional hand-coding techniques developed in social science, as well as the methods of corpus analysis increasingly used in writing studies.

Chapter Four uses five keyword-search corpora to analyze the collocation of two sets of related terms to demonstrate the importance of diction choice to discourse communities. This chapter relies on big data tools to analyze the collocation of the keywords. Collocation provides a numerical value for the probability that words will appear together in a given corpus, measuring their overall presence in the corpus against the instances when they are located next to one another in a certain range of words. This tool demonstrates the strength of associated words, providing a window into their usage. I discussed the example of the term "establishment" above. The collocation and Keyness tests provided a list of terms which occurred at higher than expected rates for a typical conversation. The table of terms paints the picture of a conversation occurring in mid-December about both Bernie Sander's chances of success in the United States and rage at Jeremy Corbyn's recent, and historic, election loss in the United Kingdom.

Analysis of memes calls for a mixture of big data tools and traditional hand coding, as the attached media of a given tweet are not fully legible to AntConc nor RAND-Lex. Therefore Chapter Five relies on hand coding of tweets to determine if a meme is occurring and what category it belongs to. As I discuss in Chapter Five, memes

range from image macros to gifs and videos to plain text, formatted to a particular

pattern, much like a mad lib script but with greater variation. Using a section of the

random sample corpus, I offer frequency statistics for various meme forms. This

frequency gives a sense to the relative importance of this kind of discourse, as a signal

distinct from diction. As I contend in Chapter Five, fluency with memes represents a

distinct part of digital ethos, apart from membership to a specific group.

Chapter Six relies on a mix of big data and hand-coded data just as Chapter Five,

but with a greater use of the relationship tools in the FireAnt suite of tools. Engagement

with the "other," which includes both other users, individuals not on Twitter,

organizations, or groups, involves several searchable permutations. The HTML of a given

tweet indicates whether the tweet is a reply, part of a quote tweet, or has addressed

another user directly through @ing them. The most elusive form of (non)engagement is

the attachment of a screenshot referencing an "other." Since it is an image, it requires

hand coding. A sufficiently powerful machine-learning program could read text images to

bring this part of data analysis into the scope of big data techniques. But for this

dissertation, hand coding provides a valid method to account for this common technique

of self-definition through reference to the "other."

With the general methods introduced, I now transition into the heart of this

dissertation project. These next three chapters offer three distinct novel appeals to ethos

in digital spaces. They are new tropes, developed in response to new media. Distinct from

traditional ethos which is characterized in modern scholarship by prior reputation and a

host of factors, digital ethos relies on fewer criteria and a shortened timeframe. As I

demonstrate in the following chapters, digital ethos is built, spent, and lost quickly. Not

all Twitter users engage in the novel forms of digital rhetorics that build ethos in these

novel ways, but those who embrace the affordances of the platform have pushed the

boundaries of classical rhetoric and force us to expand our definition of ethos to account

for these novel approaches.

CHAPTER FOUR

DICTION CHOICES: ETHOS DWELLING IN A SINGLE WORD

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two walked through the ways that ethos has stretched from verbal rhetorical arguments concerning the character of the speaker to recognizing the effect of location and physical presentation, to finally incorporating even greater awareness of the ecology of presentation and argumentation. Ethos understood in this distributed fashion incorporates the embodied voice of the speaker. Digital rhetorics decontextualize communication so that cues such as what the speaker wears, their accent, and the ascribed characteristics of their bodies are not present. Such a decontextualized interpretation of digital rhetorics, however, does not invalidate prior theory. Questions of hierarchy and ecology remain present. The digital context, however, does shift the emphasis to new factors which require new theory. In efforts to begin constructing this necessary theory, this chapter focuses in on the use of specific diction choices to develop ethos.

Traditional ethos, even incorporating new feminist and non-human elements of contemporary theory, tends to frame ethos in a longitudinal fashion. Understood this way, ethos is built over time, through lived experience. In digital rhetorics, posts are ephemeral, even as they may retain permanence. While any given set of posts, unless set to auto-delete, remain accessible indefinitely, the audience for these posts is often transient. By asserting the right vocabulary, a user can demonstrate belonging or, alternatively, demonstrate their outsider status. The following examples exhibits the clash

between traditional ethos, which considers a person's character holistically, and digital ethos, which looks to the latest post to make a judgment.

This chapter provides a close reading of the ethical[6] moves in several tweets. The first example tweet shows the lament of its author, who disapproves of users who are quick to judge without considering the full context. The second example demonstrates a typical appeal which uses specific vocabulary to demonstrate a user's background. Together, these examples demonstrate the ways that individual diction choices stand in for the context the Twitter platform itself strips out.

The focus of this chapter is on how digital citizens build ethos within groups through demonstrating fluency with their intended discourse community. The connotative weight of each diction choice is correspondingly heavier in digital spaces due to the lack of further contextual information. In this way, so much is made of so little. Given the affordance of anonymity, Twitter users rely on small cues such as diction to sort members from pretenders and exhibit insider status with certain discourse communities.

Chapters Five and Six will examine different aspects of digital ethos. Memetic fluency in Chapter Five signals an ethos which is distinct from group identity and relies on the speed and reach of digital interactions. Chapter Six focuses on ethos achieved through interactivity, as individuals present the posts of other users online to define themselves, while using platform characteristics to facilitate or restrict their interaction with the referenced other user.

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[6] Use of the adjective ethical will always refer to the rhetorical appeal to ethos. I will articulate clearly any discussion of ethics.

The concept of a discourse community was developed in composition and linguistics in the final part of the 20th century. Scholars such as Swales (1990), Spack (1997), and Gee (1986) investigated the experience of students acclimating to the writing of academic disciplines. This research noticed the pattern of enculturation into the genre conventions of the students' new disciplines. The background of the students impacted the difficulty of this enculturation process, with some students requiring more work to develop genre fluency.

Discourse communities develop because they provide members with benefits. A common vocabulary creates a frame of reference to further in-group discussions and signals to group members that a given speaker/communicator is a part of the group. Language is used to mark out belonging and identify those who are not authentic members of a given community (Gee, 1986). The use of language to mark out difference is quite old in recorded human history. The biblical narrative, which uses the term shibboleth in the *Book of Judges*, exemplifies how this process works in an oral culture (12.6). After a battle between two of the twelve tribes of Israel, the victorious side guarded a ford that the defeated needed to cross in order to return home. Given that the groups were so closely related in language and culture, the victorious army devised a test to determine whether the individuals who attempted to cross the river were bystanders or members of the defeated army. All individuals who sought to cross were challenged to say the word shibboleth. The dialect of the defeated group rendered the pronunciation as the word *sibboleth*, (removing the h). Those caught were, in the biblical story, promptly killed. The stakes of group membership were stark in that instance.

That story, and its many echoes across time, relies on pronunciation to pick out group membership. While personal pronunciation is possible to broadcast in digital spaces, most digital rhetorics rely on non-verbal forms of communication, necessarily leading to new signifiers of group belonging. The affordances of digital rhetorics — speed, reach, anonymity, and interactivity — place greater emphasis on the content of a given message. The anonymity of digital spaces complicates embodied projection, and many elements of tone and gesture must now be re-understood in an environment where communicative information is filtered through digital platforms. New shibboleths were developed to take the place of older, more traditional ones.

In this chapter, I argue that diction choices now serve as shibboleths in digital contexts, with authors' specific vocabulary and phrase choices signaling to other users their affiliation with particular groups. A large body of scholarship asserts that diction choices can predict demographic and ideological characteristics (e.g., Pei et al., 2014; Cavazos-Rehg et al., 2014). At the level of elite discourse, privileged individuals have used discourse and decorum knowledge to differentiate themselves from the marginalized or even the socially-rising other. The familiar trope of old money families looking down upon the upstart nouveau riche, who had money but lacked the social knowledge on manners, education, and consumption habits to fully fit in. These sorts of ascriptive prejudices are more difficult in anonymous digital communication, putting weight on what is present in these posts: diction.

THE CLASH OF TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL APPEALS TO ETHOS

This section offers two examples of tweets. @Noahpinion's tweet represents the fundamental distinction between the longstanding ethos built over a career and referenced, and that ethos which is emerging in digital spaces such as Twitter. The second example, written by user @e_pe_me_ri (Theo Nash), demonstrates a direct appeal to ethos, defining two elements of the user's character.

@Noahpinion's ethos. In this example, @Noahpinion, verified as the economist and *Bloomberg* opinion writer Noah Smith, laments the lack of respect shown for Larry Mishel, a progressive economist.

Figure 3. @Noahpinion's ethos.

Noah Smith is a practiced Twitter user with over 160,000 followers as of

December 2019. Smith's output is considerable: 212,000 tweets over the eight and a half

years, averaging about 68 tweets, including retweets, a day. Smith's user handle is a fun

pun on his own name. He regularly demonstrates familiarity with memetic culture and

digital discourse. Yet, Smith remains rooted in long-form opinion journalism, and

traditional credentialing, such as his PhD in economics. Further, while Smith does engage

in chatty individual tweets, he often uses the Twitter platform to deliver long tweet

threads on given topics, offering it as essentially a companion to his more traditional

opinion journalism.

Noah Smith is, then, well-established in the traditionally understood ethical sense,

with credentials, discourse style, and institutional support of a traditional elite, while still

connecting with emerging trends in digital spaces. The example tweet represents a

comment on the clearly diverged methods of establishing ethos in digital environments.

Smith makes the point in the text of his tweet that Larry Mishel is a figure worthy of

respect among left-of-center circles due to his long history of advocacy of progressive

policy. In particular, Smith offers as evidence Mishel's central role in economics research

which demonstrated the gap between productivity gains and wage increases. This kind of

academic contribution can move policy to recognize an imbalance between workers and

employers. Smith notes that for many on Twitter this is insufficient and produces four

screenshots to prove his point.

Smith presents evidence for a traditionally credentialed rhetor signaling a

particular point of view in a tweet and reactions to that well-credentialed rhetor. In the

first example screenshot, the Mishel tweet included the phrase "litmus test leftism," to

stake a position for an intellectual open-mindedness. Many users took this tweet in a

different manner, as instead signaling his disagreement with left policies. Of the three

offered examples, one dismisses Mishel as a checkmark, referring to Mishel's account, which is verified by Twitter. Another invokes the popularized insult, boomer, tying into the viral comment "OK Boomer" which taps into generational frustrations and resentments. The third comment also focuses on generational change, suggesting that while Mishel may have been progressive once, his "litmus test leftism" tweet demonstrates that he is now, in fact, conservative.

Smith's tweet, with his four example screenshots, succinctly demonstrates the greater spontaneity of the rhetorical context of Twitter. Despite Mishel's career of advocacy and research to support left-of-center policies that focus on power dynamics in businesses that disadvantage the worker, a single tweet calls down condemnation of users whose only familiarity with Mishel stems from his self-presentation on the Twitter platform. Several only reference his tweet while a few make mentions of the details in his Twitter Bio. The problem is not that digital archiving encourages amnesia (Haskins, 2007), but that there are so many users on Twitter that inevitably there are many who do not know Mishel's character. They infer much from the very limited information he has presented in his tweet.

Mishel chimed in with his tweet to signal a part of his identity. He sought to distance himself from a perceived zealotry among certain groups in the left-of-center political coalition. His comments are suggestive of the sort of free speech/decency discourse which many professional writing research scholars invoke (Brooks, 2018). That kind of civility discourse has become associated with centrist figures. They argue that respectful discourse is an important value, contrasting their views with the deplatforming movement and the concept of safe spaces in college classrooms (Selk, 2018). Objections

to the value of civility in debate include academic scholarship on the topic. Approaches

to the issue of civility discourse include theoretical explanations for how civility

enforcement instantiates existing power dynamics (Callahan, 2004; Baez & Ore, 2018).

Other work highlights the way that such metamoves, like a call for respectful language,

operate to silence social media users from marginalized backgrounds (Simons, 1994; Orr

& Hustings, 2018). Additionally, elements of popular press have called out incidents of

prominent liberals and their fondness for George W Bush, notably Ellen DeGeneres

(Roberts, 2019) and Michelle Obama (Diavolo, 2019).

In this sense, Mishel's tweet was objectionable as a call for openness, which

ranges closely to civility, as well as his specific stand against a brand of left-wing

activism. For this tweet, Mishel's past contributions are ignored, despite his advocacy for

the cause that all three critical example tweets surely support, broader power for workers.

And @noahpinion offers up this set of four tweets to demonstrate his own commitment to

Mishel's openness and distaste for Twitter users who judge others in a short,

decontextualized moment, rather than as a whole person. It encapsulates the contrasting

uses of ethos: the traditionally contextual and the more novel kairotic appeals which clash

in digital spaces.

@e_pe_me_ri's Appeal to Ethos. The next example tweet, written by user

@e_pe_me_ri (Theo Nash), demonstrates a direct appeal to ethos, defining two elements

of the user's character. It uses the language of classical and medieval scholarship to make

a comment on the contemporary high fantasy work, *The Song of Ice and Fire*, which

includes an initial book series and a subsequent HBO series, *Game of Thrones*. The tweet

itself is a joke on the contrasting quality between the two versions of the story, with

heavy implied criticism for the HBO series. The ethos built here both invites the reader to recognize @e_pe_me_ri's fluency in classical manuscript exegesis, and also their jocular disapproval of the ending to the popular HBO series. This tweet asserts a professional and personal aspect of the user's ethos, a common technique on the platform.

Theo Nash
@e_pe_me_ri

'A Song of Ice and Fire', the 21st century narrative saga, survives only partially; a prose recension covers the first half in great detail, as does an audio-visual one for roughly the same extent; after this we have only the audio-visual in an epitomated and much corrupted form.

6:45 AM · May 13, 2019 · Twitter Web Client

401 Retweets   **1.3K** Likes

Figure 4. @e_pe_me_ri's appeal to ethos

The user makes use of specific diction choices to assert their ethos. The terms 'narrative saga' in place of the more commonplace 'story' and 'prose recension' in place of the more commonplace 'book' speak specifically to specialists in premodern texts. 'Epitomated' and 'corrupted' are terms at the heart of the criticism of the HBO series, wherein critics use the technical term epitomated to describe the process of adaptation of a book into a serialized television format. Among premodern texts, *epitomes* are the abbreviated, information-poor versions of prominent, often lost, texts. The analogy is similar to comparing the HBO series to a Wikipedia article on a given book. Within the

vocabulary of premodern textual analysis, the user advances their criticism of the HBO series, giving audience members in the know a heavily contextualized joke.

This tweet is a typical example of the use of specialized language to define the user's group identity. @e_pe_me_ri understands the discourse of premodern textual analysis. While the tweet is a joke, and not a direct advertisement of their knowledge or expertise, it did provide a lot of detail on the user's ethos. Other users might see this tweet, either due to the retweet of others they follow, or because of Twitter's algorithm, and decide that this user is both funny and knowledgeable about premodern texts and choose to follow them.

This joke is not funny without the knowledge of both the fantasy series as well as familiarity with academic discourse on classical texts. While the first example was political and angry, this example typifies the humor prevalent on Twitter. This joke has little persuasive content beyond a criticism of the HBO adaptation of the Martin fantasy series, but it does clearly project an ethos for its user. In the next section of this dissertation, I move from a tight focus on individual users to a broad analysis of the conversations in which certain diction choices appear. The close reading took the view of the individual, and the big data analysis will look at whole conversations through a corpus analytic lens.

BIG DATA ANALYSIS

Diction choices adhere to different discourse communities. This chapter will not explicitly connect any word to any particular group, since the veil of anonymity prevents assigning certain connections between arguments and people. This is one reason why

users are referred to by their handles, rather than screen names, unless they have been

verified. What this corpus analysis will do is shed light on the conversations in which

these terms are deployed. The following analysis follows the work of other corpus

linguistic projects to look at the concordances of search terms (Hardaker & McGlashan,

2016; Boettger 2016). These concordances offer a window into associated words. In this

case, this kind of analysis on its own is not particularly informative or enlightening, but it

does offer researchers an exhibit regarding trend in numbers which can be interpreted.

As noted in Chapter Three, I treat retweets in my corpus analysis as individual

instances of rhetoric. There were some corpora, particularly of uncommon phrases, where

retweets of one individual tweet made up 93% of the total corpus. This provides for some

interesting collocates, since the one viral tweet provides considerable association between

its words. However, I will present this situation in the discussion as it arises. Another

point to recognize about this dataset is the occurrence of Twitter usernames. In the

collocate lists below, usernames frequently occur in the datasets I have collected. The

tweet format often includes Twitter usernames, either when the user directly addresses

other users or when a user is retweeting another. These are all features of the Twitter

platform, and they would certainly look different if I ran this analysis method on a

different digital platform.

Collocation is one measure of the relationship of words in a text. Collocation has

a long history, serving an important purpose in language study and translation, as

collocate tables can serve to show relationships between a poorly understood term and

more known ones (Nagy, 1996, Wilkinson, 1959; West, 1937). Digital technology has

profoundly sped the process of collocation, taking the painstaking task of months and years and transforming it into a quick algorithmic process.

As noted in Chapter Three, this dissertation uses the AntConc corpus analysis tool (Anthony, 2006). Specifically, I use the standard MI (mutual information) collocate measure in the 3.5.7 version of AntConc. Collocation measures the overall relationship of words in a corpus by noting the instances when they are located next to one another in a certain range of words. The MI measure specifically the occurrence of words together against an expected rate. Anthony built his collocation tool along the lines discussed in Stubbs in his 1995 article calling for greater rigor in quantitative corpus analysis.

The second analytic process I discuss in this chapter is the RAND-Lex Keyness test. The RAND-Lex tool compares a target dataset to a baseline, giving a comparative analysis of the word choices in the target. Using the sample corpus of 100,000 randomly selected tweets as a baseline, I ran each of the five word-search corpora to create a set of key terms in the word search corpora. This tool demonstrates the kinds of conversations which these terms are used in even more clearly. Keyness essentially measures the over-representation of certain terms in the conversations using certain vocabulary compared to the total discourse on Twitter. Keyness can demonstrate the overlap and distinctions between conversations occurring using the related terms.

The following terms were selected for their similar denotative meaning. The tables of collocation and Keyness are edited to remove the usernames and small connecting words (prepositions, helping verbs, etc.). I provide full tables of these analyses in the Appendix.

POC and BIPOC. The first pair of terms, *BIPOC* (black, indigenous, person of color) and *POC* (person of color), describe non-white individuals in the American context. Both of these terms are used to discuss all those non-dominant racial groups as a collective, but each term has significant theoretical differences underpinning their use within social justice conversations.

POC, or person(s) of color, is the mainstream term for non-white individuals in the American racial context, using a single unifying term that some note, critically, suggests a fictive unity among non-white groups, just as the term white signifies a fictive unity among many distinct groups. Twitter users often use this term when discussing issues of social justice. The term itself speaks to a politics of a unified group of racial minorities working toward equality and fair treatment before the law, in the economy, and in their communities. Person of Color leans into American racial nomenclature, which assigns perceived racial groups a color. *BIPOC* takes this concept and teases out nuance derived from critical racial theory (Mills, 2014).

One articulation of the meaning of *BIPOC* taken from an advocacy website, thebipocproject.org, states the purpose of the term in the following way: "We use the term BIPOC to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) people have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context." This term takes the lessons of critical race theory, such as the false black-white racial dichotomy, and uses that added nuance to refigure the *POC* phrase to better incorporate a term more consistent with theory. The advocacy website emphasizes that they aim to "disrupt calls for 'unity'" inherent in a term like *POC*, and instead stand for solidarity. This subtle difference works

against the erasure of more individuated identities and ante-narratives which occurs in the

embrace of a super-term like *POC*. I wish to acknowledge here that there are strong cases

for using either term, and I am not advocating for either in this analysis.

The Twitter users predominantly employing the term *POC* and *BIPOC* have

directionally similar goals with respect to social justice, and in most practical ways are

allies. Yet *BIPOC* reflects a good deal of scholarship and engagement with critical racial

theory. In digital spaces, this nuance can be lost. But the term can signal to other in-group

members the ideological commitments of the users of *BIPOC*.

A corpus analysis of the two terms in comparison reveals the specificity of the

BIPOC term. I do not seek to single out the *BIPOC* community, or communities

committed to social justice as particularly inclined toward this issue, but rather, this was a

conversation I recognized on my feed, and felt that an analysis would shed light on the

diverging usages of these two distinct, but functionally similar terms.

Each term was collected from streaming tweets on two distinct occasions, first on

the afternoon of December 22, 2019, and then on the following afternoon, December 23.

They were collected 30 minutes each on December 22, which yielded 67 uses of the word

BIPOC and 639 uses of the term *POC*. On December 23, the search was set for one

thousand tweets, so the final corpus of each term is 1067, and 1639 respectively. As a

comparison, in the 100,000 tweet sample collected in the general corpus, only 19

instances of *POC* and no instances of *BIPOC* were sampled, indicating the relative

frequency of these conversations against the total discourse on Twitter. These corpora of

tweets were then run through the collocates program on the AntConc corpus analysis tool

(Anthony, 2006). Using the standard MI collocate measure in the 3.5.7 version of AntConc, the following collocates were generated.

The following table includes the rank of the collocates, as organized by the Collocation Stat. It includes the Frequency at which the term appears in the specific word search corpus, and then it lists the collocate itself. The Collocation Stat is the measure of the difference between the expected association and the actual occurrence in the corpus. Therefore, words which may be less frequent hold a higher collocation stat, and appear higher in the table. For clarity in the subsequent discussion, I italicize the search terms and place collocates in quotation marks. The tables below offer a snapshot that may be of use in the extended discussion.

Rank	Frequency	Collocation Stat	Collocate
2	9	5.81948	god
3	8	5.64956	forbid
5	12	5.58245	disabled
6	13	5.57239	yo
7	15	5.55645	vendor
8	23	5.52104	murdered
9	8	5.45691	waited
10	9	5.45691	romances
11	16	5.45691	owned
12	21	5.45691	ostracized
15	25	5.45691	fields
16	51	5.45691	director
17	14	5.45691	cutely
18	10	5.45691	cannot
19	9	5.45691	angst
20	21	5.45691	alienated
22	52	5.42943	movie
23	50	5.42835	bullying
25	29	5.40800	added
26	21	5.38980	segregated
27	16	5.36945	creating
28	13	5.35000	student
29	51	5.34798	actress
30	36	5.34144	non

Table 2. Collocation table for *POC* data

Rank	Frequency	Collocation Stat	Collocate
1	3	4.90176	young
3	3	4.90176	stans
4	2	4.90176	smears
5	6	4.90176	reading
6	3	4.90176	ow
7	34	4.90176	lgbtq
8	2	4.90176	leveled
9	25	4.90176	including
10	917	4.90176	important
11	3	4.90176	gift
12	2	4.90176	etc
13	25	4.90176	disabilities
14	25	4.90176	complain
15	3	4.90176	children
16	3	4.90176	buy
17	2	4.90176	bi
18	5	4.90176	alway
19	2	4.90176	against
20	4	4.90176	adult
21	918	4.89862	let
22	918	4.89862	folks
23	917	4.89705	do
24	1836	4.88924	so
25	924	4.88006	not
26	35	4.86112	women
27	920	4.85546	for
28	25	4.84517	part
29	946	4.84055	is
30	921	4.83742	people

Table 3. Collocation table for *BIPOC* data

As expected from two closely denotated terms, *BIPOC* and *POC* have similar sets

of collocated words. But it is clear from the lists above that *POC* is the word in more

general usage. Terms in Table 2 that stick out are "director," "movie," and "actress,"

which denote conversations involving the entertainment industry. Words such as

"vendor" and "owned" denote the economic circumstances of persons of color. The terms

"ostracized," "alienated," and "bullying" talk to the social issues at play in *POC*

communities.

      The high collocation of terms in table 3 such as "disabled," "disability," "lgbtq,"

"bi," and "women" suggest the intention of intersectionality of *BIPOC*. "Folks" is

another term which I personally recognize from inclusion-oriented discourse.

      This dataset was made up mostly of the single retweeted post. 917 instances of the

1067 tweets in this corpus were retweets of a single post. The text of this message is

"@TheAiguStays: This is so, SO important for BIPOC folks. Do not let people play you

or play WITH you about YOUR name. https://t.co/YWPrx…" The link in the tweet is to

a video of a *BIPOC* comedian, Hasan Minhaj, sharing with the audience at a stand up

show his own journey to asserting his given name, starting with the highly Anglicized

"Sean" to his embrace and insistence on the correct pronunciation of Hasan Minhaj. That

video, attached to @TheAiguStays's tweet, went viral, with more than 34,000 retweets as

of December 29, 2019.

      The newness of the term *BIPOC* is highlighted in the viral tweet. One user replies

to the tweet, asking @TheAiguStays what the term means. She replies that she herself

just learned of it. The user just discovered the term, and then deployed it successfully in a

viral tweet which established her credibility to speak on these intersectional issues. Due

to the nature of intersectional issues, terminology is often tweaked or changed to better

address the unfolding realizations of the harms of various terms and the positive

assertions of self-definition. Knowing the latest term is an important part of

demonstrating relevance and care in these social justice conversations.

This point is made more emphatically by the Keyness test, the results of which are presented in Tables 4 and 5 below. The following set of terms are derived from the whole corpus, not a five-word radius of the target word. The Keyness test is organized by the Log-likelihood of the word occurring in any given corpus. Naturally, the search term itself (*POC* and *BIPOC* in these examples) tops the Keyness test in its corpus, since it is present in far greater numbers than would be close to typical. Since I specifically searched for it, these corpora have instances of their search term in each tweet. The "Target" in the table is the word search corpus and the Baseline is the 100,000 tweet sample.

The terms are listed on the far left, in the "Token" column. These are words from the corpus which occurred at higher than expected rates, compared to the log-likelihood that the term will appear in a corpus. This is calculated using the baseline corpus, consisting of a random sample of tweets. The table then notes the overall frequency of the term, its percentage of the whole corpus, and then the frequency of the term in the sample baseline corpus, and the percentage of the term in that sample baseline. Therefore, words higher up the table have a greater significance in the corpus than words lower down. The full Keyness test includes thousands of entries, one for each unique combination of letters in the corpus. What is presented in these tables are the top terms, skipping some words, such as usernames, as being irrelevant to this analysis. Once again, in the discussion that follows the tables, I italicize uses of the search term and place words derived from the Keyness test in quotation marks.

Token	Log Likelihood	Target Frequency	Target percent	Baseline Frequency	Baseline percent
poc	7174.885	1012	2.36642	19	0.0012

white	1019	314	0.73425	773	0.04883
artist	758.475	158	0.36946	131	0.00828
socialites	713.046	98	0.22916	0	0
transistor	713.046	98	0.22916	0	0
sword	579.156	99	0.2315	31	0.00196
policing	567.526	78	0.18239	0	0
deriding	560.25	77	0.18005	0	0
malaysian	519.538	78	0.18239	7	0.00044
substantive	512.435	77	0.18005	7	0.00044
minded	510.134	78	0.18239	9	0.00057
substitute	498.713	77	0.18005	10	0.00063
tone	445.629	79	0.18473	31	0.00196
collab	444.037	78	0.18239	29	0.00183
openly	439.019	78	0.18239	31	0.00196
transphobic	402.624	78	0.18239	48	0.00303

Table 4. Keyness Test of *POC*

Token	Log Likelihood	Target Frequency	Target Percent	Baseline Frequency	Baseline Percent
play	12629.57	1842	7.11224	557	0.03519
bipoc	8225.116	996	3.84571	0	0
so	6660.497	1858	7.17402	6581	0.41574
folks	6379.942	922	3.55998	259	0.01636
important	6159.956	920	3.55226	332	0.02097
name	6015.129	958	3.69898	518	0.03272
let	4962.887	923	3.56384	1023	0.06463
or	3592.347	931	3.59473	2790	0.17625
you	3451.197	1869	7.21649	19099	1.20654
people	3262.622	965	3.72601	3867	0.24429
do	3115.958	923	3.56384	3710	0.23437
about	2953.634	929	3.58701	4204	0.26558
your	2458.496	929	3.58701	5797	0.36621

Table 5. Keyness Test of *BIPOC*

While the collocation test demonstrated the use and associated words of our search terms, the Keyness test focuses on the conversation more broadly. As in the case of the collocation, the strength of the retweet in the results for *BIPOC* produce an oddly banal list of key words. The outsized effects of retweets on data is a good reason for using multiple tests when possible.

The key terms returned on the *POC* corpus highlight the general conversation in which *POC* is deployed. Table 4 shows that "White" is the second most significant term in the *POC* corpus. This accords with the concerns of *BIPOC* advocates that the term *POC* is too caught up in the black/white binary which structures cultural understandings of race. "Artist" and "tone" reinforce the social commentary in conversations deploying this term. The two key terms "transistor" and "socialites" derive from a single unique tweet which was retweeted 98 times in my search corpus. It refers to a game on the Nintendo Switch, a hybrid gaming device. The game itself is titled, "Transistor," and the plot of the game involves fighting "socialites." The tweet specifically praises the *POC* representation in the game as a selling point. Users are tapping into the cultural value of diversity to distinguish goods and services (games and movies) based on their adherence to that value. *POC* is deployed to appeal to an ethos of inclusion and respect. Finally, the key term "policing" also underscores a political cause for groups who reach for the term *POC*. While less prevalent than references to artistic output, the term *POC* is used when some groups are advocating for criminal justice reform.

While these associations would fit with my anecdotal understanding of the connotations of the *POC*, the collocation and Keyness data back up those general impressions with hard data, and offer nuances. In the comparison between the two terms, *POC* is both more widespread, and concerned with American culture, as well as politics. In fact, cultural concerns seem more important in conversations using the term *POC*. The *POC* artist or filmmaker is a central concept in these discussions occurring on December 19 and 20. The Keyness test emphasizes that while concerns of race theory and intersectionality are more often found in conversations which use *BIPOC*, the key term

"transphobic" encourages us to see that this remains a part, although less centered, of the conversations that use the more widespread term, *POC*.

   Swamp, establishment, and corruption. The second set of terms: *swamp*, *establishment*, and *corruption* all denote the idea of distant actors rigging the system against the participants. While the idea is widespread, the term *swamp* is particularly associated with conservative invective and the Trump administration's accusation against a Washington elite establishment. The other two terms are more general among discourse groups. The three terms— *swamp*, *corruption*, and *establishment*— all point to a similar denotated meaning of a self-serving, often political, elite. The term *swamp* is primarily used by supporters of the current President of the United States. The term *corruption* is fairly widespread in use, while the term *establishment* is also used by many different groups of Twitter users. It has a particular resonance with left political movements when describing their more centrist counterparts in the progressive movement. Each noun describes a dishonest and entrenched group of leaders who the users of the terms attempt to expose and disempower. These terms function within ethical appeals at two levels. First, they conform to the larger appeal to ethos as described in this chapter since users of the term assert their belonging through using the correct vocabulary. But in their specific cases, these terms define what the group stands against, which functions to define the group itself.

   Candidate Donald Trump used the term *swamp* as a central term in his successful 2016 presidential campaign. Trump's concept of the *swamp* included a notion of corruption wherein the grifted individuals were working-class white voters who worked hard but saw their government beholden to a cloistered elite. Who exactly resides in the

swamp is ambiguous, and usefully so. It is a general-purpose insult, which can include whomever the President and his supporters wish. In a 2018 article, Noah Bierman, Staff Writer at the *Los Angeles Times*, wrote that "Trump has rebranded the "swamp" to mean almost anything he objects to: reporters, opponents of his immigration plan, free traders, phonies, bureaucrats, politicians who vote against tax cuts." What began as a campaign trail talking point which supporters could fill in as they pleased has become, over the course of the presidential term, more solidly an epithet for those specific groups.

       Establishment and *corruption* are the terms that I understood to be more neutral alternatives to *swamp*. I noted references to the political *establishment* as negative on all sides of the political spectrum. Yet, as the analysis will show below, *establishment*, at least in the snapshot captured in the data, is more often used by insurgent left political forces against more center left politicians.

       These three terms were collected over a three-day period, December 27-29, in the afternoon, Pacific Standard Time. 5640 tweets containing the term *swamp* were collected between 1:36 and 4:50 PM on December 27. 1876 tweets containing the term *establishment* were collected between 3:33 and 4:46 PM on December 28. And 5000 tweets containing the term *corruption* were collected between 1:30 and 2:19 PM on December 29. In the sample corpus, these terms appeared at a frequency of 35 times for *swamp*, 12 times for *establishment*, and 87 times for the more neutral word, *corruption*. The results of collocation are presented in Tables 6, 7, and 8.

Rank	Frequency	Collocation Stat	Collocate
3	65	5.15801	creature
4	68	5.15494	creatures

5	93	5.10544	drained
7	49	5.08984	touted
9	29	5.08984	rivals
10	24	5.08984	moscowmitch
13	31	5.08984	dailycaller
14	39	5.08984	added
15	805	5.08805	rats
16	867	5.08486	example
17	764	5.08419	works
18	193	5.08239	uncovered
19	864	5.07820	hunter
20	425	5.06962	drain
21	884	5.06236	deep
22	260	5.05693	draining
23	868	5.05373	better
24	30	5.04254	journalist
25	26	5.03540	rat
26	788	5.03418	state
27	142	5.03014	hillary
28	885	5.02763	than
29	70	5.00967	trust
30	95	5.00149	completely

Table 6. Collocation table for *swamp* data

Rank	Frequency	Collocation Stat	Collocate
1	94	6.09545	understands
2	102	5.61813	public
5	65	5.25984	shady
7	47	5.19061	signing
11	43	5.12940	cleanup
12	527	5.11197	throughout
13	522	5.10099	continued
14	24	5.09545	waste
15	94	5.09545	uncovering
16	85	5.09545	turns
17	35	5.09545	progress
19	53	5.09545	mechanics
20	23	5.09545	institutionalized
21	42	5.09545	impeaching
22	26	5.09545	haiti
23	23	5.09545	deter
24	520	5.09545	consequences
25	36	5.09545	basics
26	21	5.09545	arabia
27	524	5.09270	zero

28	519	5.09267	faced
29	59	5.07120	written
30	166	5.06110	ukrainian

Table 7. Collocation table for *corruption*

Rank	Frequency	Collocation Stat	Collocate
1	56	5.51119	needs
2	57	5.41889	politicians
3	21	5.32881	defied
4	26	5.25842	surround
5	60	5.25842	snuffy
6	38	5.25842	resign
7	21	5.25842	psychical
8	21	5.25842	proverbially
9	26	5.25842	politicia
10	21	5.25842	pangs
11	21	5.25842	naked
12	55	5.25842	headmistress
13	21	5.19131	manifestation
14	54	5.18042	change
15	38	5.14880	racism
16	23	5.13813	trolls
17	61	5.12307	corrupt
18	30	5.03603	everything
19	22	5.01741	davidsirota
20	32	4.93649	whole
21	20	4.93649	decades
22	30	4.91739	death
23	114	4.88186	am
24	95	4.78388	british
25	29	4.75885	fight
26	90	4.72791	media
27	65	4.68088	democrats
28	29	4.65697	anti
29	48	4.63393	corbyn
30	24	4.59546	speaking

Table 8. Collocation table for *establishment*

The collocation tables for the terms *swamp*, *corruption*, and *establishment* demonstrate the partisan uses of these terms. As expected, swamp appears in conversations which directly implicate enemies of the current president. "Hunter" (Biden), "Hillary" (Clinton), "deep," "state," and "journalist" reflect many of the list

which Bierman listed. Other collocates, such as variations of drain and creature mirror Trump campaign rhetoric closely. The one curious collocated term was "MoscowMitch," which in the data appears to be opponents to the president accusing the Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell of being swampy himself. "MoscowMitch" includes concepts of Russian election meddling with the coziness of the Republican party and Trump in particular with Vladimir Putin's Russia. The term is not often used of Trump himself, at least in my dataset. Two unique tweets, however, which earned several retweets, attached the "Trumpy" label to the Senate leader. Generally, the use of the term *swamp* was a clear indication of a conversation in support of the rhetoric of the Trump campaign.

 Corruption was far less partisan in its usage, as is seen in the spread of collocated terms in Table 7. It is the most neutral term of the three, freely used by different groups to level the accusation of *corruption* in all directions. The top collocated terms are nouns and adjectives which relate to *corruption*, such as public, shady, and waste. It also lists verbs for addressing *corruption* such as uncover, deter, and cleanup. However, "impeaching," "consequences," and "Ukrainian" all refer to the *corruption* in and around the impeachment process. Each of those three terms come from tweets that assert that Democratic corruption is leading to their impeaching of the President, while Joe Biden experiences no consequences for his *corruption*. The collocated table presents a general word, but it was deployed most often in conversations which once again supported the president's narrative of events.

 Establishment is associated with political elites, as seen in the highly collocated term on Table 8, politicians. Yet, this term is currently more often deployed by a specific faction on the left political coalition as an epithet against their rivals. "British," "Corbyn,"

and "Democrats" all come in tweets which talk disparagingly of *establishment* left

figures. Jeremy Corbyn, the now disgraced former leader of the British Labor Party, is

consistently discussed as having failed due to betrayal by the *establishment*. The British

establishment ensured his, and his socialist agenda's, failure. Likewise, the Democratic

establishment is standing athwart true progressive change.

Particularly startling from Table 8 is the username, @davidsirota. It is the only

username I left in the tables, because it is the verified username of a prominent Bernie

Sanders campaign staffer. A quick search of that account finds that Mr. Sirota often uses

the term *establishment* in his tweets, which represents official campaign language of the

Sanders presidential campaign. Much as *swamp* represents Trump campaign rhetoric,

establishment seems to be Sanders campaign rhetoric.

These three examples exhibit the discourse significance of synonyms in this

present cultural moment. *Swamp* is an identifiable appeal to ethos for supporters of the

president. *Corruption* is a more neutral word which is often used by backers of the

president, which perhaps means they are attempting persuasion with it, rather than mere

ethical posturing, as in the use of *swamp*. And left political voices more often than others

reach for *establishment* to condemn their rivals in left-of-center politics. These corpora

are distinct from the earlier discussion of *POC* and *BIPOC* since, in the timeframe these

discrete data were collected, the terms appeared to be used much more by elite political

actors. These findings are confirmed in the Keyness test.

Token	Log Likelihood	Target Frequency	Target Percent	Baseline Frequency	Baseline Percent
swamp	16427.71	3229	2.55035	35	0.00221
washington	7407.493	1551	1.22502	87	0.0055
story	5929.507	1535	1.21238	452	0.02855

"no" appears in both the phrase "no corruption" as well as exhortations to say "no" to the

Swamp and their accusations. I was personally surprised to find "fake" and "news" so far

from the top returns from this corpus. While present, they are not as closely associated in

users' tweets as I would expect from a general impression of political discourse. This

Keyness test emphasizes that this term is an invective, not a defense. Users are deploying

this term in accusations of corruption, rather than in dismissals of opponents.

token	Log Likelihood	Target Frequency	Target Percent	Baseline Frequency	Baseline Percent
corruption	17302.34	3301	3.02603	87	0.0055
joe	3815.503	872	0.79936	188	0.01188
biden	2898.212	726	0.66552	252	0.01592
faced	2738.079	520	0.47668	12	0.00076
consequences	2670.976	519	0.47577	21	0.00133
continued	2633.848	520	0.47668	28	0.00177
exposed	2622.643	555	0.50877	68	0.0043
2008	2611.106	520	0.47668	32	0.00202
throughout	2605.453	521	0.4776	34	0.00215
zero	2335.335	525	0.48127	102	0.00644
yet	1818.427	556	0.50968	390	0.02464
ukraine	1510.628	389	0.3566	152	0.0096
son	1220.292	363	0.33276	235	0.01485
i	1220.049	459	0.42077	24662	1.55797
my	1143.791	47	0.04308	11216	0.70855
trump	1136.234	863	0.79111	2725	0.17215
involved	1032.561	238	0.21817	54	0.00341
corrupt	953.204	246	0.22551	97	0.00613
answers	892.159	212	0.19434	57	0.0036
back	887.365	605	0.5546	1706	0.10777

Table 10. Keyness test of *corruption*

The Keyness test of *corruption* does a much better job than the collocation table

(7) at finding the center of the discussion which uses this term. "Joe," "Biden," and

"Trump" are close in their frequency, but the log-likelihood measure expects "Joe" and

"Biden" to appear less frequently in a corpus, so they are higher in this list. But their

presence in the corpus at high rates indicates that *corruption* is alleged against all major

party figures, with surprising references back to the "2008" election. The word "son"

instead of "Hunter" does suggest to me that those users who reach for this term are

attempting to make a more measured claim. Tweets refer to the son of the Vice President

rather than directly name the family member of a politician, which seems more restrained

than the *swamp* corpus.

Token	Log Likelihood	Target Frequency	Target Percent	Baseline Frequency	Baseline Percent
establishment	6768.726	911	2.47669	12	0.00076
british	732.085	129	0.35071	65	0.00411
the	574.469	1952	5.3068	45838	2.89572
facade	567.748	75	0.2039	0	0
oligarchy	567.748	75	0.2039	0	0
headmistress	416.348	55	0.14953	0	0
democratic	411.814	101	0.27458	173	0.01093
uk	394.236	95	0.25827	155	0.00979
pussies	387.28	55	0.14953	4	0.00025
confused	366.759	76	0.20662	77	0.00486
private	342.093	79	0.21477	114	0.0072
club	336.405	84	0.22837	151	0.00954
influenced	335.628	55	0.14953	18	0.00114
against	312.448	128	0.34799	621	0.03923
corbyn	308.171	66	0.17943	75	0.00474
bernie	304.417	90	0.24468	242	0.01529
northam	278.404	38	0.10331	1	0.00006

Table 11. Keyness test of *establishment*

Finally, in Table 11, there was further corroboration of the collocation results

linking the term *establishment* to current conversations in left political discussions. The

presence of both "Corbyn" and "Bernie" as well as surprisingly the maligned

establishment figure Ralph Northam, Governor of Virginia, underscore the transatlantic

socialist use of this term. It too serves as an attack. The term "oligarchy" could be

synonyms for the word *establishment*, drawing attention to the class consciousness in the users of the term.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

This quick-moving nature of Twitter ethos leads to a situation where the longstanding appeals to ethos exist along with these more ephemeral appeals. Institutions which rely on traditional ethos may have difficulty employing the novel tactics of unverified users. Where brand knowledge exists, users' prior opinions are engaged to block the kind of spontaneous ethos creation. Disinformation campaigns, by contrast, can mass-produce new accounts which may enter into a situation, use the right sort of diction choices to assert a particular identity and then spin plausible propaganda.

The fact that the Covington high school controversy, mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, was started by an account crafted by a Brazilian bot farm, purporting to be a California teacher who marched in the Women's March is excellent evidence of this problem. And this problem is one of ethos. Users cannot rationally evaluate so many other users, and so employ discourse-based and diction-associated short cuts to assign trust. Even as so many fraudulent accounts are exposed, the growth of conspiracy thinking and loss of general trust makes this situation worse. Therefore, recognizing this ephemeral ethos is a first step to navigating these spaces.

Using the right term for the right conversation is weightier than in the past, as the word on the screen remains even after digital platforms have mediated it. But this stands alongside the ephemerality of digital discourse. It moves so quickly that a user who is "canceled" one week can reappear several months later using a new vocabulary set and

participate in conversations. The importance of these appeals to ethos is their timeliness, the audience's necessary reliance on bare text on the screen.

In Chapter Five I turn from this discussion of identifying ethos established in individual conversations or groups to the ethos of an online person. Demonstrations of memetic fluency complement and supersede fluency in any particular discourse community. The meme culture of Twitter acts as a vernacular in which different groups converse with one another, as well as internally. It offers an appeal to users to build credibility as digital citizens who are worth reading/following for the quality of their posting, regardless of its specific content.

CHAPTER FIVE

BEING VERY ONLINE: MEMETIC CULTURE AS APPEAL TO ETHOS

Memetic fluency operates on a different level to the appeals of ethos discussed in Chapter Four. Instead of individual words marking out different discourse communities on the Twitter platform, memes serve as a language for any digital discourse. This Chapter will first offer definitional work around the concept of the meme. I present several example tweets that make use of memetic appeals to ethos. The set of examples start with traditional image macros, which are ubiquitous across different platforms, but then move to meme forms which are more distinct in the Twitter platform. These forms rely on Twitter's formatting to deliver a message. Finally, through a hand-coded corpus of 500 tweets, I show how often memetic rhetoric is used in a typical afternoon on Twitter. Understanding the frequency of meme use on the platform suggests why recognizing memetic fluency and "very online" rhetors is important.

MEMES: BUILDING BLOCKS OF (DIGITAL) CULTURE

Memes frequent social media spaces. Often associated with humor, meme culture and memetic fluency have become a hallmark of fluency in online discourse. The work of this chapter is to define and account for the appeals to memetic fluency which represents a distinct characteristic of ethos to any particular group signaling, as was discussed in the Chapter Four. "Very online" individuals represent a subset of all users engaged in digital rhetorics. Fluency with memes amounts to a distinct character trait compared to appeals involving political or social discourses and demonstrates belonging to the digital space.

Social justice advocates, blue lives matter supporters, avowed socialists, neo-nazi groups, and other groups all engage with memetic culture to talk amongst themselves and with each other. Users in each disparate group may not know the full range of memetic forms, but the ubiquity of online culture has generated a new genre of communicating: the meme. The use of memes is one way digital rhetors can be differentiated from their "not-very" online counterparts: internet users who maintain face-to-face norms of communication on digital platforms.

The term meme was coined in Richard Dawkins' 1976 work, *The Selfish Gene*. Meme is based on the Greek word, mimema (μίμημα), or imitation. Dawkins cut the original Greek word to match the biological term, gene, and posited that as genes were the fundamental element of biological replication, memes were the basic unit of cultural replication and dissemination. The field of memetics grew up to develop the theory of memes as parallel field to evolutionary biology based on gene transmission. It is from this context that Mark Godwin applied the term to internet discourse in a 1994 article in *Wired* magazine. The term has since been popularized and has joined the set of basic terms in the digital lexicon to describe a predominately online form of discourse. Many of the initial set of memes were recognized as visual. There was a recognized format which included an image with impact-font text applied to the top or bottom of the image (Brideau & Berret, 2014). Memes are now increasingly generated through a multitude of formats including text, image macros, gifs, video, and more.

The historical definition of a meme, as the primary unit of culture, sits above the more specific definition of an internet meme. The definition of meme is broad, to allow for the many different potential memes which may arise. Davis defines the meme as both a "theoretical concept and an agentic actor that functions as a unit of communication" (2017, 42). Wiggens & Bowers, (2015) term a meme an "artifact of participatory digital culture," adapting the theory of memetic theorist, Henry Jenkins. Wang & Wang (2015), following Weingart (1997), argue for insisting on replication as a key distinctive component to a meme, in addition to a general definition of a cultural unit. They suggest it must have the following:

- have conceptual or ideational reality and be capable of influencing behavior and artifacts;

- have a history of social transmission;

- be an embedded component part of a greater conceptual system, the *culture* from which it comes (Weingart et al., 1997, p. 301).

All of these sources discuss the problem of distinguishing a meme from culture. Memes have come to mean something specific which occurs in digital spaces, beyond the original theory proposed by Dawkins. But the theory needs to be distinctive yet flexible enough to include both posted Harlem Shake videos on YouTube, image macros, and snowclone text tweets. Taken together, these theories suggest a meme is a communicative unit which is reproducible and repurpose-able. Memes need to be able to adapt. Digital spaces have allowed for memes to arise due to the ability to rapidly copy and disseminate the rhetoric which users experience.

The history of many meme forms includes a breakthrough moment where a code or program was introduced which allowed for easier replication and dissemination, such as the code for posting image macros with added text to comments on the internet forum, Something Awful, in 2004 (McCulloch, 2019).

Theorizing a meme is further complicated by the commonplace insistence that it is digital phenomenon. The parody cartoon offers a compelling non-digital parallel. Edwards & Winkler (1997) use the concepts of ideography from Michael McGee to examine the reproduction and significance of images, focusing on the iconic flag raising at Iwo Jima in their article. The history they trace, 1945 to their present in the mid-1990s, and the meaning they assign to these images appear indistinguishable from the process a typical digital meme undergoes. Additionally, some scholars investigated the comparison between traditional ideographs and memetic culture (Ballard, 2016; Hahner, 2013). The distinctions, for me, are the digital affordances outlined in Chapter 1: speed, interactivity, reach, and to a lesser extent anonymity. Digital memes can be produced at a rapid speed and reach every corner of the plant. Others can respond or iterate just as quickly and just as far. Analogue memes and the use of ideography can be anonymous, as in the case of graffiti, and therefore the distinction between them does not seem particularly important. Generally speaking, memetic culture occurs in analogue communication, but it requires greater resources, time, and skill.

Replicability is the key to any definition of a meme, which means that any given piece of digital rhetoric can become a meme if users begin to replicate it. In practice on Twitter, memes are formulaic text tweets which repeat either a phrase or a text-based image, image macros including object labeling memes, gifs, and videos. Merely sharing a

video or an image does not make a post a meme. A cat video moves from being merely a fun video about a cat into a meme when people began to use the same video but layer on their own individual messages on to it. Much as the many discrete examples of the Obama Hope posters were just part of a political campaign until people began to remediate the poster. Only then did it become a meme (Gries, 2015).

The line between an image and a meme is blurry but important. For the hand coded data which appears later in this chapter, I needed a clear definition to sort out memes from non-meme images. For instance, there might be coordinated posting which seems to fall under the definition of replication but fails to iterate. In the aftermath of a set of conflicting stories about a conversation between Democratic presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, replies to Warren tweets and those of her supporters began to fill with snake emojis (Ellis, 2020). The misogyny inherent in these posts aside, they do not represent memes as I define them. The snake emojis were replicated but were not typically altered or juxtaposed in novel ways. Therefore, this behavior does not qualify as a digital meme, under my definition.

This definition is not universal, as definitions for memes are quite tricky. Its origins as a cultural analogue for gene allow for quite a broad definition. The article referenced in this paragraph uses the term "memetic harassment" to describe the snake emoji replies (Ellis, 2020). However, merely using an image bears a closer rhetorical effect to the diction choice appeals as described in Chapter 4.

My definition eliminates the use of unchanged symbols, but also includes things which many deem to be something distinct from a 'meme.' In the quantitative section of this chapter, I will delineate between text, image, and animated (video and gif) based

memes. If one googles the question, there are many explanatory websites and videos on how a gif is distinct from a meme, for instance (Hyatt, 2017 is one example). Yet when used in an iterated context, the addition of a gif, or a video, or even plain text codes as a meme in my definition. Since a memetically fluent Twitter user will recognize these posts as native digital rhetoric, they all contribute to signaling belonging and competence in digital spaces.

Therefore, the operating definition of a meme that I use in this chapter, and I used during hand coding, includes the following characteristics:

- *Replication* of digital media (image, text, video, or other), in part or in whole

- *Iteration* of the media, so that the context or content is changed, however slightly.

MEME USERS

Memes often operate as an in-joke but are not necessarily exclusive to any particular group. A memetic form can circulate widely, with the content targeting specific groups. One notable resource for keeping track of the various forms of memes, and the specific references their creators make, is the website knowyourmeme.com. Given my own limited view of popular culture, resources such as Know Your Meme were indispensable to the work of this chapter.

Memetic fluency operates in digital spaces as a signal of general competence. One important point to recognize is that memes are better understood as a genre, or set of genres, rather than a medium (Wiggins & Bowers, 2015). Memes grew as a digital genre, or set of genres. Memes serve to structure communication among many dynamic groups,

without necessarily belonging to any one group. While these forms are widespread and used by most groups conversing in digital spaces, this form of communication is not universal. There is a spectrum of mastery over memetic communication, just as any discourse involves users at different levels of fluency. Memetic discourse is not universal, and within any given group — a popular culture fan group, sports aficionados, or members of a political movement — will be members with more or less internet fluency.

I wish to express an important caveat to my insistence that memes are accessible across contexts. Certain groups are associated with certain content. Pepe the Frog, The Joker, and other references grew out of alt-right communities, typically on social media platforms such as 4chan. This content, and memetic forms, then migrate to Twitter. In fact, as the close reading section of this chapter attests, most memetic forms begin elsewhere, and then move to Twitter. Yet, those symbols are placed with specific memetic genres which are seen, imitated, and innovated upon. As I discuss in the definition below, while content will vary by the discourse community which produces a given meme, the different types of meme spread without regard to social or political groupings. Instead, the use of memes as a new genre of communication speaks to a person's relationship to the internet itself, to their digital ethos.

In her work, *Because Internet*, Gretchen McCulloch discusses several waves and subsets of users who have come to digital spaces since its earliest days (2019). She details three distinct waves, from "Old Internet People" who took to the ARPAnet and Usenet in the pre AOL world, to "Post Internet People" who grew up with digital ubiquity and have to contend with "context collapse," or loss of privacy when private friend conversations are suddenly etched permanently for parents, future employers, and all other internet

users to see (63-108). In these various waves include those reluctant users who began

using the internet as a tool to facilitate living in a world which increasingly prioritizes

digital access. The stereotypical reluctant internet latecomer is the grandparent who found

Facebook to be a useful tool to see pictures of their grandkids. But this group includes all

users who come to digital spaces with an inclination to impose non-digital, traditional

forms of communication into their digital interactions. Memetic fluency is a test these

users will inevitably, and sometimes proudly, fail. McCulloch's work looks at typography

and emoji, as well as memetic culture, to understand changing linguistic mores online.

Yet her careful discussion of generational waves points to an important appeal to ethos

which cuts across any particular group.

     McCulloch's taxonomy cuts across both memetic fluency and point of entry into

the digital world. This leaves it more nuanced than the kind of fluency scale which I

discuss below. Therefore, as a useful heuristic, I offer a scale of fluency. This scale uses

as its primary measure the frequency that a user engages with social media. Greater

engagement leads to greater fluency, so the scale begins with a user who actively avoids

participation on social media and ends with a user who checks in multiple times during

the course of one day.

1. Unfamiliar with memetic forms	2. Occasional familiarity with memetic forms	3. Average familiarity with memetic forms	4. Active familiarity with memetic forms	5. Very online
Only interacts with digital environments when necessary. Maintains Face-to-face	Maintains a passive social media presence.	Engages periodically with social media.	Actively engages with social media, almost daily.	Actively engages with social media multiple times a day.

grammar and style.				

In the next section of this chapter, I offer several example tweets which demonstrate different types of ethos which a meme can project. Full memetic fluency is directly related to digital affordances of speed and reach. "Very online" users demonstrate close tabs on the latest memes, whereas more casual users typically recognize memes after their peak. At different points on the spectrum of fluency, users craft and appeal to their ethos as digital natives. The following sections offer considered readings of several memes that circulated on Twitter. The readings of specific memes on Twitter illustrate different manifestations of memetic fluency and how they function as appeals to ethos.

DISTRACTED BOYFRIEND MEME

The example of the popular "distracted boyfriend" meme demonstrates the appeal to memetic fluency directly. This meme, based on a stock image, falls into the broad category of image macro. Specifically, this is an object labeling meme, a sub form of the image macro where the text is directly tied to figures in the image (or series of images) rather than juxtaposed to it as in a traditional image macro (Schwedel, 2018). A visually interesting image is superimposed with text, most often creating an ironic or humorous contrast. This specific image includes three figures, generally understood as a man and two women. The man, while grouped with one woman, looks back with approval to the other figure of a woman. This plays into the trope of the unfaithful, or at least wandering eye, of the stereotypical boyfriend in popular culture.

This meme originated on Facebook, with the first dated example appearing on January 30, 2017. The virality of this meme form accelerated on February 23, 2017 with a popular Instagram post which used the stock photo. This meme form made the jump to Twitter on August 19, 2017 with a post placing "the youth" in the position of the man, "capitalism" in the place of the scorned girlfriend, and "socialism" in the place of the other woman (Distracted Boyfriend). While this particular meme form has peaked, it remains a staple of object labeling memes both on Twitter and around the Web.

The example illustrates that merely being aware of the meme format is important. This person offers several examples, including one that maintains the format even in a different specific image. The text that @SteveStuWu used to offer commentary on the series of images he attached was merely "A+ Distracted-Boyfriend Memes."

Critically, this tweet does not communicate cutting edge memetic fluency, but rather a reflection back on past popular memes. This distinction is important. Due to the affordance of speed and reach, new meme genres (image macro, gif, object labeling meme, snowclone, etc) and new content/topics are constantly churning. This retrospective tweet does not demonstrate a cutting-edge fluency, but merely an attachment to a particular type of meme. On the scale developed above, this user would be a 3. The level of memetic fluency looks back at iterations of the Distracted Boyfriend Meme and offers four examples the poster found particularly amusing. While not demonstrating cutting edge knowledge of memetic forms, this post shows that this user pays casual attention, and offers some insights into their specific appetites in memetic humor.

The four examples include two references to political discourse, one possibly academic reference, and in the most altered example, one reference to Greek mythology. The butt of the joke in this meme format is the central figure of the man, who cannot keep focus on his partner. Our four examples include "me," a staple character in memetic humor. The two political memes target "socialists" as well as both the "reasonable left" and "reasonable right." Finally "Zeus" comes under some criticism for his well-publicized unfaithfulness to the goddess Hera.

The user for this example, @SteveStuWu, is not demonstrating cutting edge memetic fluency, but instead offering a retrospective appreciation of memes. They have crafted an ethos which is an average (3) level of memetic fluency, one that passively notices trends that are already years old at the time of that tweet. This user shows their audience their taste in memes, which here include political commentary and classical

allusions, as well as evidence of the user's connection to digital discourse. @SteveStuWu did not contribute a meme to the Twitter ecosystem, but articulates their position as an engaged observer of memetic culture.

AMERICAN CHOPPER MEME

The American Chopper meme is another object-labeling type which gained in popularity despite its ill-suitedness to the Twitter platform. Based on a 2009 episode of the reality TV program, American Chopper, this meme's first significant appearance was in a reddit forum in November 2012. In its first few years, the wit of this meme was to append humorously wholesome dialogue to the arguing men in the image. Yet the meme did not reach any prominence until the spring of 2018, with posts on Reddit and Twitter earning tens of thousands of upvotes and retweets in March (American Chopper Argument, 2019). The strength of the meme, as numerous media analysis posts conjectured (Yglesias, 2018; Schwedel, 2018), was its dialogic quality, giving not one opinion, but the opportunity for a complete argument. In fact, Yglesias makes the point that this meme format, rooted in the back and forth of its characters, allows meme authors to "demonstrate that you actually understand the viewpoints of people on both sides of an issue." The sort of person who deploys this meme is empathetic, according to this argument.

The popularity of this meme may lie in its unusual capacity for complexity. It made the turn to metanalysis more strongly than other object labeling memes of its time (American Chopper Argument, 2019). On the Twitter platform, this meme had to overcome a significant barrier to its success. For Twitter users, the long, narrow image

made for awkward viewing, with the need to zoom into the text in some cases. But this meme emphasizes that memetic culture takes account of platform-specific affordances. Each platform still participates in what is essentially an internet-wide memetic culture. Twitter users took the time to click on the meme and zoom into the text to get the joke.

Given the dialogic nature of the tweet, it invited different interpretations of family dynamics as well as later moving into political and cultural arguments. But this back and forth appealed to many scholars on Twitter, giving a chance to humorously parse out different academic debates. The example below is just such a post made by a French historian.

Figure 7. @LeCheikh American chopper meme

This specific example is pulled from among the ancient history accounts I follow. Following the contours of the old debate on the reasons for republican Rome's military success, the positions of Harris and Eckstein are articulated in the first two images, complete with citation dates, emphasizing the conventions of academic discourse. The argument continues over the following two panels, ending with the fully capitalized final panel which defends the historical accuracy of the first century BCE historian, Polybius.

This example demonstrates both a familiarity with this meme form and this academic debate. The tweet includes, in addition to the slate of images, some text in French. Posting on April 5, 2018, this tweet occurred a few days before the media explainer articles, and either at or just after the peak of interest in this meme, depending on if one focuses on interest or posts of this meme form. The poster, @LeCheikh, claims to be a historian in their bio, which is also written in French. The meme itself is written in English, and references an Anglophone academic discussion, although ancient history has long been trilingual, with most prominent PhD programs in classical history requiring reading competency in English, French, and German.

What this contribution demonstrates about @LeCheikh is their familiarity with this rapidly peaking meme form. Posted before the analyses of the mainstream media, @LeCheikh proves their ethos as a connected digital denizen, and not merely as a user clued into memes through third party analysis. @LeCheikh is not an internet sensation. In the past 6 years they have produced 38,000 tweets, or about 17 per day, and have amassed almost 3,000 followers. This account could not be counted as an influencer, but rather better classified as a successful hobbyist tweeter. Perhaps someone with a day job who takes time to join the conversation on Twitter. On the scale above, this tweet merits

at least a 4, since @LeCheikh has posted a meme while it is having its moment, but not

necessarily at the cusp of that moment. At the particular stage of this meme's lifecycle,

@LeCheikh noticed the trend of a few days and posted a contribution.

IS THERE A DOCTOR ON THIS FLIGHT?

With the Is There a Doctor on This Flight Meme, I turn to something which

internet users would not have recognized as a meme a decade ago, when the image macro

was dominant.

This meme began with the dedicated joke account @thedad on November 22,

2019 (Is There a Doctor on This Flight, 2019). The account owner clearly felt this tweet

succeeded in some exceptional way, as they pinned this tweet to the top of their

homepage. It is a typical of a text-based meme, specifically termed a "snowclone,"[7]

relying on tweet formatting instead of the use of images or a certain font. The text is

presented like a dialogue, with named speakers, text next to their names, and spaces

between the dialogue of each speaker. While Tweets are limited to a certain number of

characters, text memes allow for a more dynamic presentation, with blank space between

the text giving users an easy time experiencing the joke. These texts also typically take up

more space, giving them more presence as users scroll through their feeds. Instead of

attracting attention with flashy images, these memetic tweets use the framing of the

platform's presentation of the feed to stand out.

This meme performs the work of discussing one's profession. It is a typical text

meme, built using the structure of the commonplace question, "Is anyone a doctor?" and

---

[7] https://latimesblogs.latimes.com/webscout/2008/08/the-snowclone-a.html

pairing it with the stock figure of the disappointed parent. The crux of the meme's humor

rests in the figure of the parent, playing on cultural tropes. The disappointing son or

daughter plays the situation straight, while the parent mocks their child by making a

reference to an important part of their current profession. Users tweeting these memes

accomplish two distinct ethical appeals with these tweets. The most obvious way in

which these tweets build character is through their direct reference to the users' work or

field of specialty. The other point users are making is their familiarity with the meme,

participating in the common cultural currency. To be clear, the first example is not a

meme under my definition, since it is the start of a trend. The subsequent snowclones of

the @thedad tweet are memes.

   This tweet serves as a bridge to the remaining examples, as it explicitly works to

discuss the user's ethos. The various examples discussed below offer each user the

chance to call attention to a particular part of their professional identity. Many call

attention to the frivolity of their field, such as the initial YouTuber's iteration. Others

used the format as a chance to make other sorts of claims, which often have the effect of

demonstrating their personal moral compass. But in each instance the user is also

demonstrating their connection to memetic culture, and hence their competence at digital

rhetorics.

Figure 8. @thedad is there a doctor? meme

Jackson Hayes
@jacksonhvisuals

Flight attendant: Is there a doctor on this flight?

Dad: *nudging me* that should've been you

Me: Not now Dad

Dad: Not asking for a cinematographer to help, are they?

Me: Dad, there's a medical emergency happening right now

Dad: Go and see if "moody lighting" helps

10:57 AM · Nov 26, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

29.2K Retweets   **241.6K** Likes

Figure 9. @jacksonhvisuals is there a doctor? meme

This example from four days after the initial tweet demonstrates the meme in its initial stages, adhering closely to the original format. This example represents a 5 on our scale, since it was a very timely contribution to this meme. The self-deprecating humor targets cinematography in this instance, which is a tight parallel to the initial tweet which poked fun at posting to YouTube professionally. Both examples poke fun at the entertainment industry. Further, these tweets remind us of the typical populations which need to be memetically fluent. Participants in the knowledge economy or the entertainment sector are expected to stay on top of trends. These two examples, as well as the journalist example below, joke at their own expense, but these jokes emphasize a certain humbleness. Youtuber, cinematographers, and journalists have cultural cachet.

The first two are part of multibillion-dollar industries, and journalists have a long storied

place in liberal democratic societies. These tweets serve to demonstrate their finger on the

pulse of current memetic trends and to demonstrate the humility to laugh at themselves.

Sheera Frenkel ✓
@sheeraf

Flight attendant: Is there a doctor on this flight?

Mom: *nudging me* That should've been you

Me: Not now Mom

Mom: Not asking for a journalist to help, are they?

Me: Mom, there's a medical emergency happening right now

Mom: Go and see if "an anecdotal lede" helps

12:38 PM · Nov 28, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

19 Retweets   **169** Likes

Figure 10. @sheeraf is there a doctor? meme

> **Sam Ghali, M.D.**
> @EM_RESUS
>
> If I'm ever on a plane and the flight attendant asks "is there a doctor on board?" of course I'll help. I'm an ER doctor. But the first thing I'll be doing is looking for a nurse.
>
> 7:12 AM · Nov 28, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone
>
> **1.2K** Retweets **7K** Likes

Figure 11. @EM_RESUS is there a doctor? meme

The above tweet, the final example of the Is There a Doctor on the Flight snowclones, makes the move from self-deprecation to clear virtue signaling. The user, @EM_RESUS (Dr. Sam Ghali), breaks the most from the snowclone format. He appears to acknowledge the meme but not truly participate in it. However, the user acknowledges that they are an emergency room doctor. This appeals to traditional ethos by establishing the medical degree and calling attention to this doctor's relevant specialization, emergency medicine. The doctor then subverts the expectation of the meme by mentioning nurses.

The connotation of the position of nurse centers around their caregiving, subordinate position, medical knowledge, and heavy thankless labor (Nelson & Gordon, 2004). These cultural associations have elements of truth to them, and this ER doctor is using nurses' status as the unsung heroes of medicine to burnish their own insight and empathetic perspective. This doctor appears to be the kind of humble person who recognizes that society puts doctors on pedestals while nurses are the true "correct" choice in a given emergency situation. In this situation, the humility the doctor is

demonstrating is not the self-deprecating kind of the entertainers above. In fact, this tweet is not really attempting to be funny. It makes the substantive point that nurses are critical to the health system. It also exhibits that this user is fluent in this meme and that he is humble enough to appreciate nurses, even when the flight attendant is asking for a doctor.

The reason I shared so many iterations of this meme is because it began on Twitter and takes greatest advantage of its platform dynamics. We see the comedy account, @thedad, post a joke— one of many. For whatever reason, this particular joke strikes a chord, possibly because of its facility for self-deprecation and sharing of a user's own occupation. As of February 6, 2020 this tweet had over 64,000 likes and over 10,000 retweets, which is fairly successful, given the roughly 100,000 followers of the @thedad account.

The takeoff of this meme over the following few days in November resulted in many iterations, some more successful than others. Sheera Fenkel, the journalist, did not garner much engagement with her attempt, but @jacksonhvisuals, the cinematographer, garnered almost a quarter million likes and nearly 30,000 retweets. The rewards for staying on top of trends and offering your own contributions is the potential for these kinds of breakout viral moments. @jacksonhvisuals has only 6,000 followers as of February 2020, so the meme tweet succeeded wildly beyond the accounts follower network. The meme operated as one of the channels by which this account took the potentially enormous reach of digital discourse and actualized it. And in so doing @jacksonhvisuals introduced themselves to hundreds of thousands of people as a funny, memetically fluent, cinematographer.

In contrast, @EM_RESUS, the emergency room doctor, has over 60,000 followers. That his tweet only garnered 7,000 likes suggests that his entry, which worked against the spirit of self-deprecating humor, was not a good candidate for virality. But it did demonstrate this account's memetic fluency, a 4 on the scale, and communicated the virtue of @EM_RESUS. Despite the claimed authority of ER doctor, this account found the Is There a Doctor on The Flight meme to be a useful vehicle to assert respect for nurses. Responding to the meme almost certainly garnered more engagement than any direct statement on the industry and value of nurses. @EM_RESUS does not need to drive engagement and catch the lightning that is a viral moment, given their claimed profession to be a well-compensated one. Yet nevertheless, this account used a meme to send their message. In the following section, I will indicate how common this practice is.

EXAMINING THE CORPUS: NOVEL APPEALS ARE UNCOMMON BUT MEANINGFUL

On December 19, 2019, I collected five hundred tweets, randomly selected from all tweets posted in between 13:58 and 14:03 Pacific Standard Time by the FireAnt collection program. I have hand coded the tweets in order to identify the memes which were present. This process was complicated by the inability of the collection tool to copy the images or videos attached to tweets. Links are provided instead, which I searched for after the collection was completed. This shades the accuracy of this analysis, since fourteen of the corpus were unavailable at the time of hand coding. These tweets were either deleted, or the accounts which produced them changed their privacy settings. After attempting to make inferences as to whether they might have been memes based on the

other information collected in the database, I determined that I must set those tweets
aside.

The data demonstrates the widespread use of memes in Twitter discourse. Of the
tweets, 32 used a memetic genre in their posts. In these 32 tweets, 14 followed image
meme genre expectations, eight (8) used gifs, eight (8) included videos, one (1) was a
text-based meme and one (1) was an image of text.
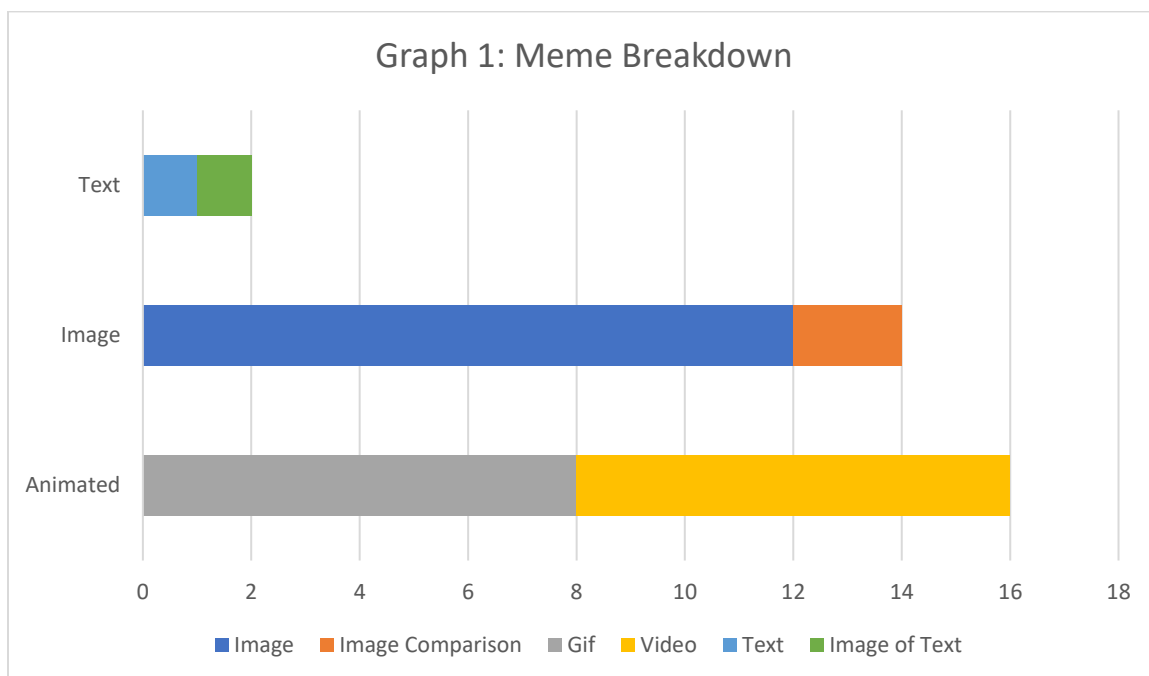
Figure 12. Meme sample classification breakdown

The spread of usage indicated on the graph in Figure 12 above points to a few
patterns. The traditionally understood image macro continues to hold a significant place
among the instances of meme usage, while animated memes, either in the form of gifs or
short videos, make up half of the recorded instances of memes in my dataset. The text
meme, which incorporates the platform affordances of Twitter, ranks a distant third in
overall usage. This suggests that memes making use of platform-specific affordances take

up a considerably smaller space than memes which cross platforms. But altogether, memes made up 6.4% of the tweets in my 500-tweet dataset. Roughly one of every fifteen posts is a meme, under my definition.

Images have been the dominant form of a meme, and are the form with which most people associate the term, meme. While animated memes did include slightly more posts, the image memes were typically unambiguous classic Impact font memes or the newer popular object-labeling memes. The two image-comparison memes operate to compare two different images in a formulaic fashion, such as the #10yearchallenge meme mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation.

The 16 total instances of animated memes split neatly between traditional gifs and video. Others define gifs as not memes at all, but a separate genre of internet discourse, but they clearly operate in an imitation, iteration cycle just like the image memes. Given their longstanding nature, however, gifs appear very clearly in the corpus, and almost always indicate memetic content. The media format of video if far less tied to memes. Videos are often posted as content all their own, or with direct commentary. The target corpus of this chapter includes 7% of posts which include an attached video. Therefore, there are many times more videos which are just posted as content, without placing them in a memetic format.

Memes are often driven my technical changes, with image macros gaining both their name and popularity from the code commands which streamlined image attachment and transmission. So too are videos used to form memes, but in a number of different ways. Videos are directly attached, which is accounted for in the 7% mentioned above. But when hand coding, I noted at least two instances where the videos were incorporated

into the tweet through quote tweeting. The video looks almost indistinguishable from an attached video, but when one clicks on it one can see that it was originally posted by another user. One meme used video from the new Chinese video sharing service, TikTok. While one meme used a TikTok video, there are many more posts of TikTok videos which seek to just share the videos. The widespread availability and ever increasingly supply of video offer Twitter users endless grist to articulate their reaction to an event or current mood through an arresting or banal video.

The single instance of a text meme involved a reference to a song lyric. It did not follow the obvious script formatting of the Is There a Doctor on This Flight meme, but did involve iterating on the context and spelling of the song lyric. The second text meme was in fact a screenshot of text. It is a liminal case, since it uses an image to make its point, but I classed it as a text meme since whether one is reading text on an image or in the text box is not significantly different. Nevertheless, the posted image of text is the exception that underscores the rule that most memes on Twitter are either images, gifs, or videos.

The anecdotal prevalence of text meme posts from my own timeline led me to suspect that this category of meme would be much higher, especially since text memes have developed to take advantage of the Twitter platform's affordances. However, the relative prevalence of animated and image memes demonstrates their ongoing dominance of memetic culture, which trumps the confines of any particular platform.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

Memetic fluency operates as an appeal to ethos which is distinct to the kind of group identity discussed in Chapter Four. It is a distinguishing feature of "very online" users compared to those who casually use the internet and those who only use it as a last resort. In the end, memes represent a born-digital genre of communication. Although related to earlier analogue ideographic productions, the development of the digital meme occurred due to the spread of easy to use computer commands which accelerated and democratized the spread of the meme genre. Like any discourse community, fluency in that genre indicates levels of participation and belonging. But unlike discourse communities built around foci such as geographic space, profession, or an ideological bond, the digital discourse of memes involves fluency in memetic culture.

What these results point to is the way in which memetic culture supersedes other group dynamics, but also does not stay closely confined to an individual platform. Some platform-specific memes exist, but most memetic Twitter posts originate on other services. TikTok and YouTube videos sit alongside embedded and quote-tweeted ones. Image macros which started on Facebook or Reddit move with the speed which digital discourse is defined by across platforms. Both the examples and the data gesture to the ways in which memetic culture acts as a means of cross-cutting and short-circuiting the establishment of a user's ethos in comparison to other aspects of ethos such as those discussed in Chapter Four and reference to the "other" which I address in Chapter Six.

One typically talks about a platform-specific ecosystem. Alt-Right young men on 4chan develop misogynous, racist content. Twitter produces angry, extreme content which often crosses the line to harassment and bullying. Facebook involves echo

chambers where users confirm their biases. These platforms are certainly very different and have distinctive cultural and formal rules for participation which shapes the rhetorics of those platforms. These reputations belie how interactive digital culture is, however. Many users have multiple accounts across platforms, and a "very online" person acts as part of a vanguard which moves, shares, and iterates the latest trends from the latest platforms to other and older ones. Among different ideological and social groups, there are members who are more or less online. And the internet offers a new digitally specific aspect to ethos which centers memetic fluency as the shibboleth of membership.

CHAPTER SIX

(NON)ENGAGEMENT WITH THE OTHER

INTRODUCTION

Engagement drives social media and is majorly advantaged by one of the four affordances of digital rhetorics: interactivity. This chapter focuses on the platform-specific instantiation of that affordance. In Chapter Six, I discuss how users invite or block other users from easy access to a conversation through composition choices.

These choices, and the lack of involvement of the other, represent an appeal to ethos. Specifically, as I have asserted throughout this project, users and communities can define themselves through what they oppose. While a user's reference to allies and/or antagonists on the Twitter platform is often a conversation, it represents a core function of what social media is set up to do. I argue that, in addition to the goal of interaction, the range of options available to a Twitter user in invoking an interlocutor transforms a conversation into another opportunity to assert their values and define their ethos.

In Chapter Two I discussed how, in pre-Aristotelian Greek thought, ethos was described as both elevating the speaker and also denigrating the antagonist speaker. In novel digital rhetoric spaces such as Twitter, the use of the "other" can operate as a method of offering information about the user, rather than maligning the "other" who is mentioned. The "other" is used, either a paragon or a villain, as a way of demonstrating the values of the user who invoked them. This move can break down, as can any appeal, when the invoked other becomes a contested symbol.

Using the "other" to define one's self has a long history (Sizgorich, 2012; Hall, 2002). Typically understood in binaries, the "other" defines the self in terms of language (Joseph, 2016), race (Mills, 2014), gender (Butler, 2002), and many other valences. These rhetorical frameworks operate to simplify the complexities of group dynamics. When I use the term "other" here, I mean a specific individual or set of individuals which Twitter users will invoke to represent a group. While both individuals and groups have Twitter accounts, the pose of individuals interacting as though in conversation has long been the analogue of Twitter interactions.

The engagement or invocation of the other fits with traditional praise and blame rhetoric of the epideictic branch of rhetoric. In practice, these appeals are often formulated as either a *kategoria*, an accusation or attack upon another's character, or an *encomium*, praise for another's actions or character. Theory on the purpose of epideictic rhetoric centers on its ability to assert values to an audience (Hauser, 1999). The audience can be a civic community, or it might be a single individual, such as a Roman Emperor (Ruiz, 2013). Whatever the specific context, typically the thing praised is something for which the speaker is implicitly arguing while the thing blamed is implicitly something warned against. Epideictic rhetoric sets the terms for societal and personal virtues and ethics. It defines both what is good and what is bad.

In the digital context, this original purpose remains, yet the affordances of anonymity and interactivity often push epideictic rhetoric toward discussion of persons or intellectual property. A politician was courageous or treacherous. A film was sublime or a betrayal of the source material. Praising or blaming one's favorite politician or the next iteration of the Star Wars franchise not only offers some information to a social media

audience, but it also clearly defines who the user is in relationship to those defined topics. Epideictic rhetoric in digital contexts operates in an ecosystem where divergent views are posted continuously. Therefore, to praise or blame marks a user out in a constellation of competing value claims. It defines who is good, and who is bad.

INTERACTION ON THE TWITTER PLATFORM

The affordances of the Twitter platform allow for control of the likelihood that a particular "other" will notice a given tweet which invokes them. I will lay out three of the four basic Twitter interaction functions: replying, retweeting, and liking. Sending a direct message is the fourth type of Twitter interaction, but since it is a private act, it falls outside the scope of this project. Behind each of these simple functions, Twitter has introduced additional features. Users have tended to lean on these functions, and Twitter has developed shortcuts only after users have demonstrated the utility of these features.

Research into the characteristics of social media engagement occurs in both writing studies disciplines as well as the burgeoning field of social media studies. Technical communication scholars have recognized the role their undergraduates might play in managing social media, and advocated pedagogical tools for the instructors teaching at undergraduate programs (Hurley & Hea, 2014; Bowden, 2014; Blythe et al., 2014). Crisis communication researchers attempt to analyze the pattern of information posts and responses to get a sense for what approach best addresses a crisis situation, during natural and human disasters (McIntyre, 2015; Potts, 2013).

While the affordances of the platform are a useful topic of scholarship and public discussion, the toxic nature of Twitter engagement garners considerable scholarly

attention. Marginalized populations tend to receive disproportionate harassment in digital

spaces. The harassment of women in particular is well-studied (McGregor & Mourão,

2016; Usher et al. 2018). Some of the examples later in this chapter point to strategies for

controlling the legibility of references to the "other" on Twitter. There is a clear

connection between the efforts to calibrate engagement and the kind of harassment

campaigns that marginalized individuals experience. This is why the techniques for

calibrating engagement are critical for the use of this appeal to ethos. When users invoke

the "other," they do not always want interaction with that other. They want to maintain a

conversation within a particular audience. This is the reason behind the (non) of the

chapter title, representing the choice of users both to engage with or merely to invoke the

other on Twitter. I now turn to discuss the different avenues of engagement, with

implications for inviting the referenced "other" into the conversation.

   The first function of interaction which appears on a tweet is the reply. But before

moving to that button, users have a related method of direct address which served as the

forerunner of the reply. However, this has since evolved into a different avenue of

interaction in the time since Twitter added a formal reply button. A user can @

(pronounced "ăt") another user, directly engaging them through the platform, with

Twitter informing users of all @'s they receive. This is a common method of

engagement, meant to lean into the interactivity of the platform. It is used both to invoke

friends and allies and also to directly address antagonists. This technique has given rise to

the trope of posting some sort of "unpopular opinion" and ending it with the phrase

"don't @ me" as a way of acknowledging that others will want to strongly disagree.

tadah67@kevin
@tadah67

Andy Reid is a HOF don't @me

7:04 PM · Feb 2, 2020 · Twitter for Android

Figure 13. @tadah67's "don't @ me"

The contemporary practice of directly @ing is similar to the more common form of user engagement, the reply. The reply is a feature of Twitter, part of the four main forms of interaction, along with retweeting, liking, and direct messaging. Replying is a privileged form of @ing. It both directly communicates the interaction to the intended first user and preserves the context of the relationship of the original post to the reply post. Twitter initially launched in March of 2006, and the reply feature was added in November of that year (Seward, 2013). Therefore, Twitter has recognized the importance of this kind of interaction and has supported it since almost the beginning of its existence.

In addition to the reply, Twitter rolled out the retweet in November of 2009. This followed user behavior which started tweets with the acronym RT and the originating user's handle, followed by the copied and pasted tweet. Twitter employees felt this was cumbersome, and so introduced the retweet feature formally into the platform (Seward, 2013), fundamentally altering the structure of Twitter discourse.

The move to add a formal retweet function is now understood as a groundbreaking moment. In a retrospective interview, Chris Wetherell, the lead developer on retweet functionality in 2009, laid out his regrets about creating a program which only amplified negativity. His quotes are searing, such as "We might just have

handed a 4-year-old a loaded weapon." The article, which appeared in *Buzzfeed News*, paraphrases these concerns.

> But the button also changed Twitter in a way Wetherell and his colleagues didn't anticipate. Copying and pasting made people look at what they shared, and think about it, at least for a moment. When the retweet button debuted, that friction diminished. Impulse superseded the at-least-minimal degree of thoughtfulness once baked into sharing. Before the retweet, Twitter was largely a convivial place. After, all hell broke loose — and spread. (Kantrowitz, 2019a).

The frictionless sharing at the heart of retweeting is a core concern that drove the genesis of this dissertation project. It seemed to me to be a shortcut to ethos. If a person I chose to follow has retweeted this thing, then I am more inclined to believe it. As the project evolved, I developed a much more nuanced view of the interaction of ethos and the retweet, and how users' ethos is established via the many other aspects of the Twitter platform. Yet the retweet remains a method of amplifying misimpressions, misinformation, and misanthropy.

The reply functionality was expanded with the introduction of quote tweeting in 2014. Now retweets could include a comment to clarify what the retweeter intends for their followers to understand from their retweet. The slogan used by some twitter users— "retweets do not equal endorsements"— wrestles with the question of whether retweeting something reprehensible was meant as a tacit support of the original tweet, merely informing others that it existed, or as a way of condemning it. The quote tweet feature allowed for much more explicit comment, which users typically chose to use to disparage. Quote tweeting became the primary vehicle of the Twitter "Dunk"

(Krantowitz, 2019b). Dunking is one of the clearest examples of asserting one's own ethos through offering up the disparaging example of another.

The final of the public forms of interaction deserves mention but is the weakest tool for signaling ethos. The "like" button was initially the "favorite" button. It functioned like a bookmark. When Twitter changed the button from the star shaped "favorite" into the heart-shaped "like" button, many users lamented that the meaning of the signal had changed. Users were no longer just keeping track of noteworthy tweets; users now feared the "like" button would be interpreted as liking the thing that was posted. Under some privacy settings, users can see what other users have liked; however, it takes some work and is not the most natural way to use the platform. What the like button has done is function in the creation of the "ratio," or the comparison of the number of likes and retweets to the number of replies. A tweet with too many replies compared to the number of likes and retweets is understood to be bad, typically from a moral standpoint. The concept of the ratio was coined in 2017 by Twitter users and is now a commonplace concept on the platform (The Ratio).

In addition to these Twitter-provided tools of social interaction, users have options for invoking the other which do not signal the other in question. Users can type out the name of someone or something which they are offering praise or blame. The offending "other" would only notice their presence in a tweet through searching for results of their own name. Major corporations and prominent individuals may do this to keep track of their image across digital contexts, but most users will not find a tweet that does not directly @ them. In this way, despite being a public forum, Twitter users can discuss others in public with relative privacy.

The final form of (non)engagement with the other, and the most private, is the posted screenshot. Digital devices can take a screen capture or screen shot of whatever is currently displayed on the screen. Smart phones, tablets, and laptops have made this process easy and created user-friendly ways of speedily taking and accessing screenshots. Instead of quote tweeting, or writing about a user who is the target of praise or blame, a Twitter user who comes across a noteworthy tweet can quote tweet it and post a tweet with the attached screenshot. The major advantage of this approach is that if the target user, under social pressure to abandon a particular stance, deletes the original tweet, the "dunking" user maintains the integrity of their original post. Screenshots have the added advantage of additional privacy in the public discourse of Twitter. The search tool cannot currently search images, even images of text. While efforts are underway, and programs currently exist which render the image of text into something a search engine can read, images are currently totally illegible to the Twitter search tool.

The next section both discusses what is at stake in the ethical appeal of the other to define oneself and offers an example of a traditional "dunk" tweet. Thereafter, I offer examples of different permutations of (non)engagement with the other, using the tools discussed in this past section.

THE LINDA RONSTADT MOMENT

The fraught nature of this rhetoric is the messiness of any individual object of praise or blame. On December 8, 2019, Linda Ronstadt replied to a canned joke delivered by Mike Pompeo, while being honored at the Kennedy Arts by Secretary of State. He joked that he was waiting to be loved around the world as she was, but Ronstadt replied

that he needed to just stop defending the President's poor foreign policy choices. This has led to a round of feting on social media spheres of presidential opponents. In this swirl of approval, and demonstrating of ethos through invocations of Ronstadt, one user posted an old video of the performer from 1983 where she defends her decision to perform a concert in South Africa despite the protests and international boycott of the white supremacist, apartheid government. In her response in the clip, Ronstadt claims that if she kept her performances to the standard of only performing in countries with governments she agreed with, then she could not perform in the United States, or other western countries, comparing the Reagan administration, as well as other conservative governments, to the apartheid government of South Africa.

The video became a test, where Ronstadt made many claims which fit well into current social justice discourse, but which were used to justify defying the boycott which helped to topple a repressive, racist government. Some users focused on the discourse, and praised Ronstadt, appearing to burnish their own social justice beliefs. Others saw the context of the South African boycott and determined Ronstadt's words were hollow. The authenticity of Ronstadt's commitment to the values of equality, diversity, and social justice are impossible to judge objectively, with competing public evidence of her statements, even statements in socially awkward situations. On the other hand, she chose profit over standing by the boycott of South Africa. Perhaps her choice was principled one, but it cannot be verified.

> **Jack Hamilton** ✔
> @jack_hamilton
>
> just so everyone is aware this viral clip is linda defending her decision to perform in apartheid-era south africa. she's not on the right side of history here, the clip is edited so as to remove the context
>
> > 🟤 cass @loriperrynicks · Dec 8, 2019
> > Linda Ronstadt is trending under politics so I'm bringing up this Iconic moment
> > Show this thread
> >
> > ▶ 473.6K views   0:00 / 1:52 🔊 ⤢
>
> 8:24 AM · Dec 8, 2019 · Twitter Web App

Figure 14. @jack_hamilton's tweet about Linda Ronstadt

This kind of ambiguous figure, with a contested meaning, is quite common in digital rhetorics and throws into stark relief the difficulty of applying simple true/false logic to a given fact claim in digital spaces. Is Ronstadt an 'icon' worthy of praise, or a hypocrite, who proves that elite discourse on diversity is hollow? Attacking the uncomplicated appeal to Ronstadt's courage in speaking truth to power and appealing to one's own ethos as an admirer of Ronstadt's actions is not about disproving Ronstadt's social justice bona fides, but rather the pretensions of all those Twitter users who invoke her.

All of these currents are operating in the invocation of Linda Ronstadt, sometime social justice icon. The specific example tweet has its own undercurrents. There are of course gender dynamics at play in this particular Twitter "dunk." The long, perfunctory "just so everyone is aware" stands in for the much maligned "actually." Jack Hamilton, the man, is explaining how the woman who posted this video has in fact failed to realize

it means the opposite of her intention. Whether one agrees with Hamilton or not, and I will admit I personally find the argument persuasive, it appears to be verging on "mansplaining," or the condescending explanation by typically a man to typically a woman. What distinguishes this from textbook mansplaining is the fact that it is a "dunk," a quote tweet where the original poster is meant to look foolish. Hamilton is not attempting to correct @loriperrynicks, but rather demonstrate his own knowledge and savvy through offering up and exposing an 'incorrect' interpretation of Ronstadt's legacy.

As I move into further examples of what I assert are appeals to ethos, I want to recognize the complexity in the purpose behind these tweets. These tweets serve to build the ethos of the users who post them, but these are not all intentional choices. I am not asserting that these users in the examples or the mass of users included in the large dataset are consciously thinking in all cases about what persona they are projecting. What I am claiming in this dissertation project is that these appeals, while ostensibly about making factual claims, do in fact make ethical claims as well. When a user attacks or praises another user, person off Twitter, organization, or group, they may have direct goals such as communicating their feelings. But the way that Twitter leaves these posts legible to other Twitter users results in these tweets constructing the ethos of the person. @jack_hamilton may have merely enjoyed the dunk, but in doing so left an artifact which tells others on the platform what kind of user @jack_hamilton is. The following examples demonstrate other methods of appealing to a defined "other" through the Twitter platform.

APPEAL TO A GROUP

A much more typical invocation of ethos through engagement is the following example, which employs both political and cultural tropes. The user, @RachelRGonzalez, types this tweet formatted as an open letter to Republicans, with the adjective, Christian, in quotation marks. Quotation marks act in a manner similar to phrases like "so called" or "supposedly" which indicate the user's doubt about the authenticity of their interlocutor's claims to Christianity. In the body of the letter, @RachelRGonzalez points to the plight of the detained immigrant minors who were subject to the Trump administration's child separation policy. The letter is concluded with the accusation that the desperate predicament of these children is the fault of these voters, who were part of the coalition which elected the current administration. This tweet is a clear signal of @RachelRGonzalez's ethical values. It uses a group deemed reprehensible as a point of comparison to give followers to this account a clear picture of @RachelRGonzaelez's ethos as an empathetic and publicly minded citizen.

Rachel R. Gonzalez
@RachelRGonzalez

Dear "Christian" Republicans,

While you prepare to celebrate Christmas, here is a reminder:

There are children in cages who

1. are unaware that Christmas is coming.

2. are sad because Santa can't find them.

3. will think they did something wrong.

It's your fault.

10:25 AM · Dec 23, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

297 Retweets   **892** Likes

Figure 15. @RachelRGonzalez's tweet "Dear 'Christian' Republicans

This tweet is not framed to convince the purported addressed audience. The very address includes an insult, since it takes as questionable the sincerity of the beliefs of Christian conservatives. While this tweet focuses on an issue Christians might care about, the pathos of children essentially missing the joys of Christmas, it does not do so in a way which invites action or a change in beliefs. This plain text invocation of the "other," in this case Christian Republicans, serves to define the user who posted it. It does not constitute a serious effort to persuade the "other" into some sort of consensus view. This represents a kind of "preaching to the choir" which works well with a friendly audience which already agrees with the underlying premises of the rhetor's argument and invokes an enemy to demonstrate @RachelRGonzalez's values.

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN TWEET

The following example of (non)engagement demonstrates the awareness of users of these varying levels of interaction. It shows how, in a digital public space, users try to contain their conversations to only certain users. It is this balancing of public and private that sits at the heart of the contradiction of anonymity and interaction on Twitter. The user, @allisongeroi is presumedly using their own name. Without verification, I cannot say for certain this is who they claim to be, but it has the appearance of a single individual's personal Twitter account. Therefore, when this individual moves to criticize the Human Rights Campaign, the user takes precautions to keep the referenced "other" from discovering the criticism while still making this public attack. This user is making a public appeal to their ethos while taking steps to not engage with the invoked "other."

Figure 16. @allisongeroi's nonengagement with H*man R*ghts C*mp*ign

The typographic move, as seen in the tweet, is to replace a letters, at least one in each word in the organization's title, with an asterisks (*). Adding in an asterisk prevents easy searching for this post. One imagines the workers at the Human Rights Campaign social media team, scouring the web for references to their brand, and missing this one, due to the user's precautions. This image is almost inviting by the very nature of @allisongeroi's criticism. There is a way that the precaution both works to make this criticism more anonymous and also underscore the reality of the criticism.

The purpose of this tweet may be to build an ethos, or it may be to vent about a poor prior experience. Regardless of the purpose, this tweet presents @allisongeroi as a savvy, world-wise worker who knows the reality behind the branding façade of this well-known charity. Implicit in this criticism is the affirmation of a better ethics, a charitable organization which is focused on its charity, rather than its image. And @allisongeroi is the sort of person who recognizes the distinction and is repulsed by the example of the Human Rights Campaign. Responding to the question, "what's the worst job interview you've ever had?" this user holds up an allegation of superficiality at a major charitable

organization. @allisongeroi does this in a way which shows her followers this allegation, and in turn the followers of the 1,800 users who retweeted this tweet but hides the criticism from its target.

BRET STEPHENS, BED BUG

The concerns of @allisongeroi serve to strengthen the rhetoric that the Human Rights Campaign is overly image-conscious. Yet the use of asterisks in place of certain letters seems a sensible precaution, given the story of Dr. Dave Karpf, Bret Stephens, and bed bugs. This example drove a considerable amount of political and social discourse on Twitter in August of 2019. I will here refer mostly to the article written by Dr. Karpf in *Esquire*, which states his side of this controversy.

Due to the public nature of this incident, I will be able to use names, rather than user handles, since all the participants in this example are verified by multiple news outlets. Bret Stephens is an opinion columnist at the *New York Times*, who holds a conservative perspective. He is a lightning rod for criticism since he was hired at the *New York Times* in the wake of the election of Donald Trump and was praised as adding a diversity of perspective to the paper (Bennet, 2017). Longtime readers of the Opinion section tend to have left-of-center views, and hoped the *Times* would hire new writers based on diversity of experience, not merely thought diversity. This criticism included multiple published pieces in other mainstream media outlets (Martinson, 2017; Beutler, 2017). Dr. Dave Karpf is a professor of media and public affairs at George Washington University.

In response to a tweet from a *New York Times* opinion writer and editor, Stuart Thompson, concerning bedbugs in their offices, Karpf quote tweeted Mr. Thompson, and proceeded to "dunk" on Brett Stephens. My image derives from months after the controversy, by which time Stuart Thompson had deleted his initial tweet. This is the reason for the message, "This Tweet is unavailable."

dave karpf
@davekarpf

The bedbugs are a metaphor. The bedbugs are Bret Stephens. twitter.com/stuartathompso...

This Tweet is unavailable.

2:07 PM · Aug 26, 2019 · Twitter Web App

4.5K Retweets   **31.4K** Likes

Figure 17. @davekarpf Bret Stephens, Bed Bug

While there has been no direct evidence of Stephens' social media monitoring practices, speculation around this exchange assumes that Stephens searched for instances of his own name, deliberately looking for those conversations. This is an approach open to anyone, yet Dr. Dave Karpf sent his admittedly mild tweet with an expectation of no reaction from Stephens. The controversy of this moment stemmed from Stephens' response. In an email which cc'ed the provost of GWU, Karpf's employer, Stephens offered Karpf the chance to go to Stephens' home, meet his family, and then make the bedbug joke to his face. The implication is that Karpf had behaved uncivilly, and the understood purpose of involving the provost in this matter is to generate some sort of professional consequences for the professor.

Stephens had violated the norm against interaction in this instance. Karpf had not @ed him or replied to something Stephens had tweeted. In his own words Karpf summarizes his actions as follows:

> Riffing on the headline "Breaking—there are bedbugs in the NYT newsroom," which was drawing rounds of Twitter jokes, I had written "The bedbugs are a metaphor. The bedbugs are Bret Stephens." The tweet had landed with a thud (nine likes, zero retweets), and I went about my day.

Stephens broke decorum by taking notice of this joke at his expense and attempting to invite consequences on Karpf. Yet Twitter is a public platform, and while the joke did land with a "thud," it might have gone viral. It might have led to harassment. In other circumstances, particularly when the target is a woman, these sorts of things do lead to harassment. But the expectations of some users of the site, typified by Karpf, is that they will have an element of privacy to tweets which do not directly engage with the other. Karpf used Stephens instrumentally to demonstrate his ethos. By making fun of Stephens, Karpf was defining himself as a person who finds the conservative, "diversity-of-perspectives" *New York Times* opinion writer to be blameworthy. Implicitly, Karpf is one of the good, right-thinking people for making this joke. Karpf invoked the "other," which had the effect of defining his character, and was then taken aback by the direct response. Perhaps following the practice of @allisongeroi would have avoided this entire exchange.

JUDITH BUTLER INTERACTION

This example speaks to interactivity in a way which corresponds to the Brett Stephens tweet from above. It exemplifies the cross-platform interaction which is possible in a digital environment. Judith Butler used the affordances of digital rhetoric to read a posted news headline, and then used email to offer her concerns to the author of the headline. Butler here is following the norms of email etiquette, and those of academic discourse. The recipient of this email, however, clearly found the email to be unexpected and surreal, given the small-scale use of the term 'performative.'

Spencer BokatLindell
@bokatlindell

So last week for Thanksgiving I ran a headline saying "Turducken Is Performative," paraphrasing @kimseverson. Over the weekend I got an email from JUDITH BUTLER

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Judith Butler** < >
Date: Thu, Nov 28, 2019 at 3:10 PM
Subject: Re: Spencer Bokat-Lindel on Turducken
To: <nytnews@nytimes.com>

To Spencer Bokat-Lindell,

I very much appreciated your piece in performative Turkey, but wanted to caution against the association of 'performative' with fake. The term gained meaning through J.L. Austin's theory of speech acts. There he gives the example of legal performative s such as "I sentence you" or "I pronounce you man and wife." In those cases the speech act makes something real happen in the world. Someone goes to jail or two people get married. Similarly, in Notes Toward a Performative Theory is Assembly, a title that appears to be echoed by your interesting piece, assemblies form an exemplify sometimes the very principles for which they call. They bring about a reality, or seek to, but they are not producing a falsehood by virtue of their performativity. Although some take performative to mean ersatz, that is not the main meaning of the term in speech act theory or its queer theory appropriation. Such a construal suggests that performative effects are not real or are the opposite of real.

In any case, I enjoyed your piece.

best wishes,
Judith Butler
UC Berkeley

7:18 AM · Dec 2, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

2.2K Retweets   **13.6K** Likes

Figure 18. @bokatlindell and Judith Butler

It is probable that @bokatlindell replied to the email, maintaining the interaction along that channel. However, they chose to share the email on the Twitter platform, trumpeting this brush with a well-regarded thought leader. In this instance, the choice of @ing was not possible, since Judith Butler does not have a Twitter account. The reason

this tweet was highlighted was to offer a positive example of referencing the other to

appeal to ethos. @bokatlindell is clearly star-struck by the gender studies icon. The full

capitalization of her name suggests that the user considers this email to be important,

especially when contrasted with the matter-of-fact statement of running a headline. The

mundane work of the user's job was interrupted by the unexpected email of one of the

leading scholars in the United States.

This tweet demonstrates a number of qualities in the ethos of @bokatlindell.

There is a certain amount of bragging about this interaction. But in that, the user shows

their own intellectual awareness. I mean intellectual in the sense of being well read, and

conversant in the important points of critical theory. @bokatlindell also demonstrates a

kind of humility, advertising that they consider this email to be noteworthy, and

respecting the time and attention Dr. Butler put into the email. In this instance, the user

offered the "other" of Judith Butler to demonstrate quite a number of positive

characteristics to their own ethos. This contrasts sharply with the next, and final example

of (non)engagement as ethical appeal.

POSTED TEXT

The posted screenshot is the final example before I turn to the rates of

engagement on Twitter. In this final example tweet, @notcolloquial calls back to a tweet

about them by notorious academic, Jordan Peterson. Since this is a reference to a year-old

tweet, the image has the advantage of permanence. Particularly since this tweet is calling

attention to an error which Dr. Peterson made, there is a chance it might be deleted. This

form of invocation also calls out the anti-feminist academic without bringing attention to

his online supporters who might turn to troll or flame, harassing @notcolloquial for the temerity to object to Jordan Peterson's treatment of them. In this example, the prominence of the "other" encourages this kind of caution.
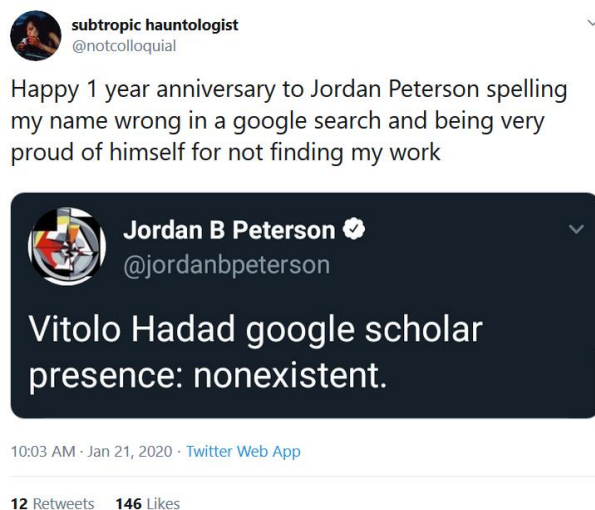
Figure 19. @notcolloquial and Jordan Peterson

Jordan Peterson has clear meaning as a figure in academic circles. As a strident anti-feminist, and actively hostile to trans rights, Peterson is anathema to those interested in social justice. Just so, he is a hero to social justice opponents. The screenshot is a put-down quite resonant in academic circles. Jordan Peterson is accusing a fellow scholar of irrelevance in academia's most prestigious metric, publication. @notcolloquial's rejoinder, that Dr. Peterson had not done his due diligence, and failed to use the search tool correctly, exposes him to ridicule. Among academics who advocate for social justice causes, I argue that a humbling of Dr. Peterson would cause a greater-than-professional level of satisfaction. His whole career is built on belligerently denying the validity of the lived experiences of others, privileging his research. The personal nature of his attacks heightens the meaning of stumbles.

This example appeals to ethos through the person of Jordan Peterson. His name alone incites opposition or support, and it is safe to assume that @notcolloquial's audience would loathe Peterson. Taking this powerful "other," the user then demonstrates something which their audience would surely value highly, an example of the kind of overconfident, blundering error which they would like to attribute to all his claims. This tweet communicates the @notcolloquial is important enough for Peterson to attack, possesses the kind of diverse name that Peterson could not spell correctly, and can make a fool of this reviled figure. @notcolloquial is setting themselves up as an antithesis to Jordan Peterson.

RATES OF ENGAGEMENT

The above tweets offered examples of how different levels of engagement can work as an appeal to ethos on Twitter. Following the pattern of the last two chapters, I now turn to explore the ethical appeal toward (non)engagement with the other in the corpus of tweets. The 100,000- tweet random sample, generated on December 19 and 20, served as the baseline for analyses in the prior chapters. This chapter uses that corpus as the primary point of analysis, searching specifically for frequency of the kinds of engagement which were discussed above. Rates of retweets, quoting, and replies are understood as typical for Twitter as a whole.

One of the most striking findings from the hand-coded set of 500 tweets from Chapter Five was the complete lack of screenshots that referenced the "other." As ubiquitous as it seems from my feed, the hand-coded example of 500 included one image of text, but it was not attributed to any individual or group. Despite its utility, and the

frequency with which I have seen the screen shot post, it will not feature in this analysis.

Quote tweeting, @ing, and replying are far more frequent, which gives ample evidence

for the features of a platform shaping the type of interaction which occurs on that

platform.

	Replies	Retweets	Quote Tweets	Direct @s
Frequency	22,484	57,048	14,959	1,755
Percentage	22.5	57	15	8.5[8]

Table 12. (Non)engagement table of replies, retweets, quote tweets and direct @s

The largest form of interaction on the Twitter platform is straight retweets. 57%

of all new posts are retweets rather than unique contributions. This fact warps so much of

the experience of Twitter, with certain voices amplified over others. As an interesting fact

not captured in the chart above, retweets and replies are almost completely exclusive. In

my sample of 100,000 tweets, only 17 of the replies were retweeted. This means that

collectively, replies and retweets account for nearly 80% of the total posts on a typical

afternoon on the Twitter platform. The platform encourages this behavior, as the first two

interactive buttons on the platform are the reply, and the retweet buttons.

Replies make up the second most common form of engagement, at 22.5%. The

lack of overlap with retweets means we can also understand replies to contribute around

half of all unique Twitter posts in a given day. If the average user is not retweeting, they

are spending half their time posting new content and the other half replying to others.

---

[8] This percentage is reached since direct @'s are measured against non-retweet and non-reply tweets. This figure represents when users directly @ed another user when composing a new post. In my corpus of 100,000 tweets, these were 20,485 of the total.

Twitter was designed to encourage engagement, and these numbers bear out the success which Twitter has had at those goals.

Quote tweets make up only 15% of my corpus of tweets. Of these, roughly two thirds are retweeted posts that quote another user, and one third are unique contributions. This roughly matches the general rate of retweets. This suggests to me that quote tweeting has become a naturalized part of the Twitter experience, and represents an average method of interacting with fellow users. Quote tweeting is more comparable to a unique post compared to the reply, however. Quoting another user's tweet and offering a commentary above it serves more of a function of talking to your own followers, rather than to the user who was quoted.

The direct @ is more complicated, as I could not cleanly determine the frequency of this form of interaction among the retweeted subsection. Those tweets, along with replies, include the handle information of the user retweeted or replied to in the text of the message, so distinguishing direct @s for the whole corpus proved too difficult. So among the remaining tweets which were neither retweets nor replies, 1,755 instances of direct address were found among 20,485 unique posts. This represents an 8.5% frequency rate. As a point of comparison, Twitter users are more often @ing each other than using memes.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

This chapter underscores the importance of interactivity on the Twitter platform, as well as the strength of such frictionless features built into the platform. The examples for close reading exemplified the varied ways in which the casual user can call to the

"other" to help define their own ethos. Either offering up a positive "other" to demonstrate proper respect, or a negative "other" to demonstrate proper contempt, Twitter encourages users to measure themselves against others on and off the platform.

Something which appears again and again is the expectation of privacy in this very public forum. The examples of the interviewee at Human Rights Campaign and Dr. Karpf emphasize that the decorum rules are weak, and that users should treat the Twitter platform as a fully public zone. The fact that most conversations are ignored due to the vastness of the conversation on Twitter, with six million tweets a day, lulls users into a sense of privacy, which can be stripped away should the user go viral or find prominence in mainstream news.

One of the most striking features of the big data section is the high frequency of usage of the retweet and reply buttons. The shape of a platform has enormous impact on the contours of the rhetorics practiced in it. The overwhelming frequency of retweets and replies are indicative of ongoing efforts by Twitter to tweak the platform; the impact of the infrastructure influences users' engagement of the "other" and, thereby, their efforts to establish ethos (intentional or otherwise). Such impacts make the discussion of Twitter and similar platforms design crucial for recognizing how digital rhetorics are shaped by users and designers alike. This data suggests that social media engineers can keep iterating the platform to improve discourse. Unfortunately, the duty to the shareholders of Twitter suggests that the ultimate goal of these engineers will be to increase ad revenue. While beyond the scope of this current project, such issues should be of concern to all users and citizens as they shape our public discourse communities.

The Twitter ecosystem encourages engagement and also assessment. Users are in a flurry of activity measuring themselves in the pecking orders of different Twitter hierarchies and within discourse communities. Through the metrics of engagement, users can perceive their relevance to the conversation, and they can see the relevance of others. This encourages greater engagement, either directly with opposing interlocutors, or through in-group dynamics. Twitter users, wittingly or not, craft an ethos that articulates their position within the many conversations occurring on Twitter. Given the affordances of the Twitter platform, many have found the "other" to be an excellent vehicle for this process.

CHAPTER SEVEN

REFLECTION, SYNTHESIS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this final chapter, I offer some personal reflections on the process of this project, points of synthesis from the project as a whole, and implications for future research. Throughout this dissertation, I applied the rhetorical concept of ethos to the new digital context of Twitter. Through that examination, I identified three nontraditional appeals to ethos on the Twitter platform: diction choices, memetic fluency, and (non)engagement with the other. While these appeals to ethos are not unique to Twitter rhetorics, the platform dynamics and the affordances of digital rhetorics have accentuated and accelerated these appeals. The speed, reach, anonymity, and interactivity of digital rhetorics in the Twitter context foregrounds audience reception to rhetorical moves that are necessarily more abbreviated. Therefore, from the audience's position, more implications are drawn from fewer data points. The rhetor, or user, establishes ethos via multiple strategies that can be accommodated by Aristotle's broad framework. This dissertation attempted to more specifically identify some of these strategies for establishing ethos.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

The work of this dissertation altered my Twitter use habits. Prior to this project, I primarily used Twitter to follow face-to-face acquaintances, my fellow Sunderland AFC supporters, scholars from my various fields of interest, and some journalists covering political news. I did not alter my followers for research purposes during the course of this

project, yet I did much more searching, reading through replies, and following certain arguments up and down to get a broader picture than my narrow follower network. This change in user behavior prompted a strong algorithmic reaction.

I noticed a marked shift in my Twitter experience while selecting the example tweets that I used to exhibit the different appeals to ethos through close reading in Chapters One, Four, Five, and Six. I actively searched out those tweets which I felt gave the reader the best chance to understand the particular trope on display, and those tweets tended to be more extreme. I also did not want to confine my search to those tweets that happened to show up in my feed.

I am conscious of the limits of my viewing experience and did search through comments on the more political tweets in Chapter Four, especially, to find those users who both agreed and disagreed with the left-of-center political propositions I was regularly exposed to. The handful of tweets I "liked" to maintain a record of possible example tweets had a large, immediate impact on my Twitter feed. Since the feed is algorithmic, and shows a user tweets from other users which they do not follow, those few likes, without following any new individuals, produced a marked difference in the tweets which showed up in my feed.

The algorithm fed more users who supported the president into my feed. I read more about the injustice of impeachment and the scandal of the FBI investigating Carter Page. One account in particular appeared consistently in my feed and expressed values through a vocabulary set which was at odds with my personal worldview. I was personally repelled by the arguments on topics such as women's health, gun control, and immigration. Another group of users who were relatively new to my feed were self-

identified leftists, who often used similarly abrasive language, and employed harassment tactics. Yet these users did tend to speak in terms which I approved, and they often attacked political figures with whom I disagree; they also posted funny or outrageous memes and in-jokes which were at times fun to read.

As a matter of personal experience, I found myself not dismissing the left-of-center political accounts out of hand. These accounts projected different levels of earnest sincerity, with some frequently asserting blatant falsehoods, and following up with posts expressing mirth (LOLing) that anyone took them seriously. Yet others appeared to be self-consistent, earnest people advocating a left-leaning view of the world. And these accounts made many claims which I cannot, from my standpoint, truly verify or deny.

For instance, leftist Twitter accounts took the ouster of the Bolivian President, Hugo Morales, which occurred during the drafting phase of this dissertation, as both definitely a coup, and also a CIA-orchestrated coup. This group offered many conspiratorial accounts of the background and intentions of Pete Buttigieg, the Democratic Presidential candidate. These Twitter accounts have certainly left an impression on my views of international events and political figures, despite my best efforts to remain detached from this content.

I felt the temptation of ideological radicalization in the course of writing this dissertation, and this is a process which is playing out among the hundred million active users of Twitter, who each have their own individual relationship to this platform. Some of those users will move further down that path than I have. Trust is a precious resource which immeasurably improves metrics of wellbeing, economic health, and good governance. Conspiratorial thinking is highly corrosive to societal trust.

I do not have enough data to describe with certainty typical user behavior, yet given my anecdotal experience prior to this project, I felt cocooned by the algorithm into only seeing posts which conformed to my worldview. Under these conditions, the Twitter platform itself acts as a legitimizing space for its users. It is very difficult to distinguish between those operating in good faith and those who are not. No worldview is immune to fake news or extremist thinking.

Social media companies are working to influence behavior on their platform, publicizing their efforts which they feel will win broad public support. YouTube, for instance, has worked since 2018 on the radicalization problem on their algorithmic software. Prior to their efforts, a child investigating monetary policy for a school project, for instance, would quickly, given YouTube's functionality,[9] come across videos advocating a return to gold backed currency, with a clear white supremacist ideology underpinning the rationale. Independent scholarship has found YouTube's algorithm has successfully identified and suppressed, by not suggesting, videos with white identitarian or other hate group messaging (Ledwich and Zaitsev, 2019). Twitter is similarly embarking on its own work to adjust user experience.

My own research suggests that Twitter has a large influence on user behavior, with forms of engagement built into, and hence encouraged, by their platform. Independent analysis of how the platform functions is necessary both to offer industry stakeholders and students clear heuristics for understanding Twitter rhetorics, but also to hold the administrators of this corporate, but publicly significant platform accountable for

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[9] Wherein after one video, more follow as YouTube is set to play subsequent associated videos automatically once the current video finishes.

the decisions made in private interest. Their introduction of the retweet and the quote

tweet function did much harm to positive dialogue, according to former Twitter Team

members, as was discussed in Chapter Six. Adding functions which decreased

anonymity, or increased self-disclosure, such as an expanded verification system or

creating a new marker for bot accounts, would help reduce some of the worst tendencies

which have resulted in these less helpful ethical practices.

I discussed the parallels that exist between the formative moments of classical

rhetoric in ancient Athens and our contemporary digital moment. Both contexts grew the

space of the "public" to thoroughly eclipse the role of the private sphere. Ancient

societies and modern digital citizens invite an audience into their lives, facilitating a

community-wide witnessing to moments in their life, both important and trivial. At the

conclusion of this dissertation, I have come to recognize an important distinction between

these two contexts. Both are driven by uncertainty. Ancient uncertainty, however, was

presumably, and as documented, fairly general, with the need for considerable resources

to learn about a foreign community. Few, if any, strangers could not walk into an ancient

community and pose as a local resident. Things are not so in our modern digital context.

Contemporary social media practice leaves the posts of users, and their act of

witnessing, permanently accessible. While an individual may choose to take their account

private, a stranger may create a Twitter account and observe the discourse norms of a

given community and replicate those norms, either in person, or through a procedurally

run bot. The uncertainty is asymmetrical in digital environments, not general. Casual

users will not know with certainty who their social media interlocutors are, but a

determined individual can observe the abbreviated forms of ethos on display and mimic them.

This dissertation contributes, therefore, both to the ongoing and longstanding conversation on the meaning of ethos, and also the more contemporary issue of social media discourse. In the next section, I offer core takeaways of this research. I then provide two possible future directions for research as outgrowths of this dissertation project and the considerable scholarship that undergirds it.

SYNTHESIS

The following research questions drove this dissertation project:

1. How does the Twitter interface permit and constrain its users to express their identity and appeal to their ethos?

2. What are the context-specific ways in which Twitter users appeal to their ethos?

3. How frequent are those appeals compared to traditional appeals which rely on credentialing or personal narrativizing?

The answers to first and second question interrelate, and so I offer a combined answer. While some of the characteristics of Twitter rhetorics are dominated by larger trends in digital rhetorics, the specifics of the platform drive distinctive appeals to ethos based in abbreviated language.

The results of this research confirm the importance of the four affordances of digital rhetorics first articulated by Gurak (2001) and then carried into technical communication by Zappen (2005). The affordances of reach, speed, interactivity, and

anonymity drive rhetorics in digital spaces, including Twitter, in a manner diagnostically distinct from face-to-face rhetorics. They remain rhetorical, in that in both modalities of rhetorics we are still dealing with human ecologies. The framework of classical rhetoric still applies at some level. Aristotelian ethos, logos, and pathos still form a useable framework for understanding different types of argumentation, but the specific affordances of digital rhetorics change the nature of those appeals.

I conclude that the speed, reach, anonymity, and interactivity of digital rhetorics cause the development of the diction choices, memetic fluency, and (non)engagement with the "other" on Twitter as ethical appeals. Speed and reach relate directly to appeals to ethos based on a memetically fluent, or "very online," character. The uncertainty of users, driven by the anonymity of non-verified accounts on Twitter, raises the salience of both diction choice and references to the "other." These small choices can indicate group affinity or values in a single word or in the praise or blame directed at another user, non-Twitter person, or organization. The affordance of interactivity leads to situations where users seek to calibrate the available platform tools for interacting with other Twitter accounts. Users have developed techniques to hold semiprivate conversations in the face of public interactivity. The illustration below is an attempt to visualize how the affordances of digital rhetoric influenced these three nontraditional ethical appeals.

Relationship of the affordances of digital rhetorics to Twitter ethos appeals

speed	reach	anonymity	interactivity

memetic fluency	diction choice	(non)engagement with the "other"
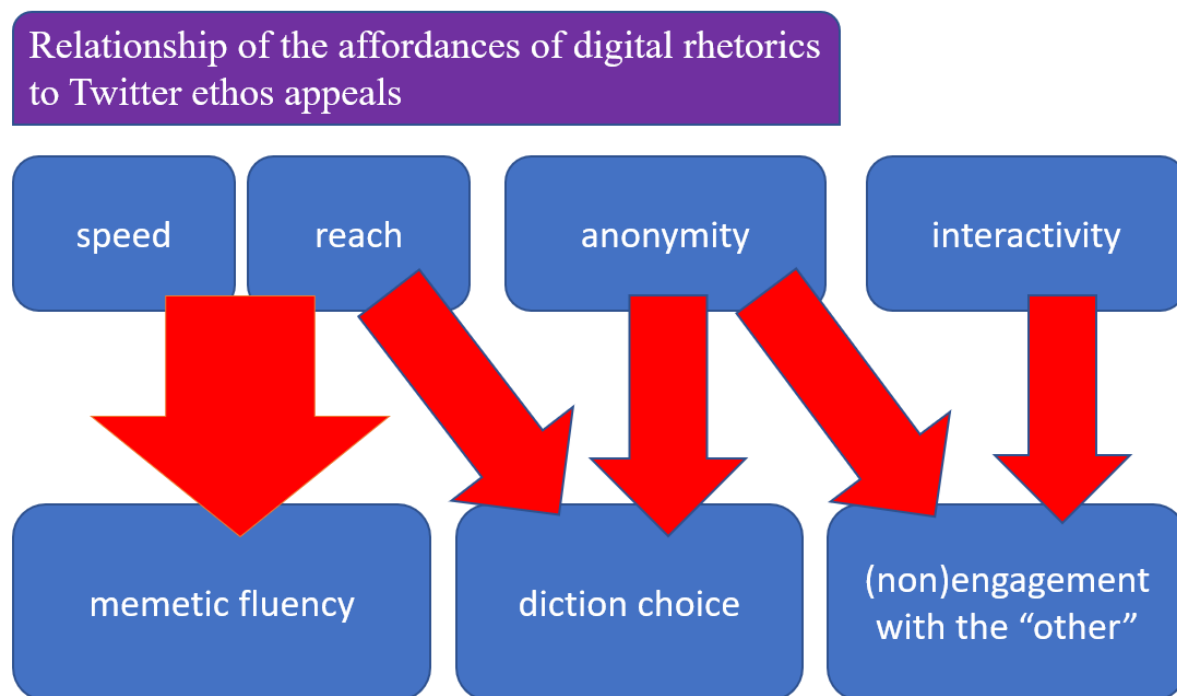
Figure 20. Relationship amongst affordances of digital rhetoric and Twitter ethos appeals

In figure 20 above I represent the relationship of the affordances of digital rhetoric to the appeals to ethos which they have caused. The arrows represent major causal links, with different affordances producing different ethical appeals. The speed and reach of digital rhetorics results in an internet-wide memetic culture which privileges knowledge of ongoing trends in media. A joke started in Great Britain at 2:30 AM Eastern Standard Time can percolate and spread, with Americans waking to a new object-labeling meme, or a new snowclone. These new genres or references will jump platforms, replicating and iterating. And the "very online" individual will keep abreast of these trends through virtue of their consistent attention across platforms. Some memes are better suited to the Twitter platform than others, but Twitter will play host to whatever is generated. Memetic fluency acts along a different axis from the appeals to ethos based in

diction or reference to the "other," demonstrating not the ethos of belonging to a given group but an ethos of digital citizenship.

Yet the reach of Twitter rhetorics also ensures that users often encounter the tweets of those who fall outside of either their follower network or other well-known individuals such as politicians, celebrities, or prominent journalists. With one hundred million regular users, and over six million tweets on the average day, Twitter users necessarily must develop short cuts to assign credibility to diverse users. The results of Chapters Four and Six point to the reliance on diction choices and references to others to make those determinations.

This problem is exacerbated by the affordance of anonymity. With the heightened uncertainty around the asserted identity of users, other markers become important to discern a user's character. With so much of the user's identity reduced to a bio line and an avatar, the text of the tweets themselves become a more meaningful site of analysis for Twitter users. Word choice or references to the "other," be that "other" a Twitter user or group or individuals outside of Twitter, communicates values and group identity. In this situation, falsification of credentials is relatively simple, requiring only a rudimentary observation of a group's vocabulary. It may not be enough for fluent conversation, but Twitter conversations cannot force a user into real-time tests of their fluency on discourse norms. Instead, it allows them to craft tweets at their leisure, offering up the signals of belonging they need to achieve their rhetorical goals. This was demonstrated critically from the imposter California teacher who enflamed American tempers through showing the video of Covington School students and the native protestors.

The affordance of interactivity drives much of the activity on the Twitter platform, but despite its public face, participants still wish to hold semiprivate conversations. The discomfort which Twitter users feel at their tweets being used in research further indicates their unease with the implications of their posting their tweets to a fully public forum. Yet the majority of tweets are public, and users have dealt with this fact through gaming the search system when they do not wish to directly alert another Twitter user. People can adjust how much they interact depending on which technique they use. Replies, retweets, quote tweets and @ing constitute a majority of Twitter posts, which suggests that most users are on the platform for its interactivity. Yet they also will use plain text, images of text, or text with deliberate misspellings to calibrate the accessibility of their communication. To successfully navigate this platform, one must accept these affordances and their implications.

The third research question asked about relative frequency in the appeals to ethos on Twitter. My methods revealed some data, but it was this question that posed the greatest difficulty for my datasets and tools to answer. While I did provide frequency statistics for Twitter engagement which appeals to ethos, I was unable to offer a validated measure of appeals to traditional ethos. On Twitter, some individuals operate in ways which fit well into mode of ethos creation and appeal as articulated in the textbooks discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation. Individuals discuss their credentials and past experiences, assert goodwill, and discuss counterclaims. The RAND-Lex tool offers a set of measures for that activity, which was why I felt a more comprehensive answer to research question 3 was possible.

In figure 21 below, I present a screenshot of part of my results when I ran my dataset through that tool, results that I did not share in Chapter Four for a number of reasons. This is the corpus compared to the roughly one-million-word FROWN corpus, which is a standard baseline used in corpus analytics to represent average English written discourse. The results of this test provided some answers, but not ones with the statistical power to merit inclusion in the formal results of this dissertation.
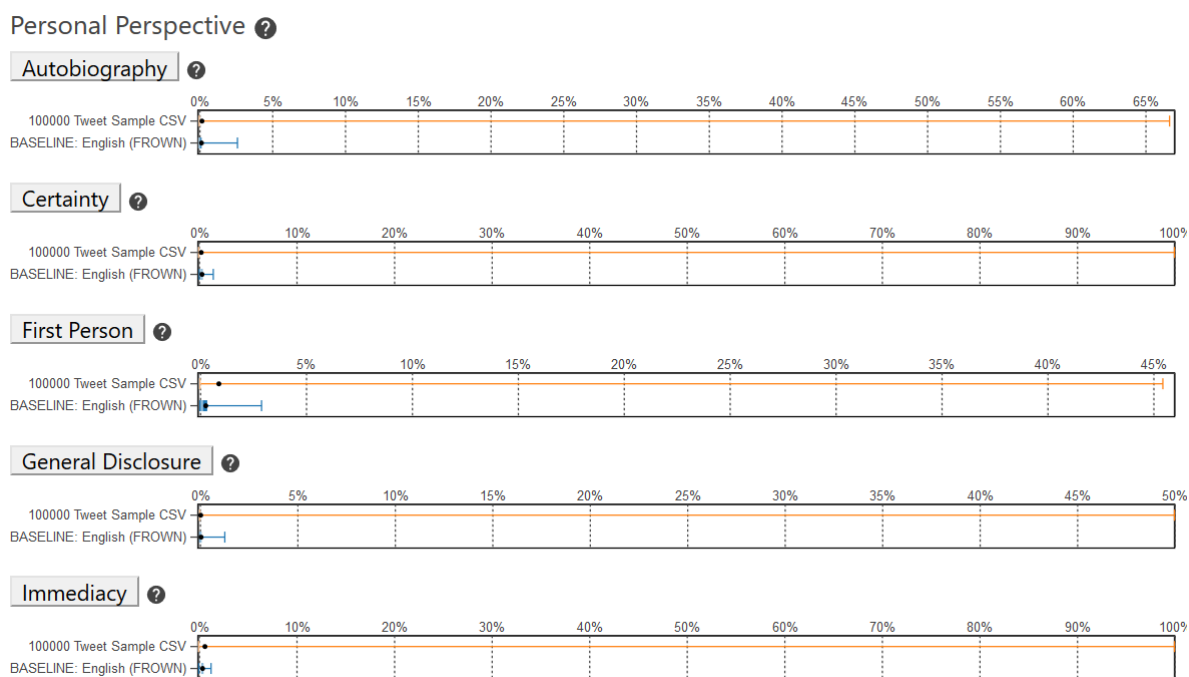
Figure 21. Partial RAND-Lex results focused on personal perspective.

As seen in the figure, RAND-Lex has algorithmic tools trained to distinguish such features as autobiographical references, assertions of certainty, and uses of first person. The small black dot represents the probable frequency, but the orange line represents the possible range of answers. When the measure produces something valid, it contains a box and whiskers type graphical representation, as can be seen in the blue line representing the FROWN corpus. The tool was too uncertain about my 100,000 tweet sample. Given

the circumstances of my access to the tool, my time was too limited to resize the dataset to attempt to generate validity.

This experience provided many lessons in the affordances and limits of big data analysis. The collocation and Keyness tool delivered clear results on my datasets. The metrics of Twitter engagement were likewise readily legible to my tools. But the algorithmic tools which operate with probabilistic logics require larger datasets to offer the answers I am seeking. This presents some important resource considerations for future research. My hardware had a difficult time processing the number of tweets I used for this dissertation. This underscores the constraints of big data analysis both on the side of expensive tools, but also the hardware to manipulate the data. These lessons stand alongside the data collection restrictions on historical data which Twitter imposes on researchers. I will carry forward all of the methodological lessons of this project into my own next steps and hope they serve as useful insight for researchers interested in writing analytics.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDAGOGY

Ethos, as an important rhetorical concept, should maintain its place in Writing Studies curricula. The traditional understanding of ethos, as discussed in the textbook section of Chapter 2, however, is clearly inadequate to address the novel appeals to ethos occurring in digital spaces such as Twitter. The static characteristics discussed in most textbooks are applicable, but insufficient to communicate to students the full range of what an appeal to ethos is. Current practice relies on discussing ethos in terms of

representing the communicator's character. The emphasis must shift from the representational model of ethos analysis to one of presentation.

Ethos understood as a presentation, rather than merely a representation of some authentic self, can shift students' assumptions about what a given rhetor is attempting to accomplish with their communication. It moves the question from a simple one of qualifications or biography toward one of motivation and purpose. A traditional interpretation of ethos would require students to answer questions of veracity which would bog down analysis in a context of wide reach and anonymity. This stands in contrast to what a flexible interpretation of ethos prompts. When analyzing a Twitter user who claims to be a doctor, for instance, a reader conversant in digital ethos considers the utility of the claim of medical credentials before questioning whether the claimed qualification is true.

Ultimately the textbooks are a conservative genre and will change their discussions of ethos only slowly and with the consensus of the field. In most cases, current textbooks can be used as written, if the instructor emphasizes the complexity of the topic. Digital rhetoric does not completely reinvent the ethical appeal, but adds new parameters and shifts focus to those qualities which can be most readily analyzed in the digital context, the bare text.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this dissertation, I sought to look at Twitter as a whole. I wanted to understand the ecosystem as it currently exists. This includes the straightforward users, both verified and unverified, as well as the trolls, the sockpuppets, and the bots. This dissertation

project delivered those broad outlines. Memes are an important, but not dominant, genre of expression, with the greater digital ecosystem providing greater influence than Twitter-specific dynamics. Diction choices and the sliding scale of public and private praise and blame offer much more frequent appeals to ethos on the Twitter platform.

Moving forward, this research branches into two possible directions. In the first branch, I envision useful investigations into the affordances of digital rhetorics and how these play out on other platforms. Some will remain off limits to the methods of this dissertation, such as Instagram and Facebook, but Reddit, YouTube comments, and other publicly-facing social media platforms offer new sites of research. One of the standout lessons from Chapter Five was the cross-platform nature of memetic culture. Despite developing elements of its own platform-specific culture, Twitter memes tend to follow the broad trends of memes on other platforms. I am most interested to see if the four affordances of digital rhetorics have similar effects on the ethical appeals which occur in those spaces. Given the efforts to address platform concerns, this research can answer such research questions related to whether nontraditional appeals to ethos are more common on Twitter or if they are a general factor across publicly facing social media.

The second direction to take this research is to disaggregate the Twitter user base to investigate the rhetorical choices of different discourse communities on Twitter. This can focus on different affinity groups. I predict behavior will also differentiate based on verified status and follower count size. Research questions for future research on the Twitter platform include these: what characteristics are typical of users who appeal to ethos through memetic fluency or engagement? What is the frequency of different types of engagement for subpopulations of Twitter users? This research would provide greater

nuance in ethos on the Twitter platform. Further research can show with greater granularity the characteristics of Twitter users.

CONCLUSION

It is crucial to acknowledge that this project is situated in a specific space and time bounded not only by my skills and expertise, but more importantly by the functionality of my hardware, the affordances of available software, and the algorithms and infrastructures of Twitter. The inquiry affirmed that characteristics of Aristotelian ethos are useful in modern digital rhetoric, and feminist and materialist definitional work around ethos further engage researchers in tricky problems regarding trust and communication not bounded by traditional modes of communication. These sites of research are rich and invite endless inquiries. My hope is that such investigations offer researchers and teacher strategies for engaging productively with iterative, non-static representations of ethos that account for critical digital engagement in both research and pedagogies.

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APPENDIX: UNABRIDGED KEYNESS AND COLLOCATION TABLES

Bolded text are Twitter handles.

Rank	Frequency	Collocation Stat	Collocate
1	9	5.81948	**havenluxx**
2	9	5.81948	god
3	8	5.64956	forbid
4	10	5.60892	**solonahusband**
5	12	5.58245	disabled
6	13	5.57239	yo
7	15	5.55645	vendor
8	23	5.52104	murdered
9	8	5.45691	waited
10	9	5.45691	romances
11	16	5.45691	owned
12	21	5.45691	ostracized
13	9	5.45691	fields
14	14	5.45691	ed
15	25	5.45691	**dreamzen**
16	51	5.45691	director
17	14	5.45691	cutely
18	10	5.45691	cannot
19	9	5.45691	angst
20	21	5.45691	alienated
21	10	5.45691	**abirmohammxd**
22	52	5.42943	movie
23	50	5.42835	bullying
24	47	5.42654	gc
25	29	5.40800	added
26	21	5.38980	segregated
27	16	5.36945	creating
28	13	5.35000	student
29	51	5.34798	actress
30	36	5.34144	non

Table 1 Collocation table for *POC* data

Rank	Frequency	Collocation Stat	Collocate
1	3	4.90176	young
2	3	4.90176	**tchkimpossible**
3	3	4.90176	stans
4	2	4.90176	smears
5	6	4.90176	reading
6	3	4.90176	ow
7	34	4.90176	lgbtq
8	2	4.90176	leveled

9	25	4.90176	including
10	917	4.90176	important
11	3	4.90176	gift
12	2	4.90176	etc
13	25	4.90176	disabilities
14	25	4.90176	complain
15	3	4.90176	children
16	3	4.90176	buy
17	2	4.90176	bi
18	5	4.90176	alway
19	2	4.90176	against
20	4	4.90176	adult
21	918	4.89862	let
22	918	4.89862	folks
23	917	4.89705	do
24	1836	4.88924	so
25	924	4.88006	not
26	35	4.86112	women
27	920	4.85546	for
28	25	4.84517	part
29	946	4.84055	is
30	921	4.83742	people

Table 2 Collocation table for *BIPOC* data

Rank	Frequency	Collocation Stat	Collocate
1	34	5.22311	**nwgoboating**
2	45	5.18938	**realdonaldt**
3	65	5.15801	creature
4	68	5.15494	creatures
5	93	5.10544	drained
6	31	5.08984	**willdavisdc**
7	49	5.08984	touted
8	26	5.08984	sl
9	29	5.08984	rivals
10	24	5.08984	moscowmitch
11	22	5.08984	mog
12	36	5.08984	**fridayvib**
13	31	5.08984	dailycaller
14	39	5.08984	added
15	805	5.08805	rats
16	867	5.08486	example
17	764	5.08419	works
18	193	5.08239	uncovered

19	864	5.07820	hunter
20	425	5.06962	drain
21	884	5.06236	deep
22	260	5.05693	draining
23	868	5.05373	better
24	30	5.04254	journalist
25	26	5.03540	rat
26	788	5.03418	state
27	142	5.03014	hillary
28	885	5.02763	than
29	70	5.00967	trust
30	95	5.00149	completely

Table 5 Collocation table for *Swamp* Data

Rank	Frequency	Collocation Stat	Collocate
1	94	6.09545	understands
2	102	5.61813	public
3	68	5.30027	**bethrcoast**
4	582	5.26074	**goptony**
5	65	5.25984	shady
6	23	5.22670	**mikemaga**
7	47	5.19061	signing
8	37	5.17562	**tgcz**
9	535	5.13648	hi
10	36	5.13609	**ybdu**
11	43	5.12940	cleanup
12	527	5.11197	throughout
13	522	5.10099	continued
14	24	5.09545	waste
15	94	5.09545	uncovering
16	85	5.09545	turns
17	35	5.09545	progress
18	22	5.09545	onc
19	53	5.09545	mechanics
20	23	5.09545	institutionalized
21	42	5.09545	impeaching
22	26	5.09545	haiti
23	23	5.09545	deter
24	520	5.09545	consequences
25	36	5.09545	basics
26	21	5.09545	arabia
27	524	5.09270	zero
28	519	5.09267	faced
29	59	5.07120	written
30	166	5.06110	ukrainian

Table 6 Collocation Table for *Corruption* Data

Rank	Frequency	Collocation Stat	Collocate
1	56	5.51119	needs
2	57	5.41889	politicians
3	21	5.32881	defied
4	26	5.25842	surround
5	60	5.25842	snuffy
6	38	5.25842	resign
7	21	5.25842	psychical
8	21	5.25842	proverbially
9	26	5.25842	politicia
10	21	5.25842	pangs
11	21	5.25842	naked
12	55	5.25842	headmistress
13	21	5.19131	manifestation
14	54	5.18042	change
15	38	5.14880	racism
16	23	5.13813	trolls
17	61	5.12307	corrupt
18	30	5.03603	everything
19	22	5.01741	**davidsirota**
20	32	4.93649	whole
21	20	4.93649	decades
22	30	4.91739	death
23	114	4.88186	am
24	95	4.78388	british
25	29	4.75885	fight
26	90	4.72791	media
27	65	4.68088	democrats
28	29	4.65697	anti
29	48	4.63393	corbyn
30	24	4.59546	speaking

Table 7 Collocation Table for *Establishment* Data

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Education

PhD, Technical Communication & Rhetoric   May 2020
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> Committee: Keith Grant-Davie (chair); Jared Colton (First Reader); Rebecca Walton; Lynne McNeill; Erica Holberg

MA, History
University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT   Dec 2012

BA, Classical Studies & History
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM   May 2009

Teaching Experience

Aug 2019-Present   Washington State University
Adjunct Instructor **English 402:** Instructor of record for online WSU Technical Writing course

Sep 2017-Present   Clark College
Adjunct Instructor **English 101:** Instructor of record for Clark College's composition program

Aug 2016- May 2017   Utah State University
Graduate Instructor **English 1010 and 2010:** Instructor of record for USU's academic prose and research writing courses

Aug 2014-May 2016   University of South Florida
Graduate Assistant, **English 1101 and 1102:** Taught online and in-person for USF's CCCC award winning Composition program

Aug 2013-May 2014   Florida State University
Graduate Assistant, Department of Classics: Writing Across the Curriculum grading in large, Ancient Civilization courses

Aug 2009-May 2011   University of Utah

    Teaching Assistant, Department of History: Graded in general education, high enrollment history courses

Conference Presentations

Hillen, A. (2020, May). Understanding ethos through three perspectives. Presentation. Rhetoric Society of America Biennial Conference, RSA 2020. (Conference cancelled due to Covid-19)

Hillen, A. (2020, January). Digital ethos analysis in the AOI composition classroom. Poster. Modern Language Association Annual Convention, MLA 2020.

Hillen, A. (2019, October). Ethos in the text: Appeals to credibility within tweets. Poster. ACM International Conference on Design of Communication. SIGDOC 2019.

Hillen, A. (2017, March). A historical example of how language defines disciplinary genres. Presentation. Conference on College Composition and Communication, CCCC 2017.

Hillen, A. (2016, May). Recognition, contradiction, and appropriation in rhetorical translation. Presentation. Rhetoric Society of America Biennial Conference, RSA 2016.

Hillen, A. (2015, October). The student made whole: Musings on electracy in the two year college. Presentation. Two Year College Association West Conference, TYCA-West 2015.

Hillen, A. (2015, October). Historical technical communication: Programmatic implications. Presentation. Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication National Conference, CPTSC 2015.

Hillen, A. (2012, November). Aratus and the tyrants in the Achaean League. Presentation. Classical Association of the Middle West and South Southern Section Meeting, CAMWS-SS 2012

Hillen, A. (2011, April). Ethnic considerations of loyalty among Italo-Greek poleis. Presentation. Classical Association of the Middle West and South Annual Meeting, CAMWS 2011.

Hillen, A. (2011, March). The Cleomenean War and the over-extension of the Achaean League. Presentation. Southwestern Historical Society Annual Meeting, SSSA 2011.

Publications

Popular Press

Hillen, A. (2017) "Under Pressure: Divisions among the Greeks in Italy," *Ancient Warfare Magazine 11*(2), 19-23.

Hillen, A. (2015) "The rise and fall of the Achaean League: Citizen Soldiers in the Hellenistic Age," *Ancient Warfare Magazine 9*(5), 18-19.

Under Development

Hillen, A. (in progress, 10 manuscript pages). "Ever Changing Ethos: Public or Private, from Athens to Social Media." Target journal: *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society*

Hillen, A. with J. Phelps. (in progress, 5 manuscript pages) "Method as Ethos" Target journal: *Written Communication*.

Professional Development

Summer 2019 MLA Institute on Access Oriented Institutions Mellon Fellow
Summer 2015 Rhetoric Society of America Institute Workshop, Institutional Histories of Rhetoric
Fall 2015 Online Teaching Certification, University of South Florida

Grants and Awards

Summer 2019   MLA Access Oriented Institutions Training Institute **$2,500**
Spring 2017   CCCC Childcare Grant **$250**
Fall 2016-Spring 2017   Utah State University Presidential Doctoral Fellowship **$20,000**

Reading Proficiencies

Attic Greek | Latin | English

Affiliations

Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication
Rhetoric Society of America
Association of Teachers of Technical Writing
Conference on College Composition and Communication
Modern Language Association
Association for Computing Machinery