Crooked Hillary and Dumb Trump

The strategic use and effect of negative evaluations in US election campaign tweets

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While there is extensive research on the language of twitter, our knowledge of the pragmatics of particular twitter genres (and sub-genres) is still piecemeal. At the same time, in the past decades, political discourse analysis has widened our understanding of how language can be used instrumentally to alter or manipulate public interaction, meanings and opinions. However, it has seldom examined the evaluative load of political communication in much detail. To this end, the paper, on the one hand, serves to illuminate the pragmatics of political tweets as a twitter genre. On the other hand, the study brings to the fore the strategic use of negative evaluations in political online campaigning and discusses its potential (and actual) socio-political ramifications. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of negative evaluations largely draws on Martin and White's Appraisal framework (2005) and is based on a compatible study by Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados (2014). I track down, classify and categorize the negative evaluations of a subset of twitter posts by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in a self-compiled corpus of 1965 tweets, with a view to evaluation types, their relative frequencies and dispersion across the corpus, as well as objects and targets of evaluation. The quantitative analysis is then completed by a qualitative examination of the objects and targets of evaluation in both twitter profiles as well as a closer look at the recurrent language used to evaluate the political "other". The results show that Trump makes more flexible (and strategic) use of negative evaluations (both in terms of types, frequency and distribution), while Clinton's negative evaluations are less frequent, less diverse and, thus possibly, less convincing.

Keywords: evaluation, Twitter, political discourse analysis, Appraisal Theory, corpus pragmatics
1. Introduction

This study focusses on the frequency, types and functions of recurring negative evaluations on the Twitter accounts of the US politicians Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump during the run-up for the presidential elections in the United States of America in 2016. It takes into view a highly understudied area of both internet pragmatics (Twitter genre research) and political discourse analysis (online party campaigning). More precisely, the investigation revolves around three main research questions which all seek to unravel the strategies, ideologies and functions of political tweets in US-American online campaigning: (a) which are the most frequently used types of negative evaluations on Trump's and Clinton's Twitter profiles during the final phase of the election campaign, (b) how are these types distributed over time (are they consistent or do they change?) and (c) which targets and objects of evaluation are used by the two candidates and do they form patterns of evaluation that provide insights into the underlying political ideologies and online campaign strategies of the Republican and the Democratic party.

There already is an abundance of pragmatic research on evaluation both in spoken face-to-face interaction (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Eggins and Slade 1997) as well as written interaction (Hunston 1993; Hunston and Thompson 2000; Bednarek 2006; Thompson and Alba-Juez 2014). However, while discourse analysis has seen many critical studies deal with the rhetorical strategies politicians employ to manipulate their audience (Dunmire 2012; Fetzer and Bull 2012; Capp and Okulski 2013; Kreis 2017; Montgomery 2017), appraisal theories (Hunston 2000; Martin and White 2005; Bednarek 2006) have seldom been applied to detect politicians’ beliefs, values and stances (see Zappavigna 2017). Based on few notable exceptions, e.g. Miller (2004), Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados (2014), this study makes use of Martin and White’s attitudinal framework (2005), to take a first glimpse at the mechanics of evaluation in US-American online campaigning. It likewise sheds light on an influential and increasingly popular Twitter genre, namely political tweets, of which we still know very little.

2. Using Twitter in election campaigns

The recent rise of social media, in general, and Twitter, in particular, can be explained by the fact that today they constitute the most flexible opportunity for politicians broadcast to a mass audience (Perlmutter 2008; Towner and Dulio, 2012; Ott 2017). Tweets, in particular, seem to exert a sense of communicative immediacy and authenticity which arguably appeals to a spectrum of the populace
which distrusts (or disregards) the regular news coverage of classic mass media outlets. Above all, Twitter has proven to be a particularly effective image management tool for politicians. A recent study by the PEW research center (Greenwood et al. 2016) revealed that, US American consumers largely believe that the internet has surpassed newspapers and radio news as a regular campaign news source. While in pre-millennial election campaigns the latter still had a considerable stake in setting the social and political agenda (including the public stance and perspective), social media have evidently weakened such gatekeeping effects (Conway, Kenski and Wang 2015:364). Nowadays, political parties can use Twitter to strategically bypass the “corrective”, mediating force of mass media, reclaiming control over the effects of larger campaign strategies online. Designing the content and evaluative force of politicians’ social media accounts, political campaigners broadcast daily (even hourly) to millions of users, reframing debates with the click of button. Such Twitter news is thus commonly imbued with specific beliefs and values, social and political ideologies, and serves a persuasive function.

The use of Twitter for political campaigning is closely related to what Puschmann (2009:40) called “genre mimicry”, i.e. the deliberate exploitation of users’ genre expectations to maximize the (manipulative) impact of corporate practices. To be sure, Twitter constitutes a microblogging practice which is reminiscent of classic personal online diaries which set off the new era of social media communication in the late 1990’s (Walker Rettberg 2008:26). These online diaries were dominantly used to record, document and reflect private experiences in an authentic and unfiltered fashion, and it is this basic expectation of private, personal content, coupled with authenticity and sincerity, which politicians wilfully exploit to serve their campaign purposes.

In contrast to other forms of social media such as social network sites or blogs, Twitter has proven to be particularly amenable to political campaign objectives. Other social media may also be powerful tools of communication but their social force is almost exclusively tied to their participatory text design. In other words, the more they make use of their inherent interactional features to harness the communicative surplus of social collectives, the more effective they become. Despite being equipped with the technological potential to enable two-way communication (via retweets or Twitter conversations), politicians hardly make use of this interactional facet on Twitter. This is because Twitter is easily transformed from an interactive communicative hub into an online platform which primarily serves self-presentation. Such Twitter profiles then only pretend to be participatory (aimed at empowering common internet users). In reality, they most often are not, and most campaign Twitter accounts hardly ever engage in what one could call interactive Twitter conversations. As Conway, Kenski and Wang explain, “some candidates exploit its interactive features, but many choose to use
Twitter as a broadcast medium rather than a venue for discussion with voters” (2015:365).

This monologic use of Twitter makes it amenable to the adversarial nature of political discourse which needs candidates to keep criticizing their opponent during the pre-election phase. Political tweets can thus be either self-directed (involving some form of praise) or other-directed (criticising or blaming the opposing party and its candidate). In this heavily constrained interactional setting, in which explicit and implicit accusations are constantly issued, exchanged and negotiated by party candidates, politicians eke out their personal online image, display and reinforce their aims, views and policies, and voice their reservations and objections. It is in the virtual space of Twitter that “negative other-representation” (Kreis 2017:8) takes centre stage, i.e. the strategic moves to blame and criticise the opposing political candidate (and by proxy also the opposing political party).

To uncover these evaluations, their patterns, goals and functions, this study will draw on the attitudinal subset of Martin and White’s appraisal theory to categorize Donald Trump’s and Hillary Clinton’s inscribed and invoked negative evaluations in all tweets between 01 June and 01 December 2016. Contrasting my findings to the main results of a recent study by Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Diez-Pra-dos (2014) helps me in assessing the typical evaluation patterns in political Twitter discourse. It also clarifies how Twitter differs from more classical forms of political engagement, such television debates and interviews. The objective is to reveal the evaluations (e.g. attitude, judgement, affect) which appear in either explicit (inscribed) or implicit (invoked) form on both Twitter profiles. I then seek to identify the targets and objects of evaluation and track the use and distribution of these evaluations in the last five months before Election day. On this empirical basis, I can then show which evaluative patterns Donald Trump has been using, which human agents he has been targeting and which objects of evaluations could be identified. As we will see, bundles of negative evaluations correlate with the individual campaign strategies of the two politicians. To this effect, Donald Trump’s and Hillary Clinton’s recurrent use of particular types of judgment evaluations has played a key role in promoting their respective online (and offline) image as the campaign unfolds.

3. Scoping evaluation

The idea that speakers do not only use language in its referential and propositional sense but also to serve a spectrum of interpersonal purposes is not new. Indeed, many linguists have argued that language can be used “to construct and maintain relations between the speaker or writer and hearer or reader” (Hunston 2000:6,
see also Bühler 1934; Jakobson 1960; Fowler 1996; Halliday 1985). Notwithstanding this general research interest in the way speakers view and assess people, objects, events and affairs, Martin and White's appraisal theory (2005) has arguably been one of the most influential frameworks in the past thirty years, set out to clearly delineate verbal evaluations in a systematic fashion.\footnote{Next to Martin and White's concept of “appraisal”, a number of competing terms have emerged over the years, each one equipped with its own, yet related framework of analysis. Such terms include \textit{inter alia} the notion of “stance” (Biber et al. 1999) or “evaluation” (Thompson and Hunston 2000).}

In this framework, Martin and White (2005: 41f.) distinguish three basic levels (or as they call it: systems) of speaker evaluation, i.e. “attitude”, “graduation” and “engagement”. The category of graduation maps the different degrees in which speakers express their positive or negative evaluations, boosting or mitigating their respective force and effect. In turn, the category of “engagement” addresses what might be called the mode of evaluative presentation. “Monoglossic” evaluations present people, objects and events in a principled, yet often one-sided and forthright fashion, without indications or references to other sources, beliefs or alternative viewpoints. In contrast, “heteroglossic” evaluations try to provide more balanced, modified and hedged versions of the “reality” they wish to (re-)present, often calling on various sources, perspectives and argumentative contingencies. While the use and degree of both of these categories are promising, they are precluded from the analysis of this paper for the benefit of a more conclusive analysis of the third category of evaluations, which appears to be most central to appraisal strategies in political discourse, i.e. attitude. The attitude category identifies the ways in which

a. speakers voice their emotions (“affect”),
b. speakers put forward their moral or ethical judgments (“judgment”) or
c. speakers express their aesthetical judgments of objects, processes or states of affairs (“appreciation”).

While example (1) shows a verbal expression of affect, Example (2) illustrates the class of judgment, and (3) can count as a case of appreciation.

(1) Great parade in The Villages – I love you all. We will #MAGA. Thank you for the incredible support – I will not forget.
   (Attitude-Affect-Happiness, Trump Tweet, 16 September 2016)

(2) Our not very bright vice president, Joe Biden, just stated that I wanted to “carpet bomb” the enemy.
   (Attitude-Judgment-Capacity, Trump Tweet, 26 July 2016)
The election is absolutely being rigged by the dishonest and distorted media pushing Crooked Hillary – but also at many polling places – SAD [state/event] (Attitude-Appreciation-Impact; Trump Tweet, 16 October 2016)

Note that (3) is a rather tricky case, often detected in the corpus. It requires the analyst to disambiguate the reference of the evaluator “sad” as pointing to the entire proposition of the sentence. It qualifies the emotional impact of an abstract concept (election, state of the election/event) on the speaker (here: “[It is] sad [that x]”. This turns the expression of “sad” into an instance of appreciation evaluation (reaction/quality) since its target referent no longer represents a human agent (as in (1) and (2)) but a state or event.

It is, however, arguable that one could equally take “sad” to implicitly refer to the “deplorable” quality of journalists who represent what is referred to as “mass media”. In fact, it is the journalists, not the state of journalism, who are explicitly denigrated as ‘dishonest’ and ‘distorted’ by the Tweet. The group of human agents (here: the journalists) therefore become an implicit secondary target of evaluation (Wagner 2017, personal communication, 07/03/2017), with the expression “media” used metonymically to symbolize this group of people. In line with this view, one could likewise qualify the evaluative expression “sad” as an instance of judgment evaluation (veracity (dishonest) or propriety (distorted)). This classification dilemma between judgment and appreciation is not unknown to evaluation research. For instance, Hood (2010) underlines that

[n]onetheless, we feel the appreciation-judgment tension. The expressions […] here evaluate the concept of physical difference but would be more commonly associate with an evaluation of people. It is a kind of latent, pending judgment.

(Hood 2010:83)

In my own analysis, I came across quite a number of examples of this kind and decided to classify them as instances of the judgment category as opposed to the appreciation variety, and this choice may well have had an impact on the quantitative distribution of appreciation tokens in the data set. Still, since appreciation evaluations were not considerably frequent overall in the corpus, especially compared to the other two attitudinal sub-categories of evaluation, the resulting quantitative deviations in the findings should be largely insubstantial.

Each of the three categories of affect, judgment and appreciation features a number of subcategories which all capture the ways in which their evaluative force takes shape. For reasons of clarity, Table 1 provides an outline of all of these categories and their concurrent meanings. It can be seen that “affect” consists of four subcategories which tap into four different types of speaker emotions, namely “(un-)happiness”, “(dis-)satisfaction”, “(in-)security” and (dis-)inclination”.

(3) The election is absolutely being rigged by the dishonest and distorted media pushing Crooked Hillary – but also at many polling places – SAD [state/event] (Attitude-Appreciation-Impact; Trump Tweet, 16 October 2016)
Table 1. Subcategories of attitudinal evaluation (based on Martin and White (2005) and Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados (2014))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affect</th>
<th>Un-/Happiness</th>
<th>down, sad, miserable, laugh,</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Misery/Cheer</td>
<td>rejoice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antipathy/Affection</td>
<td>dislike, hate, fond, loving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dis-/Satisfaction</td>
<td>Ennui/Interest</td>
<td>flat, tuned-out, involved,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dis-/Pleasure</td>
<td>absorbed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-/Security</td>
<td>Dis-/Quiet</td>
<td>uneasy, scared, confident,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dis-/Trust</td>
<td>assured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dis-/Inclination</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>astonished, suspicious, commit,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>entrust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgement</td>
<td>Normality</td>
<td>how special or unusual?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>how competent or able?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>psychological disposition or determination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenacity</td>
<td>ethical or moral standing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propriety</td>
<td>how truthful, how honest?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veracity</td>
<td>how truthful, how honest?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>Reaction</td>
<td>how does it strike me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>do I like it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>does it hang together?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>was it hard or easy to follow?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>is it useful or worthy?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arguably the most important category, “judgment”, includes five subcategories, i.e. “normality”, “capacity”, “tenacity”, “propriety” and “veracity”. Finally, appreciation features three subcategories called “reaction”, “composition” and “social valuation”. The class of “reaction” is very similar to “affect”-related subcategories in that this category equally expresses a type of emotion. However, as we have seen before, reaction-based emotions target objects, events or processes rather than human beings (e.g. a boring house (appreciation) vs. this house bores me (affect)). They thus describe a state or the looks of an object rather than the properties of a human being. Appreciation thus gives expression to the speakers’ aesthetic views rather than their emotions and feelings. The category of composition amounts to expressing the structure and organization of an object, process or event, while the category of “social valuation” reveals the usefulness or social value of the very same object, process or event.
Before applying the aforementioned framework to access the negative evaluations in political tweets, it should be noted that evaluations can be expressed in different ways. Some tweets may not hold any of the evaluation types, others may comprise many different ones. In fact, just one sentence within a single tweet may host a range of different evaluations tied to a single word form, a string of lexical expressions or even more complex contributions. In contrast, longer stretches of discourse (a phrase, a sentence or more) may likewise constitute just one evaluative type in contrast to many. Moreover, evaluations are sometimes expressed explicitly and lexical items or phrases refer to a given speaker evaluation or emotion in a clear and straightforward fashion (inscribed evaluations, see Example (4)). At other times, implicit hints or allusions to speaker evaluations surface as “invoked evaluations” (Example (5)). To detect invoked evaluations, often contextual clarification (either by co-textual determination or contextual disambiguation) is necessary.

(4) Hillary Clinton should not be given national security briefings in that she is a lose [sic!] cannon with extraordinarily bad judgement & instincts.

(Invoked evaluation, Trump Tweet, 29 July 2016)

(5) If the Republican Convention had blown up with e-mails, resignation of boss and the beat down of a big player. (Bernie), media would go wild.

(Invoked negative evaluation, Trump Tweet, 24 July 2016)

While Martin and White's appraisal framework (2005) probably counts as one of the most widely used analytical tool kits for the identification of verbal evaluation, there is, of course a dearth of compatible approaches to the study of human emotion and evaluation in pragmatics. To provide the necessary theoretical background for this investigation, it is thus useful to next provide an overview of previous research on evaluation both in political discourse as well as on social media. I shall then present the results and interpretation of the current analysis.

4. Previous research on evaluation in social media

In the last two decades, a considerable number of linguists have devised and adapted evaluation frameworks to study the appraisal of internet users in and across different types of social media. Most notably perhaps, Zappavigna (2014, 2015) has probed the nature of affiliation in discourse, drawing on Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005). Other research has centred on solidarity building (Drasovean and Tagg 2015), narrative evaluations (Page 2012), sentiment analysis (Vásquez 2014) and social tagging (see also Zappavigna 2017: 439). More recent work on evaluation in social media has adopted computational strategies...
to quantify and determine the appraisal of internet users. Such approaches usually circle around what has become known as “sentiment analysis” (Wiebe et al. 2005, Chin, Zappone and Zhao 2015). These studies often “favour […] a ‘bag of words’ approach that, by focussing on lexis alone, factors out a range of interpersonal meanings at clause level and above” (Zappavigna 2017: 437). However, they switch time-consuming contextual disambiguation for extensive numerical quantification, relying on larger, more extensive, text corpora to even out potential analytical slips in their analysis. Whereas this type of approach may be fruitful for many linguistic purposes, it is often unsuitable for pragmatic investigations, such as this one, which tend to focus on smaller text corpora and which necessitate more elaborate contextual assessments of the data at hand. With sentiment analysis and Appraisal frameworks competing for the analysis of evaluation online, there is obviously a clear lack of evaluation research covering

a. different types (or platforms) of social media, e.g. social network sites, Twitter, blogs,
b. different social media genres, e.g. political blogs vs. political Tweets and
c. substantive comparisons between “real” life and online use of evaluations in compatible text genres.

One of these lines of research may draw on the extensive literature on language use in political communication to seek out the differences which hold between evaluations in political interviews, speeches, debates and spot the dissimilarities which exist between internet-based forms of adversarial forms of political discourse (see Lauerbach 2006; Miller and Johnson 2013). Such important work notwithstanding, linguistic investigations on evaluation in news discourse by far outnumber research on politicians’ appraisal in political discourse (cf. Bednarek 2006, Bednarek & corle 2012 & 2017, Haarman and Lombardo 2009). Most political research aimed at evaluation scrutinizes the use of modality and evidentiality in political discourse (see Simon-Vandenbergen 1996, 1997; Reyes 2011; Reber 2014; Fetzer 2013, 2014). Only few have turned their attention to evaluation theories and probed the decisive ways in which politicians appraise their political opponents.

This apparent gap in evaluation research is filled in this study which his loosely based on a recent seminal study by Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados (2014). The latter tracked down the positive self-evaluations and negative other-evaluations of the two politicians Mariano Rajoy and Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba in a pre-election debate televised on Spanish television in 2011. Using Martin and White’s attitudinal framework as a backbone for their own investigation, the two authors manage to show that negative other-evaluations are used much more frequently than positive self-evaluations in the debate setting. More importantly, a
considerable amount of these negative other-evaluations turned out to be judgment appraisals, and both opposing politicians turned out to use different types, patterns and quantities thereof.

While the politician Mr. Rajoy, representing the challenging party (not in power at the time), predominantly fell back on capacity and propriety accusations, his counterpart, Mr. Rubalcaba (defending the governing party) primarily resorted to propriety and fewer capacity judgments. More importantly, the challenging politician Mariano Rajoy drew on more attitudinal evaluations than Rubalcaba, framing Rajoy as the more adversarial of both politicians in the debate. Concurrently, the authors interpret the amount of attitudinal evaluations as an indicator for Rubalcaba’s loss of the debate in the eyes of the general public which was projected by various opinion polls or widely purported by the Spanish media (Cabrejas-Penuelas and Díez-Prados 2014: 171).

It is argued that “Rajoy makes a more balanced use of the different Judgement types than Rubalcaba, who clearly prefers Propriety over the rest of the Judgement types” (Cabrejas-Penuelas and Díez-Prados 2014: 171), and we shall see if the findings of the present study confirm this trend. To this extent, the current paper follows the methodological path taken by Cabrejas-Penuelas and Díez-Prados (2014). There are three important differences between the two studies, however, which we need to consider. First, this study only focuses on negative other-evaluations, assuming that these types of evaluations take centre stage in adversarial types of political discourse, of which political campaigns constitute only one important type. Second, the evaluation types are not related to particular topical segments of a television debate but with respect to their respective target of evaluation (who is appraised?) and objects of evaluation (what feature, aspect of a person, object, event is appraised?). Third, this investigation tries to retrace the use of negative evaluations across time, uncovering time-specific changes in the use of evaluations by both Trump and Clinton between 1 July 2016 to 8 November 2016.

5. Corpus and method of analysis

This study is based on a self-compiled Trump-Clinton Twitter corpus (TCTC). It consists of 36244 words (tokens) in 1965 Tweets (748 for Trump, 1217 for Clinton), published between June 1st 2016 and November 8th 2016. This period was chosen deliberately and represents the most crucial and adversarial phase in the run-up to the 2016 US-Presidental elections. The starting date (1 June 2016) captures the aftermath of the presidential primaries, which found their climax with the nominations of both political candidates on 3 May 2016 (Trump) and 6 June 2016 (Clinton). With the end of the Democratic primaries, the final lap of the race to the
oval office had started and the corpus attempts to map exactly this final period of the campaign which ended on Election Day, 8 November 2016.

The twitter corpus therefore contains six months of verbal Twitter data from both politicians, which was automatically extracted from the internet with the help of the software “Facepager”. It is designed to systematically fetch public data from social media platforms. Once the Twitter message and its time stamp were retrieved from Twitter, it had to be transcoded into csv.files and prepared for the analytical purposes at hand. To this effect, the excel files were separated into “date”, “author” and “message” columns. The “message” column for each month (and each politician) was subsequently copied into separate txt-files and accessed with the freeware corpus tool “UAM Corpus Tool” (O’Donnell 2012). It enables analysts to search, annotate and conduct basic statistical analyses of the annotated text data, using a pre-installed annotation layer of Martin and White’s attitudinal framework.

Using the attitudinal mark-up, each tweet was manually annotated for each month, using Martin and White’s classification network of attitudinal appraisal. It required me to detect and mark up the evaluative load of single expressions, strings of words, phrases or sets of sentences. While I restricted my annotation exclusively to negative attitudinal evaluations, they not only proved to be considerably more frequent than positive evaluations in the corpus, but were equally more diverse and more relevant for my research questions than their positive counterparts. I also identified inscribed and invoked types of negative evaluations. Both corpus sets (Clinton’s Tweets and Trump’s Tweets) then underwent a rigid contrastive analysis, using the inherent UAM corpus tool statistics measures.

One of the upshots of using this corpus tool is that it allows users to run statistical tests to determine the significance of numerical deviations between the evaluations in the two data sets. As evaluations in the corpus frequently stretched beyond single words, calculating their proportional frequency per 1000 words (normalization procedure) was not feasible. Instead, following Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados (2014:168), “the different types of evaluative devices [found in the data were] weighed against the total amount of evaluation in the text”. The method of analysis adopted in this study is thus very similar to Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados’ study on evaluations in Spanish pre-election debates, and this choice was not by chance but by design. It enables me to contrast the scholars’ previous findings with the results obtained by the present investigation.

This approach is firmly lodged in the field of corpus pragmatics. It uses an established corpus-based investigation, using a manual annotation scheme to

2. For more information on the software, please consult: http://tillkeyling.com/facepager-what-it-is-what-its-not.html
search for evaluation patterns, which are then subjected to more qualitative, context-sensitive sample examinations. They are the empirical backbone for the ensuing pragmatic interpretation. Having described the corpus compilation, size and content, I will now first present the results of my quantitative analysis of negative other-evaluation before examining the specific subtypes of evaluations, closing in on their relative distribution, their evaluated target and features of evaluation.

6. **Negative evaluations in US-American election campaign tweets**

The analysis furnished a total number of 1383 negative evaluations in the corpus data, with Donald Trump using 748, Hillary Clinton only 635 negative evaluations. Trump’s Twitter account features significantly more negative attitudinal evaluations than Hillary Clinton’s Twitter account for the respective time span ($\chi^2 = 511.03$, $df = 1$, $p < = 0.001$). This general finding is particularly striking since Clinton tweets generally contain more words than Trump’s (23580 tokens for Clinton vs 12664 tokens for Trump) and Clinton also publishes more tweets than Trump (1217 Tweets by Clinton vs 747 Tweets by Trump).

(6) America is **stronger** because of President Obama’s **leadership**, and I am better because of his **friendship**.” – Hillary

(7) “No matter how daunting the odds, she never – ever – quits. That is the Hillary I know.” – @POTUS

(8) Our Commander-in-Chief shouldn’t insult and deride our generals, retired or otherwise. That really should go without saying

A closer look at the data reveals that the tweets, issued on Hillary Clinton’s Twitter account between July and August 2016, often comprise a fair number of positive self-evaluations (Example (6) and (7)) next to negative other-evaluations (Example (8)). One possible reason for this initial scarcity of adversarial confrontation

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3. The statistical significance was calculated on the basis of the total number of Tweets for both politicians not in regard to the total amount of word forms (tokens), since evaluations often comprise multi-word entities, phrases or even clauses.
could be Clinton’s long struggle to win the Democratic primaries, which had her consistently focused on attacking her partisan candidate Bernie Sanders for much of the first half of 2016, and not Donald Trump. Another explanation could be her underestimating Donald Trump as a serious challenger in July and August 2016 when Trump’s chances of becoming President of the United States of America were still comparatively slim.

Table 2. Attitudinal categories in the Clinton Subcorpus

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude-type</td>
<td>N=151</td>
<td>N=108</td>
<td>N=205</td>
<td>N=163</td>
<td>N=8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>2 1.32%</td>
<td>0 0.00%</td>
<td>1 0.45%</td>
<td>2 1.23%</td>
<td>0 0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>146 96.69%</td>
<td>107 99.07%</td>
<td>199 97.07%</td>
<td>161 98.77%</td>
<td>8 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>2 1.32%</td>
<td>0 0.00%</td>
<td>1 0.49%</td>
<td>0 0.00%</td>
<td>0 0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Attitudinal categories in the Trump Subcorpus

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude-type</td>
<td>N=170</td>
<td>N=161</td>
<td>N=98</td>
<td>N=283</td>
<td>N=36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>6 3.53%</td>
<td>4 3.53%</td>
<td>0 0.00%</td>
<td>2 0.71%</td>
<td>6 3.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>142 83.53%</td>
<td>145 90.06%</td>
<td>92 93.88%</td>
<td>268 94.70%</td>
<td>142 83.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>15 8.82%</td>
<td>5 3.11%</td>
<td>4 4.08%</td>
<td>12 4.24%</td>
<td>15 8.82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beyond these first results, we can see that judgment evaluations by far outnumber the other two attitudinal subcategories, “affect” and “appreciation” (see Table 2 and Table 3). These findings are conducive to Cabrejas-Peñaules and Díez-Prados (2014:168), who likewise found their televised political debate to comprise mostly negative judgment evaluations. In their study, which likewise accounts for positive evaluations, they also reported a considerable number of positive normality evaluations, by which the politicians emphasized the change they were going to bring about. Although this investigation did not quantify positive evaluations, such evaluations were also spotted repeatedly in the analysis (Examples (9), (10)).

(9) I will bring jobs back and get wages up. People haven’t had a real wage increase in almost twenty years. Clinton killed jobs!
I'm promising you a new legacy for America. We're going to create a new American future.” – @realDonaldTrump


When Trump voices positive self-evaluations, he commonly commits himself to social change and, repeatedly, to economic improvement (e.g. “bring back jobs”). In contrast, Clinton, in her positive self-evaluations, centrally focusses on her political achievements. To mitigate the socially-inappropriate self-praise, Clinton quotes fellow politicians or celebrities approving Clinton’s past leadership ability and her excellent political expertise (Example (11), (12). Periodically, Clinton’s tweets strategically couple positive self-praise with negative other-evaluation as in Example (13).

(11) “She doesn’t always talk about what drives her. But I’ve had a chance to see her.” – @POTUS

(Attitude-Judgment-Tenacity, Inscr. Pos. Evaluation, quoting strategy)

(12) “She’s a changemaker. That’s what she does.” – @BillClinton on Hillary helping 8 million kids get health coverage.


(13) While Hillary was monitoring the raid on Osama bin Laden [pos], Trump was hosting “the Apprentice” (which didn’t win an Emmy) [neg.]

(Attitude-Judgment-Capacity, Invok. Pos. Evaluation + Attitude-Judgment-Capacity-Invok. negative evaluation)

From the very beginning of the final phase of campaigning, Trump’s tweets are consistently geared towards attacking Hillary Clinton, whereas Clinton’s negative evaluations are more frequent in the last two (September: 199 neg. evaluations, October: 161 neg. evaluations) than in the first two months of the final phase of campaigning (July: 146 neg. evaluations, August: 107 neg. evaluations). Trump’s negative evaluation seem to be more stable in terms of general numbers, with a remarkable drop in numbers only in the month of September 2016. This numerical oddity can perhaps best be explained by the reduced number of Tweets Trump published in this month. He also used more positive evaluations in September than he did in any of the preceding months of the final election phase; quite possibly, Trump did so to prepare his followers for the televised presidential debate, which took place September 26 2016. The positive evaluations were then supposed to set up and develop his political agenda to be discussed in the television debate.

With a view to the explicitness of negative evaluations, we can see that most appraisals detected in the corpus were actually inscribed (explicit), whereas much fewer evaluations could be identified as invoked (implicit) (see Table 4). This find-
ing can be explained by recourse to the adversarial discourse genre of which political tweets form a constitutive part. Here, politicians are expected to use Twitter as a platform to showcase their personal and party identity by contrasting their own political views to those of the political opponent (for an outline of such political strategies, see also Labov 1997: 409; Schubert 2010: 151)

Table 4. Inscribed vs invoked evaluations in the Trump-Clinton corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trump</th>
<th>Clinton</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>635,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inscribed</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>530,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>invoked</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>105,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 also informs us that Trump used invoked evaluations more frequently than Clinton (roughly twice as often) while inscribed evaluations were displayed slightly more often on Clinton’s account than on Trump’s. The difference may be due to the differing verbal strategies used by each politician to voice negative evaluations. On the one hand, Clinton typically addresses Trump’s moral flaws (propriety) explicitly in her tweets, sometimes adding a personal token of accusation or condemnation (Example (14)). On the other hand, Trump frequently uses indirect allusions, rhetorical or ironic statements (“Silence at CNN”, “so sad”, “nytimes is a joke”) to express his negative attitude. In these allusive constructions, the reference is often more comprehensive than the one induced by a lexical expression (e.g. “nytimes” does not refer the newspaper but the people who are allegedly manufacturing false facts, etc). Let us now return to our second research question which sought to capture the use of negative evaluation across time from 1 July 2016 to Election Day.

6.1 On the campaign trail: Tracking negative evaluations across time

If we compare the use of judgment evaluations in both Hillary Clinton’s and Donald Trump’s Twitter profile from 1 July 2016 until 8 November 2016, we can detect some significant quantitative and qualitative differences (See Figure 1 and 2). Trump makes use of three evaluations types, i.e. capacity, propriety and veracity throughout his campaign. The most prominent types are propriety and capacity, followed by veracity. Interestingly, propriety starts and ends up as the most dominant evaluation type in July and October, whereas capacity-related negative evaluations take centre stage in most of the remaining months, spiking in mid-September. The sudden increase of capacity-related evaluations can again be explained by the presidential debates which took place in September and
forced both politicians to define and clarify their political agenda. Agenda setting is typically effectuated by attacking the policies of the opponent, questioning their leadership abilities, competence or previous political moves (capacity-related evaluations).

The start as well as the end of the campaign, in contrast, is accentuated by Trump's consistent accusations of Clinton's moral deficiency, denigrating her as a greedy and corrupt representative of a so-called “political establishment” (“@draining the swamp”). For instance, the famous hashtag “@Crooked Hillary” is used differently in the last five months of the election campaign. In July 2016, we find 26 instances, 16 in August, only six in September but a top count of 30 in October. In fact, if we discard all of these hashtags, Trump would end up almost exclusively using propriety and capacity evaluations on Twitter for this period. The rise of veracity evaluations all through September and October can thus be partly explained by the heightened use of the hashtag “@Crooked Hillary”. This finding, in turn, coincides with Trump's increasing attacks on Hillary Clinton's in September and, particularly in October 2016, following new FBI investigations into her using a private email server for classified communication.

![Figure 1. Trump's negative judgment evaluations over time (01 July – 10 November 2016)](image)

In general, however, Trump uses three different evaluative categories for most of the pre-election phase. This is very different from Hillary Clinton’s use of negative evaluations. As we can glean from Figure 2, she predominantly (and almost

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4. It is obviously an important methodological choice to keep or discard hashtags as recurrent evaluative devices in Tweets. I chose to include evaluative hash tags deliberately in the analysis because they play an important and often influential role in manipulating Twitter followers and reinforce value systems and ideologies.

5. The values indicated on the left of the figure indicate the percentage of evaluation types with respect to total number of judgment evaluations found in the corpus.
exclusively) applies propriety evaluations, which are consistently aimed at Trump’s doubtful morals as expressed through his ethically questionable statements and demeanour e.g. racism, sexism, bigotry, discrimination, etc. While Clinton uses a considerable number of capacity-related negative evaluations at the beginning of her final campaign period (July, August), they become less prominent in the later months (September, October). Again, the focus on propriety-based negative evaluation may have been fuelled by a number of correlative campaign events, which saw Trump engage in overtly discriminatory, sexist and racist behaviour.

![Figure 2. Clinton's neg. judgment evaluations over time (01 July 2016 – 10 November 2016)](image_url)

Clinton repeatedly addresses these incidents on her Twitter profile in a critical manner, not least to reinforce her own image as a tolerant, liberal and responsible political leader. The fact that Clinton hardly ever draws on veracity evaluations to attack Trump seems puzzling, given Trump’s reputation to be rather economical with the truth.

We can summarize that Clinton predominantly uses propriety evaluations, with other judgment evaluations appearing in fewer numbers, while Trump features a more nuanced and balanced profile of negative judgment evaluations, including propriety, capacity and veracity evaluations. Once again, this seems, to a certain extent, reproduce the findings by Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados (2014:168), who also reported that the challenging politician in their dataset used a more diverse and balanced set of negative judgment evaluations while the politician representing the governing party, resorted to a more exclusive use of propriety evaluations. The similar findings can be interpreted as an emergent evaluative pattern which is possibly inherent to negative judgment evaluations in adversarial political discourse settings, where two politicians engage in more or less direct verbal confrontations.
In the next section, we shall explore in a more nuanced fashion which target individuals were evaluated negatively by both politicians and which feature or object of evaluation was most frequently coupled with particular targets as well as with particular types of judgment evaluations.

6.2 Targets of negative evaluation

Most negative evaluations in Donald Trump’s campaign target his political opponent, Hillary Clinton (almost half of all negative evaluations in the Trump sub-corpus do). As we can see in Figure 3, the second, most frequent target refers to a group of human actors, Trump himself often labels “the [liberal] media”. Whereas Trump intermittently denigrate the practices of individual media outlets, such as CNN and The New York Times, he most often prefers to address the media in general, drawing on the more general, and somewhat diffuse concept of “the Media”.

More specifically, we can see that more than ¼ of all negative evaluations target the alleged misdemeanours of liberal newspapers, television shows and their moderators. A minor part of negative evaluations can be retracted to hashtags such as “@Draining the Swamp” which seems to blame social decay on a small group of people regarded as the greedy, corrupt political establishment. As opposed to Hillary Clinton, Trump evaluates numerous individuals (politicians, moderators, TV show hosts, fellow party members, etc), resulting in a highly varied range of targets of evaluation (more than 30 different target types). Table 5 shows this highly versatile use of targets. Almost one third of all negative evaluations are attributed to various different individuals rather than larger groups. This shows us that Trump also attacks different individuals rather apart from larger collectives.
In contrast, we can see in Figure 4 that Hillary Clinton almost exclusively targets Donald Trump, with very few attacks directed at Trump’s running mate, Mike Pence or the larger collective of Republican Party politicians in third place. In some ways, Donald Trump is not only more flexible in his use of negative evaluation strategies (propriety, veracity, capacity) but he likewise focusses on different targets of evaluation rather than concentrate one individual opponent, which seems to be the main strategy Hillary Clinton follows in her tweets. It should now be illuminating to look at the particular objects (facets or features) of evaluation in both Twitter profiles. We shall start with Hillary Clinton’s stance on Donald Trump and then continue to Donald Trump’s evaluation of Hillary Clinton, the Media as well as his fellow Republican Party members.

![Figure 4. Targets of negative evaluation in Hillary Clinton’s Campaign Tweets](image)

### 6.3 Objects of negative evaluation

Taking a closer look at the different objects of negative evaluation reveals a clear tendency in Donald Trump’s attacks to focus on the dishonesty/deception of his targets of evaluation (see Kreis 2017:8; also cf. Table 5). Both main target groups (Hillary Clinton and her democratic associates and party members as well as the US American liberal print and television media) are repeatedly accused of this particular feature of evaluation (Example (14), (15), (16) and (17) or corruption (Example (18), (19), (20), (21)).

(14) Just watched recap of #CrookedHillary’s speech. Very short and lies. She is the only one fear-mongering!  
(Trump Tweet, 25 August 2016)

(15) The seriously failing @nytimes, despite so much winning and poll numbers that will soon put me in first place, only writes dishonest hits!  
(Trump Tweet, 10 September 2016)
(16) Hillary said she was under sniper fire (while surrounded by USSS.) Turned out to be a total lie. She is not fit to lead our country. (Trump Tweet, 26 October 2016)

(17) @HillaryClinton loves to lie. America has had enough of the CLINTON’S! It is time to #DrainTheSwamp! Debates. (Trump Tweet, 19 October 2016)

The negative evaluations uncover a latent ideology which is persistent in Trump’s Twitter discourse. It repeatedly ties the liberal media (and their alleged “manipulative power”) to Hillary Clinton’s election campaign. Both media and Clinton are not characterized as independent actors or institutions (politics and media) but as one interwoven network of corrupt individuals which continuously sustain and feed into each other’s greed, corruption and power. The negative evaluations of Hillary Clinton (dishonesty, corruption) thus tacitly provide an interpretative backdrop for the ensuing negative evaluations of liberal media (dishonesty, corruptions), based on

a. the pattern and similarity of their evaluation types and
b. their habitual co-occurrence in the data set.

Negative evaluations (their types, targets and objects of evaluation) thus function as a suitable discursive signpost to the ideological undercurrent of political Tweets, exposing the belief systems of their authors, parties or politicians.

(18) Wow, it is unbelievable how distorted, one-sided and biased the media is against us. The failing @nytimes is a joke. @CNN is laughable! (Trump Tweet, 31 July 2016)

(19) @CNN is so disgusting in their bias, but they are having a hard time promoting Crooked Hillary in light of the new e-mail scandals. (Trump Tweet, 03 September 2016)

(20) The Democrats have a corrupt political machine pushing crooked Hillary Clinton. We have Paul Ryan, always fighting the Republican nominee! (Trump Tweet, 16 October 2016)

(21) Hillary is the most corrupt person to ever run for the presidency of the United States. #DrainTheSwamp (Trump Tweet, 18 October 2016)

The remaining negative evaluations feature “secondary targets” (Clinton affiliates, members of the Democratic Party, moderators of liberal TV stations, etc) and the objects of evaluation remain largely consistent (dishonesty, bias, corruption, incompetence). Repeatedly, Trump strategically “protects” Bernie Sanders from Hillary Clinton’s allegedly “unfair and disloyal” treatment of her party opponent in the Democratic primaries. Still, it quickly unravels that Trump discards Sanders
as physically and psychologically unfit to win any kind of election, also criticising an apparent lack of leadership and determination. Trump likewise does not miss out on reproaching fellow Republican party members of disloyalty, e.g. Chris Christie or John McCain, dismissing them as wavering and incompetent colleagues. As we shall see, Hillary Clinton’s tweets do not only cover a more restrictive group of targets, they are also different in terms of their objects of evaluation.

**Table 5.** Top 25 targets and objects of negative evaluations (Donald Trump’s Tweets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tag of evaluation</th>
<th>Neg. evaluations</th>
<th>Objects/features of evaluation (Top 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>Dishonesty – Incompetence – Corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Media</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Bias – Dishonesty – Corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Incompetence – Bias – Ignorance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Incompetence – Corruption – Confusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barack Obama</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Incompetence (Obamacare)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Political Establishment</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Diffuse (“@Draining the Swamp”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Incompetence – Dishonesty – Indecency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim Kaine (HC’s running mate)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Indecency – Dishonesty – Corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernie Sanders</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Indecision – Physical Inaptitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Disloyalty/Unreliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Clinton</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Incompetence – Sexism – Indecency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Corruption – Dishonesty – Ignorance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The People of the USA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Misery – Insecurity – Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Ryan (Republican)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Corruption – Disloyalty – Indecision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted Cruz (Republican)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ignorance – Incompetence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary and Bill Clinton</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Incompetence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton and Tim Kaine</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Incompetence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Incompetence – Dishonesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton supporters</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Disloyalty/Unreliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna Brazile (Political Analyst)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dishonesty – Criminality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John McCain (Republican)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dishonesty – Disloyalty/Unreliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Morell (former deputy director of CIA)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Incompetence – Favouritism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mika Brzezinski (TV moderator)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ignorance – Psych. Inaptitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton’s contractor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Criminality – Corruption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hillary Clinton, as we have seen, concentrates her negative evaluation more or less exclusively on Donald Trump, who she characterizes intermittently as politically, socially incompetent and ignorant and whose policies she repeatedly describes as a danger or threat to national security (See Figure 5). At various times, Clinton responds to Trump’s spontaneous (or planned) racial or discrimi-
natory outbursts by distancing herself from his behaviour, thereby sharpening her image as a political spokesperson and protector of minority rights (LGBT, women rights, etc). This strategy can be detected in Table 6 in the evaluation objects of “racism”, “sexism” and “discrimination”. Clinton further appraises Trump’s psychological aptitude, stressing his inability to assume the responsibilities that comes with being the President of the United States.

However, whereas Trump’s evaluation strategy was designed to shape Clinton as a deceitful and corrupt member of a (fictitious) financial elite, Clinton tries to present Trump mostly as an incompetent outsider, who is ethically unfit and unprepared to become President of the United States. She may attempt to frame Trump as dishonest, greedy and racist but her attacks focus almost entirely on Trump alone. In turn, Trump managed to discursively interlace his criticism of left liberal US media with his pejorative characterization of Clinton, fostering a conspiracy theory of a rich elite which is systematically weighing down on the rights of the working class. As we know today, this strategy turned out to be more convincing and appealing to many US Americans. The collective blame of a biased liberal media pushing a corrupt Democratic candidate was felt to be more truthful than Hillary Clinton’s persistent negative characterization of an “unintelligent, incapable” Republican. In some ways, Clinton’s strategy of disqualifying Trump on the basis of his political inaptitude feeds into Trump’s bizarre concept of political suppression which recognizes Clinton’s move as another sign of the “regular citizen” being treated irreverently by a fuzzy “political establishment”, headed by Clinton as their candidate.

As we have seen a deeper look at the quantitative and qualitative use of negative judgment evaluations brought to light a different use of evaluation types,
patterns, quantities, distributions, evaluative targets and objects in Hillary Clinton’s and Donald Trump’s Twitter campaign. Before I conclude the most relevant results of this study, I shall now explore some of the more frequent formal strategies found in both Hillary Clinton’s and Donald Trump’s tweets. It is purported that at least some of these verbal strategies may be typical for Twitter evaluations in US-American political discourse.

Table 6. Objects of evaluation (target: D. Trump) in Hillary Clinton’s negative evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objects of negative evaluation</th>
<th>Number of negative evaluations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incompetence</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psych./Phys. Inaptitude</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Threat</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishonesty</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecency</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignorance</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greed</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexism</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deception</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminality</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favouritism</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narcicism</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigotry</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Leadership</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynicism</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecision</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irresponsibility</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disloyalty</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifference</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrationality</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recklessness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfairness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreliability</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Twitter-specific democratic and republican evaluation strategies

Among the many different negative evaluations identified in the Trump-Clinton Twitter Corpus, there are some which share the same formal make-up and could
either be spotted consistently in one of the two main data sets (Trump or Clinton sub-corpus) or were used by both politicians. One consistent method applied by both politicians to attack the opponent is to embed a verbal or audio-visual quote in their tweets, typically accompanied by an additional negative comment or evaluation of some sort (Examples (22) and (23)). This strategy is found in Trump’s and Clinton’s Tweets, and used pervasively throughout the corpus data. As we have seen, such quote tweets identify and frame the context for a given negative other-evaluation (as well as its corresponding, more implicit self-praise of the author). This compressed quotation format lends itself particularly well to Twitter-based discourse, with its inherent 140 character limit per tweet. By adding quotes, politicians can effectively bypass the character restriction, linking and presenting contextually relevant pieces of information for the reader.

(22) Quoting as an evaluative framing device

(Trump Tweet, 31 October 2016)
As Examples (22) and (23) show, negative evaluations on Twitter do not only make use of verbal quotes but most often incorporate a range of different audio-visual modes of expression, such as video clips, pictures, drawings or photographs. The evaluative force of these semiotic resources should not be underestimated although, for reasons of time and space, this study cannot account for them here in any comprehensive manner. To this end, in many tweets, the verbal message is reinforced by the quoted video or vice-versa. Sometimes the evaluative force of the verbal message only becomes tangible after having watched the quoted video or the video’s evaluation is specified by a relevant verbal anchorage (Examples (24) and (25)).
A third frequent verbal strategy to display negative evaluations on Twitter is what I have chosen to call “blame or boost lists”, enumerations of a target politician’s accomplishments (positive evaluation) or flaws and mistakes. Again, this strategy often comes as a readymade visual graphic which condenses and exemplifies the positive or negative evaluation conveyed in the tweet to maximize cognitive uptake and reduce cognitive overload (Example (26), (27)).
Finally, Trump uses a peculiarly idiosyncratic type of negative evaluation in many of his tweets, which I chose to call “shell evaluation”. First, a quoted statement is displayed. Then, the given message (statement, view or event) is framed by a negative marker or intensifier coupled with a single noun or adjective phrase (NEG/INT. + NP/ADJ). It encapsulates the previous message like a shell, indicating the
degree and type of evaluation attached to the message at hand (Example (28),
(29)). This tool is used effectively and consistently by Donald Trump. The feature
appears to be one of his most recognizable verbal style markers to the present day.

(28) In Crooked Hillary’s teleprompter speech yesterday, she made up things that I
said or believe but have no basis in fact. Not honest!

(Shell Evaluation, Trump Tweet 2 June 2016)

(29) Terrible jobs report just reported. Only 38,000 jobs added. Bombshell!

(Shell Evaluation, Trump Tweet 3 June 2016)

(30) So I raised/gave $5,600,000 for the veterans and the media makes me look
bad! They do anything to belittle – totally biased.

8. Conclusions

This study set out to explore the use of negative evaluations in the Twitter Profiles
of Hillary Clinton and Donald in the run-up to the presidential elections in the
USA in 2016. To this end, the investigation was divided into three main subordinate
questions which I shall try to answer in consecutive order.

The first question concerned the types and frequencies of negative evaluations
in the TCTC corpus. We discovered that Trump actually makes use of more neg-
ative evaluations than Hillary Clinton although the Clinton corpus contains more
word forms than the Trump corpus and also features more tweets than Trump.
While Clinton's negative evaluations are more inscribed than invoked, Trump
uses more implicit evaluations than Clinton. Overall, the frequency of affect and
appreciation is significantly lower for both politicians than for the judgment cat-
egory, which seems to be the most relevant category used by politicians to foster
their own online image and attack the positive face of the opponent. Surprisingly,
Trump's subcorpus features a more balanced use of three different evaluation
types (propriety, capacity and veracity) throughout the corpus data. Clinton's cor-
pus, instead, shows a clear prevalence for propriety-based evaluations. She does
not only focus more exclusively on Trump as the main target of her accusations
but focusses her negative evaluations on Trump’s indecency, recurrent acts of dis-
crimination and racism.

The second question touches upon the change of evaluation types during the
last five months of the presidential election campaigns. The findings revealed that
specific campaign events and incidents (e.g. Clinton email scandal, Trump's sex-
ist remarks, the television debate) may have had a decisive impact on the fre-
quency of judgment evaluation types. For instance, the official FBI inquiry into
Clinton's use of classified documents on a private email server led to a consid-
erable increase on veracity judgments on Trump’s Twitter account. At the same time, revelations of Trump’s derogatory and discriminatory remarks aimed at various women, disabled individuals or ethnic minorities have certainly yielded an increase in propriety evaluations on Clinton’s website. On the whole, the study could, by and large, replicate the findings of a previous study (Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados 2014) who claimed that the challenging contender for public office used a more balanced mix of judgment evaluations than his opponent, representing the governing party. Not only did Trump likewise use a more flexible and balanced collection of judgment evaluations, Clinton, as we have seen, did not. More importantly, the types of judgment evaluations in Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados’s investigation (2014) were compatible to the ones elicited in this study. On this basis, I suggest that, in adversarial types of political discourse, it is likely that negative evaluations surface in specific patterns both in terms of their respective quality (propriety, capacity) as well as with a view to their relative quantitative distribution.

A final question asked for the targets and objects of evaluation on both Twitter accounts. To this end, the results revealed that Hillary Clinton almost exclusively targeted Donald Trump, attacking Trump’s recurrent acts of indecency, discrimination, racism or bigotry. In contrast, Trump targets a broader collection of media representatives, media outlets and members of the Democratic party, with Hillary Clinton functioning as their main leader. What all of these targets have in common is two objects of evaluation which Trump accords to all of them, i.e. dishonesty and corruption. Trump stylizes Clinton as the figurehead of a conspicuous elite determined to disadvantage the working class, which only he truly represents. As we can see the frequency, change and types of judgment evaluations can serve us well to find a methodological path into the belief systems and latent social and political ideologies of the two politicians. They also promise to be a veritable point of departure for future investigations, exploring how the evaluation strategies of both politicians may have led to the final result of the presidential elections on 08 November 2016. Future research may also reveal if the evaluative patterns uncovered in this study resurface in other forms of political discourse, or indeed, in other forms of Twitter discourse. They will hopefully also provide empirical evidence for the forms and functions of positive evaluations in political discourse, both in different Twitter as well as various political genres.
References


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