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'Going negative': An APPRAISAL analysis of the rhetoric of Donald Trump on Twitter



Andrew S. Ross a,*, David Caldwell b

- ^a Sydney School of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia
- ^b School of Education, University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

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ABSTRACT

This article explores a selection of the tweets of President Donald Trump, specifically in relation to his use of negativity as a rhetorical political strategy. The study is guided by a corpus-based comparative keyword analysis and the analytical framework of APPRAISAL, from Systemic Functional Linguistics, which is concerned with the language of evaluation. The study reveals that in order to carry out an approach of 'going negative', Trump utilises the APPRAISAL system in a variety of ways, with the ultimate aim to attack and undermine the character of his political opponent.

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1. Introduction

In political discourse and communication, negativity is regularly observed, particularly in relation to election campaigns. Negativity in this sense refers to the focus within campaigning processes being placed upon alleged faults and weaknesses of opposition candidates rather than on a candidate's own personal and policy strengths (Dolezal et al., 2017). Although 'going negative' is not a new phenomenon of political communication, the advent of social media platforms – most significantly Twitter – has both amplified and simplified the capacity of politicians to adopt this strategic approach. Jensen (2017) has argued that Twitter showcases this through the way it enables easier participation in dialogue with a wider and more diverse audience than has historically been the case. This in turn reflects the ability of Twitter to facilitate the 'immediate, fast, and widespread dissemination of information' and opinion (Maireder and Ausserhofer, 2012, 306). When a negative approach becomes especially personal and targets an opponent's reputation and credibility, it can also be argued that this represents an instance of character assassination, where character assassination is defined as 'a deliberate and sustained effort to damage the reputation or credibility of an individual' (Samoilenko, 2016, 116). Thus, in this study, the broad tactic of going negative in political discourse and communication is examined, with a particular emphasis on the personal component.

In the relatively short time that Twitter has been a critical tool of political campaigning, its use by political candidates and their teams has aligned with an approach of 'professionalism', where a candidate's tweets are typically carefully composed by a trained media team in order to promote the candidate and their policy proposals (Enli, 2017). Enli and Naper (2016) highlight this by pointing out that in the 2008 US election, Barack Obama did not personally author any social media messages related to his campaign, and in the 2012 re-election campaign he composed only 1% of tweets posted (these were signed 'b.o.', which signified he did in fact author the tweet). However, with President Donald Trump, a new type of Twitter use has

E-mail addresses: andrew.s.ross@sydney.edu.au (A.S. Ross), david.caldwell@unisa.edu.au (D. Caldwell).

^{*} Corresponding author.

emerged that is reflective of a move towards what Enli (2017) terms 'de-professionalisation'. Since emerging as a prolific tweeter during his 2016 election campaign, Trump has demonstrated an ongoing tendency to author his own tweets through his personal Twitter account in a display of 'gut-feeling' and impulsive tweeting (Enli, 2017, 55) that is significantly different than professional, focus group-tested tweeting. The rhetoric associated with Trump's tweeting has been the subject of several studies to date (see Enli, 2017; Ott, 2017; Ross and Rivers, 2018a). While these studies allude to a negativity that resides in the tweets, negativity and character assassination as an overall political and rhetorical strategy have not received specific attention to date, and particularly not in relation to how this strategy is realised linguistically.

This article takes a language-focused approach to the analysis of Trump's tweets leading up to his election as President and the months following his inauguration. Guided by the corpus-based method of a comparative keyword analysis and informed by the linguistic theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the study adopts the analytical framework of APPRAISAL (Martin and White, 2005) to explore the discourse semantic resources used by Trump in his tweets to construct his negative discourse. With the key aim of APPRAISAL being to identify and analyse evaluation within language through 'the semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgements and valuations, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations' (Martin, 2000, 145), it becomes possible to bring to consciousness the manner in which Trump evaluated his opponent – Hillary Clinton – through expressions and grammars of emotion, judgement or valuation/appreciation.

The over-arching aim of the article is to demonstrate how the political tactic of 'going negative' is evident in Trump's deprofessionalised, 'amateur yet authentic' (Enli, 2017, 54) tweeting style, and more specifically, how it has been realised linguistically by applying the APPRAISAL framework to a corpus of Trump tweets from 2016 to 2017. Broadly speaking, the contribution of this paper is to the conceptual and theoretical developments of the APPRAISAL framework in terms of examining a 'negative' stance as construed through the affordances of Twitter. This in turn has implications for the field of political discourse and communication as we seek to understand what the linguistic realisation of political de-professionalism looks like.

The article has three main sections. In the first, the notion of negativity in political discourse and communication is explored. Following this, the APPRAISAL framework and methodological approach to the study are outlined. Finally, APPRAISAL analysis is applied to the data to explore how negativity is realised in the tweets of Donald Trump.

2. Trump, negativity and political communication via Twitter

The strategy of 'going negative' occurs primarily (although not strictly) during election campaigns and refers to 'any criticism leveled by one candidate against another during the campaign' (Geer, 2006, 23). More specifically, it relates to one candidate and their campaign team prioritising the attack of opponents over their own self-promotion and the promotion of their own policies (Nai and Maier, 2018). It represents an ongoing point of contention in political studies, with Nai and Walter (2015) suggesting that it remains unclear whether the use of negativity as an approach can be considered good or bad for democracy. Negativity can take different forms, but primarily focuses on 'attacking rival parties/candidates and criticizing their policy platforms or personality traits' (Ceron and d'Adda, 2015, 1937), or at times a combination of both. When policy is the target of negativity it tends to be the ideas, proposed programs, and track record of opponents that are in the crosshairs. On the other hand, when character is the target, Kahn and Kenney (1999) state that personality, values or the behaviour of candidates becomes central. Ultimately, when negativity is adopted as a campaigning tactic, one party or individual aims to signal that the opposition is unsuitable to carry out the task of governing. The strategy of 'going negative' has received scholarly attention in several areas to date including in direct relation to campaign events such as debates and television, radio or print advertisements (Geer, 2006; Schweitzer, 2009), and then more indirectly where the manner in which political events are reported to the public through the mass media such as newspaper articles (Buell and Sigelman, 2008; Kahn and Kenney, 1999). The continued increase in use of social media has added substantially to this body of research with several studies focusing on the use of negative campaigning on Facebook (Auter and Fine, 2016; Caton et al., 2015) with a particular emphasis on advertising and political messages, and Twitter (Ceron & d'Adda, 2016; Evans et al., 2014; Gross and Johnson, 2016).

With regard to the use of negativity as a strategy in modern campaigns and with a focus on the character component, Twitter can be seen to play an important role in the simple delivery of such messages. For instance, Bekafigo and Pingley (2017) identified that character-related tweets are those that directly address or reference qualities such as leadership or experience. Such tweets can be either positive or negative in nature, with those exemplifying strong negativity often able to be considered instances of character assassination. Tweets targeting character traits are particularly common, lending impetus to the current study in terms of focusing primarily on character-based rather than policy-based negativity. While the use of Twitter as a tool of political communication has continued to grow in general, Gross and Johnson (2016) point out that during times of heightened interest and newsworthiness such as election campaigns, Twitter's audience expands beyond merely Twitter users to the broader citizenry. The tweets posted by candidates and political organisations become a form of news themselves, and the increased regularity with which candidates and their media teams post to the platform permits us 'to witness the emergence of negativity in real time' (Gross and Johnson, 2016, 748). This sort of social media use by presidential hopefuls can be said to provide a rich and uncensored resource for scholars and political analysts seeking to understand the decision to go negative in political campaigns. However, it must be reiterated here that typically tweets do not come directly from the candidates themselves (Enli, 2017), but from highly professionalised media and public relations teams.

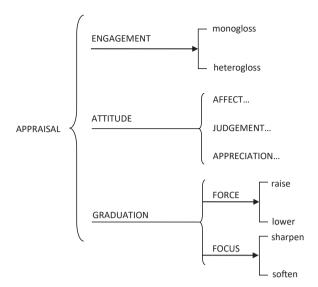


Fig. 1. An overview of APPRAISAL resources (Martin and White, 2005).

In contrast, the de-professionalised approach displayed by Donald Trump opens up a new avenue for investigation in the use of negativity in political communication on social media as the messages, news and updates he tweets are unfiltered.

Turning more specifically to Trump's use of negativity, and particularly in relation to character, Nai and Maier (2018) indicate that in 2016 his overall his campaign was assessed as fear-based, populist, and negative, with the majority of negativity coming in the form of explicit character attacks of Hillary Clinton via Twitter, but with numerous other instances of negativity directed towards other parties, including candidates from within his own party. This is perhaps not surprising given that Twitter users in general have been found to favour the use of a negative or aggressive tone, likely due to 'negative sentiment' being one of the key determinants of popularity on Twitter (Thelwall et al., 2011). In relation to this, Ott (2017) discusses the manner in which the format of Twitter itself requires users to be simple, and that this then breeds impulsivity and, in turn, incivility. The combination of these, Ott (2017, 62) argues, aids in nurturing a 'dark, degrading, and dehumanizing discourse' of which Donald Trump is an exemplar.

Previous research has found that a correlation exists between heavy Twitter use and the posting of negative emotionally-charged tweets as a means of ensuring attention (Stieglitz and Dang-Yuan, 2013). In fact, it has been shown in recent years that Dark Triad psychological constructs exhibit a link with Twitter usage (Sumner et al., 2012), where the Dark Triad is comprised of the personality traits of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (Paulhus and Williams, 2002). Ott (2017) suggests that Trump displays all three of these traits. Similarly, Gross and Johnson (2016) conducted a study of the Twitter use of all Republican candidates during the Republican Presidential Primaries, and found that negativity increased among all candidates during the campaign period, but that Trump emerged as a 'clear network negativity hub' (p. 750); that is, his use of negativity and negative affect was much more frequent and directed at a wider range of opponents that the other candidates. It was also found that 'the overall rise in negativity is accompanied by a dramatic increase in Trump's poll numbers' (Gross and Johnson, 2016, 750). Thus, as with traditional campaigning, there appears to be potential benefits to going negative on Twitter in modern political campaigns.

Character assassination is another aspect of the 'going negative' rhetorical tactic deployed by Trump. Clearly associated with negativity, character assassination warrants consideration in relation to the manner in which it is carried out and the motives that drive it. Character assassination has been defined as 'a deliberate and sustained effort to damage the reputation or credibility of an individual' (Samoilenko, 2016, 116). In relation to the aim of character assassination to damage an individual's reputation, Sobieraj and Berry (2011) explain that this attempt to cause reputational damage is typically conducted by slandering or misrepresenting the views, motives or behaviours of a particular individual, which can be done in various ways. Tied up in the notion of character assassination is the pattern of, in effect, laying blame on an individual for 'lacking key virtues' (Herfroy-Mischler and Friedman, 2018, 10), which can be seen as being more destructive to the political ambitions and plans of any given actor than a failure in action. In other words, a failure in character is potentially more damaging than a failure to carry out an action. Thus, it follows that a failure of character *and* a failure of action can be extremely difficult to overcome, which is what makes deliberately highlighting issues with and failures of character such a formidable political tactic within an overall approach of 'going negative'.

3. APPRAISAL and the language of evaluation: an overview

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (e.g., Halliday, 1978; Halliday, 1994) models language according to its use; that is, language is theorised, described and analysed according to the context in which it operates. SFL has been successfully applied to a range of language-in-use contexts, particularly oral and written media discourse (see Cotter, 2001). Following Halliday's metafunction hypothesis, and the aims of this paper, we will focus on the interpersonal metafunction of language – the linguistic resources speakers use to construct roles and relationships. APPRAISAL, from SFL, provides an ideal text analysis framework to systematically identify interpersonal meanings, and in this case, examine the negative rhetoric of President Trump's tweets.

Led by Martin (e.g. Martin, 2000, 2003; Martin and White, 2005; Martin and Rose, 2007), APPRAISAL comprises three main systems: Attitude, Graduation and Engagement. In short, Attitude is the semantic resources used to express emotions, judgements, and valuations, while Engagement and Graduation engage with, source and amplify those various evaluations and 'positions' within a text. An overview of the three basic APPRAISAL resources is presented in Fig. 1 below.

The system of Attitude is presented in Fig. 2 and comprises three major sub-systems which are chosen simultaneously: the polarity of the Attitude, the Attitude type, and the realisation of the Attitude.

Starting at the top of the system network, Attitude is analysed according to positive or negative valence, and it is the negative valence that is of particular interest to our study. In the example 'Donald Trump is happy', the adjective happy conveys a positive value; Trump is in a good or desirable emotional state. In contrast, in the clause 'Donald Trump is sad', the adjective sad carries a negative value; he is in a bad or undesirable emotional state. In terms of Attitude types, Martin and White (2005) summarise the three basic options as follows: Affect concerns the semantic resources used to construe emotional responses such as 'Trump is calm/angry'. Judgement concerns resources deployed for construing moral evaluations of behaviour and is realised as normality, capacity, tenacity, veracity or propriety. An example Judgement would be 'Trump is cool/weak', and Appreciation construes the aesthetic quality of semiotic text/processes and natural phenomena such as 'his speech was brilliant/horrible'. Finally, in addition to valence and type, Attitude is simultaneously classified as inscribed or invoked. The examples presented thus far are inscribed. Under the inscribed category, the evaluation is explicitly presented by means of a lexical item carrying the value, for example, a cool politician or a weak politician. In contrast, invoked Attitude is realised by the combination of various words, for example, a politician who does work for charity or a politician who has never voted. In these examples, there is no particular lexical item that carries a positive or negative value. However, the ideational meanings, such as does work for charity and has never voted nevertheless invoke potential Judgements of good and bad respectively.

Drawing on Bakhtin's (1981) dialogic perspective of language, the Engagement system is based on a fundamental distinction between utterances which do engage with dialogic alternatives: the politician **might** be happy (engaging with the possibility that he/she might not be happy), and those which do not: the politician **is** happy. This distinction is classified as heterogloss and monogloss respectively (see Martin and White, 2005, 98–104). In short, a monogloss proposition does not acknowledge an alternate proposition. The propositions are declared absolutely; they do not explicitly engage in the dialogic alternative. The system of heterogloss however does, to varying degrees, acknowledge alternate points of view. The complete system of heterogloss, with examples in *italics*, is presented in Fig. 3.

Martin and White (2005) divide heterogloss into two broad and opposed categories: dialogic contraction and dialogic expansion. In short, dialogic contraction acts to directly reject or challenge alternative propositions, real and/or imagined, and is further categorised as disclaim and proclaim. The resource of disclaim is the most contractive of all Engagement resources. As White explains, disclaim is the 'direct rejection or countering of a dialogically contrary position' (White, 2003, 271). For

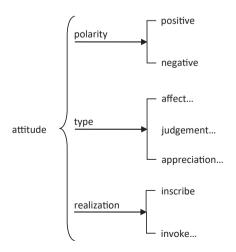


Fig. 2. A system of Attitude (after Martin and White, 2005).

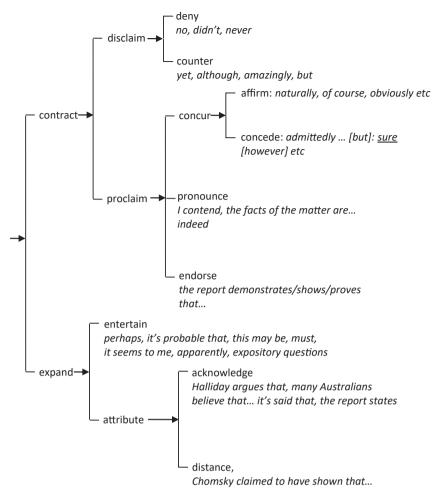


Fig. 3. The Engagement system (Martin and White, 2005).

example, the proposition, *the politician is* **not** *happy*, explicitly engages with, but ultimately rejects the alternative proposition – that the politician *is* happy. The resource of proclaim is also dialogically contractive. White explains that with proclamations, 'the textual voice puts on display a personal investment in the viewpoint being advanced' (White, 2003, 271). In this case, the proposition, *the politician* **must** *be happy*, does not directly negate or 'deny' the alternative. Instead, the high degree of personal investment in the proposition functions to 'close down' the dialogic space for the alternative.

Dialogic expansion 'entertains' or is 'open' to dialogic alternatives, real and/or imagined, and is categorised as either entertain or attribute. Through the resources of entertain, a proposition is presented as one possibility among other possibilities. For example, as noted above, the proposition, *the politician might be happy*, explicitly engages with the possibility that he might *not* be happy. The resource of attribute is further classified as acknowledge and distance. White (2003) argues that by attributing a viewpoint to an external voice, the author represents it as one of many potential positions since it is explicitly grounded in the individual subjecthood of one speaker. So for example, the proposition, *they say the politician is happy* is exclusive to 'they', and as such, invites dialogic alternatives from anyone besides 'they'.

Finally, the Graduation system concerns linguistic resources that essentially grade feelings, entities and Attitude broadly (see Martin and White, 2005, 135–152). From a dialogic perspective, Graduation resources function in a similar way to Engagement resources: 'with respect to graduations, we are interested in which meanings they are applied to and whether they act to indicate increased or decreased investment in the value position' (Martin and White, 2005, 155). In short, Graduation enables a speaker to either up-scale or down-scale the force of their feelings and propositions, for example, *the politician is really happy* (up-scale), as distinct from, *the politician is a little happier* (down-scale). From a dialogic perspective, up-scaling essentially increases the speakers' investment in the proposition, and thereby acts to 'close down' the dialogic space for the alternative. Down-scaling in contrast can decrease the speakers' investment, thereby distancing themselves from the proposition.

4. Methodology

4.1. Comparative keyword analysis and focus of the APPRAISAL analysis

Data collection focused on tweets from Donald Trump between 29 June 2016 and 21 August 2017; the latter part of his election campaign and the months following his victory and inauguration as President respectively. Data were collected with the assistance of Anthony and Hardaker's (2016) 'FireAnt', a Twitter data collection and analysis tool which enables the collection of a maximum of 3000 tweets from the tweet history of any particular user at one time. We utilised the software to collect the maximum 3000 *original* tweets (i.e. excluding retweets), which in turn established a research corpus of 55,512 words for the current study.

Traditionally, a keyword analysis is the most common type of corpus analysis, and for this we required a research corpus (i.e. the dataset of Trump's tweets) which needs to be compared to a much larger reference corpus that reflects language use in general (Branum and Charteris-Black, 2015) – an example of such a corpus might include the British National Corpus. However, for our study we adopted the more acute methodology of a *comparative* keyword analysis whereby the research corpus is compared to a more specific 'discourse reference corpus' in order to observe similarities in language use that occurs within similar contexts. The discourse reference corpus used in the study is known as the Political Discourse Reference Corpus (PTDC), which was developed by Ross and Rivers (2018b) for use in corpus-based studies of political Twitter use, and has previously been applied to other studies of Trump's use (see Bhatia & Ross, forthcoming; Ross and Rivers, 2018a). The PTDC is comprised of 205,303 original tweets made by current US politicians for a total of 4,659,381 words. Details of the corpora can be seen in Table 1.

We then utilised the corpus analysis software application AntConc (Anthony, 2016) to carry out the comparative keyword analysis. This generated a keyword list comprised of those words that occur with unusual frequency in the tweets when compared to the PTDC. Ross and Rivers (2018a, 4) point out that 'this does not necessarily equate to high frequency – the emphasis is on *unusual* frequency'. For instance, common function words such as definite or indefinite articles would typically be the most frequently occurring and would not demonstrate *unusual* frequency, and thus would not rank highly in the results. Therefore, we removed all function words from the results, and content words were analysed for their rhetorical function and use. In keyword lists, the results are typically presented in order of their 'keyness', a statistic determined by the use of a chi-square test conducted automatically by the software. According to Branum and Charteris-Black (2015), this indicates any statistically significant frequency differences (i.e. *unusualness*) between the corpora. The top 10 results from the comparative keyword analysis are presented in Table 2.

Beyond the quantitative procedure of the comparative keyword analysis, we also utilised the concordance tool, which presents a given keyword within the context it occurs. This is shown in a keyword in context (KWIC) display. Being able to observe the surrounding text of each word was critical to our analysis and meant we were not relying on frequency alone. An example of the KWIC display can be seen in Fig. 4 with the focus on the keyword 'crooked'.

Once we had determined the keyword list, we were able to use the results as the foundation of our qualitative analysis of the tweets. As shown in Table 2, the top three ranked words were 'Crooked', 'Hillary' and 'Clinton', and these three words were also typically used together in a cluster (i.e. 'Crooked Hillary' or 'Crooked Hillary Clinton'). The number 5 and 9 ranked words also typically appeared together as 'fake media'. The other words making up the top 10 were hashtags reflecting some of Trump's campaign slogans and not a part of a complete sentence or clause, rather added to reinforce the slogans.

From this point, we determined that the most frequent cluster of 'Crooked Hillary Clinton', which indicates a strong degree of negativity, was where we would focus our analysis. This was done on a selection of tweets incorporating this phrase to further investigate the use of negativity through application of the APPRAISAL framework. Further, the unusually frequent appearance of this phrase in Trump's tweets forms the basis of our rationale for focusing explicitly on those tweets. With 'Crooked Hillary Clinton' a core feature and catchphrase of Trump's campaign rhetoric, combined with the different subject matter with which he connected her in the tweets, we felt this cluster warranted significant attention in its own right. This is of course not to say that there would not be equally interesting analysis that could be done focusing on the negativity-laden 'fake media' accusations (see Ross and Rivers, 2018a for a discourse analysis around this cluster), nor that 'fake news' and 'fake media' have become any less synonymous with his rhetoric. Rather, it simply lay beyond the scope of the present study to explore it in detail; thus, we made the decision to focus only on those tweets using 'Crooked Hillary Clinton'.

Table 1Details of the research corpus and discourse reference corpus (PTDC).

Corpus	Content	Total Tweets	Total Words
Research	Trump tweets	3000	55,512
Discourse reference (PTDC)	Original tweets from US politicians	205,303	4,659,381

Table 2Results of the comparative keyword analysis.

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	153	1220.131	Crooked
2	307	1142.600	Hillary
3	224	901.115	Clinton
4	133	766.931	Maga
5	108	724.488	Fake
6	83	705.502	Americafirst
7	88	698.220	Draintheswamp
8	61	518.501	Imwithyou
9	142	486.628	Media
10	64	467.638	makeamericagreatagain

Note: Statistical significance is determined by chi-square and is termed 'keyness' in corpus studies.

4.2. Challenges in the application of the APPRAISAL framework

There are challenges involved in the annotation of discourse for APPRAISAL. Fuoli (2018) has recently drawn attention to many of these, in particular those related to identification and classification. First among these is that identifying instances of APPRAISAL is subjective and context-dependent. To deal with this, the two authors separately coded the selected tweets, and then compared. Where there were differences in the annotations, these were discussed within the context of APPRAISAL, the context of Trump's broader political discourse, and a final annotation was agreed upon. To consolidate the reliability of the annotations, we then had a colleague familiar with APPRAISAL code the tweets, which we compared to our own, and were therefore able to establish a third level of interrater reliability.

Another important issue outlined by Fuoli (2018) is that it is common to encounter instances of evaluative language where APPRAISAL categories are somewhat blurred, and multiple interpretations are possible. We acknowledge therefore that our reading of APPRAISAL categories is not absolute. However, through our checking of each other's annotations and understanding of the scope of the project and the domain of political communication in which it is situated, we are confident in the representativeness of our coding. The fact that we were working with small samples of text in each instance (i.e. 140-character maximum tweets) also helped in this process.

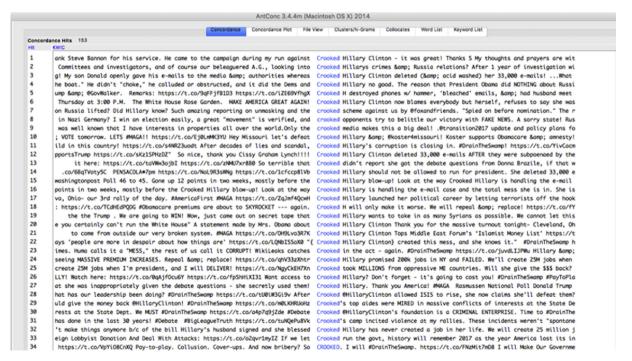


Fig. 4. Example of the AntConc KWIC display based on the keyword 'crooked'.

5. Analysis and discussion

Upon analysing the tweets including the term 'Crooked Hillary Clinton', we observed some distinct interpersonal motifs that Trump utilised to direct negativity towards Hillary Clinton. These motifs are her character, her political track record, and her family (namely her husband, former President Bill Clinton). In the sections that follow we systematically apply the APPRAISAL framework to a sample of representative tweets from those collected to observe exactly how Trump's negativity is constructed linguistically within his Twitter discourse. An integrated discussion of Attitude resources (Affect, Judgement, Appreciation) as well as Engagement and Graduation resources is conducted as they are identified in the tweets. Each tweet will be presented in its original form together with a coded version (see Appendix for APPRAISAL coding conventions used).

5.1. Hillary's character - so CROOKED!

The first motif analysed are the tweets that focused on Hillary's personal character, and thus aligns most closely with the personal component. These can therefore also be seen to most closely reflect the strategy of character assassination within an overall approach of 'going negative'.

Tweet 1

Original tweet	Crooked H destroyed phones w/hammer, 'bleached' emails, & had
	husband meet w/AG days before she was cleared- & they talk about
	obstruction
Tweet coded	Crooked H [-judgement ^ veracity: DT <hc] destroyed="" phones<="" td=""></hc]>
for	w/hammer, 'bleached' emails, & had husband meet w/AG days before
APPRAISAL	she was cleared & they talk about obstruction [tjudgement ^ veracity:
	DT<'they'/Democrats]

Tweet 1 sets the scene for the 'naming' of 'Crooked Hillary', itself a strategy often utilised as part of character assassination campaigns (Samoilenko, 2016). Trump's use of this nickname is an inscribed negative Judgement of Hillary, or more specifically, a Judgement of veracity (Martin and White, 2005), that is, Hillary is judged by Trump as untrustworthy and/or dishonest. Although 'Crooked Hillary' appears in each tweet presented in the study and is loaded with this inscribed Judgement, from this point we actually consider 'Crooked Hillary' to represent her new 'proper' name and that the tweets then engage in the provision of further ideational content about Hillary or her supporters to invoke further Judgements. For instance, the statement drawing attention to Democrats 'talking about' obstruction is an invoked veracity Judgement of Hillary and her supporters. Trump adopts monoglossic Engagement resources as a way to completely remove any dialogic space for alternative views through his accusations that Hillary 'destroyed' phones, 'bleached' emails, and 'had husband meet'. While Graduation resources were not as evident in this tweet, infused Graduation such as 'destroyed' as opposed to alternatives such as 'broke' increase the force of Trump's accusations (see Ross and Rivers, 2018a for more work on Trump's use of accusations within his Twitter discourse).

Tweet 2

Original tweet	Why didn't Hillary Clinton announce that she was inappropriately given
	the debate questions – she secretly used them! Crooked Hillary
Tweet coded	Why didn't Hillary Clinton announce that she was inappropriately [-
for	judgement ^ propriety: DT <donna brazile]="" debate="" given="" questions="" td="" the="" –<=""></donna>
APPRAISAL	she secretly [tjudgement ^ veracity: DT <hc] crooked<="" td="" them!="" used=""></hc]>
	Hillary

The second tweet presented also demonstrates Trump's inclination to incorporate and invoke negative Judgements of Hillary and others associated with her, first by referencing the incident whereby Democratic National Committee (DNC) chair Donna Brazile revealed aspects of debate questions to Clinton in advance (Quigley, 2017). Through the use of the adverb 'inappropriately', a negative Judgement is inscribed with regard to this unethical behaviour, or for Martin and White (2005), a Judgement of propriety. Similarly, the adverb 'secretly' is also deployed to invoke further negative Judgement of Hillary by alluding to a 'sneaky' type of behaviour in utilising the questions. This tweet also showcases the texturing Trump employs in his tweets. For instance, with his use of the rhetorical question (inclusive of the invoked Judgement of inappropriateness), Trump opens up the dialogic space – he entertains the possibility for alternative positions. However, by providing an answer

to the question, he shuts down this space as soon as it is opened, and concludes with a final explicit Judgement of 'Crooked Hillary'. The heteroglossic function of 'entertain' is significant here as even though the rhetorical question typically opens up the space for other viewpoints and voices, here there is the implication that Hillary has been engaged in undesirable behaviour. This makes it difficult to consider the alternative position that an expanded heterogloss typically invites.

Tweet 3

Original tweet	Pay-to-play. Collusion. Cover-ups. And now bribery? So CROOKED. I	
	will #draintheswamp	
Tweet coded	Pay-to-play. [tjudgement ^ veracity: DT <hc] [t<="" collusion.="" td=""></hc]>	
for	judgement ^ veracity: DT <hc] [tjudgement="" ^="" cover-ups.="" td="" veracity:<=""></hc]>	
APPRAISAL	DT <hc] [tjudgement="" ^="" and="" bribery?="" dt<hc]="" now="" so<="" td="" veracity:=""></hc]>	
	CROOKED . [-judgement ^ veracity: DT <hc]. #draintheswamp<="" i="" td="" will=""></hc].>	
	[t-+judgement ^ veracity: DT <dt]< td=""></dt]<>	

The texture of Tweet 3 illustrates the way in which evaluative language can work through a series of invoked Judgements to culminate in an inscribed Judgement. With reference to various aspects of Clinton's political behaviour, Trump produces invoked judgements about her honesty (these might also be considered invoked Judgements of propriety on the basis of unethical behaviour). These Judgements refer to various controversies surrounding Clinton and her campaign such as questionable 'pay-to-play' politics from the Clinton Foundation, Russian collusion and alleged attempts to cover up her email scandal. The overall effect in this tweet produces prosodic intensification, which Martin and White (2005, 20) describe as a type of realisation that 'involves amplification; the volume is turned up so that the prosody makes a bigger splash which reverberates through the surrounding discourse,' and often involves various types of repetition. The authors provide an example in a clause which reads 'It's a dirty rotten stinking lousy bloody low filthy two-faced lie' (Martin and White, 2005, 24). With regard to this tweet, the negativity builds through invoked Judgements to the final inscribed Judgement of veracity – 'Crooked Hillary'. It is sequenced as invoked Judgement invoked Judg

Beyond the attitudinal resources, Tweet 3 also employs heteroglossic Engagement (as proclaim: concur) through the rhetorical question 'And now bribery?' as a means of presenting a sense of staged surprise, where the answer to the leading rhetorical question is considered obvious, or known, and thus the relationship of concurrence is established with the audience (Martin and White, 2005). It is also conceivable that Affect is evident here in the form of insecurity: surprise. Finally, Graduation resources are employed in the inscribed Judgement through the use, firstly, of the submodifying adverb 'so' to add extra emphasis to the negative Judgement of veracity, combined with the 'ALL CAPS' capitalisation of 'CROOKED'. This type of stylistic practice serves to amplify the negative sentiment inherent in his tweets at the same as heightening their emotional impact. This links with his populist approach to politics in that this emotional impact then tends to be reflected in the intense emotion of his followers in a form of 'emotional contagion' (Auflick, 2016).

Tweet 4

Original tweet	The invention of email has proven to be a very bad thing for Crooked in
	that it has proven her to be both incompetent and a liar!
Tweet coded	The invention of email has proven to be a very bad [-appreciation ^
for	DT <invention +appreciation="" ^="" dt<="" e-mail="" email]<="" invention="" of="" t-="" td=""></invention>
APPRAISAL	thing for Crooked [-judgement ^ veracity: DT <hc] has="" in="" it="" proven<="" td="" that=""></hc]>
	her to be both incompetent [-judgement ^ capacity: DT <hc] a="" and="" liar!<="" td=""></hc]>
	[-judgement ^ veracity: DT <hc]< td=""></hc]<>

Judgement of Clinton's character as being untrustworthy continues in Tweet 4 with the retention of her nickname as well as Trump's labelling her as a liar. She is also judged on the basis of her ability to carry out her duties as a politician with explicit reference to her lack of competence. This sort of negative valence is a deliberately designed to portray Hillary as an undesirable leader. These Judgements are also punctuated with an exclamation mark, which acts to increase the force of the negativity in the tweet via Graduation resources. Trump also expresses negative evaluation here in the form of Appreciation. According to the APPRAISAL framework, in describing the invention of email as 'bad' (with the adverb 'very' acting as graduating force), Trump is evaluating it in a negative manner. However, the fact that this evaluation is subjected to post-modification by the prepositional phrase 'for Hillary', transforms an inscribed negative Appreciation into an invoked positive Appreciation, as whatever is 'bad' for Clinton is in effect 'good' for Trump. Engagement resources are also deployed in the form

of closed heterogloss of 'has proven' and 'has proven her', which leave no opportunity for alternative scenarios to be considered as what has proven is typically to be taken as truth. Completely closing down this space for rebuttal or differences of opinion allow the negative tone of the tweet to emerge unimpeded.

5.2. Hillary's political track record – what a DISASTER!

The second motif that emerged from the tweets collected relates to Clinton's political track record and ability to carry out the job as President. Although we look at these tweets from the perspective of her track record, this is itself intertwined with Trump's perception of her character, so while the negativity does not always directly reference her character, there is an implied causal relationship between poor character and poor political track record.

Tweet 5

Original tweet	Crooked Hillary launched her political career by letting terrorists off the
	hook. #Draintheswamp
Tweet coded	Crooked Hillary launched her political career by letting terrorists off the
for	hook. [tjudgement ^ capacity: DT <hc] #draintheswamp="" [t-<="" td=""></hc]>
APPRAISAL	+judgement ^ veracity: DT <dt]< td=""></dt]<>

In Tweet 5, Trump invokes two Judgements to add to the repeated inscribed Judgement of Hillary's crookedness. Firstly, the post-modifying prepositional phrase 'by letting terrorists off the hook' does not directly reference Hillary's character or track record through any singular lexical item, but rather invokes a Judgement with regard to her capacity to carry out the job of a politician and, more significantly, as President. The background to this invocation references then President Bill Clinton's 1999 acts of executive clemency for the sentences of convicted members of Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN), a Puerto Rican paramilitary organisation guilty of terrorist activity within the US. This occurred at the time Hillary Clinton was engaged in her first campaign for the Senate.

This initial invoked Judgement is utilised as a means of depicting Hillary as unsavoury and incapable, as a lead-up to the next Judgement of '#draintheswamp', where Trump invokes a *positive* Judgement of himself in order to amplify the invocation against Hillary. This hashtag references the swamp which was originally a literal reference to the bog-like state of the site of Washington D.C. (Widmer, 2017), but now is Trump's reference to the corrupt elite of Washington D.C., and through it he portrays himself as the hero who will rid Washington of this. In effect, this establishes him as the honest one and his opposition as those who need to be removed, thus through positivity towards himself he is also strengthening his negativity towards Clinton. Finally, with regard to Engagement, Trump delivers a monogloss claim that this was how Hillary 'launched' her career, which in its perceived certainty, leaves no space available for alternative positions or viewpoints.

Tweet 6

Original tweet	Crooked Hillary, who embarrassed herself and the country with her e-	
	mail lies, has been a DISASTER on foreign policy. Look what's	
	happening!	
Tweet coded	Crooked Hillary, who embarrassed herself and the country with her e-	
for	mail lies [tjudgement ^ veracity: DT <hc], <b="" a="" been="" has="">DISASTER [-</hc],>	
APPRAISAL	judgement ^ capacity: DT <hc foreign="" on="" policy.<="" policy]="" td=""></hc>	
	Look what's happening! [tappreciation ^ reaction: DT <hc's foreign<="" td=""></hc's>	
	policy]	

When referring to Clinton's foreign policy in Tweet 6, Trump first reminds his audience of her dishonesty through an invoked Judgement referencing her 'email lies' as well as through his use of monoglossic Engagement in asserting that Clinton 'embarrassed herself.' This serves as the foundation and build-up for the negative Judgement of Clinton's performance in relation to foreign policy, which is described as a disaster on the basis of capacity, written in all capitals in order to amplify the negativity. This in turn draws on APPRAISAL resources from the Graduation system, specifically in relation to Graduation of force. The use of all capitals and exclamation marks is a regular feature of Trump's expressions of negativity on Twitter, and Ott (2017, 64) points out that 'these stylistic practices reinforce the negative sentiment of his tweets and heighten their emotional impact, which is, in turn, reflected in the intense emotion of his followers.' The tweet concludes with additional invoked negative Appreciation, communicated through the proclamation 'Look what's happening!', where the inference is that US foreign policy is flawed, and this negativity is a direct result of the political actions of Hillary Clinton.

Tweet 7

Original tweet	Crooked took MILLIONS from oppressive ME countries. Will she give	
	the \$\$\$ back? Probably not. Don't forget her slogan – "TAKE THE	
	MONEY!"	
Tweet coded	Crooked took MILLIONS from oppressive [-judgement ^ propriety:	
for	DT <me \$\$\$="" back?="" counties]="" countries.="" give="" me="" probably<="" she="" td="" the="" will=""></me>	
APPRAISAL	not. Don't forget her slogan – "TAKE THE MONEY!"	

Tweet 7 presents an interesting use of Judgement as well as Engagement. Firstly, the main Judgement being made is by Trump of 'oppressive' Middle Eastern countries on the basis of propriety or unethical and inhumane behaviour. However, it can be said that this Judgement is being made in order to amplify the force of his claim that Clinton accepted money from these countries. In other words, this inscribed Judgement of Middle Eastern countries can be said to make Clinton look *worse* through this Graduation of force. Secondly, and with regard to Engagement, through the use of the rhetorical question, Martin and White (2005) would say that Trump has opened up the discourse to alternative possibilities; however, by responding himself immediately with the denial of 'probably not' Trump immediately shuts down this space and, again, it serves to intensify his critique of her. An alternative reading here is that the leading question highlights the relationship of concurrence (i.e. proclaim: concur) with the answer being so obvious that no answer is required, so Trump provides it himself. Finally, the last sentence of the tweets displays Trump's invoked Judgement of Clinton's veracity through his 'quoting' of her slogan 'TAKE THE MONEY' (capitalised for Graduation).

What must be observed here, however, is the subtle manner in which Trump has incorporated the strategy of 'going negative' into this sentence. The negativity in the sentence is certainly directed towards Clinton, but it does not come directly from Trump – he simply positions himself as reminding the reader that this slogan represents her perceived dishonesty and corruptibility. Importantly, there is a stark irony inherent in the fact that this slogan is fictitious and has been concocted by Trump himself to depict his opinion towards Clinton. Thus, the irony resides in that Trump quoted this slogan to highlight Clinton's perceived dishonesty, but in doing so sets himself up to be the target of such negative evaluations on the basis of veracity.

Tweet 8

Original tweet	It doesn't matter that Crooked Hillary has experience, look at all of the	
	bad decisions she has made. Bernie said she has bad judgement.	
Tweet coded	It doesn't matter that Crooked Hillary has experience, look at all of the	
for	bad [-appreciation ^ DC <hc's decisions="" decisions]="" has="" made.<="" she="" td=""></hc's>	
APPRAISAL	Bernie said she has bad [-appreciation ^ BS <hc's judgement]<="" td=""></hc's>	
	judgement.	

In the final tweet presented as part of the study focusing on Clinton's track record, Trump indicates an inscribed negative Appreciation of her track record, shown through his description of her 'bad decisions'. To strengthen his overall negative message in the tweet, Trump opts to utilise heteroglossic Engagement to expand the possibility for another viewpoint to support his own. In this instance, Trump appropriates the words of Bernie Sanders (Alcindor, 2016) into his delivery of negative appraisal of Hillary. This is an effective tactic as, like Clinton, Sanders is a Democrat, so for him to portray her as having bad judgement adds weight to Trump's own argument. Here, through the use of Engagement by attribution, Trump has found a way to use Democrats against each other to support his own position.

5.3. Hillary's family - 'just like her husband ...'

The final motif we explore in our analysis focuses on references to Hillary Clinton's family, and primarily to her husband, former President Bill Clinton. Trump appears to draw such references into his tweets as a way of accentuating his negativity towards Hillary by simultaneously reflecting on his negative perceptions of Bill's presidency and behaviour since being president. We encountered less tweets that align with this category than the previous two, but feel that it deserves attention as it highlights the different resources Trump utilises to maintain his overall campaign of negativity.

Tweet 9

Original tweet	A country that Crooked Hillary says has funded ISIS also gave Wild Bill
	\$1 million for his birthday? SO CORRUPT!
Tweet coded	A country that Crooked Hillary says has funded ISIS also gave Wild Bill
for	[-judgement ^ normality: DT <bc] \$1="" birthday?="" for="" his="" million="" so<="" td=""></bc]>
APPRAISAL	CORRUPT! [-judgement ^ veracity: DT <hc bc="" democrats]<="" td=""></hc>

In a similar manner to Tweet 8, Trump adopts heteroglossic: expansive Engagement by quoting Hillary in order to pose a moral contradiction between Hillary and her husband. Here Trump is referring to a donation received from Qatar by the Clinton Foundation in honour of Bill's birthday in 2011 (Allen, 2016). Through attributing the claim of Qatar's support of ISIS to Hillary, alongside Bill accepting such a donation, represents a crisis of values and, therefore, suggests an unsuitability to govern. This contradiction is also established through the Engagement resource of a rhetorical question, which on this occasion is not answered by Trump, but is left for the reader to ponder the dilemma he has posed. The final sentence of the tweet does show Trump's inscribed Judgement of both Bill and Hillary, and indeed Democrats in general on the basis of veracity. The use of Graduation resources in the form of capitalisation and exclamation mark confirm his negative assault on the Clintons.

Tweet 10

Original tweet	I employ many people in the State of Virginia – JOBS, JOBS, JOBS!
	Crooked Hillary will sell us out, just like her husband did with NAFTA.
Tweet coded	I employ many people in the State of Virginia – JOBS, JOBS, JOBS! [t-
for	+ judgement ^ capacity: DT <dt]. [t<="" crooked="" hillary="" out="" sell="" td="" us="" will=""></dt].>
APPRAISAL	judgement ^ veracity: DT <hc], did="" her="" husband="" just="" like="" td="" with<=""></hc],>
	NAFTA.[tjudgement ^ veracity: DT <bc]< td=""></bc]<>

The final tweet presented in our exploration of the way that Trump has employed various APPRAISAL resources in his tweets about 'Crooked Hillary Clinton' begins not with negativity, but with a positive invoked Judgement of himself in relation to his capacity to create and provide jobs to Americans –an important election issue. Once again, through his use of ALL CAPS he adds emphasis to this Judgement. Although this positive Judgement of self is marked in Trump tweets, he is able to use positive self-Judgement as a way to build up to, or to represent the counter position, to the negativity he wishes to direct towards Clinton. In this case, he continues in the tweet to proclaim with certainty that Clinton will *not* do this and instead will 'sell us out'. The modality of 'will' represents a pronouncement; a sub-category of contracted heteroglossic Engagement. Martin and White (2005, 129) state that such statements are 'dialogistic in that they acknowledge the presence of this counter view', with this counter view being Trump's ability to support the people through job creation, and also that they are 'contractive in that they challenge, confront or resist this particular dialogistic alternative.'

Trump's final act in this tweet is to reference Bill Clinton as a way of emphasising the degree to which the reader could be assured of the likelihood of being 'sold out' by Hillary. Firstly, through the use of the verb 'did', Trump is using monoglossic Engagement, and writing as though this is precisely what Bill did when signing the NAFTA agreement. Thus, the way he has framed this is as *fact*, and with no other dialogistic possibilities. Again, Trump's strategy in mentioning Bill Clinton is to focus on a negative aspect of Bill's presidency to add further power and weight to his claim about Hillary. That is, if Bill has sold us out before, why should anyone expect that Hillary would not.

6. Conclusion

This article has analysed a sample of the tweets of Donald Trump from before and after his election to the role of President of the United States of America in order to examine how he linguistically expresses the political strategy of 'going negative'. Informed by a comparative keyword analysis of a corpus of 3000 tweets, we have focused on tweets including the moniker 'Crooked Hillary Clinton', which ranked most highly in the results of the analysis. Our analysis was guided by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and in particular Martin and White's (2005) APPRAISAL framework that focuses on the language of evaluation. Although there have been several studies to date focusing on Trump's tweets as a contemporary phenomenon of political communication (Enli, 2017; Ross and Rivers, 2018a), none have closely analysed his interpersonal language to examine his de-professionalised rhetoric and strategies of 'going negative' and character assassination (Samoilenko, 2016).

Our analysis has revealed that Trump makes use of a variety of APPRAISAL resources as part of his de-professionalised approach to political communication on Twitter (Enli, 2017). Our study has drawn out some specific APPRAISAL features that help enable the strategy of 'going negative'. First are the frequent negative Judgements of Hillary Clinton, as well as anyone (e.g. Democrats) and anything (e.g. her activities) connected to her. This is most salient in Trump's use of the explicit negative judgement of veracity – 'crooked' – coupled with Hillary's name: 'Crooked Hillary' (see also 'Wild Bill').

Another noteworthy interpersonal feature in Trump's tweets is his texturing of evaluation. Trump tends to position a negative Judgement of Hillary's veracity or propriety in a Theme position. And then shifts to other Judgements, such as in relation to her capacity (e.g. she is incompetent – Tweet 4), or Appreciation, such as in relation to the value of her activities (e.g. she has been a 'DISASTER' – Tweet 6). The result is a prosody of impropriety that saturates any subsequent evaluations, and the tweet more generally.

Trump's 'going negative' voice is also realised through rhetorical questions. Typically, this choice is made to open up the possibility for alternative dialogic positions or to establish a relationship of concurrence, where his use of leading questions is intended to point towards what he sees as an obvious answer, with no alternative. However, Trump utilises it to immediately close down the dialogic space he has just opened. In other words, he uses rhetorical questions to deliver an aspect of negativity – most commonly in the form of a Judgement– before answering the question himself or responding to it through another Judgement as a way of affirming the negativity he initiated (e.g. Will she give the \$\$\$ back? Probably not – Tweet 7).

Finally, the tweets in our dataset highlight Trump's use of Graduation resources that have become a feature of his tweets more generally. One common feature we have noted is his use of ALL CAPS, which he adopts as a means of amplifying the evaluation he is making, or of adding emphasis to the negativity of a preceding statement (e.g. Clinton has been a DISASTER on foreign policy – Tweet 6). Further, he utilises submodifying adverbs to intensify his comments (e.g. So CROOKED! – Tweet 3), which achieve even greater force when combined with the ALL CAPS strategy.

The manner in which Trump delivers his political rhetoric is reflective of an authorial position that has been outlined by McKinley (2018) with respect to APPRAISAL resources. Within this position, Attitude is shown to be expressed primarily through Judgement based on subjective interpretation; Engagement relying on personal endorsements or criticism of the arguments or positions of others; and Graduation emerging from one's own emphasis. These characteristics accurately mirror Trump's own rhetoric and highlight his subjectivity. It might be argued that this subjectivity is precisely what has provided Trump with so much political success, which is supported by Enli's (2017) position that Trump's de-professionalised authenticity is what has differentiated him from politicians before him.

Overall, the language of Trump's tweets systematically draws on a selection of resources from the APPRAISAL framework, with the ultimate rhetorical effect of not only 'going negative' but more specifically, of attacking and de-legitimizing the character of his political opponent. In the space of 140 characters permitted in a Tweet, Trump successfully vilifies his opponent; judging her ethics and morality, her capacity to lead, her associates, and her previous accomplishments. He increases the force of these evaluations through typography and grammar, and employs rhetorical questions to close down the dialogic 'space' that his opponent could in fact be a capable adversary. In addition to being an important contribution to the ongoing development and theorization of APPRAISAL, particularly the description of a de-professionalised, negative, assassination voice, we see this paper as an ongoing example of Halliday's (1984) appliable, socially accountable linguistics. Going beyond a critical stance of Trump's tweets, of which much has been written, we hope this paper gives those working in the fields of politics, media and the like with the kind of insights that might help transcend the didactic, unproductive, deprofessional discourse that is common in this new media political context.

Declarations of interest

None.

Appendix. APPRAISAL Coding

bold t	Attitude coding positive Attitude (Affect/Judgement/Appreciation) negative Attitude (Affect/Judgement/Appreciation) inscribed Attitude (Affect/Judgement/Appreciation) invoked Attitude (Affect/Judgement/Appreciation) Engagement
underline	Graduation

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