

# **“Trump is an equal opportunity insulter”**

A discourse analysis of political discourse in Democratic and  
Republican social media

Master's thesis

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| <p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Diskurssit, eli kielenkäyttötavat, voivat vaikuttaa ihmisten asenteisiin, tapaan nähdä maailma ja toimintatapoihin merkittävästi. Tähän suhteuttaen poliittisten diskurssien rooli on merkittävä, koska ne saavuttavat suuren yleisön ja tulevat yleensä uskottavilta henkilöiltä, mikä osaltaan lisää niiden vaikuttavuutta. Tämän takia poliitikkojen ja muiden, jotka osallistuvat poliittisten diskurssien tuottamiseen, kielenkäyttöä ja argumentointia on tärkeä tutkia. Tässä työssä näiden teemojen tutkimiseen käytetään kriittistä diskurssianalyysia, joka tarjoaa välineitä tarkastelemaan eriarvoisuutta ja vallan väärinkäyttöä. Kyseessä olevassa tutkielmassa on hyödynnetty lisäksi diskurssihistoriallisen lähestymistavan tarjoamia työvälineitä.</p> <p>Tämän maisterin tutkielman tarkoitus on selvittää miten Donald Trump käyttää kieltä twiiteissään kirjoittaessaan tietystä vähemmistöön kuuluvasta ihmisestä, sekä kuinka tähän henkilöön liittyvään uutistapahtumaan ja Trumpin twiitteihin itsessään reagoitiin niin demokraattisessa kuin republikaanisessa mediassa. Tutkimuksen kohteena olevat mediat ovat Stephen Colbertin monologit hänen myöhäisillan keskusteluohjelmastaan ja Ben Shapiroin poliittiset podcastit. Analyysi keskittyy kyseisten henkilöiden käyttämiin diskursiivisiin ja argumentatiivisiin strategioihin.</p> <p>Tutkimukseni tulokset osoittavat, että vaikka kaikki kolme käyttävät laajaa kirjoa strategioita, ne eivät eroa toisistaan merkittävästi. Kaikki nojaavat argumentoinnissaan osin virheellisiin strategioihin ja luottavat kaikukammioidensa reagoivan näihin diskursseihin toivotulla tavalla. Toisin sanottuna, heidän odotuksenaan näyttää olevan, että suurin osa yleisöstä jakaa heidän mielipiteensä ja siten kokevat diskurssit ideologioitaan vahvistaviksi. Suurimmat erot syntyvät siinä, onko kyseinen diskurssi esimerkki populistisesta kielenkäytöstä tai poliittisesta satiirista. Tämän tutkimuksen pohjalta näyttää siltä, että jatkotutkimuksessa olisi paikallaan nostaa enemmän esiin poliittisten kytköksien vaikutusta yleiseen kielenkäyttöön samoin kuin sitä miten suuri yleisö ottaa vastaan median välittämiä diskursseja.</p> |   |
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | INTRODUCTION.....   | 4  |
| 2 | BACKGROUND.....   | 7  |
|   | 2.1 Political discourse .....   | 7  |
|   | 2.1.1 Social media as a medium for political discussion .....                   | 8  |
|   | 2.1.2 Mass media as a medium for political discussion .....                     | 11 |
|   | 2.1.3 Norms of political discussion .....                                       | 14 |
|   | 2.2 Populist discourses .....   | 16 |
|   | 2.3 Political satire.....   | 17 |
| 3 | THE PRESENT STUDY .....   | 20 |
|   | 3.1 Aims and research questions .....   | 20 |
|   | 3.2 Data selection and collection.....  | 21 |
|   | 3.3 Methods of Analysis.....  | 23 |
|   | 3.3.1 Critical discourse analysis .....   | 24 |
|   | 3.3.2 Discourse-historical approach .....                                       | 26 |
| 4 | ANALYSIS .....  | 33 |
|   | 4.1 Analysis of President Trump’s tweets.....                                   | 33 |
|   | 4.1.1 The discourse of delegitimizing opposing characters and institutions..... | 35 |
|   | 4.1.2 The discourse of positive representations of in-group members.....        | 37 |
|   | 4.2 Analysis of Colbert’s monologues .....                                      | 40 |
|   | 4.2.1 The discourse of satirical portrayal of relevant persons.....             | 43 |
|   | 4.2.2 The discourse of introducing new partial information .....                | 52 |
|   | 4.2.3 The discourse of critical evaluation of the news media .....              | 56 |
|   | 4.3 Analysis of Shapiro’s podcasts .....  | 58 |
|   | 4.3.1 The discourse of satirical portrayal of relevant persons.....             | 61 |
|   | 4.3.2 The discourse of introducing new partial information .....                | 68 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 4.3.3 The discourse of critical evaluation of the news media ..... | 72 |
| 5 DISCUSSION .....   | 78 |
| 6 CONCLUSION .....   | 88 |
| REFERENCES.....  | 91 |

# 1 INTRODUCTION

*In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible. Thus, political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging, and sheer cloudy vagueness... Political language -- is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.*

George Orwell (1946)

George Orwell wrote his essay “Politics and the English language” over half a century ago, but his criticism of political language still rings true. Political language is almost akin to an artform as it purposes to influence the audience and create representations beneficial for the politician or person otherwise engaged in political discourse. In the times of Orwell political discourse mainly appeared in speeches, dialogues, and longer written pieces, or other traditional forms of media, whereas nowadays mass and social media provide an enormous platform for disseminating and furthering political agendas. The rise of these new media forms both lowers the challenge of reaching a captive audience as well as increases public participation in the discussion. Therefore, it is vital to understand the language and argumentation strategies being used in public political discourse. In this thesis the analysis will focus on current political discourses within such newer media platforms.

Political discourse has always been of interest to researchers, and it has been studied widely in several contexts and with the help of a varied set of methodologies. To set my study apart from the majority of these studies, I have chosen to use qualitative data and analysis. In this way, my study differs from the kind of quantitative study that has been exceedingly more popular in the analysis of political discourse (e.g., Michael and Agur 2018, Davis 2018, Yaqub 2017, Ott 2017, Halpern 2012). In addition, and in contrast to most political discourse analyses, my data are not related to political elections. Rather, I chose an instance in time where the political discourse surrounding an African American female gained notoriety and was widely discussed across several media platforms.

In December of 2017, the White House chief of staff, General John Kelly, fired Omarosa Manigault Newman who had been working as an aid both in the Trump presidential campaign as well as in the White House administration. Directly after the firing the political discourse surrounding the event was mainly cordial; this can be seen in my data, too. However, when it came out that she had written a tell-all book about her time working in the Trump administration, the tone in President Donald Trump’s tweets changed dramatically, and the

amount of other political discourse on the matter increased in volume as well. The tell-all book itself came out in August of 2018. My data come mainly from the week surrounding the publication of Newman's book.

In this thesis, my main goal is to analyse the language that is used in reference to a racial minority woman who was fired from the White House, and the launch of her tell-all book, in three different media of political discourse. I chose to analyse this incident from the point of view of President Donald Trump's Twitter feed, Stephen Colbert's monologues from his Late-Night TV, and Ben Shapiro's podcast. The last two frequently comment on current political events, Donald Trump's tweets often being an integral part of them. The goal with my analysis of Colbert and Shapiro is to examine how they respond to the events and to Trump's tweets about the event coming from different ends of the political spectrum. In line with many far-right politicians, Trump's language choices can be seen to voice populist discourses. In contrast, Colbert's monologues are an example of political satire. Ben Shapiro then falls somewhere between these two, he voices conservative opinions in ways that reflect a populist agenda while occasionally adding a satirical spin to his messaging. To frame the analyses of these types of political discourses I will be explaining and discussing terminology relating to both populist discourse and political satire in the following chapters.

The reason I chose these particular media as sources for my data is that President Donald Trump, Stephen Colbert, and Ben Shapiro are political actors in their own right and all three reach a large, but somewhat different, audience. Donald Trump's Twitter (@realDonaldTrump) had, at the time of data collection, over 56 million followers. Stephen Colbert receives several million views on his monologues posted on YouTube, on top of the viewers who watch his show as it airs on television. Ben Shapiro's podcast is among the most popular conservative political podcasts in the United States, but as there are a multitude of platforms in which you can listen to his show, it is difficult to provide an accurate account of his listeners. Donald Trump was followed by people from all ends of the political spectrum, but his tweets reflect his right-wing ideology that coincides with that of the Republican Party. Stephen Colbert, on the other hand, could be classified as a Democrat, or at least as having his sympathies with the Democratic Party or political left-wing, and his content is catered towards people with like-minded ideologies. Here Ben Shapiro resembles President Trump, as his show is labelled conservative and therefore draws on more Republican listeners and their ideologies. He reflects Donald Trump and the Republican parties' views. In addition, whereas Trump usually voices his personal opinions, Colbert and Shapiro also use other people's comments (as heard in, for

example, news interviews or other forms of mass media) and receive help from their staff when writing the programs. As these three political actors use their powerful platforms in very different ways and aim their messages towards different demographics, their use of language is an interesting source of comparison.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

This section of the thesis focuses on relevant terminology and previous research in the fields of political discourse, populism, satire, and media discourses. These concepts and terms will be relevant in the analysis and discussion portions of this thesis.

### **2.1 Political discourse**

In order to investigate political discourse, it is important to understand what is meant by the term ‘politics.’ Chilton (2004: 3) gives two possible definitions: it can be seen as a struggle for power by two opposing forces, those that wish to maintain it and those that seek to resist it, or as cooperation within a society to resolve different issues that apply to most members of a given society. In the context of this thesis, the first definition is mainly drawn on: the study compares different political actors from opposing ends of the political spectrum. Political discourse, then, is what happens when politics and language meet as intrinsically linked. This was discovered as early as in Aristotle’s time when he called humans “political animals” and recognized the importance of power relations when it comes to determining human communities (Schaeffner 2010: 2). Following Aristotle, we can also state that without the human capability of using language, political activity would not exist (Chilton 2004: 6). Chilton (2004: 8) also acknowledges the importance of language, in the sense of monitoring phrases, wordings and different verbal formulation in political communication especially in the age of mass communication.

Schaeffner (2010: 2-3) also introduces three different strands of political communication: communicating about politics by ordinary people, political discourse via mass media and political communication, as in communication that originates from political institutions. The third strand can be further divided into two subgenres. Firstly, it can be communication from politicians to politicians, and, secondly, communication from politicians to the public (ibid.). The first strand of political communication is not relevant to the focus of the study as all three people under analysis here are political actors instead of ordinary people in the context of political discourse, but the other two strands are quite crucial. This is because the present focus is on communication that is dispersed via mass media to an audience of general population and the communicators are political actors, or actual politicians in the case of Donald Trump (Colbert and Shapiro not being politicians themselves, but prominent figures in political discussion nonetheless).



Political discourse then uses political language to attain its goals. Political language is an open resource that anybody can take advantage of: it is not jargon as it is meant to be understood (Gushchina 2015: 15). There is no lexicon that is specific to political language, and, in fact, what makes it political is the circumstances and context of its delivery. Gushchina (2015: 15) argues that it is a subsystem of national language, which is intended for political communication, aiming to invoke emotive impact on citizens, spread propaganda, motivate political action, develop public consensus, or simply work as a tool for political communication. In the age of social media, and especially of Twitter, however, the presentation of political discourse has undeniably shifted. Edwards (2018: 37) argues that the rise of Twitter has resulted in a collision of entertainment and American politics. Especially under President Trump, the American political system has started resembling a form of global entertainment. According to Edwards (*ibid.*), the divide between political discourse and popular culture is nearly non-existent. Twitter's measurable effects on the public political discourse are also a result of the platform's adoption of the role of the presidential "bully pulpit", referring to the persuasive power of the nation's (the USA) highest elected office (Michael and Agur 2018: 262). Social media can indeed be a powerful tool in the hands of a president used to influence the public opinion and decision-making. This was found to be true in Michael and Agur's (2018) analysis of President Obama's use of Twitter. In addition to increased public attention, evoking national discussion on the terms of the President's choosing, and increased proportion of support as a result of the enhanced attention to the issues, they also found some negative effects of the social media "bully pulpit". Among these was the well-organized opposition the platform provided means for. Political discourse on social media allowed for well-organized opposition and other negative tweets, though these mainly focused on the President's (Obama) person and policies rather than the actual issue at hand (*ibid.* 272-273). A more positive effect of the use of social media as a medium for political discourse, in contrast to the aforementioned negative ones, is that it allows for the choosing of the time and method of communication. In this respect, *i.e.*, time-shifting, it differs significantly from television shows and channels (Michael and Agur 2018: 273).

### **2.1.1 Social media as a medium for political discussion**

In this subsection, I will examine previous studies relating to political discourse in social media, focusing especially on Twitter, since it is most relevant when considering the current study. The understanding of how Twitter functions as a medium of political discourse will be

instrumental in the analysis of President Trump's tweets, as he follows some very prominent trends when it comes to the construction of his tweets. These trends will be presented below.

According to Halpern (2012: 1160), the use of social media in political communication enhances civic participation and democratic decision-making. It can also be argued, however, that Twitter is rarely used as a forum of political discourse for actual political mobilization. Instead, it is used for self-expression (Davis 2018: 3911), though Davis (*ibid.*) did find in his study that most humorous political tweets had an agenda of expressing opposition, bolstering civic support, or establishing political subjectivity. Twitter, in particular, is also closely monitored by the mainstream media, as well as by the public, and it is generally used as a source of news (Yaqub 2017: 614). Nevertheless, it is important to consider Twitter, and other social media forums, critically, as it can be argued that they do not properly represent the general populace of any given nation or community (*ibid.*).

When it comes to social media use, an important term to consider is 'homophily'. This refers to the propensity of social media users to only, or mainly, associate with other users sharing their traits and ideologies (Brummette 2018: 498). It contributes to a hindering of a successfully functioning democracy, in that democracy requires diverse opinions and communication that can flow freely. In contrast, when ideas are only shared between people with similar ideologies this knowledge sharing, and critical thinking does not happen. The communities of people with similar traits and ideologies sharing thoughts with each other are called 'echo chambers' (*ibid.*). Brummette (2018: 503) further explains echo chambers by claiming that they are formed when social media users receive inaccurate information through computer algorithms and cognitive systems. These inaccuracies in the information they receive reinforce the ideologies and beliefs they already hold. When it comes to President Donald Trump and his uses of Twitter, it could be argued that, by focusing on his echo chamber "Trump uses Twitter as a kind of gut focus-group polling to pick up and amplify messages that resonate" (O'Meara 2018: 37). However, when looking at polls conducted by both CNN (in 2017) and Fox News (also in 2017), most Americans were sceptical of the President's tweets and often found them misleading and easy to misunderstand, while only 13% wholly approved of them (Ekovich 2017: 503). Therefore, Ekovich (*ibid.*) argues that Trump's supporters might actually be hearing their own voices echoing back at them when reading his tweets, from their personal political echo chamber which in turn muffles the President's voice. In any case, it can be concluded that echo chambers hinder effective political discussion because they exclude dissenting opinions which are crucial as

without them the subsets presented in social media platforms do not represent the general populace, but rather a vocal group of extreme individuals (O'Meara 2018: 37).

Ott (2017) has analysed extensively the language of Twitter, also in relation to Donald Trump. He found that it promotes impetuous, simple, denigrating, and dehumanising public discourse. According to him (2017: 60), the media ecology (i.e., the fixed physical, psychological and social features) of Twitter as a microblogging platform include simplicity, impulsivity, incivility, and motivation. The character limit on Twitter results in simple messages, which in turn contributes to rapid attention shift and reduced deliberations. Impulsivity refers to the lack of effort needed when tweeting: there is no forethought required and the consequences are hardly considered, which causes emotionally charged messages (Ott 2017: 61). As for incivility, the informality and depersonalization of interactions makes it easier to act impolitely and offensively, and to ignore correct style and grammar. These kinds of tweets often show a need for attention and self-promotion as their main motivation (Ott 2017: 62). As for Donald Trump, his language on Twitter resembled his regular face-to-face language quite well (Edwards 2018: 30), which might in part explain his Twitter fame (Ott 2017: 63-64). Donald Trump's Twitter feed often comprised of simple language, mentions of friends and colleagues, insults towards his opponents, negative messages, exclamation points and all caps (*ibid.*). All this, Ott (2017: 64) claims, heightens the tweets' emotional impact all the while creating an emotional contagion.

The rise of Twitter as a medium of political messages has raised the question of whether traditional media messages are still considered more influential or not (Morris 2018: 457). In his study, Morris (2018: 458-459) came to the conclusion that there is continual crossbreeding between different media platforms and that there are no clear boundaries left between social and traditional media. This he calls this the hybrid media model. This theory further points to the fact that there is no relevant difference in the credibility or persuasiveness of political messages whether they were broadcast on Twitter or in traditional mass media (Morris 2018: 459). However, most social media platforms are not created for news dissemination and therefore their uncritical acceptance as a sole, or principal, source of news is deemed problematic (Ott 2017: 65). What Ott (*ibid.*) also recognises as problematic is how the mainstream media treats Twitter as news and promotes the tweets of prominent people. An example of this is how traditional media showcases President Donald Trump's tweets to the degree that it is hard not to be in some way aware of them while only a small percentage of Americans read them directly from Twitter (Edwards 2018: 31).

Another term that is relevant to social media analysis is discourse architecture. It is a method that can be used to analyse different social media platforms that support interaction and open discussion (Freelon 2015: 776). These networked environments are analysed based on the possibilities of pre-selecting the content that you are exposed to, whether it is possible to reply to others, how much text there can be in a post and whether you can filter the posts and report unsuitable content. The existence of these features on a platform, and how prevalent they are, can encourage users of said platform to deliberate on the content they produce, which will be discussed in further detail in following subchapters.

The concepts introduced in this section, specifically those of homophily, echo chambers and media ecology, will be instrumental in the analysis section of President Trump's tweets as they help showcase the construction of the tweets themselves and how they might affect his audience. The presence of homophily and echo chambers also support the need for critical analysis of social media texts as they, by nature, lack diversity and thereby promote singular views and ideas.

### **2.1.2 Mass media as a medium for political discussion**

In addition to social media in the form of Twitter, this study also analyses discourses from Late-Night Television and a political podcast, both of which will fall under the umbrella term 'mass media', in this instance.

I use the term mass media here instead of audio-visual media for the sake of consistency. This is a reasonable choice, even though I will be excluding print media from my analysis and will be employing merely the audio aspect of mass media in my thesis, since the podcast lacks the visual aspect all together. Despite the fact that social media, discussed previously, is here included within mass media, I will be discussing them separately. This is done because they do vary from each other based on the previous research on the topic, and as my data comes from both audio-visual mass media and social media. In this type of audio-visual mass media, the information comes through verbal as well as non-verbal messages (Schaeffer 2010: 4). Non-verbal messages can include, for example, leaning in, close-ups of a speaker, the seating arrangements and voices coming from off-camera. These, in combination with the verbal message, aim to influence the audience and transfer the given message (Schaeffer 2010: 4).

As mass media functions as a tool to transfer information from the few to the many it can be used as a filter to pass only certain ideas and fabricating the facts (Gushchina 2015). This can be done quite easily by telling outright lies, selecting the events chosen for public consumption,

simplification, black and white propaganda, stereotyping, repetitions etc. By following these methods, mass media can be used to persuade, control, or even manipulate the average person (Gushchina 2015), and this effect is enhanced by the importance of information in the society and the lack of critical reading skills. Another way in which mass media affect the impression received by the average person is through hostile media perception (ibid.). Hostile media perception refers to the tendency of partisans that are on the opposing sides of an issue, to see an identical article or others on mass media as being biased for the other side (Feldman 2011: 410). Relating to this, Feldman (ibid.) introduces the term “selective categorization”. By this, he means the action of opposing partisans processing and recalling identical information but still categorizing aspects of it differently, biased for the other side. The same information is filtered through partisan lenses which creates different stimulus for both groups.

A particular form of more traditional mass media is the televised late-night show. The shows have become more political ever since the Presidential elections of 2000 in the United States (Niven et. al 2003: 118-119). The audience of late-night TV shows is largely comprised of young people, and they are used as a source of political knowledge (Young and Tisinger 2006: 114). However, Young and Tisinger (2006: 116) also discovered that the worry that young people ignore more contemporary news media, in favour of late-night TV shows was unfounded. Instead, late-night TV shows were used as a “gateway” for other news outlets. In short, Young and Tisinger (ibid.) found that young people who watched, and learned from, late-night TV were regularly more likely to follow traditional media than those who did not watch late-night TV. Late-night TV shows communicate their political messages usually through humour. Especially in the past, their humour was mainly focused on the personal characteristics of politicians rather than on policy issues (Niven et. al 2003: 120). There is, however, a noticeable shift in this; this was discovered by Baym (2005) who studied the Daily Show with Jon Stewart. According to Baym (ibid. 259), the show is a hybrid blend of comedy, political conversation and news, and she even refers to it as an experiment in journalism. This type of alternative journalism comprises satire to interrogate power, parody to critique contemporary news and dialogue to enact a model of deliberative democracy (Baym 2005: 261). She (ibid. 263) claims that Jon Stewart’s show delves deeper into satirical news updates than more traditional late-night shows, while also violating journalistic conventions (e.g., by using soundbites of: rambling politicians, poor grammar, and false statements). Baym (2005: 273) continues by saying that Stewart even mocks traditional media by questioning the content of contemporary news and offers criticism by parodying the news. This new type of late-night

show also differs from the traditional ones in that, in addition to celebrities, political figures are often interviewed (Baym 2005: 271). Whereas in traditional mediated political talk, interviews often follow certain talking points, on Stewart's show, it is an honest discussion with a circulation of ideas, which Baym sees as an important part in the reinvention of political journalism (2005: 272). In Baym's research, the discussion deals only with the Daily Show with Jon Stewart, but I would argue that more and more late-night comedy shows are beginning to follow this model, or at least to adopt some of the methods. This is also the case with the Late Show with Stephen Colbert that this study will analyse.

The other form of mass media relevant to the current study is podcasts. Kim et.al (2016: 42) refer to the New Oxford American Dictionary, when describing podcasts as "a digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program, made available on the internet for downloading to a personal audio player." In today's media atmosphere, there are multiple apps that can be used for disseminating and listening to podcasts, for example, Spotify, iTunes, Soundcloud. The main feature of podcasts is that they blend the lines between what is "public" and "private" as they possess the characteristics of both traditional and new media (Kim et.al 2016: 43). They resemble traditional radio broadcasting but are disseminated through means of social media. Initially podcasting was mainly reserved for amateurs, eventually, however, commercial radio stations and other mainstream media adopted podcasting as well as a way of increasing their listener involvement (McClung & Johnson 2010: 83). According to a study conducted in 2008, 20% of Americans have listened to podcasts, and it was estimated that the number would continue growing exponentially (ibid. 82). The Ben Shapiro Show, which is one of the foci of this study, is produced by the Daily Wire and described in the shows official Facebook page as "the fastest growing, hardest hitting, most insightful, and savagely irreverent conservative podcast on the web" (Facebook 2021).

The growing popularity of podcasts relies on the fact that there is a wide range of options of what to listen to, as well as the possibility of time-shifting and place-shifting (McClung & Johnson 2010: 83). This means that, due to the nature of podcasts, the individual can freely choose when and where they wish to listen to a particular podcast, rather than being tied to specific broadcast times as with traditional radio programs for example. In McClung and Johnson's study (2010: 88), they found that most podcast users have a higher educational level, and they see themselves as active social networkers. Over 70% also fell in the age group of 18-34. The study also recognised five distinct reasons for listening to podcasts: entertainment, time-shifting, library building, advertising, and social aspects (ibid.). The most prevalent of

these aspects was the social aspects, as in sharing with friends and discussing the podcasts with other people. From this, it can be understood that the content is still valued higher than convenience when choosing what to listen to (McClung & Johnson 2010: 91). Interestingly, despite the rise of podcasts, and political ones in particular in the United States, not that much attention has so far been given to them in the world of academia (Kim et.al 2016: 43).

In terms of the present study, the analysis will focus on large part, to Steven Colbert's monologues in his late-night TV show as well as Ben Shapiro's podcasts, which makes it important to understand how these two media function and spread their message. It is also important to note how they differ from each other, as they present two different political views, which is where selective categorization and hostile media perception come into play.

### **2.1.3 Norms of political discussion**

All the types of political discourse share some similarities with each other, no matter what medium it is presented in. These similarities usually include influencing people's opinions, invoking public discussion, or increasing mobility within a society (e.g., voting). However, there are often some significant differences between different ideologies, specifically those of liberals and conservatives. As this study analyses people from the opposing ends of the political spectrum, it is crucial to take these differences into consideration. They are succinctly exemplified in the norms of political discussion.

In political discussion, the evaluative criteria setting apart "good" communicative acts from "bad" ones are specified by norms (Freelon 2015: 773). The most commonly studied norm is deliberation, but, according to Freelon (ibid.), it is crucial to also take communitarianism and liberal individualism into account in order to more fully understand and categorize online political behaviour (ibid. 774). Deliberation in political communication consists of openness, reciprocity, reason-giving, civility, and communication across lines of political differences (Freelon 2015: 772). Based on these five factors it can be stated that deliberation is intrinsic in promoting thorough group discussion and it encourages individuals to consider the claims for and against different propositions presented by other group members carefully (Halpern 2012: 1160). There are six different variables that can be used to analyse the deliberation behind a political statement: these include the type of argument it is, equality of participation, message length, conversational coherence, civility, and politeness (Halpern 2012: 1163). Halpern (ibid.) described these in more detail by stating that the argument type is analysed based on the logic and reasoning behind it, and on whether the participants' interaction was reciprocal. Message

length, on the other hand is rather straight-forward: the longer the message is, the more it allows for complex ideas and sentences. Conversational coherence can be analysed by looking at whether the messages are related to the initial message and each other. In contrast, civility and politeness consider the way in which the participants treat each other (ibid.). A term that is crucial in studying deliberation is selective exposure, which resembles very closely homophily discussed previously (Freelon 2015: 774). According to the idea behind selective exposure, people select content that is opinion reinforcing, however, they do not avoid opinion challenging content systematically as could be assumed (ibid.).

The norm ‘communitarianism’ refers to the act of collaborating merely with individuals sharing your ideals and working together to advance ideologically specific goals (Freelon 2015: 774). This type of action is common in Twitter, as it is relatively easy to choose to follow only your preferred streams of information there, and so discuss and share ideas with like-minded individuals. Freelon (2015: 775) also found that people acting according to these ideals are more likely to disengage from outsiders or treat them merely as adversaries. Drawing on these characteristics and research studying this phenomenon in a US context it can be argued that communitarianism, as well as deliberativeness, are most commonly associated with progressives, or those on the political left. This can be seen, for example, in the tendency of progressives engaging in deliberative metrics, such as cross-cutting justifications and questions (Freelon 2015: 786). Conservatives were also more likely to contribute to the discourses by way of monologues and insults thereby adopting a significantly more liberal individualist tone (ibid.).

As for liberal individualism, it is defined by Freelon (2015: 774) as “a single-minded pursuit of uninhibited self-expression” and it might take place at the expense of responsiveness and civility. In comparison to communitarianism, liberal individualist ideas are more often connected to conservatives or the political right wing (ibid. 786). According to Freelon (2015: 775-776), people with this kind of ideology usually consider individuals’ inalienable rights the main concern of democracy. In practise this might manifest as speaking freely while not listening to others or dissenting opinions. Freelon (2015: 777) also connects liberal individualists most with media where the discourse architecture is not restricted to the amount of how much can be written or uttered, this then quite clearly does not include Twitter.

It is extremely important to apply a multi-norm framework when studying political communication as it allows for the possibility of understanding a wider range of online political behaviour, even non-deliberative communication acts (Freelon 2015: 775). In this study, this is



achieved by applying methods of Discourse Historical Approach (which in itself is multidimensional) in conjunction with the different terms and concepts presented in these beginning chapters.

## **2.2 Populist discourses**

Populism, and especially right-wing populism, has been a growing concern within the Western world for several years now. As globalization gains speed, so does populism, as it often promotes nationalistic and conservative ideas in a reactionary way. As a member of the conservative Republican Party President Donald Trump could be assumed to present right-wing populist discourses within his communications - which makes it important to analyse how these discourses function.

Populism as such has existed for as long as democracy has. It is built on the idea presented by Aristotle that democracy means “government of the people, for the people, and by the people” (Wodak 2012: 3). From this, it can be gathered that populism presents an extreme form of democracy where parliaments and other similar forms of governing are seen as secondary, or even obstacles, as they prohibit the direct rule of the people. Most populist parties have a deep-rooted history in fascism and/or Nazism. This connection is, however, usually downplayed extensively. In relation to this phenomenon, Wodak introduces the idea of ‘parties without history’ (2012: 11). Wodak (2015: 10-11) also argues, that in contrast to fascism, current populist parties usually represent no coherent ideology, but rather a mixed, sometimes even contradictory, array of beliefs, attitudes, and stereotypes aimed at addressing a varied electorate. Populist discourses are often used to create fear and support populist parties’ policy proposals by appealing to the necessities of society (Wodak 2015: 5). These appeals are constructed by representing complex historical events as mere snapshots, which in turn allows for the creation of extreme dichotomies such as friend/foe and victim/perpetrator (ibid.). Populist discourses can be divided into right-wing populism and left-wing populism. These two branches are set apart by the right-wing’s tendency to direct their discourses at ethnically and/or nationally and/or religiously defined ‘other’, whereas leftist rhetoric is not ethnically exclusive (Wodak 2012: 7). Right-wing populist discourses resemble Donald Trump’s rhetoric extremely well, and they will therefore be the main focus in this thesis.

Right-wing populism is often defined by how it holds no one coherent ideology. Instead, its discourse focuses on single issues and the preservation of the status quo with the help of a few simplified slogans and a charismatic leader (Wodak 2012: 10). Populistic discourses can usually

be identified by their extensive use of keywords or topics and by their protests against the power of the elites, all the while framing foreigners as the culprits for most issues within any given nation (ibid. 5 & 8-9). In turn, their anti-elitism appeals to the 'common man/woman' as it frames "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite", consisting of people with privilege by birth, wealth, election or education, as antagonistic groups (Wodak 2015: 8). Wodak also argues that the main weakness of populism is its limited understanding of who 'the people' actually are (2012: 3). In fact, the very simplified and homogenous understanding of 'the people' as well as the division between 'us' and 'them' common within populist movements ignores social fragmentation (ibid. 5-6).

The electoral bases of right-wing populist parties often consist of lower-middle-class and blue-collar voters (Wodak 2012: 10). People who fall under these categories often lack higher education and see globalization and the decrease of national sovereignty as a threat. Therefore, they are more inclined to side with right-wing populists (ibid. 11). Another factor drawing people to these political parties is their attitudes of protesting against taxation, integration, and immigration (Wodak 2012: 10). In the United States especially populist movements have also a strong connection to religious-Christian fundamentalist agenda and the idea of 'American exceptionalism' which all work to promote racist and exclusive ideologies (ibid. 15-16). The Tea Party movement, for example, falls under these categories and has close ties with the Republican Party.

### **2.3 Political satire**

The role of political satire in the mediation of Western politics is highly visible. It is also a method used by both Steven Colbert and Ben Shapiro. It offers a way for the public to critically interpret politics (Higgie 2015). Researchers often define political satire as a communicative strategy that can be employed to negotiate some form of democratic change, demand solutions for problems in society or to criticize regime power (Marzouki 2015: 283). The many possible forms which political satire can take include parody, irony, and sarcasm (Boukes et. al 2015: 724). The amount of political parody and satire has increased significantly with the advances in digital social technologies (ICT) and internet culture (Davis 2018: 3899). The difference between parody and sarcasm being that parody is the imitation of someone's style for comedic effect and satire is a humorous method of exposing someone's stupidity or vices. Political satire also receives increased attention in times of politicised media events. Davis (ibid.) recognizes two types of political satire; one where the satirist uses humour as a tool to make political claims, and the other where political content is used merely as source material for jokes.

A fairly new phenomenon with political satire is that it is no longer seen only as commentary of recent events, but rather as politics itself (Petrovic 2018: 203). Some satirists are even regarded as more truthful, sincere, and reliable sources of real-time information than the mainstream, corporate media, that has, until recently, been seen as the main source of information (ibid. 202). Higgie (2015: 69) presents the term “truth-teller” as something that is associated with political satirists and comedians. This is because they are often asked to cover even controversial issues, and because the audience perceives them as telling the truth from outside of the organizational publicity machines. Higgie further explains this by arguing that they are not necessarily speaking the objective truth. Instead, “their practice of defining falsehoods in their satire is regularly accompanied by a corresponding, unspoken demand that the truth must be restored in opposition to what is widely regarded as the deeply untrustworthy and manipulative world of contemporary politics” (ibid.). This might be a result of politicians and satirists’ crossing over to each other’s realms, as even politicians must often appear entertaining in order to be successful (ibid.). Higgie (2015: 64) also argues that, in addition to encouraging healthy scepticism towards democracy, political satire might also create apathy and cynicism towards political actors or even reinforce the political agenda that it aims to attack.

Nevertheless, political satire often allows for a fresh way of seeing political matters. It has been found to be especially appealing to the younger generations. Therefore, it may even increase their political attentiveness (Boukes et. al 2015: 727). It provides perspectives differing from the traditional news media but requires some intertextual knowledge in order to be understood (ibid. 724). What Boukes et. al (2015: 724) mean by this is that political satire does not happen in a vacuum; rather it is deconstructed from existing news and knowledge. If the audience has no previous knowledge about the topic, then the intended meaning of the satirical message is most likely not understood. The terms ‘hostile media perception’ and ‘selective categorization’ are also relevant when it comes to analysing the effects of political satire. If the satire is understood in a way that is opposed to one’s views or threatens the individual’s self-image then it will not be perceived as funny (Boukes et. al 2015: 723). This is also important when considering the intertextuality of satire. If the individual processing the satirical message lacks the necessary background information, they are most likely to interpret it in a way that does not threaten their self-image, even if that is not the intended meaning.

In their study Boukes et. al (2015: 726) found that understanding political satire requires a high cognitive load which, in turn, increases the absorption of the message and makes it more persuasive. However, they also found that the higher absorption of the message results in fewer

counterarguments, so it could be argued that political satire, when understood properly, might actually decrease the volume of the individual's own critical perception of the issue (ibid.). In the same way as Higgle (2015), also Boukes et. al (2015: 724) argue that satire might actually invoke positive thoughts about the target of the joke, and that this is due to the perceived humour of the joke which in turn encourages counterarguments. In light of this, satirists should make clear, that even though they are presenting their message as a joke, the topic is indeed serious, and the method of joking should also be more definitive as this would give more credibility and less counterarguments towards the message. As such, this concept of either passively consuming political satire without critical thinking about the topic on the audience's part or the satire forming positive notions towards the object of the joke within the audience can be problematic for the satirists as they might not be able to accomplish their goals of criticising societal issues. Looking back at Baym's (2005) study of John Oliver's discourses (who, it could be argued, represents political satire as well), the goal is to present an alternative form of journalism, something to be taken seriously and understood. However, according to Higgle (2015) and Boukes et. al (2015) this might not actually happen.

The most important takeaway from the previous research as it pertains to this Master's Thesis, is the understanding of concepts such as echo chamber, homophily, selective categorization, and hostile media perception. They are vital in understanding how public political discourse appeals to their audiences and affects language choices by the political actors as the messages can be aimed at a very specific group of people. In addition, this background chapter also looks thoroughly at how political satire and populist discourse are characterized and traditionally what kind of groups engage in these kinds of discourse.

### **3 THE PRESENT STUDY**

In this section, I present the aims of my thesis. I will also explain the choices of my data and their collection in detail. I will also shed more light into the methods of analysis, as in the steps that will be taken when conducting the analysis. Lastly, this section will also comment on the questions related to data protection, as the present data come from social media sources, and as all the people at the centre of analysis are public figures and will not be dealt with as anonymous subjects in this thesis.

#### **3.1 Aims and research questions**

In this thesis, I wish to raise awareness of the language that political actors from different ends of the spectrum, both in terms of ideologies as well as status or role in the political field use. More specifically, my data come from both conservative (Republican) and liberal (Democratic) sources. In addition, one person in focus in my analysis is a career politician, the other two are merely commenting on political events from the outside. The language use that I will pay particularly close attention to is how it is used in relation to a scandal surrounding a minority woman, in this case that person being Omarosa Manigault Newman. This aim is exceedingly important as political discourse is increasingly spreading to social media and other less traditional news outlets. Language use in social media can have a significant impact on the audience, both by spreading ideologies as well as the linguistic features that are used into mainstream discussions. The political discourse in question took place following the announcement of Omarosa's tell-all book's launch. This is an interesting period for my collection of data, because the tone of political discourse, especially in Trump's tweets, shifted dramatically in comparison to when Omarosa was initially fired. The reason I will also study Colbert's monologues and Shapiro's podcasts, and how they discuss the event in general and Trump's tweets about it, is that they, presumably, offer two very contrasting points of view on the issue both in terms of linguistic features and ideologies. The contrasting nature of these two instances of political discourse becomes evident when looking at Colbert and Shapiro's political affiliations and purposed aims of the discourses. As pro-Trump and anti-Trump, they will undoubtedly reflect differently on this situation and their satirical remarks will most likely be directed at opposing actors in this situation. They might also be employing different linguistic means when it comes to the argumentation strategies that they use in relation to this issue, this would be an interesting point of comparison to see whether, for example, one uses more

fallacious argumentation than the other. It is also important to note, that Shapiro, being a Republican, might borrow Trump's populist rhetoric while in his defence.

As such, my research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What kinds of discourse and argumentation strategies does Trump use in relation to Omarosa in his presidential Twitter account?
2. How do Colbert and Shapiro respond to the overall events and the President's tweets in their discourses?

The first question focuses on the instances of political discourse within President Donald Trump's Twitter during August 2018, and it strives to discover what kinds of strategies he uses, and how he aims to influence his audience into siding with him in this issue. As most examples of political speech aims at encouraging civic participation or gaining support for a particular idea or ideology, it is important to understand what kind of argumentative strategies politicians have in their repertoire as they can be very effective methods of persuasion. In practice, I will attempt to answer this question with the methods provided by the discourse historical approach into critical discourse analysis.

Whereas the first research question focuses on analysing only the tweets published by President Trump, question number two delves deeper into linguistic strategies used by Colbert and Shapiro. Using the discourse historical approach of critical discourse studies, I will look closely at the linguistic choices and strategies at play, as well as their argumentation. In practice, this part of the analysis will follow, in large part, the same steps of analysis as the first one focusing on Trump's tweets. However, here the analysis will also focus on how these two political actors comment on Trump's actions as well the situation in general. This is because, as stated previously, my hypothesis is that they will do this very differently from each other owing to their different aims. Shapiro wishes to support Trump, whereas Colbert opposes the President. The main comparison of Colbert and Shapiro's discourse will take place in the discussion section, where I will also reflect on my findings in light of previous research. My hope is, that this study will showcase the importance of the critical analysis of political discourse as an effective method of influencing large portions of the society.

### **3.2 Data selection and collection**

As mentioned above, I will be using a combination of tweets, monologues, and podcasts for my data. The tweets were collected directly from President Donald Trump's personal Twitter feed. As for Stephen Colbert's monologues, I extracted them from The Late Show with Stephen

Colbert's official YouTube account. Initially, these monologues were broadcast on television, but for my purposes it was easier to collect the monologues from YouTube as they are there readily available. The podcasts are available on several different online platforms, but I downloaded them from SoundCloud. They have also been published on the official webpage of the Daily Wire, which is in charge of producing the podcasts, but they store the material only for a limited amount of time. Therefore, I used another source for the podcasts.

The data from President Trump's tweets cover two periods of time. Firstly, they date back from the two days following Omarosa's dismissal from the White House in December of 2017. The main portion of the tweets come from the week of Omarosa's book launch in August 2018. These two periods of time are interesting when it comes to the tweets, because, on the outside, Omarosa's departure seemed very amicable, but later as news about her oncoming book detailing everything that happened while she worked for Trump started coming out, the tone in the public discussion, as well as Trump's tweets, changed drastically. The reason for selecting my data from December 2017 and August 2018 is because I want to find out whether, and how, the situation, as in the announcement of Omarosa's book, affects the language President Trump uses. In December, Omarosa had merely been fired and, even though the parting was not perfectly amicable, as was found out later and can be seen in my data, there were no further conflicts. In the following August, however, Omarosa's tell-all book was published and along with it she published some tapes that she had recorded within the White House and while talking to members of the administration. These paint President Trump in a very negative light. This difference in situation will most likely prove to have some effect in the tweets. While during those two weeks from which my Twitter data comes from, Trump did tweet several times relating to other topics, they are not be included in this study. Rather I focus only on tweets that directly or implicitly refer to Omarosa and her book.

As for Steven Colbert's monologues from his late-night TV show and Ben Shapiro's podcast, the data collected covers merely the August of 2018. The reason I chose not to include any data from the previous December, is that, while Colbert discussed Omarosa's dismissal at length, Shapiro chose to leave it out of his podcast at the time. However, at the height of public discussion about Omarosa's tell-all book 'Unhinged' both Colbert and Shapiro discussed the topic extensively in their prospective platforms. When it comes to Colbert's monologues, I chose entire sections of his monologues that were separated into individual YouTube videos. These vary in length from three to twelve minutes. As for Shapiro's podcasts, I transcribed

extracts from them in which the discussion related to my topic. In total my data from Colbert and Shapiro consists of 32 minutes of monologues and 23 minutes of podcast data. When it comes to the reason why the main portion of my analysis relies on comparing a late-night TV show and a podcast, it is because both mediums mainly attract a young audience, and both rely heavily on the audio aspect of message transference (especially since I will not analyse any visual cues from Colbert's monologues). Despite these similarities within the mediums, Colbert and Shapiro themselves are very different and hold contrasting political views, which makes analysing their discourses valuable.

Analysing political discourse in general is very important, but especially so when it comes to political discourse in new media (e.g., Twitter, YouTube, podcasts), and when it is by prominent public figures. As the data in this study exemplify discourses surrounding a minority woman (Omarosa being African American), this makes analysing these discourses even more important. President Donald Trump and his tweets reach over 50 million followers, not to take into account how much further they are carried through retweets and other citations in other forms of mass media. Colbert does not reach quite those numbers in his viewership, but his monologues are often viewed over a million times on YouTube, and that does not consider how many people watch his show when it airs on television. As for Shapiro, it is difficult to discern exactly how many people listen to him, as his podcasts are shared through so many different platforms and many do not share how many times the podcast has been played, but according to the official webpage, his is the most popular conservative podcast in the United States.

When it comes to data protection, my use of social media discourse by public figures is justifiable. Firstly, it is important to note that all platforms, Twitter, YouTube and SoundCloud, allow the use of their content for research purposes. As to how I justify using material created by President Donald Trump, late-night television host Stephen Colbert and podcaster Ben Shapiro is that they are all very prominent public figures. This makes it important for the general public to understand how they use language to create representations and with them influence, and even manipulate, their audience and how they perceive certain groups of people. My hope and justification are also that this kind of study might be helpful in raising awareness for the importance of critical media reading skills.

### **3.3 Methods of Analysis**

As the current study focuses on analysing political discourse in many forms, be that through social or mass media or representative of populist or satirical discourse, it is important to



employ means that allow for a systematic and thorough look at language use within a political context. In addition, the present study also represents qualitative, instead of quantitative analysis, which in itself requires precise and in-depth methods of analysis.

To achieve these goals, this present study strives to employ methods provided by discourse analysis as the theoretical framework while doing qualitative analysis. The value of qualitative analysis, in contrast to quantitative analysis, according to Wodak (2015: 50), is in its ability to study discriminatory practices in-depth, something that traditional analytical methods of measurement often fail to do, as they might encounter enormous obstacles in their attempt to identify racist, xenophobic, and antisemitic attitudes. However, discourse analysis in itself is not a method of analysis, but rather a larger framework. Therefore, this study will employ the methods that fall under the umbrella term of discourse analysis. In this case the more specific approach taken is critical discourse analysis (CDA). What makes the analysis of discourse ‘critical’ is its focus on discrimination, oppression, and social issues. These issues are apparent in the asymmetrical power relations between the different actors within the political discourse under investigation in this study (mainly President Donald Trump and Omarosa Manigault Newman).

As the analysis focuses on political discourse, the methodology of discourse-historical approach (DHA), a particular approach to CDA, is used to better describe and understand the strategies of argumentation behind the messages. A particular emphasis is paid on the discursive and argumentation strategies used in these instances of political discourse. Along with explaining the framework of this study and the important concepts it entails, this section will provide a description of the analytical process used in the study, with reference to the aforementioned theories and other relevant concepts presented in the background chapters.

### **3.3.1 Critical discourse analysis**

When engaging in critical analysis of any discourse, in this case political discourse, it is important to understand what the framework implies in terms of the analysis itself and what the relevant terminology refers to. As such, this chapter introduces those relevant concepts while also discussing the possible dilemmas that can occur when using this paradigm and how they can be avoided in any study.

The term ‘politics’ has already been explained in the previous sections, but in order to proceed further, it is also important to note what the term ‘discourse’ means and how it is applied in this study. As Fairclough (2003: 3-4) puts it, discourse can be seen both in an abstract and a concrete

way. In a more abstract sense, it is one element of social life which is inalienable from other elements. As a concrete term, one can refer to specific discourses, such as political discourse, and workplace discourse. These more specific discourses all share their own unique features and contexts in which they may be applied (Fairclough 2003). As such, discourse is what happens when people interact with each other in social situations, language is “a form of social practice” (Fairclough 2013: 33). Therefore, language and discourses are a way of shaping reality and they are an integral part in the creation of social relations of power (ibid. 16). This means that when people act according to conventions that have been widely accepted in the society, they are often, possibly unknowingly, enforcing already existing power relations and assumptions. As these existing relationships can sometimes be very unequal and oppressive towards minority groups, it is important to study how these discourses function and are disseminated. Critical discourse analysis offers tools for this precise phenomenon.

When striving towards a critical analysis of discourses, it is vital to take into consideration the three aspects proposed by Fairclough (2013: 36). These are text, interaction, and context, the analysis of these aspects provides for a way to understand how the surrounding society is affecting each instance of discourse and vice versa (ibid. 35). In addition to understanding the importance of societal influence in general, critical discourse analysis has a strong focus on institutional and social structures at play. This focus on contexts instead of merely the text itself, sets CDA apart from many other paradigms (Meyer and Wodak 2001: 3). In some sense, this can be seen to mean that CDA is biased as it supports “solidarity with the oppressed” as it has a strong focus on the role of discourse in the production of power abuse and unequal power relations (ibid. 96). However, the ‘critical’ nature of this paradigm should lessen its possible bias. As a method of studying social inequality, CDA covers many different approaches and therefore, it should be considered more of a perspective, rather than a specific approach. CDA in itself acts more as a critical lens through which it is possible to employ different theories to the field of discourse analysis in general (van Dijk 2008: 85-86). This reflects the idea presented by Meyer and Wodak (2001: 11) that CDA can be biased, as each researcher will have their own perspectives based on their personal history and interactions within society that will influence how they view specific data. In response to this, it is extremely vital to be as transparent as possible when discussing research findings etc. to avoid subconscious scientific bias (ibid.). This has all been taken into account within the present study.

### **3.3.2 Discourse-historical approach**

In this thesis, the primary methodology of analysis is the discourse-historical approach, because it allows for an efficient and thorough way of examining the argumentation strategies of discourse. It is also often used for the study of political discourse, especially ones with populist connotations, which coincides well with the current thesis. As a specific approach to critical discourse analysis, it also adopts many of the qualities that make CDA particularly effective for these types of discourses, while also providing concrete methods for analysis, something which CDA lacks as a more general methodological framework.

As stated above, the discourse-historical approach (DHA) is one of the many theoretical and methodological approaches within the field of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and it is heavily influenced by other concepts and theories (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 31). As a methodology DHA adheres to critical theory through its socio-political orientation. As its main focus is on criticising power abuse, discrimination, language barriers, and other similar issues with discursive practices in the media for example (Wodak and Meyer 2001, Reisigl and Wodak 2001, Flowerdew and Richardson 2017), it could generally be said that DHA presents critique against the status quo in society. When it comes to this approach the source of data is often populist or otherwise political material (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 32). Part of what distinguishes DHA from other critical methodologies in discourse studies is how it integrates and triangulates knowledge about history and change, the background of the socio-political fields within which the discursive events are embedded, and the practical applications it can provide (Flowerdew and Richardson 2017: 49). In doing this, DHA strives at 1) demystifying the hegemony of specific discourses and/or powerful actors in an asymmetric power relationship achieved with the use of persuasive strategies. It also aims at 2) analysing discourse on multi-contextual levels (Reisigl and Wodak 2001), by paying attention to the context as well as the text-internal factors such as paradoxes and inconsistencies. As such, it has often been used successfully in the study of political discourse. As the aims of DHA and the multifaceted focus on context are compatible with the goals of this study, it was chosen as the theoretical framework for the analysis. In the case of the current study, the investigation focuses on the discursive strategies used by three different political actors in relation to a singular event and how they reflect the change within the history of political discourse as it pertains to these newer forms of media. Triangulation in that sense is to be understood as an instrument that connects intertextual knowledge about the agent under investigation. In practice this means relating each

actor to a specific type of discourse, such as populist or satirical ones, in addition to reflecting on the chosen media of disseminating the message.

The other main principles of DHA have been succinctly summarized below (Reisigl and Wodak 2001, as cited by Can Küçükali 2014: 98-99):

- 1) The approach is interdisciplinary in the sense that it involves theory, methods, methodology, research practice and practical application.
- 2) The approach is problem-oriented.
- 3) Various theories and methods are combined, wherever integration helps to understand and explain the research project.
- 4) The research incorporates fieldwork and ethnography where required for a comprehensive analysis and theorization of the object under investigation.
- 5) The research moves recursively between data and theory.
- 6) Several genres and public spaces as well as intertextual and interdiscursive relationships are studied.
- 7) The historical context is taken into account. Dealing with the historical context allows seeing the recontextualization process that link differing texts and discourses over time.
- 8) Tools and categories are not fixed. They must be elaborated for each analysis according to the specific problems under consideration.
- 9) Although grand theories often serve as a foundation, middle-range theories frequently supply a better theoretical basis in a specific analysis.
- 10) The results of the research should be made available to and applied by experts and be communicated to the public.

The current study follows these principles as closely as the limited scope of a Master's thesis allows, with the main focus being on principles one through three as well as six and seven. In practice, this will be evident in how the data was selected (surrounding a single issue and from a variety of genres), the steps the analysis takes (studying linguistic choices in discursive strategies and argumentation) and how the results of the analysis will be discussed in how they relate to past research and how this study might contradict or support any past studies (accounts for historical context around the discourses). The most crucial concept when it comes to DHA is triangulation (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 35). Triangulation promotes interdisciplinarity by introducing a variety of empirical data and background information, which in conjunction with each other help the analysis transcend the purely linguistic dimension of many other discursive analytical approaches (ibid.). The triangulatory approach as presented by Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 35) relies on the notion of a four-tiered concept of 'context'. The tiers are as follows: 1) the text internal co-text 2) the intertextual relationship between different utterances and texts or even whole genres and discourses, 3) the so called 'middle range theories', which include

institutional frames and extralinguistic social variables within a given context, e.g., formality of situation and occasion of communicative event, and 4) ‘grand theories’ or the larger context of socio-political and historical elements that the text falls under, as in the fields of action as well as the history of the discursive event which the discourse topics are related to (ibid. 41). These are also called the four dimensions of context (Flowerdew and Richardson 2017: 53).

In following these principles attributed to DHA, I adopt an analytical perspective and other relevant tools to analyse the political discourses of President Donald Trump, Steven Colbert, and Ben Shapiro. For each of their discourse I will 1) look at their content and topics, 2) identify the discursive strategies used and 3) examine the linguistic means (i.e., argumentation strategies) and possible context-dependent linguistic realizations they mobilize. Discursive strategies refer to intentionally chosen practices and/or plans that help achieve a specific goal be it social, political, linguistic, or psychological (Wodak and Meyer 2001: 11). Often these strategies are employed systematically. From a DHA standpoint, these strategies are approached by going through five questions:

- 1) how are persons, phenomena, objects, etc. referred to linguistically,
- 2) what characteristics or qualities are attributed to them,
- 3) what kind of argumentation is present in the discourse,
- 4) from what point of view are these attributions and arguments presented, and
- 5) are the utterances articulated overtly, or are they intensified or mitigated? (Flowerdew and Richardson 2017: 52, Reisigl and Wodak 2001, Wodak and Meyer 2001).

Wodak and Meyer (2001: 11) argue that these questions represent five types of discursive strategies all of which are closely tied to the creation of positive self and negative other presentation (2001). The strategies are nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivation, and mitigation/intensification (ibid.). All of these discursive strategies have specific objectives and devices.

The first of these discursive strategies is nomination, which refers to the construction of in-groups and out-groups through membership categorization, dividing language (e.g., metaphors and metonymies) and synecdoches. The second strategy, predication, is closely related to nomination as it is the labelling of different social actors in a specific manner that can be either positive or negative, this can be achieved by attributing stereotypical and/or evaluative traits to social actors. This is followed by argumentation strategies, which try to justify and legitimize

the presented positive or negative attributes. This justification of political exclusion/inclusion, and discrimination is achieved by the use of topoi (the concept of which will be explained later). Perspectivation in turn positions the speaker in relation to the topic expressing either involvement or distance by, for example, using narrative, descriptive or reporting strategies when describing events and utterances. Lastly, intensification and mitigation are used to modify the epistemic status of a given proposition. This in turn either intensifies or mitigates the illocutionary force of an utterance, which is usually a discriminatory one. (Wodak and Meyer 2001, Reisigl and Wodak 2001)

Table 1. Discursive strategies, their objectives and devices (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 95)

| Strategy   | Objective(s)  | Device(s)  |
|--|---|--|
| Nomination   | Discursive construction of social actors, objects, phenomena, events and processes, actions   | Membership categorization devices, deictics, anthonyms, etc.<br>Metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche<br>Verbs and nouns used to denote processes and actions etc.   |
| Predication  | Discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions (more or less positively and negatively) | Stereotypical, evaluative attribution of negative and positive traits (e.g. in the form of adjectives, appositions, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, conjunctive clauses, infinitive clauses and participial clauses or groups)<br>Explicit predicates or predicative nouns/adjectives/pronouns<br>Collocations<br>Explicit comparisons, similes, metaphors and other rhetorical figures<br>Allusion, evocations and presuppositions/implicatures etc. |
| Argumentation  | Justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness  | Topoi (see below)<br>Fallacies (see below)   |
| Perspectivation, Framing or Discourse Representation | Positioning speaker's or writer's point of view and expressing involvement or distance  | Deictics<br>Direct. Indirect or Free Indirect Speech<br>Quotation marks, discourse markers or particles<br>Metaphors   |

|                                |  |   |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
|                                |  | Animating Prosody   |
| Intensification and Mitigation | Modifying the illocutionary force and thus the epistemic or deontic status of utterances | Diminutives and Augmentatives<br>Modal particles, tag questions, subjunctives, hesitations, vague expressions<br>Hyperboles, Litotes<br>Indirect speech acts<br>Verbs of saying, thinking, feeling etc. |

The strategies of argumentation are composed of topoi and fallacies, they allow for a discussion of different forms of discrimination and social exclusion by arguing both for and against racism, nationalism, and ethnicism (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 74). Within argumentation theory, the description of topoi connect them to obligatory premises thereby connecting the arguments with the conclusions (ibid. 74-75). In other words, they are content-related conclusion rules or warrants which allow for a connection between the argument and the conclusion or central claim therefore providing justification (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 102). Another way to paraphrase the meaning of topoi is to describe them as ‘search formulas’ that can help identify the arguments present in a text (Wodak 2015: 51). They are so called argumentation strategies as they aid in producing successful speeches, the formation can be either as conditional or causal paraphrases (ibid.). The analysis of topoi can be used in detecting possibly convincing fallacious arguments within the genre of political discourse. Instead of listing all possible topoi Wodak recognizes, I gave a cursory glance to the data in the present study in order to find ones that are most likely to appear within the analysis and chose to present only them. As such, the most relevant topoi to this study are exemplified below:

Topos of burden: If an institution is burdened by a specific problem, then one should act to diminish it.

Topos of history: Because history teaches that specific actions have specific consequences, one should perform or omit a specific action in a specific situation.

Argumentum ad ignorantiam: An appeal to ignorance means that a certain argument, thesis or opinion should be regarded as true as long as the reverse has not been proven.

Argumentum ad verecundiam: This fallacy consists of supporting one’s standpoint by means of reference to an authority considered as competent, superior or unimpeachable. This appeal is fallacious if the referenced authority is

not competent or qualified, if it is prejudiced or if it is referenced in an inaccurate way.

Argumentum ad populum: This pathetic fallacy encompasses more or less populist appeals to ‘masses’ of people. It consists of the appeal to the prejudiced emotions, opinions and convictions of a specific social group instead of relevant arguments.

Hasty generalizations: A generalization on the basis of a quantitative sample that is not representative. This fallacy can either take the form of a *compositio* or of a *divisio*, the former consisting of replacing the whole by a part, the latter consisting of replacing a part by the whole.

Fallacies of ambiguity, equivocation, amphibole or clarity: This consists of surreptitiously changing the interpretation of an ambiguous utterance or of intentionally playing with ambiguous, polysemic meanings for the purpose of weakening the antagonist’s arguments and standpoint, and for strengthening one’s own arguments and standpoint.

Topos of advantage: This can be paraphrased through the following conditional: if an action under a specific relevant point of view will be useful, then one should perform it.

Topos of authority: If one refers to somebody/something in a position of authority, then the action is legitimate.

Topos of definition: A person or thing designated X should have the qualities/traits/attributes consistent with the meaning of X.

Topos of justice: If persons/actions/situations are equal in specific respects, they should be treated/dealt with in the same way.

Topos of reality: Tautologically, this infers that reality is as it is and a particular action should be performed.

Argumentum ad hominem: It is a verbal attack on the antagonist’s personality and character instead of challenging his/her argument with counter-arguments.

Trajectio in alium: This fallacy is used strategically in rationalizations, in the discursive construction of scapegoats, in victim-victimizer reversals etc. It means shifting the blame, responsibility or guilt onto somebody else. In politics this can



be used to decrease the responsibility of executive power so that potential criticism can be directed towards other political adversaries (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 72-80).

The actual step-by-step analytical process used in this thesis was modified from how Can Küçükali uses it in his thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (2014: 135-147) and it consists of two main steps. The entry-level analysis is where the discourse topics were identified and further divided into clear-cut macro-topics (for example, discussing Omarosa, discussing Trump, and discussing the mainstream media), which work to effectively summarise the contents of these discourses while including most of the relevant material within them. These also relate to the subheadings within the analysis chapter. This part in the analysis also focuses on distinguishing which discursive strategies were used most prominently within each discourse and how they have been utilized, this draws on the characteristics as exemplified by Reisigl and Wodak (2001). Following that, the more in-depth analysis will draw on the list of topoi provided above. In the case of the most prevalent topos, a thorough analysis will be provided to further aid in understanding the analysis. While analysing the argumentation strategies each agent in this study used, they are also reflected against the socio-political/historical context as well as that of the current event. This is accomplished by considering the distinguishing features of each medium at play (Twitter, late-night TV show, and podcast) while also remembering how the current situation is evolving and how that affects the discourse. The analysis will then close with a comparison of the discourses in the discussion section of the thesis.

## 4 ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Analysis of President Trump's tweets

The tweets by President Donald Trump under analysis were published in mid-December 2017 (after Omarosa's dismissal from the White House) and from the two days in mid-August 2018 following the announcement of her oncoming book which showcases President Trump in a rather unflattering manner. Rather than analysing all the tweets Trump posted on those days, I chose to focus on the ones that clearly referenced the 'Omarosa-incident.' As will be evident from the analysis, the first tweet relating to these events is considerably different from the rest, as the tone is positive and friendly. The tone changes dramatically, however, after it came to public attention that Omarosa would be publishing a book that did not portray Trump in a positive light.

#### Example (1)

Thank you Omarosa for your service! I wish you continued success. (14.12.2017 1:58)

#### Example (2)

Wacky Omarosa, who got fired 3 times on the Apprentice, now got fired for the last time. She never made it, never will. She begged me for a job, tears in her eyes, I said Ok. People in the White House hated her. She was vicious, but not smart. I would rarely see her but heard.... (3:27 PM - Aug 13, 2018)

#### Example (3)

...really bad things. Nasty to people & would constantly miss meetings & work. When Gen. Kelly came on board he told me she was a loser & nothing but problems. I told him to try working it out, if possible, because she only said GREAT things about me - until she got fired! (3:50 PM - Aug 13, 2018)

#### Example (4)

While I know it's "not presidential" to take on a lowlife like Omarosa, and while I would rather not be doing so, this is a modern day form of communication and I know the Fake News Media will be working overtime to make even Wacky Omarosa look legitimate as possible. Sorry! (4:21 PM - Aug 13, 2018)

#### Example (5)

Wacky Omarosa already has a fully signed Non-Disclosure Agreement! (6:13 PM - Aug 13, 2018)

#### Example (6)

When you give a crazed, crying lowlife a break, and give her a job at the White House, I guess it just didn't work out. Good work by General Kelly for quickly firing that dog! (1:31 PM - Aug 14, 2018)

As stated above these tweets have been written by the POTUS (President of the United States) Donald Trump in December of 2017 and August of 2018, following the dismissal of Omarosa Manigault Newman from the White House staff, and the announcement of her subsequent book launch detailing her time working for Trump. The tweets mainly consist of explaining the events surrounding Omarosa's dismissal while also commenting on her character and the opinions other people have shared about the situation, mainly those that seem to present a similar opinion as Trump himself. As it stands, the tweets are very much context-dependent and require some background information on the overall situation (provided in the introduction and data chapters) in order to be fully understood. They also reflect the basic nature of tweets in general as the character limit, for example, is prompted by the nature of the microblogging platform. This often results in incivility, impulsivity, and informality, as is apparent in President Trump's tweets. As the main goal behind the tweets is to delegitimize Omarosa and her book while showing Trump himself in a positive light, the incivility is focused on her character for the most part.

The main discourse topics (central themes in the texts around which discourses are organized in order to provide a particular elaboration of the issue at hand) are 1) the criticism of Omarosa's character and talent, 2) the portrayal of President Trump as a kindly benefactor, 3) delegitimizing other news sources, and 4) showing General John Kelly as a positive influence. These four discourse topics quite clearly fall under two general categories of positive in-group presentation and negative out-group presentation. For the purposes of this thesis, I chose to denote these 'macro-discourses' (main discourses in a text; determining the content of other discourse topics) by calling them the discourse of delegitimizing opposing characters and institutions and the discourse of positive representations of in-group members. For clarity's sake, I will analyse these macro-discourses separately within their own subchapters.

#### **4.1.1 The discourse of delegitimizing opposing characters and institutions**

The discourse of delegitimizing opposing characters and institutions is focused on the negative representations of the out-group members, whereby President Trump attempts to discredit both Omarosa and the news media partly in response to the press the book launch has garnered and partly in anticipation of negative backlash following the book's publication. The reason I did not separate the discrediting of Omarosa and the news media into separate macro-topics (as I did with Colbert's monologues and Shapiro's podcasts), is because of the number and nature of the tweets, as there is only one short mention of 'the fake news media' it did not warrant its own macro-discourse. This section aims to uncover how the opposing actors are approached and how they are characterized.

President Trump's tweets use predicational tactics as the general discursive strategy in this macro-discourse of delegitimizing opposition in order to discredit the out-group members who are perceived to stand against Trump or create negative and/or false representations of him. The opposition is further divided into Omarosa and the news media. Omarosa is mainly referred to by her first name, or simply as 'she', which are often complemented with derogatory nicknames and adjectives 'wacky', 'crazed, crying lowlife', 'vicious', 'that dog', 'loser'. These words and phrases work to underhandedly influence the reader's perception of Omarosa and undermine her character while also placing blame on her dismissal exclusively on herself. As a result of this strategic use of language, Omarosa is perceived as the sole perpetrator of unsuitable actions for a workplace and being without talent. There is also an attempt to delegitimize the contents of her book by making a reference to a non-disclosure agreement she had agreed to sign. The one time there is a direct reference to the news media, they are referred to as 'fake'. This works to compromise any past, present, or future actions taken by the media President Trump has deemed as 'fake', also dividing the news media into two subcategories. Those supporting Omarosa are delegitimized, whereas those standing with Trump are accepted.

Overall, the vocabulary employed to refer to those considered the opposition or out-group are, without a fail, ones with strong negative connotations whereas referring to the in-group is achieved with positive phrases. The only tweet that lacks this kind of vocabulary is the one posted in December 2017. In this, Trump merely wishes Omarosa continued success on her journey, without any negative undertones. To understand this shift in tone, it is important to remember the context, i.e., the events taking place at the time. In December there was no information about Omarosa's plans to publish a book, which became prevalent in the following August. Throughout the tweets, President Trump is also using methods of indirectly addressing

the reader, by framing his messages in such a way that they resemble discourse that might take place in face-to-face situations (see Example (4)). This informal and, even friendly, form of discourse might sway the reader into agreeing with Trump, as he is framed more as a friend than a distant politician.

Within the tweets from August 2018 the main argumentative strategy at play to delegitimize the opposition is the topos of burden or weighing down. The presence of characters deemed unsuitable for the administration is portrayed as highly problematic, along with those supporting these kinds of characters and actions. The events described in the tweets and the outside perspective provided by unsupported claims “people in the White House hated her” are used as evidence to support this claim. Other examples of attempting to prove the problematic nature of Omarosa’s presence in the administration is done by referring to her previous, non-flattering, employment record, her work ethic, and the non-disclosure agreement she signed.

This argument bases its logic on the assumption that Omarosa is a negative influence on the work atmosphere in the White House and the dissenting opinions provided by the ‘fake’ news media give false, and therefore problematic, representations. This argument, however, fails to take into consideration the possible results of losing this opposition. No mention is provided for whether the administration is functioning better or more positively following Omarosa’s dismissal. In addition, the lack of oppositional media, and its possible side-effects to a functioning democracy, are not touched upon. Thus, the question of whether opposition and heterogeneity in the workforce/presidential administration lays a foundation for a well-functioning democracy should not be overlooked. However, this idea is not apparent in the tweets.

The lack of this kind of overarching idea of what political discussion should be like, can partly stem from the nature of Twitter as a platform. As tweets are short and are often posted without much consideration beforehand, Twitter might not be an ideal medium for a thorough political discussion. This also resembles other populist discourses, as it focuses on attacking opposition and creating dichotomies of friend versus foe.

Another argumentation strategy that is somewhat apparent in the tweets is *trajectio in alium*. This is, however, a fallacious strategy, as it involves the discursive construction of scapegoats or victim-victimizer reversals by shifting the blame or responsibility onto another to rationalize a decision. Trump does this by occasionally referring to Omarosa simply as “her” and by attacking her work ethic and success numerous times without accepting any of the blame for

hiring her or keeping her employed for an extended period of time. As will be discussed below, Colbert even notes that Trump had hired Omarosa a total of four times, so it could be assumed that he would know she is not an ideal employee for the White House. However, this is not evident from the tweets and one would need to have previous knowledge about both parties to understand the full picture.

Placing blame is arguably the central theme of the tweets (achieved with the use of *topos* of burden and *trajectio in alium*). Thereby they project a clear distinction between Trump and Omarosa. This is achieved by focusing the arguments on Omarosa's negative characteristics while using simple language with strong negative connotations. All of this works to create an impression of the situation by appealing to the assumed audience's emotions. The audience in this case are mainly middle-class people with little education. (Appealing to this kind of audience is common for populist discourses of which Trump is a prime example of). Similar strategies were used by Trump before (Watt et.al 2017), and due to the echo chamber Twitter created around him, he was no doubt assuming that previously successful strategies would also remain successful in the future.

#### **4.1.2 The discourse of positive representations of in-group members**

In contrast to the macro-discourse of delegitimizing opposing characters, another strategy by Trump focuses on how President Trump vocalised his thoughts on people who are on his side in this issue i.e., oppose Omarosa. These people include Trump himself, General Kelly, and unnamed employees within the White House. These can also be referred to as the in-group members as they represent similar ideas and priorities relating to this issue. Within this context, the in-group members were focused on, supporting the firing of Omarosa and discrediting any information she might have been bringing forward by discrediting her character (see above).

Within this macro-discourse, Trump employs methods from two separate discursive strategies that are both equally apparent. These are predication (which was also present in the first macro-discourse) and perspectivation, also known as framing or discourse representation.

Focusing first on predication, Trump uses it in an attempt to create positive self-presentation of himself as well as the other people within the in-group. This is achieved by using adjectives and certain types of clauses with positive connotations, as well as implicatures. The number of adjectives reflecting the in-group is significantly lower than the number of derogatory ones aimed at Omarosa and the "Fake News Media". However, when they are present, "she only said GREAT things about me", they clearly reflect positive characteristics. In the case of the

previous example the adjective is even written in all capital letters further emphasizing it and setting Trump apart from Omarosa. The small number of adjectives in relation to the in-group reflects the nature of these tweets, where the main focus is clearly on Omarosa and little focus is given to anything else. When looking at entire clauses, however, the positive self-presentation is more common in all but one of the tweets. All of these instances paint Trump as a kindly benefactor, who is giving Omarosa a chance despite others disagreeing with that decision: “She begged me for a job – I said Ok”, “I told him (General Kelly) to try working it out”, “When you give a crazed, crying lowlife a break”. These all imply that without Trump Omarosa would not have had significant job prospects as she was given “a break”, and that Trump himself and other people in the administration (namely General Kelly) were willing to make it work because of her desperation. This paints Trump and his administration in a positive light because they are seen as being ready to make sacrifices for the sake of individuals. Another instance of Trump presented as a kind character is in the very first tweet when Trump wishes Omarosa “continued success”, insinuating that they departed on good terms. It is important to note, however, that this particular tweet was published in December 2017, so before Omarosa had written her tell-all book.

All of the above-mentioned examples of predication here have slight implicatures behind them, but nowhere is it more apparent than when Trump tweets “she only said GREAT things about me – until she got fired”. This implies that everything Omarosa has said post-firing, is not to be believed, because she is merely using the media attention that she is receiving to get back at Trump for firing her. While making Omarosa’s negative comments less credible, this also further enhances the idea of Trump as a positive character, as previously Omarosa had been very pro-Trump. In example (4) Trump also implies, that he does not enjoy discussing these matters in the public eye on social media, but he is merely doing it because it “is a modern-day form of communication” and it is an effective way to delegitimize the news media spreading “fake news”.

In contrast to predicational strategies, Trump’s use of the tactics of perspectivation is slightly less common, but they do run consistently throughout the tweets. The aim behind these framing strategies, is to position the speaker in relation to the events and express either involvement or distance from them. In this situation, Trump is clearly distancing himself from Omarosa and the whole situation. There are two explicit examples of this: “I would rarely see her (Omarosa) but heard... really bad things” and “Good work by General Kelly for quickly firing that dog”. The first one is an example of a deictic expression where Trump refers to Omarosa simply as

her requiring the reader to know the context in which this discourse takes place to understand the full meaning. It also distances Trump from Omarosa, as, according to this tweet, they did not work closely together and therefore he would not have had first-hand knowledge of her poor work performance. With this Trump may have also attempted to imply, that had he known these things sooner, Omarosa would have been let go earlier lessening his blame for the situation. The second example makes it clear, that it was General Kelly who was actually in charge of firing Omarosa, distancing Trump even further from the situation. It also provides a positive characterization of General Kelly as he is implied to have done the right thing and in a timely manner as well.

In the context of this macro-discourse, there are a few different topoi in play, the most significant one being *argumentum ad populum*. *Argumentum ad populum* relies in appealing to the masses and their prejudiced emotions. Instead of relying on relevant argumentation, Trump, in this case, focuses his efforts on reaching out to a specific group of people, his echo chamber, from which he would likely receive a positive response. Even though many non-Trump supporters were likely following his tweets it can be presumed that he focused his messages to those that would react supportively to them. In order to fully understand this, some contextual information is required. During August 2018, Omarosa had been active in her anti-Trump media appearances. Therefore, it could be assumed that Trump's supporters would be against her and this is the group of people Trump is aiming his tweets at. Of course, Trump being the President, his tweets should have reached a much larger audience than that, but his echo chamber was the audience from which he most likely would have received the desired response, positive and agreeing. The use of derogatory adjectives in relation to Omarosa would then reinforce the negative connotations towards her character already present in Trump's main audience. Another facet of this type of argumentation, is that, when Omarosa is painted as the villain, Trump is to be seen as the better of the two.

The other two main argumentation strategies within this context are *argumentum ad ignorantiam* and *trajectio in alium*. As these two are rather similar to others in the previous macro-discourse as well as each other, they will be discussed here together. *Argumentum ad ignorantiam* is an appeal to the audience's ignorance while *trajectio in alium* relies in shifting the blame from the in-group members to the out-group. The appeal to ignorance is possibly most apparent when considering how Trump relays information on how the events have unfolded. For example, he provides information on how people in the administration perceived Omarosa and how he himself attempted to integrate her properly into the administration without



giving any actual evidence these things took place (this is most likely at least partly due to the nature of Twitter, where message-length is rather short). In a sense, he relies on his audience taking his word as fact without searching for other sources that might corroborate or contradict what he is saying. This results in the fact that those following the logic of *argumentum ad ignorantiam* (most likely members of Trump's echo chamber) will end up sharing his thoughts on Omarosa. Similarly, when talking about these events, he is also distancing himself and even crediting other people (naming General Kelly as the one who fired Omarosa) in an effort to shift the blame away from himself and the rest of the in-group indicating that they were the ones who were wronged. This can be seen in how he claims to not having been aware of what Omarosa was like in the workplace, as he rarely saw her, and how he insists he is only discussing this topic in social media because it is expected of him as it is "a modern-day form of communication."

In sum, the main focus of Trump's tweets focused on discrediting Omarosa by means of predication and derogatory language as well as somewhat fallacious argumentation strategies. These strategies rely mainly on shifting blame and showing Omarosa as being a burden to the administration. In addition to discrediting his opposition, President Trump also focuses on painting himself and his in-group as kind characters while distancing himself from the situation by using strategies of predication, perspectivation as well as the fallacious strategies of *argumentum ad populum*, *argumentum ad ignorantiam* and *trajectio in alium*.

## **4.2 Analysis of Colbert's monologues**

In this section I will attempt to analyse Colbert's monologues in his talk show, following the principles of DHA extrapolated before and deployed in the analysis of President Trump's tweets. For the sake of clarity, I will be analysing all of the monologues together and merely referring to each individual one as monologue (1), (2), (3), or (4). This is done to avoid repetition as they have several recurring themes and strategies, and to keep the analysis as coherent and easy to follow as possible.

These monologues were performed by Stephen Colbert on stage of his late-night TV show between the dates of 13th to 16th of August, 2018. They are a response to the events following Omarosa's firing from the White House and her book launch, while they also comment heavily on Trump's response to these events. The following paragraphs will offer a succinct summary of all the monologues, and it will provide contextual knowledge for the analysis. The full transcripts are, however, not provided here as the links to each monologue can be found within

the reference section. In addition, as extensive examples are presented whenever relevant in the analysis, there was no need for the inclusion of the entire transcripts here.

All the monologues were broadcast within a week from each other. The first to be analysed here was published on the 13th of August 2018, nine months after Omarosa was initially fired. This nine-month period is presumably how long it took for Omarosa to write and find a publisher for her book.

The first, relevant, monologue of 2018 begins by exclaiming that another of Trump's former employees has betrayed him, referring to Omarosa's upcoming book, while also implying that this is not a novel situation. Immediately following this, however, Colbert also admits that Omarosa's book contains no new information, with possibly the exception of the alleged tape of Trump using the 'n-word' that Omarosa claims to have heard. While acknowledging this as new information, Colbert also scoffs at it sarcastically, which is made obvious by Colbert's descriptions of Omarosa as an untrustworthy person.

The monologue also makes note of singular, curious, incidents within the White House, such as Trump wanting to use his own book "The Art of the Deal" for his swearing in ceremony instead of the Bible, as was claimed by Omarosa. There is also mention of the tapes Omarosa has recorded including the one of her being fired by General Kelly as well as Trump's reaction to it. In the recording it is to be understood that Trump did not know about her firing beforehand, and Colbert uses this as a point of satire as in the tape, Trump does not seem to be happy about these events, but the tweets Trump had posted before this monologue (that are directly referred to) portray a very different mind-set. Colbert cites these tweets and questions whether this is acceptable behaviour for a sitting president. At the end of the monologue, the media's reaction to Omarosa and Trump's clash is reported and Colbert calls into question how the media seem to have changed their opinion on Omarosa quite suddenly.

The second monologue, which took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 2018, begins with a recap of the publishing of Omarosa's book and her claim of having heard a tape of Trump saying the 'n-word.' This results in a lot of satirical commentary by Colbert and discussion on the fact that President Trump seems to have compared Omarosa to a dog "fired like a dog" in a recent tweet. Immediately following this, the press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders' lacklustre statement of responding to the possible 'n-word' tape is ridiculed at length. Then other snippets from Omarosa's appearances on TV are provided in which she claims Trump was aware of the

Wikileaks emails during the 2016 election and instructed the campaign staffers to bring them up at any opportunity, something that Colbert finds very curious and incriminating.

The monologue that was published a day after the second one begins by relaying information on how Trump revoked a former CIA director's security clearance due to his actions on social media, which Colbert then compares to Trump's similar actions and calls out the hypocrisy. Immediately following this, the talk turns back to whether or not Trump used the 'n-word' on the set of the Apprentice even playing clips of Trump interviews from the 1980s where Colbert insinuates, he was being racist towards African American people.

The final relevant monologue was dated the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2018. It begins by questioning whether it was worth firing Omarosa for the Trump administration considering all the negative press her book launch has generated. Colbert then refers to a Republican insider who claims that Trump is insisting on arresting Omarosa. The monologue makes fun of this, as Omarosa has not broken any laws. Furthering the discussion on the tapes Omarosa has released, a clip is played where Trump's daughter-in-law offers Omarosa a position in the re-election campaign and a substantial pay check, which Colbert refers to as "hush money." An even bigger question to Colbert about this situation seems to be, however, why Lara Trump was in charge of this, as he refers to her as "my (Donald Trump's) worst son's wife" parodying the president's manner of speech. The monologue ends by making a reference to the alleged "peepee"-tape the Russians might have in their possession (a tape of Trump in a Russian hotel room with strippers who were peeing on the bed).

Colbert's monologues can be divided into five discourse topics that remain the same throughout all of them with the exception of the topic of media that is strongly present in only one of the monologues. The discourse topics are as follows: 1) providing the viewers with new and relevant information on the situation, 2) commenting on Trump's actions and reactions, 3) commenting on Omarosa's character and actions, 4) discussing other relevant people (people in the administration etc.), and 5) commenting on the mainstream media. As is evident from these topics, most of the monologues are focused on character depictions. The language used in these character depictions is mostly of negative connotations (as will be demonstrated further in the analysis) and as such these characters can be labelled as the out-group members. However, no in-group is provided, as Colbert does not inject himself or any group he is associated with into the events but is merely reporting on them. Due to this lack of in-group presence in the monologues, the macro-discourses that the analysis focuses on are: 1) the discourse of satirical portrayal of relevant persons, 2) the discourse of introducing new partial

information, and 3) the discourse of critical evaluation of the news media. The first macro-discourse thereby looks at the portrayal of Trump, Omarosa, and other members of the administration that are mentioned by Colbert, whereas media portrayal is placed into the third macro-discourse. The reason for this, is that these instances are quite distinct within the monologues. As with the analysis of Trump's tweets, I will be looking at the macro-discourses one at a time.

#### **4.2.1 The discourse of satirical portrayal of relevant persons**

The only discursive strategy that is consistent throughout all four of Colbert's monologues is predication. Predication in this context mainly consists of attributing negative traits to, and comparisons of Trump and Omarosa. However, there are some instances sprinkled throughout the monologues where predication strategies are aimed at other people in the Trump administration, mainly the press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, and Trump's daughter-in-law, Lara Trump. In the first monologue, Colbert describes Trump with the following statements:

Example (7)

“what a wiener” and

Example (8)

“then Trump recognizes that getting to the gutter with Omarosa might not be a good look, but he didn't really care and for reasons that will soon become apparent I will read this next tweet like a petulant 13-year-old”

The first of these implying that he is a coward, specifically because he did not fire Omarosa himself, but by General Kelly. Colbert claims that this makes Trump a coward, because Trump is known for firing people in the TV show “The Apprentice.” The reference to a teenager, in contrast, refers to how Trump is acting on Twitter and how that, according to Colbert, resembles the actions of a 13-year-old. In addition, the second, third and fourth monologue rely heavily on comparing Trump to other well-known characters. The first of these comparisons is one to Martin Luther King, which is done sarcastically. The sarcasm is obvious in how Colbert describes these two people, Trump as a mean racist and Martin Luther King as a good and kind character, clearly not comparable in that sense. In this comparison, Colbert responds to how the press secretary claimed that the way in which Trump referred to Omarosa as “a dog” had nothing to do with race, Colbert then says,

Example (9)

“the President is an equal opportunity... uhh... person that calls things like he sees it. Yes, yes... no folks. It has nothing to do with race, he's an equal opportunity insulter.”

This he then compares to Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech in a joking manner, which is evident from the apparent differences between the languages of President Trump and Martin Luther King, claiming that both represent similar ideas.

Another instance of this kind of comparison can be found in the third monologue, where Colbert mocks Trump's vehement claims of not being a racist, then giving a hypothetical example of Hannibal Lecter explaining how he is not a cannibal.

#### Example (10)

"Hey, welcome to the neighbourhood. I'm Hannibal. I just wanted to say, I don't eat people. In fact, I'm the least people eating person ever. I just can't do it. I promise you. I can't. I can't so it. I'm allergic or something. Anyway, come by the barbeque later."

This quite clearly mocks Trump's credibility of claiming to not be a racist, as this example portrays a known fictional cannibal vehemently claiming the opposite of what is known by the audience to be true. From this, a conclusion can be drawn, that because Trump is so adamant about his not being a racist, the opposite might in fact be true. This is what Colbert is insinuating with his language choices.

In the last comparison, it is originally Omarosa who, in an interview, supposedly accidentally calls Trump Nixon, and Colbert says that is an insult to Richard Nixon, who is known for being impeached from his position as president. All of these instances of predication rely on creating negative evaluations of Trump either through the use of adjectives with stereotypically negative connotations or insulting and sarcastic comparisons between other people and Trump.

In addition to using predicational strategies about Trump, they are also employed about Omarosa quite often. The first instance when this happens is when Colbert calls her:

#### Example (11)

"the latest person to turn on Trump is former Trump advisor and realtor giving you a business card at a funeral Omarosa Manigault-Newman."

This relies heavily on stereotypes about what realtors are like. The assumption is that they are power-hungry or at least very career-driven, an idea which is further emphasized by how, in this example, they are attempting self-promotion during a funeral. As most people would not support these kinds of actions, that paints a very self-serving and otherwise negative image of Omarosa's character. Within the monologues, Omarosa is also referred to as "America's sweetheart", which usually would be a positive thing, but based on the context, it can be assumed to be used sarcastically. Other instances of evaluative language about Omarosa are when Colbert calls her "a liar" and "a backstabber", which very obviously are negative. Finally,

even her book is mocked by Colbert referring to it as “day-old sushi”, the implication being that it is old news and not worth it.

In addition to Trump and Omarosa, these tactics are also used in relation to other people in the administration. The most salient examples of this are when the podium of the press secretary is called “the White House lying perch”, and Lara Trump is called Trump’s “worst son’s wife.” The first of these examples implies that nothing Sarah Huckabee Sanders says as the press secretary is to be taken as trustworthy or as fact. The second diminishes Lara Trump’s credibility and serves as a nod towards Colbert’s constant mocking of Eric Trump (Lara’s husband) - a theme that runs through all the monologues where Trump is a topic.

In short, all the examples of predicational strategies by Colbert, no matter who they are aimed at, promote very negative images of the people relevant to this situation. Mostly, they are aimed at people who watch his show and are already likely to agree with his opinions. This is apparent in how he does not focus on explaining why he has these opinions, rather, he merely focuses on regurgitating them, relying on the fact that his audience will probably know why he holds these opinions and share them. Although there might be people in his audience not sharing his views, the hypothesis is, that the language is designed in such a way that is mostly appeals to his echo chamber and encourages like-minded individuals in their opinions.

Another discursive strategy that recurs in several of the monologues is that of intensification and mitigation. This strategy focuses on modifying the illocutionary force of utterances usually either by intensifying or diminishing it. How Colbert uses this strategy is by referring to someone defending Trump and then, in a sarcastic manner, mocking that defence, thereby diminishing its illocutionary force on his audience. One example of this happens when Colbert quotes Trump saying that Mark Burnett, the producer of the *Apprentice*, told him on the phone that Trump never said the n-word while filming the show. The way Colbert makes light of this, is by saying:

Example (12)

“That settles it. A guy called him and told him it's not on tape.”

Example (13)

“you know what they say, if a tree falls in the forest and there’s no one there to hear it say the “n-word”, is it racist?”

In example (13) he takes it even further by misquoting a common phrase. This works to discredit both Trump and Mark Burnett by using the figure of speech of litotes, which is a form of verbal irony where understatements or double negatives emphasize a point. In this case,

when, for example, Colbert agrees Trump saying the n-word is not on tape, he is actually encouraging the audience to believe the opposite.

In contrast to litotes, Colbert also uses hyperboles to achieve similar goals. In the first monologue, there is the first mention of the possibility for an “n-word” tape, and Colbert responds to that by saying:

Example (14)

“this is huge – big news, finally, we have proof that the guy who refused to rent to black tenants, said that a Nazi Klan rally had some fine people and called Africa a (bleep)hole is a racist. That is... tear up your history books, rewrite the history books. We didn’t know, had no idea.”

From the context, it is clear that this is said sarcastically and as such strongly exaggerates Colbert’s apparent surprise that Trump could have said the n-word. In this example the strong exaggeration makes it clear to the audience, that this was not in fact a surprise and reminds them of other instances where Trump could have acted in a racist manner emphasizing that, according to Colbert, he has always been a racist.

The last discursive strategy Colbert makes use of is nomination, which is significantly less prominent than the other two. Nomination refers to the discursive construction of social actors by membership categorization and different figures of speech (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 95). This mainly happens in the first of Colbert’s monologues where the launch of Omarosa’s upcoming book is first mentioned.

Example (15)

“Yet another close advisor to President Trump has betrayed him. The White House is basically a reboot of the Last Supper, oops all Judases.”

This creates a metaphorical connection between the Trump administration and Jesus’ disciples. The understanding of this piece of discourse relies on the audience being aware of the biblical events and remembering that Judas is the one who betrayed Jesus. However, as this is often assumed to be common knowledge, it is easy for Colbert to rely on this method as most of his audience would undoubtedly understand his message. It also constructs an image of the White House, where no one is trustworthy, and it is not an ideal workplace.

As the satirical portrayal of relevant people is the most salient macro-discourse throughout all of Colbert’s monologues, it seems, that it is also the most varied one when it comes to argumentation strategies. This is because there is a total of six different strategies at play. Some are more prevalent than others, but all are used for the same purpose, to satirize the people that are in one way or another related to the sequence of events from Omarosa leaving the White House to the publication of her book. Even with this multitude of argumentation strategies

there is, however, only one that is prevalent throughout all the monologues. This is the topos of burden: “if an institution is burdened by a specific problem, then one should act to diminish it” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 78). This is used both in relation to Omarosa and the effects of her current presence in the public eye on the Trump administration, as well as to Donald Trump himself and how his presidency is affecting the political climate and society on a larger scale.

How Colbert uses the topos of burden considering Omarosa is often in relation to her personal history as an employee of Donald Trump. In the first monologue, this manifests in one the utterances by Colbert where he is directly referencing a Trump tweet (example (3)):

#### Example (16)

“so let me see, so she’s a loser who wouldn’t show up to work but you kept her on cuz she said nice things. What is the interview process like there? Okay, you will be working as the White House, a lot of responsibility, so first question. Do you think the President’s a big handsome boy? Great, okay good, here’s your key card and here are the launch codes there you go.”

This utterance subtly implies that her dismissal did not come as a surprise and that her not being a part of the administration will not be a problem, since her output was insignificant and she was only able to keep the job as long as she did by complementing the President. Another instance in which the topos of burden becomes evident in relation to Omarosa is in the second monologue, where Trump’s tweets stating how she had been fired several times during “the Apprentice” are being discussed. The implication here is, that any person whose contribution would be so inconsistent as to result in losing the same job three times, would not be in the workplace’s best interest. Colbert also uses this statement to ridicule Trump:

#### Example (17)

“You do realize that means you (Trump) hired her four times, right? But you know ... but you know the old saying: fool me once shame on you, fool me twice also shame on you, fool me two more times, maybe you should stop hiring this person.”

In the monologues, there are also instances where the topos of burden is applied to Trump and they follow a similar structure as in the previous examples. This is most salient in the third monologue where a short news segment is played. In it Omarosa tells the audience how, during the campaign, Trump encouraged people to talk constantly about Hillary Clinton’s emails (a scandal during the election period) as he was, allegedly, aware of them even before they were published by Wikileaks. As the emails were hacked by Russia, Colbert claims Omarosa was accusing Trump of being a “traitor to his country”, which would undoubtedly weigh down the administration. Whether or not this is true, however, even the mere existence of this news segment, and all the other tapes and public appearances Omarosa was involved in, would



negatively influence the administration and the public's' perception of them. This is something that is subtly hinted at throughout all of Colbert's monologues.

The second most common argumentation strategy is one in which Colbert refers to supposed authorial figures, using a tone of mockery. Depending on the point of analysis, this can fall under either the topos of authority "if one refers to somebody/something in a position of authority, then the action is legitimate" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 79) or the fallacious *argumentum ad verecundiam* "supporting one's standpoint by means of reference to an authority considered as competent, superior or unimpeachable. This appeal is fallacious if the referenced authority is not competent or qualified, if it is prejudiced or if it is referenced in an inaccurate way" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 72). Both of these are relevant for the same instances within the monologues, because when Colbert reports on what other people have said (e.g., President Trump in his tweets or Sarah Huckabee Sanders in her press conferences), they rely on the topos of authority. When Colbert is commenting on these occurrences, he is, in turn, questioning the competency of the presumed authorial figures thereby making the original argumentation fallacious. As it stands, Colbert himself is not often guilty of fallacious argumentation. Instead, he is demonstrating how other actors might be arguing their point erroneously. In total, there are three relevant characters in authorial positions whose qualifications are questioned by Colbert. The most prominent of these three is Omarosa herself. Her statements in the media about Trump and his activities are always reported on as factual, before her reliability is put into question. This happens throughout all of the monologues, but it is especially relevant in the second monologue. Firstly, she is referred to as a "realtor giving you a business card at a funeral" as per example (11), after which all of her unproven allegations are given the same prominence as the ones with evidence provided on tape. Finally, near the end of the monologue, Colbert closes the argument by saying that Omarosa is:

Example (18)

"a liar and a backstabber with no credibility, exactly like everyone else in the Trump administration"

making it one of those situations, in which Colbert himself presents the audience with fallacious argumentation as he disputes the statements that were first presented as fact in his monologues.

This type of argumentation is especially problematic when, as happens in this case, the authority and reliability of Omarosa's character is only challenged in the very beginning and the very end of the monologue. This means that the middle-section, where most of the information is presented, is not questioned and so some of Omarosa's statements are not challenged, even the

unverified ones. In contrast, when referring to the authority of Sarah Huckabee Sanders (press secretary at the time) and Mark Burnett (producer of “the Apprentice”), their credibility is questioned directly, and Colbert is merely reporting on other people’s fallacious argumentation rather than relying on it himself.

In the third monologue there is a reference to the alleged tapes in which Trump used “the n-word”, and to a Trump tweet in which he is quoted saying:

Example (19)

“Mark Burnett called to say that there are no tapes of the Apprentice where I used such a terrible and disgusting word.”

The credibility of this, however, is questioned straight away in the following line which is also presented in example (12) “that settles, it. A guy called him and told him it’s not on tape.” This questions both Burnett’s credibility in stating that there is no such tape, as well as Trump’s credibility because he seems to be comfortable with relying on the word of a single person. In a similar manner, the statements made by Sarah Huckabee Sanders are critiqued, most notably in monologues (3) and (4). In monologue (3), there is a snippet from a press conference where she defends Trump’s statement of never using the ‘n-word’. This she does by stating:

Example (20)

“I can’t guarantee anything, but I can tell you that the President addressed this question directly. I can tell you I’ve never heard it” and

Example (21)

“despite the fact that the President has had a long string of insults for African Americans, this has nothing to do with race”

Both arguments are immediately criticized in the monologue, as Colbert questions whether there is a special room in which President Trump uses racist language. Colbert does this because Huckabee Sanders has never been present to hear it and then he sarcastically remarks that instead of using racially coloured language Trump insults everyone equally “yes, yes – no, folks. It has nothing to do with race. He's an equal-opportunity insulter,” (the whole citation is available as example (9)).

Similar discrediting of Sarah Huckabee Sander’s trustworthiness occurs in the fourth monologue where the press secretary’s podium is called “the official White House lying perch” and the efficacy of her argument that Trump cannot be a racist is put into question. Her argument relies on the fact that during Trump’s career he has worked with people who are active in their support for black-rights. Colbert, however, does not see this as sufficient evidence.

This comparison between the topos of authority and its fallacious counterpart, *argumentum ad verecundiam* calls into question the role of Stephen Colbert as a media spokesperson. In mass media, it is often assumed that the ones reporting on the news present an impartial view of the events, but based on this data, it is clear that Colbert is biased against President Trump and is therefore more likely to grant credibility to his opponent. As he is not a part of traditional news media, this is, however, acceptable and plays more into his role as a political satirist and goal to entertain his audience while simultaneously providing critical discussion on current events.

A very common strategy out of all the argumentation strategies is the topos of history, which implies that “because history teaches that specific actions have specific consequences, one should perform or omit a specific action in a specific situation” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 80). It is used in all the monologues apart from the fourth one. This topos overlaps to some extent with the topos of burden, most notably in the second monologue where there is reference to Omarosa’s extensive work history with Trump. Within of the framework of both the topos of history and burden the implication is that with a history of being fired on multiple occasions, she should not have been hired again. Another overlap between the two topoi is when Trump is being compared to Richard Nixon by both Omarosa and Colbert.

Even though the comparison to Richard Nixon has historical connotations, it also applies to the topos of definition and will be further examined in regards to that argumentation strategy. Two novel appearances of the topos of history also occur within the monologues, however. In the first monologue, Colbert ridicules Trump for not being the one to fire Omarosa as that was done by General Kelly. The reason behind this ridiculing is that Trump became known in his show “The Apprentice” for firing people and so Colbert states:

Example (22)

“you’re the “you are fired” guy, and you’re too scared to tell Omarosa she’s fired. – gosh darn it oh oh cheese and crackers, I ... I don’t love that you are leaving but, but I do love cheese and crackers.”

As it stands in relation to the topos of history then, it would have been appropriate for Trump to do the firing as that is the one thing, he is known for doing well and being qualified for.

The final situation in which this argumentation strategy is used, is in reference to Trump using the phrase “fired like a dog” in regard to Omarosa in the third monologue. Colbert notes the recurring nature of this phrase, as Trump has used it a number of times before in tweets about other people. It is also assumed that due to the repeated nature of this phrasing, Trump must be excited by the notion of dogs being fired, which, in turn implies that as he refers to Omarosa as a dog, he is also excited about her being fired from the White House. As a whole, all these

instances of the topos of history rely on some contextual knowledge of previous events to relate them to these happenings in both Trump and Omarosa's pasts. In contrast to the instance of Colbert insinuating Omarosa should not have been hired again, due to her history of being fired multiple times, all the other uses of this argumentation strategy imply that similar actions should be taken, or already have been taken, in the present as were in the past.

Another relatively common fallacious argumentation type Colbert uses is *argumentum ad hominem*, which is a "verbal attack on the antagonist's personality and character instead of challenging his/her argument with counter-arguments" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 72). Colbert uses this quite consistently throughout the monologues to refer to both Trump and Omarosa. However, with Trump being his main antagonist in these monologues, the instances focusing on him are the ones being analysed here. Some instances of this include examples (7), (8), (9) and:

#### Example (23)

"exactly how a big of a racist is the president? I mean, on a scale of 'drunk uncle at thanksgiving' to 'drunk uncle at a Trump rally'."

These imply that Colbert conducts his verbal attack on Trump by employing adjectives with negative connotations "wiener" and "petulant" as well as making explicit comparisons. The first comparison is that of Trump and a teenager. What makes this insulting is the fact that, as an adult Trump should be above actions suitable for a teenager. The second comparison notes the similarities between President Trump and a "drunk uncle" in various contexts. The understanding of this comparative strategy relies on some contextual clues and the viewers' ability to draw intertextual inferences. There are some assumed characteristics that can be associated with this proposed "drunk uncle" that most are likely aware of and none of which are admirable. The most likely assumptions that people might draw based on this comparison is the use of racist language and partaking in conservative political discussions when it is not desired by other people in the situation. Comparing Trump to such a character then implies that he shares these less-than-ideal characteristics.

The topos of definition "if an action a thing or a group is named x it should carry the qualities contained in the meaning of x" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 76) is notably present in three of the five monologues. It is always used in the same context, but it is a reversed version of the official description, as in Colbert first mentions qualities contained in the meaning of x and then links these qualities to a specific group rather than introducing the group first and then describing their characteristics. In monologues (2), (3), and (4), there are examples of Trump's actions in

such a way that presents him like a racist. In addition, there is also an ironic statement in monologue (2) by which Colbert is questioning whether Trump is, in fact, a racist.

In the second monologue, this happens when there is a clip of Omarosa in a news segment talking about the “n-word tape” which she was able to hear first-hand. “This is huge” is how Colbert first reacts to this, ironically stating that “finally, we have proof that the guy who refused to rent to black tenants said that a Nazi Klan rally had some fine people and called Africa a (bleep)hole is a racist”, as per example (14). As per the topos of definition, these qualities that Colbert attributes to Trump by referring to his past actions and statements directly and unquestionably imply that Trump is a racist. This is achieved by listing racist actions and qualities and tying them to President Trump, implying that because he shows qualities associated with racism, this also makes him a racist.

The third monologue offers no new insight to this, as the arguments for Trump’s alleged racism are very similar as those in the second monologue. Having said that, Colbert’s fourth monologue adds a new aspect to this argument. He does this by playing a clip of different interviews put together of Trump saying he is “the least racist person” several times and another clip of an interview from 1989 where Trump says that he would love to be a well-educated black, because they have a significant advantage over white people in the job market. The first clip is ridiculed with this quote:

Example (24)

“But don’t just take Hucka-Sand’s word that Trump isn’t a racist. Take it from Trump’s biggest defender: “I am the least racist person that you have ever met. I’m probably the least racist person there is. I am the least racist person you have ever interviewed – ” and you can tell somebody’s not something when they protest exactly the right amount”

This implies that Trump is overcompensating in his denial making the opposite (him being a racist) true. The segment of his past interview is provided in response to his supporters claiming that no one argued for him being a racist before his presidency. According to Colbert, this would only have been possible had people not seen this particular interview, which he claims proves his racism. Colbert ends his argument by saying he also wishes Trump was a well-educated black showing a picture of Barack Obama, implying he wishes Obama were still president.

#### **4.2.2 The discourse of introducing new partial information**

The second most prominent macro-discourse in the monologues is the discourse of introducing new partial information. This is evident throughout all the monologues as Colbert recaps everything that has happened in relation to the Omarosa/Trump situation since the previous monologue. As for the prejudiced nature of Colbert’s remarks, it is clear he has presupposed

ideas about the events and about what is true, which, along with his anti-Trump agenda, becomes apparent when listening to his words. This is particularly clear whenever Colbert mentions the alleged tapes, whether it be the tape in which Trump uses the n-word, or the one in which he is in a hotel in Russia with strippers peeing on the bed. Even though neither tape is proven to exist without a doubt, Colbert discusses them in a manner which leads the audience to believe that he is convinced they are real, thereby granting them credibility. Colbert also insinuates consistently that the upcoming report on the ties between Russia and the Trump administration by Robert Mueller would be bad for the President, even though, once again, the actual contents of the report were unknown at the time. As these examples provide a comprehensive look at how Colbert presents new information, they demonstrate that the discursive strategy he relies on the most is intensification and mitigation. This implies the modification of an utterance's illocutionary force and thus its epistemic status (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 95). Epistemic statements guide our decisions on what to believe by not saying directly what is proven truthful, but only what is believed to be so (ibid.). Colbert accomplishes this modification of the illocutionary force behind his utterances by using verbal irony in the form of hyperboles, as well as vague expressions. A prime example of such a vague expression occurs in the fifth monologue where there is an insert from an interview with Omarosa, claiming that her tapes about Trump are better than any tapes the administration might have on her. Colbert concludes this by stating:

Example (25)

“maybe, but I bet Russia's got you both beat. I think so. Allegedly, allegedly”

With this he is referring to the alleged ‘peepee’ tape. This is something he refers to often within his monologues underhandedly and it is almost akin to an inside joke with his audience as they are likely to understand this reference due to its recurrent use in the monologues.

Another example of such a vague expression is in the third monologue. In this segment Omarosa claims that Trump was made aware of the Wikileaks email prior to them being public, which would, in turn, incriminate him and prove he was colluding with Russia. To this Colbert responds by stating:

Example (26)

“that is a massive revelation, the emails that Russia hacked that Wikileaks leaked, Donald Trump somehow knew before they were actually released. Somewhere Robert Mueller is yelling um, how about a spoiler alert?”

This again reflects Colbert's attitude towards Trump and his actions, as he seems certain Trump had engaged in unlawful actions without concrete evidence.

As for the hyperboles, they often coincide with situations where someone, often Omarosa, states clearly that President Trump is a racist, to which Colbert reacts to with feigned surprise. The first instance of this is in the second monologue where there is a mention of the possible existence of a tape where Trump uses the n-word. Colbert's regular audience would know that he is not surprised by this, although he states in example (14), "this is huge – tear up your history books". Clearly, by the listing of these examples, Colbert already holds the opinion that Trump is a racist, but in order to intensify his message he uses exaggeration to ironically portray his non-existent surprise. A similar method is used in many other instances throughout the monologues.

As with the previous macro-discourse, Colbert uses a variety of different argumentation strategies to support his views. In a similar manner, the topos of burden is the most prevalent of all the argumentation strategies used. However, the difference in the use of this topos within two different macro-discourses lies in the context. As the second macro-discourse focuses on the presentation of new information, so do the instances of the topos of burden as well. Instead of focusing on personal characteristics of specific people, these focus on events, things that have happened or things that might happen that could prove to be harmful to the Trump administration. As these are presented from the point of view of the administration, Colbert adds his sarcastic flair insinuating his attitude towards the administration.

This particular topos is most prominent in the fifth monologue where it occurs several times and each time with a close relation to Omarosa. The first instance of this is at the very beginning of the monologue, where Colbert lists the original reasons why Omarosa lost her position at the White House:

Example (27)

"do you ever think maybe it wasn't worth firing somebody? Because the Trump administration has got to be thinking that about Omarosa. So she hired a few ubers and did her wedding photographs in the rose garden. Did that undermine the dignity of the place where they pardon the turkeys?"

This insinuates that her dismissal might have been deserved. However, following this, he also questions whether it was worth it, considering she has brought a lot of negative press to the administration preceding her book launch. In addition, Trump's reaction to this book is recounted which further implies weighing down the administration as, according to Colbert and an unnamed Republican insider, Trump wished to arrest Omarosa whether or not she had broken any actual laws. Further along in the fifth monologue there is an excerpt from another secret tape Omarosa had released, where presidential daughter-in-law, Lara Trump, is offering

her a well-paid position in Trump’s re-election campaign. Here the assumption would be that she would stop spreading negative information about Trump. This segment continues to allude to the burden Omarosa is posing on the administration and how they have attempted to diminish it however unsuccessfully, as the monologue ends with Omarosa stating that she has even more tapes ready for publication.

Colbert also relies on the effectiveness of the *argumentum ad ignorantiam*. “[A]n appeal to ignorance means that a certain argument, thesis or opinion should be regarded as true as long as the reverse has not been proven” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 72). He uses this strategy several times to imply that certain unproven allegations might be true and other unconfirmed damning material might exist. Colbert often uses ‘hedging’ in these instances to lessen the certainty behind his words and their impact with the use of the word “allegedly.”

The most significant example of this occurs in the fifth monologue where there is discussion about the tapes Omarosa claims to be in possession of and might publish in the future and how she claims they are better than any tapes the White House might have on her. The administration had, prior to this, published a video of a collection of times when Omarosa had been saying nice things about Trump. Colbert counters this by saying “maybe, but I think Russia’s got you both beat – I think so, allegedly, allegedly,” as was showcased in example (25). The existence of this so called “peepee tape” is implied in some of the other monologues as well. For example, in the third monologue, Colbert questions why the president does not own a dog, because he should like them as:

#### Example (28)

“that is so weird that Trump used ‘dog’ as an insult. He should love dogs. You don’t have to pay to watch them pee”

The successfulness of these statements relies on the fact that people know that there was discussion about this tape in the previous years and agree that it is quite possible such a tape actually exists. As these excerpts of Colbert’s monologues imply that such a tape exists and provide no counterarguments, they present a good example of *argumentum ad ignorantiam*.

In addition to alluding to the “peepee tape”, Colbert also uses *argumentum ad ignorantiam* to make subtle hints towards the results of the upcoming Mueller report throughout his monologues. In all of these examples, he presents the results of the report as a foregone conclusion and something that definitely would negatively hinder Trump and his presidency. This is, however, a fallacious argumentation strategy as it allows for the presentation of arguments without providing any concrete evidence. As such, it can be used to manipulate the



audience, especially those lacking critical media reading skills. However, as is the case with Colbert, most of his audience is likely to already share his view on President Trump, so his statements might reinforce their opinions but is unlikely to change them based on manipulative strategies.

Another argumentation strategy that is relatively ongoing throughout Colbert monologues is the topos of justice. As a reminder, it posits that “if persons/ actions/ situations are equal in specific respects, they should be treated /dealt with in the same way” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 78). It is especially valid in monologues (2) and (4), however, only the fourth one will be discussed here, as the occurrence in the second monologue falls under the third macro-discourse of critical evaluation of the news media. In the fourth monologue, the topos of justice comes up when Colbert discusses how John Brennan, a former C.I.A director and intelligence officer, was fired from his position:

Example (29)

“and the official reason Trump gave for revoking Brennan’s clearance? Brennan ‘leveraged his status to make a series of unfounded and outrageous allegations, including wild outbursts on the internet’”

Colbert seems to find this ironic as:

Example (30)

“I’d say that’s the pot calling the kettle black, but there may be tapes of it calling the kettle something much worse.”

He states that from now on, Brennan would only be able to read threats against America on Trump’s Twitter. The implication here is that, as Trump is known for his colourful use of social media, these two situations should be treated equally and if that truly was the reason Brennan had lost his job, then Trump should have lost his as well. Either that or both should have kept their positions.

#### **4.2.3 The discourse of critical evaluation of the news media**

The third and final macro-discourse within Colbert’s monologues is the discourse of critical evaluation of the news media. This was only clearly mobilized in one of the monologues, but there are some references to overall media and particular members of the press in the other monologues as well. However, these instances are not so much about criticizing the media, but rather just including their reports in the monologues. Overall, criticizing the news media is mainly at play when Colbert is discussing how they treat Omarosa inconsistently, calling her unreliable, while at the same time reporting on her book and the information she has, or will

release, thereby increasing her credibility. The most significant example of this happening is provided below:

#### Example (31)

now the media has been all over Omarosa's Oma-roasting of her former boss. But while they are reporting on it, they are also dismissing her as unreliable.

“She has built her reputation as being the villain. A liar, a backstabber and self-promoter. If anyone has less credibility than Donald Trump it is actually probably Omarosa. The reality is this is not a serious person. Omarosa is of low character. Omarosa has no credibility.”

Yes, she is a liar and a backstabber with no credibility, exactly like everyone else in the Trump administration. So don't -- okay the press can't have it both ways. They can't report on it and roll their eyes at the same time, okay.

She's not below anyone else in the White House she and general Kelly may have completely different paths, but they have exactly the same future. You can never scrub off the Trump stank.

Within this section of the second monologue the most obvious discursive strategy is that of nomination where the reasoning behind the language choices is to construct social actors, phenomena, actions, etc. discursively. Colbert categorizes ‘the press’ as something cohesive and separate from what he represents, even though he is arguably a member of the media who distributes news and current events in his show. This categorization is achieved by means of synecdoche. This infers referring to the whole group of people, as in all the members of the mainstream media, simply as the press “the press can’t have it both ways” while simultaneously only providing one example of statements made by this supposedly cohesive group. This creates the illusion, that all members of the press hold and present similar views even though no concrete evidence for this is provided in this instance.

When evaluating the news media through a critical lens Colbert spreads his message mainly through the topos of justice, according to which “if persons/actions/situations are equal in specific respects, they should be treated/dealt with in the same way” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 78). As it stands, Colbert argues that all references to Omarosa’s actions and character should be treated equally. If she is deemed unreliable and not suited for working within the White House, then all the information she is relaying about Trump and the administration should be dismissed. And, vice versa, if the information she is currently providing is seen as trustworthy, then her previous actions deeming her non-credible should be forgotten “they can’t report on it and roll their eyes at the same time.” According to the topos of justice, it therefore stands to reason that as Omarosa’s previous actions (making her unreliable) and her current actions of demeaning Trump are equal in standing the press should discuss them in a similar tone and this is what Colbert argues for as well.

This is a direct complaint about how the media operate when it comes to Omarosa by Colbert. However, he himself falls victim to this same fallacy on occasion. This was showcased in the analysis the first macro-discourse satirical portrayal of relevant persons, uncovering his bias against President Trump and comparing his use of the topos of authority and *argumentum ad verecundiam*. Colbert also mocks Omarosa's past, while also granting her credibility by reporting on many of her current actions and claims as undisputed facts. While understandable from the standpoint of him presenting his own brand of political satire, it also calls into question his credibility as a reliable source for news about current political events. However, as he is not a newscaster, but rather an entertainer, he is not expected to discuss topics neutrally.

To concisely summarize Colbert's monologues, they consist of three macro-discourses, of which the most prominent one is that of satirical portrayal of relevant persons. In addition, his discourses also focus on introducing new partial information and critically evaluating the news media. Colbert employs a wide range of discursive strategies, from nomination and predication to intensification and mitigation. These he accomplishes with the use of linguistic means such as hyperboles, explicit and implicit comparisons between people, negative adjectives, and stereotyping. His argumentation strategies consist of a large spectrum from straightforward to fallacious ones. Even his legitimate argumentation can be fallacious on how he argues against actions taken by the media that he himself has also partaken in.

### **4.3 Analysis of Shapiro's podcasts**

The podcasts by Ben Shapiro will be analysed here, following the structure introduced in the previous sections. This is done to facilitate the comparison of the findings of three cycles of analysis in the discussion section of this thesis. In the same way as with Colbert's monologues, I will also be referring to the different sections of the podcasts simply as sections (1), (2), (3), and (4).

The sections used in this analysis appeared in three different podcast episodes which aired between the dates of the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 2018, and the 15<sup>th</sup> of the same month. All three podcasts averaged around 50 minutes of run time from which I selected these particular clips for closer study. These all focused on the issue of Omarosa, her book, and President Trump's reaction to the events. The first section is from episode 599 of the podcast, sections (2) and (3) are both from episode 602, while the fourth section is from episode 603. Again, no full transcripts of the podcasts are made available, but short summaries will also be provided here to aid in following the analysis and links to the original versions of the podcasts are provided within the references.

As stated above, the first podcast clip used in this thesis is from the episode that aired on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 2018. The section relevant here appears in the very beginning of the episode and is two minutes and thirty seconds long. In this clip, Ben Shapiro focuses on recapping the rumours that Omarosa might be in possession of audio clips taped from within the White House featuring President Trump. However, as Shapiro makes clear, the existence or contents of these audio tapes is not clear at this point. As an anticipatory measure, he also makes several remarks discounting Omarosa's credibility in an attempt to delegitimize any and all information she might be coming forward with in the near future. There are also mentions of Michael Cohen, a previous Trump employee who had secretly taped private conversations with the president, and questionings whether Trump has made good choices choosing his employees.

The second podcast in which Shapiro discusses these events aired on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August. Within this podcast episode the first relevant clip, runs for almost ten minutes at the very start. This one has also a strong focus on the alleged tape of Trump using the n-word backstage of the Apprentice that Omarosa claims to have heard and be in possession of. There is also further discussion about her untrustworthy characteristics and discussion of the media's partiality in regards to the language Trump had used in his tweets surrounding this topic. Shapiro claims it unfair to deem Trump a racist merely for using the phrase 'fired like a dog' about an African American woman, because, as he showcases with multiple examples, Trump uses the phrase frequently about a plethora of different people. Shapiro also brings up a previous case, where Trump was accused of mocking the disability of a disabled reporter by using hand gestures, after which it was discovered that he uses similar gestures about everyone he does not like, whether disabled or not. According to Shapiro, this does not make Trump a racist but:

Example (32)

“the truth is that one of the reasons people give Trump a lot of leeway on him being a jerk, is cause he's a jerk to everybody. I'm surprised that we're still fighting this fight, like he's constantly a jerk.”

In this clip there is also some disparaging of the media and some direct comments to the audience:

Example (33)

“so President Trump in his own inimitable fashion takes to Twitter to respond because this is the reality show we all bargained for, and lets be real about this. This is what you wanted to see was it not, when you tuned into the Apprentice this is what you wanted to see. You are getting the show that you took the remote control and decided to TiVo and now you're getting to enjoy it. Break out the popcorn, break out the jellybeans, because this is how it's gonna go from here till the end of the administration.”

This podcast also holds within it the third clip to be analysed here. The clip is close to three minutes in length and is quite similar content wise to the previous two. Shapiro gives further details about the method with which Omarosa recorded her audiotapes from the White House, while questioning the existence of the alleged tape with Trump's use of the n-word. He also makes it a point to note, that nobody actually believes what Omarosa is saying, because her book is not number one on Amazon and that even members of the media think her untrustworthy:

#### Example (34)

“even members of the media are looking at her and saying, yeah this is not, this is pretty weak stuff, this is pretty weak stuff.”

The final, and fourth, clip of Ben Shapiro discussing Omarosa on his podcast aired on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2018 and is eight and a half minutes long, the clip being near the end of the episode. This begins in a similar fashion to the other ones, with disparaging commentary about Omarosa's character and the mainstream media lending her undue credibility by giving her airtime. Shapiro claims that the media are dividing the nation by promoting these unsubstantiated rumours proposed by Omarosa. In his view these include, in addition to the n-word tape, an affair between Donald Trump and his pastor Patty White as well as the possibility of Trump being aware of the Hillary Clinton WikiLeaks emails before they became public. This podcast also satirizes comments by the media personality Joe Scarborough saying that Trump likening Omarosa to a dog is similar to how the Nazis labelled Jews rats, and how Rwandan Tutsis were referred to as cockroaches preceding the genocide. The main portion of this clip, however, focuses on questioning why we are even talking about the possible n-word tape, as Shapiro puts it:

#### Example (35)

“if that tape existed, do you think that might've come out by now? It was long rumoured during the 2016 campaign that tape. If that tape exists, that sucker is in the public sphere by now, no question about it.”

He also recognizes a problem within the White House, which is that you are not allowed to say anything without Trump's direct approval, which has led to some questionable statements by press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders in which she has been unable to outright deny the existence of the n-word tape. The clip ends with an outrage towards the media:

#### Example (36)

“the only reason we're talking about this, is because the media have decided to grant additional credibility to a woman who has none.”

Similar to Colbert's monologues, there are also five distinct discourse topics to be found from these podcast clips, though they do differ slightly from the ones found in the monologues. The discourse topics are as follows; 1) relaying relevant information on the events, 2) discrediting Omarosa and her character, 3) commenting on President Trump's actions and characteristics, 4) discussing the mainstream media's reaction to the events, and 5) directly addressing the listeners. The main difference, therefore, between these podcasts and Colbert's monologues is Shapiro's stronger focus on providing his audience with all relevant information as opposed to mainly focusing on character depictions and disparaging language about the people in the situation. Shapiro also focuses more on satirizing Omarosa than Trump, which is a direct consequence of his political affiliations. He does, however, also ridicule Trump's statements on occasion as will be evident from the analysis below. Another fashion in which these podcasts stand apart from the monologues is Shapiro's habit of addressing the audience directly, usually in combination with some of Trump's more controversial actions, these will be added to the discussion of the macro-discourses whenever relevant. Even though the order of frequency varies, the macro-discourses are the same as in the previous section of analysis, 1) the discourse of satirical portrayal of relevant persons (includes both Trump and Omarosa), 2) the discourse of introducing new partial information, and 3) the discourse of critical evaluation of the news media and will be analysed in the same order.

#### **4.3.1 The discourse of satirical portrayal of relevant persons**

As with Colbert's monologues, Shapiro also uses predication the most out of all the discursive strategies in the context of this macro-discourse. However, Shapiro uses it consistently in all three macro-discourses. Within the context of the discourse of satirical portrayal of relevant persons predication, or the "evaluative attribution of negative or positive traits" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 95), is mainly focused on Omarosa and attaching negative attributes to her. However, Shapiro also uses similar discursive devices when talking about President Trump and certain members of the press, to a lesser degree though. When it comes to Omarosa, the predicative objectives are obvious and clear-cut as Shapiro uses adjectives, rhetorical figures, implicatures and other linguistic devices with strong negative connotations. Some examples of such language from the podcasts include:

Example (37)

"Omarosa who everyone despises"

Example (38)

“Omarosa has long been known as one of the most solid citizens in our country right, she’s long been known as a person you would trust with your life if you were suicidal”

Example (39)

“honest to God, I would not trust these people (Omarosa and Katrina Pierson) to handle my safety deposit box”

Example (40)

“Omarosa’s book still hasn’t reached number one on Amazon, it’s because nobody believes anything she has to say”

Example (41)

“that lady has been fired more often than a Bill Clinton cigar, I mean she’s been lit up like a Christmas tree”

Example (42)

“Omarosa Manigault, a proven liar over and over and over, a turncoat politically about eighty thousand different ways, right we should definitely believe her when she says that there is an outstanding n-word tape for the President if the United States.”

As can be seen from these examples, Shapiro mainly focuses on downplaying Omarosa’s trustworthiness by repeatedly referring to her as a liar. Some of these references are presented as Shapiro’s own words, whereas others are shown to be coming from other people, thereby giving more credit to these claims as it appears as though many people share these views. In addition, while some of these examples clearly state she is untrustworthy, others approach this in a more roundabout way relying on the audience’s ability to draw the correct conclusions from these allusions. Out of these, example (44) also uses sarcasm as Shapiro means the opposite of what he actually says, as in Omarosa is not someone he would trust if suicidal. Therefore, it relies on the audience having contextual knowledge of the podcasts to understand, based on his other remarks, that even though Omarosa is in the same example referred to as “one of the most solid citizens”, this is not what Shapiro means as he is implying the contrary. This method of saying and meaning two opposite things can be very effective in eliciting the desired response from the audience, if used appropriately, something Shapiro most likely accomplishes here as a significant portion of his listeners belong to the same echo chamber and are therefore likely to share his views.

While not all conservatives supported Trump, based on Shapiro’s podcasts it is still somewhat surprising that President Trump is not exempt from criticism by means of predication within them. However, it occurs more seldom than the criticism facing Omarosa. It is often accompanied immediately or later in the podcast by either positive reimbursement or further explanations about why this is excusable behaviour for the president. In the beginning of the first podcast Shapiro reacts to the news that Omarosa is in possession of incriminating tapes recorded within the White House by stating:

## Example (43)

“she makes trouble for President Trump by suggesting she has tapes of all the worst things Trump has ever said. I’m not sure honestly what you can catch him on tape doing that would be worse than what he has tweeted, but I guess we’re gonna find out.”

This is both implying that Trump uses social media in a very derogatory manner and that Omarosa’s threats are useless. The more relevant point here is the first one. From this the obvious conclusion is that Shapiro realises that Trump’s language on Twitter is not traditionally acceptable from someone in his position. However, in other sections of the podcasts he cites Trump’s tweets. While he does not necessarily agree with the language itself, the message is always something he can support and pass on to his audience. This acceptance of Trump’s use of derogatory language is directly addressed in podcast (2) with two statements:

## Example (44)

“out of the charity of his heart, he hired Omarosa because he’s such a charitable fellow – he’s just such a nice guy”

and example (32) where Trump is referred to as being a jerk to everyone. Both of these examples have the same underlining intention. Although they approach it differently, the main objective is to make it clear that President Trump is not a nice person and should not be expected to act as such. Later on, Shapiro claims that Trump is nice to people who are nice to him and vice versa, but here the only characteristics accredited to him is being a jerk. However, this is not treated as necessarily a bad quality but rather something that is emblematic of Trump and also something his supporters have always been aware of and the reason he was voted into office “this is the reality show we all bargained for” as per example (33). In a sense, according to Shapiro, Trump has his aggressive Twitter presence to thank for his presidency.

Another example of predication against the president is in the second podcast where Shapiro quotes Omarosa incorrectly stating, that:

## Example (45)

“President Trump is in fact a vicious and brutal racist.”

The adjectives here are ones with extremely strong negative connotations, but their strength is lessened by the fact that Shapiro is pretending to quote Omarosa, someone he has made clear he holds no high regard for. In fact, he emphasizes time and time again how untrustworthy she is, thereby simultaneously wholly discrediting his words by putting them in her mouth instead of his own. The sarcastic way in which he says this might actually enforce his audience to believe the exact opposite than what is said on the surface.



A related discursive strategy Shapiro uses in relation to discussing relevant persons is that of intensification and mitigation, or the modification of the illocutionary force of utterances. This is not quite as prominent as predication, but some clear examples of it can be seen in the podcasts, either by way of hyperboles and litotes or tag questions and vague expressions. The most common of these is exaggeration of which a prime example is:

Example (46)

“whenever you think that he’s tweeted something that is brand new, as soon as you delve into his (President Trump) past you realize he has said it one thousand times before.”

Here Shapiro refers to Trump using the phrase “fired like a dog” and how it does not automatically imply that Trump is a racist for using it about a black woman because he has previously used it several times about other people. However, the number “thousand times before” is a clear overestimation of the times Trump has said this, and it is used, paradoxically, to mitigate the effect of the President’s use of this phrase. If, indeed, he has used it this frequently it lessens the impact of each of those times. In contrast to how Shapiro uses exaggeration, he also employs diminutives, where he uses litotes to discuss Trump’s language and modify their illocutionary force. The most predominant instance where this occurs is in the fourth podcast. In it the n-word tape is discussed at length:

Example (47)

“if the President did in fact drop the n-word and drop it in a you know specifically derogatory fashion obviously, he’s not doing like the Michael Scott Chris Rock routine from the Office where he just is repeating a comedy routine or he’s rapping lyrics or something. If the president says, you know, those stupid n-words or if he says anything like that, then I think a primary is probably in order in the Republican Party.”

Here Shapiro is attempting to influence the audience’s reaction to Trump’s possible use of the n-word by making it sound less serious. He is also providing possible excuses for why he might have done it. Referring to this type of language as “those stupid n-words” is diminishing their seriousness. The same effect is also accomplished by proposing that President Trump might be using it for comedic purposes. While non-black people using this terminology even in comedy routines is usually strongly condemned, Shapiro seems to understand it, and does not see it as problematic, and shares that view with his audience.

Tag questions and vague expressions that Shapiro often uses to accomplish his goals of addressing his audience in a specific way are less common, but still noticeable. In the latter part of the fourth podcast the discussion focuses on how Trump either likes people or hates them, based on their reaction to him:

Example (48)

“the President has two categories in life when it comes to people he deals with. Either they are wonderful people who say great things about me and therefore deserve jobs in the White House no matter how bad they are at their job, or they should be fired like a dog because they are the worst people in the world. – It’s not that the President has any megaplan, like when he is nice to Putin, he’s not nice to Putin because Putin and Trump were on the phone late at night making sweet love to one another. It wasn’t that. It’s that Putin has said in the past ‘you very strong man President Trump’ and then Trump’s like, ‘I like that guy, that’s great’. And the minute that Putin does something Trump doesn’t like, he should be fired like a dog.

Those are the only two poles for President Trump, yeah and that’s... it is what it is. Like is it my favourite thing? No, but are we getting exactly what we bargained for? Of course, we are getting exactly what we bargained for.”

Here Shapiro asks the question whether the people who voted for Trump are surprised he is acting in exactly the same manner he did before he was elected. He immediately answers his own question by stating that this is what the people wanted. This modifies the epistemic status of the preceding utterances, Trump may act in very polarising ways that some people might not like, but he was elected president on a platform similar to his presidency and so no one should complain because none of this came as a surprise. In addition to tag questions, there is also one example of vagueness in the fourth podcast:

#### Example (49)

“I mean that’s like if somebody was having a conversation with me and they said, you know, there’s a rumour out there that President Trump stood the donkey down in Mexico one day. Right, I would probably be like, yeah maybe. Right. ‘cause like who... The answer is he didn’t of course, but when you’re in a conversation with people you just sort of say stuff.”

With this, Shapiro refers to statements about Trump by his past employees, including Omarosa and some others. According to him, these should not be taken seriously, because the people behind them are not trustworthy and there is no evidence presented. This again makes his audience less likely to believe what these people had been saying previously, because Shapiro likens them to ridiculous rumours that anyone might be spreading with no thought to what is actually real and what is not.

As it pertains to this macro-discourse, Shapiro’s most prevalent argumentation strategy is that of *argumentum ad hominem*, “a verbal attack on the antagonist’s personality and character instead of challenging his/her argument with counter-arguments” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 72). This is predominantly used as a method of discrediting Omarosa: it questions her trustworthiness and presents other peoples’ negative views of her, while providing no concrete evidence for these views. Some examples of this type of terminology that Shapiro uses against Omarosa include:

#### Example (50)

“our long national nightmare of people who shouldn’t be on TV never ends”

#### Example (51)

“everyone knows that she is sort of a pathological liar, that was her reputation when she was on the Apprentice and now from the White House”

#### Example (52)

“the infamous former Apprentice star who followed Trump to the White House”, as well as

#### Example (53)

“she’s going to make every buck that she can off of being associated with Trump. She was a nobody when Trump found her, she is going to be a nobody again, but not before she makes trouble for President Trump.”

As for presenting the views of other people as a fact, Shapiro claims in example (43) that everyone despises Omarosa, he also uses this topos of *argumentum ad hominem* as a method of addressing his audience by stating that if you were to believe what Omarosa is saying, you yourself have issues:

#### Example (54)

“if you believe Omarosa on this, then I think you’ve got a screw loose. I mean she is insanely dishonest.”

It can be assumed that as a conservative podcast, Shapiro’s audience is mainly pro-Trump sharing similar views and attitudes, so this kind of language would most likely work as they presumably dislike anyone opposing Trump and spreading negative stories about him so publicly.

There are also a few examples in the podcasts of a similar tactic used when talking about President Trump, however, these instances also include a hint of sarcasm and are not to be taken fully seriously. The most glaring example of this occurs in the second podcast where Shapiro satirically calls Trump a “vicious and brutal racist” in example (51), along with two other instances of stating his racism. However, all these occur in response to Omarosa calling Trump a racist and therefore Shapiro appears to be ironically agreeing with her. However, as he is constantly insisting on her lack of credibility, it becomes obvious that he is not actually in agreement with her. This type of linguistic strategy of stating the opposite of what you mean sarcastically often helps to increase the illocutionary force of your statement.

Another topos that is quite commonplace in Shapiro’s podcasts is that of justice. A quintessential illustration of this is during the second podcast section where the phrase “fired like a dog” used by Trump in relation to Omarosa is discussed at length. According to Shapiro, the media has claimed this incident is racist, because Omarosa is a black woman. He, however, argues that, because Trump has used the same phrase on multiple occasions about a variety of people, genders and races, this instance does not qualify as being racist. He further exemplifies this by bringing up a previous event in which Trump was claimed to have been ableist. In this

situation he used suggestive hand gestures while mocking a disabled reporter. However, it was later proven that Trump uses similar gestures whenever talking about people he dislikes, and they were not, in fact, a mocking reference to the reporter's disability. Shapiro closes this argument by saying that instead of being racist, Trump should be called 'a speci-ist' because he seems to dislike dogs as he is fond of firing them and that Trump gets a lot of leeway for acting in this manner because "he is a jerk to everybody" (example (32)) and does not discriminate in that sense.

Shapiro also utilizes the topos of history somewhat consistently throughout the podcasts. A good example of this was that Trump "is a jerk to everybody" (example (32)), discussed in the previous paragraph. Under this paradigm this can be seen as a reference to historical events, as in, Trump has always been the same and is merely acting as is customary for him and not doing anything out of the ordinary when discussing other people in a derogatory fashion.

In addition, another instance in which Shapiro employs methods of the topos of history occur in the fourth podcast. Here he is adding a historical precedent to the use of 'n-word' by stating that:

Example (55)

"if there is an n-word tape, it's a problem. It's a problem in a variety of senses. Obviously, the President of the United States should not be somebody who utters the n-word, the Republican Party, the Party of Abraham Lincoln should not be the party of the n-word. But, there's no evidence Trump said any of this, so why the hell are we even talking about this?"

The reference to Abraham Lincoln, a prominent past president, in this instance adds a certain credibility and grandeur to the statement. The assumption is that everyone is familiar with and respects Abraham Lincoln and would, aided by Shapiro's words, be more inclined to adopt those feelings for the modern Republican Party and in conjunction also President Trump.

The final topos used by Shapiro associated with this macro-discourse is that of hasty generalizations. These generalizations "on the basis of a quantitative sample that is not representative. It can be seen in the form of *compositio* (replacing the whole by a part) or *divisio* (replacing a part by the whole)" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 73). This particular case is an example of *compositio*. It appears in the third podcast, when Shapiro draws the conclusion that nobody believes anything Omarosa is saying based on the simple fact that her tell-all book has not reached the number one bestseller position on Amazon. This can be seen as fallacious argumentation as it is impossible to draw irrefutable sequiturs based on such minimal evidence. The fact that Omarosa's book is not yet a bestseller does not automatically imply that she lacks everybody's trust. However, that presumption cannot be wholly excluded either.

This type of language seems very on character Shapiro, as he makes strong conclusions from rather minimal evidence, usually as it relates to Omarosa and her trustworthiness. However, when someone else is seen to making similar hasty generalizations about President Trump, Shapiro will call them out on it, questioning whether the conclusions are fair when no sufficient evidence is provided. Based on this, Shapiro's actions can be seen as somewhat hypocritical, but this is not out of the norm for this type of media. He is focusing his message on Trump-minded and Republican people, therefore showing prejudice against people who oppose them.

#### **4.3.2 The discourse of introducing new partial information**

Within the macro-discourse of introducing new partial information, the only discursive strategy to note is that of predication. This is not quite as clear-cut as with the other macro-discourses, because this one deals solely with events and not people, but some instances of predication can still be discovered from within the podcasts. The first example of this occurs in the very beginning of the first podcast with the phrasing:

Example (56)

“chaos continues to reign inside the Trump administration, despite the fact that the situation in the United States is good. The economy is very solid, we're not enmeshed in any foreign crisis. The chaos that has been caused by the staffing of this administration just continues to resonate.”

Chaos is a word that has a negative meaning and the verb 'reign' implying that someone or something else than the administration itself is in command of the goings on at the White House. This naturally reflects badly on the administration, as they are not appearing to be politically capable of spinning the story in their favour or making it disappear.

Juxtaposing example (56), the other instances of predication in relation to this macro-discourse showcase negativity towards the news itself and how they are disseminated rather than the administration. For example, Shapiro refers to the reporting about Omarosa as “fake news”, and to the evidence supporting what she is saying as being “pretty weak sauce” as per example (40). Both phrases having adverse associations. Thereby they can promote disengaging from the current media climate and news reporting within Shapiro's audience. Finally, he discusses the method in which Omarosa was able to record snippets of discussions from the White House by saying it was achieved with:

Example (57)

“it turns out that the penbomb was actually a pen recording device and it was carried James Bond-like by Omarosa into the West Wing because everything is stupid.”

Here, there are two instances of predication. Firstly, by comparing Omarosa to James Bond in this context, Shapiro ridicules the idea of her acting as a secret agent. This is apparent from his

other references to Omarosa. The manner in which he regards her makes it obvious that this comparison is done in jest and should be regarded as mockery of her character. The later statement of claiming “everything is stupid” further reflects Shapiro’s attitude towards everything that is happening. The manner in which Omarosa was able to obtain her footage is deemed absurd, and everything that has followed her reappearance in the public eye should be disregarded as untrustworthy, an idea which becomes even more apparent further in the podcasts.

As for the argumentation strategies within this macro-discourse, one of the first noticeable ones is that of advantage. This strategy means that “if an action under a specific relevant point of view will be useful then one should perform it” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 75). Shapiro uses this strategy about Omarosa when claiming that she is using the perceived existence of disparaging tapes about President Trump, such as the n-word tape, to promote the sales of her upcoming book:

Example (58)

“secretly recorded conversations with the President, conversations she has since leveraged while shopping her tell-all book, which is titled ‘Unhinged’.”

This statement by Shapiro implies that Omarosa would do anything to get ahead, even publish private conversations that were taped in secret without knowledge from the other party. In the context of this topos, the conclusion is that, as Omarosa already had the tapes, she should use them. This is, because in the prevalent media climate, they were unlikely to go unnoticed, instead giving her huge amounts of publicity and promoting her book. As this is not so much about the person per se, but rather a comment of assumed motivations behind certain actions that are presented as new information to the listener, it follows that this use of the topos of advantage falls under this particular macro-discourse.

Another strategy that is used by Shapiro more consistently throughout the podcasts is the topos of history “history teaches that specific actions have specific consequences, one should perform or omit a specific action in a specific situation” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 80). The main instances of this strategy at play that will be analysed here occurred in the second podcast. In this section Shapiro questions the legitimacy of the existence of the n-word tape, because “we had this exact discussion back in 2016” (full citation provided in example (35)) and back then no tape actually came out. He claims that Omarosa resurfacing those rumours is just politically motivated talk with no real evidence to support it. However, he does agree that should such a tape appear, it would spell trouble for President Trump. This is because:

## Example (59)

“all of this stuff that people have said is racially charged would suddenly look very different if the president habitually uses the n-word right. The President habitually uses racist slurs, then all the stuff that feels racially charged or racially tinged suddenly shifts over into the category of oh probably racist.”

In both these instances he is relying heavily on historical contexts, claiming, firstly, that the tape does not exist, because it has not surfaced earlier, and, secondly, when stating that should it be published, all of Trump’s previous actions could be labelled racist due to the groundwork the tape would provide.

An argumentation strategy that is singularly used by Shapiro within the context of this macro-discourse is *trajectio in alium*. It is a fallacious strategy “used strategically in rationalizations, in the discursive construction of scapegoats, in victim-victimizer reversals etc. It means shifting the blame, responsibility or guilt onto somebody else” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 74). The way in which Shapiro uses this is by putting the blame of President Trump’s actions onto the people who voted for him and elected him for office. Shapiro does this in example (33) by saying that “this is the reality show we all bargained for and let’s be real about this, this is what you wanted to see was it not – break out the popcorn, break out the jellybeans.” In this instance, he recognizes Trump’s actions as problematic, but delegitimizes any complaints against Trump, because it is the peoples’ fault that he is in office. Thus, he is able to use the voice his position grants him to use such politically incorrect language and gain notoriety. Using the pronoun ‘we’ here implies that Shapiro assumes that all of his listeners, along with himself, voted for Trump in the 2016 election and are therefore a part of the reason people pay more attention to Trump as the president than they probably would otherwise.

What makes this strategy fallacious, however, is that it is merely redirecting the blame and possible criticism of one person’s actions to all those who supported him instead of realizing the blame belongs solely to the person responsible for the misconduct. In politics, *trajectio in alium* is more commonly used to redirect the blame onto political adversaries, instead of supporters as Shapiro does here, which makes his use of this strategy highly unconventional. However, it does create a sense of unity and pro-Trump atmosphere as all his voters are grouped together and his presidency is portrayed as a “reality show” they should all enjoy.

Another quite typical argumentation strategy by Shapiro is the topos of reality, which infers that “reality is as it is, and a particular action should be performed” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 79). The most obvious use of this particular strategy occurs in the fourth podcast where Shapiro discusses the options for the Republican party, if the n-word tape is revealed to be true. “If the

president says, you know, those stupid n-words or if he says anything like that, then I think a primary is probably in order in the Republican party,” (full quote in example (47)).

Here he is arguing that the existence of the tape should realistically result in very specific actions by the party. However, following this statement, he once again begins questioning the existence of such a tape in example (35). He even does so using the same topos of reality: “If the tape exists that sucker is in the public sphere by now no question about it”. Here Shapiro is arguing for a very different reality than in the preceding statement. Contradicting his first claim according to which the tape is assumed to be real, at this point its existence is discredited. As it stands, Shapiro is arguing that if such a tape indeed existed there would be no possible way it would not have been published already. Therefore, the fact that it has not been published means that it does not exist.

This strategy is also used later in the same podcast in relation to the then White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. The context behind this use of the topos of reality is that Huckabee Sanders had held a press conference where she would not categorically deny the existence of the n-word tape, merely stating that she personally had not heard President Trump using such vocabulary. This generated a lot of talk in the media, but Shapiro chose to defend her by stating that, even though a clear answer would have been better, it was good to avoid implicating hard answers:

#### Example (60)

“What’s the downside, she says no (i.e., the tape does not exist) and then it turns out that the tape breaks, so what like so what, what are they gonna say. That she’s a liar, they’re already saying she’s a liar. They’re gonna say that the administration was dishonest, like okay what exactly is the downside.”

The argument here is that, because the media have already decided what kind of a person she is (a liar), her actions or inactions in either direction will not make any difference and so it is okay for her to lie. It would not have any real consequences merely reinforcing the image the media already has of her.

The final argumentation strategy Shapiro uses in relation to this macro-discourse is *argumentum ad ignorantiam*, “an appeal to ignorance” which means that “a certain argument, thesis or statement should be regarded as true as long as the reverse has not been proven” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 72). Shapiro does not use this in the most traditional sense as, in the fourth podcast, he is more focused on critiquing the media for believing unsubstantiated rumours, thereby establishing that even unverified facts remain true if no counterevidence comes to light. Some examples of unproven statements the media have been reporting as true,



according to Shapiro, include Trump's alleged affair with his pastor Patty White, suggested by Omarosa, and the fact that Omarosa claims Trump was made aware of the Wikileaks emails implicating his political opponent Hillary Clinton before they were made public. He agrees that especially the latter would implicate Trump's involvement in a conspiracy with the Russian government, but also claims that the media is merely parroting Omarosa's words with no supporting evidence behind these malicious claims. As such, the media is the one operating with the *argumentum ad ignorantiam* and Shapiro is exposing it to his audience, at least according to him.

### 4.3.3 The discourse of critical evaluation of the news media

The third and final macro-discourse also focuses heavily on methods provided by the discursive strategy of predication. In this context, it is also focused solely on the negative attribution of characteristics towards either the media as a whole or specific members of the mainstream media. The most notable instance of this towards an individual occurs in the fourth podcast where Shapiro ridicules Joe Scarborough on his criticism of Trump using the phrasing "fired like a dog" about Omarosa. Shapiro simultaneously accuses him of exaggeration and hypocrisy:

Example (61)

"the media declared yesterday that this is the worst thing anyone had ever said, Joe Scarborough who gave President Trump millions and millions of free ad dollars on MSNBC during the presidential run before turning on him and deciding Trump was actually a bad guy. He says that Trump opened the door to genocide by calling Omarosa a dog. Yes, I'm yes... Right on the money there Joe. I'm... not an exaggeration.

Oh my goodness, during the holocaust Nazis referred to Jews as rats and in Rwanda genocide was often justified with calling Tutsis cockroaches. Slave owners throughout history considered slaves subhuman animals. You can see time and time again – this is actually how dictators and tyrants open the door, and they do it dehumanizing their political opponents."

From the context it is clear that Shapiro believes this situation is blown completely out of proportion by the media and he does not agree with this being the "worst thing anyone has ever said". As for him accusing Scarborough of hypocrisy, that becomes evident from the middle section of this example. Shapiro alludes that Scarborough was very supportive of Trump monetarily previously, but is not willing to follow through on that support anymore now that there is so much negative press surrounding President Trump.

As a whole, the podcasts are more focused on discrediting the media in general, rather than individuals. This is done by either questioning the media's credibility or condemning them for over-dramatization. Examples of this include:

Example (62)

"the media are responding to this with the predictable outrage that you knew that they would"

## Example (63)

“here’s my view, when I can’t trust anybody I wait for evidence to come out. Otherwise this is just a bunch of media nonsense”

## Example (64)

“— here’s Omarosa saying this, again with no supporting evidence. And this was parroted all over by the media yesterday”

## Example (65)

“—using that as evidence that there actually is an n-word tape is just evidence the media is willing to go out of its way for anything” and

## Example (66)

“There’s no evidence Trump said any of this (referring to the ‘n-word’ tape) so why the hell are we even talking about this, that is a serious problem with the media and their own credibility and demonstrates full scale what their agenda is.”

Examples (62) and (63) of these include adjectives and nouns that in the current context are to be seen as negative (“predictable outrage” and “nonsense”). These imply a disproportionate reaction from the media - based on non-factual evidence. This idea is further demonstrated in the latter examples, either by directly questioning the media’s credibility and accusing them of manufacturing drama against President Trump or more covertly with explicit predicates. This can be seen in the example where the verb “parroted” is used to describe how the media has been reporting on these events. As a verb in this particular context this has negative connotations as it refers to mechanically repeating information received from another, not necessarily reliable, source. It is specifically negative here as it used to describe the media which should be very thorough with their research before reporting anything as fact, all of which Shapiro calls into question here.

In the same way to the first macro-discourse, here Shapiro, in addition to predication, also employs the methods of intensification and mitigation. This is mainly done by way of exaggeration but also with the help of verbs of thinking. The most significant examples of hyperboles include:

## Example (67)

“—that’s how the media are treating her these days, and the media that hated Omarosa up until, let’s see, thirty-seven seconds ago, now they think that she has tons of credibility”

## Example (68)

“the media are treating her (Omarosa) as though everything she says is gospel truth” and

## Example (69)

“yes, the holocaust’s right around the corner because Omarosa Manigault Newman taped President Trump in the Oval Office and then Trump called her a dog and said she was fired like a dog. That’s exactly the same as Nazis spending years and years labelling all Jews rats, and it’s the same thing as the government in Rwanda labelling the Tutsis cockroaches, exactly the same thing.”

In example (67), the exaggeration is quite obvious: Shapiro implies that the media changed their opinion of Omarosa particularly abruptly. This can suggest to his audience that the media should not be believed in this situation.

The following example (68) follows a very similar logic, but does it more covertly, by using the phrase “gospel truth.” This insinuates a relationship to the Bible and its values. However, based on intertextual knowledge, it is clear that Omarosa is not someone Shapiro associates with these things. Therefore, this further discredits the media in the eyes of his audience. This means that what the media are assumed to be doing (valuing Omarosa’s words as high as the Bible) is portrayed as completely unfathomable. The final example, example (69) of augmentative language refers to Joe Scarborough comparing Trump’s actions to “opening the door to genocide.” Shapiro instantly ridicules this notion by exaggerating Scarborough’s statement and presenting the events that supposedly led to this in a demeaning manner. In dramatizing Scarborough’s statement by saying “holocaust’s right around the corner” Shapiro accomplishes his goal of making this conclusion drawn by the media seem utterly ridiculous as he compares the situation surrounding Omarosa and Trump to actual historical genocides. This ultimately works to both intensify his audience’s lack of trust in the media and lessen the impact of Trump’s use of the phrase “fired like a dog” about an African American woman, making it seem like of no consequence. Finally, Shapiro also uses verbs of thinking to criticize the media. The most apparent example of this is:

#### Example (70)

“the media, they thought it was a joke she (Omarosa) was in the White House. Because it was a joke she was in the White House, because she never should have been hired. Because the President didn’t hire all the best people.”

What this accomplishes again is to make the media seem untrustworthy. Shapiro presents this as a factual statement. According to him, the media used to think that Omarosa was not to be trusted, but now that she has turned against Trump, this view of her no longer stands. This directly affects the epistemic state of his audience by, once again, discrediting the mainstream media.

The most pronounced argumentation strategy that Shapiro uses in conjunction with this macro-discourse is quite possibly *argumentum ad populum* which “encompasses populist appeals to the masses. It consists of an appeal to the prejudiced emotions, opinions and convictions of a specific social group or to the masses, instead of relevant argumentation” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 72). The specific group of people in this case are Republican listeners of Shapiro’s podcast who, as members of his echo chamber, are likely to share his views on Donald Trump

and his treatment in the media. Examples of this fallacious argumentation strategy are present in all but the third podcast section. Shapiro mainly uses this strategy to point out how the media has changed its tune when it comes to Omarosa. He assumes that the previously notorious Trump staffer gained credibility in the eyes of the media only after she started to talk about President Trump in a significantly negative manner. This is most striking in statements such as:

Example (71)

“the media, of course, will treat her with all sorts of respect. There’s this phenomena in the media, where if you rip on a republican figure and you were once a friend with a republican figure, then you get this sort of grand new respect, a strange new respect, suddenly you’re taken very seriously”

Example (72)

“now meanwhile, the media have been doing yeoman’s work (hard, and valuable work done to support a cause) to demonstrate exactly where they stand on all these issues. They have been continuously granting all sorts of credibility to Omarosa.”

Along with these two examples, also previously presented example (67) portrays the same thing. The function of these statements is to validate the listeners assumed position on how the media propagates an anti-Trump agenda by endorsing his antagonists’ views while ridiculing his support.

This works because the assumed majority of Shapiro’s audience already shares a similar ideology and stance with him as members of the same echo chamber. Within an echo chamber, strong statements such as these are more likely to further bolster pre-existing ideas rather than reverse them.

Another strategy that Shapiro uses rather consistently is that of the topos of justice. As stated, multiple times above, this is the strategy of comparing two or more situations and arguing for their just evaluation. In the fourth podcast section Shapiro draws on this topos when he brings up a past case where the media treated Linda Tripp, the person who covertly taped Monica Lewinsky talking about her affair with then President Bill Clinton:

Example (73)

“the worst person who ever lived for having taped Monica Lewinsky.”

Furthering this comparison, he then questions why Omarosa is not facing similar harassment for similar actions, taping Trump in secret and publishing the tapes. Shapiro goes on for a significant period of time about the unfairness of this incongruence. The other most prominent example of this topos within this macro-discourse is one that overlaps with several other argumentation strategies within the other macro-discourse as well. That being the occasion where the phrasing “fired like a dog” is discussed at length. As it pertains to this particular context, it is most noteworthy how Shapiro claims that the media regards this phrasing as being

racist simply because Omarosa is African American. However, as Shapiro then goes on to claim, this is not a fair assumption, because Trump has used the same phrase countless times and in relation to people of different racial backgrounds.

A topos that Shapiro uses only once, but discusses it at length, is the fallacies of ambiguity, equivocation, amphibole or clarity. This is extrapolated as schemes consisting of “changing the interpretation of an ambiguous utterance or of playing with ambiguous, polysemic meanings for the purpose of weakening the antagonist’s argument and standpoint, and for strengthening one’s own argument and standpoint (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 74).” This instance occurs in the final podcast where Shapiro discusses and condemns Joe Scarborough’s (an MSNBC host) opinion that by calling Omarosa a dog, Trump had opened the door to genocide. The full context in which this statement was given is not provided in the podcast, making it therefore difficult to deduce whether Shapiro’s reaction to this was justified. Nevertheless, he takes this somewhat ambiguous statement and makes comparisons to Nazis calling Jews rats and Tutsis being referred to as cockroaches during the Rwandan genocide. While he agrees that these actions were an efficient way for tyrants to dehumanize their opponents and to justify their extermination of another race, he argues that what Trump has done is in no way comparable with these other events. He concludes by saying:

Example (74)

“right on the money media, I can’t imagine why people don’t trust you on any of this stuff.”

This way he is elaborating on Scarborough’s statement, while retaining an ironical tone throughout and it works to weaken the original argument as well as making the audience more inclined to agree with his version of the events. The assumption here is that because Joe Scarborough’s statement is regarded by Shapiro as utterly ridiculous and laughable, people would rather distance themselves from Scarborough and his opinions than become a laughing matter themselves.

Another argumentation strategy that only takes place in the fourth podcast is that of *argumentum ad verecundiam* which “consists of supporting one’s standpoint by means of reference to an authority considered as competent, superior or unimpeachable. This appeal is fallacious if the referenced authority is not competent or qualified, if it is prejudiced or if it is referenced in an inaccurate way” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 72). The authority which Shapiro refers to here is that of the then White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. This argument is fallacious as she is biased due to her belonging to Trump’s staff and will most likely have been presenting the events in such a light that would exhibit a positive outlook for

the president, her employer. In fact, the statements given by Sarah Huckabee Sanders that Shapiro chooses to focus on here are ones where she is critiquing the media:

Example (75)

“Sarah Huckabee Sanders, she makes the point that the press are jumping on all the Omarosa stuff, they’re doing lots to divide the country, and she’s not wrong about this. Frankly if we wanna look at whose creating divisions in the country, I think the media has done more to divide this country, certainly far more than this President ever has.”

Showing her as an authoritative figure and indicating agreement with her words increases her credibility in the eyes of his audience. However, as per the argumentation strategy, her authority is fallacious, as she herself is biased. A way to diminish this fallaciousness would be to include some other authority in the discussion who would support Huckabee Sander’s words. Shapiro, however, elects not to do this and thereby presents his audience with non-reliable information, which is something he himself has been critiquing continuously throughout the podcasts.

The final strategy of argumentation at play in this particular discourse is *argumentum ad hominem*, “a verbal attack on the antagonist’s personality and character instead of challenging his/her argument with counter-arguments” (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 72). It is most prevalent in the fourth podcast where it is employed a number of times. It is mainly at play when Shapiro disparages Joe Scarborough for his comments about Trump opening the door to genocide, but also when Shapiro uses phrasing such as the media “parroting” everything Omarosa is saying and claiming that they are willing to go to any lengths to slander Trump.

The lack of counterarguments or relevant thorough discussion on these actions, makes Shapiro’s credibility somewhat questionable. His audience, however, as members of the same echo chamber, are likely to get validation for their opinions from Shapiro’s words instead of being prompted to do some introspection.

In sum, Shapiro’s podcasts consist of three macro-discourses: satirical portrayal of relevant persons, introducing new partial information, and critical evaluation of the news media. Out of these three, the last one is arguably the most prominent one. Discursively, he focuses on using strategies of predication as well as intensification and mitigation. With the use of these, he mainly aims to discredit Omarosa and members of the press through rhetorical figures, adjectives, implicatures, and other linguistic means. Shapiro’s argumentation ranges from fallacious to legitimate strategies with both being quite equally prominent. His consistent use of fallacious strategies mainly attacks personal characteristics of people.

## 5 DISCUSSION

In this section, I will discuss my findings in relation to each other and other relevant, previous research as well as establish the answers to my research questions clearly and succinctly. I will begin by referring to previous relevant research about political discourse in general that applies to all three of my data sources and then going into more specifics and finally discussing the analysis as to how it relates to my research questions and whether I was able to answer them satisfactorily.

As a whole, Trump's tweets along with Colbert's monologues and Shapiro's podcasts all fall under the same umbrella term, political discourse. However, it can be debated whether they are political discourse via mass media, or political communication i.e., communication that originates from political institutions. In the case of Colbert and Shapiro this distinction is quite clear, and they fall under the first one, as even though they are deeply ingrained in the political discussion, they are not directly involved in politics themselves. However, it could be argued that President Trump employs both of these since as the president he is quite clearly a politician and therefore making his statements political communication. However, his main source of addressing the people is through social and mass media. In fact, Edwards (2018: 37) has made the claim that American politics is colliding with entertainment, making the distinction between those two concepts somewhat vague and these three political actors certainly prove him correct. This is most evident with Colbert and Shapiro. They are discussing serious political matters, but in a light-hearted and sarcastic tone, making these topics entertaining for their audiences to listen to and partake in. As for Trump, his messages are shorter and therefore do not provide as much entertainment, but by the nature of Twitter and his personal tendency to write polarising and colourful tweets makes them entertainment to read, particularly for those with similar ideas.

When it comes to political discussion, there are certain norms that set "good" and "bad" communicative acts apart. The first of these norms is that of deliberation which in this context consists of openness, reciprocity, reason-giving, civility and communication across the political spectrum (Freelon 2015: 772). These factors are essential for deciding whether particular political discussion is promoting thoughtful discussions and considering claims for and against political topics thoroughly. When applied to the present study, it could be argued that none of the three people under scrutiny follow this norm effectively, if we pay attention to the types of arguments, equality of participation, length of messages, civility and politeness as well as conversational coherence. It could be argued, however, that Colbert and Shapiro follow this

norm more closely than Trump, because their statements are coherent, discussed at length and they sometimes even provide dissenting opinions, however briefly that might be, to make the messages more multi-faceted. When it comes to civility and politeness, all three lack these values in their discourses, as mocking and disparaging remarks are part of their repertoire. As for the tweets by Trump, they lack all of these characteristics, except perhaps for conversational coherence, some of which can all be blamed on the nature of Twitter as a platform that only supports relatively short messages. In short, it is somewhat questionable whether any of these three represent “good” communicative acts. All of them are problematic in their own ways.

The other two relevant norms of political discussion are communitarianism and liberal individualism. In general, communitarianism is associated with progressivism and liberal individualism with conservatives. However, some cross-contamination occurs and the divisions between these two are not always so clear-cut. What characterizes communitarianism is the tendency to disengage from outsiders and to focus on collaboration with like-minded individuals only about ideologically specific goals (Freelon 2015: 775). In conjunction with deliberation, this results in cross-cutting justifications and questions, which, according to previous research (ibid. 774), is particularly common on Twitter. Somewhat surprisingly then, communitarianism does align in part with how Trump uses the platform, even though he is not very politically progressive. This does also apply to Colbert and Shapiro, as they also mainly present like-minded opinions, or at least discredit any opposing ones. As for liberal individualism, it is also visible in all three data sets in the sense that it implies uninhibited self-expression and speaking without mind for responsiveness and civility (Freelon: 2015: 774). The fact that both of these norms are present in all three sources of data regardless of whether they represent the right- or left-wing of the political spectrum raises the question of whether these concepts are appropriate for analysing these newer forms of media and political satire. Perhaps they are more applicable for more traditional forms and means of political discussion, excluding satirical and disparaging discourses. This is something that could be further examined and taken into account in any possible future research into similar topics.

In general, social media, and mass media present different forms for political discussion. However, as they share several similarities that all apply for the media under discussion here, they will be explored together. Where distinct disparities occur, they will be explained in detail. Some important concepts that apply to all three are the following: Twitter, late-night TV shows and podcasts all include homophily, echo chamber, hostile media perception, selective categorization and a hybrid media model. A few of these characteristics are remarkably similar



to one another, but some distinctions exist, so they will all be discussed in relation to the data of this thesis. Homophily implies the tendency of online media users to only associate with others who share their ideologies and thoughts which then leads to echo chambers where users of online media only intermingle with a homogenous group of people and hear the same thoughts bounced back at them that they already have (Brummette 2018: 498). This then leads to single-minded users who are hardly aware of any opposing arguments. This might be the case with Trump's Twitter as well as Colbert's monologues and Shapiro's podcasts. All three share their opinions online (Colbert's monologues are published on YouTube after airing on television), so according to this theory, it can be hypothesized that most of their audiences comprise of like-minded people. Therefore, this makes these media opinion-reinforcing, rather than providing dissenting views and perhaps even making their audience question the opinions they hold and being critical of the media they consume.

Somewhat similar to homophily is the idea of hostile media perception. This includes the idea that partisan media users who are on the opposing sides of an issue are more likely to see the same article or other form of media as if it were biased for the other side (Feldman 2011: 410). An even more radical idea of media perception is selective categorization (*ibid.*), according to which, for example, a Democrat and a Republican are processing the same information through their partisan lenses and therefore seeing it differently. When it comes to this thesis, selective categorization implies that those people who venture outside of their echo chamber and consume opposing media (e.g., a leftist listening to Shapiro's podcasts) might perceive the other forms of media as even more negative and contradictory to their ideologies. This can result in an antagonistic experience which might further drive them back to their echo chamber. An experience with the media like this could create a loop where any opposing media are disregarded, and only similarly-minded people are listened to, which makes thoughtful and constructive partisan discussions nigh impossible.

Lastly, the concept of a hybrid media model suggests that there is no longer a clear distinction between what is social media and what is traditional, or mass, media (Morris 2018: 458-459). This becomes exceptionally clear from the data of this thesis. In the past, before the rise in popularity for podcasts and late-night TV shows, especially podcasts were used mainly for networking (McClung & Johnson 2010: 88) and social media was not used as a source of news, but these two ideas are becoming more and more muddled which Ott deems problematic (2017: 65). While mass media might still not be an effective method for networking, social media are used for staying up to date with the news, especially by younger generations. Even in terms of

the data in the present thesis this is problematic, because the type of social media in question do not undergo the same type of scrutiny as traditional news outlets do, and partiality is not frowned upon; rather it is encouraged. This is especially problematic about Twitter, because the discourse architecture of that platform does not allow for long and complicated messages but does allow the users to pre-select and filter the content that they wish to see.

Some characteristics of Twitter as a microblogging platform that sets it apart from other forms of media include its media ecology of simplicity, impulsivity, incivility, and motivation (Ott 2017: 60), all of which Trump utilizes admirably. In terms of Trump's tweets, simplicity insinuates reduced deliberations behind the message, as such it could be assumed, that had Trump had time and interest to consult with his political advisors some of his tweets would never have been published. As for impulsivity, it contributes to simplicity and how the lack of effort and forethought required in publishing tweets can often result in emotionally charged messaging. This is obvious in the case of President Trump, his tweets portray a very emotional mindset and his personal considerations of other people, often with derogatory language included. The nature of the uncivil and even offensive language he uses falls under incivility, which suggests that it is easier to ignore the norms of polite society when your interactions do not take place face-to-face. Finally, Trump's motivation to post the tweets he does seems to be a desire for attention and self-promotion. This is clearly something that is important for Trump as he tweeted constantly and received a huge amount of attention on them. This motivation of self-promotion is even argued for by Ben Shapiro when, in his podcasts, he claims that Trump's Twitter personality is the reason he gained such notoriety and was ultimately elected president in 2016. In other words, President Trump's tweets are a form of self-expression with heightened emotional impact, due to his use of language that, in the case of the present data, has an agenda of expressing opposition against Omarosa and bolstering support for himself from his echo chamber.

As for late-night TV shows and podcasts, the audience they garner are mostly comprised of younger generations who might be using these forms of media as a source of news (Young & Tisinger 2006: 114 and McClung & Johnson 2010: 88). Both media are rising in popularity and use their respective platforms to disseminate specific politically charged messages, often through humorous and satirical means. Both also use similar techniques of parody, irony, and sarcasm to achieve their satirical tone. While there may also be singular instances from within the monologues and podcasts where Colbert and Shapiro are using satire to make political claims, they mainly use political content as source material for their jokes while partaking in

political discussion. In the discussion of previous research (Higgie 2015: 69), the idea of satirists as “truth-tellers” was presented. Within this context, it would imply that because Colbert and Shapiro call out other political actors for stating falsehoods, their audiences would perceive them as more trustworthy. This, again, goes hand-in-hand with the idea of hostile media perception and selective categorization, because together they suggest, that while those with similar ideologies are trusted wholeheartedly, others presenting contradictory views can be seen as hostile and threatening to the person’s self-image. The flipside of political satire is the possibility of creating apathy in the audience towards political actors or, in some extreme cases, reinforcing the agenda it aims to attack (Higgie 2015: 64). However, as both Colbert and Shapiro are known for their political affiliations, their audiences are likely to know what kind of discourse they will be subject to and choose it willingly, they are therefore unlikely react negatively to the given discourses.

In addition to political satire, like Trump, also Shapiro employs populist discourses. Shapiro and Trump both represent right-wing populism due to their political affiliations, but also because their discourses are aimed at a defined ‘other’. In this case, it is mainly Omarosa who represents a different ethnic and gender background but who is also an opponent politically. What is inherent for populist discourses is the creation of extreme dichotomies, usually those of victim/perpetrator or friend/foe. This is very apparent in the data of this thesis, too. Within both Shapiro and Trump’s discourses Omarosa is depicted as the perpetrator and foe for publicly talking about the president in a negative way. This, in turn, makes the administration the friend and victim in this context. Such dichotomies also appear in Colbert’s monologues, but they are, used differently and slightly less clear-cut. Although Omarosa’s actions are also questioned, she is mostly viewed as the victim of Trump’s aggressive tweets, whereas the president is then the perpetrator. However, in some instances Omarosa is also the perpetrator within the monologues, and her past transgressions are brought up. This makes it somewhat unclear whether Colbert is using methods of populist discourses or merely using a slightly similar tactic in some instances. Within the American context, populist discourses also rely on the idea of “American exceptionalism” (Wodak 2012: 15-16). In this data sample this idea can be seen in some of Shapiro’s podcasts, especially when he is harking back to globally well-known politicians from the past, such as Abraham Lincoln. The way he uses this is to promote credence and belief in his words from his audience.

Lastly, I will look at the research questions and discuss the answers I was able to discover to them. I will also evaluate how successful the analysis was in regard to the research questions.

In order to be concise, I will summarize the strategies identified in a tabular form, and discuss the findings within the framework they provide. As a reiteration the present research questions were the following:

1. What kinds of discourse and argumentation strategies does Trump use in relation to Omarosa in his presidential Twitter account?
2. How do Colbert and Shapiro respond to the overall events and the President's tweets in their discourses?

Within the analysis of Trump's Twitter, the discourse was divided into two macro-discourses which both use one or two discursive strategies and several argumentation strategies.

Table 2. Discursive and argumentative strategies in Trump's Twitter

| Macro-discourses:                             | Discursive strategies:         | Argumentation strategies:  |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Negative representation of out-group members: | Predication                    | Topos of burden<br>Trajectio in alium                                    |
| Positive representation of in-group members:  | Predication<br>Perspectivation | Argumentum ad populum<br>Argumentum ad ignorantiam<br>Trajectio in alium |

In general, Trump uses tonal shifts, negative adjectives and implicatures, as well as discourse framing to simultaneously both discredit and distance himself from Omarosa, while portraying himself as a benevolent figure. As for the argumentation strategies he employs, most are fallacious as they rely on shifting the blame, appealing to the audience's ignorance or to preconceived notions and stereotypes that would attract members of his echo chamber. Some of this can, however, be the fault of Twitter itself as its nature as a microblogging platform allows only for short messages and encourages lack of consideration and civility. However, there is some previous research (Edwards 2018: 30 and Ott 2017: 63-64) which claim that Trump's discourses are similar within and without Twitter, so it might be more accurate to state that this type of discourse can be emblematic of President Trump, whether it be on Twitter or any other form of media.

As for Stephen Colbert, his monologues consist of three macro-discourses within which he uses a variety of discursive and argumentation strategies. Out of all three under analysis here, his discourses are the most varied when it comes to the discursive strategies.

Table 3. Discursive and argumentative strategies in Colbert's monologues

| Macro-discourses:                        | Discursive strategies:                                    | Argumentation strategies:   |
|--|---|---|
| Satirical portrayal of relevant persons: | Predication<br>Intensification & mitigation<br>Nomination | Topos of burden<br>Topos of authority/argumentum ad verecundiam<br>Topos of history<br>Argumentum ad hominem<br>Topos of definition |
| Introducing new partial information:     | Intensification & mitigation                              | Topos of burden<br>Argumentum ad ignorantiam<br>Topos of justice  |
| Critical evaluation of the news media:   | Nomination  | Topos of justice  |

There is not one discursive strategy that Colbert uses in all three macro-discourses, but both intensification and mitigation as well as nomination appear in two of them. For the first one, in it Colbert mostly uses hyperboles and litotes as means for verbal irony to diminish the illocutionary force of statements made by other people (such as Trump). Thereby, he encourages the audience to believe the opposite of what they say. As for nomination, Colbert draws comparisons between groups of people, e.g., by presenting the media as a single cohesive unit while not including himself as a member of the group. Predication, in turn, is merely mobilized to create negative evaluations of President Trump and Omarosa. This is achieved with the help of adjectives, comparisons, stereotypes, and contextual clues. When it comes to the argumentation strategies Colbert uses, most are straightforward, but some are problematic in their fallaciousness. In using the topoi of, burden, history and definition, his argumentation is straightforward. However, he also uses the strategies of attacking the subjects' personality without proper counterarguments of relevant topics, as well as appeals to his audiences' ignorance on particular things. Possibly the most questionable of Colbert's arguments, however, is his use of the topos of justice in relation to how the media has been treating Omarosa. His argument is that they have been calling her unreliable while also reporting on her

statements as though they were undoubtedly factual. What makes this especially problematic is that Colbert falls victim to this exact thing himself. As his audience is most likely not doing a thorough analysis of his monologues, they might not be able to notice this dichotomy and would therefore continue to have high regard for Colbert's credibility while possibly beginning to question the mainstream media.

Finally, Ben Shapiro's podcasts can also be further divided into the same three macro-discourses as Colbert's monologues, but his discursive strategies are slightly more repetitive than those of Colbert. However, when it comes to argumentation strategies, he uses a wide array throughout the different macro-discourses.

Table 4. Discursive and argumentative strategies in Shapiro's podcasts

| Macro-discourses:                        | Discursive strategies:                      | Argumentation strategies:   |
|--|---|---|
| Satirical portrayal of relevant persons: | Predication<br>Intensification & mitigation | Argumentum ad hominem<br>Topos of justice<br>Topos of history<br>Hasty generalization   |
| Introducing new partial information:     | Predication                                 | Topos of advantage<br>Topos of history<br>Trajectio in alium<br>Topos of reality<br>Argumentum ad ignorantiam   |
| Critical evaluation of the news media:   | Predication<br>Intensification & mitigation | Argumentum ad populum<br>Topos of justice<br>Fallacies of ambiguity, equivocation, amphibole or clarity<br>Argumentum ad verecundiam<br>Argumentum ad hominem |

In contrast to Colbert's wide range on discursive strategies, Shapiro only employs two of them within the podcasts, predication as well as intensification and mitigation. His main objective with these is to create negative evaluations of Omarosa and other characters, while also discrediting the events, through his use of adjectives, rhetorical figures, and implicatures, as well as hyperboles, litotes, vague expressions, tag questions and verbs of thinking. While his discursive strategies are quite simple and repetitive, the argumentation used by Shapiro implements a multitude of strategies. When looking more closely at the argumentation strategies at play, it seems that they are divided quite evenly between legitimate and fallacious ones. Legitimate argumentation occurs when Shapiro uses, for example, the *topos* of justice, history, advantage, and reality. However, his consistent use of such strategies as *argumentum ad hominem*, *argumentum ad ignorantiam*, *argumentum ad populum*, and *argumentum ad verecundiam*, among others, are misleading the audience, because they rely on irrelevant rationales. These irrelevant rationales include attacking personal characteristics of opponents, appeals to ignorance as well as opinions and prejudices shared by the masses and using incompetent authority to support his arguments.

To compare Colbert and Shapiro, they both respond to the overall events surrounding Omarosa's dismissal and subsequent book launch with slight derision and a range of discursive and argumentative strategies. Both implement several fallacious arguments and use irony and sarcasm to reach their respective audiences. As for responding to Trump's tweets themselves, this is a common tactic used by Colbert, but not so much Shapiro. Colbert makes a habit of parodying Trump's tweets and using his language to argue the opposite of what the tweets are actually saying. In contrast, Shapiro does not take these measures; instead, he seems to prefer avoiding direct citations of the President. It could be argued that this is because, as he himself puts it, Trump's actions on Twitter are not his favourite thing, and therefore he does not wish to highlight them for his audience. When Shapiro does refer to the tweets, it is either done to argue that this is what the people wanted when they voted for Trump, or to ridicule the media for making hasty assessments about Trump's character based on a single tweet.

As noted in this discussion, all three have somewhat distinct styles and methods of presenting their ideas to the wider public, the one thing they have in common is being arguably problematic in their discourses. As they are all hypothesized to be presenting their discourses at their respective echo chambers, however, it can be assumed that all are successful. Conversely, if their media are consumed by other, non-members of their echo chambers, the reception is most

likely going to be hostile and perceived as attacking the audience's self-identity while reinforcing their existing opinions rather than contradicting them.



## 6 CONCLUSION

All in all, this thesis highlights the problematic nature of political discourse within the newer forms of media, and the importance of critical reading skills in the age of social media. The rationale for this importance is that political actors can have a lot of influence on large groups of people. These media, which some might consider source of actual news as they discuss the most recent political events, are not subject to such rigorous preparation and groundwork as more traditional forms of media, news broadcasts etc. As such, it is easy for people producing these discourses to influence their audiences and promote extraordinarily singular ideologies without presenting counterarguments. This can be undesirable for a functioning democracy where open discussion across political differences is a key for making considered decisions, either by politicians or ordinary voters. It is also important to note the problematic nature of these mediums, regardless of whether they represent left- or right-wing discourse. In fact, in these particular data, the strategies used are remarkably similar across political differences. The political affiliations of Trump, Colbert, and Shapiro only become clear when analysing how they discuss other political actors in their discourses, e.g., whether pro- or anti-Trump. The main differences between these three discourses come from the media they are presented in, and whether they represent political satire or populist discourses. In the case of Shapiro's podcasts, they are an example of both political satire and populist discourse. As such, it is vital to study the different discourses within the political spectrum to evaluate whether and where they differ from one another and how those differences might relate to the political affiliations of their producers. As the present study is merely a Master's thesis, the scope of the analysis did not allow for a thorough look at how political associations affect the language use of the political communicators, but this would be an interesting objective for future study. The differences might also be more varied between official political discussions and ones on social and mass media, as was the case with the data in question. However, the key conclusion from this thesis should be that no medium that was under scrutiny in this study is completely free of fallacious and even manipulative argumentation.

Out of all three sources of data within this thesis, the most problematic is perhaps the Twitter posts by Donald Trump. This is due to the fact that he is arguably more influential than Stephen Colbert or Ben Shapiro, partly because of his status as the president during the time the tweets were posted, and because his posts were reported on other media outlets as well. They were thus made accessible to people not using Twitter. Another factor making Trump's tweets the most problematic is the nature of Twitter itself, which only allows for rudimentary arguments

due to its allowed message length. In today's political discourse Donald Trump's Twitter account might have been frozen permanently, but this does not mean it is any less important to realize that the platform is a dubious means for political discourse. As Trump gained notoriety for his public appearances and became very popular among Republican politicians and voters, it does not seem unlikely that some future politician in a similar highly influential position could adopt comparable language use. To some extent, this is undoubtedly already happening, perhaps by people not gaining quite the same audience as President Trump did, but still this kind of language will most likely prevail within the social media political discourse sphere making it all the more important to analyse and understand. This is also in the nature of right-wing populist discourses, as Wodak (2012) states, because the movement relies on charismatic leaders. As attested to by Trump's large base of support, he certainly did, and it is likely that others will follow his lead. As populism, both on the left and right, is gaining rapport globally, it is increasingly important to study its persuasive nature and how they argue their political views effectively.

Even though President Trump's tweets might be the most problematic out of all three, Colbert and Shapiro's are hardly less problematic as far as their language and argumentation strategies are concerned. As is the case with Twitter, in their respective cases part of the blame lies on the type of platforms used, but also on the nature of political satire in which both Colbert and Shapiro participate. Features of their respective discourses include describing characters they do not agree with by using disparaging language, avoiding presenting ideas that oppose their personal opinions (at least in a way that they would be taken seriously) and depicting current events with sarcasm and irony. As such it could be argued that both Colbert and Shapiro represent an alternative form of journalism as their discourses are a blend of news, comedy, and actual political conversation, something Baym (2005) claimed was happening to late night TV shows. Based on the data of this thesis, it seems that the same shift is also taking place within the world of political podcasts. Similarly, it seems that these discourses also represent political satire which, as argued by Petrovic (2018), is becoming 'politics itself'. Satirists are being regarded as more and more truthful compared to traditional media personalities this further increases their authority and influence over their audiences. These two characteristics combined -, serving as an alternate form of journalism and a 'truth-teller' -, raise the status of Colbert and Shapiro, as well as others contributing to similar mediums, as political actors and accentuates the importance of analysing their discourses.

On the basis of previous research within this field (O'Meara 2018:37, Young & Tisinger 2006: 114, McClung & Johnson 2010: 88 and Boukes et. al 2015: 727) it appeared that the audiences of these three political actors should be varied, and even conflicting in some cases. Some studies (Wodak 2012: 10-11) claim that people consuming populist media are mostly older generations with lower education backgrounds. On the other hand, social media, especially late-night TV shows and podcasts are utilized by the young and well-educated (Young & Tisinger 2006: 114 and McClung & Johnson 2010: 88). Especially in the case of Ben Shapiro's podcasts, this seems contradictory as he reaches both of these audiences. However, even in the case of Trump's tweets and Colbert's monologues this makes the composition of their audiences somewhat questionable as the scope of this thesis did not allow for a thorough look at this factor and the previous research provides some conflicting information which is not directly applicable here. As such, further study into the audiences of these kinds of mediums would be invaluable as it would provide insights for how and who these discourses are affecting in practice.

When it comes to the theoretical framework and analytical methods chosen for this thesis, they were quite successful in uncovering the discursive and argumentation strategies used by these three political actors, which was the goal as per the research questions. As such, the same methods could also be applied in a future study of political discourse. In a similar vein, this study could also promote further interest in analysing political discourse from other, non-American, contexts to see whether the same trends prevail globally and in diverse political systems. The main takeaway of this thesis, however, should be awareness for the importance of critical media literacies and understanding of how discursive and argumentation strategies can be used by political actors to influence, or even manipulate the laypersons in a given society. The reason why this is so very important is because many people lack a critical understanding of social media and how it functions which can lead to susceptible minds. Furthermore, these already more susceptible people are undoubtedly easier to introduce to extreme ideologies, such as the radical right or radical left, which can lead to a more divided society.

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