Donald Trump’s divisive rhetoric is a common topic among scholars and citizens of America and the World. Trump’s ability to connect with his followers through Twitter created a different environment than what past politicians encountered due to the unique affordances of social media and the negative attributes of Twitter. Trump’s communication style combined with the rhetorical device of the enthymeme in his tweets conveyed a range of bigoted ideologies, from misogyny to racism to classicism. This paper examines how Donald Trump’s tweets actively promote a hateful divide between Americans by investigating how enthymemes in his tweets are used, the ideographs contained within these enthymemes, the role Twitter’s attributes play, and how rhetor and audience create these understandings together. This analysis explicates the power of Trump’s hateful digital rhetoric and how his continued influence presents a clear and present danger to American democracy.

Introduction

The presidential election of 2016 swept in Donald Trump and his unrestrained use of Twitter, earning him the title of “Tweeter in Chief.” Trump earned this title due to the sheer number of tweets and retweets emanating from his personal account (@realDonaldTrump). According to the Trump Twitter Archive V2, from Inauguration Day on January 20, 2017, to December 5, 2020, 7:50 p.m. Mountain Standard Time (MST), Trump tweeted 16,164 times and retweeted 9,427, creating a total of 25,591 interactions (tweets + retweets). This amount equals over 11 interactions per day (thetrumparchive.com).

However, it is not the volume of tweets Donald Trump sent that is important, but the meanings and messages embedded within his tweets.

Trump’s election loss escalated his continued denial of the results and increased calls for violence (See Figure 1) with well over 458,000 likes, showing the reach and agreement of his message. The tweet stating, “JANUARY SIXTH, SEE YOU IN DC!” was short (simplistic), impulsive (ordering followers to DC in a week’s time) and uncivil (all caps/shouting) in its enthymemic call for violence. While Trump’s speech in person on January 6, 2021 initiated the actual march to, and subsequent storming of the capitol, this tweet set the stage by urging people to travel to Washington, D.C. and be ready to act on Trump’s instructions.

Responding tweets (See Figures 2 and 3) provide additional support to the claim that Trump called for violence with references to fighting and wildness as well as projecting images of armed foot soldiers and military airplanes.

Figure 1: Trump’s Tweet “JANUARY SIXTH, SEE YOU IN DC!”.
The era of the “Tweeter in Chief” ended on January 8, 2021 after Twitter decided to ban Trump following a series of his incendiary tweets. Twitter based the ban on violations of its Glorification of Violence policy, citing the following two Trump tweets with the second one sent approximately an hour after the first (See Figures 4 and 5). Twitter understood these tweets as Trump advocating for future violence in the days leading up to the inauguration and, thus in their words, permanently suspended the president (Twitter, 2021).

Figure 2: Response to Trump’s Tweet Agreeing to Be There and Fight.

Figure 3: Another Response to Trump’s Tweet Agreeing to Be There and Fight.
Trump's Digital Rhetoric of Hate

While these two tweets are specific examples of Trump's calls to violence, his rhetoric of hate, both verbal and written, ran the gamut of misogynistic (McAlister, 2018; Shear & Sullivan, 2018; Walsh, 2018), racist (Graham et al., 2019; McElwee & McDaniel, 2017; Shafer, 2017), classist (Graham et al., 2019; Miller, 2016; Pramuk, 2017), Islamophobic (Hossain, 2020; Khan et al., 2020; Klaas, 2019), anti-immigrant (Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018; McElwee & McDaniel, 2017; Silva, 2018), homophobic (Acosta, 2020), and everything in between. He has also mocked disabled people (Carmon, 2016), criticized the military service and sacrifice of veterans (Goldberg, 2020; Kellman, 2019), and encouraged violence from his supporters (Cathey & Keneally, 2020; Solender, 2020).

Trump's propensity for using Twitter and his large number of followers, which as of December 8, 2020 at 3:25 p.m. MST, was 88.6 million, allowed him to directly reach millions of people quickly and easily. Twitter prizes speed (tweets are sent out instantly) and openness (tweets are public unless the privacy setting is set to protected tweets, which can only be viewed by approved followers), thus enabling Trump to connect, communicate, influence, command, and govern through the vastly popular platform.

Trump's tweets employ several rhetorical devices to ensure his audience understands the message and/or desired action. The rhetorical device under consideration in this essay is the enthymeme. In enthymemes, using Gerard Hauser's (2002) definition, the rhetor and audience share common beliefs and actively participate in building and creating the argument together. Enthymemes give Trump the ability to deny alleged statements or argue he was misunderstood since enthymemes are generally implicit and can be interpreted differently by diverse audiences. An analysis of Trump's tweets exemplifies how he builds and connects with those sharing and willing to contribute to the end result of creating a divide between Americans by casting them against each other, establishing an Us versus Them philosophy.

By examining Twitter as a vehicle for Trump's communication, Ott and Dickinson (2020) attribute Trump’s Twitter success to its attributes. Trump embraces, the simplicity, impulsivity, and incivility inherent in Twitter’s structure as a medium for communication. In understanding how Trump employs the enthymeme, I use Gerard Hauser's (2002) interpretation of the enthymeme where the rhetor and audience share common beliefs and actively participate in building and creating the argument together. Enthymemes give Trump the ability to deny alleged statements or argue he was misunderstood since enthymemes are generally implicit and can be interpreted differently by diverse audiences. An analysis of Trump’s tweets exemplifies how he builds and connects with those sharing and willing to contribute to the end result of creating a divide between Americans by casting them against each other, establishing an Us versus Them philosophy.

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Trump brings recovery, prosperity, and freedom/liberty. This tweet means to create fear and panic amongst the voters due to the hyperbole predicting implausible results from a Biden victory, the killing of the American Dream.

Followers fight back by attributing the characteristics of Trump’s tweet to those attacking Trump (See Figure 7 – a response to Figure 8 Trump tweet about suburban housewives). Plausible deniability is vital to Trump’s survival as he may be called by either criminal or civil court cases for a multitude of crimes including the most serious of inciting an insurrection (Ayer & Eisen, 2021) and being complicit in COVID-19 deaths (Kelly, 2021). This deniability offers Trump protection and a defense against these charges.

While Trump also retweets posts containing messages of hate, this article focuses on Trump’s rhetoric as it pertains to his own words in the digital arena of Twitter. In this article, I will examine three topics consisting of multiple tweets or threads addressed by Donald Trump’s tweets – exploring how the enthymemes are created, the ideographs contained within these enthymemes, the role Twitter’s attributes play, and how rhetor and audience create these understandings together. In considering these topics, I argue that together, they expose how rhetoric within a digital space can be polarizing and hateful, thus contributing to a division among Americans.

**Enthymemes**

Aristotle coined the term, enthymeme, but did not fully define it, leaving many scholars to debate the definition (Bitzer, 1959; Poster, 1992). Additionally, Poster (1992) posits that definitions for, “…rhetorical terms are not so much immutable entities with fixed and unchangeable meanings, but rather methods by which a culture analyzes its own discursive practices…” (p. 1), which supports the enthymeme as a dynamic entity adapting to its environment and/or community. In moving away from the enthymeme as a logical syllogism, Hauser (2002) claims there are three fundamental elements to

![Figure 6: Trump’s Tweet Predicting Doom and Disaster.](image)

![Figure 7: Response to Trump’s Tweet Countering Trump’s Racist Statements.](image)
the enthymeme, (1) “...some point of common ground among rhetor and audience,” (2) “...a linking premise that joins the common ground of the rhetor and audience to a conclusion,” and (3) “...enthymematic arguments are co-constructed by audience and rhetor” (p. 125). As such, the enthymeme is more than missing information within an argument, it is missing information the rhetor and audience believe in and actively participate in building and creating. It cannot be determined exactly what the audience thinks and believes is the common ground and how it links to the argument. Yet I would argue the tweets I analyze exemplify Hauser’s fundamental elements as evidenced by the audience’s response to Trump’s tweets (either through retweeting, liking, or responding). Trump’s enthymemes often engage the concept of ideographs as well to communicate his meaning. Ideographs play a social function in communities by offering an established meaning understood by those within the community (McGee, 1980). While outsiders might understand the dictionary version of the ideograph, they miss its culturally understood meaning because they do not belong to the group. Many times, enthymemes rely on ideographs to function, as understanding the ideograph allows people to comprehend the enthymeme. In my study I examine how Trump employs ideographs within his enthymemes (e.g., the American Dream, suburbs) by using hegemonic ideas of these ideographs to co-create the meaning called for, within his tweets.

Twitter’s Affordances

Circulation is what new media in general, tweets particularly so, are well-suited to do. The characteristics of speed and openness provide tweets the affordance to disseminate, allowing for circulation to occur within a natural flow. There is no waiting as in asynchronous communication, or gatekeepers as with many other social networking sites. Aided by these features, Twitter provides a channel via retweeting for tweets to travel widely and exponentially. Successful tweets are measured by their circulatory track records. That is, tweets enter the public and either circulate within the public sphere or fade away. The limited number of characters (280) permitted in a tweet allow the audience to read the message without delving into extraneous text. Readers can determine almost immediately if the tweet has value and if a response action (retweeting, responding, or an external action) should be taken. A value of circulation is being able to determine and create a response in a minimal amount of time and the openness of Twitter encourages dissemination as well.

The speed at which tweets can be posted and then retweeted provides the opportunity for hateful or false information to spread exponentially. As found in a recent study, “It took the truth about six times as long as falsehood to reach 1500... [and] falsehoods were 70% more likely to be retweeted than the truth” (Ott & Dickinson, 2020 as cited in Vosoughi et al. 2018,
p. 1148). Before social media the ability to spread information at this rate of speed was not possible. Social media enables instant communication.

Along with circulation, the affordances social media provides such as speed, openness, and accessibility allow people to connect, be heard, and organize and unite in a fight for social justice and fairness against the state (Hayes, 2016). Donald Trump on the other hand, as the state and in using Twitter for official business (Knight First Amendment Institute, et al. v. Donald J. Trump, et al., 2018), engages in the opposite. He spreads hate through sowing discord and enmity by pitting American citizen against American citizen. Although, this manipulation by the state against its people is not a new phenomenon. Governments in the past have embraced the affordances of digital spaces and the Internet to move against their citizens. Evidence of this is seen in cases of surveillance (ACLU, n.d.) or the Arab Spring (Hands, 2011; Morozov, 2009), in an effort by the government to control citizens. Of course, state or other government entities in the United States do also engage in similar activities, as the police actively monitored the Facebook usage of the Dakota pipeline activists and their protests (CBC News, 2016). The unique aspect here is that the head of state, the president of the United States, has engaged in direct communication efforts to divide the country.

Analytical Framework
As previously mentioned, there is no shortage of offensive remarks shared by Donald Trump. There are arguments about the intent, meaning, and context of Trump’s words from the man himself and his supporters (whether official government members, the media, or American citizens). The primary reason these arguments exist is due to Trump’s use of enthymemes within his rhetoric. Without use of the enthymeme, Trump would need to be explicit in his statements for his supporters to understand the meaning, so deniability is less plausible.

In order to demonstrate Trump’s use of enthymemes in tweets, I examined a series of his tweets, starting with the most well-known (tweets receiving attention and media coverage), and searched the Trump Twitter Archive V2 for additional tweets. I define media coverage as a story covered by a variety of sources including national (The Washington Post, USA Today, Associated Press, NPR), local (LA Times, The Detroit News), and international (BBC, The Independent). Both national and local Fox News outlets covered these stories, thus providing coverage from both major parties’ viewpoints.

The chart below (See Table 1) shows the number of Comments, Retweets, and Likes for the tweets. Some tweets do not have comment data as the screenshots did not include that data and tweets are not accessible due to Trump’s Twitter suspension. These numbers indicate the popularity of the tweets due to the number of interactions.

While the array of tweets was numerous, the goal was to discover content displaying multiple aspects of Trump’s rhetoric of hate, thereby showing the broad spectrum of Trump’s ire rather than focusing on a particular demographic. Once I obtained the specific tweets for this study, I analyzed them for enthymemes. After determining that all selected tweets functioned as enthymemes, I looked for evidence showing that the audience believed, supplied, and understood the meaning of each enthymeme in order to buy-in to the argument Trump presented. I also assessed the tweets usage of ideographs within Trump’s tweets.

Table 1: Number of Comments, Retweets, and Likes for Selected Tweets.

| Figure | Thread | Comments | Retweets | Likes |
|--------|--------|----------|----------|-------|
| 1      |        | 89       | 458      |       |
| 8      |        | 52.7     | 42.3     | 94.4  |
| 9      |        | 26.3     | 116.2    |       |
| 13     | 1      | 63.9     | 69.7     | 182.3 |
| 13     | 2      | 31       | 45.5     | 160.6 |
| 13     | 3      | 31.9     | 34.7     | 162.5 |
| 16     |        | 33.9     | 159      |       |
| 17     |        | 37.8     | 190.5    |       |
| 18     |        | 41.1     | 176.1    |       |
| 22     | 1      | 35       | 42.2     | 139.9 |
| 22     | 2      | 13.8     | 26.1     | 104.8 |
| 22     | 3      | 23.7     | 32.3     | 126.9 |

Note: Numbers are represented in the thousands.
Presidential Use of Digital Rhetoric

While presidential speeches and oratory have long been a focal point of scholarship, the advent of social media has enabled a new method for candidates to connect with and motivate followers. The use of digital tools and the Internet started with Howard Dean in the 2004 election and his campaign’s use of targeted emails, blogs, and Meetup groups to organize supporters. Barack Obama’s campaign continued building on and using the tools and strategies developed by Dean’s campaign to actively engage with supporters (Kreiss, 2012).

With the arrival of Twitter in 2006, both Barack Obama and Mitt Romney used Twitter in their 2008 presidential campaigns. Additionally, in this election year, Barack Obama, John McCain, and Mitt Romney developed and utilized websites. Dadas (2008) investigated how effectively these three presidential candidates used their websites to connect with constituents, volunteers, and the American people in order to engage more directly and encourage participation.

Bernie Sanders was next to harness the power of the Internet through official promotional uses and unofficial grassroots efforts (Penney, 2017). His campaign used common applications like email, but in new ways, the focus being on quantity through smaller donations along with new social media applications such as Reddit (Chadwick & Stromer-Galley, 2016).

While presidential candidates used social media in the past, and several used Twitter (Romney, Obama, Clinton), Twitter was the game changer in Trump’s campaign more so than any other candidate, enabling him to “generate free media” (Ott & Dickinson, 2020, p. 12). This free media included coverage of his tweets as well as the tweets themselves. This leads us to today, where most scholarship on presidential digital rhetoric focuses on Trump’s use of Twitter.

Trump and Online Hate

Trump’s insulting language and lack of civility contained in his tweets is not a new phenomenon. Lee and Lim conducted an analysis of two periods during the 2016 presidential campaign, covering a total of two weeks and found that 10.5% of Trump’s tweets in this timeframe were uncivil, while Hillary Clinton did not have a single uncivil tweet (2016). Trump is well-known for his misogynistic and racist statements through in-person remarks and digital spaces, primarily using Twitter to spread these statements (Eddington, 2018).

However, Trump’s language is not merely offensive, but his rhetoric of hate within digital spaces exerts a great amount of influence on his supporters. During Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign, his rhetoric fueled the action of multiple white nationalist groups. These groups used digital platforms to support Trump’s election campaign including top Neo-Nazi websites: The Daily Stormer and Stormfront (Barnett, 2019). This acceptance and adherence to the beliefs espoused by Trump’s words and the strong promotion and campaigning by these groups on his behalf, makes it difficult for Trump to deny the meaning of the enthymemes within his tweets. The tweets are directed to an audience who respond as expected to the messages.

Eddington argues that the use of the hashtag, #MakeAmericaGreatAgain (#MAGA) allows online hate groups to unite in a discursive space (2018). While individuals and groups can always connect directly with Trump’s Twitter account, hashtags allow them to find and link with others who are like-minded. Hashtags within Twitter are also considered an affordance, because a hashtag “serves to coordinate large-scale discussion spaces that many can engage in at once” (Eddington, 2018, p. 3). The ability to engage with others, including those not tied to a particular geographical area, is an affordance that encourages activism.

The use of social media and digital tools to rally supporters is a common practice used in activism. The affordances (circulation, connection, speed) of social media provide agency and the ability to organize and also allow those wishing to spread hate to do so with ease. What has motivated and worked for activism has also worked in Trump’s favor. Trump stokes fear and converts it to outrage by gathering people together in a united front against what they have envisioned as a wrong or an abuse. The same tactics used by activists from the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street are now being used by Trump to remain in power. Castells (2012) states, “But the big bang of a social movement starts with the transformation of emotion into action” (p. 13), and Trump does this well. Trump’s supporters see their American Dream, their legacy as white people, being threatened and taken away, which angers and mobilizes them.

The foundation to understanding Trump’s effective use of Twitter starts with what Ott & Dickinson (2020) articulate as style. “For us, style combines Trump’s general manner of speaking with his preferred modality of speaking” (p. 2). They analyze his style of speaking as “an affective appeal of white rage” (p. 2) using Twitter as the means to distribute vitriol against the other. The other being anyone who is not white, heterosexual, able bodied or male who takes away what has been the purview of white masculinity.

As previously mentioned, Twitter embodies simplicity, impulsivity, and incivility, characteristics that complement Trump’s style. Simplicity is based on the limited characters Twitter allows. The maximum number of characters was 140, but in November of 2017 Twitter doubled the number to 280. While the tweets analyzed in this paper occurred after 2017, the number of characters still restricts the “capacity to convey complex ideas and concepts” (Ott & Dickinson, 2020, p. 62). Impulsivity stems from the ease and lack of effort needed to tweet. This lack of effort correlates to the inability to discuss difficult or controversial topics effectively. Ott and Dickison elaborate, “Since tweeting requires little effort, it requires...
little forethought, reflection, or consideration of consequences" (p. 62). Since effort is not required, complex topics are not addressed. Lastly, “Uncivil communication refers to speech that is impolite, insulting, or otherwise offensive” (Ott & Dickinson, 2020, p. 63). Twitter’s informality and lack of personal interaction are two attributes that contribute to incivility as formal communication is more civil and people often will not say offensive things in person (Ott & Dickinson, 2021). These aspects contribute to Trump’s appeal and use of white rage to engage his followers through his use of bombastic enthymemes. The tweets examined in this paper exemplify this practice by Trump.

Joshua Gunn (2018) labels Trump’s rhetoric and style as perverse. While many may be repulsed by this perverse style, Trump’s followers are entranced by it. In contemplating this attraction Gunn suggests we start, “with a consideration of perversity as a genre that invites affective or emotional investment” (p. 173). Thus, Trump’s perverse rhetoric connects through emotionally charged hyperboles wrapped in white rage.

**Trump’s use of Twitter and the Enthymeme**

What differentiates Trump from past presidents is his prolific use of Twitter to divide the American people, not unite them. When the nation needed a leader to bring them together in 2020, during both a global pandemic and the fight against racial injustice fueled by George Floyd’s murder, Trump turned to Twitter to stoke the fires of intolerance. Trump encourages white rage as “Trump locates in his audience their virtue as passive marginalized subjects. He emphasizes how they are forgotten, demoralized, attacked, and dispossessed of their birth rights. It is for these reasons that they are entitled to their revenge” (Kelly, 2019, p. 19). His rhetoric fuels hate and creates an Us (Trump supporters) versus Them (other Americans), thus pitting Americans versus Americans.

The use of Trump’s enthymemes as a tool in connecting with his supporters and sending messages of hate also gives him the ability to deny the hate implicit in the message. As McCAughey (2020), a former lieutenant governor of New York, states, “CNN accused the president of fearmongering white suburban voters.’ But it’s CNN that is being racist — by assuming that only whites own homes in the suburbs’ (para. 13). Trump directly links to McCaughey’s opinion piece in the tweet in Figure 8 in an attempt to deflect from his racist actions. McAlister (2018) discusses the advantage of Twitter in constructing enthymemes for Trump, “The enthymeme’s ability to bury premises that may be both unutterable and unchallenged for a popular audience is crucial when considering how Trump’s campaign made use of Twitter’s condensed format to advance assertions in place of arguments” (p. 7). The character limitation of Twitter inherently creates missing parts by limiting the length of the message, thus allowing the audience to fill in the parts and construct the meaning.

Trump’s supporters also take advantage of the cover enthymemes provide. Hawdon et al. (2020), declare “...enthymemes allow right-wing extremists to wear their support for Trump like a reversible jacket, changing the direction to suit the setting and audience while maintaining a public-facing persona by feigning plausible deniability of their ideological leanings” (p. 11). If right-wing extremists are with co-workers at the employee cafeteria, they encounter a different audience and location than attending a Trump rally with like-minded individuals.

Words are not the only possible component of enthymemes. Hashtags can play the role of enthymemes as well. It can be argued that Trump’s hashtags, #MAGA and #MakeAmericaGreatAgain, work as enthymemes in tweets because “Make America Great Again” returns us to a time when white men were in charge. “His campaign message resonated with white supremacists across the U.S., who hoped that an election victory would ‘make America great again’ by reinstalling white power” (Perry et al., 2019, p. 54).

**Tweets: Misogyny, Racism, and Classism**

Trump’s tweet, by referring to the Obama era Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule to frighten suburban dwellers into voting for him (See Figure 8), uses enthymemes to not only invoke racism, but misogyny. His tweet also embeds an ideograph within an enthymeme to establish an understanding of what is at stake. The audience co-creates the meaning through supplying the missing arguments of the tweet, as well as forming a mutual understanding of what the ideograph, The American Dream, contextually means.

Trump (2020d) starts his tweet (See Figure 8) by addressing his stated audience, “The Suburban Housewives of America,” which beckons to a bygone era where women stayed home and cared for the children and home. This is ironic considering, as of December 2019, American women represented the majority of the workforce at 50.04% (Law, 2020, para. 1) (although this statistic eliminates self-employed and farm workers). Therefore, perhaps Trump should be more concerned with the suburban househusband voting for him. This retro vision of women as stay-at-home housewives is not in touch with the reality of 2020, although the pandemic has played a role (Gershon, 2020; Guilford & Cambon, 2020) in women’s participation in the labor force in a myriad of ways. Trump needs his supporters to agree that the suburban housewife still exists. He combines misogyny with racism as the suburbs are where white people supposedly live. Most past uses of race have been directed towards white men and their “losses” that occur when women or minorities gain (McAlister, 2018). This tweet uses race, but is directed more specifically to white women in the suburbs who are housewives.
However, there still exist suburban housewives who agree with Trump as seen in Figure 10. Judy Reppart does not specify the type of housewife she is, but states she is one and will be voting for Trump. Her reply exemplifies the simplicity of Twitter as her response is short and concise in meaning.

The Obama era Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule required cities receiving federal housing funds to address bias and racial inequities in housing (Kurtzleben, 2020). Trump invokes his rescinding of the AFFH as the action resulting in the return of the suburbs to the idyllic peaceful way of living without low-income housing or people of color in the neighborhood. Trump’s tweet (2020e) states, “They want safety & are thrilled that I ended the long running program where low-income people would invade their neighborhood” (See Figure 9). Trump’s use of the word invade also signals that low-income people moving to the suburbs are committing an act of aggression against the current residents. His message is clear and a classic Us (white suburban Americans) versus Them (low-income people of color).

Clearly Trump’s followers agree the suburbs would be destroyed through a loss in property values (See Figure 11). Roy Williams reverts to incivility as well through name calling, “Dementia Joe.” The impulsivity in writing this tweet is evident via the typo “of” instead of “if.”

To set up the theme of Us versus Them, Trump uses an ideograph to situate the enthymeme in this tweet (See Figure 8) for his supporters. The phrase, The American Dream, as an ideograph, correlates to a time in the past where white men were in charge, women were housewives, and the American Dream consisted of a house in the suburbs. What comprises the American Dream has ranged from “religious freedom to a house in the suburbs” (Hochschild, 1996, p. 15), to the
opportunities available for all willing to work hard to earn success (Bormann, 1985). “Biden will destroy your neighborhood and your American Dream. I will preserve it and make it even better!” This is Trump (2020d) implying that a vote for him will keep the American Dream and suburbs intact.

Furthermore, the reference to low-income people as invaders expresses an additional element of Trump's rhetoric to his supporters – classism. Trump plays on people’s fears and prejudices, that low-income housing brings undesirables. As people of poverty move into the neighborhood, they bring crime, thus destroying the neighborhood and the American Dream. Along with financial success being viewed as an indicator of achieving the American Dream (Kasser & Ryan, 1993), this viewpoint buttresses the myth that low-income people have not worked hard. Therefore, they do not deserve the reward of achieving the American Dream and living in the suburbs. Trump’s message is that if low-income people would like to live in the suburbs, they too can partake in the hard work necessary to achieve these goals.

Trump’s message echoes loud and clear (See Figure 12) as shown by this response and the incivility conveyed through its informality, word choice, and offensive stereotypes.

In these two tweets, Trump claims he will protect and keep the suburbs safe for the suburban housewife and that the American Dream will remain intact. This protection and safety are dependent on Trump being reelected as Biden would bring an end to the American Dream by allowing low-income people to move in, ruining the neighborhood with disruption and crime.

**Tweets: Racism and Misogyny**

Trump’s tweet thread (See Figure 13) is directed at Representatives Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts, and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan. Ocasio-Cortez, Pressley, and Tlaib were all born in the United States and Omar was born in Somalia but became a United States citizen in 2000. Trump tells these four women...
of color, all of whom are United States citizens and elected members of Congress, to go back to where they came from. This command upholds a long-standing American racist trope (Dwyer, 2019) and can be considered harassment and discrimination by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, n.d.). Additionally, Ocasio-Cortez is Puerto Rican (her mother was born in Puerto Rico and her father was born in the United States to Puerto Rican parents) and Puerto Ricans are United States citizens. Readers can conclude from Trump’s tweet that Puerto Ricans are second-class citizens. It has also been reported that Trump denigrated Puerto Rico, calling it dirty and poor after the destruction of Hurricane Maria (Ocasio, 2020).

Trump indicates these four women are not considered real United States citizens and, therefore, not eligible to criticize the government through their freedom of speech. These tweets are ironic as they ignore the basic tenets of our democracy and the three branches of government established by Article 1 of the Constitution, whereby the Legislative Branch is granted the sole authority to enact legislation. As legislators, these women help create the laws our government and citizens follow. Yet in his tweet, Trump attacks the women for telling the people of the United States how our government is to be run.

This response to Trump’s thread (See Figure 14) shows how his followers believe these women are not citizens of the United States and are considered immigrants. The tweet’s insulting comments showcase racist sentiments by claiming “white christian patriots” are the “backbone of our highly advanced western civilisation.”

Trump’s (2019) start to the second part of the tweet, “…and viciously telling the people of the United States” also builds on the theme of second-class citizenship by implying that the four representatives are not part of the United States, that they are not real citizens, and these four Congressional members are not welcome. The four representatives are portrayed as the “Them,” and are against the “people of the United States,” the “Us.”

Misogyny is found in this same portion of the tweet, “now loudly……….and viciously telling the people of the United States,” as Trump (2019) attributes the Representatives’ conduct and speech with these negative descriptions. This allows the audience to fill in the blanks of what the words “loudly” and “viciously” mean, with another racist/misogynistic trope, that of the angry black women (Adams & Lott, 2019, Scott, 2013).

While Trump insults a wide variety of people from different demographics, including both men and women, Republicans and Democrats, blacks and whites, his vitriol is excessively directed to these four women when compared to other members of Congress. National Public Radio (NPR) conducted a study of every Trump tweet that referenced a member of Congress from Inauguration Day until October 4, 2019, for a total of 700 tweets. NPR discovered that “While Trump has always spread his insults far and wide, the volume of personal insults and extreme language that he directed at the so-called ‘squad’ of four Democratic Congresswomen and African American Rep. Elijah Cummings over the summer stood out” (Rascoe, 2019, para. 4). While it is unclear whether these tweets contain more of a racist or misogynist motivation or a combination of the two, it is obvious these four women of color are special targets of Trump because of their gender and race as Paul Elliot Johnson (2017) states, “Trump’s rhetoric works by circulating gendered and raced accounts of American national identity” (p. 246).
When Trump tweets or speaks racist statements or sentiments, he is generally questioned or asked to deny the racist intent. At times he does, or his spokespeople do, but other times Trump does not deny the racist meaning and intent of his words. When questioned about the racism behind his tweets against the four representatives, Trump responded, “It doesn’t concern me because many people agree with me,” Trump said at the White House, ‘A lot of people love it, by the way’” (Miller et al., 2019, para. 3). He is right that many people do agree with him (See Figure 15).

It is difficult for Trump to claim he is not racist when he directly states that the racism in his tweet does not concern him because people agree with his statements, and not just agree, but passionately engage and accept this racism against their fellow Americans. If Trump did not want the label of a racist, he would address the issue, clarify his meaning, and disavow the people agreeing and loving the sentiment. It is important to note as well that Trump states, “many people agree with me,” and not “many people agree with the tweet/statement.” This acknowledges ownership of his meaning behind the tweets, and as rhetor, he sends this message to his followers who understand the meaning and agree with Trump.

Figure 14: Response Agreeing with Trump About the Congresswomen.

Figure 15: Another Response Agreeing with Trump About the Congresswomen.
The Us versus Them theme Trump promotes through his use of enthymemes in these tweets fits nicely into the ideograph of the American Dream envisioned by Trump and his supporters. The four representatives labeled as having come from other countries and are trying to tell the American government and citizens how “…our government is to be run” (Trump, 2019), signals an implicit understanding that the four are not eligible for, or part of the American Dream. Trump (2019) reinforces this by suggesting they leave, “Why don’t they go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came.” The missing information supplied by Trump’s audience is that the four representatives are not true Americans and therefore do not deserve to be here. By being here, they steal the American Dream from true Americans who have worked hard to achieve its ideals and live in the suburbs.

Tweets: Advocating Physical Violence

Trump’s message of hate can also be viewed in his calls to violence. Trump uses the enthymeme to encourage violence conducted by Americans against fellow Americans. The ideograph plays a role connecting “liberty” or the act of “liberating” to violence. The founding of The United States resulted from rebellion, fighting, and violence against the British. The United States has also sent the military to many places around the world to protect liberty and freedom (e.g., Korea, Vietnam, Iraq) so there is a connection between liberating and fighting. Trump’s followers often equate the governmental health restrictions as an infringement upon their liberty and people should fight back against these restrictions. Wearing a mask is viewed as an infringement (See Figure 19) as masks are “stinkin’ masks” and Minnesotans should protest and not wear masks while protesting.

The group of three tweets above (See Figures 16, 17, 18) relies heavily on enthymemes to create their co-constructed meaning. The first two tweets contain only two words, “Liberate Minnesota” (Trump, 2020a), and “Liberate Michigan” (Trump, 2020b). The third tweet contains twelve words, providing additional meaning – “Liberate Virginia, and save your great 2nd amendment. It is under siege!” (Trump, 2020c).

These tweets are a message to protesters in those three states who opposed the lockdown restrictions/stay-at-home orders issued by the corresponding state governors. Medical experts, including Dr. Mohammed Arsiwala, president of the
Michigan State Medical Society, supported Governor Widmer’s actions to slow the virus (Mauger & LeBlanc, 2020). These three governors are Democrats, although there were lockdown protests in states with Republican governors, such as Utah and Ohio, that did not receive “Liberate” tweets from Trump.

The tweets are a call-to-action to liberate these states from an oppressive regime imposing tyranny on American patriots protesting measures imposed on the citizens of these states. Trump’s use of capital letters (For the ‘liberate’ parts of the tweets) indicates shouting. Shouting signals an urgency to the situation; this is also not a request; it is a command. Trump’s followers understood this as a call to arms and activity of online hate groups discussing this need for action, increased (Collins & Zadrozny, 2020). This message constituted a call for physical violence directed to Americans and committed by Americans against Americans – the Us versus Them theme.

Trump’s call to action appeared to resonate with his supporters (See Figure 20). This response also includes all capital letters to indicate the importance/shouting of the message. The response is simplistic and repetitive. Ott & Dickinson (2020) state, “In addition to tweeting simple, impulsive, and uncivil messages, Trump repeats them endlessly” (p. 87). This follower’s message mimics those same characteristics while showing agreement with Trump’s tweet.

The third tweet in the thread (See Figure 18) starts in the same manner with “LIBERATE VIRGINIA” (Trump, 2020c), but continues with a more explicit command by referencing the Second Amendment. “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed” (Constitution of the United States, n.d.). The message understood and co-constructed between Trump and his followers is that, since the state
imposes restrictions on the movement of its citizens, it is just the beginning as other “rights and freedoms” will soon be taken away, including the Second Amendment.

While the response to this tweet (See Figure 21) does not specifically state which “rights and freedoms” will cease to exist, it agrees with Trump and the fight he calls for in Virginia.

Once again, the enthymematic nature of these tweets poses a vagueness that allows for denial of the explicit meaning. When Twitter was pressed about the terms of service violations in reference to Trump promoting violence, Twitter’s response stated, “The use of ‘liberate’ in the tweets is too vague to be actionable.” (Collins & Zadrozny, 2020, para. 12). However, the message is still clear to supporters. Hawdon et al. (2020), conclude from their research that enthymemes lose their ambiguity when used in online spaces where chances increase that “…vulnerable individuals move from agreeing with hate to acting on it” (p. 12).

Several months after Trump tweeted these three calls to violence, a plot was discovered aiming to kidnap Governor Whitmer of Michigan (Carrega et al., 2020). Instead of denouncing the plot and disavowing the supporters acting in his

![Figure 20: Tweet Agreeing with Trump's Tweets to Liberate States.](image)

![Figure 21: Tweet Agreeing with Trump's Tweets to Stand Up for Rights and Freedom.](image)
name, Trump deflected the blame to the victim, Governor Whitmer. Although Trump (2020f) in the third part of the thread (See Figure 22) starts with, “I do not tolerate ANY extreme violence. Defending ALL Americans, even those who oppose and attack me, is what I will always do as your President!” he quickly rescinds that statement. Trump (2020f) continues in the tweet, “Governor Whitmer—open up your state, open up your schools, and open up your churches!” as he pursues the theme of liberation and tacit approval of the current and future attacks against Governor Whitmer.

**Conclusion**

While Trump is no longer president, his ability to connect with and move millions of Americans to action continues through establishment of his own web site and media coverage of the past president who continues to influence his followers, politicians and policies. We see Trump’s legacy in the treatment of Wyoming Congresswoman Liz Cheney in response to her May 3 statement that the election was not stolen (See Figure 23). Fellow Republicans launched an attack and removed Cheney from her leadership position in the Republican party as the Number 3 House Republican.

![Figure 22: Thread of Three Tweets Criticizing Governor Whitmer.](image)

![Figure 23: Liz Cheney Disagreeing with Trump's Claim the Election was Stolen.](image)
Matt Gaetz and Marjorie Taylor Greene, members of Congress, embarked on a rally tour on May 7, 2021 (Wang, 2021) to continue where Trump left off. The “America First” rallies highlighted tributes to Trump along with lies and insults a la Trump style. It appears that the removal of Trump from the Oval Office and social media strengthened his followers resolve instead of weakening it.

The recent voter suppression laws that have been introduced and/or passed provide a glimpse into what the United States can expect from Trump’s continued influence. According to the Brennan Center (2021), “As of March 24, legislators have introduced 361 bills with restrictive provisions in 47 states” (para 1, emphasis in original). These bills confront what Republicans deem as necessary reforms against the frequently claimed, but never proven, voter fraud that ousted Trump from office. If the reaction to an unfavorable result such as a lost election is punitive laws, Trump wins.

Trump’s use of enthymemes to spread hate, whether it be through misogynistic, racist, classist, or other hateful elements, depends essentially on his supporters understanding and co-creating the meaning of his tweets. Without his supporters, Trump’s tweets would be a monologue, a one-sided conversation, but through them, a division between citizens is sown and deepened. In examining Trump’s tweets, Ott (2017) concludes that “Trump’s simple, impulsive, and uncivil Tweets do more than merely reflect sexism, racism, homophobia, and xenophobia; they spread those ideologies like a social cancer” (p. 64). Thus, Trump’s followers understand, co-construct, and heed the messages he tweets.

The tweets within this paper were selected as exemplars of Trump’s enthymematic tweeting, promoting hate with a goal of creating a divide amongst Americans. While a particular tweet may be directed towards a specific demographic group, the range of his hate encompasses multiple demographics in his goal of an Us versus Them America. Trump’s hate is the one area where he does not discriminate and even with a diminished public presence, Trump’s hateful rhetoric still presents a clear and present danger to a democratic United States.

Competing Interests
The author has no competing interests to declare.

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