

2 Trump's idiolect

Discourse-marking devices

Introduction

This chapter, along with Chapter 3, examines several distinctive and frequently employed linguistic elements of Donald Trump's speech in the Republican primary debates and other public speaking events during his primary campaign. Building on sociolinguistic and anthropological perspectives on style in public and mediated discourse (e.g., Coupland, 2007; Eckert & Rickford, 2001; Hernandez-Campoy & Cutillas-Espinosa, 2012; Jaffe, 2009; Johnstone, 1996) and work from conversation and discourse analysis (e.g., Heritage & Clayman, 2010; Schiffrin, 1987; Tannen, 2007), the analysis focuses on salient stylistic elements of Trump's idiolect and compares them with other Republican candidates in the 2016 race as well as Republican primaries of the recent past.

The current chapter proceeds as follows: First, I provide some background on the analysis of sociolinguistic style in public discourse. Next, I describe the corpus of data selected for analysis. The analysis then considers several distinctive types of discourse-marking devices related to Donald Trump's style that are argued to perform several functions and contribute to the construction of his political identity in the 2015–2016 presidential primary season. I discuss these elements in the following order: (1) the use of turn-initial “well” (or rather, Trump's notable lack of use of this feature) as a preface to refocus responses to questions in dialogic contexts, (2) the use of “by the way” as a turn-medial marker of topic change, (3) the use of the phrase “believe me,” and (4) other forms of epistrophic punctuation. Throughout the analysis, I draw comparisons and contrasts with prior analyses of politicians' speech (e.g., Duranti, 2006; Heritage & Clayman, 2010; Sclafani, 2015, in press). In conclusion, I discuss how these features, as well as others not considered in-depth here, contribute to the construction of a particular instantiation of a broader social type that I refer to as the “presidential self.”

Perspectives on style and identity

The study of speaker style has a long history in sociolinguistics, beginning with Labov's seminal work in New York City (1972), which identified style as a matter of contextually based intraspeaker variation that was considered to be dependent on the speaker's relative amount of attention paid to speech. Later approaches to stylistic variation expanded the potential factors affecting an individual speaker's style, taking into account audience factors (e.g., Bell, 1984; Rickford & McNair-Knox, 1994). In recent years, the study of style has been influenced by the so-called discursive-turn and third-wave perspectives (Eckert, 2012), and as a result, the concept of speaker agency and identity has come into focus when considering stylistic choices (e.g., Schilling, 2013; Schilling-Estes, 1998; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). The latter approach, with a view toward speaker identity not just as an aggregate of demographic categories but as an ideological construct that not only influences but also is discursively constituted *by* stylistic language use informs the approach taken here. As opposed to earlier quantitative approaches to style that focused on an individual or social group's stylistic changes in different settings, with different audiences, and in different frames of interaction, recent approaches to style have also shifted to focus attention on the social indexicality of language (see Section 1.3 in Chapter 1) and on the constellation and selection of social meanings associated with both individual features and feature clusters within and across particular speaking contexts (Agha, 2007; Coupland, 2007; Eckert, 2000, 2008; Irvine, 2001; Silverstein, 2003b). At the same time, anthropological perspectives to style, which have focused on linguistic performance and genre (e.g., Bauman, 1978, 2000, 2008; Bauman & Briggs, 1990), have laid the important groundwork for current understandings of stylistic language use in explicitly public or "staged" performance contexts by highlighting the language ideological underpinnings, affordances, and constraints of stylistic choices (see Bell & Gibson, 2011 for an overview). Language ideologies and their implications for the discursive construction of identity are of direct import to this study because, as Irvine (2001, p. 22) puts it, the concept of style implicates a "system of distinction," where one particular style gains meaning in the way that it contrasts both with other possible styles and their corresponding social meanings.

Given that this study deals with an individual's style and how his language works toward the construction of a particular social identity – one that is "branded" (Lempert & Silverstein, 2012) and marketed to voters as emanating from an existentially coherent (Duranti, 2006) and readily identifiable individual or political self, I leave aside questions of intraspeaker

variation that have been historically central to the study of the sociolinguistics of style and instead focus more on the concept of *style as distinction*. Specifically, I describe the ways in which Donald Trump's idiosyncratic style is produced and consolidated as a coherent form across various speaking contexts, how this style comes to be enregistered (Agha, 2007) or recognized as emanating from both a biographical individual and a social type, and how these linguistic features map onto a set of relatively stable, though possibly contradictory, social meanings associated with characteristics relevant to some viable (considering, in retrospect, that he won the Republican Party's nomination and the 2016 US presidential election) image of a contemporary American president.

In doing so, I rely on work in sociolinguistics that has dealt with the construction of linguistic individuals. Barbara Johnstone (1996) has written extensively about the intersection of rhetoric and linguistics in the language of self-expression in her book *The Linguistic Individual*. As Johnstone emphasizes in introducing this topic, the linguistic construction of the individual involves not just sociolinguistic descriptions of demographic and contextual factors and rhetorical explanations of purpose and audience, but requires psychological explanation, dealing with the ways people create and narrate selves as they are expressed in narrative (p. ix). Consistency, she argues, is key in creating a coherent self that is readily identifiable across various different speaking contexts (pp. 128–156). Through an examination of the late US Congresswoman Barbara Jordan's speech across more and less formal and edited spoken and written texts, she finds consistency in linguistic features such as the use of discourse markers, syntactic structures, pronoun choice, and informality markers (e.g., contractions). Johnstone also examines discursive devices that contribute to Barbara Jordan's consistent display of knowledge from a stance of moral authority, which, she argues, contributes to the construction of a particular type of political identity as well.

Homing in on the importance of the perception of style, Johnstone points out that identifications of a given idiosyncratic style rely in large part on repetition: "When a linguistic item is repeated, we attend to it for the same reason we attend to pattern in all our sensory media. If we did not, the world would be chaotic" (p. 176). While Johnstone links her analysis of the linguistics of individual expression to a broader understanding of language variation, choice, and change, her in-depth study can also be seen as a foundation for considering the discursive construction of political identity as a publically recognizable branded individual style.

In a study on the language of the lifestyle entrepreneur Martha Stewart and how her idiosyncratic style is manipulated in linguistic parody

(Sclafani, 2009), I have emphasized that when examining the language of public personalities – icons who have branded their identity across product lines, like Martha Stewart – we must depart from the variationist perspective that assumes that individuals change their linguistic style at various levels – from phonological to discursive – and according to multiple layers of context, including audience, setting, purpose, and modes. Instead, in the analysis of public figures who have branded their identity for consumption, I have argued that we should expect, contrary to our expectations of ordinary speakers in everyday casual contexts, a greater degree of consistency across contexts. In the case of Martha Stewart, this involved employing similar styles of speech in her daytime television show, her guest appearances on late-night talk shows, her starring role in the spin-off of Donald Trump's reality television show *The Apprentice*, and in written texts featuring her voice in her magazine publications. In a similar fashion, Donald Trump must maintain linguistic consistency across the various spheres of his public appearances, including his transition from the world of business and reality television to his role in politics.

A main thrust of research that has come out over the past couple decades on discourse and identity has emphasized the co-constructed nature of identity in everyday contexts (e.g., De Fina, Schiffrin, & Bamberg, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2007; Ochs, 1993). However, when we move from the realm of everyday conversational interaction to the mass mediated realm of political discourse, it is also vital to take into account the ways in which production and perception are *filtered* in various ways. For an ethnographic understanding of the language and politics, an approach like that taken by Wodak (2009) is useful in that it captures both the frontstage and backstage talk within the political sphere. However, it is important to keep in mind that little of the talk behind closed doors that one can collect in an ethnography of politics (when a researcher is so lucky to gain access) directly reaches the public. On the one hand, we must consider that everything said by a politician – even in public contexts – is heavily edited in a variety of ways for mass consumption. This includes the editing of interviews for televised broadcast and the selection of quotations and soundbites for reproduction in print and broadcast journalistic reports. Even the camera angle during any televised event selects only certain nonverbal communicative information to broadcast while hiding other information. On the other hand, mass perception of a politician's language is also mediated via the mechanisms, institutional practices, and ideologies of political news reporting. For that reason, it is of ultimate importance to take metadiscourse surrounding Donald Trump's language into consideration. This topic will be addressed in detail in Chapter 4.

Selection of data

Given the vast amount of campaign coverage and televised speaking events throughout Donald Trump's primary campaign that are available for analysis, I have selected a small but representative subset of debates and other public speaking events to discuss in this chapter. I have relied on video data of these events made available on YouTube and Donald Trump's official campaign website (www.donaldjtrump.com), which posts major public events and media related to the candidate, including debates, commercials, rallies, interviews, and other speeches throughout his campaign. I have also used the website of the American Presidency Project at the University of California at Santa Barbara (www.presidency.ucsb.edu) as a resource for debate transcripts, which have been downloaded and refined to reflect additional linguistic detail observed in the video recordings of the debates. When available, transcripts of other speeches examined were downloaded from news websites on which they aired and were further refined by the author.

Three of the 12 Republican prime-time primary debates have been chosen for the analysis in this chapter. Selection of these took into consideration the need for a representative selection with regard to (1) the temporal arc of the campaign; (2) possible differences in tone, structure, and style between debates hosted by different broadcasting companies and moderators; and (3) geographical effects. Table 2.1 outlines relevant information about the three debates chosen for this analysis.

I also chose four major formal speeches given by Trump throughout his primary campaign to examine in detail: his announcement of his candidacy (June 16, 2015), his official announcement of his vice-presidential running mate, Indiana Governor Mike Pence (July 16, 2016), and a speech he gave at the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) Convention (March 21, 2016), an organization considered very important to gaining support in the Republican Party and one at which all presidential candidates were invited to speak. These speeches ranged in terms of content, audience, and style, with the AIPAC and acceptance speeches being read almost entirely from a teleprompter, while the candidacy announcement and running mate selection speeches appeared largely unscripted.¹

Analysis of discourse markers

When nonlinguists discuss the language of Donald Trump, both in the press and in everyday conversations about politics, they tend to focus on particular lexical items, such as the high frequency use of evaluative words

Table 2.1 Selection of Republican primary debates.

<i>Debate number</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Host and moderators</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Participants</i>
1	August 6, 2015	Fox News: Bret Baier, Megyn Kelly, Chris Wallace	Cleveland, Ohio	Jeb Bush Ben Carson Chris Christie Ted Cruz Mike Huckabee John Kasich Rand Paul Marco Rubio Donald Trump Scott Walker
8	February 6, 2016	ABC News: David Muir, Martha Raddatz	Manchester, New Hampshire	Jeb Bush Ben Carson Chris Christie Ted Cruz John Kasich Marco Rubio Donald Trump
12	March 10, 2016	CNN: Jake Tapper, Dana Bash, Hugh Hewitt, Stephen Dinan	Miami, Florida	Ted Cruz John Kasich Marco Rubio Donald Trump

like “huge,” “stupid,” and “disaster,” and idiosyncratic phonological and suprasegmental patterns, such as Trump’s New York accent and his emotionally charged “tone.” Indeed, linguists have also investigated some of these features in the speeches of other US politicians (see Podesva, Hall-Lew, Brenier, Starr, & Lewis, 2012 and Hall-Lew, Coppock, & Star, 2010 for examples of regional accent analyses), and these particular features have undoubtedly distinguished Donald Trump from his Republican opponents during the 2016 primaries. However, following the framework I set up in the previous chapter, I will focus in this study on discourse-level phenomena that contribute at an interactional level to the construction of a political persona.

Discourse markers (DMs) are one such feature that plays an important role, and they have multiple functions at various planes of discourse. As outlined in Chapter 1, Schiffrin (1987, 2014) considers the role of DMs in the construction of discourse coherence, outlining how these words

contribute to the structuring of discourse at each of the five planes of discourse coherence: participation framework, or aspects relevant to speaker and hearer identities and roles; exchange structure, or the turn-taking format of the discourse; action structure, or the performance of speech acts; ideational structure, or the structure of propositions and new and given information in a text; and information state, or the structuring of new and given information based on expectations about participation levels of knowledge and common ground in discourse. Other approaches to DMs, such as those grounded in relevance theory and pragmatics (e.g., Fraser, 1999; Jucker, 1993; Schourup, 1999), have also touched upon DM functions at certain levels outlined by Schiffrin, focusing on cognitive aspects like accessible context (Jucker, 1993) or pragmatic notions like the speaker's intention of highlighting cohesion with prior discourse (for a recent survey of DM research, see Maschler & Schiffrin, 2015).

Turn-initial "well"

In my earlier research on discourse markers in presidential primary debates (Sclafani, 2014), I found that turn-initial DMs are frequently used in candidates' responses to moderators' questions and requests for rebuttals. In an analysis of a subset of the 2011–2012 Republican primary debates, DMs prefaced approximately one-third of all candidate responses (excluding direct responses to each other's attacks), with 31 percent of all responses featuring turn-initial "well." The four next most commonly employed turn-initial DMs markers combined ("you know," "look," "oh," and "now") accounted for only 6.5 percent of all candidate responses. It is unsurprising that "well" occurs so frequently in this context, considering its attested function in traditional DM analyses, which have pointed to its role as a reframing device, presupposition canceller, a face-threat mitigator, and an indicator of an indirect, insufficient, or disagreeing response (e.g., Jucker, 1993; Lakoff, 1973; Pomerantz, 1984; Svartvik, 1980; Watts, 1986).

More recent work has examined the frequency and function of "well" in specific genres of discourse. For instance, Norrick (2001) claims that "well" has specialized functions in oral narrative, marking transitions between distinct narrative sections and directing listeners back to the plot following digressions. Fuller (2003) finds that "well" occurs less frequently in interview contexts than in conversations, which she explains is due to the firmly established speaker roles within the participation framework associated with the interview genre, which is dominated by the question-answer format. In other words, in interviews, the interviewee is expected to be providing responses to the interviewer's questions, so the explicit marking of

one's answers as responses via "well" is not necessary. As I have argued previously, Fuller's analysis would predict that "well" would not appear frequently in a debate format, which is also largely governed by a tightly moderated question-answer exchange structure. However, it seems that the agonistic genre of political debates and interviews, which are also governed by the expectation of critical, challenging questions, disagreement, and frequent question evasion (Clayman, 2001), provides a counterbalance to the pattern predicted by Fuller.

If we compare the overall distribution of discourse markers in the debates presently examined, we find a similar distribution of DMs overall, illustrated in Figure 2.1. As we can see, DM usage in the 2015–2016 debates resembles its distribution in 2011–2012, with "well" even more prevalent among turn-initial markers than in 2011–2012, prefacing 42% of all responses to moderator questions.

One question regarding discourse markers that has been made in passing (Sclafani, 2014; Tagliamonte, 2016) but has not received any straightforward

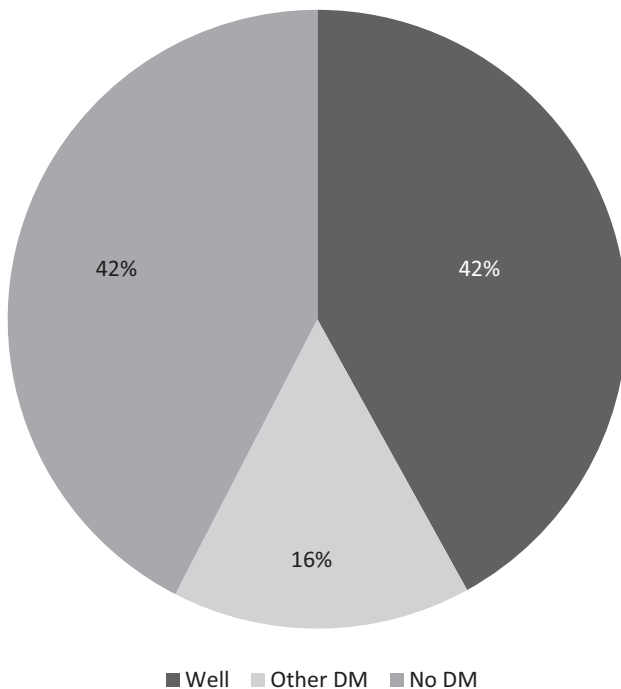


Figure 2.1 Distribution of DMs in GOP presidential primary debates.

empirical investigation is whether DM usage may contribute to a particular individual's discursive style. Considering the attested usage of "well" in past presidential debates and common characterizations of Donald Trump's style as "brash," "direct," and "simple," it would be useful to see whether his choice and stylistic usage of DMs reflects this. Since analyses in the mainstream media have often commented on the relatively short length of his sentences compared to other presidential candidates, this may be a reflection of Trump's relatively infrequent use of DMs – and of "well" in particular, which may contribute to views of his discursive style as straightforward and unabashedly face-threatening.

In order to determine whether any stylistic differences in DM usage occur among the candidates, let us first examine the candidates' rate of use of DMs in the three debates in this corpus. Figure 2.2 displays the frequency with which each candidate prefaces his response with a DM. For simplicity and clarity, I have only included in these tabulations speakers who responded at least ten times throughout the three debates examined, which excludes candidates Huckabee, Paul, and Walker.

First, by looking at how frequently candidates preface their response with a DM, we can see that Trump, who is accorded far more opportunities to respond to moderators' questions overall (with 60 responses overall; Cruz

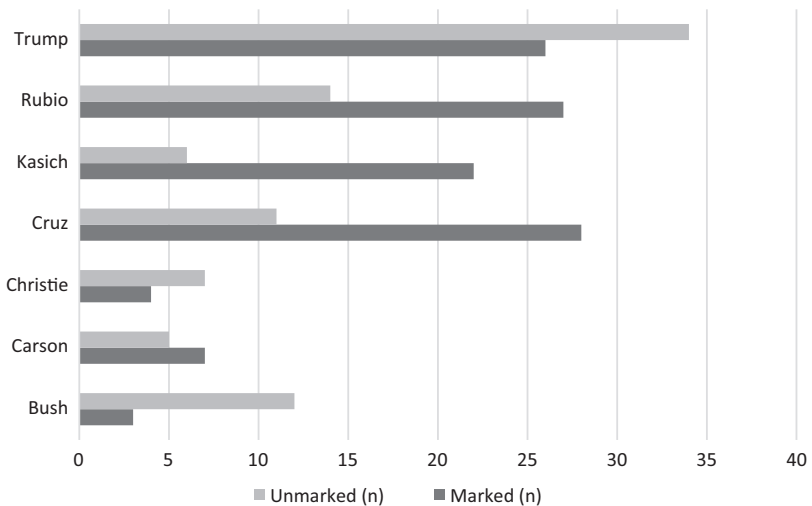


Figure 2.2 Number of discourse-marked and unmarked debate responses by candidate.

is the next most frequent to respond, with 39 responses), responds *without* a turn-initial DM more frequently than he does with a DM (34 times without versus 26 times with a DM). Christie and Bush are the only other two candidates to be more likely to begin their responses without DMs, but given that they are accorded many fewer opportunities to respond overall in the debates, they have less of a chance for this pattern to “accrete” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) into perceivable discursive acts of social identity. Trump’s high frequency of unmarked responses with common DMs (e.g., “well” or “you know”) may contribute to a view of the candidate as a straightforward or decisive debater, given the attested role of “well” (and other DMs) in attenuating speaker stance.

Let us now examine the relative use of “well” as a turn-initial DM across the candidates in the debates in Figure 2.3. It has been observed that metadiscourse frequently follows the discourse marker “well” (e.g., Jucker, 1993; Lakoff, 1973; Sclafani, 2014). Common examples of metadiscourse in the debates are, “Well, let me begin by saying . . .” or “Well, let me break down the question.” Such moves constitute explicit articulations by

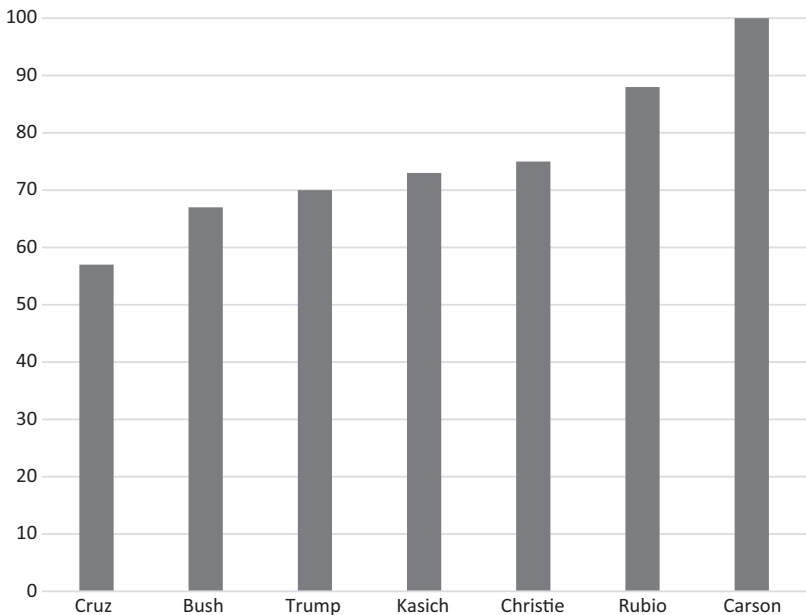


Figure 2.3 Percentage of turn-initial “well” in marked responses.

the candidates acknowledging the complexity of the moderator's question, and they can be thought of as an explicit display that the respondent is attempting to structure his response in order to comply with the moderator's request for a response.

Donald Trump, in conjunction with his relative lack of DMs, does not supply responses involving any type of metadiscourse. This distinction and stylistic choice can have multiple social meanings. First, it may be correlated with people's perceptions that Mr. Trump talks in a "decisive" or "straight-forward" manner. Connected to this indexical meaning, Trump's less frequent use of "well" may work toward the construction of the candidate as a political outsider by differentiating him from his potentially evasive opponents who frequently respond with "well . . ." On the other hand, taking into consideration the tendency of "well" as a preface to metadiscourse, it may also contribute to perceptions of his style as unaccommodating to the moderator. In other words, when other candidates use "well," it is an explicit acknowledgment that they are attempting to comply with the moderator by answering their questions (which frequently contain multiple propositions and subquestions) in full. In this sense, "well" may be argued to function as a politeness strategy that attends to the addressee's positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Trump, by not using "well" frequently, may also be seen as not exploiting face-saving strategies, and instead answering questions using what Brown and Levinson refer to as a "bald, on-record" strategy in the performance of face-threatening acts.

Finally, if we consider the economy of words as an ideology underlying political discourse, one might correlate Trump's shorter and less hierarchically complex answers (due to the fact that he tends not to break them down into constituent parts prefaced by "well") as indexing a political persona who prefers less talk, potentially because excessive talk is thought of as an alternative to action. In fact, this language ideology is quite explicitly articulated elsewhere in Trump's speeches. On multiple occasions he has distanced himself from his opponents and politicians in general by saying they are "all talk, no action," while he has spent his life outside the political arena in the action-oriented field of business.

By taking a comparative look at which candidate exploits turn-initial "well" the most throughout the debates examined – Dr. Ben Carson – the argument regarding the contribution of this DM to perceptions associated with a speaker's overall "presidential self" becomes even more apparent. Carson, who maintained strong polling numbers early in the primaries, was known as the other major outsider among the Republican candidates, but he maintained a linguistic style that was very distinct from that of Donald Trump. Often referred to as "mild-mannered," "calm," and "soft-spoken,"

Carson's "tone" is described by Hamlin (2015) as softer and slower than the other candidates, which makes him sound "so reasonable, so thoughtful in his measured pronouncements." Hamlin argues that the indexical value of this linguistic style comes across to audiences as emanating from a candidate who carefully considers issues in advance and who is "reasonable" and "a clear-thinking, strong and unflappable leader, always in control." While Hamlin only refers to Carson's pacing and amplitude as indicators of his idiosyncratic style, it could be argued that his relatively high exploitation of turn-initial "well" also contributes to impressions of him as a candidate who reflects before speaking and who carefully considers all aspects of moderators' questions before answering in debates. Through this contrast between the two Republican outsider candidates, we have a clearer view of how Irvine's notion of "style as distinction" relates to the consideration of language in the context of political campaign discourse.

"By the way"

Interestingly, while Donald Trump uses very few turn-initial DMs throughout the debates, there is one turn-medial discourse marker that he exploits to a greater extent than the other candidates: "by the way." This DM has been described as one that functions at the level of ideational structure, marking that an upcoming proposition is not related to the discourse topic (Blakemore, 2001; Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Schiffrin, 1987). Table 2.2 compares the use of this DM by candidates across the debates.

Table 2.2 Occurrences of "by the way" by candidate in the three debates examined.

<i>Debate location</i>	<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Number of occurrences</i>
Cleveland	Trump	4
Manchester	Trump	3
	Kasich	2
	Rubio	2
	Christie	1
Miami	Trump	8
	Rubio	2
TOTAL	Trump	15
	Rubio	4
	Kasich	2
	Christie	1
	Carson, Bush, Cruz	0

Trump's exploitation of the DM "by the way" is notable in that it is one of the few ways in which a candidate can steer the debate toward a topic of his/her own interest and be released from the constraint of having to comply with the topics selected by the moderators' questions. As Clayman (2001) has pointed out previously, "well" is a common turn-initial strategy for evading questions while "saving face" in the agonistic question-answer frame of broadcast interviews. But its salience due to its turn-initial position may be an obvious cue to audiences that the respondent is departing from the topic. The use of turn-medial "by the way," on the other hand, works to steer the topic of discussion in one's desired direction once the respondent already has the floor and has already established a flow to his or her answer.

Since there are so few instances of "by the way" in the corpus overall, we can examine them more closely to see how they are situated in context in order to better understand how Trump uses this marker as a discourse strategy in the debates. There is one lengthy exchange between Trump and moderator Chris Wallace in the Cleveland debate in which Trump utters "by the way" three times. I have reproduced this extract from the transcript that follows:

- 1 a WALLACE: . . . Question sir, with that record, why should we trust
b you to run the nation's business?
c TRUMP: Because I have used the laws of this country just like the
d greatest people that you read about every day in business have used
e the laws of this country,
f the chapter laws, to do a great job for my company, for myself, for
g my employees,
h for my family, et cetera. I have never gone bankrupt, **by the way**,
i I have never. But out of hundreds of deals –
h WALLACE: No, but the concept sir –
i TRUMP: Excuse me. Excuse me.

Trump's first use of "by the way" (1f) in the exchange with Wallace follows a statement about Trump's personal financial status (1c–f) in response to Wallace's question about Trump's trustworthiness following his past business deals involving bankruptcies (1a). Trump uses the DM "by the way" to shift away from his discussion of his exploitation of chapter laws, which could be perceived ambivalently by his audience, to tout his more positive personal financial status. It is important to note that this topic shift is embedded in the middle of his response, and is

thus possibly obfuscated by the seemingly direct beginning of Trump's response in which he answers the moderator's "why" question (1a) with a straightforward turn-initial "because" (1c). In sum, the salient part of this answer – the beginning – stands in direct contrast to the typical candidate response beginning with no turn-initial "well," but Trump nonetheless shifts the direction of the debate discourse by exploiting another DM mid-response.

In this same exchange, Wallace follows up with a specific claim about job loss related to Trump's enterprise and debts regarding one particular bankruptcy filing, and Trump responds, again redirecting the discussion via "by the way" in a similar manner:

- 2 a WALLACE: Well sir, let's just talk about the latest example. . . [applause]
- b Which is Trump Entertainment Resorts, which went bankrupt in 2009. In that
- c case alone, lenders to your company lost over \$1 billion and more
- d than 1,100 people were laid off.
- e TRUMP: **Well**, I –
- f WALLACE: Is that the way that you'd run the country?
- g TRUMP: Let me just tell you about the lenders. First of all, those
- h lenders aren't
- i They are total babies killers. These are not the nice sweet little
- j people that you think, **okay?** [laughter and applause] **You know,**
- k **I mean** you're living in a
- l world of the make-believe, Chris, you want to know the truth
- m [applause].
- n And I had the good sense to leave Atlantic City, which **by the way,**
- o Caesars just went bankrupt.
- p Every company, Chris can tell you, every company virtually in
- q Atlantic City
- r went bankrupt [laughter]. Every company. And let me just tell you.
- s I had the good sense, and I've gotten a lot of credit in the financial
- t pages,
- u seven years ago I left Atlantic City before it totally cratered, and
- v I made a lot of money in Atlantic City,
- w and I'm very proud of it. I want to tell you that.
- x Very, very proud of it.
- y WALLACE: So –
- z TRUMP: And **by the way,** this country right now owes \$19 trillion.

t And they need somebody like me to straighten out that mess [applause].

In example (2), I have highlighted all DMs used by Trump throughout his response. In (2e), Trump attempts to respond to Wallace's claims about the bankruptcy of Trump Entertainment Resorts with an unusual turn-initial "Well" (2e), but gets cut off by the moderator, who proceeds to pose the challenging hypothetical question of whether Trump would run the country in the same manner (2f). Trump responds to this challenge by changing the topic to discuss the predatory nature of the lenders, without prefacing this evasion with a DM of any sort (2g). In (2i), Trump uses a double DM "you know, I mean" before accusing the moderator of "living in a world of the make-believe" (2i–j). This can be interpreted as a personal attack on the moderator, especially when one takes into account the ideologies associated with the practice of journalistic professionalism, which values sticking to facts, truth, and objectivity. The DMs used here, "you know" and "I mean," which have been offered a variety of interpretations by linguists, but have been attested to have a similarity in their basic meanings, with "you know" functioning to "invite addressee inferences" and "I mean" working to "forward upcoming adjustments" (Fox Tree & Schrock, 2002, p. 728, citing Jucker & Smith, 1998 and Schiffrin, 1987). In other words, these DMs work on the plane of participation framework by sending a message to the addressee (and in the debate context, to other nonaddressed hearers). On the plane of information state, they signal a shift in the speaker's footing. In this case, the DMs signal Trump's shift from attacking predatory lenders to attacking the moderator. The applause received after this attack (2j) indicates that the audience appreciates this shift.

In (2k), Trump again shifts the topic of discussion from his expression of pride regarding his decision to stop doing business in Atlantic City before the economy there totally collapsed, to providing timely examples supporting his claim: "by the way, Caesar's just went bankrupt" (2k–l). Here, the DM "by the way" shifts the focus of talk from his personal troubles in Atlantic City to refer to a large-scale issue with the entire industry. Trump then resumes to boast that his business benefited financially from the demise that others experienced (2o–q). When Wallace attempts to follow up on this statement in (2r), Trump interrupts to close this interchange, once again using "by the way" to preface the statement about the national debt: "this country right now owes \$19 trillion" (2s). This last instance of "by the way" signals a complete topic shift, with the following proposition only bearing a remote topical connection to the previous discourse – i.e., discussion about debt and lenders. However, the problem of the US

national debt has for years been a major talking point for presidential candidates, especially Republicans, and this particular statement allows Trump to end on a “high note” by saying that the country “needs someone like [him] to straighten out that mess” (2t). In sum, “by the way” allows Trump to fluidly shift the topic of his response away from propositions that could be damaging to his presidential self and toward topics that construct his identity as a candidate in tune with more important problems facing the nation.

“Believe me”

Thus far, we have discussed elements of Trump’s discursive style as it relates to turn-initial and turn-medial DMs in the debate data. The formal speeches examined in this study, which involve a different participation format, can nonetheless be analyzed for the presence and absence of similar features. Since a formal speech constitutes a single extended turn on the discourse plane of exchange structure, examining DMs in terms of their transition relevance place is not useful. However, political speeches can nonetheless be segmented into smaller turn-like units, which are punctuated by audience applause or other forms of interactional engagement (e.g., booing, laughing, chanting). In fact, politicians may use DMs or other familiar rhetorical units such as repetition (Fahnestock, 2011; Johnstone, 1996; Tannen, 2007) to signal discourse structure or invite audience interaction.

If we examine Trump’s speeches for these units, we do find some patterns. One of these is the frequent use of the phrase “believe me,” which is by now such a salient feature of Trump’s idiolect that it has not only been discussed in the mainstream media as a feature of Trump’s style, but also has been featured in various parodies and memes of the politician. The phrase was listed by a *Washington Post* reporter as one of the six “Trumpisms” to be expected in the early debates in August 2015 (Phillips, 2015), soon after Trump announced his candidacy. An entire *Boston Globe* article analyzing the phrase appeared in May 2016 (Viser, 2016). In this piece, Viser refers to “believe me” as a ubiquitous phrase that works to somehow discursively cancel out the ideological inconsistency and/or untruthfulness of Trump’s discourse. He quotes a political science professor’s take on the phrase, who likens it to the language of a used car salesman. A spokesperson for Trump also commented on his use of the expression, saying, “It’s said from the heart with emphasis.” Viser quantifies Trump’s use of the expression in the debates – 30 times, compared to his opponents, who

altogether used it three times, and the Democratic candidates, who never used it in the debates. Linguist George Lakoff provided an academic perspective in the piece from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, commenting on its function as an epistemic and evidential marker expressing the authoritativeness of the source; he is quoted as saying, "It assumes that knowledge comes from direct experience." Viser adds that the expression evokes Trump's other professional role in the sphere of business, and specifically the act of cutting business deals. He remarks that Trump appears to add it into written speeches, citing its ubiquity in his spoken address to AIPAC (13 times), compared to his written prepared remarks, in which it appeared only once.

Viser and the sources quoted in his article have pointed to several available social meanings associated with "believe me." These include an association with the speech act of negotiating a deal, the social type of a used car salesman, and as a discursive means to counter or cover up untrustworthiness. While these are all potentially at play in at least some interpretations of Trump's language, one element that this analysis of "believe me" has ignored is its role as a discourse marker or rhetorical strategy that indicates a turn ending and signals the possibility of, or potentially even invites verbal reaction from the audience.

This function is especially important to consider in his speeches, given that the monologic nature of a speech is quite distinct from the inherently dialogic nature of business negotiations and car dealing. Since the marker appeared so frequently in the AIPAC speech, let us examine a few examples of where and how it appears in this speech. The first use of "believe me" comes within the first few minutes of his speech following an introduction in which Trump recounts ways in which he has personally and financially supported Israel in the past. Trump then segues to the topic of his current speech in the following lines:

- 3 a TRUMP: But I didn't come here tonight to pander to you about
Israel.
b That's what politicians do.
c All talk, no action.
d **Believe me.**
e AUDIENCE: (Applause, 4 sec)
f TRUMP: I came here to speak to you about where I stand,
g on the future of American relations,
h with our strategic ally. . .

The next instance of the phrase comes just a couple minutes later, when he discusses the “disastrous deal with Iran”:

- 4 a TRUMP: I've studied this issue in *great* detail, I would say actually, *greater* by *far* than
 b anybody else.
 c AUDIENCE: (Laughter, 1 sec)
 d TRUMP: **Believe me.** O:h **believe me** [audience laughter continues over Trump's talk].
 e AUDIENCE: (Laughter, 2 sec) [Trump smiles wryly]
 f TRUMP: And it's a *ba:d* deal.

In examples (3d) and (4d), “believe me” follows a point in the speech that does not relate to the overall purpose of the speech (i.e., to express a point of view related to America's relations with Israel and policy in the Middle East), but to metadiscursive quips about politics and politicians. In (3), Trump performs a common political speech act of identifying himself as a Washington outsider by telling his audience what he's *not*, doing oppositional identity work (Duranti, 2006; Sclafani, 2015, pp. 385–386) by distancing himself from the talk of politicians in an explicitly political speech. This statement, punctuated by “believe me”, is followed by lengthy applause from the audience (3e).

Similarly, in (4), Trump makes a seemingly self-mocking quip through the use of self-aggrandizing comparatives, which cues audience laughter. Trump then continues, uttering the phrase “believe me” twice, with emphasis, while the audience continues to laugh. The elongated emphasizing DM “O:h” (4d) prefacing the repetition of the phrase seems to invite further laughter, at which point he pauses and smiles wryly, allowing the audience to continue (4e). In this sense, the phrase “believe me” functions at the level of participation framework as an invitation to involve the audience in some way in his evaluative nontopical remarks about political language and action. This is a marked move in a speech event that is traditionally monologic. This sets Trump up to provide the evaluative punchline to his statement and the resolution to this micronarrative he tells about studying the issues he is discussing. It may be argued that Trump's ability to create audience interaction in this setting work toward an indexical meaning that constructs him as a charismatic candidate.

The phrase “believe me” is not only uttered to punctuate metapolitical discursive moments in the speech, but it also serves to punctuate substantive points of his topical argument. In the next example, Trump is describing the second point of his plan regarding relations with Iran:

- 5 a TRUMP: Iran is the *biggest sponsor* of terrorism around the world,
b And we will *work* to dismantle that reach.
c **Believe me. Believe me.**
d AUDIENCE: (Applause, 5 sec)
e TRUMP: Third at the very least. . .

It is important to notice that again in this example, the phrase is repeated and emphasized, and invites extensive applause from the audience. While Viser and Phillips's analyses are right to point out that Trump uses this expression extensively, and markedly more than other candidates, what the quantitative focus on "believe me" in their analyses does not capture is how it works to create audience involvement in his speech – a central function that distinguishes spoken from written discourse (Chafe, 1985; Tannen, 1982) and has been described as a definitional feature of conversation (Gumperz, 1982; Tannen, 2007). As Tannen (2007) has outlined, conversational involvement strategies include both sound- and sense-based features. Sound-based strategies include repetition of various segments, from phonological to discursive, and meaning-based strategies include figures of speech such as indirectness, ellipses, tropes, dialogue, imagery, and narrative. Trump's repetitive and emphatic "believe me" clearly works as an involvement strategy at the level of both sound and meaning. Additionally, through its imperative syntactic form and its role as a first pair part of an adjacency pair (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973), it could be argued that the phrase commands the audience into a particular cognitive state, such as a state of belief in the speaker. The use of this phrase is also a clear example of what Fairclough (1992; see also Talbot, 1995) refers to as "synthetic personalization" – a phenomenon in which the language of mass media communication is tailored in such a way that targets an implied hearer or reader, rendering the illusion of the speaker having an intimate conversation with an individual in the audience.

Epistrophic punctuation

Trump's stock phrase "believe me" might be considered one example of a larger pattern in his rhetoric, which I refer to as **epistrophic punctuation**, or the repetition of short phrases, often ones that convey an affective or epistemic stance, that appear at the end of rhetorical units in his speeches. The examples of "believe me" examined earlier (3–5) are each examples of this phenomenon, occurring in places where he is ending a cohesive rhetorical unit within his speech, but Trump uses other forms of

epistrophic punctuation in the same manner. Let us examine the following excerpt, again from the AIPAC speech, in which Trump is still discussing the situation in Iran:

- 6 a TRUMP: . . . The deal is silent on test missiles.
 b But those tests do violate the United Nations Security council resolutions.
 c The problem is no one has done anything about it.
 d **We will, we will.** I promise, **we will.**
 e AUDIENCE: (Cheers, applause.)
 f TRUMP: Thank you. Which brings me to my next point. . .

Similar to the placement and function of “believe me” in (5), which precedes an explicit mention that he is proceeding to talk about another point via the listing device “third” (5e), the repetitive use of “we will” in example (6d) invites the audience’s participation, for which Trump expresses thanks before telling the audience that he is moving on to his next point. In the following excerpt from the AIPAC speech, Trump similarly repeats a full clause “we [wi]ll get it solved” to wrap up a point before changing the topic:

- 7 a TRUMP: President Obama thinks that applying pressure to Israel will force the issue.
 b But it’s precisely the opposite that happens.
 c Already half of the population Palestine has been taken over by the
 d Palestinian ISIS and Hamas, and the other half refuses to confront the first half,
 e so it’s a very difficult situation that’s never going to get solved unless you have
 f great leadership right here in the United States.
 g **We’ll get it solved.** One way or the other, **we will get it solved.**
 f (Applause)
 g But when the United States stands with Israel,
 f the chances of peace really rise and rises exponentially.
 g That’s what will happen when Donald Trump is president of the United States.

In excerpt (7), Trump shifts from talking about the current poor state of relations between the United States and the Middle East as a result of President Obama’s policies (7a–d), referring to the situation as “a very difficult situation that’s never going to get solved” (7d–e). At this point, Trump introduces a possible exception to this undesirable outcome: “Unless you have great leadership right here in the US” (7e–f). In (7g), he proposes himself, in conjunction with his audience, using the inclusive pronoun

“we,” as a solution to this problem and as an agent to fill the absence of “great leadership.” Epistrophic punctuation – the repetition of “we [wi]ll get it solved” in (7g) – allows him again to end on a positive note and this time an inclusive note with the use of the plural pronoun, in contrast to singular “believe me.” This pattern of employing epistrophic punctuation to conclude a speech segment on a “high note” parallels Trump’s style of debate response analyzed in (2). We can see by analyzing the politician’s speech patterns and use of DMs and repetition in both debate and speech contexts that these discourse strategies work in consort with patterns in the overall arc of Trump’s larger discourse units. They also allow him to shift both the topic and his tone throughout his speech, while cuing his audience into these shifts in sometimes subtle ways, at the same time as he involves them into his talk in contexts that don’t normally invite audience participation.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has investigated several discourse marking strategies related to Donald Trump’s idiosyncratic style of public speaking in debate and formal speech contexts. Some of these features have received attention in the mainstream media, such as his tendency to utter “believe me,” while others, like his relative lack of turn-initial “well,” have gone under the radar of journalistic analyses of his rhetorical style.

Specifically, I demonstrated that Trump’s use of DMs, and specifically his relatively infrequent reliance on the use of turn-initial “well” as a topic-refocusing device, work toward the construction of his identity as a strong and straightforward debater because he appears to answer questions in a direct manner by not presenting his positions with DMs indicating qualification or evasion. On the other hand, Trump uses the phrase “by the way” more frequently than other candidates (and exclusively in debates examined here) as a way to accomplish the same sorts of evasions that “well” has been characterized as indicating in past research. Because “by the way” occurs turn-medially, it does not cue a “dodge” at the outset and also functions as a power move, showing that the candidate can assert epistemic status over his opponents as well as the moderator by proposing new topics that hadn’t been previously introduced in the debate. Donald Trump’s frequent use of “believe me”, on the other hand, was shown to play an important role in structuring his talk and encouraging audience participation in the context of monologic speeches.

With a solid understanding of these features as they work in the construction of a particular presidential identity for Donald Trump, we now turn to examine some of the interactional discourse strategies that Trump

employs in debates and speeches, and how they work in the construction of his political brand and presidential persona. The next chapter will deal with interruption, constructed dialogue and other forms of double-voicing, along with Trump's idiosyncratic use of co-speech gesture.

Note

- 1 While I do not conduct a detailed analysis of stylistic variation between the scripted and unscripted speeches here, this is certainly an area that merits further attention in future research.