Society
https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-024-00969-7

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Voice of the People: Populism and Donald Trump's Use of Informal Voice

Jens Kjeldgaard-Christiansen[1]

Accepted: 1 February 2024
© The Author(s) 2024

Abstract

Many studies have examined characteristic verbal aspects of Donald J. Trump's political communication, from his authoritarian rhetoric to his preference for short words and simple sentences, as expressions of his populism. This article focuses on his use of non-verbal voice quality. In analyzing the "Trump rallies" and other materials from his successful campaigning before the 2016 United States presidential election, I argue that Trump's evocative and meaningful uses of pitch, amplitude, speech rate, rhythm, and other vocal measures combine to make his paralanguage exceptionally and counter-normatively informal, and that this informality amplifies his explicitly populist messaging. I conclude by suggesting that Trump's informal voice solves an important problem for him: It allows him to express his populism with a deeply personal undertone, and thereby potentially to make his claims to popular identification ring intuitively true.

Keywords Donald Trump · Voice · Populism · Communication · Prosody

> To all Americans, I see you & I hear you. I am your voice.
>
> —Donald J. Trump (2016k)

Introduction

The 45th president of the United States of America, Donald J. Trump, was a politically divisive figure before his win in the 2016 presidential election and remained one when, on November 15 of 2022, he announced his candidacy for the 2024 election. His supporters see him as a man of the people. As one of them stated in an interview for *The New York Times*, "I don't really look at him as a politician … I look at him as just one of us. He doesn't act like he's above you, as a person" (Haberman, 2018). Trump's critics tend to interpret his popular appeal as a populist bid to rally the masses behind a self-serving and divisive political agenda: He rails against the political establishment, the media, and the progressive intelligentsia; he professes to be the voice of all true Americans; he stokes nationalistic and nativist sentiments; he promises simple, "common sense" solutions to complex social problems; and he tries, by his folksiness of demeanor and informality of expression, to convince the average Joe that he is just like him and therefore understanding of his hopes and fears in a way that the Washington elites could never be.

Regardless of what one thinks of Trump's actual political proposals, there are good reasons to characterize his political *communication* as populist.[1] Rhetorically, at least, he divides the United States into a good, honest, hard-working people and a dishonest, ineffectual, uncaring political establishment. For example, on a single page of his campaign manifesto, *Crippled America*, Trump (2015a) defines his own political platform against that of the "career diplomats," "pinstriped bureaucrats," "so-called leaders," and "insiders within the Washington ruling class" (p. 31). What unites these political adversaries, as the reader is repeatedly informed, is that they are neither motivated nor competent to help the American people through difficult times.

Many studies have examined characteristic aspects of Donald Trump's communication, from his authoritarian rhetoric to his preference for short words and simple sentences, as being expressive of his populism. These studies, which will be reviewed in the next section, have tended to focus on Trump's actual words and messages—on what he

✉ Jens Kjeldgaard-Christiansen
jkc@cc.au.dk

1 Department of English, Aarhus University, Jens Chr. Skous Vej 4, 8000 Aarhus C, Denmark

[1] For an argument that Trump's political governance went against his populist rhetoric and self-presentation, see Pierson (2017).

Published online: 07 March 2024

says as opposed to how he says it. In this article, I seek to significantly broaden this perspective on the former president's communication style by focusing on his voice. I will argue that Trump's evocative and meaningful uses of voice pitch, amplitude, speech rate, rhythm, and other vocal measures combine to make his paralanguage exceptionally *informal*, and that this informality echoes and amplifies his explicitly populist messaging.

There has long been a tendency in American politics and presidents toward a more informal and simple communication style (Conway & Zubrod, 2022; Kowal et al., 1997; Lim, 2012; see also Schneider & Eitelmann, 2020, pp. 4–5). Recent presidents, such as Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, have increasingly been comfortable addressing the public in plain language, a colloquial register, and an unceremonious tone of voice. This may have been to their benefit, as a simple and informal communication style retrodicts the successful re-election of former United States presidents (Thoemmes & Conway III, 2007). Trump's communication is certainly informal in this sense, which may be one way in which he means to project a "'normal guy' ethos" (Partington & Taylor, 2017, p. 190) and thereby effect a plebeian appeal. But there is also another, more specific sense in which Trump's communication may be said to be informal. His direct verbal attacks on his opponents and the "establishment," as well as his brash, boastful, and obscenity-laden rhetoric, represent a significant break with traditional forms of political communication in the United States (e.g., Stuckey, 2020). This style is often perceived as an insult to official decorum and political correctness, which may help Trump cement his status as an outsider who, unlike the trained career politicians, "isn't afraid to tell it as it is" (Trump, 2016b). Thus, Trump's rhetoric is also informal in a specifically political sense.

I will argue that Trump's use of voice is informal in precisely these two senses. His prosodic dynamism and articulatory laxness express a conversational and unmonitored informality. In conjunction with the verbal contents that they modulate, these vocal measures can come to convey an unvarnished and relatable folksiness. At the same time, Trump employs his voice in ways that express a specifically political informality, or impropriety. Key to this function are his mocking vocal impersonations and aggressive shouting and interrupting. By these means, Trump performs a transgression of the formally and respectfully "presidential" mode of oratory. Thus, Trump's use of voice symbolically aligns him with an aggrieved, straight-talkin' folk and against a self-censoring, reactionary, and condescending elite.

My argument has three parts. I will start by defining populism before describing the ways in which researchers have used that concept to analyze and explain various facets of Trump's communication. I will then analyze how Trump's informal use of voice complements his populist rhetoric. This analysis will integrate empirical findings about the actual characteristics and patterning of Trump's use of voice. Its target will mainly be the "Trump rallies" that helped secure his nomination in the 2016 Republican Party presidential primaries and subsequent win in the 2016 United States presidential election, but other materials will also be examined. My concluding discussion will argue that Trump's informal use of voice may solve for him a problem with which many populist leaders have had to contend: He is not at all like the common man with whom he claims to identify.

Populism and the Populist Communication of Donald Trump

Recent debates about the meaning and significance of populism have tended to revolve around what *aspect* of political life—ideational, social, historical, economic, personal, or communicative—the term may best be used to describe (e.g., Laclau, 2005; Mudde, 2004; Weyland, 2001; see also Ionescu & Gellner, 1969). Most political theorists view populism as an ideology[2] with a closely associated communication style (e.g., Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Freeden, 2017; Mudde, 2004; Stanley, 2008).[3] This ideology makes three defining claims about society. First is the claim that society is divided into a univocal "people," which is often represented as the true inheritors of a romanticized "heartland" (Taggart, 2000, Chapter 8), and a ruling "elite." Right-wing populist movements tend to identify this elite with an idle and corrupt political establishment, while left-wing populists are more concerned with the economic elites—with Wall Street as opposed to Washington, say (Gandesha, 2018). In all versions, however, the two opposing classes are simplistic idealizations, or even "fiction[s]" (Müller, 2016, p. 19), that fail to capture their diversity. Second is the claim that the people are hardworking, patriotic, honest, or otherwise virtuous, and that the elites are dishonest, corrupt, exploitative, or otherwise immoral, wherefore the former must be moralistically mobilized against the latter. Third,

[2] Hawkins and Kaltwasser (2017) employ an "ideational" conceptualization according to which populism is "not quite as conscious and programmatic as an ideology. Rather, it always attaches itself to some 'host' ideology, as can be seen in comparing right-wing, 'exclusionary' forms of populism in Europe with left-wing, 'inclusionary' populism in much of Latin America" (p. 514). For my present purposes, however, whether to characterize populism as a political ideology or as an inchoate form of political ideation is inconsequential.

[3] Some see the communication style (or "discursive frame") of populism as conceptually primary (e.g., Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Kazin, 1995).

populist leaders insist that "they, *and only they*, represent the people" (Müller, 2016, p. 20, emphasis in original), such that their political opposition will always and everywhere be illegitimate. Populism is therefore an anti-pluralistic ideology (Galston et al., 2018; Hawkins, 2009; Müller, 2016).

The communication style that associates to these ideological commitments is one of binary oppositions. There is always an "us" and a "them," and there is always moralistic, anti-establishment fervor (Hawkins, 2009; Kazin, 1995). Another characteristic is a continuous focus on threats and crises with which only the populist leader is able to contend (Hall, 2021; Moffitt, 2015; Weyland, 2001). Populist leaders, moreover, tend to present themselves as political outsiders who look, act, and communicate differently from those they identify as the elite. They will often cultivate an image of folksiness, such as by speaking plainly or dressing casually. They tend to be colorfully emotional, transgressive, and charismatic, as well as dominantly overweening (Aiolfi, 2022; Heinisch, 2003, pp. 94–95; Kazin, 1995; Ostiguy, 2020). These traits are very visible in the "folksy, colorful, self-consciously crude, and corporeally demonstrative" style of contemporary right-wing populism in the United States (Lowndes, 2017, p. 236).

Much academic research has investigated how the basic claims of populism pervade Trump's political communication, including his speeches and debating style (e.g., Bucy et al., 2020; Kellner, 2016; Nai & Maier, 2018). As the frequent focus of this research, Trump's 2015 and 2016 campaigning made evident his unprecedented disregard for official propriety, which has been analyzed as a populist stance—a way of "sticking it to the man" (e.g., Bucy et al., 2020; Winberg, 2017). Prior to his 2017 inauguration, some commentators predicted that Trump's populist rhetoric would abate if he were to take office. With a few notable exceptions,[4] however, President Trump mostly stayed the course (Hall, 2021; Ross & Caldwell, 2020; Hawkins & Littvay, 2019; Stopfner, 2021).

Other studies have examined how Trump's particular brand of populism, which is variously described as "nativist" (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 6), "nationalist" (Gusterson, 2017), and "authoritarian" (Kellner, 2016), frames key political issues. Concerning immigration, Trump falls in with other right-wing populist movements (Goethals, 2018; Greven, 2016; Mondon & Winter, 2019). He sees the true Americans as being economically and culturally squeezed by an emerging class of outsiders—Mexicans and others—that has been unfairly privileged by the political establishment. It takes a real leader, in the form of a "strong, proud conservative" (Trump, 2015a, p. 100), to push back. Another key issue is foreign policy and international relations, regarding which Trump's "America first" rhetoric has been interpreted as a return of Jacksonian unilateralism (Clarke & Ricketts, 2017; Löfflmann, 2022). Trump, moreover, perceives international, "globalist" institutions as in many ways continuous with the "unpatriotic" national political establishment: "Today we import nearly 800 billion more in goods than we export. Can't continue to do that … It's a political and politician-made disaster … It is the consequence of a leadership class that worships globalism over Americanism" (2016g, 7:28).

Trump's expressive personal style overlaps with that of other populist leaders, and the generalizations that have been made about them have also been targeted at him. He is "emotional" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2018), "transgressive" (Bucy et al., 2020), "charismatic" (Joosse, 2018), and "dominant" (McAdams, 2017). One particularly common way of characterizing Trump's populist communication is to call it "angry." Wahl-Jorgensen (2018) suggests that Trump's angry rhetoric is directed against "the political establishment and other cultural and economic elites, women, migrants, ethnic minorities and anyone perceived as a threat to American interests" (p. 771). It may be "a way of dramatising grievances" (p. 744) that invites sympathetic audiences to feel *with* their leader and *against* his illegitimate, all-bad enemies (see also Gonawela et al., 2018). Trump's anger fuels his catastrophizing, fear-inducing, and oftentimes false claims about the status quo (Bucy et al., 2020; Homolar & Scholz, 2019; Wojczewski, 2020). Such negative political rhetoric is typical of populist leaders, who tend to benefit from real or merely imagined crises (Moffitt, 2015; Roberts, 1995).

Trump's expressive and aggressive personal style comes through on social media, especially Twitter.[5] Before his January 2021 ban from the platform, he used Twitter to play up threats against "the people" and American popular sovereignty while lashing out against his opponents, especially other ("crooked," "corrupt," "lazy," etc.) politicians and the fourth estate of the ("fake news") media (Kissas, 2020; Ross & Caldwell, 2020). His highly informal and offensive communication on the platform has been analyzed as a "strategic instrument" of self-presentation (Kreis, 2017, p. 607). Schneiker (2019) goes so far as to characterize Trump's self-branding on Twitter as that of an "anti-politician": He "others" the political establishment and underscores his outsider status by, for example, using the word *politician* "as a synonym for someone who is incompetent, not able to solve problems and untrustworthy" (p. 219). While such rhetoric strikes many as unhinged and unprofessional, to

[4] For example, Ott and Dickinson (2019) argue that, following his inauguration, Trump's use of social media underwent a "strategic" change designed to "discredit the mainstream news media" (p. xi).

[5] Twitter was rebranded as "X" in July of 2023.

others it suggests the authenticity of a true reformer who is not afraid to speak his mind (Kissas, 2020; Kreis, 2017). Trump's use of Twitter has therefore been interpreted as one of the main ways in which he intimates a close connection to his supporters, who sense—in the virulence of his attacks, the immediacy of his responses to concurrent events, and the ungrammaticality of his sentences—that they are dealing with the man himself and not with a censoring mouthpiece.[6] Trump is aware of this fact. He exploits the democratic aura of social media in claiming that they allow him to speak directly to the American people without the "dishonest" intermediacy of the press (Gerbaudo, 2018, 2014; see also Schubert, 2020). As he put the point in a Fox News interview, "I think that maybe I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Twitter" (quoted in Demata, 2018, p. 67).

Studies that have adopted linguistic methods of analysis have drawn attention to the vernacular plainness of Trump's spoken communication. He talks very simply, preferring short, unspecific words and simple or even telegraphic sentences (Ahmadian et al., 2017; Egbert & Biber, 2020; Kayam, 2018; Ronan & Schneider, 2020). As Schneider and Eitelmann (2020) document, "his speech style is variously characterized as that of a third-, fourth-, fifth-, or sixth-grader" (p. 3).[7] The syntactic structure of his Tweets tends also to be very simple (Kreis, 2017; Ross & Rivers, 2020). In his oral communication, moreover, Trump relies heavily on constructed dialogues ("I said … and then she said …") to build an informal, "conversational" rapport between himself and his audiences (Sclafani, 2018, Chapter 3; see also Egbert & Biber, 2020), which may also be strengthened by his highly anecdotal argumentation (Reicher & Haslam, 2017). Bischof and Senninger (2018) spell out a possible rationale behind Trump's linguistic plainness:

> By employing simple language, populists can denounce mainstream politics as unnecessarily complex and as mostly relying on technical jargon which tends to correlate with complex language. Thus, linguistic simplicity is a valuable tool for exhibiting the aloofness of the remaining political elite and fosters the impression of a strong bond between the populist and ordinary people. Thereby, simple language should suggest that populists understand the struggle and problems of "ordinary" people's everyday life. (p. 476)

Trump uses many linguistic devices to mark his political status as an outsider and to suggest to his followers that he has little in common with the Washington establishment.[8] He draws "a firm rhetorical line between 'us' and 'them'" (Homolar & Scholz, 2019, p. 353), where "them" is often used synonymously with the political establishment, or otherwise with an "intransigent collective" of oppositional voices (Stopfner, 2021, p. 318). More broadly, he adopts a "discourse of dualities" (Jamieson & Taussig, 2017, p. 625) and often uses Manichaean, hyperbolic, and metaphorical language to describe political and other parties as either for the people and therefore wholly good, or else against the people and therefore wholly bad (Abbas, 2019; Çinar et al., 2020; Koth, 2020). Content analyses of his 2015 and 2016 campaign speeches further indicate that Trump "employs a rhetoric that is distinctive in its simplicity, anti-elitism, and collectivism" (Oliver & Rahn, 2016, p. 189; see also Liu & Lei, 2018).

Populism, then, may be a useful conceptual lens through which to bring different aspects of Trump's political communication into synoptic focus (see Singh, 2017, for critical discussion). By using that lens to analyze his 2015 and 2016 political campaigning, I will now go on to argue that Trump's informal voice, just as his words, serves to align him with a beleaguered "people" and against a corrupt, incompetent, and uncaring "elite."

The Voice of the People

As an aspect of his voice that many audiences will be able to intuit, Trump's New York accent might seem politically ill-advised. In analyzing the political significance of that accent, a *Washington Post* article (Guo, 2016) suggests, with input from several linguists, that "people do not perceive the New York style of speaking as particularly attractive or high-status" (see Preston, 1996, for empirical evidence). However, the same article also notes that the accent "has been a noteworthy element of Trump's populist image." It helps him "summon the stereotype of the blunt, no-nonsense New Yorker," and people do "associate it with competence, aggressiveness and directness," which he certainly wants to project. And then there is the suggestion that though Trump "is stratospherically wealthy, his average-Joe way of speaking makes him sound a little more down to earth." This cogent analysis of Trump's accent is one of only a few ways in which his actual use of voice has been analyzed as a part

[6] However, there have been speculations and reports that Donald Trump did not write all of his tweets himself (e.g., Feinberg, 2017).

[7] As Schneider and Eitelmann (2020) also point out, however, these extreme assessments are overblown (p. 3). Most of the cited studies employ the Flesch-Kincaid test (Kincaid et al., 1975), which measures the complexity of *written* language, and written language is typically more complex than spoken language.

[8] As he put the point at a rally in Rock Hill, South Carolina, "Why don't we just say I'm a businessman running for office, can we say that? We don't wanna say politician" (2016a, 21:23).

of his populist platform. It highlights several themes that run through my own findings in what follows.

One way to appreciate how Trump uses his voice quality for communicative effect is to examine it by contrast to his mocking caricatures of his opponents' voices. During his 2015 and 2016 campaign rallies, Trump would attack political rivals and other disagreeable people by impersonating them and adopting for them a weak and submissive or otherwise unflattering tone of voice. For example, at a rally in Dubuque, Iowa, Trump (2015b) pretended to be former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, who ran against him in the Republican primaries. In speaking on the topic of illegal immigration, Trump-as-Bush dramatically lowers the volume of his voice, producing a soft murmur as he scolds himself for using a politically incorrect term: "Yes. Oh yes. The anchor baby. Oh, I shouldn't say anchor baby" (13:11). More frequently, Trump would use his voice to mock what he viewed as the stiff inauthenticity of all those "career politicians" from whom he sought to distance himself. Hillary Clinton was a frequent target. At one rally, when criticizing her use of teleprompters, Trump (2016h) tightens his posture and awkwardly pouts his mouth before reciting the following words in a mock-official, overarticulating voice: "And whether you go [orients mechanically to pretended teleprompter to his left] … north and south [orients right] … or east and west [orients left] … Donald Trump is a bad person [orients right]" (42:30). In so impersonating Clinton, Trump speaks with a rigidly formal cadence such that each of the four spoken segments terminates in a pause that coincides with his pretended turning toward the next teleprompter. Together with his hyperarticulation,[9] this overstructured delivery gives the impression of someone whose concerns are not about what they are saying but only how they are saying it.

Trump (2016a) did another version of the same act at a previous rally in Rock Hill, South Carolina, in which Clinton's tele-prompted speech is reduced to meaningless babbling: "[squints toward pretended teleprompter on his left] ba-ba-ba-ba … [squints to his right] ba-ba-ba-ba-ba … [squints to his left] ba-ba" (45:52). (All other political candidates got a similar treatment at a different rally, but here the syllable of choice was "di" [2015b, 50:58].) Each babbling utterance again follows a regular meter, but this time the mock-official tone is replaced by a flatly robotic delivery. In portraying Clinton's use of voice in this way, Trump makes several implicit suggestions about her. Her flat tone betrays a personal enervation; there is no energy and motivation in the voice of this "all talk, no action" politician. But there is also again the suggestion of inauthenticity: Unfeelingly and unthinkingly, Clinton just parrots back what she reads on a screen—and who knows who wrote that?[10] By contrast, Trump immediately goes on to announce that he needs no script or teleprompter because "I speak from the heart."[11]

What does such heartfelt speech sound like? As against the formal rigidity or robotic monotonicity of "the politicians," Trump employs a dynamic prosody that evokes an excitedly informal, conversational tone. The pitch of his voice is particularly variable and at times even erratic, such that he shifts rapidly and frequently between a higher and a deeper voice. Ahmadian et al. (2017) analyzed the speech, including voice pitch, of the nine most prominent Republican candidates for the 2016 election and found that Trump's pitch was the most variable of all. The objects of study were the announcement speeches of these presidential candidates, but Trump's pitch during his many rallies tended to be even more dynamic (see also Signorello et al., 2020). Especially noteworthy may be the frequency and intensity with which Trump places stress on specific words by means of screeching pitch accents, that is, extreme momentary rises in the fundamental frequency of his speech sounds. Their most salient use may be to express the absurdity of disagreeable propositions, such as Democratic Party candidate Bernie Sanders's alleged intention to "raise your taxes to ninety percent—*ninety percent*!" (2015f, 17:28).

Trump's use of pitch is only one aspect of his dynamic and irregular use of prosody. By investigations into amplitude modulations, Bosker (2021) showed that Trump's speech during the 2016 presidential debates was much less prosodically rhythmic—less characterized by a consistent syllabic patterning—than Clinton's. In line with the argument of this article, Bosker speculated that "the lack of rhythmic amplitude modulations in Trump's speech may indicate a level of spontaneity in his speech production, with little attempt to pre-plan certain utterances" (p. 178). D'Errico et al. (2019) also found that, during interviews, Trump's speech is highly emotionally expressive, with a

[9] Hyperarticulation was an especially common way for Trump to represent the speech of establishment politicians. For example, Jeb Bush was mocked in this way at a rally in Tucson, Arizona (2016d, 1:00:05).

[10] At a rally in Columbus, Ohio, Trump (2015j) makes the same point about politicians more generally, but mentions Hillary Clinton and Jeb Bush explicitly, and states that they "can't think without the pollster" who is allegedly writing their speeches (10:09).

[11] Trump would change his view of teleprompters. From forswearing and denigrating their use throughout his early campaigning—and even explicitly calling for their use by presidential candidates to be criminalized (2015j, 7:55)—he eventually decided that they had certain legitimate uses to which he would put them (Nussbaum, 2016). Those later rallies in which he did employ teleprompters are marked by greater levels of formality and oratory in his speeches, such as in the sentence, "The arrogance of Washington, D.C. will soon come face to face with the righteous verdict of the American worker and voter" (2016j, 23:12; see also Wang & Liu, 2018).

dynamic use of pitch and a fast rate of speech being key indicators. Similarly, the audience perception study of Bucy et al. (2020) found that Trump's voice in debates is highly expressive of emotions such as anger, fear, and happiness, which are often conveyed by means of voice quality variation and pitch dynamics. Such disorganized and emotive prosodic dynamism is typical of informal, unscripted modes of speech (Beckman, 1997; Murray & Arnott, 1993; Winter & Grawunder, 2012). By an almost definitional contrast, formal communication tends to be structured and emotionally restricted.

A qualitative assessment of Trump's prosodic vivacity reveals that it communicates more than basic emotions. He also frequently uses very different voices—distinctive vocal configurations with an appreciable attitudinal tenor—to express his feelings on a current topic. For example, in discussing the "dishonest" press's suggestion that he "erupted" during a Republican primary debate, Trump (2015d) lowers his brow, raises the corners of his mouth, and asserts, in a breathy, high-pitched, low-volume voice, "I never erupted" (8:38). He would often use that voice to mark the unfairness or silliness of attacks made against him—to say, in effect, *what are you talking about?* Another of his many voices can be heard at a rally in Anderson, South Carolina, when Trump (2015g) discusses how "the right messenger" would have been able to secure better deals than the sitting president in tough negotiations with unfriendly countries. He stops himself mid-utterance to assure his audience, in a voice that suddenly drops an octave, that "I'm the right messenger. Believe me. I'm the right messenger" (54:17). The deep, self-assured voice that results suggests that Trump means business, and that he will be able to succeed where others have failed. Moreover, as with his identifiable political adversaries, Trump would frequently perform the speech of unspecific critics ("somebody said …") or collectives ("they said …"), adopting for them various kinds of generic voices: stupid, weak, up-tight, excited, angry, etc. Such voices, many of which he uses at a rally in Worcester, Massachusetts (2015i), may be heard as the oral equivalent of frowning, sneering, or otherwise expressive emoticons.

Another way in which Trump's voice is out of tune with a formal, statesmanlike style of political communication is in terms of his error-prone and disfluent speech delivery. Whereas his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton is known to produce highly articulate speech with few errors and redundancies, Trump stumbles, mumbles, and frequently repeats himself (e.g., Leith, 2017; Ronan & Schneider, 2020). A single quotation from a rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan, will serve as a representative example. Trump (2015l) gets on the topic of Ford's decision to construct a new car plant in Mexico rather than in the United States:

> So, Ford: Good company, I like Ford. In fact, the president [of Ford] wrote me a beautiful letter talking about, well, you know, it's—wasn't that bad but he hardly mentioned what he was doing—he said, you know, how well the company—he didn't want to mention this. So, Ford spending two and a half billion dollars—that's the biggest plant—can you imagine a one-story plant—two and a half billion—that's a lot—that's a big plant, right? (25:18–25:36)

The above transcription renders Trump's speech in standardized written English. A quasi-phonetic transcription of the segment, which is more suggestive of his actual stream of speech sounds, might look as follows:

> So Ford. Good company I like Ford nfact the presiden wrote me a beautiful letter talkin' abou—well y'know it's—wasn't that ba—but he hardly mentioned what he was doing—hesed y'know how well the compa—he di wanna mention this [pauses, inhales, and slows down]. So Ford spending two and a half [inhales deeply and loudly enunciates:] *billion dollars* [suddenly squints and speeds up again]—asse bigges plank—an you imagine-e one story plan—two'n'a half bill—at's a lo—that's a big plan, right?

Much of Trump's speech is marked by muttering hypo- and co-articulation. Especially when talking fast, which he tends to do in short but frequent intervals, he will elide word endings ("didn't" becomes "di"; "plant" becomes "plan") and assimilate speech sounds between separate words ("plant" assimilates to "can" and becomes "plank"). His speech is also characterized by a frequent abandonment of incomplete utterances ("a beautiful letter talking about, well, you know"; "how well the company—he didn't want to mention this"). In addition, Trump makes heavy use of repetition ("two and a half billion") and occasional use of utterance repairs ("that's a lot—that's a big plant, right?").

Such articulatory shortcuts and disfluencies are characteristic of informal, spontaneous speech, in which the speaker is unlikely to be consciously monitoring the correctness and fluidity of his or her speech, as opposed to formal, pre-planned speeches (Brown, 1990; Shriberg, 2005). The sudden abandonment of incomplete utterances is especially typical of Trump, which contributes to the sense that he speaks in "sentence fragments" (Levin, 2017), and which explains his designation as the "em-dash candidate" by the national political correspondent of *The Washington Post* (Libit, 2016). (The em dash can be used to signal a sudden communicative interruption, as in the above transcriptions.)

A graphic representation of even just a few seconds of Trump's use of voice (Fig. 1) can serve to illustrate the acoustic realization of some of its dynamic and disfluent characteristics. Trump claims that the press reported "that

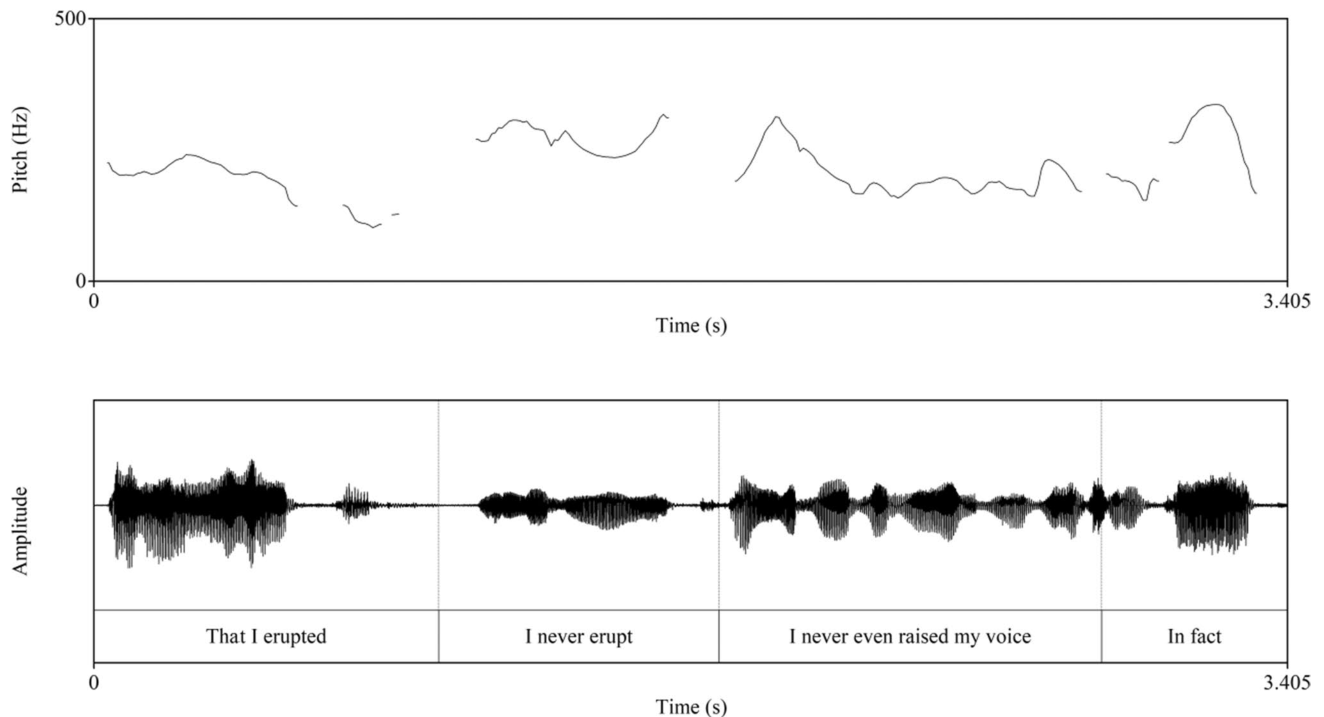

Fig. 1 An acoustic representation of a short segment of Trump's speech: pitch contour (top) and waveform (bottom). The pitch contour tracks the fundamental frequency of Trump's voice, which will be heard as his voice pitch. The waveform represents the amplitude of his voice. The analyzed clip was extracted from a video recording of a rally in Greenville, South Carolina (2015d, 8:42–8:46)

I erupted." He comments on that report by asserting, in a breathy, high-pitched, low-amplitude voice that is distinctively different from his neutral voice, "I never erupt[ed]," omitting the final syllable. He then suddenly switches back to a more neutral voice in quickly elaborating: "I never even raised my voice," before *immediately* raising his voice and pitch in introducing a new thought, which he signals with a discourse marker: "In fact …" He then pauses.

While some commentators perceive Trump's disfluent and self-interrupting speech to be "sloppy" and "spasmodic" (Libit, 2016), Trump himself prefers a different interpretation. As he explains in addressing such attacks on him at a rally in Anderson, South Carolina, he is so energized by his message that he jumps from incomplete sentence to incomplete sentence because his audience will be smart enough to "know what the end of the sentence is gonna be" (2015g, 31:30). His speech is about what is said rather than how it is said, whereas his mocking impersonations of his political opponents make it clear that they prioritize form—stiff officialism and political correctness—over meaningful content. Similarly, Trump's muttering hypoarticulation is interpretable by the contrast to what he represents as the overlearned hyperarticulation of the "politicians." He would also on occasion turn or walk away from the microphone during continuous speech (e.g., 2015h, 24:28), making his voice momentarily inaudible or almost inaudible to his audience. Whatever else one might say about such lapses, they certainly give the impression that Trump's speeches have not been carefully planned and rehearsed.

At least to some ears, then, Trump may succeed by his disorderly and disfluent speech to present himself as someone who is communicating, unguardedly and extemporaneously, exactly what comes to his mind. His sheer prosodic dynamism adds to this impression by conveying bluff enthusiasm and conversational informality. So, ironically, may be the effect of the conspicuous *absence* of one type of disfluency in Trump's speech, which is that of filled pauses such as *erm*, *uh*, and *um*. Whether at his rallies, in interviews, or in debates, Trump almost never uses such fillers, or "hesitation markers," which allow the speaker the time to translate his or her thoughts into a fluent, correct, and contextually appropriate stream of words (Corley & Stewart, 2008; Rochester, 1973)—as well as to *signal* to others that one is experiencing difficulties on these points (Bortfeld et al., 2001). Filled pauses are therefore especially common in spontaneous speech that is effortfully processed to observe demands of formality, politeness, and precision (e.g., Winter & Grawunder, 2012). By avoiding this kind of disfluency in particular, Trump conveys in his speech a sense of conversational ease: an indifference to formal expectations and a casual willingness to make verbal errors. Sclafani (2018) notes an analogous trend in his use of discourse

markers, such as *well*, *you know*, and *believe me* (Chapter 2). Trump makes frequent use of discourse markers that signal conversational informality, such as *you know* and *right*, but infrequent use of the discourse marker *well*, which signals considered hesitation.

Trump's informal use of voice echoes his informal use of words. It does much to present him as folksy and conversationally spontaneous. But Trump's manner of speaking is also informal in the specifically political sense that it flouts established forms of civility and official propriety. These two senses of formality are related and in some ways continuous: For example, Trump's speedy mumbling, like his simple and oftentimes careless choice of words, is not exactly statesmanlike; as the linguist John McWhorter (2018) has put it, "He is the first president who, rather than striding forward and speaking, just gets up and talks" (p. 74). More than that, however, Trump uses his voice in ways that are fully politically *counter-normative* in the same sense that his disrespectful and unfiltered rhetoric has often been so. Like that explicit rhetoric, these non-verbal means of communication allow him to project a near-total disregard for the constraining demands and decorum of officialdom. I have already discussed one example of this in the form of Trump's vocal impersonations of disliked others, and especially of political adversaries, which serve to attack their character, personality, or political style. These impersonations are the prosodic equivalent of his frequent name-calling, which often took aim at the same people (e.g., "Crooked Hillary," "Sleepy Joe," "Low Energy Jeb"). Another petulant mode of attack by Trump has been to ridicule the "unpronounceable" or otherwise notable names of his political opponents by means of mocking pronunciations. A list of targets would include the Republican John Kasich before the 2016 presidential election (2016e, 22:29), the Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg before the 2020 presidential election (2019, 34:43), and current vice president Kamala Harris before the 2020 presidential election (2020, 1:44:22). Such vulgar modes of disparagement would be off-limits for most political actors, but not for Trump. Of course, to say that something is politically improper is not necessarily to say that it is aggressive. At a rally in Tucson, Arizona, Trump (2016d) proclaims his love for Latino Americans. He spots a group of "Latinas" in the audience, shouts them out, and blows two audibly sloppy air-kisses their way (51:30).

Trump's proclivity for interrupting the speech of his political rivals during debates may be the most remarked-upon way in which his use of voice is politically counter-normative. During his three debates with Hillary Clinton before the 2016 election, for example, Trump interrupted her replies to the host's questions much more frequently than vice versa (Bucy et al., 2020; Grebelsky-Lichtman & Katz, 2019; Jacobsen, 2019), and a similar pattern describes at least his first presidential debate with Joe Biden before the 2020 election (Stahl, 2020). As Bucy et al. (2020) suggest, such interruptions "represent violations of debate decorum and incursions on the opposing candidate's speaking rights; as such, they constitute another element of the populist's transgressive mien" (p. 641). Trump also frequently interrupts his interviewers (Sclafani, 2018, Chapter 3), which may carry much the same symbolic meaning. The ideology of populism can easily be made to justify such behavior because Trump, as a political outsider, needs to assert himself against attempts by the liberal order to keep him out.[12] As he puts it in *Crippled America*, "I manage to blast through the ridiculous liberal bias of the media and speak right to the hearts of the people—or at least I try" (2015a, p. 80). In turn, provocative vocal displays help Trump build his ethos as a populist leader by demonstrating his willingness to transgress against the standards and pieties of the political system. An example of this was his frequent criticism of former president Barack Obama's unwillingness to use the phrase "radical Islamic terrorism." Having denounced this fact in his speeches, Trump would often go on to utter the phrase emphatically, with all three words marked by stress-borne prosodic beats and separated from each other by dramatic pauses (e.g., 2015c, 1:53). The very fact that there are "political" reasons not to utter those words becomes a reason for Trump to do so with insistent emphasis (see also Conway et al., 2017).

Finally, shouting is often seen as inappropriate to official communication for much the same reason that interrupting is seen to be so, and certainly Trump's debates with political adversaries have been frequently described as entirely inappropriate "shouting matches" (e.g., Flegenheimer & Haberman, 2020). However, shouting can also be seen as appropriate to political and official communication when what is shouted is meant to be inspiring or uplifting rather than aggressive. Therefore, a key difference between the shouting of Trump and that of many of his political opponents may be qualitative rather than quantitative.[13]

Consider Hillary Clinton's (2016) heartening cry, near the end of a Grand Rapids, Michigan, rally, to "get this country and everybody in it back up, on our feet, moving forward, together!" (34:25). In uttering these words, Clinton raises her voice crescentically—together with the applause of her audience—to a full-throated shout. By contrast, Trump's shouting during his rallies was often aggressive: He would yell, for example, for the forceful removal of protesters (2016c, 39:35), against the alleged illegal activities

[12] For cogent analyses of related ways in which populism can seem to be in this sense self-justifying, see Müller (2016).

[13] I am aware of only one study that has attempted to quantify Trump's shouting. Grebelsky-Lichtman and Katz (2019) found that Trump shouted more frequently than Hillary Clinton during their three presidential debates ahead of the 2016 general election.

of Hillary Clinton (2016h, 47:30), against the alleged dishonesty of Texas Senator Ted Cruz (2016e, 11:42), against American companies that relocate to foreign countries (2015e, 42:25), and to "attack" the "dumbass politicians" who would allow illegal immigrants to obtain birthright citizenship for their "anchor babies" (2015k, 41:14). Also, his shouting rarely displayed the plotted and measured intensification that was characteristic of Clinton's shouting. It tended rather to be sudden and prosodically unanticipated. For example, at a rally in Anaheim, California, in discussing the necessity of building a wall between Mexico and the United States to keep out illegal immigrants, Trump (2016f) briefly pauses before suddenly roaring: "Who's gonna pay for the wall!?" (25:01). (The audience shouts back: "Mexico!") And in attacking the press at a rally in Tyngsborough, Massachusetts, his voice breaks into a mid-word shout in his accusation that "they are so dis*honest*!" (2015f, 1:06:24). There is in these cases no trace of climactic or otherwise formal integration of the shouting into the progression of the speech; it becomes yet another way in which Trump appears to speak spontaneously, emotionally, and unreservedly. Trump's aggressive shouting thus amplifies his populist messaging: It emphasizes his aggressive attacks on the establishment while also breaking with formal expectations about how politicians should and should not use their voices during public speaking.

Donald Trump's Informal Voice and Populist Appeal

> I consider myself in a certain way to be a blue-collar worker.
>
> —Donald J. Trump (2016i, 42:41)

The extraordinary and oftentimes glamorous lifestyles of populist leaders can challenge their attempts to identify with common people and to disidentify with the political, cultural, or economic elites. Consequently, the popular appeal of Donald Trump has often been seen as something of a paradox (e.g., Tunderman, 2017). The famous real estate tycoon was born into a wealthy family, owns a 126-room, 62,500-square-foot mansion in Palm Beach County, has circulated the upper echelons of American society for decades, and has a history of courting powerful politicians of Republican and Democratic persuasions alike. Moreover, as Kissas (2020) remarks, Trump certainly "does not attempt to conceal or even downplay his high social-economic status and extraordinary lifestyle" (p. 273). How, then, could he claim to be the voice of ordinary Americans? I have already discussed and cited research that explores the demotic appeal of his political style, and my above analysis of Trump's voice suggests that it is a part of that appeal. I will finally suggest that it may be an especially important part.

The American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote that "the soul reveals itself in the voice only." The human voice is indeed highly expressive of our inner lives: our moods and emotions, thoughts and intentions. Such subjective states echo through the rhythm, pitch, volume, and tenor with which we speak (Frick, 1985; Scherer, 1986), enabling perceptive others to diagnose them in us from without (Nygaard & Queen, 2008; Wilson & Wharton, 2006). A similarly revelatory view of the voice comes through in the familiar notion of a "shibboleth," which names a way of pronouncing a word that identifies someone—with or against their will—as belonging to a particular social group (McNamara, 2005). Empirical research has shown how very prone people are to making deeply personal, social, and even moral assumptions about others based merely on how they talk (Allport & Cantril, 1934; Kinzler, 2020; Ko et al., 2006). Conversely, most people have had the experience of trying but failing to hide secret or private facts about themselves that nonetheless came through in their voice: their grief or insecurity, for example, or their cultural background (see Goldberg & Grandey, 2007; Scherer, 2000; Shennum & Bugental, 1982). There is then a pervasive sense not only that the human voice reveals a lot about its speaker, but that what it reveals may be especially deep or hidden truths about them.

Trump cannot legitimately claim to identify with common men and women in terms of his public lifestyle. He clearly is not, though he declares himself to be, "in the same boat" as most of the people who attended his rallies (2015j, 9:33). Yet he may still be able to inspire a deeper sense of *personal* sameness by means of his verbal and nonverbal communication. He can talk and behave in ways that signal "I am one of you" and not at all like the Washington elites (Berezin, 2017, p. 100). His use of voice in particular may allow him to do this without the suggestion of contradiction or dishonesty because it can be heard to echo something about him that is deeper and truer than his public image.

In invoking such a "deeper and truer" level of personality, I do not mean to refer to anything very mysterious. Whether right or wrong, the notion that people possess a "true," "authentic," "deep," or "real" self, which might not be readily discernible in someone's overt appearance, behavior, or reputation, is a widespread and psychologically deep-seated intuition (Strohminger et al., 2017). It explains the ready intelligibility of locutions such as "that is not who she really is" or "what you saw was not the real me," and it resounds through Western culture in discourses of self-discovery, self-denial, self-expression, and self-actualization. Trump's uses of voice may draw on such discourses and imaginaries to present him as truly a man of the people, or at least a certain

symbolic representation of "the people." As put by a female social worker and Trump supporter from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, a few months prior to the 2016 presidential election, "I don't care if he's in a plane with 24 karat gold. He talks like us. He gets us. He's a guy from Queens who's not too big for his britches" (Colvin, 2016). In the view of this voter, at least, how Trump talks is heard to express his real self in a way that his extravagant lifestyle does not. He may then really be heard to be a "blue-collar billionaire," as his son Donald Trump Jr. has labeled him (Showtime, 2016, 1:21).

Montgomery (2017) reaches a similar conclusion about the functions of much of Trump's "unbuttoned and direct" campaign rhetoric (p. 627), suggesting that "a discourse of 'authenticity' rather than 'truth' provided a crucial cornerstone of Trump's appeal to his electoral base" (p. 619). However, Montgomery does not hear the deep resonances between Trump's particular version of populism and his communication style; the former president's claim to authenticity is seen to rest simply on his casual orality and willingness to verbally offend. To be sure, that is a part of it: The "unbuttoned" style that Trump employs may be perceived as authentically sincere precisely because it is informal and unfiltered and in those two senses unconstrained by external demands on the self's ability to self-express (see Johnstone, 1996, for general discussion). Formal communication, by contrast, is often seen to constrain or inhibit authentic self-expression: One is careful, watches what one says, and is in this way a "stiff," as Trump likes to say. Or, as the conservative journalist Megyn Kelly (2015) stated in addressing a question to Trump during the first Republican primary debate of the 2016 election cycle, "one of the things people love about you is you speak your mind, and you don't use a politician's filter" (14:57).

What is missing from this analysis is that, when by his "informal, direct, and provoking communication style" (Kreis, 2017, p. 607) Trump expresses his self-avowed identification with the straight-talkin' folk and disidentification with the self-censoring elites, he creates a sense of authentic *alignment* between his person and his politics. As one of his supporters stated in a representative response to a survey about Trump's performance as president, "His pride and love of America and its people is genuine and comes through … he's not a politician, but one of us" (Pew Research Center, 2017). The respondent saw nothing in Trump's official persona that was not already there before, authentically and enduringly, in his personality. That is an impressive ethos, and one that may help to explain the finding, in the same survey, that Trump's supporters are exceptionally likely to view his personality as his most important *political* asset.

All of this is to say that Trump's informal voice solves an important problem for him. It allows him to express his populism with a deeply personal undertone, and thereby potentially to make his claims to popular identification ring intuitively true. If that is so, then Trump's voice should be heard and investigated as an integral part of his political platform.

Author Contribution The manuscript is authored solely by the corresponding author.

Funding Open access funding provided by Aarhus Universitet. This work was supported by the Carlsberg Foundation (Young Researcher Fellowship, grant number 35891).

Declarations

Ethics Approval Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest The author declares no competing interests.

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

References

Abbas, A. H. (2019). Super-hyperbolic man: Hyperbole as an ideological discourse strategy in Trump's speeches. *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law - Revue Internationale de Sémiotique Juridique*, *32*(2), 505–522. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-019-09621-8

Ahmadian, S., Azarshahi, S., & Paulhus, D. L. (2017). Explaining Donald Trump via communication style: Grandiosity, informality, and dynamism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *107*, 49–53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.11.018

Aiolfi, T. (2022). Populism as a transgressive style. *Global Studies Quarterly*, *2*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1093/isagsq/ksac006

Albertazzi, D., & McDonnell, D. (2008). Introduction: The sceptre and the spectre. In D. Albertazzi & D. McDonnell (Eds.), *Twenty-first century populism: The spectre of Western European democracy* (pp. 1–11). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230592100

Allport, G. W., & Cantril, H. (1934). Judging personality from voice. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *5*(1), 37–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1934.9921582

Beckman, M. E. (1997). A typology of spontaneous speech. In Y. Sagisaka, N. Campbell, & N. Higuchi (Eds.), *Computing prosody: Computational models for processing spontaneous speech* (pp. 7–26). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4612-2258-3_2

Berezin, M. (2017). On the construction sites of history: Where did Donald Trump come from? *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, *5*(3), 322–337. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41290-017-0045-7

Bischof, D., & Senninger, R. (2018). Simple politics for the people? Complexity in campaign messages and political knowledge. *European Journal of Political Research*, *57*(2), 473–495. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12235

Bortfeld, H., Leon, S. D., Bloom, J. E., Schober, M. F., & Brennan, S. E. (2001). Disfluency rates in conversation: Effects of age, relationship, topic, role, and gender. *Language and Speech*, *44*(2), 123–147. https://doi.org/10.1177/00238309010440020101

Bosker, H. R. (2021). The contribution of amplitude modulations in speech to perceived charisma. In B. Weiss, J. Trouvain, M. Barkat-Defradas, & J. J. Ohala (Eds.), *Voice attractiveness* (pp. 165–181). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-6627-1_10

Brown, G. (1990). *Listening to spoken English* (2nd ed.). Longman.

Bucy, E. P., Foley, J. M., Lukito, J., Doroshenko, L., Shah, D. V., Pevehouse, J. C., & Wells, C. (2020). Performing populism: Trump's transgressive debate style and the dynamics of Twitter response. *New Media & Society*, *22*(4), 634–658. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819893984

Çinar, I., Stokes, S., & Uribe, A. (2020). Presidential rhetoric and populism. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, *50*(2), 240–263. https://doi.org/10.1111/psq.12656

Clarke, M., & Ricketts, A. (2017). Donald Trump and American foreign policy: The return of the Jacksonian tradition. *Comparative Strategy*, *36*(4), 366–379. https://doi.org/10.1080/01495933.2017.1361210

Clinton, H. (Speaker). (2016, November 7). *Hillary Clinton rally*. ABC News. https://www.c-span.org/video/?412298-1/presidential-candidate-donald-trump-rally-cincinnati-ohio

Colvin, J. (2016, July 19). "Blue-collar billionaire" persona captivates supporters. *Irish Examiner*. https://www.irishexaminer.com/world/arid-20411133.html

Conway, L. G., Repke, M. A., & Houck, S. C. (2017). Donald Trump as a cultural revolt against perceived communication restriction: Priming political correctness norms causes more Trump support. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, *5*(1), 244–259. https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v5i1.732

Conway, L. G., & Zubrod, A. (2022). Are U.S. presidents becoming less rhetorically complex? Evaluating the integrative complexity of Joe Biden and Donald Trump in historical context. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *41*(5), 613–625. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X221081126

Corley, M., & Stewart, O. W. (2008). Hesitation disfluencies in spontaneous speech: The meaning of *um*. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, *2*(4), 589–602. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-818X.2008.00068.x

Demata, M. (2018). "I think that maybe I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Twitter." Donald Trump's populist style on Twitter. *Textus*, *1*, 67–90. https://doi.org/10.7370/89446

D'Errico, F., Niebuhr, O., & Poggi, I. (2019). Humble voices in political communication: A speech analysis across two cultures. In S. Misra, O. Gervasi, B. Murgante, E. Stankova, V. Korkhov, C. Torre, A. M. A. C. Rocha, D. Taniar, B. O. Apduhan, & E. Tarantino (Eds.), *Computational science and its applications – ICCSA 2019*: vol. 11620 (pp. 361–374). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24296-1_30

Egbert, J., & Biber, D. (2020). Chapter 2: *It's just words, folks. It's just words*: Donald Trump's distinctive linguistic style. In U. Schneider & M. Eitelmann (Eds.), *Linguistic inquiries into Donald Trump's language: From "fake news" to "tremendous success"* (pp. 16–33). Bloomsbury Academic.

Feinberg, A. (2017, October 6). How to tell when someone else tweets from @realDonaldTrump. *Wired*. https://www.wired.com/story/tell-when-someone-else-tweets-from-realdonaldtrump/

Flegenheimer, M., & Haberman, M. (2020, September 30). Of course, the debate was always going to be about Trump. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/30/us/politics/trump-debate.html

Freeden, M. (2017). After the Brexit referendum: Revisiting populism as an ideology. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, *22*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2016.1260813

Frick, R. W. (1985). Communicating emotion: The role of prosodic features. *Psychological Bulletin*, *97*(3), 412–429. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.97.3.412

Galston, W. A., Hunter, J. D., & Owen, J. M. (2018). *Anti-pluralism: The populist threat to liberal democracy*. Yale University Press.

Gandesha, S. (2018). Understanding right and left populism. In J. Morelock (Ed.), *Critical theory and authoritarian populism* (pp. 49–70). University of Westminster Press. https://doi.org/10.16997/book30.d

Gerbaudo, P. (2014). Populism 2.0: Social media activism, the generic Internet user and interactive direct democracy. In D. Trottier & C. Fuchs (Eds.), *Social media, politics and the state: Protests, revolutions, riots, crime and policing in the age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube* (pp. 67–87). Routledge.

Gerbaudo, P. (2018). Social media and populism: An elective affinity? *Media, Culture & Society*, *40*(5), 745–753. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443718772192

Goethals, G. R. (2018). Donald Trump, perceptions of justice, and populism. *Leadership*, *14*(5), 513–523. https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715018793741

Goldberg, L. S., & Grandey, A. A. (2007). Display rules versus display autonomy: Emotion regulation, emotional exhaustion, and task performance in a call center simulation. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *12*(3), 301–318. https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.12.3.301

Gonawela, A., Pal, J., Thawani, U., van der Vlugt, E., Out, W., & Chandra, P. (2018). Speaking their mind: Populist style and antagonistic messaging in the tweets of Donald Trump, Narendra Modi, Nigel Farage, and Geert Wilders. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW)*, *27*(3–6), 293–326. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10606-018-9316-2

Grebelsky-Lichtman, T., & Katz, R. (2019). When a man debates a woman: Trump vs. Clinton in the first mixed gender presidential debates. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *28*(6), 699–719. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2019.1566890

Greven, T. (2016). The rise of right-wing populism in Europe and the United States: A comparative perspective. *Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Washington D.C. Office*, 1–8.

Guo, J. (2016, February 9). Donald Trump's accent, explained. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/02/09/whats-up-with-donald-trumps-voice/

Gusterson, H. (2017). From Brexit to Trump: Anthropology and the rise of nationalist populism. *American Ethnologist*, *44*(2), 209–214. https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12469

Haberman, M. (2018, October 15). He's "one of us": The undying bond between the Bible Belt and Trump. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/14/us/politics/trump-southern-voters-campaign-rallies.html

Hall, J. (2021). In search of enemies: Donald Trump's populist foreign policy rhetoric. *Politics*, *41*(1), 48–63. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395720935377

Hawkins, K. (2009). Is Chávez populist? Measuring populist discourse in comparative perspective. *Comparative Political Studies*, *42*(8), 1040–1067. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009331721

Hawkins, K., & Kaltwasser, C. R. (2017). The ideational approach to populism. *Latin American Research Review*, *52*(4), 513–528. https://doi.org/10.25222/larr.85

Hawkins, K., & Littvay, L. (2019). *Contemporary US populism in comparative perspective*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108644655

Heinisch, R. (2003). Success in opposition – failure in government: Explaining the performance of right-wing populist parties in

public office. *West European Politics*, *26*(3), 91–130. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402380312331280608

Homolar, A., & Scholz, R. (2019). The power of Trump-speak: Populist crisis narratives and ontological security. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, *32*(3), 344–364. https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2019.1575796

Inglehart, R., & Norris, P. (2016). *Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash* [Harvard Kennedy School Faculty Research Working Paper RWP16-026]. https://www.ssrn.com/abstract=2818659

Ionescu, G., & Gellner, E. (Eds.). (1969). *Populism: Its meanings and national characteristics*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Jacobsen, R. R. (2019). Interruptions and co-construction in the first 2016 Trump–Clinton US presidential debate. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *148*, 71–87. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2019.05.019

Jagers, J., & Walgrave, S. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium. *European Journal of Political Research*, *46*(3), 319–345. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00690.x

Jamieson, K. H., & Taussig, D. (2017). Disruption, demonization, deliverance, and norm destruction: The rhetorical signature of Donald J. Trump. *Political Science Quarterly*, *132*(4), 619–650. https://doi.org/10.1002/polq.12699

Johnstone, B. (1996). *The linguistic individual: Self-expression in language and linguistics*. Oxford University Press.

Joosse, P. (2018). Countering Trump: Toward a theory of charismatic counter-roles. *Social Forces*, *97*(2), 921–944. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soy036

Kayam, O. (2018). The readability and simplicity of Donald Trump's language. *Political Studies Review*, *16*(1), 73–88. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929917706844

Kazin, M. (1995). *The populist persuasion: An American history*. Basic Books.

Kellner, D. (2016). *American nightmare: Donald Trump, media spectacle, and authoritarian populism*. Sense Publishers.

Kelly, M. (Moderator). (2015, August 6). *First Republican primary debate*. Fox News. https://youtu.be/2rU4W3yfd58

Kincaid, J. P., Fishburne, R. P., Jr., Rogers, R. L., & Chissom, B. S. (1975). *Derivation of new readability formulas (Automated Readability Index, Fog Count and Flesch Reading Ease Formula) for Navy enlisted personnel*. Defense Technical Information Center. https://doi.org/10.21236/ADA006655

Kinzler, K. D. (2020). *How you say it: Why you talk the way you do and what it says about you*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Kissas, A. (2020). Performative and ideological populism: The case of charismatic leaders on Twitter. *Discourse & Society*, *31*(3), 268–284. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926519889127

Ko, S. J., Judd, C. M., & Blair, I. V. (2006). What the voice reveals: Within- and between-category stereotyping on the basis of voice. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *32*(6), 806–819. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167206286627

Koth, A. (2020). Chapter 8: *Either we WIN this election, or we are going to LOSE this country!*: Trump's warlike competition metaphor. In U. Schneider & M. Eitelmann (Eds.), *Linguistic inquiries into Donald Trump's language: From "fake news" to "tremendous success"* (pp. 123–136). Bloomsbury Academic.

Kowal, S., O'Connell, D. C., Forbush, K., Higgins, M., Clarke, L., & D'Anna, K. (1997). Interplay of literacy and orality in inaugural rhetoric. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, *26*(1), 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1025043620499

Kreis, R. (2017). The "tweet politics" of President Trump. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *16*(4), 607–618. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.17032.kre

Laclau, E. (2005). *On populist reason*. Verso.

Leith, S. (2017, January 13). Trump's rhetoric: A triumph of inarticulacy. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/13/donald-trumps-rhetoric-how-being-inarticulate-is-seen-as-authentic

Levin, B. (2017, May 24). *Experts: Trump's speaking style "raises questions about his brain health."* Vanity Fair. https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2017/05/donald-trump-brain-health

Libit, D. (2016, August 18). *Transcribers' agony: Frustrated not by what Trump says but how he says it*. CNBC. https://www.cnbc.com/2016/08/15/transcribers-agony-frustrated-not-by-what-trump-says-but-how-he-says-it.html

Lim, E. T. (2012). *The anti-intellectual presidency: The decline of presidential rhetoric from George Washington to George W. Bush*. Oxford University Press.

Liu, D., & Lei, L. (2018). The appeal to political sentiment: An analysis of Donald Trump's and Hillary Clinton's speech themes and discourse strategies in the 2016 US presidential election. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *25*, 143–152. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2018.05.001

Löfflmann, G. (2022). "Enemies of the people": Donald Trump and the security imaginary of America First. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, *24*(3), 543–560. https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481211048499

Lowndes, J. (2017). Populism in the United States. In C. R. Kaltwasser, P. Taggart, P. O. Espejo, & P. Ostiguy (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of populism*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803560.013.11

McAdams, D. P. (2017). The appeal of the primal leader: Human evolution and Donald J. Trump. *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture*, *1*(2), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.26613/esic.1.2.45

McNamara, T. (2005). 21st century shibboleth: Language tests, identity and intergroup conflict. *Language Policy*, *4*(4), 351–370. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-005-2886-0

McWhorter, J. (2018, July 20). The unmonitored president. *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/07/trump-speech/565646/

Moffitt, B. (2015). How to perform crisis: A model for understanding the key role of crisis in contemporary populism. *Government and Opposition*, *50*(2), 189–217. https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2014.13

Mondon, A., & Winter, A. (2019). Whiteness, populism and the racialisation of the working class in the United Kingdom and the United States. *Identities*, *26*(5), 510–528. https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2018.1552440

Montgomery, M. (2017). Post-truth politics? Authenticity, populism and the electoral discourses of Donald Trump. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *16*(4), 619–639. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.17023.mon

Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition*, *39*(4), 541–563. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x

Müller, J.-W. (2016). *What is populism?* University of Pennsylvania Press.

Murray, I. R., & Arnott, J. L. (1993). Toward the simulation of emotion in synthetic speech: A review of the literature on human vocal emotion. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, *93*(2), 1097–1108. https://doi.org/10.1121/1.405558

Nai, A., & Maier, J. (2018). Perceived personality and campaign style of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *121*, 80–83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.09.020

Nussbaum, M. (2016, June 7). Trump and the teleprompter: A brief history. *POLITICO*. https://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/donald-trump-teleprompter-224039

Nygaard, L. C., & Queen, J. S. (2008). Communicating emotion: Linking affective prosody and word meaning. *Journal of*

Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance, *34*(4), 1017–1030. https://doi.org/10.1037/0096-1523.34.4.1017

Oliver, J. E., & Rahn, W. M. (2016). Rise of the *Trumpenvolk*: Populism in the 2016 election. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *667*(1), 189–206. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716216662639

Ostiguy, P. (2020). The socio-cultural, relational approach to populism. *The Open Journal of Sociopolitical Studies*, *13*(1), 29–58. https://doi.org/10.1285/i20356609v13i1p29

Ott, B. L., & Dickinson, G. (2019). *The Twitter presidency: Donald J. Trump and the politics of white rage*. Routledge.

Partington, A., & Taylor, C. (2017). *The language of persuasion in politics: An introduction*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315177342

Pew Research Center. (2017). *Republicans divided in views of Trump's conduct; Democrats are broadly critical*. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2017/08/29/republicans-divided-in-views-of-trumps-conduct-democrats-are-broadly-critical/

Pierson, P. (2017). American hybrid: Donald Trump and the strange merger of populism and plutocracy. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *68*, S105–S119. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12323

Preston, D. R. (1996). Where the worst English is spoken. In E. W. Schneider (Ed.), *Focus on the USA* (pp. 297–360). John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/veaw.g16.16pre

Reicher, S., & Haslam, S. A. (2017). The politics of hope: Donald Trump as an entrepreneur of identity. In M. Fitzduff (Ed.), *Why irrational politics appeals: Understanding the allure of Trump* (pp. 25–40). ABC–CLIO.

Roberts, K. M. (1995). Neoliberalism and the transformation of populism in Latin America: The Peruvian case. *World Politics*, *48*(1), 82–116. https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.1995.0004

Rochester, S. R. (1973). The significance of pauses in spontaneous speech. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, *2*(1), 51–81. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01067111

Ronan, P., & Schneider, G. (2020). *A man who was just an incredible man, an incredible man*: Age factors and coherence in Donald Trump's spontaneous speech. In U. Schneider & M. Eitelmann (Eds.), *Linguistic inquiries into Donald Trump's language: From "fake news" to "tremendous success"* (pp. 50–68). Bloomsbury Academic.

Ross, A. S., & Caldwell, D. (2020). "Going negative": An APPRAISAL analysis of the rhetoric of Donald Trump on Twitter. *Language & Communication*, *70*, 13–27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2019.09.003

Ross, A. S., & Rivers, D. J. (2020). Donald Trump, legitimisation and a new political rhetoric. *World Englishes*, *39*(4), 623–637. https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12501

Scherer, K. R. (1986). Vocal affect expression: A review and a model for future research. *Psychological Bulletin*, *99*(2), 143–165. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.99.2.143

Scherer, K. R. (2000). Emotional expression: A royal road for the study of behavior control. In W. J. Perrig & A. Grob (Eds.), *Control of human behavior, mental processes, and consciousness: Essays in honor of the 60th birthday of August Flammer* (pp. 227–244). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Schneider, U., & Eitelmann, M. (2020). Introduction: From fake news to tremendous success. In U. Schneider & M. Eitelmann (Eds.), *Linguistic inquiries into Donald Trump's language: From "fake news" to "tremendous success"* (pp. 1–16). Bloomsbury Academic.

Schneiker, A. (2019). Telling the story of the superhero and the anti-politician as president: Donald Trump's branding on Twitter. *Political Studies Review*, *17*(3), 210–223. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929918807712

Schubert, C. (2020). Chapter 10: Donald Trump's "fake news" agenda: A pragmatic account of rhetorical delegitimization. In U. Schneider & M. Eitelmann (Eds.), *Linguistic inquiries into Donald Trump's language: From "fake news" to "tremendous success"* (pp. 156–169). Bloomsbury Academic.

Sclafani, J. (2018). *Talking Donald Trump: A sociolinguistic study of style, metadiscourse, and political identity*. Routledge.

Shennum, W. A., & Bugental, D. B. (1982). The development of control over affective expression in nonverbal behavior. In R. S. Feldman (Ed.), *Development of nonverbal behavior in children* (pp. 101–121). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4757-1761-7_4

Showtime (Network). (2016, March 21). Donald Trump Jr. says his dad is a "blue-collar billionaire." In *The circus: Inside the greatest political show on Earth*. Showtime. https://youtu.be/_gUUspbCbXQ

Shriberg, E. (2005). Spontaneous speech: How people really talk and why engineers should care. *Interspeech 2005*, 1781–1784. https://doi.org/10.21437/Interspeech.2005-3

Signorello, R., Demolin, D., Henrich Bernardoni, N., Gerratt, B. R., Zhang, Z., & Kreiman, J. (2020). Vocal fundamental frequency and sound pressure level in charismatic speech: A cross-gender and -language study. *Journal of Voice*, *34*(5), 808.e1–808.e13. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2019.04.007

Singh, R. (2017). "I, the people": A deflationary interpretation of populism, Trump and the United States Constitution. *Economy and Society*, *46*(1), 20–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085147.2017.1302060

Stahl, J. (2020, September 30). We counted every single time Trump interrupted during the first presidential debate. *Slate*. https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2020/09/trump-interruptions-first-presidential-debate-biden.html

Stanley, B. (2008). The thin ideology of populism. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, *13*(1), 95–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569310701822289

Stopfner, M. (2021). Just thank God for Donald Trump – Dialogue practices of populists and their supporters before and after taking office. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *186*, 308–320. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2021.10.002

Strohminger, N., Knobe, J., & Newman, G. (2017). The true self: A psychological concept distinct from the self. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *12*(4), 551–560. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691616689495

Stuckey, M. E. (2020). "The power of the presidency to hurt": The indecorous rhetoric of Donald J. Trump and the rhetorical norms of democracy. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, *50*(2), 366–391. https://doi.org/10.1111/psq.12641

Taggart, P. A. (2000). *Populism*. Open University Press.

Thoemmes, F. J., & Conway III, L. G. (2007). Integrative complexity of 41 U.S. presidents. *Political Psychology*, *28*(2), 193–226. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2007.00562.x

Trump, D. J. (2015a). *Crippled America: How to make America great again*. Threshold Editions.

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2015b, August 25). *Donald Trump rally*. FOX 10 Phoenix. https://youtu.be/spdX7UbPt9c

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2015c, August 25). *Donald Trump rally*. LiveNOW from FOX. https://youtu.be/dEIFwfVN7Pc

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2015d, August 27). *Donald Trump rally*. FOX 10 Phoenix. https://youtu.be/V4Vf25BJKpc

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2015e, October 14). *Donald Trump rally*. LiveNOW from Fox. https://youtu.be/6ul4QbHQZLQ

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2015f, October 16). *Donald Trump rally*. LiveNOW from FOX. https://youtu.be/hg1vTt8azPI

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2015g, October 19). *Donald Trump rally*. LiveNOW from FOX. https://youtu.be/1ErwDx5xz5Q

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2015h, November 12). *Donald Trump rally*. LiveNOW from FOX. https://youtu.be/kG6FrgMXcSs

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2015i, November 18). *Donald Trump rally*. C-SPAN. https://www.c-span.org/video/?400925-1/donald-trump-campaign-rally-worcester-massachusetts

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2015j, November 23). *Donald Trump rally*. LiveNOW from FOX. https://youtu.be/Yqk4kOCPYPg

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2015k, November 30). *Donald Trump rally*. LiveNOW from FOX. https://youtu.be/3c6za9xw5Ko

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2015l, December 21). *Donald Trump rally*. LiveNOW from FOX. https://youtu.be/hXeFm0OecKk

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2016a, January 8). *Donald Trump rally*. LiveNOW from FOX. https://youtu.be/oV1t3Ppa9dw

Trump, D. J. (2016b, February 28). @RonnieMemo: DonaldTrump is a leader. He is a successful person that, like me, isn't afraid to tell it like it is. Governor @ChrisChristie [Tweet] (retweet). *Twitter*. https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/tweets-february-28-2016

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2016c, March 4). *Donald Trump rally*. LiveNOW from FOX. https://youtu.be/x5l1rOF9BsQ

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2016d, March 19). *Donald Trump rally*. LiveNOW from FOX. https://www.youtube.com/live/T9zUE6F2hBo?feature=share

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2016e, April 23). *Donald Trump rally*. Beyond Mainstream Media. https://www.youtube.com/live/5uoeGKbE-QPE?feature=share

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2016f, May 25). *Donald Trump rally*. LiveNOW from FOX. https://youtu.be/ltNVyvK8Paw

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2016g, June 28). *Donald Trump speech*. Factbase Videos. https://youtu.be/jvH8jCoP0ds

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2016h, July 6). *Donald Trump rally*. C-SPAN. https://www.c-span.org/video/?412298-1/presidential-candidate-donald-trump-rally-cincinnati-ohio

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2016i, August 10). *Donald Trump rally*. LiveNOW from FOX. https://youtu.be/WpqtxlZLWTg

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2016j, September 24). *Donald Trump rally*. Beyond Mainstream Media. https://youtu.be/mG1pmTbN0Gk

Trump, D. J. (2016k, October 27). I agree, @MMFlint- To all Americans, I see you & I hear you. I am your voice. Vote to #DrainTheSwamp w/ me on 11/8. Https://t.co/D7nBwkogBb [Tweet]. *Twitter*. https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/tweets-october-27-2016

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2019, December 18). *Donald Trump rally*. MLive. https://youtu.be/oKukIj76_L4

Trump, D. J. (Speaker). (2020, November 2). *Donald Trump rally*. PBS NewsHour. https://www.youtube.com/live/5mVa8Yh6AKU?feature=share

Tunderman, S. (2017, May 4). *Trump's paradox: A critique of "populism."* OpenDemocracy. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/trump-s-paradox-critique-of-populism/

Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2018). Media coverage of shifting emotional regimes: Donald Trump's angry populism. *Media, Culture & Society*, *40*(5), 766–778. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443718772190

Wang, Y., & Liu, H. (2018). Is Trump always rambling like a fourth-grade student? An analysis of stylistic features of Donald Trump's political discourse during the 2016 election. *Discourse & Society*, *29*(3), 299–323. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926517734659

Weyland, K. (2001). Clarifying a contested concept: Populism in the study of Latin American politics. *Comparative Politics*, *34*(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.2307/422412

Wilson, D., & Wharton, T. (2006). Relevance and prosody. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *38*(10), 1559–1579. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2005.04.012

Winberg, O. (2017). Insult politics: Donald Trump, right-wing populism, and incendiary language. *European Journal of American Studies*, *12*(2). https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.12132

Winter, B., & Grawunder, S. (2012). The phonetic profile of Korean formal and informal speech registers. *Journal of Phonetics*, *40*(6), 808–815. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wocn.2012.08.006

Wojczewski, T. (2020). "Enemies of the people": Populism and the politics of (in)security. *European Journal of International Security*, *5*(1), 5–24. https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2019.2

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Jens Kjeldgaard-Christiansen is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of English at Aarhus University, Denmark. His research focuses on the heroes and villains of popular culture, as well as on how media users relate morally and emotionally to media contents.