"Believe me" – An analysis of Donald Trump's use of refrains

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1 Introduction

In the years following his announcement of running for president in the summer of 2015, Donald Trump's rhetoric and way of speaking have become unmistakably familiar to the public consciousness, not just in the U.S. but also around the world. Trump quickly set himself apart in the overcrowded presidential primaries by offering performances and quotes that drowned out much of the competition due to the loudness of his discursive volume (Montgomery 8). His slogans, mannerisms, gestures, and general way of speaking have all become commonly known owing to the vast amounts of Trump-related news and commentary, the countless impressions performed by comedians and presidential impersonators, and online content ranging from Trump's own tweets to fact-checking critique and internet memes. Common characteristics of Trump's rhetoric and performances recognized and commented on by these different forms of media include the repetitive nature of his speeches, his love of superlatives, his tendency to exaggerate and provoke, his wild hand gestures, tangential stories, memorable catchphrases, nicknames given to political opponents, and slogans.

As important a figure as the president of the United States is, arguably no predecessor of Trump's has managed to divide the public as much, nor dominate the around-the-clock news cycle to the extent that he does, both in the U.S. and globally. The 2016 presidential elections and Trump's presidency have escalated the raging culture war between liberals and conservatives: as a general trend, the level of political discourse in the U.S. has gone down with confrontation, division, misinformation, and politically incorrect behaviour becoming more and more the norm, thanks in no small part to Trump who made it one of his campaign promises to be his own authentic self instead of adhering to the establishment's norms. Since starting his run for president, Trump has gone through more scandals and controversies than previous modern presidents have done in their entire terms. These include the disputed border wall between the United States and Mexico, which became Trump's signature campaign promise, his inflammatory anti-immigrant rhetoric, the Access Hollywood tape where he makes lewd comments about women, the Mueller investigation into Trump's campaign's ties to Russia, the withdrawal from Paris Climate Agreement, the impeachment inquiry and trial conducted due to allegations of Trump abusing the power of his office for personal gain, the president's decision to withdraw American troops from northern Syria, his order to assassinate Iranian general Qassem Soleimani, and his response to the public health crisis caused by Covid-19. Controversies and divisive policy decisions aside, various public gaffes and curious or provocative statements have also been an

endless source of commotion in the media and especially the internet, such as the viral "Covfefe" tweet, his suggestion that Finland uses rakes to prevent forest fires, and his mispronunciation and slurring of various of words.

It comes as no surprise then, that a public figure with such a strong presence in our public discourse has been of much interest to academics as well. Michelé Lamont, Bo Yun Park, and Elena Ayala-Hurtado studied Trump's election rhetoric and its connection to social change in the U.S. in their paper *Trump's electoral speeches and his appeal to the American white working class* (2017). Yaqin Wang and Haitao Liu examined Trump's language skills in their study *Is Trump always rambling like a fourth-grade student? An analysis of stylistic features of Donald Trump's political discourse during the 2016 election* (2017). Massimiliano Demata discussed the shift to populist and fearmongering language in mainstream politics thanks to Trump in *"A great and beautiful wall." Donald Trump's populist discourse on immigration* (2017). These and many other researchers have paid much attention to Trump's political speeches and their role in him getting elected, as well as his use of Twitter. On the other hand, detailed scrutiny of Trump's language in other contexts has been given less attention, and especially his use of certain phrases or refrains has been mostly brought up by journalists as well as entertainers mimicking the president's manner of speaking. These repetitive phrases, or refrains, as I call them in this study, are used by Trump in a wide variety of contexts, especially when he is engaging in unscripted talk during interviews, press events, political rallies, and debates. They are by no means unknown to the public consciousness. When a comedian impersonates Trump, chances are that phrases such as "Believe me" and "A lot of people say" are used to make the performance seem more authentic. And the people watching or listening will most likely recognize these refrains because as the data collected for this study shows, Trump does, indeed, use them to such an extent that they have become a cliché. The purpose of this study then is to 1) identify some of these refrains using natural spoken language of Trump's as research material, 2) discuss what possible purposes they might serve in Trump's rhetoric, and 3) take the refrains previously identified and look for any shared characteristics that they have in order to get a clearer sense of what their effectiveness is based on.

2 Research material

The research material used in this study will solely consist of naturally-occurring spoken language uttered by Trump during interviews, press events, debates, and rallies. Although political speeches are an important target of analysis for political science and discourse analysis both, I chose to omit them in this case due to the unusually large difference between the style of Trump's prepared speeches and his natural way of speaking. For instance, Wang and Liu found in their analysis of the stylistic features of Trump's discourse that the vocabulary richness of Trump's language was significantly higher in his political speeches compared to his debate performances (8–9, 16–17). Similarly, the reading level of Trump's language was lowest amongst all presidential candidates during debates and higher than other candidates' in prepared speeches (Wang and Liu 9–10; 16–17). This conveys the impression that Trump may not have been particularly involved in the speech-writing process, which makes them of little value when the aim of the study is to examine Trump's natural, unscripted, use of language, albeit that he is responsible for the delivery and the content of the speeches. Also, even if Trump was the sole person behind the words in his speeches, they still differ greatly from his usual manner of speaking. This is of course not something that applies to just Trump but all politicians who come across as more formal, dignified, or stiff during speeches compared to their natural way of speaking. The focus of this study lies in impromptu communication however, since that is when various speech habits and outright verbal tics become most apparent. Formal speeches are not a good representative for such analysis since they are prepared in advance to a much larger degree than, say, a debate where the candidate is forced to think on his feet, no matter how much preparation might have been done otherwise.

An argument could be made that tweets also constitute a form of natural use of language in Trump's case. They do indeed have much more in common with Trump's way of speaking during rallies and debates than his speeches do, and they have become an important and even infamous part of Trump's communicative strategy as president. They have the same "shouty" quality to them as his performances at political rallies for example, and Trump tends to use the same catchphrases and refrains in them that he does in other contexts. Nevertheless, they are not a spoken form of language, and as my analysis later on shows, the presence of—and often responses from—an interviewer, debate opponent, or an audience can have a noticeable effect on the way Trump speaks. Tweets lack this interactivity where people in the same room will question, challenge, or encourage Trump based on what he says. The potential for such interaction is definitely there, since thousands of people on Twitter jump at the opportunity to comment on a presidential tweet. Trump does not usually engage

in any meaningful exchanges with these commentators however, and so the interaction is largely one-sided, and in any case there is no way of knowing which comments the president might have read unless he mentions them.

The specific research material used for analyzing the refrains that Trump relies on in this paper consist of interviews, debates, political rallies, and various press events that typically occur on the White House lawn. Material from 2015 and 2016 take place in the context of the presidential elections and the ones after Trump's election are typically related to his policy decisions, scandals within the administration, dealings with other politicians, and various other issues that were pressing at the time. Below, I will briefly go over where various material of Trump speaking was accessed for the study, dividing it between the five refrains covered in the analysis section.

The debates that I chose for my analysis were held between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton during the 2016 presidential race. They provided examples of the usage of the refrain "Believe me." Full transcripts and video of all three are available on Politico's website, as well as the Washington Post's. The first debate was held on 26 September, 2016, at the Hofstra University. It was moderated by NBC anchor Lester Holt. The second debate took place at the Washington University in St. Louis on 9 October, 2016, hosted by ABC News' Martha Raddatz and CNN's Anderson Cooper. The third debate was moderated by Fox News' Chris Wallace at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, on 19 October, 2016.

The material for the section dealing with the refrain "We'll see what happens" consist of an interview conducted by Chris Wallace for his program Fox News Sunday, a Fox Business interview held by Maria Bartiromo, the president's remarks given to reporters outside the White House on 15 December, 2017, as well as at Mar-a-Lago on 25 December, 2019, and a news conference held by Trump in New York on 25 August, 2017. Wallace's interview was viewed from Fox News' Youtube channel, where it was split into three videos with the titles "Trump on divided Congress, Mueller Probe, foreign challenges," "Trump on fake news, freedom of the press," and "Trump gives Chris Wallace a tour of the Oval Office." Only the first two videos were relevant for this study. A transcript of the interview provided by RealClearPolitics on their website was also used. Video of Bartiromo's interview was uploaded by Factbase Videos on Youtube, and a transcript was also available in Factbase's website. Transcripts of the various informal interactions with reporters are called "The President's Remarks" on the White House's website, where transcripts of all of them are made public. ABC news uploaded a video of the New York press event where Trump discussed Steve Bannon.

Material for the refrains "A lot of people say" and "They say" include a New Hampshire campaign rally from 17 September, 2015. A video of the rally is available on C-Span's website, titled "Presidential Candidate Donald Trump Town Hall in Rochester, New Hampshire." An interview outside the White House where Trump was asked about an approaching migrant caravan was viewed from the news site of Vanity Fair, and a press event held by Trump and South Korea's president Moon Jae-in was also used. Transcript of the latter is provided by Whitehouse.gov, as well as of Trump's remarks at the third annual "Made in America Product Showcase." Finally, an interview by Tucker Carlson for his show "Tucker Carlson Tonight" from 1 July, 2019, was used, available from Fox News' Youtube channel with the title "Exclusive Interview: Trump sits down with Tucker Carlson in Japan."

The refrain "Take a look at," and its variants, are covered by material of Trump's remarks at the White House from 21 August, 2019, and a press event from 18 August, 2019, held in Morristown, New Jersey, a transcript of which is from Factbase's website, as well as a press conference with president Sauli Niinistö of Finland with transcript from Whitehouse.gov. Video of a campaign-style political rally held by Trump in Florida on 19 February, 2017, was also used, uploaded by the AFP News Agency on Youtube with the title "Trump refers to non-existent Sweden terror attack."

Examples of "Like they've never seen before," "Nobody's ever seen anything like it," and their variants were found from an interview held by NBC's Chuck Todd on 23 June, 2019, and viewed from NBC News' website, the president's remarks at the signing of the U.S. – China Phase One Trade Agreement, which were recorded by the White House alongside other press remarks, and the president's discussion with reporters aboard Air Force One on 5 January, 2020. Recordings or transcripts of the latter were not available but the president was quoted verbatim by several news organizations, including the BBC and the Hill. Trump's responses in the aftermath of natural disasters were also analyzed, including a briefing regarding relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria from 3 October, 2017, and 19 October, 2017. Transcript of the former was available on the White House's website and the latter on Factbase. Trump's remarks on North Korea were given before a briefing on the opioid crisis in Bedminster, New Jersey, on 8 August, 2017, and were also recorded by the White House's website.

When considered as a whole, a distinction can be made between three groups of events or contexts used for this study. Political debates and rallies make up the first one, in which Trump's rhetoric is most divisive and aggressive, and he is at his most combative behavior. This is likely partly explained

by the fact that he is performing before a live audience in both situations, adding tension and stakes to the situation, or a need to "perform" the role of an aggressive anti-establishment candidate that his supporters have come to expect from him. Debates and political rallies also typically take place during the election when candidates are vying for the position of the president, and therefore hostility towards the opposing candidate is to be expected. However, one quirk of Trump's presidency is that he has been actively holding rallies and in practice campaigning for the next elections early on during his term, such as in the case of the Florida rally from 2017.

The second grouping of material is made up by the various press events and remarks given by the president, mostly at the White House, but in other places as well. In these situations, Trump tends to be more curt in his answers, with the use of refrains and vague replies, such as "A lot of people say" and "We'll see what happens" becoming very apparent. A curious practice of Trump's, which he might have adopted from President Reagan, is his tendency to meet the press on the White House lawn before a loud helicopter, forcing both the president and the reporters to yell. After the departure of the third press secretary, Sarah Sanders, the White House did not hold a single press briefing for over half a year in the intended room by the press secretary, substituting them with Trump's own impromptu remarks. These "chopper talks," as they have been humorously dubbed by comedians,[1] add an element of chaos and unpredictability to the reporters' job while also allowing Trump to make a dramatic entrance. They enable Trump to walk away from any questions he does not like without having to storm out of a room as well, and he also often cites the helicopter's rotor blades as a reason why he did not hear a question.

Trump's approach to interacting with reporters this way could also be said to have some positives: the setting is more informal and interactive and allows reporters to converse with the president and do follow-up questions in a way not necessarily possible in a formal press briefing. Trump paces in front of the gaggle of reporters, jokes with them, and shows preference to some by approaching them, making the whole situation more interactional compared to a briefing given from behind a podium. The latter has turned out to be negative for some news organizations however, such as the CNN which the president detests, leaving them often hanging while he might favor other news outlets that would not get as much time in a formal press briefing with pre-allocated turns. Trump's preference of informal and colloquial communication also becomes obvious and might be preferred by some over a typical politician's textbook PR speeches. Leaving out the go-between role of the press secretary

[1] Colbert, Stephen. "Trump tries To Normalize His Criminal Behavior By Doing It In Public." *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, 3 Oct. 2019: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDhc3bK-D-o

might also be viewed as helpful since there can be no misunderstandings if the source is the president himself, unfiltered by anyone else's spin. This is arguably especially relevant for the Trump administration, since the previous press secretaries often faced the difficult task of having to clarify or defend Trump's various comments, made especially on Twitter, that undermined the administration's official policy or caused outrage for one reason or another.[2] With Trump doing the messaging himself, the press secretary is spared from awkward situations where they have to resort to answers such as "The president's tweet speaks for itself," or just ignore the reporters' questioning altogether. Finally, even if one disagrees with Trump's message, it can still be viewed as a positive that he himself is handling the press, since that way he has all the responsibility and no one else to hide behind, which is important in terms of accountability.

The third category consists of interviews and other one-on-one interactions with journalists. Perhaps surprisingly, these make up the context where Trump's rhetoric is least hostile, and he tends to act relatively amiable towards the interviewers despite his usually vocal disdain for the news media. Trump gives most of his interviews to Fox News, likely because it is the most popular conservative news organization in the country that also covers Trump favorably. However, he did show signs of irritation when asked about some awkward issues by Fox News' Chris Wallace, and conversely was very pleasant with NBC News' Chuck Todd who did not challenge him overly much, so his reactions can likely be explained with how light the reporter's questioning is. Trump appears to be especially offended by a journalist's line of questioning that suggests in any way that he has handled something poorly. An example of this can be seen when a reporter asks Trump a seemingly easy question about what kind of message he would like to send to Americans worried of the coronavirus:

> [EXAMPLE 1]
> REPORTER: So, what do you say to Americans who are scared, I guess? Nearly 200 dead and 14,000 who are sick and millions as you witness who are scared right now, what do you say to Americans who are watching you right now who are scared?
> TRUMP: I say that you are a terrible reporter, that's what I say. I think it's a very nasty question. I think it's a very bad signal that you are putting out to the American people. They're looking for answers and they're looking for hope. And you're doing sensationalism and the same with NBC and Concast—I don't call it Comcast, I call it Concast.

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[2] https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914497877543735296 and
https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1064216956679716864 are examples of such tweets.

(Trump, Donald. White House Press Briefing on Covid-19, The White House, Washington, D.C., 20 March, 2020.)

There has been widespread criticism of the Trump administration's handling of the coronavirus outbreak, dating back to the cutting of the global health security team from 2018, and more recently related to Trump's downplaying of the virus or his advice that conflicts with medical experts. This might explain why it is such a touchy issue to Trump that the mere suggestion that people are worried under his watch drives him into attacking the reporter rather than answering the softball question. In any case, the reporters that do not aggravate Trump when interviewing him tend to get lengthy and detailed answers and it almost appears like the president is confiding in them at times. When this happens, the refrains Trump uses tend to be more suited to respond to a reporter's question (We'll see what happens") or to bring up a talking point ("Take a look at") rather than attempting to influence opinions more directly ("Believe me") despite the fact that the one-on-one interview will ultimately be likely viewed by an audience of millions. All in all, it seems that the more people there are in a room when Trump is talking off-the-cuff, the more divisive or hostile his rhetoric is, whereas when interacting with just one or a few reporters, he tends to be more accommodating and courteous.

3 Theoretical and methodological framework

In this section I will be covering some of the previous research that has been conducted regarding Trump's rhetoric. This is followed by discussion of my method, political discourse analysis, as well as relevant terminology.

3.1 Previous research

The content of Trump's speeches and the rhetorical devices that he uses have been of particular interest to scholars seeking to answer the question of how such an unusual and politically incorrect candidate managed to win the presidential election. Factors such as the prominence of certain voter demographics, disillusionment with politicians, the efficiency of Trump's campaign strategy compared to Clinton's, the two-party system, the electoral college, the role of the media and the advent of fake news, misogyny, Clinton's unpopularity, foreign interference in the election process, and the disenfranchisement of parts of the population have all been named as reasons for the success that Trump enjoyed in 2016, even despite the polling data being against him. Such factors might explain how Trump ultimately gained enough votes to become president, but the question of how he reached the point where he was by far the most popular Republican candidate in the primaries to begin with could be argued to ultimately lie in his rhetoric, way of performing, and communicating his policy ideas. Like the president himself who strongly divides opinions, researchers, too, have come to some conflicting conclusions regarding what made Trump's rhetoric effective enough to get him elected. One study found that the repetitive nature of Trump's speeches helps him by causing an "unconscious response of support" among people listening to him (Ryshina-Pankova and Quam 154). Martin Montgomery suggested in his paper *Post-truth politics? Authenticity, populism and the electoral discourses of Donald Trump* (2017) that the effectiveness of Trump's rhetoric is based on the perception of him being his authentic self despite his other shortcomings (18–19). On the other end of the spectrum, Wang and Liu (2017) conclude that Trump's grasp of the language is similar to that of a fourth-grade student (17) and Geoffrey Pullum (2015) goes so far as to suggest that Trump suffers from a loss of language skills due to aphasia, which begs the question of whether Trump's use of language could have been a liming factor for his success as well, at least among some voters, rather than an advantage. Casey Kelly (2019) identifies victimization, resentment, and revenge as "inverted civic virtues" that Trump promotes in his rhetoric and uses the concept of "ressentiment" to explain how he manages to combine victimhood and hostility towards others in his rhetoric.

3.2 Theory

The following theory section will first address political discourse analysis. This is followed by discussion of van Leeuwen's theory of legitimation in discourse with a special focus on appeals to authority, which are especially relevant in my analysis of Trump's use of refrains.

3.2.1 Political discourse analysis

Political discourse analysis can be understood as both the analysis of political use of language and as a political, that is, critical approach to discourse analysis (van Dijk 11; Dunmire 736). For this study, I will be employing van Dijk's approach that views political discourse from a critical perspective. When it comes to analysing the research material in practise, I will be largely relying on Fairclough's model of doing critical discourse analysis, which consists of the three stages of describing, interpreting, and explaining the contents of a text (Fairclough 26). According to Fairclough, the stage of description involves analysis of vocabulary and grammar, and specifically, how the world, different actors, and relations between them are described. The employment of metaphors and emotive language is also of interest in this stage, as well as how sentences are linked together (Fairclough 110–111). The second stage, interpretation, involves studying the interactional elements of the text. This means analyzing the context in which the text, or in Trump's case, speech, is produced, the types of discourses that are present, as well considering the positions of other participants in the context, and how their understanding and interpretations might differ from those of the speaker or the writer. (Fairclough 142, 162). Thirdly, to Fairclough the stage of explanation means examining the power relations that have shaped the discourses relevant to the text, the presence of ideologies, and whether power relations are bring sustained or transformed (Fairclough 166).

Much has been written on what constitutes as political discourse. A simple, and for this study sufficient, definition is that political discourse consists of texts and speech produced by political actors i.e. politicians. It is nevertheless also worthwhile to keep in mind that various recipients and mediators of these discourses, such as the media, voters, activists, and lobbyists are also a part of the political process. A more accurate, if not broader, definition of political discourse therefore includes not just politicians but all other participants in the political process (van Dijk 12–13). In this study the political actor whose use of language is being examined is Donald Trump, while other political actors who are also a part of the process include journalists, debate moderators, other politicians participating in the interviews and debates, as well as the spectators of the various events.

Perhaps a more important factor in defining what counts as political discourse is the context in which the texts in question are produced. Afterall, not everything a politician says or writes is political per se. Van Dijk points out that politicians typically only talk politically when their talk is contextualized as such (14). For the president of the United States, the most prominent politician in the world, the number of such contexts is arguably larger than for ordinary politicians. For instance, it has become a tradition among presidential candidates to stop by at fast food restaurants while being followed by reporters during the elections. For most people there is nothing political about eating a hamburger, but for a presidential candidate such an act can be interpreted as a way of trying to make them seem more relatable to voters by promoting their fondness for cheap, ordinary, American food. Concerning the research material of this study, political rallies, debates, interviews, and press events obviously count as contexts where Trump is acting as a politician.

Finally, an important criterion of doing political discourse analysis is that the political-communicative events being analyzed are somehow relevant or of importance to the political process (van Dijk, 38). For instance, discourse analysis of the printed text in the merchandise that presidential candidates sell during their campaigns would likely be considered irrelevant by many. Refrains, as defined below, are among the rhetorical devices that Trump employs. They are used by him to promote his agenda, to sway potential voters, back up various claims, bolster his authority, and to polish his public image. These are all important goals of a politician hoping to get elected, pass legislation, and retain their popularity, and as such are an absolutely relevant thing to study. Their relevance is amplified by the fact that Trump won the presidency, which suggests his rhetoric during the elections was effective, and as shown below, refrains are a fundamental part of Trump's means of expressing himself. Accordingly, they deserve to be given some attention.

3.2.2 Legitimation in discourse and authority

In his article *Legitimation in discourse and communication* (2007), Theo van Leeuwen discusses the means through which people provide legitimation for their social practises through discourse. He identifies four categories of legitimation based on 1) authority, 2) moral evaluation, 3) rationalization, and 4) mythopoesis, that is, legitimation expressed via narratives (van Leeuwen 91–92). In the case of Donald Trump's political rhetoric, much of the legitimation he provides for his views fall in the first category and are based on the appeal to authority. This becomes apparent later in the paper when discussing his use of the refrain "Believe me" for instance. Out of the other three, moral evaluation is based on referencing widely accepted moral values. For example, evaluative adjectives can be used

to differentiate good and evil, acceptable and unacceptable, or abstraction can be used to moralize an action, like when a politician frames his racist rhetoric as a practise of free thought and speech (van Leeuwen 97–99). When it comes to rationalization, van Leeuwen makes a distinction between instrumental rationalization and theoretical rationality. The former is used to provide legitimization based on goals and the effects of various actions, whereas the latter is used to legitimize practises based on the "natural order of things" (van Leeuwen 101–105). Mythopoesis is used to legitimize action through cautionary or moral tales. In moral tales people are rewarded for their proper social practises or for restoring the proper order of things. Cautionary tales warn people of the consequences of not adhering to the norms of society (van Leeuwen 105–107).

Most relevant of the four categories of legitimation for this study is authorization, which van Leeuwen defines as "legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom and law, and of persons in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested" (92). Authorization can be further split into different forms, such as the authority of tradition (96), impersonal authority possessed by laws and regulations (96), and conformity, that is, the justification along the lines of "It's what everybody does" (96–97). In the case of Trump, likely the most relevant category is personal authority. First, as a presidential candidate he drew his authority from his wealth, fame, and business background, and later as president from the prestige of the office itself. This is somewhat at odds with van Leeuwen's suggestion that personal authority is most notably wielded by parents and teachers who do not have to provide reasoning for their instructions, but in practise the power wielded by a U.S. president is such that decisions often do indeed come down to the same "Because I say so" –level of argumentation as well. Authority of tradition is of course essential for a conservative: The campaign slogan "Make America Great again" echoes the sentiment that things used to be better before. However, in Trump's case conservative tradition is not as emphasized in his use of refrains as might be expected, which will be discussed later. Finally, van Leeuwen differentiates commendation as a form of authority legitimation, split into the authority of role models and experts, the latter of which also fits Trump's portrayal of himself as a savvy businessman who can fix America's problems unlike anyone else. Van Leeuwen, too, notes that these different categories can overlap and be combined (92). The authority possessed by others is also relevant when Trump refers to what other people say, think, or want according to him, or when he promotes endorsements and support that he has gained from other people or organizations while running for office.

3.3 Definitions

3.3.1 Refrain

In this study I will be using the term *refrain* when talking about the repetitive, almost slogan-like, phrases that Trump uses as rhetorical tools when talking unscripted. Arguments could be made in favor of other terms, such as slogan, mantra, or catchphrase, however. Therefore, I will next briefly discuss the different definitions of the terms and argue why I concluded that *refrain* is the best choice.

Oxford English Dictionary defines the word *refrain* as "an utterance, phrase, or theme that is often repeated; specifically (as) a repeated comment or complaint" (refrain, n.1.). *Slogan* on the other hand is described in this context as "a motto associated with a political party or movement or other group," or "a short and striking or memorable phrase used in advertising" (slogan, n.). *Mantra*'s definition is "a constantly or monotonously repeated phrase or sentence; a characteristic formula or refrain; a byword, slogan, or catchphrase" (mantra, n.). Finally, the definition of a *catchphrase* offered by the OED is "a frequently used or well-known phrase or slogan, typically associated with a particular group or person and serving to attract public attention or interest" (catchphrase, n.). These definitions make it quite clear that there is much overlap between the different terms and that in some situations they can be used interchangeably. The difference between them is perhaps best demonstrated by using the subject of the study i.e. Trump as an example. Starting with the term slogan, "Make America Great Again" is an obvious example of it. A slogan is artificially crafted for the purpose of being associated with some brand, company, or in the case of a political slogan, a person or a party. Catchphrases are also used to knowingly build a brand or a character, to entertain, or to make a reference to someone. "You're fired" became such a catchphrase after being used by Trump is his reality TV-show The Apprentice. The word *mantra* probably comes closest to being interchangeable with *refrain*, but the term possesses a religious overtone. Moreover, mantras are not always spoken out aloud, but repeated only to oneself instead with no apparent interactional aim in mind.

Furthermore, a refrain can be understood as the repetition of a theme, structure, or thought in different ways, instead of being limited to the same exact words. For instance, I consider "Take a look at" to be one of the refrains employed by Trump, used to draw attention to some entity or phenomenon that is typically undergoing or doing something negative without being more specific in details. When talking about unfair copyright practises, Trump might say "If you take a look at China, it's terribly unfair what they're doing." But when suggesting that some crisis is taking place in Sweden, he says

"Look at what's happening last night in Sweden." Other variants include "Look at what's happening with" or "Look at what's going on in" and so on. Despite being phrased differently, I consider all of the above to be examples of the one and the same refrain. Slogans, mantras, and catchphrases are much more rigid in how they are used. For instance, the catchphrase "You're fired" does not have the same iconic effect if rephrased as "You're about to be fired" or "I'm firing you." A slogan repeated at political rallies and printed on merchandize can also not possess much variation, lest it become more forgettable. Mantras are also not subject to much variation: by its definition, a mantra is repeated often in a monotonous manner. An argument in favor of using the term refrain is that it is the most encompassing one of the four. It can include the more mantra-like or catchphrase-like phrases such as "Believe me" or "It's not a big deal," which are immutably repeated by Trump, as well as phrases that are subject to more variation, such as "A lot of people say." What all of these refrains have in common is that they are constantly repeated by Trump, they tend to be used in similar contexts, and they could be argued to possess various persuasive functions. They also tend to especially occur when Trump is talking unscripted, although as noted above, these refrains are also commonly employed by Trump on Twitter. Lastly, it is worth noting that although this study shows that refrains are an important part of Trump's rhetoric, their use is by no means unprecedented for U.S. presidents, or politicians and people in general. Rather, they are quite common in English speech. For instance, Barack Obama is well known for his refrain "Let me be clear," whereas Nixon was fond of saying "Let me make one thing perfectly clear."

Having established what I mean by a refrain, it is also necessary to discuss the criteria that I used to classify phrases into refrains, as well as each other's variants. Three factors were considered when categorizing refrains. They were the following:

1. The frequency of the phrase
2. The form of the phrase
3. The function of the phrase

The frequency of a phrase is the most notable criterion of whether it could be considered to be a refrain or not. Although an utterance might perform the same social action and serve the same apparent purpose as a refrain in, for instance, convincing the audience of something, not all of them are frequent enough to be considered refrains. This criterion could also be labelled recognizability in the sense that the refrains examined in this study are immediately recognizable by anyone who has spent any time listening to the president's rhetoric. Some of them, such as "Believe me," are recurrent

enough to be familiar even to the most casual follower of U.S. politics. In the same vein, the frequency of a certain form of a refrain can be roughly used to determine whether it is a less frequent variant or the main form of a refrain.

The form of the phrase as a criterion refers to what it looks like, that is, what exact words the refrain consists of, and what the syntactic structure and the order of the sentence elements are. "A lot of people say" and "They say" are examples of a refrain with some variation regarding its subject, but the overall structure combined with the function of the refrain makes them variants of one and the same refrain. Conjugation and the adaptation of the refrain into the surrounding sentence typically also leads to some variation in its form, but the core of the refrain remains the same and is easily recognized with common sense. Such refrains tend to be longer, like in the case of "(If you) take a look at (what's happening)," where the parts in parentheses are often left out by Trump, or replaced with something else.

Finally, the function of the phrase is what ultimately determines whether two refrains are related or not. The forms of the refrains "Believe me" and "Can you believe it" have some syntactic and lexical similarities, but the function differs dramatically in that the former is an assurance used to persuade the listener of the speaker's authority, while the latter is an exclamative question used to wonder at or bemoan something for emphasis. It is worth noting that any deductions about the function of what someone says is ultimately speculative in nature; there is no way of knowing what Trump's intention is when he says something. Some conclusions can be drawn based on the interactional contexts in which the refrains are used however, as well as common knowledge of various events, and the meanings of the words themselves of course.

3.3.2 Refrain pattern

At the end of each section dealing with a certain refrain, a table of the various uses of the refrain and its surrounding sentence will be presented and then discussed. I call these refrain patterns, since the way in which they are used in a sentence by Trump tends to be very systematic and recurrent, as if following a pattern. For instance, as shown later, when employing the refrain "Like they've never seen before," Trump's use of the refrain tends to be preceded by a conditional sentence of some kind, where a condition is set for some entity. This is followed by a threat delivered by using the refrain, and then usually followed by some promise or suggestion of reconciliation with said entity as a

counter to the previously harsh rhetoric. Below is an example of a refrain pattern from when Trump was discussing Iran. It is further analyzed in a later section.

1.	"I'm not looking for war and **if** there is…"	Conditional sentence
2.	"…it'll be obliteration **like you've never seen before**."	Threat + Refrain
3.	"But I'm not looking to do that. But you can't have a nuclear weapon. You want to talk? Good."	Reconciliation

3.3.3 Rhetoric

Finally, seeing how I have defined refrains as rhetorical devices employed by Trump, it is also useful to discuss a definition of rhetoric itself.

The word *rhetoric* comes from ancient Greek and means "oratory." Aristotle summarized rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (Montgomery 7). The Oxford English Dictionary defines rhetoric as "the art of using language effectively so as to persuade or influence others, especially the exploitation of figures of speech and other compositional techniques to this end" (rhetoric, n.1). On the use of rhetoric, Aristotle identified three kinds of appeals: The ones that appeal to argument or evidence (*logos*), emotion (*pathos*), and the character (*ethos*) of the speaker (Montgomery 7). Andrew Heywood observes in his book *Politics* that today the word rhetoric is a loaded term that comes with a negative association. It can "imply high-sounding, but essentially vacuous speech" (Heywood 457). The OED's choice of word in defining rhetoric as *exploiting* figures of speech and other techniques also enforces the notion of it being an at least somewhat questionable practice.

Persuasion and an attempt to influence are both clear objectives of Trump's as a politician, and refrains appear to be used by him to accomplish these things. "Believe me" is an instruction to trust in what the speaker is saying and "Take a look at" is an urge to consider something brought up by the speaker as evidence of something he is arguing. Montgomery argues that Trump's rhetoric is most notably based on ethos, that is, the persuasiveness of the speaker based on his character (7). This can be linked with van Leeuwen's theory of legitimation through authorization, since authority has much to do with the speaker's persuasiveness and character. As an example, Montgomery notes that quotes such as "Nobody knows the system better than me, which is why I alone can fix it" and "I have made billions of dollars in business making deals" are cases of Trump relying on ethos (7). Furthermore,

both quotes can also be considered to be cases of Trump depending on his personal authority, as suggested by van Leeuwen. As my analysis later on shows, this kind of appeal to his personal success and authority are extremely relevant for some of Trump's refrains. At the same time, I will also highlight in my study that Trump's rhetoric is by no means solely restricted to the use of ethos. Appeals to the audience's emotions (pathos) and reason (logos) can also be just as relevant and effective. The latter tends to be especially de-emphasized in discussions of Trump's supporters, and masses of political followers in general, who are typically characterized as a mindless mob controlled by their emotions alone. However, during my research of Trump's refrains, I found that factual evidence and logical reasoning, or at least an impression of them, also play an important role in his rhetoric, typically by being used to give credence to more outlandish or inflammatory claims. The line between pathos, ethos, and logos as appeals also tend to blur together in Trump's rhetoric: For instance, he uses statistics and facts about the various shortcomings of the U.S. society and the world at large to appeal to people's emotions and incite them into supporting him, while at other times he references to factual-sounding numbers and statistics that are, in fact, incorrect or distorted, in which case his authority and persuasiveness are relevant in selling these things to the audience.

4. Analysis of Trump's refrains

In the following sections five common refrains of Trump's will be analyzed. Examples of the various speech acts in which the refrains were used will be quoted, followed by discussion of the language and words used, the context, possible functions, and power relations that are being shaped. At the end of each section the refrain and its surrounding sentence will be presented in refrain pattern tables in order to highlight how the refrains tend to have a fixed place in Trump's speech.

4.1 Believe me

Perhaps the most iconic refrain employed by Trump is "Believe me," which has become so easily recognizable that it is commonly used by comedians and imitators trying to mimic the president. At the same time, journalists and scholars as well have noted the pervasiveness of the phrase and refer to it when discussing Trump's rhetoric. In his article *Post-truth politics? Authenticity, populism and the electoral discourses of Donald Trump*, Martin Montgomery notes the refrain's nature as an "overt marker of direct address" used to command the people listening (11), while Justin Quam and Marianna Ryshina-Pankova in their study *"Let me tell you…": Audience engagement strategies in the campaign speeches of Trump, Clinton, and Sanders* (2016) count the refrain as part of an oratory strategy where a proclamation is followed by a pronouncement (151–152). In this section I will cover the refrain "Believe me" using the three 2016 presidential debates between Trump and Hillary Clinton as examples.

During the first debate, Trump used the refrain "Believe me" seven times in a variety of contexts. In the second and third debates, the refrain came up twice in both. At the first debate, the first and second use of the refrain occurred when Trump started to bemoan the state of the economy:

> [EXAMPLE 2]
> TRUMP: Now, look, we have the worst revival of an economy since the Great Depression.
> **And believe me**: We're in a bubble right now. And the only thing that looks good is the stock market, but if you raise interest rates even a little bit, that's going to come crashing down. We are in a big, fat, ugly bubble. And we better be awfully careful. And we have a Fed that's doing political things. This Janet Yellen of the Fed. The Fed is doing political—by keeping the interest rates at this level. **And believe me**: The day Obama goes off, and he leaves, and goes out to the golf course for the rest of his life to play golf, when they raise interest rates,

you're going to see some very bad things happen, because the Fed is not doing their job. The Fed is being more political than Secretary Clinton.

(Trump, Donald. The First Presidential Debate. Hofstra University, New York, 26 September, 2016.)

Trump appears to be using the refrain for the same purpose in both cases. First, he utters the refrain in order to makes an appeal to the audience to trust whatever he is about to say. Out of the four categories of legitimation identified by van Leeuwen, this is clearly a case of legitimation through authorization and, more specifically, personal authority. Trump does not refer to the expert authority of others, nor does he rely on the authority of tradition or conformity (van Leeuwen 94-97) when he says "Believe me." He is not invoking any justification but relies on his own perceived expert opinion. This could be argued to be especially effective when discussing the economy, since much of Trump's campaign's reasoning for why he should be elected had to do with his business acumen and success as a real estate developer. On the other hand, "real" personal authority, as defined by van Leeuwen, is based on legitimate authority of a person due to their status or role in some institution (94), which allows them to not rely on any other justification aside from "because I say so." At the time of the debates, Trump did not possess such status within the political circles, since he was not the president yet, nor had he been elected to any public office before. Rather, the positions of authority he possessed were related his businesses and fame. Nevertheless, the refrain is then followed by a claim of some kind that the audience should believe because of his authority. In this case he is claiming that the US economy is "in a bubble," that the interest rates should not be raised, that Obama will spend the rest of his life golfing, and that the Federal Reserve is politically biased. Some of the things Trump claims are debatable, others wild speculation. He also does not return to address any of the claims since the debate moves on to discuss Trump's tax returns. In other words, he offers no proof of anything he is saying. The arguments are solely based on his authority and judgement, instead of examples of what makes "The Fed" political, why a slight rise in interest rates would crash the stock market, or what the "very bad things" are.

The same pattern of an appeal to Trump's authority followed by a claim that is not backed up by factual evidence or argumentation can be seen when Clinton's email scandal comes up. During the final days of the election, the FBI announced that it had reopened its investigation into Clinton's careless use of a private email server for government business. Trump asserts that his opinions on the topic are shared by the rest of the country as well:

[EXAMPLE 3]

TRUMP: When you have your staff taking the Fifth Amendment, taking the Fifth so they're not prosecuted, when you have the man that set up the illegal server taking the Fifth, I think it's disgraceful. **And believe me**, this country thinks it's—really thinks it's disgraceful, also. (Trump, Donald. The First Presidential Debate. Hofstra University, New York, 26 September, 2016.)

In terms of power relations, both candidates are of course attempting to sustain or increase their own political power during a presidential debate by trying to come across as the better candidate while smearing their competitor at the same time. In this specific example Trump is empowering the mostly conservative half of the country that was outraged by Clinton's conduct as the Secretary of State when she did not follow the State Department's safety protocols in her communications. This is done by generalizing their view as being representative of the whole country, which is not unusual by itself, but rather arguably the norm in a country with a divisive two-party system. The claim of speaking for the whole country on any issue is naturally an extreme example of a perceived top-down power structure that only a president could claim to be on top of, and even then dubiously.

Finally, the refrain also comes up when Trump discusses a deal regarding Iran's use of nuclear power and Israel's prime minister:

[EXAMPLE 4]

TRUMP: This is one of the worst deals ever made by any country in history. The deal with Iran will lead to nuclear problems, all they have to do is sit back ten years, and they don't have to do much. And they're gonna end up getting nuclear. I met with Bibi Netanyahu the other day, **believe me**, he's not a happy camper.
(Trump, Donald. The First Presidential Debate. Hofstra University, New York, 26 September, 2016.)

The various claims that Trump makes are based on his supposed knowledge of various things: What the country thinks of Clinton's conduct, how Obama will spend his free time, and how he knows better what to do with the economy than the Federal Reserve. Example four is perhaps the most reasonable claim of knowledge that Trump makes in these examples, or at least it is the most likely to be true since it is common knowledge that Israel and prime minister Netanyahu firmly opposed the nuclear deal with Iran, and would likely speak against it. Although he mainly relies on his own

personal authority when using the refrain, here Netanyahu is seemingly referenced as another source of authority based on expertise or perhaps conformity: it is not just Trump who thinks the trade deal is flawed, but the prime minister of a country that is an ally of the U.S. and close to Iran as well.

Trump's extensive reliance on this refrain is curious in the sense that presidential candidates are historically much more likely to declare what they themselves believe in, rather than using an imperative to urge the audience to take their word for granted (Schnoebelen 2016). So rather than saying "Believe me, this country thinks […] it's disgraceful also," a more typical candidate would say "I believe this country thinks it's disgraceful as well," or something along those lines. This would likely be considered the more reasonable approach while still allowing the candidate to frame his opinions as something widely believed. However, if "I believe" were to switch places with "Believe me" in the other instances were Trump used the refrain, the results would often be quite awkward. For example, "I believe the day Obama goes off, and he leaves, and goes out to the golf course for the rest of his life to play golf […]" or "I met with Bibi Netanyahu the other day, I believe he's not a happy camper" sound a bit nonsensical and overly formal respectively. In the former example Trump's claim that Obama will spend the rest of his days golfing is of course a nonsensical claim in any case, but it sounds even more absurd when introduced with "I believe" rather than "believe me." Considered from this point of view, the refrain seems to also allow Trump to make absurd or exaggerative claims by introducing them with a colloquial "Believe me" rather than a formal "I believe" for instance. The latter would call for arguments or evidence from the speaker, whereas the former assumes taken-for-granted views shared by the audience, or can be taken as humor or irony altogether due to an informal sounding introduction in the form of the refrain.

During the second debate, Trump accuses Clinton of harboring hatred for himself and the people who support him:

> [EXAMPLE 5]
> TRUMP: We have a divided nation. We have a very divided nation. You look at Charlotte. You look at Baltimore. You look at the violence that's taking place in the inner cities, Chicago, you take a look at Washington, D.C. We have an increase in murder within our cities, the biggest in 45 years. We have a divided nation, because people like her—and **believe me**, she has tremendous hate in her heart. And when she said deplorables, she meant it. And when she said irredeemable, they're irredeemable, you didn't mention that, but when she said they're irredeemable, to me that might have been even worse.

(Trump, Donald. The Second Presidential Debate. Washington University, St. Louis, 9 October, 2016.)

Here, Trump seems to be stoking feelings of outrage in his followers by seizing on now infamous comments that Clinton had made earlier during a speech at a fundraiser[3] where she had generalized that half of Trump's supporters were "a basket of deplorables" that Trump has given a voice to during his candidacy. As noted by Casey Kelly in *Donald J. Trump and the rhetoric of ressentiment* (2019), feelings of victimhood and anger provide Trump with "nearly inexhaustible rhetorical resources," that he uses to bring his supporters together in what he frames as a righteous cause (3–4). Trump claims to possess knowledge of what a hateful person Clinton is deep down, and rhetoric such as this led in part to her becoming a target of "revenge fantasies" (16–17) in Trump's speeches and among his supporters. Labeling a significant portion of the electorate in the way Clinton did provided Trump with a plethora of ammunition to aim at her, and Trump appears almost gleeful when repeating her words. Whereas the refrain itself is used to assure that Clinton has "tremendous hate" in her heart, the latter claim in turn is used as proof that people like her are to blame for the division and violent crime in the country: One baseless accusation is used to support the previous one, and then is followed by another subjective claim of her really meaning what she said.

Aside from acting as a kind of assurance that what Trump is about to say is true, "Believe me" could also be interpreted to serve the purpose of preparing the audience for an important argument. In example two, both before and after saying "Believe me: we're in a bubble" Trump spends considerable time arguing about Clinton and making vague claims about the Fed being political or Obama going golfing. By uttering the refrain "Believe me," Trump could be signaling to the audience that he is coming to the point that he is trying to make, and it is time to pay attention. As noted by Martin Montgomery, one of the characteristics of Trump rhetoric is his vernacular, often meandering, way of speaking (9–12). One of the purposes of this particular refrain could then be, at least in some situations, to pause and bring clarity and purpose to the otherwise rambling way of performing. On the other hand, the effectiveness of such a strategy could be hampered by over-usage of the refrain.

Although the position of the refrain in a sentence usually appears to be before a claim Trump is making, sometimes it can also come at the end of a sentence as well, after Trump has made his claim.

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[3] Chozick, Amy. "Hillary Clinton Calls Many Trump Backers 'Deplorables,' and G.O.P. Pounces." *New York Times*, 10 September 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/11/us/politics/hillary-clinton-basket-of-deplorables.html

When responding to Clinton's accusation that he has not been paying his fair share of taxes, Trump says that the money would have been wasted anyway:

[EXAMPLE 6]

CLINTON: And maybe because you haven't paid any federal income tax for a lot of years. And the other thing I think is important…

TRUMP: It would be squandered, too, **believe me**.

(Trump, Donald. The First Presidential Debate. Hofstra University, New York, 26 September, 2016.)

The difference here compared to previous uses of the refrain is that Trump is interrupting Clinton's turn of speaking. In making his comment, Trump is not so much presenting a valid-sounding argument as he is scoring points with the audience by being amusing, as well as unsettling Clinton in the process. In fact, Trump's intonation falls towards the end of the sentence, whereas when starting an argument with "Believe me," the refrain is spoken loudly and with emphasis. The opposite happens here when he is responding to Clinton and speaking out of turn, and as a result he has to be brief and tell the joke quickly before trailing off as Clinton continues.

The refrain is also positioned at the end of the sentence after the claim during the two examples from the third debate:

[EXAMPLE 7]

TRUMP: The problem is, you talk but you don't get anything done, Hillary. You don't. Just like when you ran the State Department, $6 billion was missing. How do you miss $6 billion? You ran the State department. $6 billion was either stolen, they don't know. It's gone. $6 billion. If you become president, this country is going to be in some mess. **Believe me**.

(Trump, Donald. The Third Presidential Debate. University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 19 October, 2016.)

[EXAMPLE 8]

TRUMP: Chris, I think it's—I think I should respond. First of all, I had a very good meeting with the President of Mexico. Very nice man. We will be doing very much better with Mexico on trade deals. **Believe me**. The NAFTA deal signed by her husband is one of the worst deals ever made of any kind signed by anybody. It's a disaster.

Based on these examples, it appears that "Believe me" alone is more commonly used when it is positioned at the end of a sentence or a statement, whereas when the claim Trump is making comes after the refrain, "Believe me" is accompanied by *and* as seen in examples 2–5.

The refrain pattern of "Believe me" can be demonstrated thus:

1.	"Now, look, we have the **worst** revival of an economy since the Great Depression."	Criticism
2.	"**And believe me**:"	Refrain
3.	"We're in a bubble right now."	Claim

1.	"We are in a **big**, **fat**, **ugly** bubble. And we better be awfully careful. And we have a Fed that's doing political things. This Janet Yellen of the Fed. The Fed is doing political—by keeping the interest rates at this level."	Criticism
2.	"**And believe me**:"	Refrain
3.	"The day Obama goes off, and he leaves, and goes out to the golf course for the rest of his life to play golf, when they raise interest rates, you're going to see some very bad things happen, because the Fed is not doing their job."	Claim

1.	"When you have your staff taking the Fifth Amendment, taking the Fifth so they're not prosecuted, when you have the man that set up the illegal server taking the Fifth, I think it's **disgraceful**."	Criticism
2.	"**And believe me**"	Refrain
3.	"This country thinks it's—really thinks it's disgraceful, also."	Claim

1.	"This is one of the **worst** deals ever made by any country in history. The deal with Iran will lead to nuclear problems, all they have to do is sit back ten years, and they don't have to do much."	Criticism
2.	"I met with Bibi Netanyahu the other day, **believe me**…"	Refrain
3.	"…he's not a happy camper."	Claim

1.	"We have a divided nation. We have a very divided nation. You look at Charlotte. You look at Baltimore. You look at the violence that's taking place in the inner cities, Chicago, you take a look at Washington, D.C. We have an increase in murder within our cities, the biggest in 45 years. We have a divided nation…"	Criticism
2.	"…because people like her—**and believe me**…"	Refrain
3.	"…she has tremendous hate in her heart. And when she said deplorables, she meant it."	Claim

1.	"It would be squandered, too…"	Claim
2.	"…**believe me**"	Refrain

1.	"The problem is, you talk but you don't get anything done, Hillary. You don't. Just like when you ran the State Department, $6 billion was missing. How do you miss $6 billion? You ran the State department. $6 billion was either stolen, they don't know. It's gone. $6 billion."	Criticism
2.	"If you become president, this country is going to be in some mess."	Claim
3.	"**Believe me**."	Refrain

1.	"We will be doing very much better with Mexico on trade deals."	Claim
2.	"**Believe me**."	Refrain
3.	"The NAFTA deal signed by her husband is one of the **worst** deals ever made of any kind signed by anybody. It's a disaster."	Criticism

In six of the eight examples, Trump's use of the refrain seems to follow the same pattern. First, he voices his criticism of various things, whether they are related to the U.S. economy, the conduct of Clinton or her staff, or the nuclear deal with Iran. This portion of his speech typically includes scolding, or otherwise loaded, words such as *worse* or *disgraceful*. It is followed by the refrain, which acts as a bridge between the context that Trump has been portraying critically, and the claim itself, which tends to be more questionable, subjective, or rooted in Trump's own opinions. In two cases the order of the elements of Trump's rhetoric are reversed: in the second to last table the claim precedes the refrain, and in the last one the claim and the criticism have switched places. Example six also stands out due to its shortness. Arguably, "It would be squandered too" could be counted as both criticism and a claim. Indeed, in many other examples elements of criticism can be found from the claim portion, and vice versa. However, the criticism portions of the speech as compartmentalized here tend to be lengthier and act as more of a contextualizing introduction or build up to the claim that he is making, whereas the claim itself is more concise and often delivered with a note of finality. The criticism that Trump voices also tends to be more grounded on facts, history of policy decisions, and statistics whereas the claims he makes are more dubious or debatable. For instance, the claims that Obama will go golfing for the rest of his life, that Trump will make better deals with Mexico as president, that Clinton has "tremendous hate in her heart," or that the whole country thinks that the behavior of Clinton's staff is disgraceful are all subjective opinions of Trump's, no doubt shared by some, but nevertheless not grounded in evidence but presented as absolute truths by him nevertheless.

Finally, as was mentioned in the definitions section, refrains are not a phenomenon unique to Trump alone, and the refrains covered here are by no means restricted to him. This is demonstrated by Clinton's usage of the refrain "Believe me" during the second debate:

[EXAMPLE 9]

CLINTON: We have never in the history of our country been in a situation where an adversary, a foreign power, is working so hard to influence the outcome of the election. And **believe me**, they're not doing it to get me elected. They're doing it to try to influence the election for Donald Trump.

(Clinton, Hillary. The Second Presidential Debate. Washington University, St. Louis, 9 October, 2016.)

Here, Clinton is referencing Russia's attempts to influence the 2016 elections as reported by U.S. intelligence agencies at the time. The structure of the argument, and the refrain's position in it, is similar to the refrain pattern of Trump's that was detailed before. The refrain is preceded by context of what is going on according to her and followed by a claim. At least this particular claim is far less debatable than many of the ones Trump makes in the previous examples considering various reports that have come out during and after the elections that confirm what Clinton is saying. It is just one example however, and any conclusions on how Clinton uses the refrain in comparison to Trump cannot be made.

4.2 We'll see what happens

On 18 November, 2018, Fox News anchor Chris Wallace held a wide-ranging interview with Donald Trump regarding the recent events of his presidency. Fox News is the largest cable-news network in the U.S., and often accused of being biased in favor of conservative values and the Republican party. During the Trump presidency, it has managed to remain one of the few mainstream media entities that Trump does not have a hostile relationship with. What makes this interview particularly interesting for my analysis then, aside from the refrains that Trump uses during it, is the fact that Wallace challenges Trump on a variety of issues and brings up unflattering topics that Trump might not have expected to face during a Fox News interview. Trump seems to grow increasingly irritated as the interview progresses, as seen for example when he accuses Wallace of acting like "[an] innocent angel," and brings up the interviewer's father when discussing the phenomenon of fake news:

[EXAMPLE 10]

Trump: And, Chris, you know that better, you don't have to sit here and act like a perfect little, wonderful, innocent angel, I know you too well, I knew your father too well, that's not your gene.

(Trump, Donald. Interview by Chris Wallace. *Fox News Sunday*, 18 November, 2018.)

One distinctive feature of the Trump administration has been the significant amount of departures and firings at all levels. The image of the White House as having a revolving door under Trump's watch has become widely reported in the media[4] and could be viewed as not particularly flattering regarding the administration's effectiveness or competence. It has become quite common then for Trump to downplay and give non-committal answers when asked about various staff changes that have occurred at various stages of his administration, regarding positions such as the Chief of Staff, the White House Press Secretary, and the National Security Adviser, all of which have had an uncommonly high turnover rate. As the interview proceeds, he largely relies on dismissive, unconcerned, rhetoric that reinforces the perception that he is in control of the situations brought up by the interviewer. A refrain that Trump uses for this purpose is "We'll see what happens," or some variant of it, the use of which can be observed during the Fox News interview when Wallace asks Trump whether he is happy with the performance of Kirstjen Nielsen at the Department of Homeland Security:

[EXAMPLE 11]

WALLACE: Are you happy with Kirstjen Nielsen at DHS?

TRUMP: Well, I like her a lot. I respect her a lot. She's very smart. I want her to get much tougher and **we'll see what happens** there. But I want to be extremely tough.

WALLACE: What are the chances she'll be DHS secretary –

TRUMP: Well there's a chance. But there's a chance everybody – I mean, that's what happens in government you leave, you make a name, you go. The people that have left have done very well. The people that have left have done very well – from my White House. I like her very much. I respect her very much. I'd like her to be much tougher on the border – much tougher, period. (Trump, Donald. Interview by Chris Wallace. *Fox News Sunday*, 18 November, 2018.)

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[4] Lu, Denise and Yourish, Karen. "The Turnover at the Top of the Trump Administration." *New York Times*, 10 Apr. 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/03/16/us/politics/all-the-major-firings-and-resignations-in-trump-administration.html

Later on, Wallace asks Trump about his assurance back from July 2018, when he said that his Chief of Staff John Kelly would still be doing the job in 2020. At the time of the interview, this had become seemingly unlikely with reports of Kelly preparing to leave his post, which he did later in December:

[EXAMPLE 12]

WALLACE: Back in July you said that Chief of Staff John Kelly will be here through 2020 […] Can you still say the same?

TRUMP: We—I wouldn't—look, we get along well. There are certain things I love what he does. And there are certain things that I don't like that he does – that aren't his strength. It's not that he doesn't do – you know he works so hard. He's doing an excellent job in many ways. There are a couple things where it's just not his strength. It's not his fault it's not his strength. (Trump, Donald. Interview by Chris Wallace. *Fox News Sunday*, 18 November, 2018.)

Next, when pressed on whether Kelly working in 2020 is still set in stone:

[EXAMPLE 13]

TRUMP: It could happen. Yeah, it could – I mean it could be. But **let's see what happens**. I have not – look, I have three or four or five positions that I'm thinking about. Of that, maybe it's going to end up being two. Maybe, but I want to – I need flexibility.
(Trump, Donald. Interview by Chris Wallace. *Fox News Sunday*, 18 November, 2018.)

In both cases Trump seems unwilling to give any definite answer, and also appears to refuse to criticize people working at high echelons of power in his administration: He characterizes Nielsen as smart and tells Wallace that he respects and likes her, while in the case of Kelly he highlights that he is good at some things and not so good at others, but it is not his fault because "it's just not his strength." The purpose of saying "We'll see what happens," or a variant of it, such as "Let's see what happens," can be interpreted as a way of leaving room for any outcome and avoiding responsibility, so as to prevent situations where Trump is later called out for misleading people or for being wrong about something. Afterall, this is exactly what happened when Trump had earlier declared that Kelly would work for him through 2020, only for him to depart half a year later. On the other hand, a non-committal "We'll see what happens" can also be interpreted as a message to an employee Trump genuinely wants to keep working for him, in which case he could be using the interview as a way to make Nielsen, for instance, understand what Trump wants from her. Finally, "We'll see what

happens" can also be interpreted as a more ominous warning, used as part of a negotiating strategy by Trump to get what he wants. Ultimately, it could depend on the context: If it is already common knowledge in the media that someone might be about to be fired, the refrain can be seen as a promise of a lifeline. If it comes out of the blue regarding some negotiations the meaning is more threatening. And in either case, Trump keeps the media guessing, and it reinforces the perception of him as someone who is holding all the cards in the negotiations, which in turn could be seen as a way of bolstering his authority. Regarding van Leeuwen's theory of authorization, this is another clear case of rhetoric based on personal authority. Compared to the previous examples of Trump's usage of "Believe me" from 2016, here Trump is genuinely vested with authority that he possesses as the president: he alone gets to decide which employees keep their jobs.

"We'll see what happens" has frequently been used by Trump during other interactions and "remarks" with reporters as well, which will be covered in examples 14–17.

> [EXAMPLE 14]
> REPORTER: Would you consider a pardon for Michael Flynn?
> TRUMP: I don't want to talk about pardons for Michael Flynn yet, **we'll see what happens**. Lets see. I can say this: When you look at what's gone on with the FBI, with the Justice Department, people are very, very, angry. Thank you very much everybody.
> (Trump, Donald. Remarks to reporters. The White House, Washington, D.C., 15 December, 2017.)

In example fourteen, Trump is also discussing the fate of an employee of his, although in this case Flynn had already been forced to resign from the post of National Security Advisor after lying to the FBI, Trump, and vice president Pence. Despite this, Trump is again in the position of power thanks to the pardoning powers of his office. Like before, Trump keeps everyone guessing by refusing to answer whether or not a presidential pardon is on the table for Flynn. Unlike in the cases of Kelly and Nielsen, Trump does not heap praise on Flynn in the same manner at this point. He does hint at some sympathy for the man however, by using another refrain, "When you look at," to question the actions of the Justice Department and the FBI who were investigating Flynn. This time there was no need for Trump to use the refrain to dictate to an employee of his what he wants from him, or to negotiate with him for his job, since Flynn was already out. A cynical reading of the answer might suggest however, that Trump is engaging in another kind of negotiation: by refusing to rule out a pardon, Trump could be encouraging Flynn to remain loyal to him instead of disclosing possibly damaging details to the

investigators, who were looking into his dealings with Russia at the time. Of course, another reason for his ambiguous answer could be that he had simply not made up his mind yet, or he had, but did not wish to publicly say that he intends to pardon Flynn, since such an act would be met with wide condemnation.

[EXAMPLE 15]

REPORTER: What options are you considering if this does end up being a long-range missile test?

TRUMP: **We'll see what happens. We'll see what happens**. We'll… lets see. Maybe it's a nice present. Maybe it's a present where he sends me a beautiful vase. As opposed to a missile test. Right? And make it a vase. And make it a nice present for me, you don't know. You never know. If we'll find out what the surprise is, and we'll deal with it very successfully, **let's see what happens**. Everybody's got surprises for me **but let's see what happens**, I handle them as they come along.

(Trump, Donald. Remarks to reporters at Mar-a-Lago. Palm Beach, Florida, 25 December, 2019.)

Example fifteen differs the most from the other examples of Trump's usage of "We'll see what happens." No current or former employee of Trump's is being discussed here, but rather an ominous statement from North Korea that promised the U.S. a "Christmas gift." The power dynamics involved are also different with Trump being among the ones who have to guess at other people's intentions and react to them, rather than dictate the terms. There is not much to discuss regarding Trump's use of the refrain itself; the reporter is asking about hypotheticals and North Korean officials are being vague. In turn, a nonspecific answer from Trump seems reasonable considering that the topic has to do with national security and foreign policy issues, and it would be strategically disadvantageous to reveal what the United States' response to North Korea's potential hostilities might be. One thing that Trump's rhetoric does have in common with the other examples in this case is that he is unwilling to be overly hostile towards the party being discussed, likely because of the past improvements in the diplomatic ties between the two countries during Trump's presidency. To that end, he makes an optimistic joke rather than making threats as he more often does when dealing with hostile foreign countries, as seen in a later section.

[EXAMPLE 16]

BARTIROMO: Was it a mistake not to ask Jim Comey to step down from the FBI at the outset of your presidency, is it too late now to ask him to step down?

TRUMP: No, it's not too late but, you know, I have confidence at him and **we'll see what happens**. It's going to be interesting but we have to just – look, I have so many people that want to come in to this administration, they're so excited about this administration and what's happening. Bankers, law enforcement, everybody wants to come into this administration. Don't forget, when Jim Comey came out, he saved Hillary Clinton, people don't realize that. He saved her life because I call it "Comey won" and I joke about it a little bit. When he was reading those charges, she was guilty on every charge and then he said, "She was essentially okay.

(Trump, Donald. Interview with Maria Bartiromo. *Fox Business*, 12 April, 2017.)

In example sixteen Trump is asked whether he should have replaced FBI director James Comey with someone new during the transition from one administration to another. The context here is that Comey had confirmed during a senate hearing that the FBI was investigating the possibility of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russians. Comey had also refused to exonerate Trump publicly, as well as contradicted the president's claims that the Obama administration had been wiretapping the Trump campaign. In his response to Bartiromo, Trump once again uses the refrain in reference to the future of someone working in his administration. On the one hand, he expresses his confidence in Comey, and his "We'll see what happens" could be viewed as an expression of a passive stance of letting things run their course without him interfering. On the other hand, he first and foremost asserts that it is not too late to fire Comey, and seeing how that is what he eventually did on 9 May, 2017, it is difficult to interpret the refrain as nothing but a threat at this point, especially considering the example of Kirstjen Nielsen who suffered a similar faith.

[EXAMPLE 17]

TRUMP: I like Mr. Bannon, he's a friend of mine, but Mr. Bannon came on very late, you know that. I went through seventeen senators, governors, and I won all the primaries. Mr. Bannon came on very much later than that and I like him, he's a good man, he is not a racist. I can tell you that he is a good person, he actually gets very unfair press in that regard, but **we'll see what happens** with Mr. Bannon. But he's a good person and I think the press treats him frankly very unfairly.

(Trump, Donald. News conference in New York City. New York, 25 August, 2017.)

When it comes to power relations, Trump is of course the one in power in situations where he gets to decide the future of his employees. Example seventeen highlights Trump's tendency to downplay any suggestion that he would have been in debt to the aid of others in becoming the president, or that matters would have been out of his hands at any point. Specifically, many commentators have credited Steve Bannon as a "mastermind" who paved the way for Trump's presidency by creating a platform for the far-right with his Breitbart News website, as well as being an important strategist in Trump's campaign. In example seventeen Trump is, in somewhat of a contradiction, calling Bannon a friend, praising him, and accusing the media of treating him unfairly, but at the same time downplaying his chief strategist's impact on his campaign's success and calls him out for joining him late compared to various Republican politicians. The reason why Bannon's future is in doubt is that he had faced criticism for supporting white nationalists in the aftermath of a terrorist attack in Charlottesville. Once again, "We'll see what happens" is used to wave off any questions of what Trump is going to do about an employee of his, and once again said employee is later fired.

In all of the cases above, Trump employs the refrain "We'll see what happens" when he is asked about something by a journalist. Based on the material, the topic being discussed tends to be a thorny issue of some kind. Most often Trump is being asked about the future of some White House appointee of his, typically in a context where they have come under increased public scrutiny as a result of questionable behavior, or rumors of animosity between Trump and the employee in question have been circulating in the media. Comey and example sixteen count among the latter category, while example fourteen falls in the first one. Example seventeen has characteristics of both: Bannon had faced criticism for supporting white nationalists in the aftermath of a terrorist attack in Charlottesville, while Trump himself was reportedly irritated by people saying that Bannon was behind his success during the election. The latter perception is given credence by Trump's belittling of Bannon's contributions.

The refrain pattern of "We'll see what happens" is more varied than the one for "Believe me" based on these examples:

1.	"Well, I like her a lot. I respect her a lot. She's very smart."	Positive
2.	"I want her to get much tougher…"	Criticism
3.	"…and **we'll see what happens** there."	Refrain
4.	"The people that have left have done very well. The people that have left have done very well – from my White House period."	Boast
5.	"I like her very much. I respect her very much."	Positive

6.	"I'd like her to be much tougher on the border – much tougher, period."	Criticism

1.	"There are certain things I love what he does [...] It's not that he doesn't do – you know he works so hard. He's doing an excellent job in many ways […] It's not his fault it's not his strength."	Positive
2.	"And there are certain things that I don't like that he does – that aren't his strength […] There are a couple things where it's just not his strength"	Criticism
3.	"But **let's see what happens**."	Refrain

1.	"I don't want to talk about pardons for Michael Flynn yet, **we'll see what happens**."	Refrain
2.	"When you look at what's gone on with the FBI, with the Justice Department, people are very, very, angry."	Criticism

1.	**"We'll see what happens. We'll see what happens**. We'll… let's see."	Refrain
2.	"Maybe it's a nice present. Maybe it's a present where he sends me a beautiful vase. As opposed to a missile test. Right? And make it a vase. And make it a nice present for me, you don't know."	Positive
3.	"If we'll find out what the surprise is, and we'll deal with it very successfully…"	Boast
4.	"…**but let's see what happens**, I handle them as they come along."	Refrain

1.	"I have confidence at him…"	Positive
2.	"…and **we'll see what happens**."	Refrain
3.	"It's going to be interesting but we have to just – look, I have so many people that want to come in to this administration, they're so excited about this administration and what's happening."	Boast

1.	"I like Mr. Bannon, he's a friend of mine…"	Positive
2.	"…but Mr. Bannon came on very late, you know that."	Criticism
3.	"I went through seventeen senators, governors, and I won all the primaries."	Boast
4.	"I like him, he's a good man, he is not a racist. I can tell you that he is a good person, he actually gets very unfair press in that regard…"	Positive
5.	"…but **we'll see what happens** with Mr. Bannon."	Refrain
6.	"But he's a good person and I think the press treats him frankly very unfairly."	Positive

The tables show that Trump's responses to the journalists' questions tend to consist of the same "building blocks." Their order can vary quite a lot, more so than in the case of many other refrains examined in this study, but the takeaway seems to be that he has a habit of giving noncommittal answers where he both criticizes and especially praises the person being discussed. It is perhaps somewhat surprising that Trump, who became famous for his harsh performances in the reality TV show *The Apprentice* where his catchphrase was "You're fired," does not like to denounce employees whose futures are in doubt, but instead praises them every time before bringing up some criticism. The refrain also tends to be accompanied by self-praise or a boast of some kind that Trump casually

brings up, so as to veer the discussion away from the troubles of his administration in terms of its officials, and rather focus on its successes as perceived by him. All of the examples above deal with an employee of the president's, aside from the one concerning North Korea, and in all of them the person being discussed was later fired or resigned (the distinction being up for debate in some cases and unknowable to outsiders). This suggests that the refrain is remarkably specialized as a response to only certain kinds of questions posed to Trump.

4.3 A lot of people say & They say

In the cases of the previous refrains that I have covered in my analysis, Trump has tended to mainly rely on the legitimation provided by his own authority to persuade with his rhetoric. With the following refrains on the other hand, Trump seems to lean more on the perceived authority of others to justify things. The refrains in question include phrases such as "A lot of people are saying," "A lot of people say," "They say," and "They tell me," all of which make a vague reference to no one in particular. Two main forms of the refrain can be separated: one where the subject is "A lot of people" and another where it is "They." Despite the variation between the refrains, especially compared to seemingly immutable ones, such as "Believe me" and "We'll see what happens," the function and contexts in which Trump employs these refrains remain the same, and so they will be covered in the same part of the study. The first section will examine the "A lot of people say" –variant of the refrain, and the second the "They say" –variant.

An event that demonstrates Trump's use of "A lot of people say" occurred during a campaign rally that took place at a town hall in Rochester, New Hampshire back in September 2015 when Trump's campaign was still getting started. The following exchange happened when Trump started taking questions from the audience:

> [EXAMPLE 18]
> AUDIENCE MEMBER: We have a problem in this country: It's called Muslims. We know our current president is one.
> TRUMP: Right.
> AUDIENCE MEMBER: You know he's not even an American.
> TRUMP: We need this question. This is the first question. *Chuckles*
> AUDIENCE MEMBER: But anyway, we have training camps growing where they want to kill us. That's my question. When can we get rid of them?

TRUMP: We're going to be looking at a lot of different things and you know **a lot of people are saying** that and **a lot of people are saying** that bad things are happening out there. We're going to be looking at that and plenty of other things.

(Trump, Donald. Town hall meeting in Rochester, New Hampshire, 17 September, 2015.)

The glaring issue with Trump's response to this question is that he does not try to correct the man's accusations regarding Obama, nor condemn the assertion that Muslims are "a problem." Trump's comment does not challenge the conspiracy theory but reacts and goes along with the racist suggestion put forward by the member of the audience, promising to look into it. He was, after all, a vocal proponent of the so-called "birther-movement" that opposed Obama's presidency on the grounds that he was supposedly not a natural-born citizen of the U.S. but a secret Muslim. On the other hand, Trump's laughter and comment about this being the first question could be viewed as sarcasm, in which case he was talking down to the man. The use of the refrain could be interpreted as Trump's way of admitting that a lot of people believe what the man is saying even if it is not true. If that was the case, his promise of "looking at that and plenty of other things" could be considered simply a vague answer intended to keep the man and others like him happy. Yet, this kind of vagueness is what other politicians and the media have criticized Trump for when dealing with such issues, since a presidential candidate is not expected to signal any ambiguity when responding to them, no matter what his supporters believe or want to hear.

A second example of Trump using the refrain occurred when he was questioned by a reporter about a caravan of refugees approaching the southern U.S. border from Central America:

[EXAMPLE 19]
REPORTER: Do you think somebody is funding the caravan?
TRUMP: I wouldn't be surprised, yeah. I wouldn't be surprised.
REPORTER: George Soros?
TRUMP: I don't know who, but I wouldn't be surprised. **A lot of people say** yes.
(Trump, Donald. Interview outside the White House, Washington, D.C., 31 October, 2018.)

Again, Trump is using the refrain when discussing a conspiracy theory, this time about the Hungarian-American billionaire George Soros who is the target of many such theories for having donated much of his wealth to liberal causes around the world. The approaching migrant caravan had been portrayed as a security threat by some in the media. The reporter seems to be leading Trump on, either because

he wants to blame Soros, or because he wants to get a scandalous quote of Trump promoting a conspiracy theory. And like before, Trump seems to be avoiding saying directly what he thinks, but instead gives a vague answer that presumably pleases those who believe in the conspiracies, but also gives Trump a way to deny any accusations since he does not commit to supporting them himself.

The final example of Trump's use of this refrain took place during a White House press event that Trump was holding together with South Korea's president Moon Jae-in.

> [EXAMPLE 20]
> REPORTER: Unrelated Mr. President, can you tell us more about your meeting with Rod Rosenstein and Director Wray?
> TRUMP: No, it was just a very routine meeting. As you know, the Congress would like to see documents opened up. **A lot of people are saying** they had spies in my campaign. If they had spies in my campaign, that would be a disgrace to this country. That would be one of the biggest insults that anyone's ever seen, and it would be very illegal, aside from everything else. It would make probably every political event ever look like small potatoes.
> (Trump, Donald. Remarks by President Trump and President Moon of the Republic of Korea before bilateral meeting. The White House, Washington, D.C., 22 May, 2018.)

Whereas in the previous two examples the refrain was used when discussing conspiracy theories rooted in racism, this time Trump is placing suspicion on the previous administration and intelligence agencies that he claims had spied on him. Instead of his own knowledge of things, here the source of authority is the unknowable people who are supposedly saying the things Trump skirts around. In van Leeuwen's terms of legitimation, this could be considered a case of authority based on conformity (96–97). In other words, Trump is suggesting that the things he alludes to are, or at least could be, true based on the fact that enough people believe in them. Another possible form of legitimization through authorization is expert authority. This would certainly be the case if Trump's sources consisted of official reports and intelligence briefings available to him, or investigative reporting by journalists. Of course, it is also possible that Trump is simply phrasing his own views as the public opinion, or his sources are not credible enough to be named. In any case, this refrain provides Trump with an effective way to discuss topics beneficial to him without having to worry about whether they turn out to be true or not. Example twenty highlights this purpose quite well: Trump does not focus on what is being done to determine whether he was spied on or not, who exactly makes up the "them" that supposedly did the spying, or what the political or legal fallout for the people involved would be.

Instead, he speaks at length about how unprecedented and disgraceful this is, and how it would surpass all other political scandals. This suggests that Trump sees it as beneficial to paint himself as the wronged party, despite the unconfirmed nature of the rumors. Victimhood and outright martyrdom are some of the central characteristics of Trump's rhetoric as noted by Kelly (8). In fact, the other two conspiracy theories of a Soros-funded migrant caravan and secret oppression of Americans by Muslims under Obama's leadership are also rooted in the same feelings of oppression and expressed by the rhetoric of ressentiment, defined by Kelly as a combination of a "feeling of powerlessness," "self-serving morality," and "ruminations on past injuries," leading to hateful emotions and thinking (3–5). The FBI, Obama, Muslims, and Soros are the "oppressors" in these cases, with the investigations into the Trump campaign's wrongdoings, the 9/11 and other acts of terrorism, and a sense of unfair treatment or uncertainty about the future perhaps leading into the feelings of powerlessness. Self-serving morality is naturally expressed when outsiders are viewed as unwelcome or when Trump pivots various discussions into him being the victim.

As noted above, the forms and functions of the refrains "They say" and "A lot of people say" are similar enough to the extent that the two can be consider variants of the same refrain. Both of them serve the apparent purpose of providing Trump with a source of credibility to rely on and reference when he is making various claims. Whereas "A lot of people say" seemed to crop up especially often when discussing conspiracy theories, "They say" or its variant "They tell me" on the other hand tend to be used by Trump more often in situations where he is discussing more specific numbers and facts, and the anonymous "they" appears as more neutral. Some examples of this can be observed in the remarks the president gave during the third annual "Made in America" product showcase. The first example of the use of the refrain comes up when Trump discusses the United States' losses in trade and accuses China of its practices involving theft of intellectual property:

> [EXAMPLE 21]
> TRUMP: We've been losing four, five—and even more than that—hundred billion. Think of it: five hundred billion dollars a year, to China. That doesn't include intellectual property theft and loss. That doesn't include—**they say** that's $300 billion. Who knows what that is? **A lot of people estimate** it, but it's a lot. But **they say** it's $300 billion. So you add that to $500 billion. So we've been losing $800 billion a year to China.
> (Trump, Donald. Remarks at the third annual Made in America Product Showcase. The White House, Washington, D.C., 15 July, 2019.)

The example yet again highlights the characteristic vagueness of Trump's rhetoric. The gist of the president's speech is that the U.S. economy has suffered because of China, and that there has been malice on China's part, while the previous administrations have allowed the U.S to be taken advantage of. The numbers he floats keep changing and are exaggerated in any case.[5] The refrains appear to be used to gloss over the exact source of the numbers. There is room for speculation on why Trump does this: First, "They say" could be seen as a part of Trump's informal way of speaking. Detailed and completely accurate referencing of numbers and their sources is not something people usually do during everyday interactions and discussions. On the other hand, politicians tend to be held to a higher standard, and therefore inaccurateness and inconsistencies are usually pointed out, and the politicians are forced to admit their mistakes (Andone 127). Such conventional principles have rarely applied to the presidency of Trump however, who, according to fact-checkers, constantly makes false or inaccurate statements.[6] Nevertheless, few can dispute the effectiveness of Trump's colloquial rhetoric when it comes to drawing crowds and energizing his base of voters. From this perspective, the exaggeration and oversimplification of issues and, indeed, the leaving out of sources and facts, could be a deliberate strategy of making his speech entertaining and easy to digest for the crowd. In this case the oversimplification of the relations of the two countries is likely more useful than actual facts-based discussion of the nuances involved. For the rhetoric to be effective, it is enough to make the "China is bad" –generalization. Of course, another potential explanation for the lack of accuracy in Trump's speech is that he simply does not remember the exact sources that have informed him, and so "They say" is a way to go around this. And like in the case of "A lot of people say," such a refrain could also be used to frame any opinion or exaggeration on Trump's part as a fact widely accepted by others.

"They say" is used twice by Trump during a period of a few minutes while being interviewed by Fox News' Tucker Carlson. In one of the examples, the refrain is used in a neutral manner, and in the other one Trump refers to a non-existent source, likely to legitimize his claims and pad his approval numbers. On a related note, Trump's repetitive use of the personal pronoun "They" by itself as a means of establishing a "Them vs Us" –mentality, and its relation to the "They" in the refrain "They say," is highlighted and will be discussed below.

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[5] Farley, Robert, et al. "Trump's Dubious Claims About China." *FactCheck.org*, 12 Jun. 2019. https://www.factcheck.org/2019/06/trumps-dubious-claims-about-china/

[6] Kessler, Glenn, et al. "President Trump has made more than 10,000 false or misleading claims." *The Washington Post*, 29 Apr. 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/04/29/president-trump-has-made-more-than-false-or-misleading-claims/

[EXAMPLE 22]

CARLSON: Google, by some measures, is the most powerful company in the world. All information flows through it. **They**'re against you. **They** don't want you re-elected. Can you get re-elected if Google is against you?

TRUMP: So, you know, I've been hearing that about Google and Facebook and Twitter okay? I won. **They** were totally against me. I won. And Hillary –

CARLSON: But **they** didn't think you were going to win.

TRUMP: Well, **they** fought me very hard, I mean I heard that, and **they**'re fighting me hard right now which is incredible because I think the Democrats want to shut them up and frankly so do a lot of Republicans want to shut **them** up. If you look at Twitter, I have millions and millions of people on Twitter, and it's a very good arm for me, it's great social media. But **they** don't treat me right, and I know for a fact when a lot of people try and follow me and that's very hard. I have so many people come up and say "Sir, it's so hard, **they** make it hard to follow." What **they**'re doing is wrong, possibly illegal, and a lot of things are being looked at right now. But you're right, Google is very powerful, but I won, and a poll just came out today. I'm at fifty-four or fifty-five. And **they do say** you can add ten to whatever poll I have, okay? And I never get good press, I mean I haven't had a good story—I used to get the best press in the world—you remember the old days when I was an entre– I used to get great press, now I get, because of what I stand for and represent. And nobody's ever had, I think ninety-three percent, it came out the other day, ninety-three percent, and I'm talking about stories that should be good, **they** make them bad, or should be great, **they** make them like neutral. And yet I won. And I'll win again. So, when **they say** it's the most powerful, it may be, but **they** were against me. Facebook was against me, **they** were all against me, Twitter was against me Twitter was—I've been very good for Twitter, I don't think Twitter would be the same without what I do on Twitter. But **they** just have this crazy disposition, **they** have this philosophy, and yet the Democrats are very much opposed to **them** in so many ways, it's an amazing thing.

(Trump, Donald. Interview with Tucker Carlson in Japan. *Tucker Carlson Tonight*. 1 July, 2019.)

The above text highlights two things. First, there is the use of "They say." The first instance likely falls in the category of using the anonymous "they" to refer to a possibly non-existent source that has said something favorable about Trump, that is, that one can add ten percent to whatever number an approval poll gives him. The other use of "They say" is a more neutral case, having more to do with

colloquialism. It is worth noting however that Tucker Carlson, the interviewer, was the one who claimed in the beginning of the excerpt that Google is "by some measures, the most powerful company in the world." Yet, by the end of the discussion Trump says "So, when they say it's the most powerful, it may be." The fact that something Carlson said two minutes ago is so quickly generalized by Trump as something "they" say instead of addressing the interviewer himself highlights Trump's tendencies towards exaggeration and vagueness, or at the very least his fondness for this particular refrain. It is no wonder then, that the unspecified "they" is so omnipresent in Trump's rhetoric when referring to something he heard days or weeks ago, when he is even ready to use it in reference to what the person sitting next to him had just said.

The second notable thing about the excerpt is the repetitive use of the personal pronoun "they." It was uttered by Trump fourteen times within a time period of two minutes while discussing social media giants such as Google and Twitter. The interviewer initially only mentions Google, but Trump quickly brings up the other big social media companies as well and frames them as one powerful being opposed to his election and political agenda. "They" in itself is obviously not an uncommon or loaded word to use. It quickly becomes apparent however, that in this case Trump only uses the pronoun in contexts where he is depicting the objects of discussion in a negative light. He accuses the tech giants of "fighting him," of being against him, and of making it hard for his supporters to follow him in social media, as well as of possessing a "crazy disposition" and questionable philosophy, among other things. Similarly, "they" is used by him when criticizing journalists who write negative news stories about him. Regarding "They say," it is interesting how Trump uses the refrain to paint a positive picture of himself in the same breath that he uses "they" to set apart his opponents, like when claiming the following:

> What **they**'re doing is wrong, possibly illegal, and a lot of things are being looked at right now.
> […]
> I'm at fifty-four or fifty-five and **they do say** you can add ten to whatever poll I have, okay?

A further generalization about the refrain "They say" could thus be made regarding Trump's attitude towards the anonymous "they," which he seems to view favorably or neutrally as a source of authorization when used in a refrain, compared to a hostile relation with the target of the personal pronoun "they" when it is used on its own. This is in line with the concept of the "ideological square," which refers to the phenomenon where people differentiate between the positively viewed "ingroup"

and the negative "outgroup" by representing them in different ways via lexical choices (Shojaei et al. 859). "Them and us" –type of division is of course a common strategy for politicians to employ, and it is especially relevant in a country such as the U.S. with a two-party system that encourages tribal thinking. It has been one of the cornerstones of Trump's political rhetoric too. He has attributed the stigma of an "outgroup" to China, Canada, and the EU when it comes to the economy, whereas Mexico, Iran, North Korea, ISIS, Antifa, and illegal immigrants have been singled out by him as security threats during various stages of his presidency. In terms of ideology, the Democrats, the media, socialists, previous administrations, and the political establishment in general count among the groups that typically make up the "them" that he opposes. In the above interview, lexical choices used in reference to the social media companies include "crazy," "wrong," and "illegal," and they are in general portrayed as an opposing force that tried to make Trump's efforts to get elected more difficult at every turn. This in turn appears to serve the purpose of allowing Trump to both victimize himself, as well as promote his prowess in being able to win the election despite the supposed hindrance caused by the media.

A pattern of how the refrain is commonly used can be outlined as follows:

1.	"We're going to be looking at a lot of different things and…"	Vague reference or reply
2.	"…you know **a lot of people are saying** that and **a lot of people are saying**…"	Refrain
3.	"…that bad things are happening out there."	Claim

1.	"I don't know who, but I wouldn't be surprised [that George Soros is funding the caravan]."	Claim
2.	"**A lot of people say** yes."	Refrain

1.	"As you know, the Congress would like to see documents opened up."	Vague reference or reply
2.	"**A lot of people are saying**…"	Refrain
3.	"…they had spies in my campaign."	Claim

1.	"We've been losing four, five—and even more than that—hundred billion. Think of it: five hundred billion dollars a year, to China. That doesn't include intellectual property theft and loss."	Vague reference or reply
2.	"That doesn't include—**they say** that's $300 billion. Who knows what that is? **A lot of people estimate** it, but it's a lot. But **they say** it's $300 billion."	Refrain + Claim

1.	"But you're right, Google is very powerful, but I won, and a poll just came out today. I'm at fifty-four or fifty-five."	Vague reference or reply
2.	"And **they do say**…"	Refrain
3.	"…you can add ten to whatever poll I have, okay?"	Claim

As seen above, Trump's conspirational allegations naturally tend to follow the refrain itself. The refrain is usually prefaced with some kind of a vague reply, such as in example eighteen where he responds to the racist suggestion at a townhall meeting by saying "We're going to be looking at a lot of different things" or a vague reference to something, such as the documents the congress wants opened up or an unnamed poll in examples twenty and twenty-two respectively. The refrain pattern is very similar to the one "Believe me" had: the refrain is usually followed by a dubious claim introduced via the refrain. Whereas with "Believe me" the refrain and the claim were typically preceded by criticism of some kind, the above examples tend to start with a vague reference or reply to a reporter's or an audience member's question.

4.4 (If you) take a look at (what's happening)

One of Trump's quirks as a president has been his aversion of traditional press events, as detailed in the research material –section. Daily White House press briefings by a press secretary were put on ice for much of 2019 for instance in favor of various press remarks given by Trump himself, often outside on the White House lawn in front of a helicopter. Many of the interactions between Trump and reporters, and the occasions in which he uses the refrains detailed in this study, take place at events such as this. One such event highlights the refrain "Take a look at."

> [EXAMPLE 23]
> REPORTER: Are you demanding that Jay Powell lower interest rates?
> TRUMP: No, I don't demand it, but if he used his head, he would lower them. In Germany they have a zero interest rate and we do compete—we're much stronger than Germany—but we do compete with Germany. In Germany they have zero interest rate, and when they borrow money—I mean **when you look at what happens**, **look at what's going on** over there—they borrow money, they actually get paid to borrow money. And we have to compete with that. So, **if you look at what's happening** around the world, Jay Powell and the Federal Reserve have totally missed the call. I was right, and just about everybody admits that.
> (Trump, Donald. Remarks Before Marine One Departure. The White House, Washington, D.C., 21 August, 2019.)

This refrain is among the most varying ones that Trump uses. Based on the material, the longest form of it is "If you take a look at what's happening." "Happening" is also often substituted with "going on," or dropped all together. The refrain is commonly compressed into a shorter form, such as "If you look at," "Take a look at," or "When you look at." The refrain appears to serve as a kind of crutch that allows Trump to provide proof for his arguments without actually bringing much of anything substantial to the discussion. In example twenty-three, the first time Trump uses the refrain, he at least provides some details of what he is referring to, albeit in a confusing, off-handed way: "They [the Germans] borrow money, they actually get paid to borrow money." The second time he suddenly jumps from discussing Germany and Europe to the whole world and uses it as evidence of the Federal Reserve's incompetence and his own accurate assessment of the economy. The things that are "happening around the world" likely include struggling economies or other countries' financial responses, Germany included, but exactly what Trump refers to is anybody's guess. Nevertheless, the use of the refrain here gives an impression that Trump knows what he is talking about, especially since the topic is something that he as a businessman is familiar with, and therefore arguably possesses personal authority or an expert opinion to lean on when discussing it.

Perhaps the most infamous occasion when Trump employed this refrain took place at a rally on 19 February, 2017, when the president alluded to European countries and suggested that a terrorist attack of some kind had taken place in Sweden the previous night:

> [EXAMPLE 24]
> TRUMP: Here's the bottom line: We've got to keep our country safe. You **look at what's happening**. We've got to keep our country safe. You **look at what's happening** in Germany, you **look at what's happening** last night in Sweden. Sweden, who would believe this. Sweden. They took in large numbers. They're having problems like they never thought possible. You **look at what's happening** in Brussels, you **look at what's happening** all over the world. **Take a look at** Nice. **Take a look at** Paris. We've allowed thousands and thousands of people into our country and there was no way to vet those people.
> (Trump, Donald. Campaign-style political rally. Melbourne, Florida, 19 February, 2017.)

The refrain is used here to refer to events in different countries and draw parallels between them without going to the specifics of what events he is talking about. However, it is not a great leap to assume that he is referring to various terrorist attacks that had occurred in Europe in 2016: A suicide

bombing took place in Brussels on 22 March, 2016, and a cargo truck was driven into a crowd of people on purpose in Nice, France, on 17 July, 2016, as well as into a Christmas market in Berlin on 19 December. These are all factual events still presumably fresh in the minds of the audience listening to him, and so it is not unreasonable to assume that the purpose of refrains such as "Look at" or "Take a look at" is to rely on the listeners' common knowledge rather than going into details. This is the interpretation from the point of view of Trump as a colloquial speaker who is being conversational with his audiences. Trump did not use the refrains to only refer to real events however. He also implies that radical Islamic terrorists, who had taken on the responsibility for the other attacks he mentions, had done something in Sweden the previous night, which was not the case. Stating a falsehood like this is rather inexplicable since such claims are easily verified as true or false. A possible scenario is that Trump was referring to an unreliable source or confused or misremembered something. Nevertheless, whatever the background for his allegation is, the factual events that Trump lists give credence to his otherwise erroneous claims about Sweden, which are parallelized and made equal with the events in Germany, Brussels, and Nice. This impression is amplified by the use of "Look at what's happening," which at the same time reinforces Trump's authority as a person who knows what he is talking about, as well as acts as a rhetorical device of repetition for emphasis.

Like with many other refrains, there is a sense of vagueness to the topic being discussed when Trump employs this turn of phrase. It is most commonly used in reference to countries other than the U.S., typically in contexts where Trump is either criticizing policies in these other places, or drawing attention to their economies, usually perceived as unfair by him. This is demonstrated by the president's remarks given at Morristown, New Jersey, in the two examples below:

> [EXAMPLE 25]
> TRUMP: But the rest of the world is not doing well like we're doing. The rest of the world, **if you look at** Germany**, if you look at** European Union**;** frankly, **look at** the UK—I mean, **look at** a lot of countries—they're not doing well. China is doing poorly. Parts of Asia are doing poorly.
> (Trump, Donald. Speaking to reporters in Morristown, New Jersey, 18 August, 2019.)

> [EXAMPLE 26]
> REPORTER: But if it [the economy] were to slow down, could you win reelection?
> TRUMP: Well, I'd be prepared for it. We can do—sure, we can do a lot of things. But if it slowed down, it would be because I have to take on China and some other countries. Look,

you have other countries that are just as bad as China, the way they treat us**. You take a look at what's happening with** the European Union; they have barriers, they have tariffs. **Take a look at** other—I'm not going to mention all the countries because you'll be surprised. But we're treated very badly—a lot of them by our allies.

(Trump, Donald. Speaking to reporters in Morristown, New Jersey, 18 August, 2019.)

By instructing the people listening to him to "Take a look at" something, Trump shifts the burden of proof on them to find out what exactly he is referring to, while at the same time establishing himself as the authority who knows what is going on. The reasons for this are likely the same as with the other cases where he employs vague rhetoric: He appears to know what he is talking about, but by being unspecific he also cannot be pinned down for stating inaccuracies. This in turn leads into the usual reactions, where Trump's liberal critics interpret the president's vague statements in a negative light, whereas his conservative supporters construe what Trump really meant in their opinion and downplay any gaffes or falsehoods. The fact that the world's most powerful politician's words leave so much to interpretation is of course problematic, and the White House's typical strategy has been to state something along the lines of "The president's words speak for themselves"[7] instead of providing clarity.

Trump's use of "Take a look at" is not limited to informal settings either: Several uses of the refrain's variants can be seen in the examples below from when he was holding a press conference with the president of Finland, Sauli Niinistö:

[EXAMPLE 27]
TRUMP: There was no quid pro quo, at all. And **if you look at** this whistleblower's—which I have a lot of respect for whistleblowers, but only when they're real—his report of the phone call was totally different than the fact.
(Trump, Donald. Remarks by President Trump and President Niinistö of the Republic of Finland in Joint Press Conference. The White House, Washington, D.C., 2 October, 2019.)

Compared to the previous examples, here Trump is not being as vague in the sense that he is pointing to a specific report by the whistleblower, whereas in the cases before it was not always immediately

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[7] See for instance "Press Gaggle by Press Secretary Sean Spicer" from 6 March, 2017, on The White House's website, where Spicer resorted to "letting the president's tweets speak for themselves" three times.
https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/press-gaggle-press-secretary-sean-spicer-4/

clear what he was referencing. The argument itself is just as unclear however: he does not illuminate what part in the report he is referring to or what makes it so different. Trump's messaging also becomes somewhat muddled when he gets sidetracked into voicing his respect for "real" whistleblowers, likely due to the criticism he had faced for threatening the whistleblower before. When it comes to power relations, Trump is of course doing everything he can to maintain his position by disparaging and dismissing an existential threat to his presidency by portraying the whistleblower as not real, while also discouraging this and any future whistleblowers, and therefore reducing their power. This is turn arguably reduces Trump's and possibly future administrations' accountability.

> [EXAMPLE 28]
>
> TRUMP: We had an exact transcript. And when we produced that transcript, they died. **Because you look at** the whistleblower statement, and it's vicious. Vicious. And that whistleblower, there's no question in my mind that some bad things have gone on, and I think we'll get to the bottom of it.
>
> (Trump, Donald. Remarks by President Trump and President Niinistö of the Republic of Finland in Joint Press Conference. The White House, Washington, D.C., 2 October, 2019.)

Again, Trump urges the audience to look at the whistleblower's report without specifying what exactly in it exonerates him, although now he also brings up the transcript of his phone call with Ukraine's president that his administration had provided for comparison's sake. Legal opinions on whether the transcript proved there was no wrongdoing on Trump's part or not vary and is not something I will discuss here; what is relevant is that Trump himself does not discuss the details either, but instead again shifts the responsibility on those listening to find out for themselves what he means, and opts to characterize the whistleblower's report as "vicious" instead. The latter characterization makes the whistleblower sound like someone unprofessional and biased against him.

> [EXAMPLE 29]
>
> TRUMP: And I think nobody has done what I've done **when you look at** tax cuts and regulation cuts, rebuilding our military, and Right to Try.
>
> (Trump, Donald. Remarks by President Trump and President Niinistö of the Republic of Finland in Join Press Conference. The White House, Washington, D.C., 2 October, 2019.)

In example twenty-nine Trump provides the exception to the rule and instead of being vague after using the refrain, he lists some of the policy decisions that he has accomplished, admittedly briefly,

but nevertheless without leaving any doubt as to what he is referring to. The interesting thing is that this is the only case out of all the examples dealing with "Take a look at" covered here where Trump is using the refrain to point to something that he views as positive, that is, his administrations' accomplishments, rather than other countries' shortcomings or unfair trade practices, "vicious" reports about him, or trade deals he does not like. It is logical enough that a politician is more willing to talk about what he views as his successes, but the example also goes to show that Trump can be specific when he wishes to when using this refrain, and his vagueness when discussing parties he views with hostility could therefore be a conscious strategy.

[EXAMPLE 30]
REPORTER: Are you still considering withdrawing from NAFTA if Nancy Pelosi doesn't bring up the USMCA on the House floor?
TRUMP: Well, I haven't said whether or not I would, but I would say NAFTA is one of the worst deals ever made in the history of trade deals. **If you look at** NAFTA, and **you take a look at** what it's done to our country, thousands of factories closed, millions of jobs. It's been a one-way street.
(Trump, Donald. Speaking to reporters in Morristown, New Jersey, 18 August, 2019.)

Trump's rebuke of the North American Free Trade Agreement highlights the recurring structure of the rhetoric surrounding the refrain, where Trump first calls out some entity or makes a claim ("NAFTA is one of the worst trade deals"), followed by the refrain that points the finger at something ("If you look at NAFTA, and you take a look at what it's done to our country") and finally the evidence of what makes the entity negative ("Thousands of factories closed, millions of jobs). In short, Trump makes a claim or accusation, followed by the refrain and (usually) vague proof of some kind. This refrain-pattern can be observed in the tables below:

1.	"I would say NAFTA is one of the worst deals ever made in the history of trade deals."	Claim
2.	"**If you look at** NAFTA, and **you take a look at** what it's done to our country."	Refrain
3.	"…thousands of factories closed, millions of jobs. It's been a one-way street."	Proof

1.	"Look, you have other countries that are just as bad as China, the way they treat us."	Claim
2.	"You **take a look at** what's happening with the European Union."	Refrain
3.	"They have barriers, they have tariffs."	Proof

1.	"But the rest of the world is not doing well like we're doing."	Claim
2.	"The rest of the world, **if you look at** Germany, **if you look at** European Union; frankly, **look at** the UK—I mean, **look at** a lot of countries."	Refrain
3.	"They're not doing well. China is doing poorly. Parts of Asia are doing poorly."	Proof

1.	"We've got to keep our country safe."	Claim
2.	"You **look at what's happening** in Germany, you **look at what's happening** last night in Sweden. Sweden, who would believe this. Sweden."	Refrain
3.	"They took in large numbers. They're having problems like they never thought possible."	Proof

1.	"There was no quid pro quo, at all."	Claim
2.	"And **if you look at** this whistleblower's — which I have a lot of respect for whistleblowers, but only when they're real…"	Refrain
3.	"…his report of the phone call was totally different than the fact."	Proof

1.	"We had an exact transcript. And when we produced that transcript, they died."	Claim
2.	"**Because you look at** the whistleblower statement…"	Refrain
3.	"…and it's vicious. Vicious. And that whistleblower, there's no question in my mind that some bad things have gone on, and I think we'll get to the bottom of it."	Proof

1.	"And I think nobody has done what I've done…"	Claim
2.	"…**when you look at**…"	Refrain
3.	"…tax cuts and regulation cuts, rebuilding our military, and Right to Try."	Proof

As with "Believe me" and "They say," the refrain is closely linked to a claim of some kind. The third element is the already discussed vague proof that seemingly supports Trump's argument but rarely contains much of substance upon closer inspection. These three parts could be argued to serve the three classic modes of persuasion identified by Aristotle: The first claim often serves the purpose of appealing to the emotions of the listener (pathos), in these cases through outrage (There are countries that treat the U.S. badly) or pride (Others are not doing as well as we are). The refrain "Take a look at" involves ethos, that is, the speaker's authority, knowledge or character. The refrain makes it sound that Trump is an authority on whatever topic he is discussing, as he tells people to pay attention to some entity deemed notable by him. In his rally speech from 2017 for instance, Trump's language makes him seem like someone knowledgeable about the goings-on in Sweden, and what is normal for Sweden and what is not. Finally, Trump provides evidence to assuage the listener's need for logical proof (logos), even if sometimes it is thin. In the above examples this includes the fact that factories have closed, people have lost their jobs, other countries have imposed tariffs and trade

barriers on the U.S., and that Asian countries' economies are doing poorly for instance. On the other hand, it could be argued that the different aspects of classic rhetoric are not just present in one of each part in a clear-cut manner. Proof, such as the loss of jobs, is also a clear appeal to the emotions of anyone who used to work at a factory that moved to a country with cheaper labor, or anyone sympathetic to such people. At the same time, the evidence Trump provides is vague and simplified, and as such could be argued to be based more on the persuasiveness of the speaker's character and not the content itself. And the exclamation about keeping the U.S. safe appeals to both reason and emotion.

4.5 Like they've never seen before & Nobody's ever seen anything like it

A common feature of Trump's rhetoric is his fondness of superlatives and adjectives that describe largeness or greatness of things in general. Words such as "Tremendous," "huge," "great," "big," and "best" all appear to be essential parts of his vocabulary. This has been noted by various comedians and imitators trying to make an impression of Trump by using these words in an exaggerated way, such as Alec Baldwin has done with his impression of Trump on "Saturday Night Live."[8] Various news outlets have also taken a (usually critical) interest in the president's vocabulary. Columnist Charles Blow characterizes Trump's language as "sophistry peppered with superlatives," as well as "a jumble of incomplete thoughts stitched together with arrogance and ignorance" in his New York Times article "Trump's Degradation of the Language (2017). Wesley Pruden opines in his Washington Times article "Trumpspeak, a language rich in adjectives" that Trump "never met a superlative he didn't like," and that his enthusiastic rhetoric could be harmful to the president's foreign policy goals (2017). As ubiquitous as they are in Trump's speech, it would be a stretch to call a single adjective a refrain as defined in this study. Yet, Trump's affinity for these words does highlight hyperbole in general as a rhetorical device that he employs frequently, and this can be observed in his usage of the refrains "Like they've never seen before" and "Nobody's ever seen anything like it."

As far as Trump's refrains go, "Like they've never seen before" and "Nobody's ever seen anything like it" are closely related. Their function is largely the same in the sense that both refrains are used to hype something up by claiming that it is unprecedented and has not been seen by anyone else. The forms of the two refrains and their variants vary greatly however, and the verb *see* is often the only

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[8] See for instance "Donald Trump vs Hilary Clinton Third Debate Cold Open – SNL." *Saturday Night Live's Youtube channel*, 23 Oct. 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kjyltrKZSY

thing that they have in common. The frequency of both refrains is also notable. To that end, I will be examining the two as separate refrains, but under the same section since the functions of the two are similar and can be discussed at the same time.

During an interview with NBC's Chuck Todd in June 2019, the reporter asked Trump what message he would send to Iran's leadership after the downing of an American drone:

[EXAMPLE 31]

TRUMP: I'm not looking for war and if there is, it'll be obliteration **like you've never seen before**. But I'm not looking to do that. But you can't have a nuclear weapon. You want to talk? Good. Otherwise you can have a bad economy for the next –

TODD: No pre-conditions?

TRUMP: – three years. Not as far as I'm concerned. No pre-conditions.

(Trump, Donald. Interview with NBC's Chuck Todd, 23 June, 2019.)

The economy was also brought up in comparison to the times under Obama:

[EXAMPLE 32]

TRUMP: Excuse me. Take a look at your GDP, take a look at your jobs, take a look at your optimism.

TODD: Ok.

TRUMP: Take a look at all of the charts. When I took over from election day on, I mean, you show me one chart which, where I did –

TODD: It was the unemployment rate.

TRUMP: Well, in that too, but I'm not talking about that. Take a look at some of the optimism charts and everything else. It went from 57 to 92. **Nobody's ever seen anything like that.**

(Trump, Donald. Interview with NBC's Chuck Todd, 23 June, 2019.)

Examples thirty-one and thirty-two show the difference between Trump's usage of the two refrains. In the first example the president is making a clear threat to the Iranian leadership regarding what the outcome of a war between the two countries would be like. In example thirty-two Trump is making a boastful claim about the optimism that Americans feel about the country's economy in comparison to Obama's times. Out of the two refrains, "Like they've never seen before" appears to be used more commonly when Trump is discussing a hostile or negative "other" whereas "Nobody's ever seen

anything like it" is used to reference something positive or just large in general. The latter refrain will be covered next, and the more hostile "Like they've never seen before" after that.

In example thirty-three China, which is usually among the entities deemed as the negative "other" by Trump in his rhetoric, is discussed in a positive light thanks to a new trade deal between the two countries that Trump promotes as a historic success. "Nobody's ever seen anything like it" therefore makes another appearance.

> [EXAMPLE 33]
> TRUMP: But it's something that we all want to get done, and it'll be a tremendously big deal. This is something that's going to be so special, however, to our manufacturers, our farmers, our bankers, our service people. **Nobody has ever seen anything like it**. This is the biggest deal there is anywhere in the world, by far. And that's good. We're doing another big one next week. But this is the biggest deal **anybody has ever seen**. And it can lead to being a deal that's unprecedented, because China has 1.5 billion people, and ultimately, in phase two, we're going to be opening up China to all of your companies. So I hope you folks can handle it. (Trump, Donald. Remarks at the signing of the U.S. – China Phase One Trade Agreement, The White House, Washington, D.C., 15 January, 2020.)

Despite the deal still being largely hypothetical at the time, Trump appeared eager to promote it as a huge success since he ran for president on the promise of accomplishing things exactly like this. To that end, his exaggeration of the deal is unsurprising. The above extract is only a small snippet of the remarks that the president gave at the signing of the trade agreement. It is a good representation of the whole text however, in that it is scant in details and heavy in praise, and at a second or third reading it becomes apparent that Trump does not actually say that much of substance with phrases such as "This is something that's going to be so special" and "We're doing another big one next week" being very typical. Two of the common features of Trump's rhetoric—vagueness and exaggeration—appear to often go hand in hand.

Like all presidents, Trump has had to deal with several natural disasters that have struck the U.S. during his tenure. During such events, his reactions tend to be accompanied by "Nobody has ever seen anything like it," like in the case of Hurricane Maria, which hit Puerto Rico in September 2017:

> [EXAMPLE 34]

TRUMP: If you look at the—every death is a horror. But if you look at a real catastrophe like Katrina, and you look at the tremendous hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people that died, and you look at what happened here with, really, a storm that was just totally overpowering—**nobody has ever seen anything like this**. What is your death count, as of this moment—17?

(Trump, Donald. Remarks at a briefing on Hurricane Maria Relief Efforts, Carolina, Puerto Rico, 3 October, 2017.)

Trump's words caused some anger at the time: he seems to at first suggest that Hurricane Katrina was a "real" catastrophe compared to Maria, which Trump likens to just a storm. In his defense, he appears to immediately realize how his words can be interpreted and specifies that "every death is a horror." The refrain itself is somewhat at odds with what he just said about Katrina being much more devastating with a higher amount of deaths, but other than that, it is simply used to bemoan the destructiveness of the storm.

[EXAMPLE 35]

TRUMP: In Texas, it came in and did devastation and went out into the coast. It came in three times and would lot up and come in. **Nobody has ever seen water like that**. They saved 16,000 lives in Texas. Hard to believe.

(Trump, Donald. Remarks at a briefing on Hurricane Maria Relief Efforts, Carolina, Puerto Rico, 3 October, 2017.)

"Nobody has ever seen water like that" likely falls in the category of a colloquialism in this case: Trump is simply stating how massive the storm was, as well as possibly backing up locals in the sense that they could not have prepared for such a disaster any better. His marveling praise of the rescue workers in Texas also supports this view.

[EXAMPLE 36]

TRUMP: They got hit by a Category 4—grazed—but grazed about a big portion of the island, but it was grazed. The rest of it hit Florida, as you know. But that was bad. But then they got hit dead-center—if you look at those maps—by a Category 5. **Nobody has ever heard of** a five hitting land. Usually by that time it's dissipated. It hit right through—and kept to a five— it hit right through the middle of the island, right through the middle of Puerto Rico. **There has never been** anything like that.

(Trump, Donald. Remarks on Puerto Rico Recovery with Ricardo Rossello and Brock Long, The White House, Washington, D.C., 19 October, 2017.)

Example thirty-six was met by some incredulousness at the time. Other Category 5 storms had obviously hit the U.S. before. It is notable how "Nobody has ever seen anything like this" from example thirty-four and "Nobody has ever seen water like that" from example thirty-five did not cause public outcry, but as soon as the refrain was used to make a more specific—and blatantly false—claim, people took notice. This suggest that there are "benign" exaggerations that Trump, or anyone, can make and get away with, because people do not take them seriously, but after a certain point a line is crossed, and the exaggeration is viewed as a falsehood rather than a colloquial exaggeration. In this case, the hostile reactions in the media are likely caused by the fact that the president is expected to be up to date on the basics when dealing with crises such as natural disasters, instead of acting like the storm was one-of-a-kind.

There is much variation between the different examples above, but taken together, it seems clear that Trump has a tendency to marvel at the size of disasters and claim that such events are unprecedented. Some have taken issue with this, especially during later years of his presidency, since Trump has been through several such disasters and it seems odd that he always reacts the same way. Possible explanations for such rhetoric can range from cynical to benign: The president and his administration's actions tend to be under intense scrutiny during such events, especially after the Bush administration's failures during Hurricane Katrina, and due to this Trump could be anticipating any criticism of poor handling of the disasters by portraying them as unprecedented in scope. On the other, such an interpretation could be a case of reading too much into his words: wondering at and bemoaning the weather are universal topics for people everywhere. Regarding van Leeuwen's theory of legitimation, Trump seems to be basing his claims about the unprecedented nature of the disasters on conformity by suggesting that everyone is as surprised by the events as he is and that nobody has ever seen the like. There is also an element of expert authority to be found in Trump's reasoning, since he tends to claim what is usual for storms such as these and what is not. In his various reactions to hurricanes, Trump tends to move responsibility away from his administration and make it seem that it lies with Mother Nature and the local authorities instead. This helps him avoid blame, but also arguably weakens his administration in terms of power relations when locals get the credit for successful operations and he himself appears as helpless in the face of such disasters.

The refrain pattern of "Nobody's ever seen anything like it" can be sketched in the following way:

1.	"**Take a look at** some of the optimism charts and everything else. It went from 57 to 92."	Refrain + Claim
2.	"**Nobody's ever seen anything like that**."	Refrain + Claim

1.	"This is something that's going to be so special, however, to our manufacturers, our farmers, our bankers, our service people."	Claim
2.	"**Nobody has ever seen anything like it**."	Refrain
3.	"This is the biggest deal there is anywhere in the world, by far."	Claim

1.	"But this is the biggest deal **anybody has ever seen**."	Claim + Refrain
2.	"And it can lead to being a deal that's unprecedented."	Claim

1.	"But if you look at a real catastrophe like Katrina, and you look at the tremendous hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people that died, and you look at what happened here with, really, a storm that was just totally overpowering…"	Narration
2.	"…**nobody has ever seen anything like this**."	Refrain + Claim

1.	"In Texas, it came in and did devastation and went out into the coast. It came in three times and would lot up and come in."	Narration
2.	"**Nobody has ever seen water like that**."	Refrain + Claim

1.	"They got hit by a Category 4—grazed—but grazed about a big portion of the island, but it was grazed. The rest of it hit Florida, as you know. But that was bad. But then they got hit dead-center—if you look at those maps—by a Category 5."	Narration
2.	"**Nobody has ever heard of** a five hitting land."	Refrain + Claim

As can be seen above, no single predominant refrain pattern can be identified in this case. Trump's various boasts about the economy or a trade deal with China consist of refrains and claims in different orders. The refrain "Take a look at" also makes an appearance, to reference some statistics. When discussing hurricanes on the other hand, Trump first narrates the storm's procession and then employs the refrain to bemoan it. The claims themselves tend to be embedded in the refrain itself. Compared to the previous refrains covered in the study, it appears that, "Nobody's ever seen anything like it" is far more colloquial in nature, and is not accompanied by arguments, criticisms, or proof like the others. Only example thirty-two has some of these elements in it, and their presence is due to the other refrain, "Take a look at," which is used to provide evidence.

As was already mentioned with example thirty-one, "Like they've never seen before" is used by Trump to make threats. A further example of this can be seen in Trump's discussions with reporters while aboard Air Force One. In the aftermath of the assassination of the Iranian general Qassem Suleimani in Iraq, the Iraqi parliament voted in favor of a resolution that called for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the country. Trump responded by threatening Iraq with sanctions:

[EXAMPLE 37]

TRUMP: "If they do ask us to leave, if we don't do it in a very friendly basis, we will charge them sanctions **like they've never seen before** ever. It'll make Iranian sanctions look somewhat tame. If there's any hostility, that they do anything we think is inappropriate, we are going to put sanctions on Iraq, very big sanctions on Iraq."

(Trump, Donald. Talking to reporters aboard Air Force One, 5 January, 2020.)

Like in example thirty-one when threatening Iran with the consequences of a war, here Trump threatens another foreign country that is acting against America's interests, albeit that Iraq is a strategic ally of the U.S. It is also worth noting that in both examples thirty-one and thirty-seven Trump's use of the refrain as a threat comes with a caveat: In example thirty-seven Trump discusses the possibility of sanctions if U.S. forces are asked to leave and such a thing is not done in a "friendly basis." In example thirty-one Trump emphasizes that he does not want a war, and that a desire to talk with the U.S. on Iran's part is a good thing. This refrain thus appears to share the function of negotiation with "We'll see what happens": Trump makes a demand or a threat but leaves the door open for reconciliation. This is also the case in less warlike and serious contexts, as seen in Trump's remarks below:

[EXAMPLE 38]

TRUMP: So, I'm not a big fan of the tech companies, but I don't want foreign companies and foreign countries—I don't want them doing anything having to do with taxing unfairly our companies. Those are great American companies. And, frankly, I don't want France going out and taxing our companies. Very unfair. And if they do that, we'll be taxing their wine or doing something else. We'll be taxing their wine **like they've never seen before**. I don't like it. That's for us to tax them. It's not for France to tax them. Other than that, I have a very good relationship with, as you know, with Macron—as you say. And I think we're going to have a very good couple of days. I look forward to being in France.

(Trump, Donald. Remarks to reporters before Marine One departure, The White House, Washington, D.C., 24 August, 2019.)

Despite his often voiced dislike of tech companies, in example thirty-eight Trump defends them from French taxation. His threat of taxing wine "Like they've never seen before" sounds a bit overly dramatic. By exaggerating the unfairness of the situation, he once again relies on victimization in his rhetoric. After his outburst, Trump reverts to being diplomatic again almost abruptly, signaling that perhaps he does not take the issue too personally despite the fiery rhetoric, but rather was voicing his grievances on principle.

[EXAMPLE 39]
TRUMP: North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States. They will be met with fire and fury **like the world has never seen**. He has been very threatening beyond a normal statement. And, as I said, they will be met with fire, fury, and frankly, power—**the likes of which this world has never seen before**. Thank you. Thank you.
(Trump, Donald. Remarks before a briefing on the opioid crisis. Bedminster, New Jersey, 8 August 2017.)

Trump's "Fire and fury" –threat has become one of the most iconic quotes from his presidency. The wording differs a bit from the main form of the refrain with "they" having been substituted with "the world" but both the form and the function are otherwise similar. Trump's alliterative threat is quite eloquent and effective the first time, but its impressiveness is somewhat diminished when he appears to run out of things to say and stumbles a bit in his speech before resorting to the same refrain and threat again. The seriousness of the situation at the time is perhaps highlighted by the fact that Trump does not offer a chance of reconciliation like he usually does when using this refrain but rather reiterates his threat. The arms crossed posture combined with the slow, loud, and deliberate pronunciation make it seem that Trump wanted to signal power and authority to match the gravity of his message. The refrain, which often comes across as exaggerative when used elsewhere, fits this occasion, but the fact that he uses it so often in other contexts arguably also makes it sound less effective here.

Based on these examples, the following refrain pattern of "Like they've never seen before" can be outlined:

1.	"I'm not looking for war and **if** there is…"	Conditional sentence
2.	"It'll be obliteration **like you've never seen before**."	Threat + Refrain
3.	"But I'm not looking to do that. But you can't have a nuclear weapon. You want to talk? Good."	Reconciliation

1.	"**If** they do ask us to leave, **if** we don't do it in a very friendly basis…"	Conditional sentence
2.	"We will charge them sanctions **like they've never seen before** ever. It'll make Iranian sanctions look somewhat tame."	Threat + Refrain
3.	"If there's any hostility, that they do anything we think is inappropriate, we are going to put sanctions on Iraq, very big sanctions on Iraq."	Threat

1.	"And, frankly, I don't want France going out and taxing our companies. Very unfair. And **if** they do that…"	Conditional sentence
2.	"We'll be taxing their wine **like they've never seen before**."	Threat + refrain
3.	"Other than that, I have a very good relationship with, as you know, with Macron—as you say. And I think we're going to have a very good couple of days. I look forward to being in France."	Reconciliation

1.	"North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States."	Demand
2.	"They will be met with fire and fury **like the world has never seen**."	Threat + Refrain
3.	"He has been very threatening beyond a normal statement."	Criticism
4.	"And, as I said, they will be met with fire, fury, and frankly, power—**the likes of which this world has never seen before**."	Threat + Refrain

As the tables show, Trump tends to first say what the hostile other party is not allowed to do, mostly in a conditional sentence, followed by a threat delivered via the refrain, and finally either a further threat or demand, or an offer of an olive branch in a more conciliatory tone. Compared to "Nobody's ever seen anything like it," Trump is hostile towards the party in question in all the cases, most of which have to do with foreign nations acting in an antagonistic manner. In all of the examples Trump is establishing and relying on not just his, but America's, authority. He portrays the U.S. as the more powerful nation whether it be economically or in terms of military might. The witnesses of the "never before seen" responses in Trump's rhetoric range from "you" and "they" to "the world." The variation is mostly due to what kind of audience he is talking to, with "you" used to address an interviewer's question for instance, whereas "world" was used when addressing a larger gathering. This is not particularly relevant however, for the refrain and the threat would work with any of the three in all of the examples.

5. Summary of common features of Trump's refrains

Now that I have identified and discussed some of the most recognizable and notable refrains that Trump relies on, I will summarize what they have in common with each other. To that end, I have named five features that these refrains share. They are vagueness, repetition, appeals to authority, exaggeration, and what Martin Montgomery calls vernacular folksiness.

5.1 Vagueness

Vagueness is an attribute shared by most of Trump's refrains. A clear example of this is "We'll see what happens," which, as I have discussed above, is potentially used by Trump to pressure people he is negotiating with, either as a threat of consequences or as a promise of a way forward, as well as to make it harder for the media or his political opponents to call him out for inaccuracies. Similarly, when using any variant of the refrain "A lot of people say," Trump seems to be using intentionally vague language in order to avoid having to name a questionable or non-existent source that he is quoting. It allows him to back or bring up conspiracy theories and opinions that most would deem too politically incorrect to be endorsed by the president directly, like in example nineteen, where he floats the possibility that George Soros is funding a caravan of immigrants headed for the U.S. This could serve the purpose of appealing to his supporters who enjoy his lack of political correctness, or believe in the various conspiracy theories, while also making it possible for Trump to claim that he is only quoting what others are saying, not what he believes in himself. In practice the vagueness of "A lot of people say" also makes it possible for Trump to frame his own views as commonly accepted facts, or to bring up talking-points beneficial to him, as he did in example twenty where he started to paint himself as a victim based on rumors.

The refrain "They say" is closely related to "A lot of people say," and is also just as vague. As highlighted in the interview with Tucker Carlson, the "They" that Trump continuously refers to can serve as both a perceived adversary or an ally depending on whether it is used on its own or as a part of "They say." The more positive "They," that had said something helpful about Trump, tended to be vague in the material, whereas the antagonistic "They" was more specific when big IT-companies or the media were being discussed. There is also an inherent vagueness related to Trump's use of the refrain "Believe me," not so much in the words themselves but the context in which it is used and his way of argumentation. The refrain serves the purpose of assuring the people listening to Trump that his claims are true and that he knows what he is talking about. Yet, he tends to provide no reasoning

or evidence for anything he says, but rather states things as facts. "Take a look at" and its variants are also used in situations where Trump is being vague, this refrain being used to refer to some phenomenon or evidence without going into exact details, forcing the listener to interpret what Trump meant.

5.2 Repetition

Repetition is by definition one of the common characteristics of a refrain. In Trump's case it is not just a matter of him using the same refrains from one situation to another however. He also quite often repeats them in the same sentence, or at least in close proximity to each other, which is not a part of the definition of a refrain, but an effective rhetorical device by itself, and not limited to just refrains. In over a quarter of the examples covered here, Trump repeats the refrain more than once with the most repetition happening with "Take a look at" as well as "They say." The repetition of the refrain is especially noticeable with "Take a look at" because Trump tends to list several countries or things in the material and likes to introduce each of them with the refrain. Montgomery also notes that repetition is a typical feature of Trump's speech: He finds that the repeated phrases tend to be used as "retrospective, summative comments," as a form of emphasis or cohesion, or in order to signal to the audience what they should remember (10). The latter definitely seemed to be the case in Trump's use of "Believe me," as was suggested before example six. Montgomery even goes so far as to say that repetitions are the "building blocks" upon which Trump's ability to speak at length off-the-cuff is based on (10). By extension, it could be argued that refrains are the "building blocks" that Trump is most familiar with, and which act as a foundation for his extempore performances. This seems to be the case in example thirty-nine for example, when Trump appears to run out of things to say and relies on repeating the same refrain and threat again. Repetition also occurs in situations where it seems Trump is struggling to come up with an answer or appears to be stalling. This can be seen in example fifteen, when Trump is presented with a hypothetical situation where North Korea launches new missiles. His response includes the refrain "We'll see what happens" four times, two of which were the first thing he said, and were almost followed by a third utterance of it before he stopped himself.

5.3 Vernacular folksiness

Martin Montgomery (9) offers "vernacular folksiness" as one of the terms to describe Trump's apolitical and colloquial way of speaking that is perceived by many as authentic. He sums it up as "a

language or code of group solidarity, context-bound, with a strong appeal to taken-for-granted, shared values and attitudes" (Montgomery 13). It could be argued that Trump's refrains have become one of the cornerstones of this style. One of the features of vernacular folksiness is the presence of shared and taken-for-granted values and attitudes. When a Trump supporter at a rally says that Obama is a Muslim and not even an American, and Trump replies that "a lot of people are saying that," he is seemingly enforcing the notion that he believes in the same conspiracy theories as his supporters. Refrains such as "Believe me" and "Take a look at" appear to be used by Trump to build and further reinforce the shared values and attitudes that Montgomery mentions. By using them, Trump could be signaling to his followers what is important and what is insignificant respectively.

An informal way of talking can also be just that, of course, with no strategy or agenda behind it. Refrains such as "A lot of people say," and "We'll see what happens," are quite informal by themselves and would perhaps sound out of place when uttered by many politicians, but from Trump they have come to sound quite natural. He positioned himself as an anti-establishment "everyman's candidate," and seeing how successful his campaign was from the start, there has been no reason for him to change his style of rhetoric to better match his counterparts among career politicians. A commonly voiced endorsement of Trump among his supporters is that he "Tells it like it is,"[9] a somewhat paradoxical notion considering the vagueness of his rhetoric as already covered. Yet, some voters might shun traditional politicians who have their own vague, official sounding, but often ultimately empty way of communicating, and so Trump's simplistic communication could seem refreshing to them by comparison. And of course, simply setting oneself apart by having an unusual way of talking for a politician will lead to more publicity, which in Trump's case proved the old adage that there is no such thing as bad publicity: he dominated the airwaves during primary season when various news organizations cherished showing clips of him campaigning since they gained more viewers by doing so.

5.4 Exaggeration

It is no surprise that as a former businessman and reality TV star who is used to promoting his property and programs, Trump employs exaggeration as one of his rhetorical devices. Reliance on exaggeration can be clearly seen in all of the refrains covered in this study. When saying "Believe

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[9] Markovits, Elizabeth. "Trump 'Tells it like it is.' That's not necessarily a good thing for democracy." *The Washington Post*, 4 Mar. 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/04/trump-tells-it-like-it-is-thats-not-necessarily-a-good-thing-for-democracy/

me," the refrain is often followed by a hyperbolic claim of some kind, like in example two, where Trump reckons that after leaving the office Obama will spend the rest of his days golfing. Similarly, the NAFTA trade deal signed by Bill Clinton is not just flawed or detrimental to the U.S. according to him in example four: it is "one of the worst trade deals ever made." In example sixteen, after the refrain "We'll see what happens," Trump starts bragging about how many people want to work in his administration, and his various threats delivered via "Like they've never seen before" tend to be quite bombastic as well. A main feature of "A lot of people say" lies in Trump's exaggeration of how various opinions are shared by an unspecific but significant number of people, and "Nobody has ever seen anything like it" is the most obvious case of pure hyperbole. Many of these exaggerations are of course not meant to be taken literally, such as in the case of example thirty-five's "Nobody has ever seen water like that" or example twenty-eight's "And when we produced that transcript, they died," but just as often Trump's claims come across as something to be taken seriously, like in example five, where he claims that Hillary Clinton has "tremendous hate in her heart." Even Trump himself has acknowledged this tendency of his in the book "Art of the Deal" where he calls it "truthful hyperbole […] an innocent form of exaggeration, and a very effective form of promotion."[10] "Nobody has ever seen water like that" is certainly a quite "innocent" exaggeration; claiming that Clinton's heart is full of hate less so. Aside from the promotion of his positive traits as a candidate, various deals and success stories of his presidency get treated with this "truthful hyperbole," such as in example thirty-three where Trump hypes the new trade deal with China.

5.5 Appeals to authority

One of the cornerstones of Trump's rhetoric covered here is an appeal to some kind of authority. With "Believe me" and "We'll see what happens," Trump is relying on his personal authority to persuade or to dictate terms respectively. The personal authority that he draws on can be based on his acumen and knowing of things, like in "And believe me, this country thinks it's disgraceful, also" or "And believe me: We're in a bubble right now," typically due to insights that he claims to have on what Americans really think or want, or his knowledge of financial matters, derived from his business background. The latter can also be considered to be a case of expert authority in van Leeuwen's terms. Authority of conformity is relied on when Trump alleges something that "A lot of people" or "they" say or think ("A lot of people are saying they had spies in my campaign"). Expert authority or personal authority of others can also be invoked this way, although the exact nature of who Trump is referring

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[10] Colvin, Jill. "The Art of the Boast: Trump's a Master." *US News*, 29 Oct. 2019.
https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2019-10-18/the-art-of-hyperbole-trumps-got-it-down-pat

to is rarely clear. Perhaps somewhat curiously, the authority of tradition (van Leeuwen 96) does not appear to be important in Trump's rhetoric, at least in the material covered here, despite him being the president of a conservative political party. The messaging that Trump does is of course in line with common Republican talking points: Clinton and Obama have acted illegally, the media and tech industries are anti-conservative, industries and jobs should not be given to other countries, immigration should be limited, and so on. However, Trump never backs up these claims with traditional conservative arguments, such as the law, what the founding fathers of the U.S. intended, religion, or traditional family values for instance. Nor does Trump rely on the authority of tradition, that is, "We should do X because it's what we have always done." This absence can be partly explained by the lack of certain topics in the material covered here that usually bring up such arguments: gun control, abortion, and gay marriage most notably. On the other hand, despite his campaign slogan being "Make America Great Again," Trump rarely has good things to say about previous administrations and how things used to be done by them, conservatives such as both Bushes included. This could be explained by the fact that despite being a conservative, Trump himself campaigned as an anti-establishment candidate, due to which relying on traditional authority might not be something expected of him by his supporters.

5.6 Refrain patterns

As shown in the various sections, Trump's refrains tend to be used in a quite systematic manner with certain grammatical features, words, or arguments occurring in similar positions around the refrain. Taken as a whole, the refrain patterns detailed here show that the refrains tend to be positioned in the middle of a statement or a speech of some kind, usually as a part of an argument that Trump is making. The refrain is most often preceded by an introductory claim or evaluation of the person of phenomenon being discussed. It can be positive ("Well, I like her a lot. I respect her a lot. She's very smart"), negative ("This is one of the worst deals ever made by any country in history"), or just an assertion of some kind ("We've got to keep our country safe"). The following refrain then acts as a kind of linkage between the introduction and his actual point, which usually is a rebuke, jab, or an argument that he has been leading up to. Not all refrains can be categorized this neatly of course, especially in terms of the positions of the various elements.

General observations can also be made about Trump's rhetoric in the contexts where he relies on the refrains. First, he often pairs criticism with some praise or positivity as well, especially when discussing individual people. For instance, with the refrain "We'll see what happens," Trump has a

habit of balancing out his criticism of various people with some compliments, such as in the case of Steve Bannon ("I like Mr. Bannon, he's a friend of mine… but Mr. Bannon came on very late, you know that"), John Kelly ("There are certain things I love what he does. And there are certain things that I don't like that he does—that aren't his strength"), or James Comey ("No, it's not too late [to fire him]… I have confidence at him and we'll see what happens"). Second, a central feature of Trump's rhetoric is to draw comparisons: Between the U.S. and other countries ("But the rest of the world is not doing well like we're doing"), between himself and other candidates or presidents ("If you become president, this country is going to be in some mess"), or between the state of the economy in the U.S. under him and other administrations. All in all, Trump's refrains tend to appear in contexts where his rhetoric is negative or hostile in some way. This does not necessarily mean that he uses refrains more when being critical of something however: it could also mean that his political rhetoric is more often than not negative in any case. This certainly seems to be the case in the material covered here, where in a significant portion Trump is attacking others, whether it be Clinton, the news media, other nations, social media companies, or in his opinion flawed policies and trade deals.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined the ways in which Donald Trump's rhetoric relies on various refrains. "Believe me," "We'll see what happens," "They say," "Take a look at," as well as "Nobody's ever seen anything like it" and "Like they've never seen before" were identified as some of the most common ones that Trump uses, along with their variants. Common features of the refrains consisting of vagueness, repetition, exaggeration, vernacular folksiness, and appeals to authority were also identified. The various refrain patterns highlight how the refrains tend to be used in a very consistent, almost predictable, way to the extent that some of them have quite fixed locations in Trump's speech. They appear to be an intrinsic part of Trump's way of expressing himself when engaged in natural, unscripted, speech. One might expect that when wielded by a politician, these refrains would be solely used as rhetorical devices to persuade and influence, and this certainly seems to often be the case. Sometimes the refrains appear to be more like a habit however, used when Trump runs out of things to say. They also emphasize his preference for colloquialisms.

It also became apparent that Trump's rhetoric and use of refrains vary based on where he is talking, and to whom. When being interviewed one-on-one, Trump tends to be more comradely with journalists than one might expect based on his frequent bashing of "fake news." He confides in journalists, and his responses are very lengthy and often repetitive. During debates and rallies he is at his most combative behavior, while also being somewhat inarticulate. Colloquialisms and repetition for emphasis are especially frequent during rallies. When holding press conferences or doing his "remarks" in front of a helicopter at the southern White House lawn, he is briefer, and the use of refrains and vague language become very apparent. Various appeals to authority are relevant throughout, with personal authority, expert authority, as well as authority based on conformity being the most relevant ones, while the authority of tradition is noticeably absent.

The obvious shortcoming of this study is the relatively small amount of research material. Much larger amounts of data would be required, were one to determine the exact frequency and characteristics of each refrain. Even within the relatively small sample size covered here, some of the refrain patterns showed variation and exceptions in how the refrains are used. However, the main intent of the study was to recognize notable refrains employed by Trump, along with their apparent functions and common features, which was accomplished. The paper's purpose was also to contribute to the larger set of research regarding the rhetoric of President Trump. So far academics have given much attention to his formal speeches, like with all presidents, as well as his conduct on Twitter,

which has set him apart from his predecessors. Neither can be considered to be a medium where Trump expresses himself in a natural way, however. For this purpose interviews, press conferences, political rallies, and debates provide more fertile material. They are also more relevant in the sense that whereas official speeches are relatively rare, especially for Trump who appears to avoid reading from a prompter, various press events are far more numerous and provide the most occasions for Trump to promote his political agenda. Trump's methods of communicating have been unconventional, as seen for instance with his substituting of daily White House briefings with his own impromptu remarks, during which refrains are constantly used. These unconventional methods in turn deserve to be studied, for Trump's popularity among his base has remained remarkably stable throughout his presidency, meaning his communication strategy is clearly working.

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