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Instattack: Instagram and Visual *Ad Hominem* Political Arguments

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Instattack: Instagram and Visual *Ad Hominem* Political Arguments

by

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A thesis submitted in parital fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
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Dedication

For my Dad, whose unwavering strength continuously inspires, who taught me that happiness is life's most important purpose and that love has no boundaries. This thesis was written for and because of you. I love and miss you.

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Abstract

The purpose of this project is to examine the visual political *ad hominem* arguments used on Instagram during the 2016 presidential campaign. Using Walton's (2007) five subtypes of *ad hominem* arguments, this study analyzes the "attack ads" posted on Instagram from five of the 2016 presidential candidates into each subtype. This project seeks to understand how *ad hominem* arguments within political rhetoric function when they are visual. This study uses Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory of modality and Rose's (2012) compositional interpretation to analyze compositional structure of the image and parallels this analysis with ad hominem subtypes.

Findings reveal the abusive (direct) subtype as the most commonly used which aligns with traditional or popular uses of Instagram as a social networking site aimed at sharing personal events and stories. The abusive (direct) subtype is an *ad hominem* that attacks a respondent's moral character, or *ethos*, rather than their argument or biases or inconsistencies. The visual abusive (direct) arguments used by the candidates largely targeted their opponents personally which parallels the popular uses of the medium Instagram.

Instagram's Origins and Visual *Ad Hominem* Political Arguments

Instagram, an online mobile video and photo sharing site, was launched 6 October 2010 by creators Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. Instagram was created to be a fun social networking site (SNS) to share a person's personal life with friends through pictures and videos (About Instagram). Instagram's visual storytelling was created originally for personal use but shifted for marketing, broadcasting, etc. To use Instagram, users would take a picture from their cellphone, edit the picture using one of Instagram's filters, and post the visual on their personal site which could be seen by various followers and Instagram users. The editing capabilities on Instagram stood out from other social media sites since it allows users to take "mediocre" images and transform them into "professional-looking" visuals (About Instagram).

Instagram became a top SNS within a few months after its launch date, and by December 2010, Instagram's community grew to one million users (Instagram Press). Over the next few years, the mobile app continued to grow and became accessible through various mobile devices, and recently, the Instagram community has reached over 400 million users (Instagram Press). Currently, Instagram is used around the world and has over 40 billion photos shared with an average of 80 million photos shared per day (Instagram Press). With this exponential growth and its technology capabilities, Instagram's purpose was modified by new users (marketers, news organizations, celebrities etc.) to share visual information to build communities, market products, and to ultimately gain more public awareness (Thornton, 2014). Along with social sharing, Instagram has also become a new venue for politicians to build a community with their supporters.

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With the rise of SNS, politicians began using SNS to communicate with voters in real-time, to promote their political agenda, and to build communities. SNS, like Facebook, Twitter, and, recently, Instagram, allowed politicians to engage with the public politically and personally. Recently, with the 2016 presidential campaign, SNS sites, specifically Instagram, have been used as a campaigning tool to gather voters. A recent National Public Radio (NPR) article (2015) considered how Instagram was originally used by politicians to campaign and appear to their voters as "normal" people, however, recent presidential candidates are using visuals on Instagram to "attack" their competitors' political agenda (Sanders, 2015). Before the use of "attack" visuals, politicians were using Instagram to post images of their family, meeting voters, eating food, etc. in order to depict themselves as "ordinary" Americans. However, the 2016 candidates are using Instagram to visually attack their opponents through *ad hominem* arguments. The shift with the politicians' use of Instagram can be traced to Donald Trump who generated "campaign-style short videos" that attacked Jeb Bush and his candidacy; Trump's video included a clip of Barbara Bush urging him not to run for president (Sanders, 2015). Trump's attack was presumed to be a retaliation from Bush who posted an 80-second video called "The Real Donald Trump" which included compiled clips of Trump stating he was "pro-choice" and calling Hillary Clinton a 'terrific woman' (Sanders. 2015). Since these first attacks, other candidates have followed suit and began using Instagram as a site for promoting their campaigns and for attacking other candidates, all while still using Instagram to share carefully curated personal photos.

Although new to Instagram, political attacks on SNS are not new. Both Facebook and Twitter were used, at first, as SNS to stay connected or reconnect with people, and to engage in conversation with people who share similar interests. Shortly after their launch, Facebook and Twitter shifted and began to be used as a platform for celebrities or companies to advertise their

products and for presidential candidates to network, engage, and communicate with their supporters. Kerri Harvey, an associate professor interviewed by Sanders, argued that social media was once used as a personal site to engage and communicate with friends but has become a venue for public discussion including political discourse (Sanders, 2015). The use of SNS in political discourse has become foundational because it produces interactive communication and enables easy accessible information to be shared which allows multiple audiences to participate politically (McClurg, 2003; Bode, 2012).

President Obama's 2008 campaign was an integral moment for the use of SNS during presidential campaigns and for political and presidential rhetoric. Although, Obama's campaign was not the first to use SNS, his initiative, however, was the most successful. Using social media as a strategic tool, Obama's campaign team encouraged a "community-powered campaign" by engaging and communicating with voters in real-time (Harfoush, 2009). Essentially, by using a political website with an official blog, a video channel called BarackTV, and a SNS called my.barackobama.com, the then-senator Obama encouraged a participatory democracy where "regular" people were empowered to take part in the democratic process (Harfoush, 2009). Using these SNS, the Obama team was able to increase support from both supporters and grassroots organizations and generate a personalized experience for each group. In addition to using traditional campaigning websites, the Obama team also used Facebook, Twitter to further engage his voters by illustrating where he was and what he was doing at all times. Obama's campaign also had Shepard Fairey's memorable Obama Hope image which began circulating in 2008 (Gries, 2015). The Obama Hope image became an icon for his campaign and with this use of his SNS together, they, arguably, generated a pivotal moment in his campaign towards presidency.

In addition to using SNS as a way to target voters and promote a candidate's political position, images, like the Obama Hope poster, and campaign commercials have been shared across various sites like Facebook and Twitter in the past most-recent presidential campaigns. These sites have also began to be used to target other candidates in negative ads. While many SNS have been used as a platform for political discourse, politicians have been slower at using Instagram for political campaigning (Gries, 2015). Instagram is among the new social media venues in which presidential candidates can reach out to voters and target other candidates. The 2016 campaign, has been using Instagram for political discourse and character attacks which have increased and become more sophisticated with the use of visual rhetoric.

Since Instagram adheres to similar functions as other SNS and due to its unique features that allow for visual rhetoric, it has become a venue where presidential candidates target one another using visual *ad hominems*. Being a new platform that offers unique features, Instagram enables conversation and allows users to upload various types of visuals and arguments for multiple purposes (e.g. personal, political, marketing, celebrity, etc.). With the rise of political discourse and visual character attacks on Instagram within the 2016 presidential campaign I aim to analyze how *ad hominem* arguments are being used visually on Instagram to target and portray a political *ethos*. This study contributes to the understanding of how *ad hominems* function visually within presidential rhetoric, specifically in digital environments. The overall goals of this study are to participate in the conversation about unprecedented political discourse, unprecedented usage of Instagram by presidential candidates, and exploring *ad hominems* in digital environments and combining that with visual rhetoric. Examining these particular visuals on Instagram, through the lens of *ad hominem,* gives insight into an ancient rhetorical strategy and a contemporary medium for visual communication. And so, this examination affords a deeper understanding of one of the

presidential rhetorics circulating on social media, a popular communications technology, and visual rhetoric.

Research Questions

This thesis will focus on three primary research questions, which build on each other:

- Which types of *ad hominem* arguments are the 2016 presidential candidates deploying visually through Instagram?

- How do the *ad hominem* visuals compare with the other images/videos posted on the candidates' Instagram? if they are different, how do these differences contribute to the evolution of *ad hominem* arguments and presidential rhetoric in the field of visual rhetoric?

- How do *ad hominem* visuals represent and/or target a candidate's *ethos?*

Ad Hominems and Political, Visual Applications

Understanding *Ad Hominem*

The presidential candidates "attack" visuals on Instagram are *ad hominem* arguments that are not atypical within presidential rhetoric. An *ad hominem* is an argument that is directed against a particular person rather than the position they are retaining. Often with *ad hominems*, an argument is rejected or accepted based on the personal characteristics of the speaker rather than on the claims the speaker is making. Many political *ad hominems* attempt to diminish a candidate's credibility, or *ethos*, by claiming that they are either "not good," "unfit," "unprofessional," or that their views are "wrong" or "bad." All types of *ad hominem* arguments are personal attacks directed at the credibility of a person (the respondent) usually in order to argue that the respondent's argument or position is not credible or valid (Walton, 2007 p. 169). *Ad hominem* arguments are *ethotic* because they aim to imply that the respondent is either "not good" at deliberation, they "lack moral authority," or they do not share specific "values or beliefs"; essentially, these arguments intend to illustrate that the respondent is lacking *ethos* (Brinton, 1985).

Although *ad hominem* arguments can be fallacious, depending on the context in which they are used, they are not inherently fallacious and can sometimes be cogent arguments. While a fallacious *ad hominem* is a deceptive tactic used to weaken a respondent's claims and/or *ethos*, a cogent *ad hominem* is a personal attack that is relevant to the argument instead of a distraction from the argument (Walton, 2007). This type of argumentative scheme can be a powerful technique

of persuasion when they are used in deliberative contexts and at the opportune moment (Brinton, 1984; Walton 2007).

In total, there are five subtypes of *ad hominem* arguments, which include: 1) the abusive (direct)*,* 2) the circumstantial*,* 3) the bias, 4) the 'poisoning the well,' and 5) the *tu quoque* (Walton, 1998; 2007). Each distinctive subtype of an *ad hominem* argument is identified and evaluated through a set of argumentation schemes. The first subtype, the abusive (direct), is a direct attack on a respondent's moral character (Walton 2007). This type of argument highlights a respondent's dishonesty or hypocrisy. The second subtype, circumstantial, revolves around an allegation of inconsistency and is used to highlight that a person or party should not be taken seriously (Walton, 2007). The abusive (direct) subtype includes hypocrisy, however, the circumstantial is different because it focuses on a person's inconsistent actions rather than a hypocritical character. The bias subtype is an attack on a respondent's credibility by illustrating the respondent's argument is not plausible due to their biases (Walton, 2007). The fourth *ad hominem* argument is the 'poisoning the well,' which attacks a respondent for having "rigid and dogmatic" views or commitments. This subtype accuses the respondent of being unreasonable through close mindedness (Walton, 2007). The last subtype is the *tu quoque* where *ad hominem* arguments respond to previous attacks thus creating cyclical attacks (Walton, 2007).

The use of *ad hominem* arguments is frequent in media and have become achingly familiar in political discourse, as negative campaign tactics. These *ethotic* attacks have been used in campaign speeches, debates, commercials, and recently in campaign visuals on Instagram. With the current presidential candidate's using social media, like Instagram, during their campaigns, these *ad hominem* arguments have become a norm. Although *ad hominems* are used frequently as rhetorical campaign tactics they are currently being used by candidates on SNS through visuals on

Instagram. This thesis will use *ad hominem* scholarship, specific to Walton's five subtypes, in order to understand which *ad hominem* arguments the presidential candidates are deploying visually on Instagram. Understanding the various types of *ad hominem* that are being used visually will give a better understanding to how these visuals represent and target a candidate's *ethos*.

Rhetorical Presidency

The use of *ad hominems* as a campaign tactic is not new in politics, however, the use of these argumentative schemes in rhetorical presidency, specifically on SNS, has risen. Typically presidential rhetoric describes presidents has having freedom to choose venue and topic in order to communicate with a national audience (Jamieson and Campbell, 2008). Political scientists, James Ceaser, Glen E. Thruow, Joseph Bessette, and Jeffrey Tulis (1981), introduced the term, rhetorical presidency, to illustrate the important rhetorical shift within presidential rhetoric that occurred throughout the history of the US presidency. The term rhetorical presidency is used to describe the historical presidential movements that influenced the shift of rhetoric used within presidential speeches from speeches address to Congress and other government bodies to speeches addressed to the general public (Caeser et al., 1981; Tulis, 1988).

There are three factors that illustrate three influential shifts of presidential rhetoric, from the "old way," which addressed rhetoric in writing to Congress, to the "new way," which engages the public (Ceaser et al., 1981). The three factors that influenced this shift are the modern doctrine of presidential leadership, the modern mass media, and modern presidential campaigns (Ceaser et al., 1981). Speeches that started addressing the public began with President Woodrow Wilson during his Inaugural Address in 1913. President Wilson gave the Inaugural Address a "new theme" by presenting a "visionary speech" that focused on the goals for the future; this speech directly

addressed the public as its main audience. Unlike the standard "policy speech" that typically addressed Congress, the visionary speech aimed describe goals for the future that were related to the public's vision; instead of focusing on the Constitution this type of speech aimed to address the goals, needs, and desires of the American people (Caeser et al., 1981). This Wilsonian concept of rhetorical presidency aimed to create a participatory democracy, which could influence Congress and future politics. For rhetorical presidency to move the public and encourage participatory democracy, in the Wilsonian concept, the rhetor must understand the public's feelings and "articulate its wishes" (Caeser et al., 1981; Tulis 1988). This Wilsonian concept is used currently in presidential speeches and campaigns.

After the significant shift from President Wilson's Inaugural Address, rhetorical presidency came under a new shift with the rise of the radio and television. The rise of radio and television, during this time, began to facilitate presidential rhetoric to reach a national audience which included people of different genders, races, and classes. The visionary speeches were able to be broadcasted across different media allowing more audiences to become engaged, which inevitably enabled the presidents and presidential candidates to alter their speeches for their given audiences. With the growth of technology, from radio and TV to the internet, and more recently with SNS, the presidents were brought to the public until the public became personally familiar with them (Stuckey, 2010). Speaking to narrow audiences became difficult as the media developed. Presidential candidates no longer spoke directly to Congress and instead began enabling the public in participatory democracy.

Political science and communication scholars (Gronbeck, 1996; Stuckey, 2010) have discussed how technological changes have been and continue to be an important continuing factor in rhetorical presidency. For instance, Stuckey (2010) argued that the technological environment

...has meant an increased focus on public opinion, the visual elements of politics as spectacle that involves the audience as citizens in particular ways, and a reduction in the perceived distance between leaders and led. This means that rhetoric is now inevitably mediated, rhetorical processes are accelerated, *ethos* has become central, and more and more of discourse now "count" as presidential rhetoric. That is, nearly all presidential behavior and activity can be--and perhaps ought to be--understood as rhetorical. (p. 47)

Stuckey (2010) argued that the politician's mediated rhetoric generates a specific relationship and status with the public, thus generating an *ethos* and relationship with the public.

While Woodrow Wilson's speech was the first to directly target a public instead of Congress, President Obama's 2008 presidential campaign drew on the power of digital engagement in order to connect with the American people for public participation, and was one of the most significant and, arguably, the most effective in computer-mediated communication. Unlike previous presidential campaigns, Obama successfully used various computer-mediated technologies and SNS to not only speak directly to the public but enable two-way communication in "real-time" on issues of national policy (Katz et al., 2013). The use of SNS during presidential campaigns, like Obama's 2008 campaign, shifted rhetorical presidency by changing who controls, consumes, distributes, and responds to information (Gainous and Wagner, 2013). SNS changed rhetorical presidency by allowing audiences to select their own networks, and allowing candidates to tailor their communications (Gainous and Wagner, 2013).

Presidential rhetoric will continue to change as technology, media, and SNS grow and adapt to their users needs. When these technologies change so will the distribution and circulation of presidential speeches, which means that they will reach new and different audiences (Stuckey, 2010). These changes, discussed by Stuckey (2010) have already started with the rise of various

SNS like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the like. Currently, the candidates' "speeches" are illustrated through various media and are also being produced visually and circulated across multiple platforms. This new-age environment has already altered, and continues to alter, the relationship between the president, presidential candidates, and public, thus making *ethos* an important element of rhetorical presidency (and political discourse, writ large) particularly with the 2016 presidential candidates use of visual *ad hominems* on Instagram.

Ethos and Presidential Rhetoric/*Ad Hominem*

Historically, the term *ethos* can be translated as a "habitual gathering place" (Halloran 60), "character," "habit," or "custom" (Jarratt and Reynolds, p. 42; Holt, 2012), and can be used to portray the speaker as a person of good will, with good sense, and good moral character (Aristotle, 1992; Cicero, 2001; Grassi, 2001). There are two broad sense of *ethos* coming from two different rhetorical traditions within this study. The first is an Aristotelian concept of *ethos* which is an "artistic accomplishment" (Hyde, 2004; xvi) where *ethos* is crafted within a speech or text, and the second is an Isocratic concept of *ethos* which revolves around the reputation a speaker develops throughout life and brings to the speech situation (Benoit, 1990; 257).

Ethos is one of the three modes of proofs, the other two being *logos* and *pathos*, of persuasion, and for Aristotle *ethos* is created by the rhetor through language; Aristotelian *ethos* is the performance of particular expectations and argumentative properties. In Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* (1991) he argued that

> [Persuasion occurs] through character [*ethos*] whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; for we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly on all subjects in general and completely so in cases

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where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt. And this should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person; for it is not the case, as some of the technical writers propose in their treatment of the art, that fair-mindedness on the part of the speaker makes no contribution to persuasiveness; rather, character is almost, so to speak, the controlling factor in persuading (1356a4).

Aristotle's ethical appeal is not "established through the audience's prior knowledge or 'previous action' of a rhetors actions or deeds" instead each new text or speech is a "blank slate, where *ethos* can (and necessarily must) be established new" (Holt, 2012; 74). It is up to the orator to use *ethos* to "argue and deliberate and thereby to inspire trust in his [or her] audience" (Hyde, 2004; p. xvi). With the Aristotelian sense of *ethos,* an understanding of character becomes a "source of subject matter for speeches, particularly epideictic speeches," so the rhetor must "understand *ethos* in order to create in his audience a strong and favorable impression of his own character" (Halloran, 1982).

While the Aristotelian *ethos* takes place in the rhetors text, which is "contextualized and made by past, social, and rhetorical actions" (Hyde, 2004), the Isocratic sense of *ethos* revolves around the "soul" of the rhetor. *Ethos*, for Isocrates, is the performance and sincerity of moral values and community norms. For Isocrates, *ethos* is considered to "be the most important persuasive tool of the rhetor," and, unlike Aristotle, *ethos* "is not so much "constructed in speech" as it is "shown-forth" or made apparent to the audience based on the "true" character of the individual" (Holt, 2012). According to Isocrates (1982),

> The man who wishes to persuade people will not be negligent as to the matter of character [*ethos*]; no, on the contrary, he will apply himself above all to establish a most honorable name among his fellow-citizens; for who does not know that words carry greater conviction when spoken by men of good repute than when spoken by men who live under

a cloud, and that the argument which is made by a man's life is more weight than that which is furnished by words? (*Antidosis,* 278)

For Isocrates, *ethos* is established as a way of living, rather than a rhetorical device that is "delivered" with other appeals; it is established through learning about political and public rhetorical practices. A rhetor's *ethos* is manifested in all actions of his life so, in order to have *ethos,* a rhetor must be virtuous and a good citizen.

The Isocratic concept of *ethos,* through the lens presidential rhetoric, plays a crucial role in establishing a candidate's character that is generated through who the candidate presents themselves to be. The 2016 presidential candidates are using Instagram as a platform to showcase their Isocratic *ethos* by presenting their character in ways that are both related and unrelated to their politics. Due to this hybrid, Instagram is an ideal platform for candidates to present *ethos* in an Isocratic way because it allows the candidates to present themselves as politicians and as "good" and/or "ordinary" people. Through the use of visuals on Instagram, candidates are able to bring a presentation of their personal character into their political campaign which aligns with Isocrates's notions of *ethos*. However, the inclusion of *ad hominems* between the presidential candidates on Instagram, a new phenomenon to the platform, means that the candidates' *ethos* is changing both personally and politically. The visual *ad hominems* target an opponent to discredit their *ethos* in the present moment through the use of epideictic rhetoric. Using Aristotelian terms, the candidates are using both deliberative and epideictic rhetoric on Instagram. Deliberative rhetoric is used through their political visuals to convince the audience to make decisions regarding future goals, while epideictic rhetoric, which focuses on the present and creating a speech/text of praise or blame tailored to the attitude of an audience, is used through attack ads.

Epideictic *ethos* is important, particularly to presidential rhetoric between the president, presidential candidates, and the public, because it is the "the experience that occurs during true epideictic discourse when rhetor and audience enter the timeless, consubstantial space carved out by their mutual contemplation of reality" (Sullivan, 1993; p. 128). *Ethos,* in this sense, is important and closely related to epideictic rhetoric since it is concerned about both the character of a rhetor and the portrayal of that character. Sullivan (1993) used Aristotelian terms by describing *ethos* as "the consubstantial space which enfolds participants," however, he moved toward an ideological-communal sense of *ethos,* similar to Isocrates's, which ties *ethos* to certain social values and morals (p. 114). Although Sullivan (1993) related epideictic performance to Isocratic *ethos*, he is still invested in Aristotelian tradition through the five properties required for epideictic *ethos*, which include "(1) the rhetor's reputation, (2) the rhetor's vision, (3), the rhetor's authority, (4) the rhetor's presentation of good reasons, and (5) the rhetor's creation of consubstantiality with the audience" (Sullivan, 1993).

While Sullivan's (1993) epideictic rhetoric and *ethos* illustrates the importance of the relationship between the speaker and the audience it does not discuss how this type *ethos* is established online. Todd Frobish's "On Pixels, Perceptions, and Personae" (2013) discussed a model of online *ethos* that relates closely to that of both Sullivan (1993) and Isocrates (1982). Frobish (2013) focused on how various mediums or platforms complicate the understanding and assessment of character; he establishes a model of online *ethos* that illustrates the type of ethotic appeals that are possible within an online environment. Frobish's (2013) model/typology, based originally off of Sharron Kenton's (1989) model, illustrates a "four-part system for the assessment of online *ethos* and identity, consisting of appeals to (1) Community Identification and Goodwill, (2) Moral Character and Virtue, (3) Intelligence and Knowledge, and (4) Verbal and Design

Competence" (Frobish, 1993). This model is based off an Isocratic concept of *ethos*, and relates to Walton's (2007) five *ad hominems*, which illustrates the significance of a rhetor's character and the rhetor/audience relationship within an online space and digital community. For the 2016 presidential candidates, their *ad hominem* visuals on Instagram are presenting Isocratic *ethos* that consist of the four ethotic appeals within Frobish's (2013) model.

Ethos is a central part to *ad hominem* arguments and presidential rhetoric with the rise of digital environments and their ever changing platforms. This thesis seeks to understand *ad hominem* attacks that are leveraged visually on selected politician's Instagram accounts. While the use of *ad hominems* is not uncommon in political discourse, the use of visual *ad hominems* on Instagram is new (Sanders, 2015). Using Walton's (2007) five subtypes of *ad hominem* arguments in relation to both Isocratic *ethos* and Frobish's (2013) model of online *ethos* can illustrate how *ad hominems* are being used visually on Instagram. For the purpose of this project, "attack ads" are images or videos that use/depict *ad hominem* arguments, which are designed to mock, discredit, or criticize a presidential candidate's *ethos*.

Compositional Interpretation and Visual Modality

This study's focus on Instagram begets a close analysis of visual arguments. In order to do this, exploring how visuals can function as arguments is vital to project. Visual rhetoric is a theoretical framework for discussing how images, videos, and other visuals communicate rhetorically (i.e., as arguments). Rose (2012) argues that interpretations of visuals occur at three various sites: 1) production, 2) the image "itself" and 3) reception (p. 19-20). For each of these three sites there are three different aspects called "modalities" which include technological, compositional, and social (Rose, 2012). One way to understand how visuals communicate

rhetorically is to analyze visuals using a compositional interpretation. A compositional interpretation typically focuses on the compositionality of the visual by analyzing content, color, spatial organization, light, and expressive content (Rose, 2012). In order to effectively use compositional interpretation the viewer of the visual must pay attention to the specific visual elements and composition rather than reception or intended reception; Rose refers to this method as the "good-eye" (Rose, 2012). Rose attempts to offer a type of visual rhetorical analysis that analyzes the content of a visual and its modality without influence from the audience or creator.

The modality of a visual can afford a deeper analysis of the visual elements of the image itself. Modality is often "interpersonal" based on historical, cultural, and social ideas of "reality." An image can align or fail to align with collective truths or realities based on cultural factors between the visual itself and its audience (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). There are eight modality markers that can establish the "realness" of a visual, which include: 1) color saturation, 2) color differentiation, 3) color modulation, 4) contextualization, 5) representation, 6) depth, 7) illumination, and 8) brightness (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). The eight modality markers are fundamental textual cues to establish what image can be considered "credible" or worthy of suspect (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Essentially, each of these markers can be pictured as individual scales ranging from one extreme to the other (too much brightness to not enough brightness, absence of background to overly detailed background, etc.). The more realistic or "naturalistic" the visual is the higher the modality of that image. For example, when considering the modality marker of color saturation, the highest modality would lie somewhere between black and white, and maximum color saturation (Figure 1).[1]

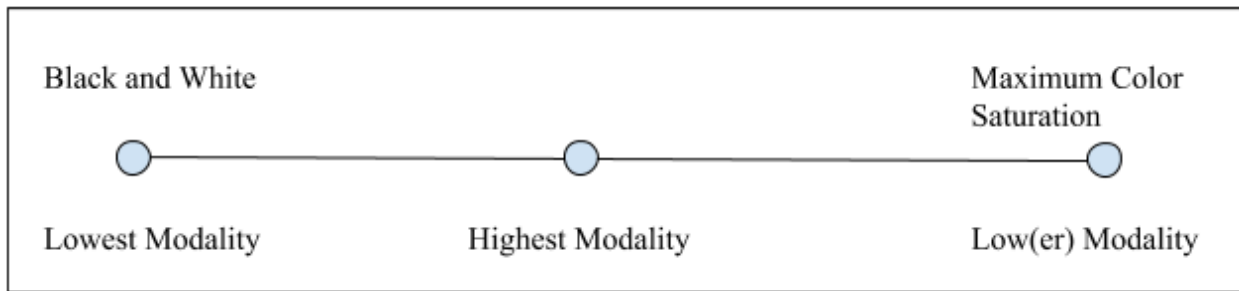[1] Line chart adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006).

Figure 1: Kress and van Leeuwen's Line Chart of Modality

While there are eight modality markers to help determine the highest possible modality of a visual it is important to note that modality or "realness" an image depends on the cultural and historical standards of what is "real" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006).[2] So, a person's conception of time and space can influence how they communicate and understand and employ rhetoric, particularly visually (Gries, 2015).

Although the modality of a visual may be determined by individual viewers differently, the compositional modality itself can produce "persuasive effects" on its viewers (Rose, 2012). Images and videos can be perceived by viewers or respondents differently, which gives them power in the world. Visuals develop "*thing-power*" which can become "rhetorically diverse" depending on the context and type of the visual (Gries, 2015; Bennett, 2010). While all visuals can develop "*thing-power*" political visuals, specifically *ad hominems*, develop a lot of power and influence against/toward the person or thing being represented in the visual and the viewers themselves.

The 2016 political *ad hominems* have developed "*thing-power*" and function similarly to visual ideographs which are political visuals that use parody and irony to influence and affect

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[2] It's important to note that "reality" and "truth" is relative to the individual viewer. So, what may be "real" to one viewer is not essentially real or naturalistic to the other. In other words, the visual analysis in this study may differ from a viewer from a different cultural and social position.

people's emotions and behaviors (Gries, 2012; Edwards and Winkler, 2009). Visual ideographs have four defining characteristics. They are images 1) used in political communications intended to influence both politicians and voters, 2) that appeal to or represent abstract ideas in particular communities (this also means they are open to interpretation), 3) that participate in power dynamics, and 4) bound to/by culture (Edwards and Winkler, 2009; Gries, 2015). Although the 2016 presidential candidates' *ad hominem* visuals are not necessarily visual ideographs in the way Edwards and Winkler (2005), and Gries (2015) describe, the *ad hominem* visuals follow and incorporate the same ideograph characteristics. *Ad hominems* are arguments directed against a person instead of a position they are retaining, and they are more often used by politicians. Visually, *ad hominems* relate to ideographs because they are often ordinary images repurposed in political discourse for negative attacks, they can have multiple interpretations depending on the respondents, they participate in power dynamics, and they are aimed at the beliefs and actions of both politicians and voters.

This study used Rose's (2012) compositional interpretation to analyze the visual *ad hominems* that were posted on Instagram by the 2016 presidential candidates. Since this study aimed to see how *ad hominem* visuals are used rhetorically it was important to note the visual elements that influenced or participated in Walton's five *ad hominem* arguments. Although this study followed a compositional interpretation by taking into consideration the context, color, etc. of the visuals, this study also relied on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory of modality. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory of modality belie challenges to Rose's (2012) theoretical underpinnings. The eight modality markers discussed by Kress and van Leeuwen relate to the compositional interpretation illustrated by Rose (2012), however, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) consider the cultural and social implications between the creator and viewer, which influences the

understanding of a visuals "realness" or "naturalism." When a visual has a high modality or "realness" it has *thing-power* which means it has the ability to act in the real world. Since *ad hominems* are sometimes fallacious and intended to persuade, influence, or attack, they have their own rhetorical power. So, a visual *ad hominem* with high modality would have higher *thing-power* and would inevitably contribute to lasting and serious rhetorical consequences.

Scope and Approach

This study examines the visuals posted on the 2016 presidential candidates' Instagram account from 1 June 2015, the beginning date of the presidential nominations, until 10 February 2016, the day after the New Hampshire Primary. The New Hampshire Primary, the first nationwide party primary election only preceded by the Iowa Caucuses, has historically predicted the presidential nominees for each party. Although the New Hampshire Primary was on 9 February 2016, visuals were collected until 10 February 2016 to allow for additional postings from this kairotic moment (Montanaro, 2016). As of 10 February 2016, there were four democrats and twelve republicans running in the 2016 presidential campaign. To create a manageable data-set, the top two candidates from both parties were chosen for this analysis. These four candidates were chosen based on the polling numbers from *The Washington Post* on 10 February 2016. The four highest-ranking presidential candidates were Donald Trump (R), Ted Cruz (R), Hillary Clinton (D), and Bernie Sanders (D), all of whom have their own Instagram accounts.

For this analysis, archives were accessed through Instagram's website, Iconosquare, and the iPhone/iPad Instagram application. Instagram was not research friendly. The software was difficult to use and the visual archives were difficult to navigate. Also, due to the static, yet ever changing platform, images lose context once they become temporally separated from current events. Listed below (Table 1) are all four candidates' Instagram usernames, number of posts between the specified date range, and number of followers as of 8 May 2016. During this study's time-frame, 1 June 2015 to 10 February 2016, a total of 889 visuals were collected; 314 from Donald Trump; 46 from Ted Cruz; 356 from Hillary Clinton, and 173 from Bernie Sanders.

Table 1: Candidate Instagram Information

Candidate	Candidate Username	Number of Posts	Number of Followers
Donald Trump	@realdonaldtrump	707	1.5 million
Ted Cruz	@sentedcruz	160	124 thousand
Hillary Clinton	@hillaryclinton	485	1.1 million
Bernie Sanders	@berniesanders	346	1.3 million

To distinguish the *ad hominem* visuals from the collection, this study relied on critical discourse analysis and compositional interpretation to distinguish the differences between attack ads and the other visuals that were collected. Flickr, a free photo-sharing, organizing, and hosting website, was used to store all of the collected visuals. Each of the candidates' visuals were placed into their own album (e.g., all of Hillary Clinton's photos/videos went into a @hillaryclinton album on Flickr). Once the images were collected within each album, the tagging process began. I tagged each of the visuals, based on a set of criteria, in order to organize the visuals into separate categories and to distinguish which visuals were *ad hominems*. With this tagging process, I categorized the visuals as either "policy visuals", visuals that illustrate a candidate as a political figure, "insta-style visuals", images or videos that illustrate a candidate's humanness, or "attack ads", visuals that use *ad hominems* to target an opponent. In order to decide on these categories, I briefly scanned each of the candidates' accounts to determine the type of visuals they were posting. Based on this preview and Sander's (2015) article, I realized the candidates were posted images that illustrated them as a political figure, an "ordinary" person, or visuals that targeted an opponent.

To differentiate between each of the categories, I created a set of criteria that was used for analysis (Table 2).

Table 2: Criteria for Category Coding

Category	Criteria
Policy Visuals	Any image or video that: • depicts candidate acting as a political candidate (e.g., posing with voters, speaking at rallies, etc.) • depicts voters supporting the candidate • depicts/promotes the candidate's logo
Insta-Style Visuals	Any image or video that: • depicts the candidate doing routine, daily tasks (e.g. eating, shopping, laughing with friends, etc.) or includes family members • focuses on the candidate's "leisure" activities over their work as a candidate • refers to popularity on social media • illustrate inspirational quotes from various figures
Attack Ads	Any image or video that: • targets an opponent's political agenda • discusses the biases of an opponent • discusses the political/personal history of an opponent in order to highlight their inconsistency • mocks a candidate's political logo or political views • targets an opponents character or credibility (morals, values, beliefs, etc.) • responds to a previous attack from a candidate

Both the visual and caption were considered when categorizing the visuals into the three categories. I had a second reader[3] analyze the visuals and place them into categories to substantiate my analysis. Before tagging the images on Flickr, my second reader and I kept record of our categories and tags on a Google Sheet so we could cross-reference our coding. After we discussed and finalized the placement of the visuals into their designated categories we tagged the images on Flickr so we could have better access to them during the next part of our analysis.

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[3] Thank you, Tiffany Wilgar, Doctoral Candidate at the University of South Florida.

Once the images were categorized, we used a compositional interpretation analysis, paying attention to modality, on the "attack ads" visuals to understand how *ad hominems* are illustrated visually on Instagram. The focus of this analysis was based on Walton's (1989/2007) five subtypes of *ad hominem* arguments: abusive (direct), circumstantial, bias, 'poisoning the well', and *tu quoque*. My second reader and I analyzed the visual elements of each image/video and each caption to see which *ad hominem* subtype it employed. During the analysis, we decided that one visual could be more than one of the five subtypes simultaneously. If a visual did not fit into Walton's schema of *ad hominem* arguments, we categorized the image as "Not Applicable" (N/A). My second reader and I analyzed the visuals independently and discussed our results after in order to authenticate our analysis; in instances of disagreement we discussed the best options for analyzing the visuals to reach a consensus. There were no instances that my second reader and I could not reach a consensus.

Findings

In total, from 1 June 2015 to 10 February 2016, 889 visuals were posted on Instagram from the aforementioned four 2016 presidential candidates, 50 of which were attack ads. The candidate who posted the most attack ads was Donald Trump, followed by Hillary Clinton, Ted Cruz, and Bernie Sanders, respectively (Table 3). However, the ratio of attack visuals versus other Instagram posts per candidate is as follows: Trump 11.78%, Cruz 6.52%, Clinton 2.53%, and Sanders 0.58%. It was surprising that out of 889 visuals there were only 50 attack ads, however, the use of *ad hominems* on Instagram is new to this SNS platform. It was surprising to see that Clinton, who had the most posts on Instagram and who was the focus of many *ad hominem* arguments, had the second-smallest percentage of attack ads. Contrastingly, Trump, who posted the second most visuals, had the highest percentage of attack ads that targeted a variety of different presidential candidates, including those from his own party, and people who were not running for president (he was the only candidate to this).

Table 3: Findings for Category Coding

Candidate	Policy Visuals	Insta-Style	Attack Ads	Totals
@realdonaldtrump	232	45	37	314
@hillaryclinton	223	124	9	356
@sentedcruz	13	30	3	46
@berniesanders	124	48	1	173
Total	592	247	50	

During the first coding process, separating the visuals into policy, Insta-style, or attack ads, and the second coding process, separating the attack ads into Walton's five subtypes, both the caption and visual were considered as a unit. The caption and visual were considered together because without the caption the image became out of context which made coding visuals into subtypes too difficult. Often during coding, captions inform the overall purpose, audience, and/or subject of the visual which makes considering the caption along with the visual indispensable to categorizing the rhetorical intentions of each post.

Once the visuals were segregated into policy, Insta-style, and attack ads the visuals categorized as attacks ads were singled out and then coded into the six subtypes for *ad hominem* arguments: abusive (direct), circumstantial, bias, 'poisoning the well', *tu quoque*, and not applicable. Unfortunately, some of the *ad hominem* arguments used by the 2016 presidential candidates on Instagram were (borderline) nonsensical. Walton's *ad hominem* subtypes do not easily allow for arguments in which evidence and claims are unrelated. Walton's schema allows for *ad hominems* that are both cogent or fallacious, because *ad hominems* can be either, however, the arguments made by the 2016 presidential candidates on Instagram were occasionally structured so that the argument was not only fallacious but truly had an arbitrary relationship between claims and evidence. While coding the visuals, to allow for the occasional argument that could not fit into Walton's five categories, an additional category was added which was labeled "not applicable" (N/A). In total, four images were coded as N/A because these arguments were too incoherent to categorize into Walton's schema.

While coding, the subtypes were not considered mutually exclusive, meaning, one visual could be coded into more than one subtype. Nearly all of the visuals analyzed were coded into multiple subtypes. During coding, my second reader and I, decided that two of the visuals should

not have been categorized as attacks ads.[4] These two visuals were eliminated from the category and were not included in final *ad hominem* totals. My second reader and I coded all the visuals independently of each other and then verbally discussed our findings. At the end of this process, we came to agreement on everything, so we had a 100% inter-rater reliability, however, after the initial independent coding 42% of codes needed to be discussed for clarification. In total, the abusive (direct) subtype had the highest number of visuals while the *tu quoque* subtype had the least number of visuals (inclusive of the N/A category) (Figure 2).
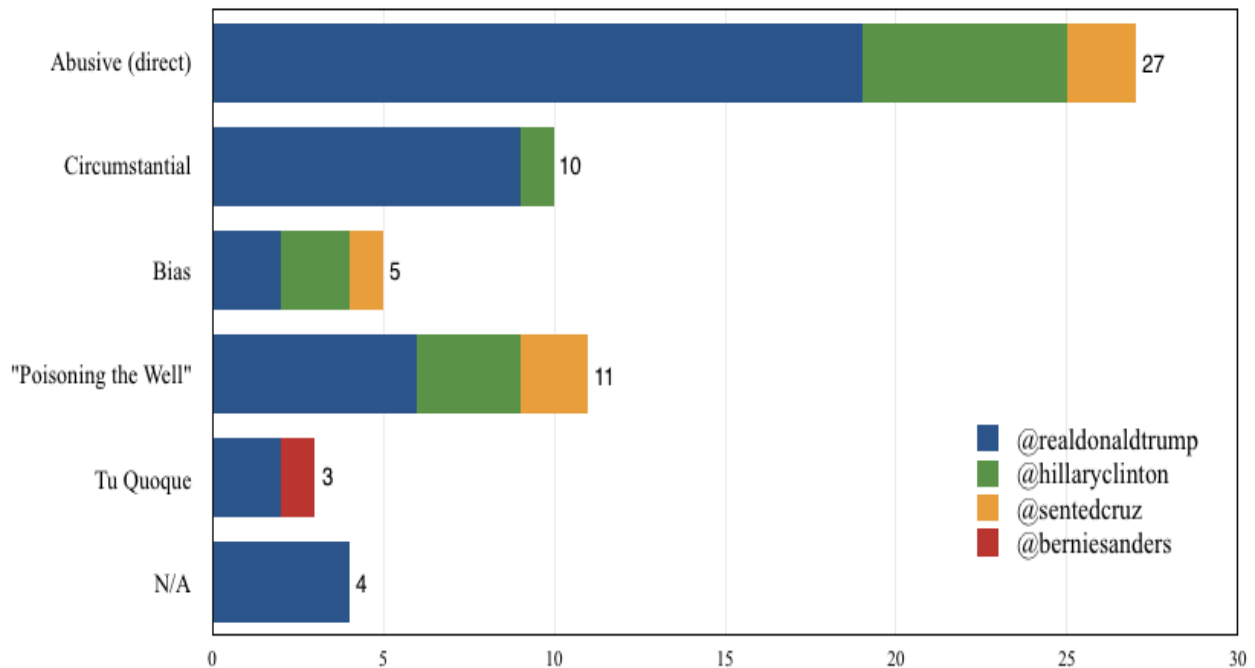

Figure 2: Findings for Subtype Coding

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[4] These visuals originally seemed like an *ad hominem* attack, however, these visuals, instead, represented a candidate's political position in comparison to their competitor.

Visual Analysis

A closer examination of example attack ads divided into Walton's five subtypes allows for a deeper understanding of the visual elements that assist in creating *ad hominem* arguments.

Abusive (Direct)

An abusive *ad hominem* focuses on the "bad" character and "ethical quality of a character, like dishonesty and hypocrisy," however, it was discovered through coding that being a "bad person" had to include more than being simply unethical or immoral (Walton, 1998). Many of the visuals targeted candidates as being generally "bad" in ways that did not attack their ethics or morality. Instead, many of the attack ads targeting their opponents as being "bad" by being "stupid," "weak" or "not serious." So, for the purposes of coding, the images for this subtype were coded on whether they represented a "bad person" as both unethical and immoral, and also, more broadly, to include specific traits that make a person not "good," like being "weak," "stupid," "untrustworthy," "open to ridicule," and "unprofessional."

One of the images from the abusive (direct) subtype is an example of the broader sense of being a "bad person" (Figure 3). This candid photograph depicts the presidential candidate Jeb Bush hugging/hanging onto his brother, former President George W. Bush. The picture was posted to Donald Trump's Instagram account on 6 June 2015 with the caption, "Do we really need another Bush in the White House-- we have had enough of them." The photo of Jeb and George W. Bush was captured as they were posing in close distance with each other, showing only their heads and shoulders during a brotherly hug. With the image being cropped to focus only on the brothers'

faces the viewers of the image have been placed in a close personal distance with the participants, which, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), can make the viewers who are non-intimates to the brothers "experience aggression or uncomfortableness" (p. 124). With the uncomfortable focus and space between the participants in the image with the viewers, and Jeb Bush's facial expression, this image is edited to make the viewer uncomfortable thus inevitably persuading the viewers to agree with the caption and its intended purpose--targeting Jeb Bush to claim he is unfit for presidency.
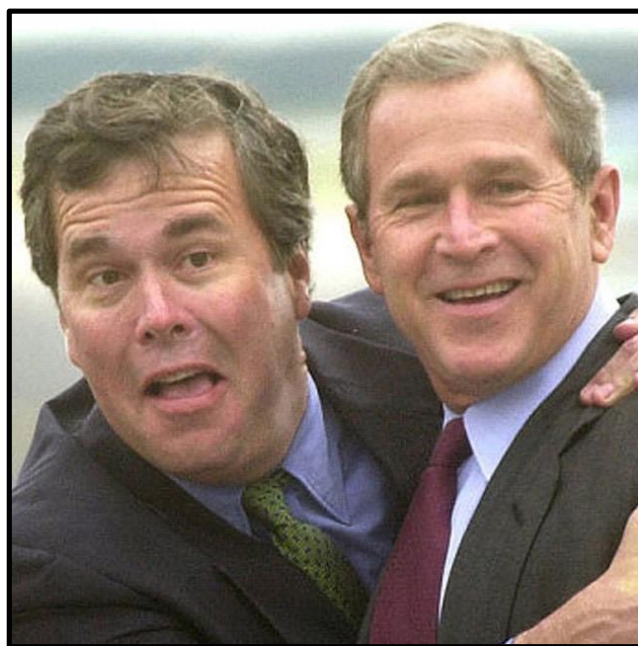
Figure 3: "Do we really need another Bush in the White House-- we have had enough of them."

In addition to the uncomfortable space between the participants and viewers, Jeb Bush's picture was captured as he was showing a humorous and silly expression while George W. Bush, on the other hand, was captured with a "normal" facial expression. The contrast between Jeb's expression and his brother's expression considered in conjunction with the caption accompanying

visual, Trump's visual argues that Jeb Bush is a buffoon who is not a serious presidential candidate. Trump's post targets the Bush brothers by stating that there have been enough Bushes in the White House, a direct attack on George W. Bush (and his father, former President, George Bush, Sr) and his term as president, by insinuating he was "bad" or "not good" at his job, which means the younger Bush brother, Jeb, would also be "bad" at his job too. Arguably, the contrast in facial expressions between Jeb Bush and George W. Bush could create the idea that Jeb is less capable than George W. Bush, whom, generally speaking, the country does not remember fondly as President (a classic example of a "guilt by association" fallacy).

This *ad hominem* targets both of the Bush brothers and is based on their family history and their own personal character. The caption of the image and Jeb Bush's facial expression creates a fallacious argument that both of the Bush brothers, particular Jeb, is stupid and unfit for presidency. This image was coded as an abusive (direct) *ad hominem* because Jeb's facial expression makes him look like a stupid or comical person, which is not good or ideal for this type of career. Trump's attack ad is arguing that being "stupid" does not make a "good person" but instead a "bad" one; this example illustrates how the term "bad person" was broadened in Walton's abusive (direct) subtype to include more components than simply being unethical.

Another example of an abusive (direct) *ad hominem* visual with a broader sense of what it means to be a "bad person" is a 14-second video posted on 22 June 2015 by Donald Trump with the caption "Who do you want negotiating for us? #MakeAmericaGreatAgain" (Figure 4).[5] The video alters from a black background with white text to a close up candid photograph of a politician until the final image of Donald Trump. In total, there are three frames that feature texts that ask,

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[5] This is an image compilation of screenshots from the video.

"Who do you want negotiating for us? All talk no politicians? Or?" There are images of various politicians that appear in between each of the text frames beginning with Hillary Clinton, and following with Jeb and George W. Bush, John Kerry, President Obama, and Donald Trump, respectively. Each individual image of the politicians, with the exception of Trump, aim to make the politician look clueless and/or awkward. The images of all the politicians, except for Trump, are candid photographs that show the politician making funny or odd facial expressions while looking slightly away from the camera lens (or the viewer's eyes). The participants in these images, once again with the exception of Trump, depict a close, personal distance to the viewer. Hillary Clinton's photograph, for example, shows only her head and part of her shoulder/arm. This close up creates an intimate relationship between the viewer and the participant, which can make the non-intimate viewers, viewers who do not know Clinton personally, uncomfortable or even aggressive.

Figure 4: "Who do you want negotiating for us? #MakeAmericaGreatAgain"

Due to the close personal distance between the participants and viewers, the facial expressions drastically affect how the image is viewed. For example, Hillary Clinton's photograph shows Clinton with her arm pointing to an unidentified audience as her mouth is held open and her eyes are open unnaturally wide. Her body language in this image makes it seem like she is yelling "Hey you!" or "You there!," over excitedly, to an audience. John Kerry's facial expression, on the other hand, does not seem as aggressive as Clinton's. Kerry's image is more passive since he is holding his hand up to his ear as if he cannot hear someone, or he is not listening or understanding what an unidentified audience is saying. Since Kerry's hand is by his ear, he is asking his audience to speak louder, clarify, and inevitably come closer, which makes the viewers even more uncomfortable. The images of Clinton, Bush, Kerry, and Obama are intended to make the viewers uncomfortable and they are designed to illustrate them as uncaring, scary, foolish, and not serious politicians.

The images of Clinton, Bush, Kerry, and Obama are contrasted to the image of Donald Trump which appears at the end of the video after the slide that reads: "Or?" The picture of Trump shows him sitting in a commanding position while pointing and staring directly at the camera with his mouth ajar as if he is yelling aggressively or demanding something from his audience. In this image, Trump is at a far social distance from the viewer, which, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), is a normal distance for business and social interaction that is more formal than personal (p. 125). Distance, like the far social distance, can be "used to signify respect for authorities of various kinds" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). In Trump's case, he is sitting behind a desk opposite of the viewer, at a professional distance, which gives Trump authority and power. In addition to the participant's distance to the viewer, Trump is staring and pointing his hand directly at the camera. This commanding position and stare "asks the viewer to relate [to the

participant] as an inferior relates to a superior" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). Trump's power-pose image represents him as being more serious and steadfast than the other politicians.

In addition to the visual elements, the music in the background of the video supports the video's overall argument that all the politicians, except for Trump, are "bad" or "not good" and unfit for presidency. The music starts as a casual instrumental tune similar to a whistle; it is carefree, upbeat, and whimsical. However, when the frame that reads "Or?" appears, the music shifts to a commanding military tone with loud, harsh drums which matches the commanding image of Trump. The music parallels the thesis of the video by transition to a serious, commanding instrumental when Trump appears on screen in contrast to the whimsical music played over the other politicians.

The contrasting music and images of the politicians not only aim to illustrate Clinton, Bush, Kerry, and Obama as "fools" but also to discredit them as negotiators and politicians while highlighting how Donald Trump is demanding, intimidating, and strong. Trump's video argues that respondents (Clinton, Bush, Kerry, Obama) are weak and disconnected from their role as politicians which, in this argument, is not good for public service. This video fits within the abusive (direct) *ad hominem* because it visually illustrates the respondents as unfit, clueless, and "bad" people for not doing their jobs "well" in contrast to the work Trump could/should do as President. Trump, in this video, is strong, professional, and dedicated unlike the other depicted politicians. Although the video is not targeting the respondents as unethically "bad" people they are considered "bad" because they are weak or clueless.

While there were a lot of visuals in the abusive (direct) subtype that focused on the broader sense of the term "bad" there were a few images that focused on a person's ethical or moral character (*ethos*). A good example of this is an *ad hominem* image posted by Hillary Clinton on 8

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December 2015 with the caption "Tell Donald Trump: Hate is not an American value" (Figure 4). The minimalist image has a white background with three words that left aligned, "Love," "trumps," and "hate," in three different colors; the word "love" is red, while the word "trumps" is dark blue and the word "hate" is light blue. With this image, Clinton is casting Trump and his rhetoric as hateful through the wordplay of "trump's" name; the image associates Trump to hatefulness and insinuates that Trump is a hateful person with hateful values. This is also supported by the color choices in the image. The word "trumps," for example, is in the darkest color, even more so than the word "hates," in order to highlight how "bad" or "worse" Trump is over hate.

Figure 5: "Tell Donald Trump: Hate is not an American value."

Both the caption and image argue that while "hate is not an American value" love is, which creates a moral or ethical dichotomy between love and hate applied to Clinton and Trump, respectively, as individuals. Since the image is the patriotic colors, red, white, and blue, Clinton's

image effectively and visually supports her argument about what is an "American value." Essentially, viewing the image in patriotic colors is meant to reinforce the validity of Clinton's argument.

Ultimately, Clinton's image attacks Trump's *ethos* by calling him a harbinger of hate which is both unAmerican (according to Clinton's caption) and an unethical characteristic, thus labeling Trump as a "bad" or unethical person. Although the image is unsupported it is not necessarily a fallacious *ad hominem*, however, it is a cliché. The idea that love conquers hate is a common cliché that people like to believe. This argument is unsupported partly because the cliché that love will overcome hate is not a claim that can have clear evidence. Overall, this image attacks Trumps moral and ethical character by claiming he is associated with hateful values and is a hateful person. Since Trump has hateful and "unAmerican" values, he is an uncaring, or misanthropic person who is not "good." Since this image was designed to attack Trump's *ethos* claiming him to be a "bad" person, this image was categorized as an abusive (direct) *ad hominem* in its traditional sense that a "bad person" is not ethical or moral.

Circumstantial

Circumstantial *ad hominems* are arguments that focus on a person's inconsistency in order to highlight how that person should not be taken seriously. Coding for circumstantial *ad hominem* was difficult because the category focuses on inconsistency and unethical/immoral qualities (like hypocrisy) which seemed related to the abusive (direct) category, however, the inconsistency component within the circumstantial *ad hominem* focuses on the actions that make a person's character (*ethos*) "bad." Walton (2000) illustrates the focus on a person's actions in his circumstantial *ad hominem* schema:

"1. person *a* advocate's argument A

2. *a* has carried out an action, or set of actions, that imply that *a* is personally committed to the opposite of A

3. Therefore, *a* is a bad person

4. Therefore, *a*'s argument A should not be accepted" (p. 105).

While circumstantial and abusive/direct *ad hominems* appear similar, they are different. The abusive (direct) *ad hominem* incorporates a broad focus on being a bad person as a whole. The circumstantial has a narrower focus by being based on "the allegation of inconsistency" where a proponent argues that the "party being attacked has committed a practical inconsistency, of a kind that can be categorized by the expression 'You do not practice what you preach'" (Walton, 2007).

Coding visual *ad hominems* based on inconsistent actions of a party was difficult because Instagram, like most social media, does not offer a lot of space for background information or context. The "here-and-now" aspect of social media allows for users to comment on current events and day-to-day happenings. So, when looking through the archived visuals on Instagram, it was sometimes difficult to know the full context that surrounded each post; this occasionally made the support for a person's inconsistent actions unclear. For example, Donald Trump posted a photo of himself and Governor Rick Perry (Figure 6) on 22 July 2015 with the caption "@GovernerPerry in my office last cycle playing nice and begging for my support and money. Hypocrite!" In the image Trump and Perry are standing at a far social distance which usually illustrates that a social or business interaction is occurring (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). The picture illustrates Trump and Perry as some sort of business acquaintance since they are standing next to one another in suits, smiling. Trump uses this image to support his caption that governor Perry was once supportive (as seen in the visual) and is, for some reason, not anymore. Initially, this visual was

almost coded as abusive (direct) because the caption uses the term "hypocrite" which is used in the definition of an abusive (direct) *ad hominem*, however, the image and the caption together focus on Governor Perry's inconsistent actions. Based on the caption, the image was taken when Governor Perry had a professional relationship with Trump, but the image was recently repurposed because this relationships seemed to have changed, although the image and caption do not illustrate why or how. Trump stated that Governor Perry was "nice" and "begged' for support and money from him which illustrates that Governor Perry and Trump were, at one point, acquaintances, to say the least. Since Trump indicated that this was done in the past and that Governor Perry is a "hypocrite," the visual illustrates that Governor Perry has acted inconsistently. Trump is accusing Perry of either not "playing nice" or wanting to associate himself with Trumps support or money any longer. Even without a clear context of the situation, Trump's image is arguing that Governor Perry's actions are inconsistent, which makes this visual a circumstantial *ad hominem*.

Figure 6: "@GovernerPerry in my office last cycle playing nice and begging for my support and money. Hypocrite!"

A second example of a circumstantial *ad hominem* is a 14-second video which was posted by Trump on 2 September 2015 (Figure 7).[6] This video targets President Barack Obama as being a bad negotiator specifically in terms of international relations and prisoners of war. Not only is this video out of context, it is fallacious because it contrasts a speech given by President Obama (without reference to the full content of the speech or context surrounding delivery) with unrelated images of prisoners of war. The black and white video shows President Obama talking to an unpictured press about international politics; he says, "A powerful display of American leadership and diplomacy shows what we can accomplish when we lead from the position of strength. Iran could move to a nuclear bomb."[7] The full message of President Obama's speech is unclear because it was taken out of context and edited to fit within the video, which is partly why this *ad hominem* is fallacious.

President Obama's speech is displayed with jump cuts of static images of prisoners of war. Each static image includes a small text box indicating who the prisoner is and how long they have been held captive. Each image shows a close-up of the prisoners' face creating an intimate distance between the participant to the viewer (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). The viewer's distance with the participants (prisoners of war in the video) aims to make the viewer feel sympathetic, however, this type of distance between the viewer and the participants can make the viewer uncomfortable since they do not have a close relationship with the prisoners of war; this would be similar to hugging a stranger. At the end of the video a clip with a black background appears with white text that says "It's time for a real negotiator" with a final image of Trump's slogan, "Make America Great Again!"

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[6] This is an image compilation of screenshots from the video.
[7] This is a verbatim transcript of President Obama's speech from this video. These ideas are just as disconnected in the video as they are in print.

Figure 7: "A terrible deal with Iran!"

The images of the prisoners of war, Robert Levinson, Jason Rezaian, Saeed Abedini, and Amir Hekmati, are used to show the disparity between what President Obama is saying and the "reality" of what is happening; essentially, the video argues that even though President Obama is negotiating with Iran, there are still prisoners of war. Visually, the video was designed to be black and white to illustrate the seriousness of Obama's inconsistent speech and the issue of prisoners of war. However, the black and white saturation, based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) modality markers, is the lowest possible modality. Since the video is black and white it does not depict authentic reality instead it illustrates a dramatized reality, which ultimately weakens the overall argument. Together, the color scheme and edited clips further supports the claim that this argument is fallacious and unclear. The video casts President Obama as a negotiator discussing the progress in international relations, however, the overlay of the prisoner images is meant to

argue that President Obama is inconsistent in his speech and as a negotiator. Trump's circumstantial *ad hominem* labeled President Obama as an untrustworthy person because of his inconsistent actions.

Bias

Unlike the circumstantial *ad hominem* that revolves around inconsistent actions and the abusive (direct) that pays particular attention to a person's character, the bias *ad hominem* focuses on "the bias an arguer is alleged to have shown in her argument" (Walton 1999; p. 68). Since there were so few *ad hominem* visuals that were categorized as biased it is difficult to make sweeping claims at how this category functions on Instagram, however, there are a few interesting examples.

Of the *ad hominems* posted to Instagram, the visual that best fits the bias subtype was posted by Hillary Clinton on 16 November 2015. The photo is captioned with "We asked Senator Claire McCaskill (@clairecmc) what a Republican president would mean for women." The photograph itself depicts Senator Claire McCaskill holding a white sign that reads "Worst news ever!" (Figure 8). Together, the photograph and caption allude that Republicans have political opinions that do not privilege women's rights, so, because of this, having a Republican president would be bad for all women. This visual does not illustrate any support for the argumentative claim it is illustrating, like most Instagram visuals, so, in order to understand this *ad hominem* argument, the viewer must have cultural and political awareness. Based on the most recent rhetoric surrounding women's rights, Republicans have been criticized for a bias against women by making political choices that do not support women's rights (e.g., equal pay, and access to birth control and medical care). This *ad hominem* visual is a quintessential example of a bias *ad hominem* because it is targeting all Republicans and their *ethos* as biased against all women by making

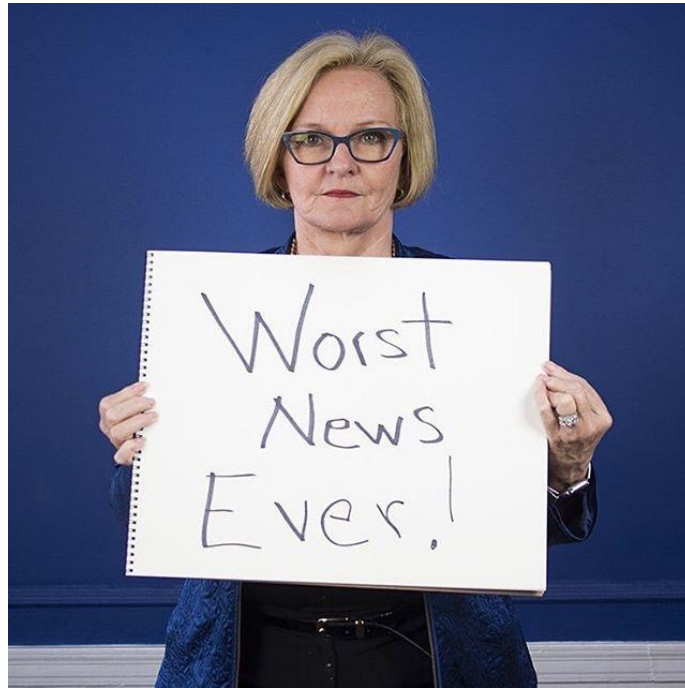choices that are privileged to their beliefs instead of focusing on the group of people the argument is about.

Figure 8: "We asked Senator Claire McCaskill (@clairecmc) what a Republican president would mean for women.”

'Poisoning the Well'

I expected to find more 'poisoning of the well' visuals simply because this study focuses on political rhetoric during what has become a very heated presidential campaign. I assumed the candidates would target one another on their rigid political views, however, most of the attack ads were directed at a person's individual character. The 'poisoning the well' *ad hominem* is a type of attack that alleges that a person is "strongly committed to some position in a rigid and dogmatic way" (Walton, 2007). This *ad hominem* targets a person in order to discredit them by claiming that they are inflexible and uncompromising in their opinions and beliefs.

Hillary Clinton's video illustrates a 'poisoning of the well' *ad hominem* by claiming that all Republicans are dogmatic in their views to reverse most of President Obama's work. In her 14-second video, posted on 13 September 2015, she illustrates how Republican's claim to be focusing on the future while also expressing how they will "repeal every rule President Barack Obama has made" (Figure 9). The caption supports the video's main argument by saying "This election is about the future-- but Republicans are trying to reverse the progress we've made under President Obama at every turn." The video begins with Marco Rubio saying "This election is about the future" and then jumps to Jeb Bush saying "Repeal every rule that Barack Obama has made." After Jeb Bush's comment, the video depicts various scenes of people and objects moving in reverse, for example, President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama walk backwards, people holding hands pull away, a cyclist moves backwards, etc. Each scene that is moving in reverse has the word "repeal" over it, and there are spliced voice clips of various Republican's saying "repeal" on repeat until the final clip appears with Hillary Clinton speaking to a crowd saying "Americans have come too far to see our progress ripped away."

The repetitive clips of people moving backwards and the repeated text "repeal" seen and heard throughout the video, Clinton attacks Republicans claiming that all Republicans are so dogmatic in their views that they want to, and will, repeal all that has been done by President Obama, and potentially, all Democrats. Unsurprisingly, this video assumes that a Democratic way of thinking is inherently better than a Republican way of thinking. This video also insinuates that Republicans hold their conservative ideology firmly enough to repeal any work done by the Obama administration. This *ad hominem* directly attacks the credibility of Republicans by saying that they are untrustworthy (and potentially dangerous) due to overly rigid and dogmatic ways of thinking.

Figure 9: "This election is about the future-- but Republicans are trying to reverse the progress we've made under President Obama at every turn."

Tu Quoque

The tu quoque *ad hominem* occurs when "one party replies to an *ad hominem* attack by attacking the attacker, using another *ad hominem* argument," which can create an endless cycle of attacks (Walton, 2007). Since the presidential candidates were using *ad hominems* to attack their opponent's personal character and political agenda, I expected there would be a lot of tu quoque arguments, however, the politicians responded to one another by making new and different claims instead of responding to specific *ad hominem* attacks. Interestingly, the most compelling tu quoque visual was created by the one candidate who claimed he would not partake in attack ads, Bernie Sanders.

On 12 September 2015, Bernie Sanders posted a visual with the caption "This campaign will be driven by issues and serious debate; not political gossip, not reckless personal attacks or

character assassination" (Figure 10). The American flag is in the forefront of the image with Sanders in the background standing behind a podium speaking to an unpictured audience. In front of Sanders is a quote that claims he does not participate in attack ads. Sanders' image is a typical political image with the use of the American colors, American flag, and the podium. The image claims that he will not participate in *ad hominem* attacks, but his image and caption are actually falling within the *ad hominem* schema. By saying that he does not "do negative ads" and that the campaign should be "driven by issues and serious debate" not "political gossip" Sanders is targeting all the presidential candidates as being trivial and unconcerned with the real issues that should be discussed during the campaign. Sanders is claiming that politicians who are creating and partaking in both personal attacks and character assassinations are unfocused and, essentially, distracting both the politicians and voters from focusing on important issues.
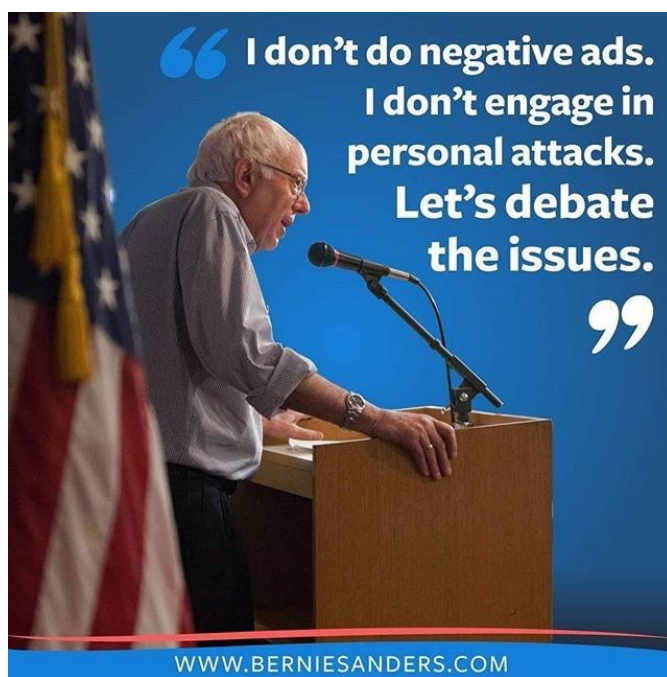

Figure 10: "This campaign will be driven by issues and serious debate; not political gossip, not reckless personal attacks or character assassination."

Bernie Sanders's tu quoque is the most effective *ad hominem* argument because, as Isocrates said "the man who wishes to persuade people will not be negligent as to the matter of character [*ethos*]...he will apply himself above all to establish a most honorable name among his fellow citizens" (Isocrates, 1982). Sanders places himself in a position of both power and grace by depicting himself as an honorable and honest man compared to his opponents. Visually, his image supports his overall argument. The design of the image and his overall argument illustrates Sander's as a professional politician who wants to debate the issues, solve problems, and do what is "right" (i.e. not falling into political gossip or squabbles); for Sanders, there are more important things to talk about. This visual was one of the most interesting findings through this analysis because Sanders claimed that he would not contribute in the "attack ad game" while actually posting a tu quoque *ad hominem*, however, Sanders sticks to this stance because this was his only *ad hominem* Instagram post. Rhetorically, this image and move by Sanders was the most rhetorically effective and cogent *ad hominem* posted by any candidate.

Implications

From these fifty attack ads, the abusive (direct) subtype had, by far, the largest number which indicates most of the visuals were created to attack another person based on their personal, moral, and ethical character (*ethos*). Instead of attacking people on policy, inconsistencies, hypocrisies, or biases, candidates are most often attacking people on who they are as people rather than attacking their political work. As a researcher, this was surprising because I expected the attack ads to be even between the five subtypes, however, that was not the case. This study reveals that candidates are more likely to attack other candidates based on moral integrity, rather than anything else. Since these attack ads were posted on Instagram it makes sense that a majority of the *ad hominems* were from the abusive direct subtype because, typically, presidential candidates in the past have used Instagram to portray themselves as "normal" people which focuses on the candidate as an individual (referred to above as the "Insta-Style" category of visuals). Like the "Insta-Style" visuals, the abusive direct subtype also focuses on the individual, however, with these type of visuals, candidates are using Instagram for moral character attacks in addition to sharing images of themselves as individuals. The abusive direct subtype is perhaps the most used subtype because it best fits the way users use this SNS platform. As the internet, SNS, and communication technologies become more visual, visual analysis is important to understand how visual elements support or challenge *ad hominem* arguments in these platforms.

This study revealed the candidate with the most attacks ads was Donald Trump, a candidate new to politics who was also the first to use attack ads on Instagram (Sanders, 2015). Trump began using Instagram in a way unprecedented to presidential candidates from previous election cycles

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and he is also the only candidate to post visuals coded into all six subtypes. Furthermore, he was the only candidate to post visuals coded into the "not applicable" subtype, which means he was also the only candidate to post visual arguments on Instagram that did not make coherent arguments. Generally, Trumps visuals focused on contrasting his image against others by privileging his own position, power, dominance, and intelligence. It is understandable that Trump used SNS differently than previous and/or current presidential candidates since he is new to politics. Trump's influence in this presidential campaign has shifted rhetorical presidency within SNS because he is not a traditional candidate for president coming from the realm of politics. Character attacks are not atypical for presidential campaigns, however, the amount and type of *ad hominem* arguments posted by Trump influenced a shift in communication styles on SNS. Since Trump is a wild card for this election his behaviors influence similar reactions from his opponents thus altering the communication style of the candidates on Instagram.

Hillary Clinton, on the other hand, posted nine total attack ads (2.53% of total posts), which were well designed, largely convincing, and usually cogent. While Clinton has been known to post oppo-opponent ads, she responded to Trump by posting direct character attacks on Instagram. Although she used *ad hominem* visuals, a majority of her ads, unlike Trump's, were cogent arguments focusing on her opponent's political position instead of only on the candidate's character. Bernie Sanders, with the least number of attack ads, was mind blowing for this study. Sanders' only attack ad was cogent, clear, and allowed him to participate in attack ads while saying he was not going to participate. Instead of attacking a specific individual, Sanders' *ad hominem* targeted the politicians as a whole for participating in *ad hominems* instead of focusing on political issues. Although Sander's *ad hominem* fit into the tu quoque subtype his visual did not fit into any of the other subtypes. In his argument he alluded that the politicians partaking in *ad hominems*

were "bad" he did not directly say they were "unfit," "not good," "inconsistent" or "hypocritical." Ultimately, Sanders achieved his rhetorical goal of being perceived as taking the "higher route" and being the "bigger person."

Visually, the most cogent *ad hominem* arguments were the ones that followed a political schema, and had the highest modality. Visuals that represented key symbols from American politics, like the American flag, the American colors, podiums, etc., were often the most cogent images that made a clear and effective *ad hominem* argument. The most cogent arguments also were designed to represent actual "reality," or in other words, have the highest modality. *Ad hominems* that depicted "truth" and/or "reality" were the images that were the most rhetorically effective in terms of the modality markers and the criteria of being cogent rather than fallacious *ad hominem*, regardless of their subtype.

This study contributes to an understanding *ad hominem* arguments, particularly visual ones. In practice, analyzing arguments based on Walton's subtypes, these demarcations bleed into each other. Based on this study, many visuals fit into more than one of the *ad hominem* subtypes. Some of the visuals were difficult to place due to the unspecific guidelines of Walton's schema. Further scholarship on this topic might create *ad hominem* subtypes that better allow for differences of visual arguments. Scholarship should address how *ad hominems* function visually, which is increasingly important as *ad hominems* become more visual via popular media. A schema that combines combines Walton's (2007) subtypes with compositional modality/analysis discussed by Rose (2012) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) would better allow for studies of visual *ad hominems*. In addition, further research could focus on rhetorical presidency in relation to the surprising numbers of visuals that were coded into the "not applicable" subtype. It was unexpected to find visual arguments in this study that were nonsensical. The goal of these visuals seemed

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clearly to attack, but the argument being made did not make sense. Researching this phenomenon seems fruitful territory for the future of rhetorical presidency and should be included within a new *ad hominem* schema for visual analysis.

In addition, it would be interesting to see how *ad hominems* on Instagram change as the election cycle progresses. Further research could also compare this study to visual *ad hominems* in other media (e.g., Snapchat, 4Chan, Reddit, etc.) to compare different frequency of Walton's five subtypes and differences in visual elements. An analysis of *ad hominems* used in situations other than politics could also be rewarding in understanding how *ad hominems* are created, received, and policed in SNS (e.g. cyber bullying).

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