

WOOD, OLIVIA, M.A. *Grabbing Him By the Tweets: Presidential Parody as Political Activism*. (2018)

Directed by Dr. Risa Applegarth. 115 pp.

It has never been easier for presidents to communicate directly with voters. Social media allows world leaders to post messages to their followers anytime, anywhere, without going through the traditional channels of speechwriters or public relations staff. Donald Trump in particular has become famous--and heavily criticized--for his unorthodox use of Twitter. This criticism has taken many forms, including a crop of Trump-themed parody accounts, tweeting in character as some version of the president. Political satire is nothing new, but social media platforms offer a new genre in which to do it. In this paper, I examine the parodic methods of five different Donald Trump parody accounts on Twitter and compare them to the rhetorical style of @realDonaldTrump. Methods of analysis included code frequency comparisons across accounts, code intersection patterns, word and phrase frequency comparisons, interviews with account owners, and comparative ethnography. Donald Trump parody accounts on Twitter sit at the intersections of new forms of presidential communication, new uses of digital media, and new strategies for activism. Analyzing their role at this crossroads necessitates considerations of genre, rhetorical situation, and the affordances of the platform.

My research thus contributes to discussions of genre and digital rhetorical theory by examining our current political situation and how rhetors are employing digital strategies in this controversial real world setting. I approach this project with four research questions: 1) In what ways are different accounts parodying the president, and what rhetorical effects do each of these methods have? 2) What elements of the actual

president's real account do the parodies focus on? How do they differ linguistically from each other and from @realDonaldTrump? 3) How do parody accounts fit into the broader set of anti-Trump activism? 4) What political issues do the different accounts highlight, and what can readers gain from them (other than entertainment)? How do parody accounts communicate a message differently than other types of activism? My results provide a rhetorical picture of @realDonaldTrump's Twitter activity in late May/early June of 2017 alongside the activities of his parodists, showing how the parodists view the president and which political issues the parodists find most important to discuss.

GRABBING HIM BY THE TWEETS: PRESIDENTIAL  
PARODY AS POLITICAL ACTIVISM

by

Olivia Wood

A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of The Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

Greensboro  
2018

Approved by

---

Committee Chair

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis written by OLIVIA WOOD has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Members \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Acceptance by Committee

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first and foremost like to thank Aaron Beveridge, because while Graduate School regulations do not allow me to list him as a co-chair for my thesis, because he is considered junior faculty, he has certainly fulfilled the function of a co-chair on this project. I would also like to thank Risa Applegarth, of course, for encouraging me to pursue graduate school in the first place and chairing both my undergraduate and graduate thesis projects. I have now taken 7 semesters of coursework with her.

Next, my professors. Thank you to Susan Andreatta, my undergraduate professor for methods in cultural anthropology. My graduate degree is in English, but her training shaped me as a researcher. Also, to Clay Stuart, for his relentless enthusiasm and support, to Greg Grieve for teaching me to love theory and breaking some of my bad writing habits, and to Jennifer Whitaker, who has made the English building feel like a home.

Now, my colleagues. Thank you to Cindy McPeters for her feedback on this thesis, Carl and Jamie for their advice about graduate school, my coworkers at the writing center both past and present, and my cohort, particularly Katie, Connor, and Michelle.

Last, my family. Thank you to Mom, Dad, Nicole, and Sarah for their unwavering support and love, to my grandparents for their encouragement and financial support, and to Ezra, for his love and support, for his feedback as a reader outside of my field, and for constantly pushing me to be the best version of myself. I love and am grateful for you all.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY .....	7
Research Questions .....	7
An Overview of Presidential Communication Research Post-World Wide Web .....	8
Implications for Research Design .....	12
Data Selection .....	13
Data Collection.....	16
III. RESULTS.....	24
Interviews.....	25
Word Frequencies.....	28
Code Frequency and Intersections .....	32
IV. DISCUSSION.....	42
Intertextuality .....	42
Genre Theory .....	46
Affordances and Constraints.....	49
The Hyperbole Subgenre: @realDonaldTrump .....	54
The Mimicry Subgenre: @DeepDrumpf.....	56
The Visual Humor Subgenre: @TrumpDraws .....	58
The Alternate-Universe Subgenre: @MatureTrumpTwts .....	59
The Translation Subgenre: @DonaeldUnready .....	61
V. CONCLUSION.....	62
WORKS CITED.....	72
APPENDIX A. CODE DESCRIPTIONS.....	83

APPENDIX B. RESULTS TABLES .....	105
APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW FORMS .....	113

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Parody Accounts Chosen .....	14
Table 2. Self-Referential Pronoun Ratios (Singular:Plural) .....	29
Table 3. Adjusted Ratios.....	30
Table 4. Word Frequencies Across All Data (25 Most Common).....	105
Table 5. Word Frequencies For @realDonaldTrump (25 Most Common) .....	106
Table 6. Word Frequencies For @TrumpDraws (All Words Occurring More Than Once).....	107
Table 7. Word Frequencies for @DonaeldUnready (25 Most Common) .....	108
Table 8. Word Frequencies for @MatureTrumpTwts (25 Most Common) .....	109
Table 9. Word Frequencies for @DonaeldUnready (25 Most Common) .....	110
Table 10. Word Frequencies for @realDonaldTrump (25 Most Common) .....	111
Table 11. Word Frequencies for @DeepDrumpf (25 Most Common) .....	112



## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Modern Day Presidential .....	1
Figure 2. Code System After Only Coding @realDonaldTrump.....	18
Figure 3. Timelines of Dataset Per Account.....	20
Figure 4. Coding System Evolution .....	21
Figure 5. @DTparodyproject on 13 October 2017 .....	22
Figure 6. Code Frequencies By Account (Scaled Separately Per Code).....	33
Figure 7. Most Common Rhetorical Strategies For Each Account.....	37
Figure 8. Most Common Topics For Each Account.....	38
Figure 9. @realDonaldTrump on People Writing About Him .....	70
Figure 10. @WulfgarTheBard Contrasted with The New York Times .....	85

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

When Donald Trump tweeted that his social media usage is “MODERN DAY PRESIDENTIAL” (see Figure 1), he was, technically, correct. He is only the second POTUS to run a Twitter account while in office, the first being Barack Obama.

Figure 1

Modern Day Presidential



Twitter did not exist until 2006, and the account that appears to belong to George W. Bush<sup>1</sup> was created in 2009. Whereas previous presidents relied on press conferences, television, radio, and written statements distributed for publication in order to

---

<sup>1</sup> The account in question, @GeorgeWBush, does not carry Twitter’s symbol for verified accounts. Additionally, the tweets are invisible to anyone the account has not approved. This could be a private account belonging to the former president, or it could belong to someone else who has assumed his persona.

communicate with the American people, social media allows presidents to communicate directly with their constituents immediately at any time of day. In fact, Trump is known for tweeting in the early hours of the morning (between 1 and 5 a.m.), and these tweets are often some of his most aggressive<sup>2</sup> or inscrutable<sup>3</sup> (McGill). Andrew McGill speculates that since Trump likely posts these tweets after waking up in the middle of the night, he is unlikely to receive input from aides on the phrasing or content of these tweets, whereas research suggests aides do manage his account at other times (Robinson).

The significance of social media activity is hotly debated, with news agencies both reporting on Twitter trends and posts and questioning whether it's worthwhile to discuss Twitter events at all. When asked their opinions on certain tweets from the president, both Republican and Democrat congressmen downplayed the significance of his posts as "just tweets" (Bowman; Maloy). However, former Press Secretary Sean Spicer stated that posts from @realDonaldTrump are "official statements by the President of the United States" (Spicer qtd. in Williams), and the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals specifically cited one of Trump's tweets in its decision to reject Trump's "travel ban" (Williams). Although it remains to be seen whether this ruling will set a legal precedent for Twitter posts as evidence of intent in court, both of these official statements lend political weight to this communication platform.

---

<sup>2</sup> Accusing Ted Cruz of fraud, lambasting Megyn Kelly and Alicia Machado, and calling for a database of Muslims living in America (McGill).

<sup>3</sup> Such as the now-infamous and since-deleted "covfefe" tweet, which was Trump's 3<sup>rd</sup> most-retweeted tweet as of Dec. 20, 2017, despite the fact it was only published for nine hours before being deleted (Keith).

Additionally, the National Archives and Records Administration has instructed the White House to save all tweets emanating from the president's two accounts (@realDonaldTrump and @potus45), but did not originally state if this included all versions of tweets that are subsequently edited or deleted (Braun). The COVFEFE Act, introduced into Congress by Representative Mike Quigley, would update the Presidential Records Act to make the National Archives' guidance into official law and would include prior deleted and edited tweets (Quigley). The COVFEFE Act would preserve tweets as evidence of presidential actions that cannot be truly undone even if the tweets are eventually deleted. The Knight First Amendment Institute has also issued an ongoing lawsuit, which argues that Trump should not be allowed to block individual users from viewing his Twitter account because, as president, his page is a public forum and blocking citizens from participating in that public forum is a violation of the first amendment (Wong). Furthermore, Shontavia Johnson of Drake University argues that Trump's use of Twitter is likely responsible for winning him the election. Clearly, whether we like it or not, social media can no longer be dismissed as trivial internet discourse. In addition to hosting cat videos, memes, and photos of this morning's breakfast, Twitter is now the location of not just political discourse, but political action.

Whereas Trump's opponents criticize his blunt, direct use of social media, his supporters praise him for being unfiltered in his communication and "telling it like it is." Although Obama did use Twitter during his presidency, most of his tweets were written

by staffers.<sup>4</sup> Robinson's research demonstrates clear differences between tweets originating from an Android phone (assumed to be posted directly by Trump) and tweets originating from an iPhone (assumed to be staff-authored tweets). The Android tweets typically appear in the morning, contain more emotional language, fewer links and photos, and fewer hashtags (Robinson). The two distinct patterns that emerge from Robinson's analysis show that Twitter is being used by the Trump administration not just as an additional platform for officially-authorized communication (like the Obama administration primarily did) but as a direct, personal, and preferred link between the president himself and his followers. Critics of Trump, noting the president's preferred platform, began to respond in kind. As of September 9, 2017, more than fifty parody accounts of Donald Trump have been created on Twitter alone.

If Twitter is a significant site for official political action, then it can also be a significant site for political resistance.<sup>5</sup> Resistance via social media is not unique to the Trump era and was used to great effect during the Arab Spring as citizen journalists covered what mainstream media outlets failed to show (Mottahedeh).<sup>6</sup> Similarly, presidential parodies both on social media and more traditional media (such as *Saturday Night Live*) are not new. Google Trends data on "presidential parody" and "political

---

<sup>4</sup> Both Barack and Michelle Obama made a practice of signing tweets "b.o." or "m.o." when tweets were directly authored by themselves. Relatively few tweets from each account carry these signatures.

<sup>5</sup> Some activists bemoan "armchair activists" who stay at their computers instead of participating in direct action. I believe their arguments are valid in many ways and do not intend to minimize the importance of direct action.

<sup>6</sup> Conversely, Eunsong Kim's article on "The Politics of Trending" demonstrates how Twitter's proprietary (and therefore secret) trending algorithms also hide resistance movements, particularly over time.

parody” both show the highest spikes in popularity around the 2004 and 2012 elections, and “parody” data peaks around Christmas every year, rather than around an election cycle. However, there are about twice as many Trump-related parody accounts on Twitter as there are Obama-related parody accounts, suggesting a shift in medium for presidential parody. The 2:1 ratio of Trump parody accounts and Obama parody accounts on Twitter does not include the many Hillary Clinton-related parody accounts (like @IfHillaryHad) and “rogue” accounts acting as subversive versions of different government agencies such as NASA and subdivisions of the National Park Service. While Twitter’s growth may be attributed to many factors, Donald Trump’s use of the network has brought new attention and exigence to the platform.

Donald Trump parody accounts on Twitter sit at the intersections of new forms of presidential communication, new uses of digital media, and new strategies for activism. Analyzing their role at this crossroads necessitates considerations of genre, rhetorical situation, and the affordances of the platform. My research thus contributes to discussions of genre and digital rhetorical theory by examining our current political situation and how rhetors are employing digital strategies in this controversial real-world setting.

The first known use of “parody” in the English language is from 1607, in which T. Walkington references a “parode” imitating Virgil (Oxford English Dictionary), although “satire” was used in English as early as 1509 and both terms are inherited from Latin and classical writers. Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of “parody” reads as follows:

A literary composition modelled on and imitating another work, esp. a composition in which the characteristic style and themes of a particular author or genre are satirized by being applied to inappropriate or unlikely subjects, or are otherwise exaggerated for comic effect. In later use extended to similar imitations in other artistic fields, as music, painting, film, etc.

Similarly, “satire” is defined thusly: “A poem or (in later use) a novel, film, or other work of art which uses humour, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize prevailing immorality or foolishness, esp. as a form of social or political commentary” (Oxford English Dictionary). The *OED*’s emphasis on “composition” in the definition of parody and “poem” in defining satire suggests that textual parody is the oldest (English) formulation of the genre, placing Twitter parodies in a centuries-long tradition extended through a new method of distribution. Furthermore, satire’s history as “especially a form of social or political commentary” also situates Trump parody in relation to an extensive canon of previous texts. Jamieson shows how previous genres and iterations of genres affect and inflect descendant forms, which suggests these parodic antecedents affect the forms of current parody on Twitter—but analysis of that influence is for another study; here, I use this history to contextualize my object of study. Because the parodists I am studying are operating in a world with a previous tradition of political satire, they are necessarily influenced by that history.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

In “Tactical and Strategic: Qualitative Approaches to the Digital Humanities,” Brian McNely and Christa Teston delineate a difference between research tactics and research strategies, arguing that specific tactics (methods) must be derived from and chosen in service to a broader research strategy (methodology). Furthermore, the methodology must be situated between global, reflexive approaches to qualitative inquiry, informative theoretical frameworks, and local needs of the site, object, or subjects in question. In this section, I will both describe my methodology and methods and explain how these approaches are specifically suited to the rhetorical situation of my own research.

I entered the world of Donald Trump parody accounts not as a researcher, but as a private citizen and Twitter user. I was struck by the diversity of existing accounts and the depth that some creators went to in crafting their personae. I thought, clearly the account owners chose their specific methods of parody for particular individual reasons, and each constructed a very different version of Donald Trump for their followers. These observations led me to my research questions.

#### **Research Questions**

1. In what ways are different accounts parodying the president, and what rhetorical effects do each of these methods have?



2. What elements of the actual president's real account do the parodies focus on? How do they differ linguistically from each other and from @realDonaldTrump?
3. How do parody accounts fit into the broader set of anti-Trump activism?
4. What political issues do the different accounts highlight, and what can readers gain from them (other than entertainment)? How do parody accounts communicate a message differently than other types of activism?

Before I explain how I went about answering these questions, I will turn to how other researchers have approached the issue of online presidential rhetoric and examine how their methods could or could not be adapted for my project.

### **An Overview of Presidential Communication Research Post-World Wide Web**

U.S. presidential communication has been an object of rhetorical study dating back to the very first president. Jamieson demonstrates how the first State of the Union Addresses evolved from the earlier genre of "The King's Speech," inheriting stylistic features not entirely appropriate for America's new form of government, and how these addresses have changed from private addresses to Congress, to written documents, to major televised events. "The Gettysburg Address" is studied in English classrooms all over the country, JFK's speeches are used in AP Language and Composition exams, and the JFK vs. Nixon debate, the first televised presidential debate, is used as a go-to example for the importance of visual rhetoric. Entire shelves of books analyze campaign and presidential rhetoric before the introduction of the internet. However, Tedesco, Miller, and Spiker argue that "the introduction of computer-mediated political

communication (CMPC) is one of the most noteworthy phenomena of practical and scholarly speculation since the broadcast of the Nixon-Kennedy debates” (51). In *The Electronic Election*, published in 1996, Tedesco, Miller, and Spiker’s chapter, “Presidential Campaigning on the Information Superhighway: An Exploration of Content and Form,” identifies the 1996 election as the first U.S. presidential election in which the internet played a major role, listing the 1996 Clinton-Gore campaign as the first presidential campaign to use email.<sup>7</sup> For their study, they archived the Clinton and Dole campaign websites weekly, noting how the websites changed over time (Tedesco et. al 54-55).

Kathleen E. Kendall, in *Communication in the Presidential Primaries*, provides an overview of candidates and their media use from 1912-2000. Nearly twenty years later, Kendall’s description of the “speeding up of news coverage” (218) due to 24-hour news cycles and the ability to publish news online prefigures how social media sped up the news cycle even further. Kendall also cites lack of media intervention in political messaging as one of the primary advantages of running a campaign website (219), again prefiguring Trump’s use of Twitter to “get the honest and unfiltered message out” (@realDonaldTrump). In 1999, Richard Davis identified six functions of presidential candidate web pages: to demonstrate that the candidate is “with the times,” to distribute information, to gauge public opinion, to organize voter registration, to organize campaign

---

<sup>7</sup> Clinton also used the internet in his 1992 presidential campaign, but although “at the time, political consultants claimed the Internet might be an essential instrument for strategic communication in presidential campaigns” (Yun, Jasperson, and Chapa 105), email was not considered significant in the 1992 election as a whole.

volunteering and fundraising, and to increase interactivity between voters. Kendall notes that campaign websites were updated much more frequently during the 2000 election cycle than the 1996 cycle (219).

Although George W. Bush did use technology in both of his campaigns, and the internet evolved in leaps and bounds during his presidency, it is Howard Dean, not George Bush, who “set the standard” for social media campaign strategy during the 2004 election (Hendricks and Denton 4). Furthermore, because Howard Dean did not win, Barack Obama is the one credited with innovative use of “New Media” in his campaigning. Mackay and Brown both provide studies of how the interactive website “My B.O.” enabled volunteers to organize more effectively than ever before. In his study of the Obama campaign’s use of Twitter leading up to the 2008 election, Solop hand-coded all 262 of Obama’s existing tweets according to content, using a system of thirteen codes (41).<sup>8</sup> Solop aggregated and analyzed the codes to “represent changes in posting strategy over time” (41).

Also during the 2008 presidential campaign, Monica Ancu performed content analysis on a sample of 261 tweets<sup>9</sup> from Obama, 26 tweets from McCain, and 1,664 randomly-selected tweets from users that were aggregated on Twitter’s “Election 2008” page (Ancu 13). She then reduced her sample by removing tweets from users who seemed to be living outside the U.S. (a rough measure for citizenship and thus ability to

---

<sup>8</sup> Examples of these codes include “Location Information,” “Campaign Web site Reference,” “Get-Out-the-Vote Message,” and “Famous People Named.”

<sup>9</sup> Like Solop (sample size 262), Ancu notes that her sample included all of Obama’s tweets. Ancu likely sampled her data slightly earlier than Solop, thus the one tweet difference in sample size.

vote) and users who seemed to be under 18 based on their profiles (Ancu 13). At the time, demographic reports suggested that a plurality of Twitter users were men ages 35-44 living in California (Ancu 13). Significant observations from Ancu's work include McCain's very minimal use of Twitter, Obama's "total lack of interaction" with the Twitter community, and that 60% of election-related tweets from average users were "very close to trivial rants, persona, and random thoughts about the election or the candidates" (Ancu 16-17). These studies provide a scholarly history of digital media use by presidential campaigns and how much digital media has grown in a relatively short time in terms of usage, interactivity, and the types of platforms used. With regards to Twitter, Solop and Ancu's studies show that during previous election cycles, Twitter and Twitter usage by presidential campaigns were both small enough that datasets could include *all* of the relevant data (e.g. all of Obama's tweets), not just a sample. Current researchers no longer have the luxury of close-reading every tweet—data is produced faster than it can be feasibly processed. Present and future studies must strike a balance between detail and scope and/or find new methods to mitigate this trade-off.

Roderick P. Hart developed one such method, which he deploys in his two book-length studies, *Verbal Style and the Presidency* and *Campaign Talk*. Hart is the creator of DICTION, a text analysis software that evaluates texts for a variety of qualities such as certainty, optimism, activity, realism, and commonality, all of which contain numerous sub-categories and opposing variables. *Campaign Talk* analyzes speeches, debates, ads, and news coverage, as well as citizen-texts like letters to local newspapers. *Verbal Style and the Presidency* examines public speeches from nine different presidents beginning

with Truman and ending with Reagan. Previously, public speeches were the only semi-direct<sup>10</sup> way a president could address American citizens. Although television and radio broadcasts provided more opportunities, they too must be scheduled. Social media provides an unprecedented opportunity for presidents to make public, direct speech, without many of the constricting forces—editors or staff approval, for example—present in other forms of communication. A tweet can be posted immediately and directly, from the user’s personal phone, without going through an approval process like most other government communications.

### **Implications for Research Design**

Since these previous studies were conducted, internet platforms and how they are used in presidential campaigning have continued to evolve, which means the research methods to study them must necessarily evolve too. For example, Solop could easily hand-code all 262 tweets from the 2008 Obama campaign account. Ancu does not explicitly state whether she hand-coded her sample size of 1,664 tweets, but even this number is theoretically reasonable for hand-coding given enough time or more than one person. Donald Trump, on the other hand, has over 36,000 tweets, and including parody accounts to the sample adds several thousand more. It is no longer feasible to conduct a study on *all* relevant tweets if a researcher is doing some of the work manually.

Furthermore, the demographics of Twitter’s user base has changed significantly since Ancu’s research. At the time of Ancu’s study, Twitter data was representative of men

---

<sup>10</sup> I say semi, here, because many presidents have speech writers, advisors, aides, and other staff members who may influence the content or style of a speech.

ages 35-44 in California; now, the user base is much more diverse. If user demographics are too broad to draw reasonable conclusions based on those factors, new ways to make sense of the data must be found. Lastly, although DICTION is still available for quantitative discourse analysis, and continues to be updated with new versions of the software, financial barriers made DICTION an inaccessible research method for this project. As a consequence, I needed to use a sampling technique to create a corpus of tweets that I could feasibly code by hand, ask questions that did not depend on a generalizable user base, and select affordable analytical tools with which to answer these questions.

### **Data Selection**

I selected the accounts for my data set by first Googling “best Trump parody accounts,” reading several resulting articles, and looking at the accounts that appeared on multiple lists. I then searched “Donald Trump parody” on Twitter for a list of all accounts identifying themselves as such and checked the other accounts that were not on the “best of” lists to see if any of them looked particularly popular or different in aims than the others. I then compiled a list of 11 accounts along with their approximate follower counts and a descriptive note. From these, I selected five accounts for inclusion in this study based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative reasons. These five accounts and their descriptions are listed, from lowest to highest number of followers, in table 1.

Table 1

Parody Accounts Chosen

Name	Follower Count	Description
@DeepDrumpf	~29.2k	A neural network trained on Trump tweets and speeches
@RealDonalDrumpf	~77.1k	Stylistically based on the original, but fake content implied to be something that could be real
@DonaeldUnready	~99.2k	Combining Trump’s tweeting style with the persona of a medieval king
@MatureTrumpTwts	~124k	An imagining of what Trump’s Twitter account might look like if he were “mature”
@TrumpDraws	~441k	GIFs photoshopped to show Trump displaying doodles attributed to him

These accounts correspond to what I found to be the main subgenres of Trump parody accounts: hyperbole, mimicry, visual humor, alternate-universe, and translation (by which I mean “translating” Trump’s posts into another speaking style such as “Trump as Bernie Sanders” or “Ghetto Trump”). Below, I provide brief explanations of why I selected each of these accounts.

1. **@DeepDrumpf** I am interested in this account because, unlike all but one of the other parody accounts, it is not written by a human but by a neural network trained on transcripts of Trump speeches, tweets, and debates. The account has almost three times as many followers as the other bot account, @mechanicaltrump, which does not publish its creation methodology.

2. **@realDonaldTrump** I selected this account because it is very similar in style to other accounts (such as @WriteinTrump) and has the highest follower count of this type, which typically tweets in a Trump-like style on similar topics as the president but in an exaggerated manner (hyperbole subgenre).  
  
@realDonaldTrump is also the first Trump parody account to directly feud with the president on Twitter (@realDonaldTrump) and one of the first accounts that Trump blocked.
3. **@DonaeldUnready** Donaeld The Unready, according to the account bio, is “The best medieval King out there. I'm the bretwalda. The bestwalda. I've got great swords, everyone says so. Make Mercia Great Again. Great thoughts, all my own.” This account sets a Trumpian tweeting style and modern American issues in the context of medieval Mercia (part of what is now England). I am interested in this for a couple of reasons: 1) The account is the most distinct form of genre-blending of the accounts available, 2) The account compares entire political systems instead of just individuals, 3) The account includes both text and comics (called “tapestries”), and 4) The account belongs to a network of accounts tweeting in the same universe, such as Stephen the Miller, Aethelflaed (the Hillary Clinton character in this world), Sean the Halfwity, The Jorvik Times, and others.
4. **@MatureTrumpTwts** This account is significant because most of its tweets align one-to-one with actual Trump tweets. The account also aims not to mimic or to mock, like most of the other accounts, but to show what an alternative version



of the president could be like. This approach to Trump parody is similar to @IfHillaryHad (Alt-POTUS 45), but @MatureTrumpTwts does not mock the president, instead providing what is meant to be a realistic alternative reality. Whereas the Hillary account makes posts like “DAY 128: Took a stroll with my G7 buddies. Reminded Republicans that I have the fucking stamina. Sent Bill out to fetch some gelato,” which a real President Clinton would presumably not say on her public Twitter, @MatureTrumpTwts’s posts could conceivably belong to an actual politician.

5. **@TrumpDraws** While this account was harder to analyze quantitatively, since its content is primarily visual, it is the most-followed of the Trump parody accounts by a significant amount (almost 150,000 more followers than the next most popular account as of May 26, 2017).

### **Data Collection**

After selecting the five accounts, I used MassMine software to collect the most recent tweets from each parody account and @realDonaldTrump as of June 6, 2017, up to 3200 tweets<sup>11</sup> from each account. It quickly became apparent that this was far too many tweets to hand-code within the period of time allotted for this thesis, so I chose the number of tweets posted by the least-active account. Since @TrumpDraws only had 60 posts as of June 6, 2017, I reduced the dataset to 60 tweets from each account. The reduced dataset did not always reflect the 60 most recent posts, since some parody

---

<sup>11</sup> Twitter only allows users to download up to the most recent 3,200 tweets from any given account unless the user pays a fee.

accounts had posts replying to other users and posting outside of their parodic personae. These posts were deleted from the dataset, leaving the 60 most recent tweets in-character addressed to their follower base at-large. Out-of-character posts and replies are important pieces of these accounts' work as digital activists, and I will discuss them in qualitative terms, but they would disrupt the accuracy of the quantitative measures I applied to the tweets (i.e. word and phrase frequency). Consequently, the tweets sampled from each account spanned different amounts of time. While I will go into further detail about the implications of the sampling below, the time differences present a generative challenge to my research in that even the frequency of tweeting carries rhetorical significance. That is, each account owner made individual choices about when and when not to tweet.

In coding the tweets, I used a grounded theory approach of open coding and theoretical memoing in MAXQDA. An open coding approach, developed by Glaser and Strauss and common throughout ethnographic research, means that rather than generating a coding system prior to coding the data, I created new codes as I went through the dataset. According to Strauss, this process has “an indispensable function in discovering, developing, and formulating a grounded theory” (109). The coding process is inductive, based upon ongoing observation, rather than generated beforehand. Original codes can be revised, combined, or divided into separate categories. Therefore, it is important to know the order in which I coded the tweets. After coding only @realDonaldTrump's tweets, the code system looked as follows:

Figure 2

Code System After Only Coding @realDonaldTrump

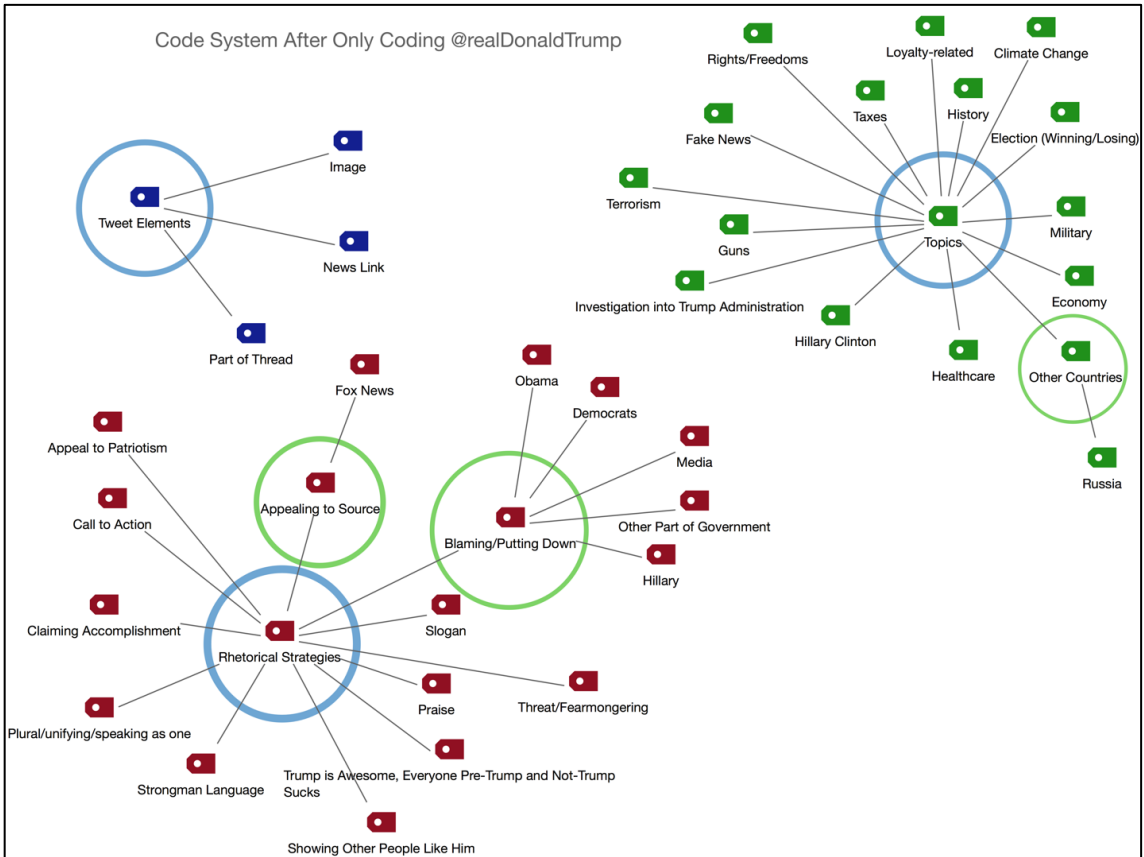


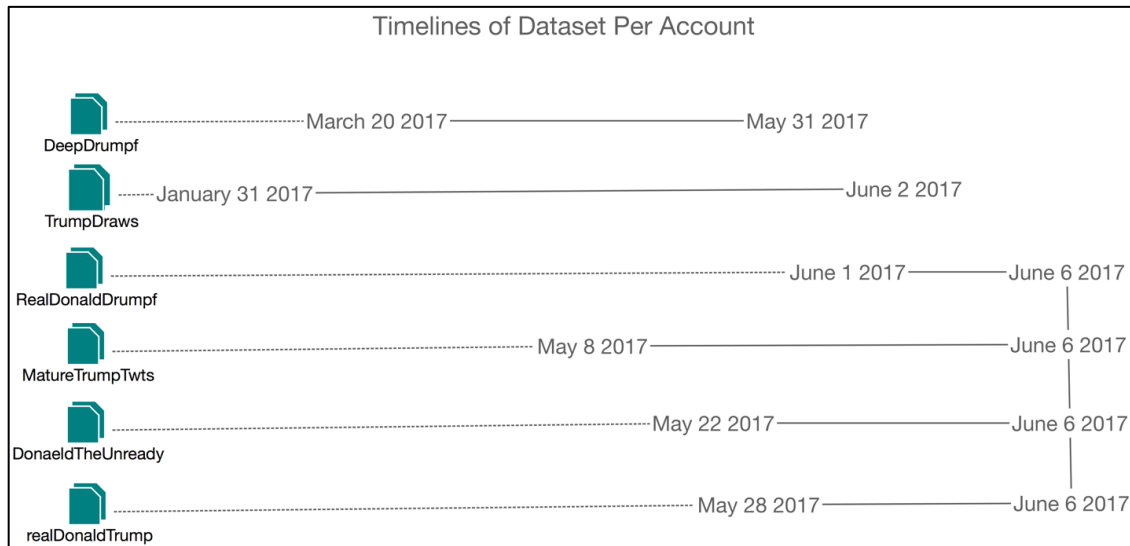
Figure 2 organizes the codes applied to @realDonaldTrump tweets in three color-coded categories, represented by the nodes circled in blue. No tweets were coded with “Tweet Elements,” “Rhetorical Strategies,” or “Topics”; these codes functioned solely as parent codes used to organize the subsidiary categories. The codes circled in green, however, were applied directly to tweets *and* used to organize subcategories of codes. For example, the red code (circled in green) “Blaming/Putting Down” was applied to tweets in which the object of blame or derision did not fit into any of the articulated

subcategories (Hillary Clinton, Obama, Democrats, Media, and Other Part of Government). For full descriptions of all codes and the criteria used to apply them, please refer to Appendix A.

It is important to note that with such a small sample size as 60 tweets, Figure 2 is an incomplete picture of the rhetorical strategies Trump uses and the topics he tweets about. Because the different accounts tweet with different levels of frequency, some of the codes applied to the parody accounts but not @realDonaldTrump reflect topics that Trump may have also tweeted about around a similar time. For example, a tweet coded with the topic code “immigration” from @MatureTrumpTwts was posted in May, which was outside of the timeframe from which @realDonaldTrump’s 60 tweets were drawn. The difference in the timespan accounted for by each account’s 60 tweets does present some problems for direct comparison of topical discussion, but the discrepancy does suggest which topics the parody accounts felt compelled to tweet about, as opposed to which topics the president felt compelled to tweet about. In other words, Trump tweeted about the topics shown above often enough (generating 60 tweets only within these topics) that the dataset did not include topics he discussed at earlier times; in contrast, the parody accounts did *not* tweet about those same topics with the same frequency as the president.

Figure 3

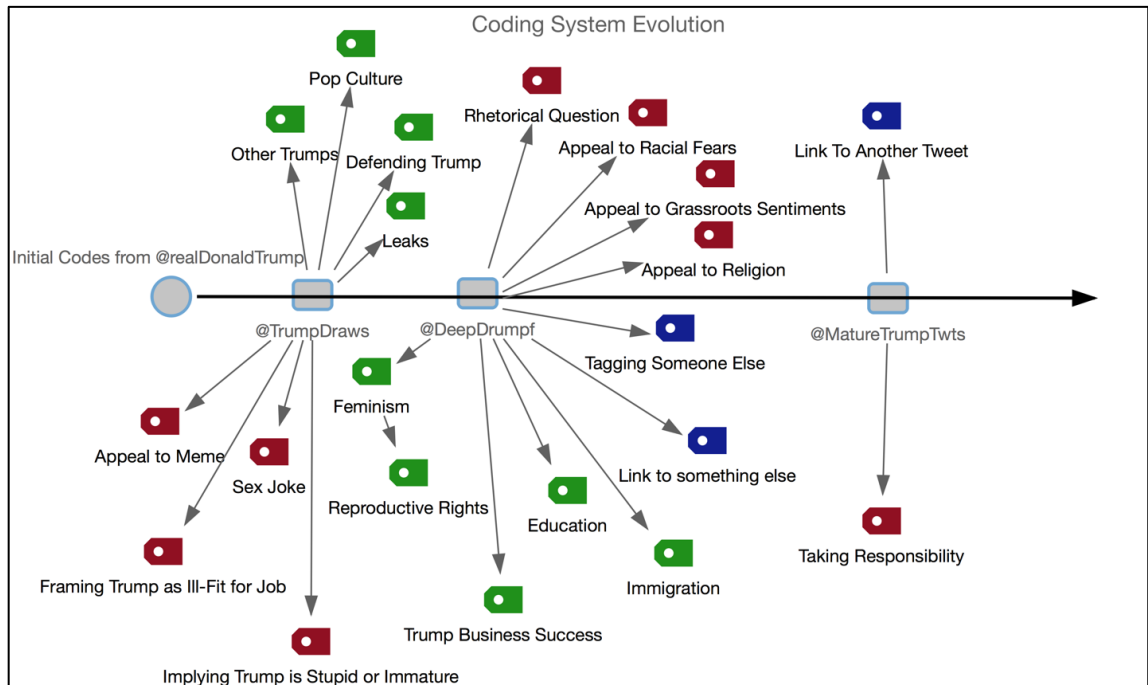
Timelines of Dataset Per Account



The coding system evolved as the data from additional accounts were coded. Some codes—such as “implying Trump is stupid or immature”—necessarily did not appear in the strategies employed by @realDonaldTrump. See Figure 4 for the full evolution of the coding system over time. Figure 4 retains the same color-coding of code categories as Figure 3: red codes represent rhetorical strategies, green codes represent topics, and blue codes represent particular uses of Twitter’s functionality. The new codes branch away from the parody accounts that prompted their creation, and subcodes are represented as branching away from their parent code (e.g., “Reproductive Rights” branches from “Feminism” instead of directly from one of the parody accounts). Movement from left to right across the figure indicates the order in which the parody accounts were coded.

Figure 4

### Coding System Evolution



@RealDonalDrumpf (coded after @DeepDrumpf) and @DonaeldtheUnready (coded last) did not prompt the creation of any new codes. Again, for full descriptions of all codes and the criteria used to apply them, please refer to Appendix A.

In so many cases in literary and rhetorical studies, it is impossible to know for sure the author’s intention, especially when a corpus includes texts by many different authors. Because Twitter is presented as a *social network*, the platform invites interaction between rhetors and audiences—and in this case, rhetors and researchers. For this project, I created a new Twitter account called @DTparodyproject and described myself as a graduate student researcher at UNCG studying Donald Trump parody (see Figure 8). From this account and my university email address, I reached out to all five of the parody

accounts, via email if the accounts provided a contact address, and via Twitter if they did not. @realDonaldTrump, @MatureTrumpTwts, and @DonaeldUnready all responded, and @realDonaldTrump and @MatureTrumpTwts both completed interviews with me—the first over email, and the second through Twitter Direct Messaging.

@DonaeldUnready expressed interest in being interviewed, but we fell out of contact since the account owner was out of the office completing fieldwork. @DonaeldUnready did not respond to my follow-up message. My research account, @DTparodyproject, attracted a (very) small audience of followers of @MatureTrumpTwts and @realDonaldTrump, parody account owners, colleagues from rhetoric and composition, and some of my former classmates.

Figure 5

@DTparodyproject on 13 October 2017

**Olivia Wood**  
@DTparodyproject  
Master's student in English at @UNCG studying Twitter parodies of Donald Trump as a form of political activism  
[olivia-wood.weebly.com](http://olivia-wood.weebly.com)  
Joined June 2017

Tweets 32 Following 9 Followers 13 Likes 11 Lists 0 Moments 0

**Tweets** Tweets & replies Media

**Olivia Wood** @DTparodyproject · Oct 11  
Walking my parents through my project so far was a really helpful experience, as it is nearly every time I show my work to an outsider

**Olivia Wood** @DTparodyproject · Oct 9  
Writing my bias into the paper makes me feel like a bad scholar, but writing "unbiased" makes me feel like a bad citizen.

As I continued to work on this project, I tweeted about my research process and some of the methodological problems I was running into. @WulfgarTheBard then reached out to me, and while we did not complete a formal interview, we discussed his work, @DonaeldUnready, and other parody accounts in the Mercian universe.



## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

Since I approached my research questions from several different angles, both quantitative and qualitative, I will divide my results into sections based on the type of analysis. First, I will summarize the content of the interviews I conducted with three of the parody account owners (@MatureTrumpTwts, @RealDonalDrumpf, and @DonaeldUnready). Then, I will discuss word frequency analysis. Lastly, I will compare code frequency and code intersections. The interviews provide emic perspectives to the parody accounts that elucidate the “speaker” side of the rhetorical situation of Trump parody accounts on Twitter and also provide a (subjective) summary of audience reactions to the parodies, both of which are not encompassed by my data. I use word frequency analysis to compare how self-absorbed @realDonaldTrump appears in his tweets to how self-absorbed the parody accounts portray him. Parody is based in exaggeration or re-focusing of elements present in the original, and perceived narcissism is one quality that the parody accounts “lift” from @realDonaldTrump and amplify in their posts. The code frequencies demonstrate which rhetorical strategies and topics the parody accounts choose to focus on, compared with each other and with @realDonaldTrump, and the code intersections reveal the associations the different accounts draw between some of these strategies and topics.

## Interviews

The owner of @realDonaldTrump is also in charge of @thedailyedge, a Twitter account that describes itself as “Political news, commentary & liberal humor.”

@realDonaldTrump told me, “During the 2012 election, The Daily Edge was ranked as one of the three most influential liberal accounts on Twitter during the televised Presidential debates. One of the three most influential conservative accounts was @realDonaldTrump.” @realDonaldTrump then explained that he began the Trump parody account because he would post fictitious quotes from Republican politicians on @thedailyedge, but many of his readers would think they were real. His goal was to entertain, not to misinform, so he created @realDonaldTrump as a separate space for his fake quotes. He chose Trump because “he was the most outrageous, ridiculous, ignorant, racist and famous conservative on Twitter” and intended to close the account after the 2016 election, assuming Hillary Clinton would win. After the election, @realDonaldTrump continued tweeting as a form of resistance.

@realDonaldTrump is modest about the impact he thinks parody accounts can have, saying “I don't think my tweets are as important as the activism that we have seen with the mass protests or Obamacare sit-ins, etc. but I do think that accounts like this can: a) inject a little humor; b) help people share and process information; and c) stay outraged.” Aside from parody, @realDonaldTrump also participates in marches, signs petitions, uses Twitter to share information, and encourages his followers to do the same.

@MatureTrumpTwts is a “50ish” man living in the Midwestern United States and is a “professional communicator and keynote speaker” who focuses on “issues around the

need for kindness, living a full life, etc.” (@MatureTrumpTwts qtd. in Singal). He goes by “Barry” online, although that is not his real name—a reference to the fact that many readers think Barack Obama is the real owner of the account (@MatureTrumpTwts). Barry admits that he originally started the account for selfish reasons—as a way to vent his frustrations about politics and process his feelings. Whereas @realDonaldTrump flowed naturally out of @thedailyedge’s existing work, the last straw for Barry was “The Tweet about Hamilton...” (@MatureTrumpTwts). He said, “[It] felt like such an assault on first amendment rights that I needed to take some control. So I started this to show the chasm between his tone and that of a statesman.” @MatureTrumpTwts became popular after Seth MacFarlane retweeted one of his posts, growing the follower count from 2 (Barry’s family members) to around 14,000. He says that from the replies he has received from followers, it seems that “many are finding this as a sanity check” against the normalization of Trump’s communication behavior (@MatureTrumpTwts).

Barry believes that whatever Trump’s other shortcomings as a president, his tweeting behavior is particularly troubling:

As for Trump, I think he needs to recognize that 140 characters is simply not enough to provide context and nuance to the issues he's bringing up. Fraught with potential for misinterpretation and danger. Words MATTER. If he can tank the value of a stock, have a decent man receive death threats and create an int'l kerfuffle with China due to tweeting, it's time to pause. He really needs to have a trust[ed] advisor...who stands between him and the send button.  
(@MatureTrumpTwts)

Barry also worries that, because the POTUS is such an influential figure, young people might learn dangerous communication habits if they believe that Trump’s behavior is

acceptable. “Finally,” Barry said, “I’d say that while I started this admittedly selfishly, I do believe it could grow into a powerful movement. We, the world, have to find our way back to civility, empathy, decorum, decency and kindness. And I think this can play a role in that” (@MatureTrumpTwts).

Because I did not conduct a formal interview with @WulfgarTheBard, our conversation was much shorter and more focused. Mike (the account owner) contacted me after I tweeted about the question of how to categorize his posts—as “news links”?—based on what they are in our world (comics) compared to what they represent in the fictional Mercian universe (news stories). Mike said:

Mercia is like a lot of parody accounts riffing off each other. It is not organised. It is organic. Each account in Mercia is independently satirising the madness that is Trump just within a shared idea of Anglo-Saxon Mercia... You will see have different Mercian accounts have come up with different names for the same individual. It can take time for everyone to notice and coalesce on one name. (@WulfgarTheBard)

He also explained that @DonaeldUnready actually satirizes both Trump and Brexit, while @WulfgarTheBard only creates content about Trump because, as a British person, he is avoiding talking about Brexit in case it affects his real life. In my analysis of @DonaeldUnready, I did not differentiate between tweets that seemed Brexit-related rather than Trump-related. All tweets in my dataset were treated as Trump-related, because @DonaeldUnready is tweeting from a Trumpian persona, even if the subject matter sometimes relates to other countries’ politics.

## Word Frequencies

Standard procedure for word frequency charts is to apply a “stop list,” which removes common English words like articles, conjunctions, pronouns, and some verbs. Although I did apply a stop list to my data, I included personal pronouns in my word frequency analysis. A common criticism of Donald Trump is that he is narcissistic or self-absorbed.<sup>12</sup> Word frequency analysis of personal pronouns in my dataset cannot determine whether this is true, but it can show how the parody accounts behave compared to @realDonaldTrump.

To assess self-absorption (or the appearance of it) in the tweets, I calculated the ratio of singular self-referential pronouns (I, My, Me) and other words (Trump)<sup>13</sup> to plural self-referential pronouns (We, Us, Our) in the top 25 most-used words for each account.<sup>14</sup> This provides a measure of how much Trump and his parodists talk about themselves as individuals as opposed to as part of a collective. Coincidentally, the ratio in @realDonaldTrump’s tweets came out to exactly 1 (26 singular self-referential pronouns to 26 plural self-referential pronouns), providing an easy baseline for comparison.

---

<sup>12</sup> As of September 2017, a Google search for “Trump narcissism” returns 1.2 million results. The first several pages of these results feature many popular news organizations (*The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Washington Post*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Guardian*, *Politico*, etc.) speculating on these claims. Whether psychiatrically accurate or not, the accusations are rampant.

<sup>13</sup> In the case of @RealDonalDrumpf, I excluded the uses of “Trump” from these ratios because all four uses of “Trump” from that account were in reference to Barron Trump, not Donald Trump.

<sup>14</sup> The top 25 most frequently used words for each Twitter account and for the data as a whole can be found in Tables 4-11 in Appendix B.

Table 2

Self-Referential Pronoun Ratios (Singular:Plural)

<b>Account</b>	<b>Ratio</b>
@MatureTrumpTwts	0.828 (48:58)
<b>@realDonaldTrump (60 tweets)</b>	<b>1 (26:26)</b>
@DeepDrumpf	1.385 (72:52)
All Accounts	1.954 (256:131)
@DonaeldUnready	6 (36:6)
@RealDonalDrumpf	6.75 (54:8)
@TrumpDraws	Undefined (14:0)

These ratios show that with the exception of @MatureTrumpTwts, every parody account depicts Donald Trump as more self-absorbed than he actually behaves in his tweets. Given the premise of @MatureTrumpTwts, it makes sense that its ratio would be lower, since it is using the idea that Trump is self-absorbed to suggest that Trump would be more “mature” if he tweeted in a less self-absorbed way. To provide a more accurate measure of @realDonaldTrump’s ratio, I also calculated the ratios using the original set of data pulled from Twitter for his account (3199 tweets). Table 2 shows the ratios adjusted for a more representative sample of Trump’s tweeting. Since this broader dataset was not loaded into MAXQDA, I cannot examine the context of his uses of words like “Trump,” so I calculated two adjusted ratios: one including uses of “Trump,” as singular self-referential terms and one excluding them. One final qualification: Robinson uses stylometrics and Twitter data to show that Trump only writes some of his tweets—the tweets originating from an Android phone. My word frequency analysis does not

distinguish between Trump-authored @realDonaldTrump tweets and those authored by a staffer.

Table 3

Adjusted Ratios

<b>Account</b>	<b>Ratio</b>
@MatureTrumpTwts	0.828 (48:58)
<b>@realDonaldTrump (60 tweets)</b>	<b>1 (26:26)</b>
@DeepDrumpf	1.385 (72:52)
<b>@realDonaldTrump (3199 tweets—low estimate)</b>	<b>1.938 (1405: 725)</b>
All Accounts	1.954 (256:131)
<b>@realDonaldTrump (3199 tweets—high estimate)</b>	<b>2.292 (1662:725)</b>
@DonaeldUnready	6 (36:6)
@RealDonalDrumpf	6.75 (54:8)
@TrumpDraws	Undefined (14:0)

If the algorithms behind @DeepDrumpf accurately mimic Donald Trump and the neural network were trained with a representative dataset, we can assume that it would provide a somewhat accurate picture of Donald Trump’s linguistic practices. The chart above corroborates that assumption, since @DeepDrumpf’s ratio falls within the range of the three ratios based on @realDonaldTrump’s tweets. However, it seems that regardless of how accurate my measure of @realDonaldTrump’s use of self-referential terms is, the parody accounts @DonaeldUnready, @RealDonalDrumpf, and @TrumpDraws all portray him as significantly more singularly self-referential (and therefore, simplistically speaking, more self-absorbed) than he actually behaves on Twitter.

This word frequency analysis provides an answer to my first two research questions: 1) In what ways are different accounts parodying the president, and what rhetorical effects do each of these methods have? 2) What elements of the actual president's real account do the parodies focus on? How do they differ linguistically from each other and from @realDonaldTrump? One way @DonaeldUnready and @RealDonalDrumpf are parodying the president is by exaggerating his tendency to talk about himself, either three-fold or six-fold, depending on which of my measures we use. The rhetorical effect is to characterize Donald Trump as self-absorbed, or even narcissistic, which is a particular kind of negative criticism that relates to arguments about whether Americans can trust Trump to do what is best for the general public instead of what is best for him. @MatureTrumpTwts makes the same argument, but through the opposite method: by tweeting in a stylistically different way from @realDonaldTrump and characterizing that alternative style as "mature," @MatureTrumpTwts suggests that @realDonaldTrump is immature with regard to his self-referencing. "Immature" invites comparisons to children and stages of healthy psychological growth, so the parodic method of @MatureTrumpTwts also implies that @realDonaldTrump may be exhibiting some kind of arrested development, which in turn relates to arguments surrounding his mental competency to lead a country.

This measure of self-absorption does not account for other ways in which Trump may refer, directly or indirectly, to himself or to his own interests. For example, some instances of "we" could refer to "the Trump administration" or other groups he



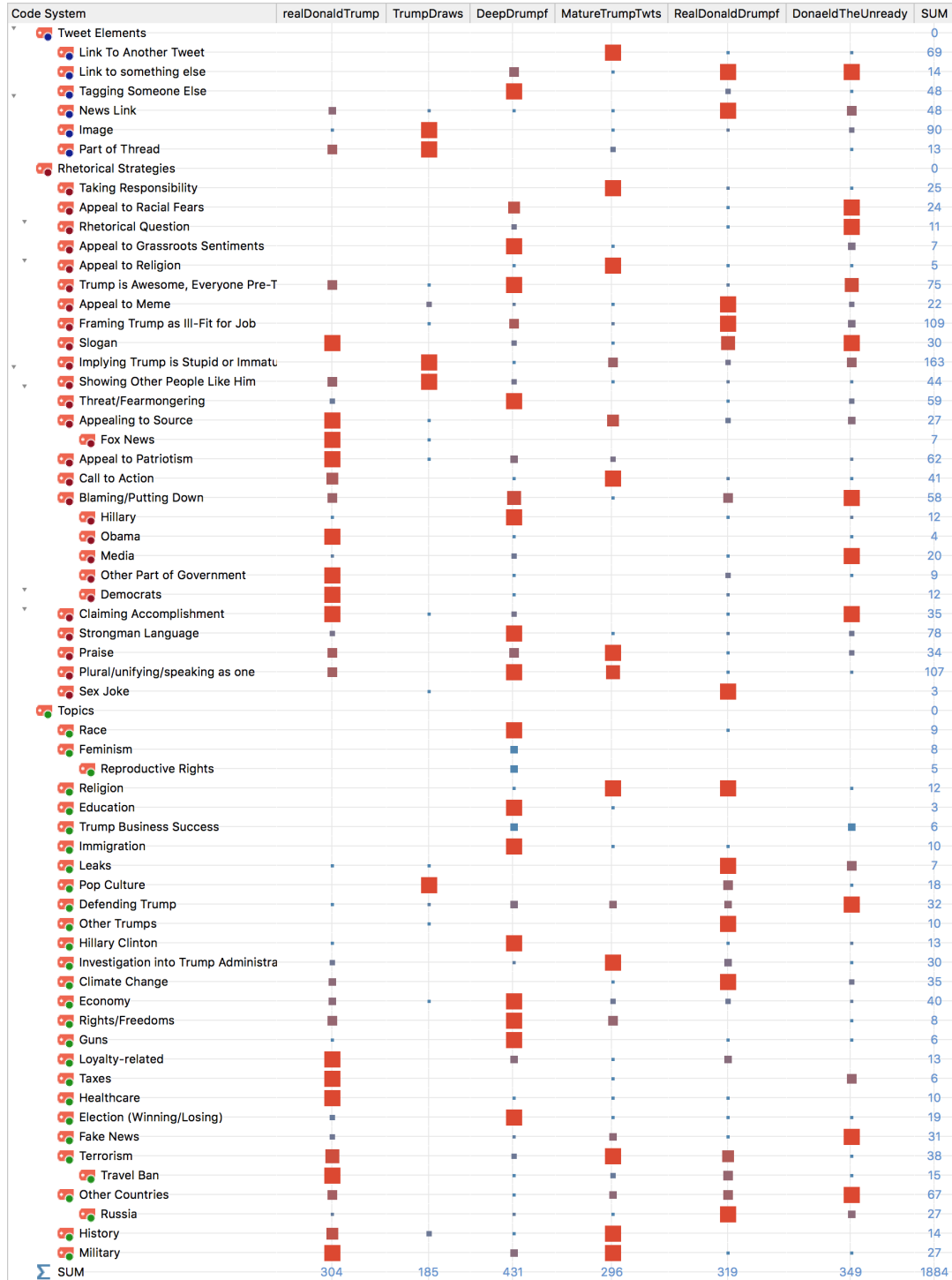
metonymically represents, or he could have tweets that focus on himself that do not use explicitly self-referential language.

### **Code Frequency and Intersections**

In this section, “code frequency” refers to the number of times a given account used a particular code. “Code intersections” refers to how often two codes appeared in conjunction with each other. Comparing the frequencies of topic codes across accounts reveals which issues the account owners prioritize in their tweeting. For example, there are several topics addressed by the parody accounts that @realDonaldTrump does not address at all, and the parody accounts vary in how much time they devote to particular subjects. Therefore, each parody account focuses or diversifies the political conversation differently, shaping a particular rhetorical agenda. Comparing the frequencies of rhetorical strategy codes and tweet element codes similarly reveals the differences in *how* the account owners choose to address these topics.

Figure 6

Code Frequencies By Account (Scaled Separately Per Code)



Before I analyze the code frequencies, I want to make a brief note about my visualization decisions and how to interpret Figure 5. The most common code across the dataset was “Implying Trump is Stupid or Immature” (163 uses). “Implying Trump is Stupid or Immature” had such a high intersection with @TrumpDraws that when the intersections were visualized according to overall frequency, the other intersections were too small compared to “Implying Trump is Stupid or Immature/@TrumpDraws to draw meaningful conclusions from the visualization. However, if we size the intersections according to frequency *relative to each code*, some patterns emerge. In other words, the large red squares in Figure 5 show that a particular account used that specific code significantly more often than the other accounts used that same code. Each large red square therefore does not represent the same number of code occurrences as all of the other large red squares. For example, @TrumpDraws has large red squares associated with “Image” and “Part of Thread,” but @TrumpDraws included images in almost all of its 60 tweets, whereas only a few tweets were part of a thread. In this case, the sizing only shows that @TrumpDraws used images and threading more often than the other accounts did.

Viewing code frequencies in this way, I will discuss the patterns that emerge in the accounts’ choice of topic and rhetorical strategies. From the topical codes, we can see that @realDonaldTrump tweets about the military, his travel ban, taxes, healthcare, and loyalty-related issues more often than the parodies. In contrast, the topics from the upper half of the list (e.g. race, feminism, religion, education, immigration) are topics the parody accounts focused on but @realDonaldTrump addressed infrequently, if at all

(within this dataset). @MatureTrumpTwts's topic frequencies more closely mirror @realDonaldTrump's than the other accounts, which is to be expected given the organizing premise of @MatureTrumpTwts. However, it is important to note that @MatureTrumpTwts also has a high frequency compared to the other accounts in topics that @realDonaldTrump does not: namely, religion and the investigation into the Trump campaign's alleged collusion with Russia. The tweets about the investigation are deployed by @MatureTrumpTwts to suggest that Donald Trump ought to be handling the investigation into his campaign differently (and addressing it more often), and the religion tweets all focus around Muslim inclusion. On these occasions, @MatureTrumpTwts diverged from its primary mission of rephrasing @realDonaldTrump tweets in order to specifically comment on topics the account owner found important. Although @MatureTrumpTwts usually lets @realDonaldTrump set the topical agenda for its tweets, in this case, @MatureTrumpTwts generated new content, thereby arguing that a "mature" Donald Trump would tweet about that too.

In terms of the rhetorical strategies employed by the accounts under study, @realDonaldTrump tends to appeal to ethos by referencing sources (specifically Fox News), appealing to patriotism, employing slogans, claiming accomplishments, and blaming or putting down Barack Obama, Democrats, and other parts of government. The parody accounts tend to direct their blame toward Hillary Clinton, the media, and other entities not given separate codes. Some of the rhetorical strategies are not techniques we would expect Donald Trump to use (implying he is stupid or immature, portraying himself as unfit to be president, appealing to memes, or making sex jokes); therefore, the

simple absence of one of these strategies in the @realDonaldTrump corpus is not automatically significant. However, we can imagine situations in which @realDonaldTrump *might* choose to employ some of the other strategies he did not use, and so the lack of those strategies in the data can be notable compared to their presence in the parody accounts. For example, the parody accounts took personal responsibility, appealed to racial fears, religion, and grassroots sentiments, fearmongered, used strongman language, praised others, and amplified others' praise ("Showing Other People Like Him") more than @realDonaldTrump in the timeframe captured by the data.

Additionally, by adjusting the visualization to size intersections relative to each account instead of relative to each code, we can view which codes each individual account employs the most (See Figures 6 and 7). I have split this data into two visualizations because the two categories have such different ranges in frequency that including the both categories in the same visualization would skew the visualization in a misleading way.

Figure 7

Most Common Rhetorical Strategies For Each Account

Code System	realDonaldTrump	TrumpDraws	DeepDrumpf	MatureTrumpTwt	RealDonaldTrump	DonaeldTheUnready	SUM
Rhetorical Strategies							0
Taking Responsibility				1	1	1	25
Appeal to Racial Fears			1		1	1	24
Rhetorical Question			1		1	1	11
Appeal to Grassroots Sentiments			1	1			7
Appeal to Religion			1	1	1		5
Trump is Awesome, Everyone Pre-T	1		1			1	75
Appeal to Meme		1		1	1		22
Framing Trump as Ill-Fit for Job		1	1	1	1	1	109
Slogan	1		1				30
Implying Trump is Stupid or Immatu		1	1	1	1	1	163
Showing Other People Like Him	1	1	1	1			44
Threat/Fearmongering			1	1			59
Appealing to Source			1	1			27
Fox News		1					7
Appeal to Patriotism	1	1	1	1			62
Call to Action	1		1	1			41
Blaming/Putting Down	1		1			1	58
Hillary			1		1		12
Obama			1		1		4
Media			1		1		20
Other Part of Government			1		1		9
Democrats			1		1		12
Claiming Accomplishment	1	1				1	35
Strongman Language	1		1				78
Praise			1	1			34
Plural/unifying/speaking as one	1		1	1			107
Sex Joke							3
Σ SUM	188	101	272	159	151	212	1083

Figure 8

Most Common Topics For Each Account

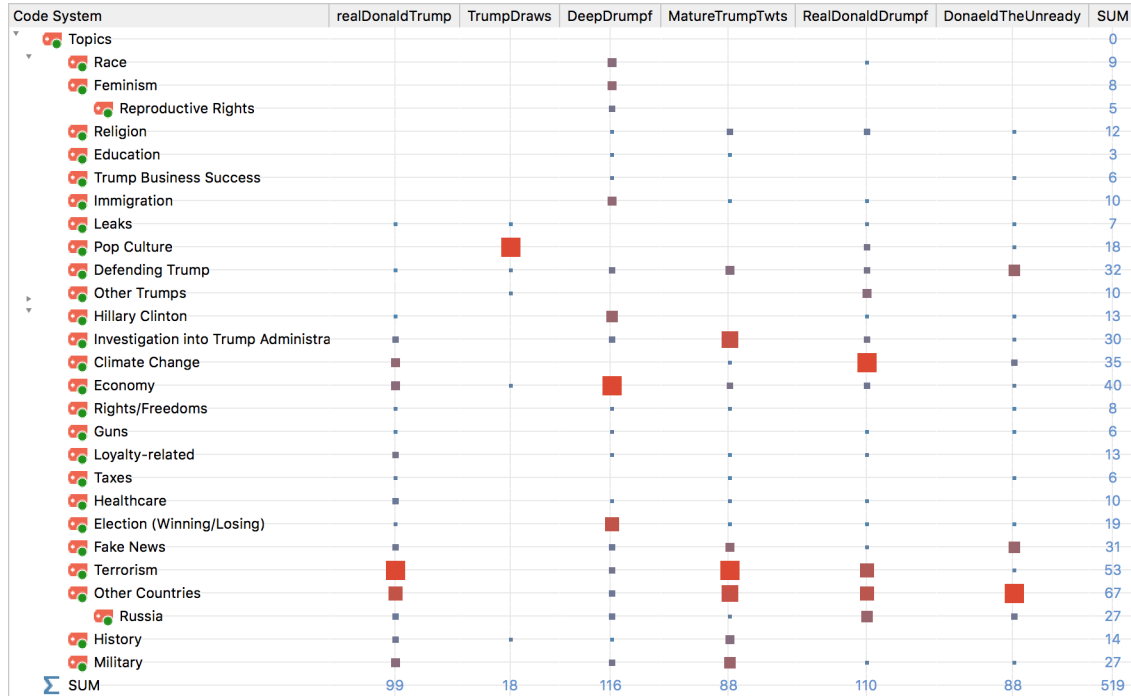


Figure 7 shows that @realDonaldTrump spends more of his rhetorical time appealing to patriotism and attempting to unify his followers, while @TrumpDraws, @MatureTrumpTwts, and @DonaeldUnready spend most of their time implying Trump is stupid or immature; @DeepDrumpf divides its time between strongman language, threats/fearmongering, and attempting to unify its followers; and @RealDonalDrumpf focuses on framing Trump as ill-fit for the job of POTUS. Comparing frequency of rhetorical strategy within each account demonstrates the primary rhetorical goals of each account. Three of the human-run parody accounts focus on humiliating Trump, the fourth human-run parody account focuses on a more concrete analysis of the ways he is

unqualified for the presidency,<sup>15</sup> and the neural network provides a picture of what Donald Trump did in the feeder texts used to train the neural network, which we can contrast with what @realDonaldTrump primarily does in his tweets.

In Figure 8, I collapsed “terrorism” (a parent code) and “travel ban” (a sub-code of terrorism) into one line of data to show that @realDonaldTrump and @MatureTrumpTwts address terrorism with similar frequency relative to how often they address other topics. When these two codes are not collapsed, @realDonaldTrump addresses “terrorism” and “travel ban” in about equal portion (slightly favoring terrorism in general), and @MatureTrumpTwts addresses terrorism in general far more frequently than the travel ban. This difference in the composition of tweets under the “terrorism” heading shows that @MatureTrumpTwts does not think the travel ban is a very “mature” way of approaching the topic of terrorism.

There were a few rhetorical strategies and/or topics that were significant to the tactics of specific accounts but did not apply to the others. For this reason, I did not include them as codes, but I would like to address them here nonetheless. For example, @DonaeldUnready makes extensive use of puns as part of how he translates real world political words into Anglo-Saxon equivalents (e.g. discussing “cutting flax” instead of “cutting tax”). Punning also adds to the humorous quality of the tweets, which may contribute to the popularity of the account. Punning is a strategy common to other parody accounts in the translation subgenre—for example, @realDonaldTrump uses *Lord of the*

---

<sup>15</sup> See the entry in Appendix A on “Implying Trump is Stupid or Immature”/“Framing Trump as Ill-Fit for Job” for more on this distinction.



*Rings*-related puns extensively (e.g. Ent-BC, Preciousdental, Orx News). In addition, and perhaps more significantly, @MatureTrumpTwts tweets extensively on the topic of “peace,” which does not fit into the coding scheme, although it is related to the topics of military, terrorism, and other countries. Although @MatureTrumpTwts uses “peace” as a rhetorical *topoi* in regard to many of the same events that @realDonaldTrump tweets about, it represents a very different approach to and framing of the same situations.

In terms of code intersections, the most common pairs of topics that occurred in the same tweets were Other Countries/Terrorism, Russia/Investigation into Trump Administration, Military/History, and Climate Change/Economy. The relationships between the first two pairs are self-evident; military/history co-occurred so much primarily because Memorial Day fell within the span of my dataset, so many accounts tweeted about remembering U.S. veterans throughout history. The co-occurrence of climate change and the economy demonstrates that @realDonaldTrump and Trump parodists primarily discussed climate change in terms of its impacts on the U.S. economy. The Paris Accord discussions happened within the span of my dataset, and much of Trump’s rhetoric around his decision to pull out of the Accord focused on prioritizing U.S. economic interests above global climate interests.

For code intersection in the rhetorical strategies, the most common pairs were Implying Trump is Stupid or Immature/Framing Trump as Ill-Fit for Job, Implying Trump is Stupid or Immature/Self-Aggrandizement,<sup>16</sup> and Strongman Language/Unifying

---

<sup>16</sup> See the entry in Appendix A on “Trump is Awesome, Everyone Pre-Trump and Not-Trump Sucks” for a discussion of this terminology.

Speech. The first two pairs suggest that the parodists suggest Trump's intelligence and/or maturity make him unqualified to be president and that his propensity for self-aggrandizement makes him unqualified to be president. To understand the relationship between Strongman Language/Unifying Speech, I ran a code relations search between both of those rhetorical strategies and all of the topics. I found that Strongman Language and Unifying Speech most often coincide with tweets about terrorism, the travel ban, other countries, and the military. Viewed in this context, the Strongman Language/Unifying Speech relationship suggests a rhetorical creation of national and nationalistic solidarity in the face of external threats and a rhetorical reification of an us/them mentality.

In this chapter, I showed how two of the parody account owners view their roles as parodists (as well as @WulfgarTheBard's views on @DonaeldUnready), how pronoun usage by the parody accounts portrays Donald Trump as more self-centered than he actually behaves on Twitter, and how the choices of topic and rhetorical strategy reveal parody account owners' political agendas in relation to and in opposition to each other and @realDonaldTrump. In the next chapter, I will discuss some of the theoretical and structural underpinnings of parody on Twitter, including intertextuality as it relates to humor and genre, genre as social action, and the affordances and constraints of Twitter as a platform. Then, I will analyze the specific rhetorical functions of each of the parody accounts under study, characterized by the subcategories of parody account they represent.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

#### **Intertextuality**

Parody inherently relies on intertextuality, since understanding of the parodic message requires the audience to be at least somewhat familiar with the text (or person, which rhetorically can be seen as a collection of texts around one locus) being satirized. However, intertextuality becomes increasingly important to parody the closer we get to the modern era, for a number of reasons. First, a larger world population means more texts exist. Second, advances in information technology (including the printing press, but also radio, television, and most recently the internet and mobile devices) generate more widespread access to existing texts. Third, increased access equates to exposure to *more* texts, even if particular texts (say, *The Aeneid*) are still consumed by only particular subsets of the population. Parodists operating with an audience that was familiar with a relatively small corpus of texts were more limited in their dependency on intertextual references for rhetorical effect. Now, because more texts exist, and more people are more familiar with more texts, parodists have more options. The internet expands this flexibility exponentially due to the affordance of hyperlinking. If an audience is not already familiar with a text on which the parodist is relying, the parodist can simply link to that text; for example, because @MatureTrumpTwts links back to the @realDonaldTrump tweets it parodies, users do not have to keep up with

@realDonaldTrump's Twitter feed in order to understand the rhetorical work of @MatureTrumpTwts.

Intertextuality can extend from allusions to specific texts to entire genres of text.

@MatureTrumpTwts is the clearest example of this extension from my dataset.

@MatureTrumpTwts does parody specific texts (particular tweets from @realDonaldTrump), but its premise hinges on pre-existing ideas of appropriate or "mature" "presidential tweeting." Without playing to notions of what mature presidential tweets look like, @MatureTrumpTwts cannot function, and readers cannot understand @MatureTrumpTwt's message without knowledge of the conventions for this other genre—mature presidential tweeting. The necessary context in this case is primarily Barack Obama's Twitter history, because he is the only other president to tweet, but it can also be extended to Joe Biden, Mike Pence, other high-ranking government officials both past and present, other presidential candidates like Hillary Clinton, and former presidents who are now on Twitter like Bill Clinton and George H. W. Bush. Even more broadly, @MatureTrumpTwts relies on the entire history of presidential communication across all media. Although all parody relies on the text, object, or collection of texts it is parodying and is intertextual in that sense, @MatureTrumpTwts takes this reliance to another level because it relies not only on its object of parody (@realDonaldTrump), but an entire network of other texts (which define what appropriate presidential behavior is). @MatureTrumpTwts cannot be understood outside of its relation to, not only its direct referent, but other texts as well. More broadly, this is true of all texts, because context always brings additional meaning to a text. However, while additional meaning can be

gleaned from comparing any text to other texts, @MatureTrumpTwts's very premise depends on outside texts. At minimum, without @realDonaldTrump's tweets for comparison, @MatureTrumpTwts is just another standard politician's Twitter account. Without the history of presidential communication, it is just an alternative way of phrasing, perhaps a personal critique of Donald Trump's tweeting style, but bereft of historical significance.

The intertextuality and rhetorical function of Twitter parody accounts is threefold: premise/humor of premise, political or social commentary, and reference/humor of reference. The two types of humor generate appeal and capture an audience's attention in ways traditional political commentators typically do not. The "translation" subgenre of parody account, for example, relies heavily on humor of premise. @DonaeldUnready is appealing because, by placing Trump's rhetorical persona in an Anglo-Saxon setting, audiences can be amused by the clever ways in which the account owner draws parallels between contexts. Similarly, @GollumTrump is funny because it merges Lord of the Rings puns and a unique speaking style (that of Gollum) with modern political discourse—a pairing of silly with serious. Humor of premise also provides a context in which the account can operate, and generates interest from potential followers separate from the tweets themselves. "Gollum J. Trump," "Bernie J. Trump," and "Ghetto Trump" all generate some kind of expectations, which audiences may find amusing, regardless of the quality of the tweets. Humor of premise is necessarily intertextual. Only by referencing the texts associated with Gollum, Bernie Sanders, and "ghetto"-style speech can these premises be engaging in and of themselves. In contrast, "Half an Onion" is a

Trump parody account that, because it lacks an intertextual reference in its premise, is not funny unless the reader explores the tweets themselves.<sup>17</sup>

Humor of reference is an intertextual feature that depends on the tweets themselves. While it can be derived from the premise (like @DonaeldUnready using the historical figure Aethelflaed as the Hillary Clinton analogue in his universe or @GollumTrump referring to himself as “Preciousdental”), it can also refer to other texts or events in the world. All of the tweets coded as “Appeal to Meme” fall under this category. The tweets from all of the parody accounts that refer to specific political events—whether linked to @realDonaldTrump tweets or not—also use humor of reference. Specificity and direct relevance are key.

Although references to specific political events are part of humor of reference, they are also integral to the parody accounts’ political or social commentary. Broad implications about Trump as a person or as a president are more effective when backed up by specific evidence. Parodying not only Trump as a whole but specific tweets, statements, or actions increases the parodic ethos of the accounts. @realDonaldTrump said in my interview with him that he has found there is nothing he can say in character that at least one person does not believe Trump actually said or did in real life. The slippage between @realDonaldTrump’s hyperbole parody and @realDonaldTrump’s real actions adds to the impact of @realDonaldTrump’s message, and specificity enables this slippage by lending it credibility.

---

<sup>17</sup> @HalfOnionInABag tweets about political matters from the persona of half an onion in a bag, under the premise that half an onion in a bag would make a better president than Donald Trump. The account has the related goal of acquiring more Twitter followers than @realDonaldTrump.

## Genre Theory

It could be argued that the commentary piece is the “real” message of the parody accounts, but my interviews show that activism and critique are only one piece of the account owners’ goals. Furthermore, even when the stated goals of the account owner are mostly related to activism and critique (such as in the case of @realDonaldTrump), users report enjoying these accounts for entertainment, catharsis, and as a form of processing their thoughts and feelings about politics (@realDonaldTrump), which the users would not gain through traditional forms of political commentary.

Carolyn Miller has established that genre functions as a form of social action in part by shaping patterns of thought—and excluding other thoughts—around particular topics.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, how a genre is used or circulated affects its function as social action—and this is where the notion of platform comes in. Carolyn Miller and Dawn Shepherd originally characterized the blog as its own genre (“Blogging”), but later revised this characterization as they recognized the multitude of blog genres that exist (“Questions”). “Platform,” therefore, is an organizing principle similar to but not synonymous with genre. Both categories provide conventions for textual production, but platforms can house texts in multiple genres, and genres can cross multiple platforms. The affordances and constraints of each must be considered. Twitter, as a microblogging platform, is designed for self-expression, mandating concision. The platform, as a form of social media, also encourages some form of sociality, even if one restricts access to their

---

<sup>18</sup> See also Schryer, Catherine. “The Lab vs. The Clinic: Sites of Competing Genres,” *Genre and the New Rhetoric*, 1994.

tweets. It is possible to tweet to a vacuum of zero followers, but the platform—and the various genres of tweets within the platform—does not encourage tweeting to a deliberately empty audience as a possible uptake. Every feature of the platform is designed to facilitate interaction with others. The 140-character limit (expanded to 280 characters in September 2017) restricts space for nuance, which helps users develop skills for writing concisely, but also flattens discourse in a way not mandated—or at least not mandated to this extent—by other platforms.

Questions of what “genre” really is, or what counts as “genre,” complicate the notion of genre as social action as it applies to Trump parody even further. Yet determining exactly what does and does not count as a genre is difficult. Is “parody” a genre? If so, it is quite broad. Are “presidential communication” and/or “presidential tweeting” genres? If so, the difference between those categories and the digital communications of other politicians and would-be politicians seems arbitrary. I have categorized presidential parody account as its own genre, but I have also defined five different subgenres of Trump parody account. Are all of these categories genres? Are they all layers upon layers of subgenres in a complex hierarchy of genres? Descriptions of genre as nexus, locus, and matrix from the genre theory literature (Miller) render these questions not insignificant, but perhaps no longer in need of exact definitions for the purposes of this project. Miller argues that each layer of organization and collection of meanings functions to organize and mediate the others. The five Trump parody accounts on which I focused are operating at the intersections of many different rhetorical demands. Their rhetorical situations include the considerations, exigencies, affordances,



and limitations of all of the above—regardless of whether we label them genre, medium, platform, or mode. Miller situates genre as one layer of organization within a matrix of other organizing principles including human nature, culture, forms of life (higher-order layers than genre) and episodes/strategies, speech acts, locutions, language/grammars, and experiences (lower-order layers than genre) (162). In Miller’s model, “genre” is not a unique social artifact, but the name we give to a particular layer of human interaction. Therefore, regardless of where genre, medium, platform, and mode fit on Miller’s proposed hierarchy (or any other hierarchy), they all function within the same system of discourse and meaning.

The parody accounts also operate within the context of different types of activism—direct or indirect action, online or in-person action, violent or non-violent, civil or non-civil disobedience, terrorist (designed to incite fear and chaos) or constructivist (designed to incite unity and organization), discourse-based or material. Genres (as well as platforms, media, etc.) shape what can and cannot be done and the ways in which particular messages can and cannot be said. However, using a form of discourse familiar to one’s audience (a tweet, a particular meme, or even just staying within the premise of one’s account) or utilizing other genres through intertextual reference gives account owners greater flexibility by allowing them to do more with fewer words. Genres carry with them social baggage, so just using or referring to a particular genre at all, regardless of the content of the words, adds to one’s message without using up more of one’s allotted characters. For example, framing discourse as

“news” (like @TheJorvikTimes) places the text in relation to, and as a commentary on, real life news coverage or the press in general.

### **Affordances and Constraints**

As one of the most popular social media platforms—and Donald Trump’s platform of choice—Twitter affords parodists the opportunity for more attention than they might receive on other platforms and increased relevancy, since they are directly engaging with the object of their parody in a digital space that he also uses. Its public nature and low character limit generates quick-to-consume content that is readily available to a wide array of users<sup>19</sup> while placing very little demand on the users themselves for either time or mental attention. Additionally, because Twitter posts from parody accounts are intermixed on users’ feeds with their friends’ accounts, news, entertainment, and many other types of content, users who follow these accounts—or even just follow other users who retweet these accounts—can be exposed to Trump parody content without specifically seeking it out on a particular occasion. A user scrolling through their feed on their bathroom break might encounter the message, scan the tweet, register the message, perhaps laugh internally, and move on. Extended articles, essays, or other pieces of commentary are not so digestible. Tweets can link to more nuanced content, but those links must be clicked on. Restricting one’s message to a single tweet—or short Twitter thread—enables a writer to reach a wider audience of less politically-devoted readers in addition to those who deliberately spend time with political

---

<sup>19</sup> According to the Pew Research Center, approximately 20% of all Americans use Twitter, and Twitter users tend to be younger and more highly educated than the population as a whole.

topics. Additionally, Twitter's reply, quote, retweet, and link previewing features facilitate interactivity, amplification, and redistribution that enable tweets to extend beyond their own bounds.

Ridolfo and DeVoss introduce "rhetorical velocity," a term that refers to a text's propensity toward being remixed and redistributed far beyond its original delivery. Their first example is the press release, which is written with the intention of news agencies appropriating some of the text for their own articles. Ridolfo and DeVoss discuss rhetorical velocity with regard to composition—the questions a rhetor might ask themselves as they make choices about text, genre, formatting, platform, or design. Although not every tweet is written in hopes of being retweeted, the platform of Twitter is designed to encourage rhetorical velocity: retweeting, quoting tweets, and link previewing all accelerate the distribution, remixing, and redistribution of content. The "quote tweet" feature lends itself to appropriating an original message more easily than the other features, but retweeting at all, even without adding one's own content, places a message in a new context (the retweeter's feed). Changing the context—or framing—of a message always changes the meaning of a message too. Even just clicking on a tweet displays the tweet in relation to its replies, if any exist; replying, therefore, also changes the frame of the original message.

The popularity of Twitter, the likelihood of stumbling across content without specifically seeking it out, the quick, concise format of tweets, and Twitter's built-in propensity toward rhetorical velocity all serve as affordances for Donald Trump parody accounts. However, Twitter parody accounts as a form of anti-Trump activism (or any

type of activism) are also limited by their intersections of genre. Social media is known for enabling polarizing bubbles (Boyd), as users typically elect only to interact with users who have viewpoints similar to their own, while personalization algorithms filter content even more (Pariser). How effective can parody accounts be in creating social change through their critique of Donald Trump, if their readers are mostly users who already have negative viewpoints about Donald Trump? It's possible that the users who find community, humor, and catharsis in parody accounts are then better mentally equipped to engage in other activism, but that argument would require investigation into whether parody accounts *cause* participation in additional activism. @realDonaldTrump said in my interview with him that one of his hopes for his account is to maintain outrage among his followers in hopes that that outrage leads them to further action. Users who do not follow @realDonaldTrump on Twitter may be more informed about the president's statements and activities if they do follow parody accounts. For example, most of @MatureTrumpTwts's posts correlate one-to-one with @realDonaldTrump tweets, at least in terms of topic. Users reading a @MatureTrumpTwts tweet may then wonder how the original tweet addressed the topic, thereby prompting them to look at @realDonaldTrump's feed. @realDonaldTrump tweets do not directly relate to @realDonaldTrump tweets as often as @MatureTrumpTwts, but they may still remind readers of Trump's past actions or potential future actions.

The fact that @realDonaldTrump has blocked @realDonaldTrump and posted several disparaging tweets about Saturday Night Live's portrayals of him suggests that Trump himself is paying attention to—and upset about—at least some of his parodists.

Seth Meyers believes his performance at the 2011 White House Correspondents' Dinner motivated Trump to run for president in the first place (Chavez). Mockery and comedic humiliation (“roasting”) are common forms of humor and parody, and they are certainly not without effect. However, if we assume Seth Meyers is genuine in his disdain for Trump, we can also assume that he did not intend for his mockery to have the ultimate effect of prompting Trump’s campaign to occupy the Oval Office. This reaction means that Trump parody has, at least in the past, had material consequences. Since parody has influenced Trump in the past—if only in his reactions to @realDonaldTrump and *Saturday Night Live*, if not also his response to Seth Meyers—it may continue to do so in the future.

Beyond just the mockery of Trump, or even social media parody in general, the affordances and limitations of the platforms have had clear effects. Facebook is under fire for not doing more to prevent the spread of fake news during the election, and both Facebook and Twitter are home to Russian bot farms—that is, AI systems that proliferate posts about particular topics, or humans who are paid to run several accounts that advance a particular agenda (Shane). Because people on social media have trouble distinguishing between real news or real accounts and fake ones, and trend-tracking algorithms cannot distinguish between them at all,<sup>20</sup> bot farms and fake news can be effective means to focus political attention and shift public perception; for example, Russian-run accounts promoted news stories relating to Black Lives Matter, immigration,

---

<sup>20</sup> Researchers at Indiana University have developed a “Bot or Not” tool that estimates the likelihood that a particular Twitter account is a bot, but their algorithm has known flaws; for example, @BarackObama is “often” categorized as a bot account (Observatory on Social Media).

and Hillary Clinton, presumably to “amplify political discord” and “racial tension” (O’Sullivan and Byers). Facebook has delivered more than 3,000 Russia-funded ads to Congress, and many of those ads were specifically targeted at swing states during the 2016 campaign cycle (Borger). Trend-tracking algorithms also struggle to distinguish between negative commentary and positive commentary, especially in cases of sarcasm. Kharde and Sonawane, in their evaluation of several different sentiment analysis tools, achieved results with up to 77.7% accuracy, but only with extremely large datasets (45,000 tweets) (13). They also list 11 different ongoing challenges to accurate sentiment analysis (13-14). Even if most tweets about Donald Trump are negative, he will likely still appear as a trending topic, leading to increased publicity. The “quote tweet” feature on Twitter (and the analogous post-sharing-with-comment feature on Facebook) means that even if a user quotes a tweet as an example of something reprehensible, and adds his/her own commentary accordingly, the message of the original tweet is nonetheless proliferated.

As James Brown Jr. discusses in *Ethical Programs*, software design decisions have ethical ramifications in that they affect how users are able to interact with one another. Programs, like genre, play a role in determining the form an argument takes. Analyzing Twitter rhetorically means considering Bogost’s lens of procedural rhetoric, which examines the persuasive functions of the very processes underlying the software. The “quote tweet” feature, for instance, prevents readers from deciding if they would like to view the original content on which the new tweet is commenting; by reading the new tweet at all, they also see the entirety of the previous tweet. Twitter’s “link preview”

feature has similar ramifications; rather than showing readers just the URL, from which users may be able to glean only the article and website title, the link preview feature shows readers the headline, any featured photo associated with the article, and the first few lines of content from the website. In short, Twitter users are limited in their ability to reference *without re-distributing*, which means to use Twitter for political ends can also require amplifying points of view one does not agree with. If this amplification only affected one's own followers, who probably already hold similar views to the tweeter, the amplification would be less concerning; however, trend-tracking algorithms can notice the amplification and spread the same ideas to a much wider audience.

Given the affordances and constraints of Twitter-as-platform (e.g. the quote tweet feature) and Twitter-in-practice (e.g. the tendency toward self-segregation into ideological bubbles), what exactly do Trump parody accounts accomplish beyond entertaining their followers? I will answer this question according to the five subgenres of Trump parody account I identified during my data selection process: hyperbole, mimicry, visual humor, alternate-universe, and translation.

### **The Hyperbole Subgenre: @realDonaldTrump**

The account owner of @realDonaldTrump said in our interview that when he posted fictitious exaggerated quotes from Republican politicians, the readers of @thedailyedge (his main account) often failed to realize the quotes were not real. His intention had not been to mislead, but to amuse, and so he created @realDonaldTrump as a home for this type of post, clearly marking all content as fake. Distinguishing a sense of reality in political discourse is a challenge for members of both of the major political

parties. Many Republicans try to rationalize and defend Trump's actions and phrasing, even in the face of cognitive dissonance, in order to maintain unity and functionality within their party. In contrast, Trump-critics are hindered by their own anti-Trump bias in that their attitude of "I wouldn't put anything past him" means it is difficult to assess which accusations, interpretations, or news stories are true. For example, Trump supporters by and large categorically rejected the findings of the Steele dossier, while many Trump critics embraced the dossier immediately—even the parts (like the allegations of being filmed with Russian prostitutes) that almost a year later have yet to be verified. With accusations of fake news in the liberal media on one side, and accusations of rampant Republican lies on the other, the lines between truth, speculation, and lies are slippery. The human desire to make sense of confusion means many different narratives are likely to emerge to give citizens a sense of direction: for example, the "fake news is out to smear Trump" narrative, the "we need to try to collaborate and work through differences between parties and between factions within the parties" narrative, and the "Trump is a monster who needs to be impeached" narrative.

Hyperbole accounts like @realDonaldTrump present the situation as more extreme than it appears. Some would argue the hyperbolized depiction of Trump and his presidency is *more accurate* than how Trump depicts himself, and some would argue that the hyperbole creates a straw target caricature that makes Trump seem more ridiculous or malicious than he is. @realDonaldTrump's said his goals are the following:

My win goal is to use humor to educate people to look at things in a new way, to remind people that the daily repetition of atrocities does not change the fact we



should not accept a single atrocity. My goal is to make people aware of the danger Donald Trump represents to every aspect of civil society and the future of humanity. My message is that he must be removed from the White House before we all die.

The account prompts readers to ask themselves, “Is this *really* so far from the truth?”. By embodying what audiences already think about Donald Trump without the motive of concealing Trump’s supposed true intentions, @realDonaldTrump crystallizes a “more true” version of Trump while making it harder for readers to rationalize or dismiss his posts. For example, while many people on the left believe Trump’s ultimate goal is to pass legislation that benefits the rich at the expense of the poor, @realDonaldTrump makes these intentions explicit: “Sorry! If I #SaveMedicaid, I won’t be able to give \$880 billion to the Top 1% who are really looking forward to it!”. While many political commentators can argue that these are indeed Trump’s intentions, @realDonaldTrump puts the admission in “Trump”’s own voice. Just as Trump claims to “get the honest and unfiltered message out,” @realDonaldTrump implies that it gets the *real* honest and unfiltered message out: the real intentions and nature of Donald Trump.

### **The Mimicry Subgenre: @DeepDrumpf**

Accounts like @DeepDrumpf focus on critiquing Trump at the linguistic level, rather than the policy or moral level. @DeepDrumpf’s tweets rarely make sense semantically, although they are usually grammatical. Because an algorithm like the neural network behind @DeepDrumpf can only mimic the texts on which it is trained in terms of word frequency, phrase usage, and syntax, @DeepDrumpf cannot serve as a higher-order critique of Trump. Instead, it forces its audience to develop metalinguistic

awareness. Take, for example, this tweet from @DeepDrumpf: “No, Abraham Latino is poisoning our country. Impossible to sell our product. There will be no amnesty, but this is locker room talk.@jonfavs.” Because the audience cannot make sense of the words as signs (representing both signifier and signified), at least without splitting them up into the individual phrases pieced together by the bot, the audience is forced to engage with the tweets *as language* rather than as a stand-in for objects and abstract concepts.

Additionally, because @DeepDrumpf is trained on more types of text than just @realDonaldTrump’s tweets (Hayes), it provides a broader picture of Trump’s public linguistic practice than even an analysis of all tweets from @realDonaldTrump. The @DeepDrumpf website describes the project thus: “Created to highlight the absurdity of this election cycle, [@DeepDrumpf] has amassed over 20,000 followers and has been viewed over 12 million times -- showcasing the consequences of training a machine learning model on a dataset that embodies fearmongering, bigotry, xenophobia, and hypernationalism.”

The website also links to an article in *The New York Times* summarizing how artificial intelligence algorithms can literally encode systems of oppression, such as the Google Images identifying algorithm that labeled pictures of black people as gorillas (Crawford), and an article on *ProPublica* on how algorithms designed to predict criminal recidivism are biased against African Americans (Angwin, Larson, Mattu, and Kirchner). @DeepDrumpf therefore also serves as an example of how prejudices and broader systems of belief and oppression can become embedded in software—software, which is often thought to be more “objective” since the human element is supposedly removed.

Aside from highlighting the dangerous ideological effects of training artificial intelligences on biased human texts, the recursive nature of @DeepDrumpf's functioning has benefits, too. Because @DeepDrumpf tweets are generated based entirely on what Trump has previously said, 60 tweets of @DeepDrumpf provides a more complete picture of @realDonaldTrump's Twitter linguistic patterns overall than 60 tweets from @realDonaldTrump. @DeepDrumpf's behavior is based on averages and broad patterns; mathematically, it will have fewer outliers in a given sample than a human-run account that tweets based on new events and other stimuli outside of Twitter. @DeepDrumpf creates new content that matches previous patterns, while @realDonaldTrump creates new content that recursively also *creates the patterns*.

### **The Visual Humor Subgenre: @TrumpDraws**

The rhetorical function of @TrumpDraws rests on mockery and humiliation more so than the other accounts under study. Because the topical content of @TrumpDraws posts primarily involves pop culture references instead of references to political issues, the messaging of @TrumpDraws situates Trump in a space isolated from his context. @TrumpDraws contains very little social or political critique besides "Trump is childish" (implied by the childlike style of the images and poor spelling in the captions). @TrumpDraws also posts less often than any of the other accounts I studied. However, despite the factors suggesting a limited political impact from @TrumpDraws—infrequent posts and mockery in a vacuum—@TrumpDraws still has the highest follower count of all Trump parody accounts by a significant margin. Large reach does not equate to large impact, but the lack of political engagement of the @TrumpDraws tweets combined with

its popularity may suggest that the appeal of parody accounts is significantly divorced from their quality of political commentary.

Although @TrumpDraws is my example of the visual humor subgenre, I do not mean to suggest that visual humor is inherently devoid of the political substance found in its verbal counterparts—American political cartoons, for example, date back to Benjamin Franklin. In terms of Trump parody on Twitter, @WulfgarTheBard’s work is largely visual and yet engages directly with sociopolitical issues. The mass appeal of @TrumpDraws also may not lie in its apolitical content, but in the visual medium or primary message. Twitter users may prefer single images to text-based posts for their humor, and they may more often enjoy simple demeaning humor at the expense of someone they dislike rather than more nuanced political analysis.

### **The Alternate-Universe Subgenre: @MatureTrumpTwts**

The alternate-universe subgenre differs from the translation subgenre because while the translation subgenre “translates” real Trump’s statements into an alternative speaking style, the alternate-universe subgenre imagines a different Trump (or a different political situation) entirely. @MatureTrumpTwts suggests that the primary problem with Trump—or at least the primary problem Barry wanted to focus on—is that Trump is an immature person with regrettable communication strategies. Such a framing places emphasis on Trump’s speaking style, rather than on his beliefs and actions. Focusing on Trump’s style elides criticism of his policies and ideological approach. While @MatureTrumpTwts reads much like other politicians’ Twitter accounts, and what we can imagine a President Mike Pence account might look like, the premise of

@MatureTrumpTwts directs attention away from what Trump represents—the Republican party, his voter base, various types of power structures, etc.— and toward the single figurehead. However, @MatureTrumpTwts raised an important point in our interview: that words do matter. Although Trump and his tweeting behaviors are not the end of the story, they do nonetheless have real material effects on the world.

Another type of alternate-universe account is the “Hillary Clinton Universe.” One example of this type is the account @IfHillaryHad. @IfHillaryHad imagines a world in which a Hillary Clinton won the presidency and exhibited a similar—albeit exaggerated—tweeting style to Donald Trump. @IfHillaryHad is connected to same-universe accounts depicting imaginary versions of Vice President Tim Kaine and First Gentleman Bill Clinton. Although these accounts do make policy and ideology critiques when contrasted with @realDonaldTrump, @IfHillaryHad runs into the same problem as @MatureTrumpTwts: suggesting that the problem is primarily with Donald Trump himself, and that a Hillary Clinton presidency would mitigate or remove many issues. However, @IfHillaryHad also makes the opposite argument—that if Hillary Clinton were president, it would be acceptable and funny for her to behave in a Democrat’s equivalent to Trump’s tweeting behavior. Although I doubt the account owner actually would approve of Hillary Clinton behaving the way the @IfHillaryHad persona behaves, this version of Hillary Clinton is portrayed as an amusing feminist icon putting Republican men in their place. Whereas @MatureTrumpTwts elides the consequences of Trump’s ideologies, @IfHillaryHad elides the consequences of Trump’s rhetoric by suggesting that it would be funny for Hillary Clinton to tweet in a similar way. The problem, it

suggests, is not with Trump's tweeting style, but with the fact that it is coming from Trump.

### **The Translation Subgenre: @DonaeldUnready**

Many accounts within the translation subgenre also face one of the same problems as @MatureTrumpTwts: placing the focus on Trump's style rather than the ideologies he represents. Accounts like Bernie J. Trump and Gollum J. Trump provide pleasure to audiences through metalinguistic awareness and humor of reference, but perhaps do not accomplish very much in terms of political critique. The translation subgenre is most rhetorically effective (beyond providing entertainment) when the choice of target "language" is rhetorically significant. @DonaeldUnready translates contemporary American politics into a medieval Anglo-Saxon context, creating a comparison of two entire systems of relations of production: feudalism and neoliberalism. By suggesting that Donald Trump behaves more like a medieval warlord than the president of a democratic republic, @DonaeldUnready makes a damning argument against Trump's respect for liberal democratic values. @DonaeldUnready's tweets about growing the "hoard" (an allusion to a dragon hoard) comment on supply-side economics and the accusation that Trump is only interested in funneling more money to the richest members of American society.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the five accounts under study have varying levels of efficacy as political activism. Some of the variability is due to the subgenre in which the accounts operate, and some of it depends on the choices of the particular account owner. Some accounts—like @DonaeldUnready—accomplish more sophisticated criticism of Donald Trump, and other accounts—like @TrumpDraws—mostly just hold entertainment value. However, some of the accounts expand beyond their rhetorical premises to also engage in other forms of activism. @DeepDrumpf’s “campaign fund site” actually raises money for GirlsWhoCode, a non-profit aimed at increasing girls’ participation in STEM fields, particularly computer programming. Some of the accounts have also monetized their accounts for personal benefit; @MatureTrumpTwts sells “Russian Ties,” and @DonaeldUnready is trying to publish a book with illustrations by @WulfgarTheBard. Although my dataset only included in-character tweets, most of the accounts (with the exception of @TrumpDraws) do also post commentary written in the voices of their creators, which can generate rhetorical effects outside of the scope of this study.

Through my results and discussion, I have answered my first, second, and part of my fourth research questions: 1) In what ways are different accounts parodying the president, and what rhetorical effects do each of these methods have? 2) What elements of the actual president’s real account do the parodies focus on? How do they differ

linguistically? And 4) What do the different accounts highlight, and what can readers gain from them (other than entertainment)?

In the second part of my fourth research question, I asked “How do parody accounts communicate a message differently than other types of activism?” The critiques levied by the parody accounts are the same critiques found in opinion pieces, political commentary, and Facebook comments—they’re just spoken through “Trump’s” voice and shaped by the conventions of genre and platform. However, even taking on Trump’s voice is not unique to parody accounts on Twitter, since *Saturday Night Live* and other comedy shows regularly feature Trump impersonators (and impersonators of other political figures). Twitter parody accounts fill a different distribution channel, reaching audiences differently. Although such a difference can seem so miniscule as to be irrelevant, my discussions of the affordances and constraints of the platform and the procedural rhetorics of Twitter show how the method of distribution affects both the message and its reception. For better or for worse, Twitter serves an unavoidable amplification function for the content it delivers. Furthermore, Eunsong Kim emphasizes that whatever Twitter amplifies through its proprietary trending algorithms, news organizations tend to amplify even further as they report on whatever seems to be popular, based on trending data. Even my own data selection process began by reading lists of best Trump parody accounts that other news sites had compiled. Many other kinds of activism can involve, encourage, and depend on amplification, but social media amplifies messages automatically just by using it at all.



In my third research question, I asked, “How do parody accounts fit into the broader set of anti-Trump activism?” @realDonaldTrump views the answer this way: “I don't think my tweets are as important as the activism that we have seen with the mass protests or Obamacare sit-ins, etc. but I do think that accounts like this can: a) inject a little humor; b) help people share and process information; and c) stay outraged.”

@realDonaldTrump also discussed the importance of social media as a means to spread information and organize other forms of activism. Both the account owners I interviewed said their audiences seem to find catharsis and community through the parody accounts as well as entertainment. The account owners also use their parody work as a means of self-expression and emotion-processing, both of which are important for mental wellbeing. Parody accounts also have the potential to reach audiences who might not otherwise engage with political criticism because they find it boring or difficult to understand. Parody accounts offer public digital fora (a word I use to avoid confusion with “forums,” which has a specific meaning in online contexts) through which users can congregate, connect, and interact. The parody accounts can provide information or the impetus to look up more information, and they organize political events in an engaging, humorous way. The role of humor should not be underestimated, because if thinking about politics feels too serious, upsetting, or too much like “work,” people may begin to feel burned out and be less inclined to participate.

Because my dataset for this project was so limited, a useful direction for future research would be to analyze Trump’s tweeting patterns across a longer stretch of time. It could also be interesting to study how his tweeting changed between the campaign

season, the time between the 2016 election and Trump's inauguration, and Trump's presidency. The scope of my project was limited by the fact I hand-coded every tweet, so more macroscopic methods like tracking metadata, performing statistical analysis, comparing broader Twitter trends over time as they relate to political events or Trump tweets, and applying software like DICTION to a large corpus of Trump tweets could all potentially yield significant results. *The New York Times* is keeping an archive of every person, place, thing, and entity that Donald Trump has insulted on Twitter, so a study of their archive could also be fruitful. In terms of continuing to study political parody, future research could include circulation studies on parody artifacts similar to Gries's project mapping the "Obama Hope" image or network analysis studies examining the communities of practice surrounding Trump parodists on Twitter. I particularly wish I could have devoted more time to studying the network of Mercian-universe parody accounts that arose around @DonaeldUnready as an example of an organic writing community/affinity space coalescing around a (semi)shared political goal.

Whereas some forms of political satire like *SNL* and formerly *The Colbert Report* perform political parody to generate income, Twitter parody accounts—while they may eventually monetize—arise from individual citizens using the rhetorical agency afforded to them by Twitter to respond to a personal exigency. @MatureTrumpTwts, @realDonaldTrump, and @WulfgarTheBard (the three account owners I spoke with) all began their parody accounts because they had and continue to have a desire to do *something* in response to Donald Trump, however small. The five parody accounts I studied had, as of 25 June 2017, over 770,500 followers between them, although many of

these followers are likely the same people following more than one parody account. These parody accounts play a role in shaping how each of those 770,500 followers perceive our ongoing political situation: the topics they discuss, the rhetorical strategies they utilize, the content they include, and the overall messages of each account. If the account owners are even partially successful in their goals to maintain outrage, draw attention to problems, and resist the normalization of Trumpian discourse, they will have enacted real change through rhetorical persuasion.

Kenneth Burke defines rhetoric as manipulating language and other rhetorical resources so that “[A] may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so” (Burke 20). He articulates the “terministic screen” as a framing device composed of terminology and rhetorical shaping that makes an audience predisposed toward certain frames of mind and interpretations, and directs them away from others (Burke 46). In other words, terministic screens are “the angle of approach we take to phenomena through our vocabularies sets limits on what observations are possible” (Blakesley 95). As my word frequency tables in Appendix B show, each parody account presents a different vocabulary (if vocabulary includes patterns of usage), and how these different vocabularies are deployed shapes how Donald Trump is perceived. @realDonaldTrump, @TrumpDraws, @DonaeldUnready, @DeepDrumpf, and @MatureTrumpTweets all mobilize their rhetorical resources to promote their own specific critiques of Donald Trump, whether they are primarily ideological (@realDonaldTrump and @DonaeldUnready), linguistic (@DeepDrumpf and @MatureTrumpTweets), or *ad hominem* (@TrumpDraws). It is

impossible for any one rhetor to “do everything,” so to speak, so the premise of each account functions as a terministic screen that determines—for both the rhetor and the audience—which particular arguments emerge most clearly. Donald Trump parody accounts on Twitter unite diverse opponents of Donald Trump under the same umbrella; one can read and enjoy a parody account without agreeing with all of the political positions of the account owner. One Trump opponent is made consubstantial with another Trump opponent, and collectively the followers are immersed in particular framings of U.S. politics.

Because parody is necessarily selective, however, parody accounts also exert influence over how audiences perceive @realDonaldTrump’s tweets, or even which tweets they perceive at all. If parody accounts are to be a source of news or information for readers who do not follow @realDonaldTrump directly, parodists can essentially provide a filter or screen through which audiences receive Trump’s messages. Although no user is *prevented* from receiving information about Trump’s Twitter behavior from other sources, some users might not choose to do so, particularly if they find a parody account poignant and funny. Following a cluster of parody accounts with similar content or aims could effectively place users in an information bubble, much as social media tends to do as users self-select among friends who already share similar views. If parody account owners view themselves as activists rather than just entertainers, this line of reasoning might imply a responsibility to portray Trump in particular socially-productive ways. What critiques of Trump are most important, beneficial, or effective? How should parodists focus their efforts to promote positive social or political change? I will address

these questions in my analysis of each parody account below, but in general terms, the answer depends in part on the purposes of Trump's original tweets.

Some people, as Chuck Todd says in his interview with George Lakoff, believe that Trump "has no strategy" (Meet the Press Daily), yet Lakoff believes Trump's tweets are incredibly strategic. Lakoff has developed a taxonomy of Trump tweets, categorizing them into four rhetorical actions: preemptive framing, diversion, deflection, and trial ballooning (@GeorgeLakoff). Lakoff tweeted on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 that "each tweet gets his message retweeted so he dominates social media. Reports, social media influencers, and many others fall for it hook, line, and sinker. They retweet, share, and repeat his messages ad infinitum. This helps Trump tremendously." Lakoff then explains that the retweeters (including journalists, political critics, and parodists) "may think they're negating or undermining him, but that's not how human brains work. As a cognitive scientist, I can tell you: repeating his messages only helps him." Repetition of Trump's tweets, even in a critical context, helps Trump by drawing attention onto his antics and away from other issues, controlling the news cycle and public consciousness, and enabling him to portray himself as a victim of establishment politicians or news media (@GeorgeLakoff).

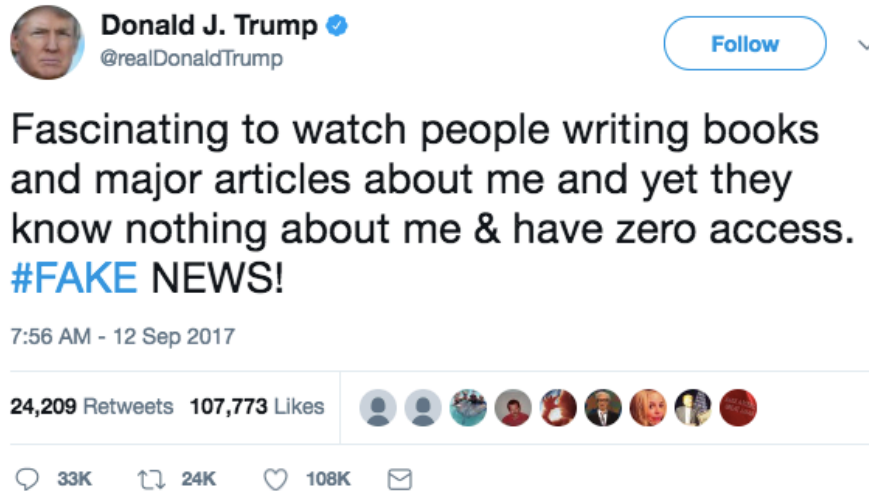
If Lakoff is correct in viewing @realDonaldTrump as fundamentally strategic, then parody accounts, as part of an inherently reactive genre, largely play into this strategy by focusing on his phrasing and reacting to his chosen topics. Of all the accounts I studied, @MatureTrumpTwts resists this temptation most often by choosing its own framing concepts (like peace instead of militant defense) and sometimes tweeting not a

more “mature” version of an existing @realDonaldTrump tweet, but a tweet about something else entirely, suggesting that this is what @realDonaldTrump *should* have tweeted about in that moment. Ultimately, talking about Trump, even negatively, keeps the conversation focused on Trump. I don’t know if @realDonaldTrump’s tweets are deliberately strategic in the way George Lakoff suggests, but I agree with his analysis of their effects, even if the strategy is incidental. I argue that while parody doesn’t have a meaningful impact on activism per se, parody accounts of Donald Trump do focus political conversation in particular directions and contain their own arguments about what is most important or worthy of criticism. Therefore, parodists have a duty to parody responsibly; otherwise, they are obfuscating and contributing to the problem.

I too have fallen victim to the pattern Lakoff identifies, focusing my research on Trump’s tweets and how people repurpose his tweets for comedy rather than the political or social implications of his rhetorical acts. Nevertheless, I began this thesis with a Donald Trump tweet, so it is only appropriate to finish with a Donald Trump tweet. On 12 September 2017, Donald Trump tweeted the following (Figure 9):

Figure 9

@realDonaldTrump on People Writing About Him



I can't claim that this is a book, and I can only dream that one day it will become a major article, yet I hope I have proven this tweet false. Researchers and writers do not have zero access: we have access to, as of 12:45pm on 14 October 2017, approximately 36,100 tweets, retweets, replies, and Twitter comments from Donald Trump. Internet researchers continually face the problem of too much data, rather than not enough. We "know" nothing to begin with, but careful examination of even just Twitter data can reveal much: when Trump tweets, what he tweets about, who he refers to, and who he's angry with. More importantly for this project, however, understanding what "is" reveals the possibilities for what "could be." Identifying quantitative descriptive measures of Trump's tweets, and examining how various parody accounts revise those measures, reifies the obvious: that things *could* be different. Any word frequency, any rhetorical strategy or topic pattern, could be different—could be used more, or used less, or used

differently. And if Trump can choose to act differently, we have an ethical and political obligation as citizens in a representative democracy to determine how he *should* act, and apply pressure to shape him—and our government—into the kind of America we want to be.



## WORKS CITED

- @DeepDrumpf. “No, Abraham Latino is poisoning our country. Impossible to sell our product. There will be no amnesty, but this is locker room talk.@jonfavs.” *Twitter*, 26 October 2016, 11:10 a.m., [twitter.com/DeepDrumpf/status/791311140550762500](https://twitter.com/DeepDrumpf/status/791311140550762500)
- @DeepDrumpf. “[Thank you, Georgia!] The education is a disaster. Jobs are essentially nonexistent. What do you have to lose?” *Twitter*, 8 November 2016, 11:56 p.m., <https://twitter.com/DeepDrumpf/status/796214927707033602>
- @DeepDrumpf. “[The second amendment]. We’re killing us. I know the Revolution. I want to expand this, so that we can have our last moment. #debatenight” *Twitter*, 19 October 2016, 8:20 p.m., <https://twitter.com/DeepDrumpf/status/788912637098782721>
- @DeepDrumpf. “[We’ll fix the economy] by selling out veterans. I will get the power, from some core of hell. I will be the most powerful. #debatenight” *Twitter*, 19 October 2016, 8:43 p.m., <https://twitter.com/DeepDrumpf/status/788918639810478080>
- @GeorgeLakoff. “Trump uses social media as a weapon to control the news cycle. It works like a charm. His tweets are tactical rather than substantive. They mostly fall into one of these four categories.” *Twitter*, 3 Jan 2018, 12:23 a.m., <https://twitter.com/georgelakoff/status/948424436058791937>

@IfHillaryHad. "DAY 128: Took a stroll with my G7 buddies. Reminded Republicans that I have the fucking stamina. Sent Bill out to fetch some gelato." *Twitter*, 27 May 2017, 2:29 p.m., [twitter.com/IfHillaryHad/status/868579825908293632](https://twitter.com/IfHillaryHad/status/868579825908293632)

@MatureTrumpTwts. Personal interview. 19 July 2017.

@MatureTrumpTwts. "Readying 4 diplomatic trip to build stronger relations w/Muslim allies, Israel & Pope Francis, ending w/NATO Summit & G-7 <http://t.co/DiRiXj62a8>" *Twitter*, 19 May 2017, 9:47 a.m., <https://twitter.com/MatureTrumpTwts/status/865579731525283840>

@MatureTrumpTwts. "Relish the oppty 2B a uniter, b/c we're all minorities in some way. Make outsiders feel included. Only together can we make a difference <https://t.co/sfkQjm9C3>" *Twitter*, 13 May 2017, 6:58 p.m., <https://twitter.com/MatureTrumpTwts/status/863543953588707328>.

@MatureTrumpTwts. "The buck stops at MY desk w/how the world views our great country. It matters on many diff levels & I take that responsibility very seriously." *Twitter*, 11 May 2017, 3:42 p.m., [twitter.com/MatureTrumpTwts/status/862770027971305473](https://twitter.com/MatureTrumpTwts/status/862770027971305473)

@MatureTrumpTwts. "This is the single greatest (humbling) job in the world. I wish I'd done some things differently & pledge to do better 4 YOU moving forward." *Twitter*, 18 May 2017, 7:28 a.m., [twitter.com/MatureTrumpTwts/status/865182401156272129](https://twitter.com/MatureTrumpTwts/status/865182401156272129)

@MatureTrumpTwts. "We'll fully cooperate w/respected special counSel Mueller. He'll thoroughly investigate & allow us to focus on governing this great country."

*Twitter*, 18 May 2017, 6:59 a.m.,

[twitter.com/MatureTrumpTwts/status/865175099237957632](https://twitter.com/MatureTrumpTwts/status/865175099237957632)

@RealDonalDrumpf. “If anyone retweets this, I’ll expand the Travel Ban to Canada, too!

<http://t.co/DWC2YJkof2>” *Twitter*, 5 June 7:25 p.m.,

<https://twitter.com/RealDonalDrumpf/status/871885767664164864>

@RealDonalDrumpf. “In any event I need to implement EXTREME VETTING of people coming into the U.S. Everyone I meet is a Russian spy!

<https://t.co/Auisyc4Eax>” *Twitter*, 5 June 2017, 8:07 a.m.,

<https://twitter.com/RealDonalDrumpf/status/871715159672311808>

@RealDonalDrumpf. “Is money laundering legal if the President does it?

[#askingforafriend](#)” *Twitter*, 4 June 2017, 11:32 p.m.,

<https://twitter.com/RealDonalDrumpf/status/871585511781085184>.

@realDonalDrumpf. Personal interview. 31 July 2017.

@realDonalDrumpf. “Sorry! If I [#SaveMedicaid](#), I won't be able to give \$880 billion to the Top 1% who are really looking forward to it!” *Twitter*, 6 June 2017, 11:52

a.m., [twitter.com/RealDonalDrumpf/status/872134159610892288/photo/1](https://twitter.com/RealDonalDrumpf/status/872134159610892288/photo/1)

@RealDonalDrumpf. “The Justice Department must argue for a stricter travel ban on Muslims while pretending it’s not a travel ban or targeting a whole religion!”

*Twitter*, 5 June 2017, 10:11 a.m.,

<https://twitter.com/RealDonalDrumpf/status/871746332104556544>.

@realDonaldTrump. “Despite the constant negative press covfefe” *Twitter*, 31 May 2017, 12:06 a.m.

@realDonaldTrump. “Fascinating to watch people writing books and major articles about me and yet they know nothing about me & have zero access. #FAKE NEWS!”

*Twitter*, 12 Sept. 2017, 7:56 a.m.,

[twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/907588803161939968](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/907588803161939968)

@realDonaldTrump. “My use of social media is not Presidential - it’s MODERN DAY PRESIDENTIAL. Make America Great Again!” *Twitter*, 1 July 2017, 5:41 p.m.,

[twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/881281755017355264](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/881281755017355264)

@realDonaldTrump. “The FAKE MSM is working so hard trying to get me not to use Social Media. They hate that I can get the honest and unfiltered message out.”

*Twitter*, 6 June 2017, 4:58 a.m.,

[twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/872059997429022722](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/872059997429022722)

@realDonaldTrump. “The massive TAX CUTS/REFORM that I have submitted is moving along in the process very well, actually ahead of schedule. Big benefits to all!” *Twitter*, 29 May 2017, 7:07 p.m.,

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/868981969664843777>.

@realDonaldTrump. “Who can figure out the true meaning of “covfefe” ??? Enjoy!”

*Twitter*, 31 May 2017, 5:09 a.m.,

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/869858333477523458>

@WulfgarTheBard. Personal interview. 5 Sept. 2017.

Ancu, Monica. “From Soundbite to Textbite: Election 2008 Comments on Twitter.” In

*Techno Politics in Presidential Campaigning: New Voices, New Technologies*,

*and New Voters*, edited by John Allen Hendricks and Lynda Lee Kaid, Routledge, 2011, pp. 11-21.

Angwin, Julia Surya, et al. "Machine Bias." ProPublica, ProPublica, 23 May 2016, [www.propublica.org/article/machine-bias-risk-assessments-in-criminal-sentencing](http://www.propublica.org/article/machine-bias-risk-assessments-in-criminal-sentencing).

Blakesly, David. *The Elements of Dramatism*, Pearson Education, 2002.

Bor, Stephanie E. "Candidates Use of Social Network Sites to Control Their Campaign Message." In *Studies of Communication in the 2012 Presidential Campaign*, edited by Robert E. Denton Jr., Lexington Books, 2014, pp.195-203.

Borger, Julian. "The Trump-Russia Dossier: Why Its Findings Grow More Significant by the Day." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 7 Oct. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/oct/07/trump-russia-steele-dossier-moscow](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/oct/07/trump-russia-steele-dossier-moscow).

Bowman, Bridget. "Senators Learning to Shrug Off Trump's Tweets." Roll Call, Roll Call, 1 May 2017, [www.rollcall.com/politics/senators-learning-to-shrug-off-trumps-tweets](http://www.rollcall.com/politics/senators-learning-to-shrug-off-trumps-tweets).

Boyd, Danah. "Self-Segregation: How a Personalized World Is Dividing Americans." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 13 Jan. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jan/13/self-segregation-military-facebook-college-diversity](http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jan/13/self-segregation-military-facebook-college-diversity).

Braun, Stephen. "National Archives to White House: Save All Trump Tweets." Chicago Tribune, Chicago Tribune, 4 Apr. 2017,

[www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/politics/ct-trump-tweets-national-archive-20170404-story.html](http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/politics/ct-trump-tweets-national-archive-20170404-story.html).

Brown, James J. *Ethical Programs: Hospitality and the Rhetorics of Software*, Digital Culture Books, 2015.

Burke, Kenneth. *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method*, University of California Press, 1966.

Chavez, Danette. "Seth Meyers Blames Himself for Trump's Presidency." The AV Club, Onion, 9 Feb. 2017, [news.avclub.com/seth-meyers-blames-himself-for-trump-s-presidency-1798257654](http://news.avclub.com/seth-meyers-blames-himself-for-trump-s-presidency-1798257654).

Crawford, Kate. "Artificial Intelligence's White Guy Problem." The New York Times, The New York Times, 25 June 2016, [www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/opinion/sunday/artificial-intelligences-white-guy-problem.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/opinion/sunday/artificial-intelligences-white-guy-problem.html).

Davis, Richard. *The Web of Politics*, Oxford University Press, 1999.

Donaldson, Mike. "What is Hegemonic Masculinity?," *Theory and Society*, vol. 22, no. 5, 1993, pp. 643-657, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.uncg.edu/stable/657988>.

Glaser, Barney and Anselm Strauss. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Aldine Transaction, 1967.

Gries, Laurie. "Mapping Obama Hope: A Data Visualization Project for Visual Rhetorics." *Kairos*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2017, <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/21.2/topoi/gries/index.html#>

- Hart, Roderick P. *Campaign Talk: Why Elections are Good For Us*, Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Hart, Roderick P. *Verbal Style and the Presidency: A Computer-Based Analysis*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984.
- Hayes, Brad. "About." DeepDrumpf 2016, Brad Hayes, 31 May 2017, [www.deepdrumpf2016.com/about.html](http://www.deepdrumpf2016.com/about.html).
- Hendricks, John Allen and Robert E. Denton Jr. "Political Campaigns and Communicating with the Electorate in the Twenty-First Century." In *Communicator-in-Chief: How Barack Obama Used New Media Technology to Win the White House*, edited by John Allen Hendricks and Robert E. Denton Jr., Lexington Books, 2010, pp. 1-18.
- Jamieson, Kathleen. "Antecedent Genre as Rhetorical Constraint," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 61, no. 4, 1975, pp. 406-415.
- Johnson, Shontavia. "Donald Trump Tweeted Himself into the White House." *The Conversation*, The Conversation U.S., 10 Nov. 2016, [theconversation.com/donald-trump-tweeted-himself-into-the-white-house-68561](http://theconversation.com/donald-trump-tweeted-himself-into-the-white-house-68561).
- Keith, Tamara. "From 'Covfefe' to Slamming CNN: Trump's Year in Tweets." NPR Politics, National Public Radio, 20 December 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/12/20/571617079/a-year-of-the-trump-presidency-in-tweets>.
- Kendall, Kathleen E. *Communication in the Presidential Primaries: Candidates and the Media, 1912-2000*, Praeger Publishers, 2000.

- Kharde, Vishal A. and S. S. Sonawane. "Sentiment Analysis of Twitter Data: A Survey of Techniques," *International Journal of Computer Applications*, vol. 139, no. 11, pp. 5-15. <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1601.06971.pdf>
- Kim, Eunsong. "The Politics of Trending." Model View Culture, Feminist Technology Collective, 19 March 2015, <https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/the-politics-of-trending>.
- Mackay, Jenn Burlison. "Gadgets, Gismos, and the Web 2.0 Election." In *Communicator-in-Chief: How Barack Obama Used New Media Technology to Win the White House*, edited by John Allen Hendricks and Robert E. Denton Jr., Lexington Books, 2010, pp. 19-36.
- Maloy, Simon. "Take @realDonaldTrump Seriously: Don't Dismiss Trump's Twitter Madness as 'Just Tweets.'" Salon, Salon Media Group, 26 Dec. 2016, [www.salon.com/2016/12/26/take-realdonaldtrump-seriously-dont-dismiss-trumps-twitter-madness-as-just-tweets/](http://www.salon.com/2016/12/26/take-realdonaldtrump-seriously-dont-dismiss-trumps-twitter-madness-as-just-tweets/).
- McGill, Andrew. "What Trump Tweets While America Sleeps." The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 7 Oct. 2016, [www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/10/what-trump-tweets-while-america-sleeps/503141/](http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/10/what-trump-tweets-while-america-sleeps/503141/).
- McNely, Brian and Christa Teston. "Tactical and Strategic: Qualitative Approaches to the Digital Humanities." In *Rhetoric and the Digital Humanities*, edited by Jim Rodolfo and William Hart-Davidson, University of Chicago Press, 2015, pp.111-126.



- Meet the Press Daily. "Why Does Trump Keep Tweeting?" *MSNBC*, hosted by Chuck Todd, 3 Jan. 2018, <http://www.msnbc.com/mtp-daily/watch/why-does-trump-keep-tweeting-1128707651918>
- Miller, Carolyn. "Genre as Social Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 70, no. 2, 1984, pp. 151-167.
- Mottahedeh, Negar. "HASHTAG: #CNNfail & the Slogans of the 2009 Iranian Election Crisis." *#Iraelection: Hashtag Solidarity and the Transformation of Online Life*, Stanford University Press, pp. 9–32.
- Observatory on Social Media. "Botometer." Indiana University Network Science Institute and Center for Complex Networks and Systems Research, <https://botometer.iuni.iu.edu/#/>. Accessed 5 December 2017.
- O'Sullivan, Donie and Dylan Byers. "Exclusive: Fake Black Activist Accounts Linked to Russian Government." CNN, Time Warner, 28 Sept. 2017, <http://money.cnn.com/2017/09/28/media/blacktivist-russia-facebook-twitter/index.html>.
- Oxford English Dictionary. "parody, n.2." OED Online, Oxford University Press, June 2017, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/138059](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/138059). Accessed 14 October 2017.
- Oxford English Dictionary. "satire, n." OED Online, Oxford University Press, June 2017, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/171207](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/171207). Accessed 14 October 2017.
- Pariser, Eli. Beware Online Filter Bubbles. TED, TED Conferences LLC, Mar. 2011, [www.ted.com/talks/eli\\_pariser\\_beware\\_online\\_filter\\_bubbles](http://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles).

- Quigley, Aidan. "Trump Tweets Would Be Archived Under COVFEFE Act." *Newsweek*, Newsweek LLC, 12 June 2017, [www.newsweek.com/trump-tweets-would-be-archived-under-covfefe-act-624580](http://www.newsweek.com/trump-tweets-would-be-archived-under-covfefe-act-624580).
- Ridolfo, Jim and Dànielle Nicole DeVoss. "Composing for Recomposition: Rhetorical Velocity and Delivery" *Kairos*, vol. 13 no. 2, 2009. [kairos.technorhetoric.net/13.2/topoi/ridolfo\\_devoss/intro.html](http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/13.2/topoi/ridolfo_devoss/intro.html).
- Robinson, David. "Text Analysis of Trump's Tweets Confirms He Writes Only the (Angrier) Android Half." *Variance Explained*, David Robinson, 9 Aug. 2016, [varianceexplained.org/r/trump-tweets/](http://varianceexplained.org/r/trump-tweets/).
- Schryer, Catherine. "The Lab vs. The Clinic: Sites of Competing Genre." In *Genre and the New Rhetoric*, edited by Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway, Routledge, 1994.
- Schryer, Catherine. "Genre Space/Time: Chronotopic Strategies in the Experimental Article," *JAC*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1999, pp. 81-89.
- Shane, Scott. "The Fake Americans Russia Created to Influence the Election." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 7 Sept. 2017, [www.nytimes.com/2017/09/07/us/politics/russia-facebook-twitter-election.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/07/us/politics/russia-facebook-twitter-election.html).
- Singal, Jesse. "The Best Anti-Donald Trump Twitter Account Transforms Him Into a Normal President." *New York Magazine*, New York Media LLC, 3 Feb. 2017, [nymag.com/selectall/2017/02/the-best-anti-trump-twitter-account-makes-him-normal.html](http://nymag.com/selectall/2017/02/the-best-anti-trump-twitter-account-makes-him-normal.html).

- Solop, Frederic I. ““RT @BarackObama We just made history’: Twitter and the 2008 Presidential Election.” In *Communicator-in-Chief: How Barack Obama Used New Media Technology to Win the White House*, edited by John Allen Hendricks and Robert E. Denton Jr., Lexington Books, 2010, pp. 37-50.
- Strauss, Anselm. *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Tedesco, John C. et al. “Presidential Campaigning on the Information Superhighway: An Exploration of Content and Form.” In *The Electronic Election: Perspectives on the 1996 Campaign Communication*, edited by Lynda Lee Kaid and Dianne G. Bystrom, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999.
- Williams, Joseph P. “Courts Considered Trump's Twitter in Ruling.” U.S. News, U.S. News & World Report, 12 June 2017, [www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2017-06-12/donald-trumps-statements-on-twitter-cited-in-courts-decision-to-upholds-block-on-travel-ban](http://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2017-06-12/donald-trumps-statements-on-twitter-cited-in-courts-decision-to-upholds-block-on-travel-ban).
- Wong, Julia Carrie. “Twitter Users Sue Donald Trump for Blocking Them Over Critical Comments.” The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 11 July 2017, [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jul/11/twitter-lawsuit-donald-trump-blocking-knight-institute?CMP=share\\_btn\\_link](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jul/11/twitter-lawsuit-donald-trump-blocking-knight-institute?CMP=share_btn_link).
- Yun, Hyun Jun, et al. “New Voices and New Voters: Ethno-Technology in Reactions to Candidate Messages in the 2008 Campaign.” In *Techno Politics in Presidential Campaigning: New Voices, New Technologies, and New Voters*, edited by John Allen Hendricks and Lynda Lee Kaid, Routledge, 2011, pp. 102-128.

APPENDIX A  
CODE DESCRIPTIONS

For the sake of academic integrity, I have preserved the names of each code as they were listed during the coding process. The names are not always phrased in consistent ways, in the clearest terms, or in the most formal register. I have noted alternative names for the codes when necessary.

**Tweet Elements**

**Link to Another Tweet**

This code was used when a tweet used Twitter’s “quote” feature (which displays the tweet as a comment on another) or when the tweet included a link to another tweet. “Link to Another Tweet” was most often used by @MatureTrumpTwts, since many of that account’s posts link directly to the @realDonaldTrump tweet it is rephrasing.

**Link to Something Else**

This code was mainly applied to tweets in which the parody account owners were selling a product or soliciting donations. In one tweet by @MatureTrumpTwts, it referenced a link to an official White House statement. On a few occasions, it was used when @DonaeldUnready provided a link to a page on which he had posted a Trump-themed parody of the poem “Jabberwocky.”

**Tagging Someone Else**

This refers to the use of @-mentions in the tweets, which are used when referencing that person, when directly addressing that person, or when trying to attract

their attention on Twitter by giving them a mention notification. This code was added to the coding schema while coding @DeepDrumpf, because the use of @-mentions prior to that point (@realDonaldTrump and @TrumpDraws) were either deemed irrelevant (@TrumpDraws) or accounted for in other codes (e.g. many of @realDonaldTrump's @-mentions were coded as "praise" or "showing other people like him"). I began tracking @-mentions in @DeepDrumpf because since the account is an AI, any @-mentions of people Donald Trump does not reference as an @-mention himself must have been intentionally added in by the human manager of the neural network.

### **News Link**

This code is self-explanatory in most cases, but became more complicated when coding @DonaeldUnready. Because @DonaeldUnready operates in an alternate timeline/universe, it does not use real links to news in our world. However, related accounts such as The Jorvik Times and Wulfgar the Bard function as "news agents" within the same universe. Wulfgar the Bard creates comics, called "tapestries," that are depicted as visual news sources within this alternate world (where presumably the peasants are illiterate). The "tapestries" are usually similar to news coverage of the real-world events they parody, and may recreate images from those news stories (such as the image of Trump touching a glowing orb alongside the Egyptian president and the Saudi king).

Figure 10

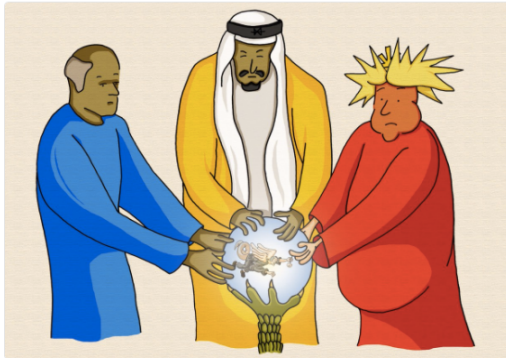
@WulfgarTheBard Contrasted with The New York Times



**Wulfgar the Bard**  
@WulfgarTheBard

Following

When shall we three meet again?



10:37 AM - 22 May 2017

59 Retweets 105 Likes

12 59 105

**Image**

The “image” code was applied to still images, animated GIFs (like those used by @TrumpDraws), and instances where the tweet itself linked to another medium (such as a news source or another tweet), but an image in that other text was integral to the tweeter’s use of the reference.

## **Part of Thread**

A current trend in Twitter usage is to circumvent the 140-character limit by creating “threads”—replying to one’s own tweets so that readers see the content linked together in order. Threads can also include other users, such as if two users were holding an extended conversation using their Twitter accounts. Other users would be able to view the entire conversation as one “thread.”

## **Rhetorical Strategies**

### **Taking Responsibility**

“Taking Responsibility” could, in many cases, also be called “Accepting Blame.” This code was mostly used on tweets from @MatureTrumpTwts, but @RealDonalDrumpf and @DonaeldUnready also displayed instances of taking responsibility. Examples include “The buck stops at MY desk w/how the world views our great country. It matters on many diff levels & I take that responsibility very seriously” (@MatureTrumpTwts) and “This is the single greatest (humbling) job in the world. I wish I'd done some things differently & pledge to do better 4 YOU moving forward” (@MatureTrumpTwts). The most significant examples, however, focus on alternative responses to the investigation into the Trump campaign’s alleged collusion with Russia: “We'll fully cooperate w/respected special counSel Mueller. He'll thoroughly investigate & allow us to focus on governing this great country” (@MatureTrumpTwts).<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> The capitalized S in “counSel” is present in the original tweet. Barry, the owner of the account, clarified in a later tweet (signed with his own name instead of in the account persona) that this was intentional because @realDonaldTrump’s tweet on the same subject was missing the S.

### **Appeal to Racial Fears**

Although many of @realDonaldTrump's tweets were coded with "Threat/Fearmongering," those tweets were not clearly phrased with racial motivations in mind. Beginning with @DeepDrumpf and continuing through @RealDonalDrumpf and @DonaeldUnready, however, some tweets clearly indicated appeals to racial anxieties. For example, "No, Abraham Latino is poisoning our country. Impossible to sell our product. There will be no amnesty, but this is locker room talk" (@DeepDrumpf) and "The Justice Department must argue for a stricter travel ban on Muslims while pretending it's not a travel ban or targeting a whole religion!" (@RealDonalDrumpf). While the exact parallels between @DonaeldUnready's terminology and present-day countries are not always clear, @DonaeldUnready tweets extensively about the threat posed by "the Welsh," "Sneaky Danes," and "Viking Rus." Because these still refer to different ethnic groups (rather than countries, since countries as we know them today did not exist in the medieval period), I coded them as appeals to racial fears.

### **Rhetorical Question**

While the nature of the code "rhetorical question" needs no explanation, I do want to note that only three of the six accounts used this relatively common rhetorical figure. These three accounts were @DeepDrumpf, @realDonalDrumpf, and @DonaeldUnready. Because @DeepDrumpf did use rhetorical questions, and it is modeled off of Donald Trump's real speaking and tweeting patterns, the lack of rhetorical question in @realDonaldTrump's tweets could be an arbitrary result of the particular dataset. However, we could speculate that @MatureTrumpTwts might not consider rhetorical



questions to be particularly mature rhetorical figures, or might not consider them appropriate for the mode in which the account is composing (i.e., sober and direct, rather than persuasive).

### **Appeal to Grassroots Sentiments**

I defined “Appeal to Grassroots Sentiments” as any tweet that utilized notions of the common man, “everyday Americans” (my phrase), or “the people.” The results for this code did not match my expectations. Because Donald Trump’s presidential victory is largely attributed (by himself and others) to grassroots populism and appeal to “everyday Americans,” I expected both his tweets and the tweets of his parodists to reflect this type of appeal more strongly. More than half of the tweets marked with this code were from @DeepDrumpf, however, so perhaps @realDonaldTrump previously used this appeal more often when campaigning (thus explaining why @DeepDrumpf’s algorithms might deem that kind of content correct), but did it less often after he won the election.

### **Appeal to Religion**

“Appeal to Religion” is another code that defied my expectations. I defined this code not as any reference to religion, but any tweet that used people’s faith, religious convictions, or sense of religious identity to persuade. Because the Republican party tends to be associated with evangelical Christianity, I expected more appeals of this type than appeared in the dataset (5 uses across 4 accounts). Some of these tweets referred to a general concept of God, while others specifically cited Christian or Muslim beliefs. @MatureTrumpTwts also, paradoxically, alluded to Islamophobia as an appeal to religion when he tweeted “Readying 4 diplomatic trip to build stronger relations

w/Muslim allies, Israel & Pope Francis, ending w/NATO Summit & G-7.” This tweet refers to Christian/Muslim tensions while also appealing to ideals of interfaith goodwill.

### **Trump is Awesome, Everyone Pre-Trump and Not-Trump Sucks**

A close rephrase of this code would be “Self-Aggrandizement,” but my informal and somewhat off-color phrasing reflects both the difficulty I had in capturing the exact notion I was marking and the corollary sense to self-aggrandizement: that if I am grand, everyone else must be less grand than me. Some tweets marked with this code do present simple self-aggrandizement, such as “The massive TAX CUTS/REFORM that I have submitted is moving along in the process very well, actually ahead of schedule. Big benefits to all!” (@realDonaldTrump) and “I will get the power, from some core of hell. I will be the most powerful” (@DeepDrumpf). However, most of them from both @realDonaldTrump and the parodists hinge their rhetorical effect on comparison. Even the slogan “Make America Great Again,” used extensively by @realDonaldTrump and the parodists, suggests that Trump is the answer to a pre-existing national problem.

### **Appeal to Meme**

Most of the tweets coded as “appeal to meme” referenced hashtags that were trending at the time of posting, such as #ManyPeopleAreSaying and #ThingsISayToGetLaid. Others reference Trump-related phrases and topics that others meme-ed because of him, such as Ken Bone and #covfefe. Still others made use of phrases that straddle the line between meme and Internet slang, such as #tbt and #askingforafriend. I categorized this last category as “appeal to meme” because, much

like more traditional memes, they are still mini-genres of posts that circulate primarily online, representing an engagement with digital-only discourse systems.

### **Framing Trump as Ill-Fit for Job and Implying Trump is Stupid or Immature**

The difference between “Framing Trump as Ill-Fit for Job” and “Implying Trump is Stupid or Immature” has been an ongoing source of uncertainty throughout this project, so I will address these two codes concurrently. Not every tweet coded with one is coded with the other, but there is also significant overlap. Generally, tweets coded as “Framing Trump as Ill-Fit for Job” focus on his qualifications to be president compared to users’ ideas of the qualifications a president should have. For example, “Framing Trump as Ill-Fit for Job” tweets might suggest Trump is financially corrupt, compromised by Russia, or temperamentally unfit for the specific position of POTUS. In contrast, “Implying Trump is Stupid or Immature” tweets aim more to mock or humiliate rather than to present an argument about Trump’s qualifications, although they may also imply that he is unqualified *because* he is stupid or immature. An example of a tweet coded “Framing Trump as Ill-Fit for Job” is @realDonaldTrump’s post “Is money laundering legal if the President does it? #askingforafriend.”

### **Slogan**

Slogans include “Make America Great Again,” “America First,” “Build the Wall,” “Drain the Swamp,” and @DonaeldUnready’s Anglo-Saxonized versions of these phrases. Some of these were campaign slogans used by the Trump administration, and others are more general cultural slogans (“Land of the Free, Because of the Brave”) or phrases coined after the election (such as “PittsburghNotParis”). The use of slogans

generates rhetorical commonplaces that, through repeated use, gather associations and rhetorical weight over time.

### **Showing Other People Like Him**

This code mostly refers to instances where Trump or a parodist retweeted or referenced someone else praising them. In the case of @TrumpDraws, it also refers to any time the posted GIF included people in the background vigorously applauding Trump's (fictitious) drawing. Ten out of the eleven tweets from @realDonaldTrump marked with this code were direct retweets. Most of the tweets marked with this code from the other accounts referenced praise more indirectly, such as saying "Thank you, Georgia!" (@DeepDrumpf).

### **Threat/Fearmongering**

This code includes direct threats ("If anyone retweets this, I'll expand the Travel Ban to Canada, too!" (@realDonaldTrump)), but mostly refers to tweets that imply an outside threat or foment fear. Although "Appeal to Racial Fear" did not emerge as its own code until I coded the tweets from @DeepDrumpf, several of @realDonaldTrump's tweets did display threats or fearmongering. Furthermore, six out of eight of @realDonaldTrump's tweets marked with this code related to terrorism or the travel ban specifically, which are racialized issues even though his words themselves did not refer to particular racial or ethnic groups. The two other tweets from @realDonaldTrump that fearmongered about a topic other than terrorism dealt with European countries taking advantage of the U.S. and the mainstream media trying to mislead the American people. Most of the tweets marked with this code were posted by @DeepDrumpf and

@DonaeldUnready. Other topics with notable intersections with “Threat/Fearmongering” (although a less strong correlation than with “Terrorism,” “Other Countries,” and “Travel Ban,”) include Hillary Clinton, Russia, and the economy.

### **Appealing to Source (Subcode: Fox News)**

“Appealing to Source” largely overlapped with the “News Link” tweet elements code, but also included screenshots of news and retweets from/@-mentions of news-related Twitter accounts like @foxandfriends. I also included references other entities that carry some kind of expertise or ethos like doctors and university professors, although these types of sources were less common. Eleven of @realDonaldTrump’s fifteen appeals to source in my dataset referenced Fox News. In the case of @DonaeldUnready, I included references to Wulfgar the Bard, The Jorvik Times, and The Breitbart Chronicle as “appeals to source,” because these fictional entities are all constructed as news sources within @DonaeldUnready’s world.

### **Appeal to Patriotism**

Although some of the most obvious appeals to patriotism lie in “Make America Great Again” and discussions of American veterans, this code also includes rhetorical usage of the American flag, national security, and #AmericaFirst-related messaging. @realDonaldTrump used this strategy more than twice as much as the account with the next-highest frequency, @DeepDrumpf (27 uses by @realDonaldTrump and 13 uses by @DeepDrumpf).

## **Call to Action**

The tweets I coded with “Call to Action” included tweets that suggested actions to the general population, like “We must stop being politically correct” (@realDonaldTrump), and tweets that called particular groups of people to action, like “The Justice Dept. should ask for an expedited hearing of the watered down Travel Ban before the Supreme Court - & seek much tougher version!” (@realDonaldTrump). The majority of the tweets marked with this code were from @realDonaldTrump and @MatureTrumpTwts. The calls to action also typically feature plural first person pronouns like “we” and “us,” and intersect most prominently with the topic of terrorism, and the strategies of strongman language, implying Trump is stupid or immature, and framing Trump as ill-fit for his job.

## **Blaming/Putting Down (Subcodes: Hillary, Obama, Media, Democrats, Other Part of Gov.)**

In pure numeric terms, @realDonaldTrump blamed or put down Democrats and people/entities not encompassed by the subcodes the most. The sum of the frequencies of Hillary, Obama, Media, and Other Part of Government (11) was equivalent to the number of times he blamed or put down a person or entity not encompassed by one of the categories. However, Trump blamed or put down Obama, Democrats, and other parts of government far more than the parody accounts did. The parody accounts focused their blame and disparaging remarks on Hillary Clinton, the media, and people/entities not encompassed by the subcodes. The non-categorized targets of blame are typically either other countries/their leaders, specific critics of Trump, or general opposition.

### **Claiming Accomplishment**

The meaning of this code is self-explanatory, but the tweets it encompassed ranged from announcing executive actions to taking credit for un-correlated outcomes. For example, @realDonaldTrump tweeted “Perhaps this will be the beginning of the end to the horror of terrorism!” in relation to his supposed intervention into the Saudi-Qatar dispute. Although the tweet was admittedly speculation, it suggested that Trump’s own action might cause the end of terrorism and claimed that accomplishment for himself in advance.

### **Strongman Language**

For the purposes of this project, “Strongman Language” included any language that emphasized physical or military strength and/or the ability to fight or protect, totalizing language, and language that suggested infallibility, patriarchal notions of masculinity, and black and white thinking or an us vs. them mentality. These ideas comprise an admittedly loose network of notions, but they circumscribe the archetype of hegemonic masculinity (Donaldson). Trump consistently plays into this archetype through his displays of power, attitude toward women, self-aggrandizing language, and emphasis on size (of his deals, of “the wall,” of his inauguration crowds, etc.).

### **Praise**

“Praise” includes tweets that extend praise to specific people (often in the form of thanks or a warm welcome), to countries as a whole, to news programs, to particular states, and to veterans, although this list is not exhaustive. The code frequencies (Figure

5) show that @MatureTrumpTwts praised others the most, followed by @realDonaldTrump and @DeepDrumpf in about equal proportion.

### **Plural/Unifying/Speaking as One**

This code most commonly applied to uses of “we,” “us,” and “our,” but could also refer to statements about “America” as a whole, to the Trump administration as a collective, to the government, or to the Republican party. The tweets marked by this code presented unity, erasing internal conflict within groups.

### **Sex Joke**

Only three tweets were marked with this code: two from @realDonaldTrump, and one from @TrumpDraws. The @TrumpDraws tweet makes a deprecating joke about Trump’s alleged sexual appetite, one of the tweets from @realDonaldTrump makes a suggestion about the President and First Lady’s private life, and the other tweet from @realDonaldTrump implies that Trump and Putin have a sexual relationship.

## **Topics**

### **Race**

The criteria governing the application of this code were similar to the criteria for “appeal to racial fears.” That is, I only marked a tweet with the “race” topic if a specific racial or ethnic group was mentioned or alluded to, or an explicitly race-related issue was discussed. For example, @realDonaldTrump tweeted twice about Bill Maher, in relation to his use of a particular racial slur. Although the slur was not included in either of these tweets, the tweets referenced an explicitly racial issue in the news, so these tweets still carry the topic code “race.”



### **Feminism (Subcode: Reproductive Rights)**

All eight of the tweets coded with “feminism” came from @DeepDrumpf. Most of these related to Trump’s treatment of women or women’s attitude toward Trump (“Here's the thing, I horribly abuse women and LGBT citizens. You know that better than anybody. That's my plan to win” and “[Women love] me. I'll make them Great Again, like in Iran. We have to have that suppression, it's good for my business”). Two of the “feminism” tweets from @DeepDrumpf related to representation of women in STEM—a tweet raising money for the Girls Who Code initiative and a tweet in honor of Ada Lovelace Day. The “Reproductive Rights” tweets, also all from @DeepDrumpf, addressed sexual assault, abortion, and the oppression of women in other countries.

### **Religion**

Almost all of the tweets under this code explicitly mentioned either God, Jesus, Islam, or the Pope. The other tweets that did not explicitly mention one of these people or topics were in reference to the two men in Portland who died trying to protect a Muslim from a hate crime. All of the parody accounts except @TrumpDraws had at least one tweet about religion, and @realDonaldTrump did not have any.

### **Education**

Only three tweets were coded with “education.” The first, from @MatureTrumpTwts, celebrated National Teachers’ Day. This tweet was posted on May 9<sup>th</sup>, which is outside of the timeframe of @realDonaldTrump’s tweets for this project, so the data does not reflect whether @realDonaldTrump also tweeted about National Teachers’ Day. The other two tweets coded with “education” were from @DeepDrumpf.

## **Trump Business Success**

All three “Trump Business Success” tweets from @DonaeldUnready relate to the product the Twitter account is selling. Although this does not relate to actual Donald Trump’s actual business, the Twitter account frames the product as “Donaeld’s Chronicle.” Donald Trump’s real “chronicle” is *The Art of the Deal*, which relates to his business success both in that it is a product he sells and in that it hinges on his reputation for making business deals. The other three business success tweets are from @DeepDrumpf. Two @TrumpDraws tweets, about Trump’s imaginary “lemonade stand,” would be marked with this code except business success did not emerge as a significant theme in the coding until after @TrumpDraws had already been coded.

## **Immigration**

Eight out of ten of the “immigration” tweets come from @DeepDrumpf, suggesting that Trump has tweeted about immigration more often in the past than he does now. One of the remaining two tweets was from @MatureTrumpTwts about “relishing the opportunity be a uniter,” (“Relish”) and the other was from @realDonaldTrump about “extreme vetting” (@realDonaldTrump “In any event”).

## **Leaks**

The three categories of references to “leaks” from the dataset are leaks about White House internal matters, the leak of British intelligence about the Manchester attack, and jokes playing on the homophones leak/leek. Only @MatureTrumpTwts and @DeepDrumpf did not have tweets about this topic.

## **Pop Culture**

The pop culture tweets were confined to @TrumpDraws, @RealDonalDrumpf, and @DonaeldUnready. They include references to music, books, TV shows, and celebrities, as well as many of the tweets coded under “appeal to meme.” “Pop culture” tweets are also necessarily intertwined with intertextuality. @DonaeldUnready rewrote Lewis Carroll’s “Jabberwocky” poem as “Jibbertrump” and had several tweets linking to his version of the poem.

## **Defending Trump**

All six accounts (the five parody accounts plus @realDonaldTrump) posted at least one tweet coded with “defending Trump.” @realDonaldTrump had only one tweet marked with this code. Later in the day after the “covfefe” tweet was posted and subsequently deleted, Trump tweeted, “Who can figure out the true meaning of "covfefe" ??? Enjoy!” Although this tweet is not specifically refuting an accusation, this tweet “defends” Trump from the embarrassment of his original mistake by framing it as a source of entertainment (hence “Enjoy!”). The two @TrumpDraws tweets defend against accusations of Trump having small hands. Most of the other tweets are phrased as general defensiveness against unspecified criticism, rather than targeting particular accusations.

## **Other Trumps**

Two of the “Other Trumps” tweets were from @TrumpDraws, and the rest from @realDonalDrumpf. Most of the tweets that referenced “Other Trumps” referred to either Melania or Barron Trump. However, Ivanka and Donald Trump Jr. were also mentioned once each.

## **Hillary Clinton**

All of the accounts except @MatureTrumpTwts and @TrumpDraws referenced Hillary Clinton at least once—and in the case of @realDonaldTrump, it was only once in this dataset. Most of the mentions were from @DeepDrumpf, suggesting that Trump used to talk about Hillary Clinton more often than the frequency represented in the May-June tweets. @DonaeldUnready does not actually mention “Hillary Clinton,” but that account refers to “Crooked Aethelflaed” as the equivalent of Clinton in the @DonaeldUnready universe.

## **Investigation into Trump Administration**

By “Investigation Into the Trump Administration,” I am specifically referring to the investigation into the alleged collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russian government to win the 2016 presidential election. All of the accounts except @TrumpDraws tweeted at least 3 times regarding this topic, although @MatureTrumpTwts addressed this topic the most.

## **Climate Change**

Most of the tweets coded “climate change” also referred to the Paris Accord, and most of @realDonaldTrump’s “climate change” tweets were actually retweets of other people praising his decision to pull out of the agreement. Most of the other tweets on this topic were from @realDonaldTrump, although @MatureTrumpTwts and @DonaeldUnready also addressed this topic.

## **Economy**

“Economy” is another code in which most of @realDonaldTrump’s tweets were retweets from other people praising his decisions or attributing positive economic measures to Trump—many of them the same tweets that were coded with “climate change,” since Trump justified the decision to pull out of the Paris Accord by citing economic benefits to the United States. All of the accounts had tweets marked with this category, although @DeepDrumpf had the most. The two tweets from @TrumpDraws that I coded with “economy” showed pictures of “[Trump’s] lemonade stand” alongside a graph tracking the stand’s monetary success.

## **Rights/Freedoms**

The tweets marked with this code mostly address freedom or “rights” as abstract, general concepts, but some of the tweets specifically address the right to free speech, privacy rights, and the right to equal protection under the law.

## **Guns**

Although one might expect at least some of the “guns” tweets to relate to gun control or the right to bear arms, and thus also belong to the rights/freedoms category, none of the accounts under study actually addressed the right to bear arms directly.

@DeepDrumpf used the phrase “the second amendment” as a stem for the neural network to generate a post from, but the rest of the tweet was unrelated to guns. One

@DeepDrumpf tweet also did not talk about guns specifically but @-mentioned the NRA, and the other gun-related tweets only mentioned guns because they were pointing out how irrelevant gun control is as a topic of conversation (such as

@realDonaldTrump's tweet, "Do you notice we are not having a gun debate right now? That's because they used knives and a truck!").

### **Loyalty-Related**

Loyalty-related tweets included the same kinds of tweets coded with "Showing Other People Like Him" but also tweets expressing frustration at disloyal people and tweets promising rewards to people who demonstrate loyalty. For example, @realDonaldTrump tweeted, ".@foxandfriends Dems are taking forever to approve my people, including Ambassadors. They are nothing but OBSTRUCTIONISTS! Want approvals." I coded the use of "my people" with "loyalty-related," because Trump is expressing frustration that he would like the people who are loyal to him to be confirmed into positions of power, and the "OBSTRUCTIONIST" Democrats are not loyal. @DeepDrumpf also bribed voters for their party loyalty: "[I told Ohio] my promise to the American voter: If I am elected President, I will grow your money. \$500 billion a year to be a Republican."

### **Taxes**

Only six tweets across all accounts referenced taxes, three of which were from @realDonaldTrump. All of @realDonaldTrump's tax tweets framed the topic in terms of "tax cuts" and the two @DonaeldUnready tweets discussed a "low flax" policy, "flax evasion," and a "Hoard-First" economic policy: "New Hoard First budget proving great success! Trickle-down economics TOTALLY FAILED, Snatch-up plan MUCH BETTER. #buildthehoard #minted." The remaining "taxes" tweet, from @MatureTrumpTwts, discussed tax "reform" instead of tax "cuts."

## **Healthcare**

All ten of the “healthcare” tweets related to either repealing Obamacare or passing the various alternative bills known as different versions of “Trumpcare.” The four healthcare tweets from @realDonaldTrump express a general sense of urgency to improve the healthcare system in the United States (either implicitly or explicitly by repealing Obamacare). The two tweets from @realDonaldTrump portray Trump as corrupt (“Sorry! If I #SaveMedicaid, I won't be able to give \$880 billion to the Top 1% who are really looking forward to it!”) and opposed to what is supposedly “his” healthcare plan (“#Trumpcare is a complete disaster! We must do the exact opposite of what @SpeakerRyan proposes!”). The remaining healthcare tweets are from @MatureTrumpTwts and @DeepDrumpf.

## **Election (Winning/Losing)**

Most of the election-related tweets come from @DeepDrumpf because the AI recycled the phrase “#ElectionNight” and other election-related phrases from the tweets on which it was trained. Interestingly, two of the three election-related tweets from @realDonaldTrump displaced credit for his win onto the shortcomings of other entities—Hillary Clinton and the Democrats. In only one election-related tweet did he attribute his success to his own choices (his lack of reliance on the mainstream media).

## **Fake News**

Trump uses “Fake News” and “Mainstream Media” more or less interchangeably in his tweets, so for this code I also included all tweets addressing “Mainstream Media,” “MSM,” or criticizing specific news outlets like CNN and *The New York Times* for false

reporting. @DonaeldUnready's equivalent phrases included "Twisty Monks," "Lying Bards," "Lamestream Bards," "Fake Chronicles," "Fake Nuns," and "Lying Scribe."

### **Terrorism (subcode: Travel Ban)**

In addition to explicit mentions of terrorism, ISIS, and the travel ban, this code encompassed references to national security, "safety," dangerous immigrants, and discussions of specific terror attacks (like the attack in Manchester). @realDonaldTrump, @realDonaldTrump, and @MatureTrumpTwts all addressed this topic with similar frequency, although @DeepDrumpf and @DonaeldUnready also had a few tweets about this topic. A little less than a third of the "terrorism" tweets were about the travel ban.

### **Other Countries (subcode: Russia)**

Slightly more than a third of the "other countries" tweets referenced Russia, although the specific references were sometimes hard to determine in the case of @DonaeldUnready. Sometimes @DonaeldUnready refers to "Viking Rus," which clearly denotes he is talking about Russia, but other cases he references other ethnic groups (Sneaky Danes, etc.) in ways that make their real-world analogues unclear. In a brief discussion with @WulfgarTheBard, Mike (the account owner) explained to me that the different accounts in the Mercian universe are run separately from each other, so terms are used differently until the community gradually settles on a particular usage over time.

### **History/Military**

Almost all of the "History" tweets were also coded with "Military," and the remainder of the "history" tweets referenced holidays like Easter, Mother's Day, and Ada Lovelace Day. Therefore, I have combined the codes into one section for this Appendix.



The overlap is due to the fact that my dataset was collected shortly after Memorial Day, so all of the accounts except @TrumpDraws had at least one Memorial Day tweet. The half of the “military” tweets that were not also coded with “history” discussed veterans, war in general, military funding, and the military actions of other countries like North Korea.

APPENDIX B  
RESULTS TABLES

Table 4

Word Frequencies Across All Data (25 Most Common)

<b>Word</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Documents</b>	<b>Documents %</b>
i	1	155	3.59	117	32.50
we	2	93	2.15	73	20.28
my	3	68	1.57	64	17.78
will	4	44	1.02	42	11.67
you	5	42	0.97	38	10.56
may	6	39	0.90	38	10.56
our	7	38	0.88	30	8.33
great	8	35	0.81	31	8.61
make	8	35	0.81	34	9.44
me	10	33	0.76	31	8.61
all	11	32	0.74	30	8.33
get	12	29	0.67	25	6.94
well	13	24	0.56	22	6.11
people	14	23	0.53	22	6.11
say	14	23	0.53	23	6.39
us	14	23	0.53	23	6.39
go	17	21	0.49	16	4.44
need	18	20	0.46	18	5.00
don <sup>22</sup>	19	19	0.44	19	5.28
no	19	19	0.44	18	5.00
sit	19	19	0.44	19	5.28
w <sup>23</sup>	19	19	0.44	16	4.44
america	23	18	0.42	17	4.72
like	23	18	0.42	18	5.00
win	23	18	0.42	18	5.00

---

<sup>22</sup> Here and in the other word frequency charts, “don” represents “don’t,” rather than the name “Don” as in “Donald.”

<sup>23</sup> “w” is primarily used as an abbreviation for “with” or, when written as w/o, as “without.”

Table 5

## Word Frequencies For @realDonaldTrump (25 Most Common)

Word	Rank	Frequency	%	Documents	Documents %
we	1	17	2.13	13	21.67
i	2	12	1.50	11	18.33
my	3	10	1.25	8	13.33
our	4	9	1.13	8	13.33
get	5	8	1.00	5	8.33
people	5	8	1.00	8	13.33
u <sup>24</sup>	5	8	1.00	7	11.67
will	5	8	1.00	8	13.33
american	9	7	0.88	3	5.00
hard	9	7	0.88	7	11.67
make	9	7	0.88	7	11.67
travel	9	7	0.88	7	11.67
america	13	6	0.75	6	10.00
foxandfriends	13	6	0.75	6	10.00
right	13	6	0.75	6	10.00
ban	16	5	0.63	5	8.33
need	16	5	0.63	3	5.00
president	16	5	0.63	5	8.33
should	16	5	0.63	5	8.33
take	16	5	0.63	5	8.33
want	16	5	0.63	5	8.33
well	16	5	0.63	4	6.67
all	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
big	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
court	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
dems	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
fake	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
give	23	4	0.50	3	5.00
great	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
healthcare	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
london	23	4	0.50	4	6.67

<sup>24</sup> Although the presence of “u” in the frequency chart suggests its use as a shortened form of “you,” the algorithm calculating word frequency actually processed mentions of “U.S.” and “U.K.” as two separate words. The presence of “u” in this chart is representative of that usage.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Documents</b>	<b>Documents %</b>
news	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
no	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
now	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
paris	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
pay	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
republican	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
say	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
today	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
trump	23	4	0.50	4	6.67
you	23	4	0.50	4	6.67

Table 6

Word Frequencies For @TrumpDraws (All Words Occurring More Than Once)

<b>Word</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Documents</b>	<b>Documents %</b>
my	1	9	9.18	9	15.00
me	2	3	3.06	3	5.00
first	3	2	2.04	2	3.33
i	3	2	2.04	2	3.33
lemonade	3	2	2.04	2	3.33
luv	3	2	2.04	2	3.33
stand	3	2	2.04	2	3.33

Table 7

Word Frequencies for @DonaeldUnready (25 Most Common)

<b>Word</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Documents</b>	<b>Documents %</b>
may	1	33	4.01	33	55.00
great	2	17	2.07	13	21.67
i	3	16	1.95	15	25.00
me	4	11	1.34	10	16.67
bad	5	9	1.09	7	11.67
mercia	5	9	1.09	9	15.00
my	5	9	1.09	9	15.00
well	5	9	1.09	8	13.33
don	9	8	0.97	8	13.33
like	9	8	0.97	8	13.33
lie	11	7	0.85	7	11.67
dane	12	6	0.73	5	8.33
make	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
much	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
say	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
time	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
viking	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
we	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
welsh	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
all	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
fact	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
get	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
know	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
look	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
no	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
paris	20	5	0.61	4	6.67
sneaky	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
sun	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
write	20	5	0.61	4	6.67
you	20	5	0.61	4	6.67

Table 8

Word Frequencies for @MatureTrumpTwts (25 Most Common)

Word	Rank	Frequency	%	Documents	Documents %
i	1	35	3.57	26	43.33
we	2	33	3.37	24	40.00
w	3	16	1.63	14	23.33
our	4	15	1.53	12	20.00
all	5	14	1.43	13	21.67
my	6	13	1.33	12	20.00
make	7	10	1.02	9	15.00
us	7	10	1.02	10	16.67
you	9	9	0.92	9	15.00
day	10	7	0.71	6	10.00
must	10	7	0.71	6	10.00
work	10	7	0.71	7	11.67
world	10	7	0.71	6	10.00
forward	14	6	0.61	6	10.00
great	14	6	0.61	6	10.00
country	16	5	0.51	5	8.33
get	16	5	0.51	5	8.33
hope	16	5	0.51	5	8.33
issue	16	5	0.51	5	8.33
keep	16	5	0.51	5	8.33
many	16	5	0.51	5	8.33
together	16	5	0.51	5	8.33
allow	23	4	0.41	4	6.67
ask	23	4	0.41	4	6.67
b	23	4	0.41	4	6.67
clear	23	4	0.41	4	6.67
enhance	23	4	0.41	4	6.67
investigation	23	4	0.41	4	6.67
peace	23	4	0.41	4	6.67
press	23	4	0.41	4	6.67
safe	23	4	0.41	4	6.67
time	23	4	0.41	4	6.67
well	23	4	0.41	4	6.67

Table 9

Word Frequencies for @DonaeldUnready (25 Most Common)

<b>Word</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Documents</b>	<b>Documents %</b>
may	1	33	4.01	33	55.00
great	2	17	2.07	13	21.67
i	3	16	1.95	15	25.00
me	4	11	1.34	10	16.67
bad	5	9	1.09	7	11.67
mercia	5	9	1.09	9	15.00
my	5	9	1.09	9	15.00
well	5	9	1.09	8	13.33
don	9	8	0.97	8	13.33
like	9	8	0.97	8	13.33
lie	11	7	0.85	7	11.67
dane	12	6	0.73	5	8.33
make	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
much	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
say	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
time	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
viking	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
we	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
welsh	12	6	0.73	6	10.00
all	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
fact	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
get	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
know	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
look	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
no	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
paris	20	5	0.61	4	6.67
sneaky	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
sun	20	5	0.61	5	8.33
write	20	5	0.61	4	6.67
you	20	5	0.61	4	6.67

Table 10

Word Frequencies for @realDonaldTrump (25 Most Common)

Word	Rank	Frequency	%	Documents	Documents %
i	1	33	4.51	26	43.33
sit	2	14	1.91	14	23.33
my	3	12	1.64	12	20.00
you	4	11	1.50	10	16.67
me	5	9	1.23	8	13.33
sun	5	9	1.23	9	15.00
will	7	8	1.09	8	13.33
he	8	7	0.96	5	8.33
all	8	7	0.96	6	10.00
get	10	6	0.82	5	8.33
say	10	6	0.82	6	10.00
tell	10	6	0.82	6	10.00
ban	13	5	0.68	4	6.67
like	13	5	0.68	5	8.33
today	13	5	0.68	5	8.33
travel	13	5	0.68	4	6.67
us	17	4	0.55	4	6.67
we	17	4	0.55	3	5.00
now	17	4	0.55	4	6.67
win	17	4	0.55	4	6.67
golf	17	4	0.55	4	6.67
need	17	4	0.55	4	6.67
your	17	4	0.55	4	6.67
paris	17	4	0.55	4	6.67
trump	17	4	0.55	4	6.67
upset	17	4	0.55	4	6.67
barron	17	4	0.55	4	6.67
please	17	4	0.55	4	6.67
so-called	17	4	0.55	4	6.67



Table 11

Word Frequencies for @DeepDrumpf (25 Most Common)

Word	Rank	Frequency	%	Documents	Documents %
i	1	57	6.38	37	61.67
we	2	33	3.70	27	45.00
will	3	22	2.46	20	33.33
go	4	16	1.79	12	20.00
my	5	15	1.68	14	23.33
our	6	14	1.57	10	16.67
you	7	13	1.46	11	18.33
make	8	11	1.23	11	18.33
no	9	9	1.01	8	13.33
people	9	9	1.01	9	15.00
win	11	8	0.90	8	13.33
great	11	8	0.90	8	13.33
debatenight	11	8	0.90	8	13.33
america	14	7	0.78	6	10.00
country	14	7	0.78	7	11.67
want	16	6	0.67	5	8.33
american	16	6	0.67	5	8.33
us	18	5	0.56	5	8.33
big	18	5	0.56	5	8.33
don	18	5	0.56	5	8.33
get	18	5	0.56	5	8.33
job	18	5	0.56	5	8.33
now	18	5	0.56	5	8.33
say	18	5	0.56	5	8.33
like	18	5	0.56	5	8.33
well	18	5	0.56	5	8.33
woman	18	5	0.56	5	8.33
believe	18	5	0.56	5	8.33
disaster	18	5	0.56	5	8.33

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW FORMS

**Form 1: Consent Form**

**Study Title:** “Grabbing Him By the Tweets: Presidential Parody as Rhetorical Resistance”

**University:** University of North Carolina at Greensboro

**IRB Number:** 17-0295

**Principal Investigator:** Olivia Wood

You are being asked to take part in a research study of how parody Twitter accounts of Donald Trump are used as a form of political activism. We are asking you to take part because your Donald Trump parody account has been identified as one of the most popular and/or unique active parody accounts of Donald Trump. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

**What the study is about:** The purpose of this study is to study the rhetorical strategies Twitter parodists use to critique and comment on the actions and words of Donald Trump in his role as President of the United States.

**What we will ask you to do:** If you agree to be in this study, we will conduct an interview with you. The interview can be conducted through Twitter direct messaging, an email account of your choosing, or a secure messaging app such as Signal. This choice will be up to you. In the interview, you will be asked questions about your intentions for your Donald Trump parody account, your experiences as the owner or moderator of this account, and your perspectives on social media, politics, and activism.

**Risks and benefits:**

I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those already encountered in running a public parody Twitter account of a controversial political figure. However, it is possible (though unlikely) that your personal identity could somehow be identified with your account by outside entities. Unfortunately, doxxing on Twitter and other types of social media is a hazard faced by many people associated with controversial topics. By signing this consent form, you acknowledge that you are aware of these risks. Regardless, I do not anticipate that participating in this project will increase this risk for you.

There are no direct benefits to you. Indirect benefits may include a (very) slight increase in traffic on your Donald Trump parody account once the research is complete due to exposure via this project.

**Your answers will be confidential.** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we make public we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. You are allowed to sign this form with your Twitter handle instead of your legal name if you wish. However, signing using your Twitter handle will constitute your consent in the same manner that signing with your full name would.

**Taking part is voluntary:** Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current or future relationship with the principal investigator or the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. If you decide to take part, you have the right to request that certain pieces of information you share or parts of the interview remain off the record. Any information designated off the record will not be included in any publications resulting from this research. This includes but is not limited to the principal investigator's thesis document and any journal articles that may result from this research.

You also have the right to **change your mind** about what information or parts of the interview you would like to be off the record. Any changes you make in this regard will be respected unconditionally if you notify the principal investigator in writing (via email, Twitter, or any other written form of communication) before March 3, 2018. This allows enough time for the information to be removed from any documents it has been used in prior to the principal investigator's thesis filing deadline. Exceptions to this deadline may be negotiated but are not guaranteed.

**If you have questions:** The principal investigator of this study is Olivia Wood, a master's student in rhetoric and composition at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. If you have questions later, you may contact Olivia Wood at [oawood@uncg.edu](mailto:oawood@uncg.edu) or via Twitter direct message at @DTparodyproject. All emails sent to [oawood@uncg.edu](mailto:oawood@uncg.edu) are subject to regulations regarding accessing private university communications.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. If I choose to sign using my Twitter handle instead of my name, I consent that my Twitter handle is used in place of my legal signature and, for the purpose of this form but no other forms unless otherwise indicated, serves in the same capacity as my legal signature.

Signature:                      Date:

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study.

## **Form 2: Interview Questions**

1. Why did you decide to make a Trump parody account? When did you decide to do that? Was there a specific event that triggered your decision?
2. Why did you decide to do it THIS way?
3. What motivates you to keep posting?
4. What has the response from your followers been like?
5. What kind of reaction have you gotten from critics?
6. What moments stand out to you from your time running this account?
7. What are you trying to say through your parody account? What are your goals? What is your message? What do you want people to understand?
8. Do you participate in any other types of protest or activism? If yes, what others?
9. What makes parody different or special from other types of activism? What are its advantages?
10. In your view, what is social media's role in today's political landscape?
11. Why is humor useful or important?
12. What have you learned from your experience running your account?
13. Is there anything I haven't asked about you think is relevant to a project studying presidential parody on Twitter?