

Presidential Framing of Failure: A Pentadic Rhetorical Criticism of President Donald
Trump's Rhetoric on Policy Failure with Obamacare

by
Miranda Marie Robinson

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

Honors College

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in Speech Communication
(Honors Scholar)

Presented May 25, 2018
Commencement June 2018

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Miranda Marie Robinson for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in Speech Communication presented on May 25, 2018. Title: Presidential Framing of Failure: A Pentadic Rhetorical Criticism of President Donald Trump's Rhetoric on Policy Failure with Obamacare

Abstract approved: _____

Chelsea Graham

In October, 2016, presidential candidate Donald Trump released a document titled “Contract with the American Voter.” This document promised, among many things, that within his first 100 days of his potential presidency, he would repeal and replace Obamacare. When he was unable to fulfill that promise, he employed rhetorical tactics to maintain his credibility in the face of failure. In this thesis, I argue that in order to maintain his credibility after failing to repeal and replace Obamacare by the time he said he would Trump constructs a specific worldview in which his ideas are the only true reality and he is the only savior for his audience against destructive enemies. To analyze this, I use Kenneth Burke's Pentadic criticism on two of President Trump's speeches: his Response to Republican Health Care Bill Failure delivered on March 6th, 2017 and the Signing of the Executive Order to Dismantle Obamacare from October 12th, 2017. In both of these speeches, he presents the same pentad, with the dominating terms being agent (Democrats) and purpose (stopping President Trump from making progress and positive change) which indicates that his motives are dictated by the ideological schools of idealism and mysticism.

Key Words: Donald Trump, Rhetoric, Pentad, Criticism, Obamacare, Republican, Democrat, Credibility, Failure, Motive, Ideology

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Honors Baccalaureate of Arts in Speech Communication project of Miranda Marie Robinson presented on May 25, 2018.

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University, Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

Miranda Robinson, Author

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my mentor, Dr. Chelsea Graham, for believing in this project and supporting it wholeheartedly every step of the way. Her guidance truly helped me turn this into a piece I'm incredibly proud of, and her advice and support has helped me grow as a writer, communications scholar, and person tremendously.

I would like to thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Colin Hesse and Dr. Bradley Boovy for not only assisting me in this project, but for also being such a key part of my growth as a student at Oregon State University. Their dedication to this project and their students is inspiring, and I am grateful to have received their guidance.

I would like to thank all of the students, faculty, and staff in both the Speech Communication department and the Honors College. Thank you for allowing my collegiate experience to be in such welcoming, thoughtful, and inspiring environment.

I would like to thank my friends, specifically Carl, Lauren, Rachel, Elizabeth, Jessica, and Alex, for being unselfishly supportive throughout this process. Their willingness to excitedly listen to me discuss rhetoric endlessly is what gave me the confidence and courage to keep writing.

And finally, I would like to thank my family. To my parents, Rhonda and Bryan Robinson, thank you for never allowing me to give up, and for being there to pick me up whenever I wanted to. I am so grateful for you both. To my sisters Ashley and Alyssa, thank you for always being willing to listen, and for always being my biggest cheerleaders.

Thank you all for taking part of this process and making my undergraduate experience so beneficial and unforgettable.

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Introduction and Rationale

The 2016 presidential election came during a time in which policy discussions in the United States were incredibly polarizing. In addition to that, the policy changes offered by each individual presidential candidate presented contradicting solutions to policy arguments that had been plaguing the nation during the Obama Administration. Out of the top ten voting issues in that election, health care was number four with 74% of Americans saying that it is “very important” to their voting decision in the election (Pew Research Center, 2016). Approximately 10.4 million people were set to be in Obamacare¹ policies as of June 2016, however conservative Americans feared that the access to benefits would lead to an economic crash in the near future (Luhby, 2016). Therefore, while the democratic candidates wanted to keep Obamacare in place and work to make it more accessible and beneficial, the republican candidates were focusing on finding ways to include cheaper plans with less benefits that they believed wouldn’t pose a threat to the economy (Scott, 2017).

In October of 2016, Donald Trump released a document titled “Contract with the American Voter” which laid out a 100-day plan of action for the beginning of his potential presidency (NPR, 2017). The document included portions on various hot-topic issues for the campaign, such as terrorism, job creation and security, tax relief,

¹ The use of the term “Obamacare” over the use of “Affordable Care Act,” serves as a terministic screen. Terministic screens are the terms that rhetors select to “describe the world that constitutes a kind of screen that directs attention to particular aspects of reality rather than others,” (Foss, pg. 368, 2017). “Obamacare” over “Affordable Care Act” is a terministic screen that President Trump uses in order to support the goals of his pentad, since Obamacare is a term that is inherently tied to the Obama Administration, which is then tied to the Democratic Party. The Affordable Care Act does not have that kind of connotation. In addition to that, conservative Americans and politicians broadly have used the term Obamacare to describe the Affordable Care Act. Because this is an analysis focusing on the rhetoric of Donald Trump, I will be mirroring the rhetorical choices that he uses. Therefore, the Affordable Care Act will be referred to as Obamacare for the rest of the piece.

illegal immigration, and more. Included in this document was the following plan of action:

“Repeal and Replace Obamacare: Fully repeals Obamacare and replaces it with Health Savings Accounts, the ability to purchase health insurance across state lines and lets states manage Medicaid funds. Reforms will also include cutting the red tape at the FDA: there are over 4,000 drugs awaiting approval, and we especially want to speed the approval of life-saving medications,” (Donald Trump, 2016).

Since the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2017, there have been over 70 attempts by the GOP to repeal and replace it, each attempt failing (Riotta, 2017). The ACA – which I will further be referring to as “Obamacare” – remains a huge point of contention within the American government and population, and many Democrats were upset at the idea of the full repeal and replacement of this act and the protections that it provides. Therefore, it was a central platform that Donald Trump’s campaign used to support him getting elected as president, especially since it was put as a primary point in the 100 Day Contract (Donald Trump, 2016). However, since he took office in January, 2017, Trump has failed to act on his repeal and replace promise in the time he said he would. In any situation, the act of failure by an individual diminishes credibility, and this policy failure is no different. Therefore, this critical problem is posed: how does a rhetor maintain credibility after falling short on a drastic campaign promise?

Overall, President Trump’s goal was to fulfill his “end of the deal” as laid out in his Contract with the American Voter by repealing and replacing Obamacare.

Therefore, once the repeal of Obamacare failed, he had to emphasize in his rhetoric the positives of his policy despite the legislative failure in order to garner further support from his constituents and supporters. He also had to show those groups that his previous failures were not because of his wrongdoings or mistakes, but could instead be attributed to others stepping in and actively attempting to stop him from making legislative changes. In this essay, I argue that he does this by constructing a specific worldview for his audience in order to maintain his credibility after failing to repeal and replace Obamacare by the time he said he would. Donald Trump frames his failure as a result from the Democratic Party working to stop progress by presenting a worldview that his ideas are the only true reality, and that he is the only way in which we can be saved from “Broken Washington.”

Being that the repeal and replacement of Obamacare formed a huge aspect of his administration’s efforts, this essay examines how President Trump managed to maintain his credibility after failing to repeal Obamacare through his comments on the policy changes and attempts therein. To do this, I use Kenneth Burke’s dramatistic method of criticism known as pentadic criticism. Dramatistic, or pentadic criticism is concerned with understanding a rhetor’s motives, rather than focusing strictly on audience effect. In other words, it aims to understand the rhetor’s worldview. Because I am examining President Trump’s motive rather than the effect of the rhetoric, pentadic criticism is the most applicable form of criticism since it looks into how an individual frames their rhetoric through their motives.

In this essay, I first analyze the literature in existence on presidential failures specifically, and the rhetorical processes employed in maintaining credibility after

said failures. Then I will establish and explain the critical process of pentadic criticism as another means of understanding presidential failure and recovery. I will then analyze two speeches addressing Obamacare by Donald Trump: his Response to Republican Health Care Bill Failure delivered on March 6th, 2017 and the Signing of the Executive Order to Dismantle Obamacare from October 12th, 2017. Then I will examine the dominant elements of the pentad in order to identify Trump's motives before suggesting future research and the implications of his motives through the perpetuation of his worldview on other policy topics and throughout the media.

Literature Review

Rhetoric is a principal tool when it comes to governing a nation (Ceaser, Thurow, Tulis & Bessette, 1981, pg. 159). The American population expects presidents and presidential candidates to use rhetoric frequently to educate or move a population to support an action. It is the presidential duty to not only be the head of guiding policy and government, but to use rhetorical devices in order to educate and motivate the American population (Laracey, 2009, pg. 924). This rhetorical duty is not limited to just the positives and informational aspects of the presidency. Because we are a large, bipartisan nation, not every citizen will agree with the actions that a president takes, whether that be personal or professional. Therefore, presidents have a rhetorical responsibility to address the nation in regards to all topics: successes, changes, threats, failures, and more.

The term "failure" is defined as the lack of success, therefore in this case I define President's Trump inability to repeal and replace Obamacare within the 100 days as specified in his contract a failure because he was unable to succeed in his

policy change in the time promised. Communication about failure is a “type of persuasion that functions to explain the unsuccessful experience and alleviate dissonance resulting from it,” (Zagacki, 1992, pg. 43). Generally speaking, this form of rhetoric works to console due to the failure, or to work towards compensation (Payne, 1989, pg. 42). When it comes to more publicized cases of failure, the focus is also on repairing their image (Benoit & Henson, 2008, pg. 40). Therefore, a large majority of the critique and analysis of failure tends to focus on the effect of the rhetor’s attempt to console and compensate for their said failure.

In order to compensate and console for the behavior, many rhetors choose to repair their image by utilizing the tactics of apologia as defined by William Benoit. These tactics fall under five general strategies with multiple variants under each category: denial (simple denial, and shifting the blame), evading responsibility (provocation, defeasibility, accident, and good intentions), reducing offensiveness (bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attacking of the accuser, and compensation), corrective action, and mortification (Benoit & Henson, 2008, pg. 41). Apologia has proven very useful by public individuals, including presidents and other elected officials. For example, in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina, President Bush fell under criticism after apparently having too slow of a federal response to the natural disaster. When speaking about the event, he focused on the strategies of bolstering, corrective action, and defeasibility, which were deemed as overall ineffective because of the audience and the situation (Benoit & Henson, 2008, pg. 44). When critiquing apologia there is a focus on identifying the processes by which a rhetor constructs their presentation of failure. It also has a primary focus on the effect therein rather

than the motives. While we know how much of a negative effect that President Bush's apology statement had on the audience, this form of analysis does not allow for a general understanding of the underlying motives that President Bush had for the rhetorical choices he made, therefore not leading to an understanding of his worldview. Despite the fact that President Bush used tactics in order to minimize and move on from his failures, he still admitted to them and accepted fault.

Another tactic that is used by those in positions of power is the general tactic of denial (Benoit & Henson, 2008, pg. 41). Denial is classified as the denial of facts, sentiments, objects or relationships, and can be done through upfront denial or shifting of blame (Carcasson, 1998, pg 353). Modern governance is now characterized by a reallocation of authority to other parties, whether that be upward or downward which can allow for the deflection of public blame for policy outcomes and overall governmental failures (Mortensen, 2012, pg. 439). For example, when President Herbert Hoover ran for his second term in office in 1932, he was facing the aftermath of WWI, growing tensions in Europe, the Great Depression (much of which he was facing harsh criticism for), all while facing an incredibly well-run campaign by Franklin D. Roosevelt. A primary tactic that Hoover used in order to save face when running during such a polarizing time was differentiation by blaming the depression on Europe and by attacking the Democrats (Carcasson, 1998, pg 353). Eventually, his use of differentiation about his failures as a president lost him the re-election, and didn't have as positive of an effect. This was a rhetorical tool that again proved to be ineffective in the long run due to how failures were acknowledged. However, this analysis still didn't look at the motives behind Hoover's rhetoric.

When looking specifically at President Trump's rhetoric throughout his campaign and presidency, he has used rhetoric of fear, victimhood, and absolutism in order to portray himself as the savior for the United States (Marietta, 2017). Through his rhetoric, Trump has assigned the role of villain to many different groups, including the Democratic Party, the Obama Administration and Obamacare itself for crippling the U.S. economy by robbing the people that it is meant to support (Szilagyi, 2017). Donald Trump has a history of not taking the blame for his actions by assigning the roles for his misfortunes and failures to these other parties. In this sense employs the use of differentiation quite frequently.

Overall, the literature on presidential (or policy rhetoric in general) tends to focus primarily on the effect of the speech rather than the motives of the rhetor. It is important to note understanding the effect is important when looking at rhetoric, but understanding the underlying motives behind an individual's rhetorical choices allows for a deeper insight on the goals of the rhetor and the worldview they present. Because I am looking for the underlying motives behind President Trump's rhetoric and the implications for his other remarks that seem to lack consistency, I use Kenneth Burke's pentadic criticism to analyze President Trump's rhetoric on the repeal and replacement of Obamacare in an attempt to understand the worldview from which he is making his decisions.

Method

Kenneth Burke's dramaturgic method of criticism, pentadic criticism, was introduced in 1945 (Burke, 1945). Dramatism is defined as a method of analysis and critique of terminology to show human motives (Burke, 1989). Therefore, this

specific form of criticism is intended to identify the rhetor's motive in regards to a particular situation (Foss, 2017). In order to construct and identify his motives, one must look at how the rhetor constructs their reality or worldview (McClure and Cabral, 2009). This allows me to identify how Trump's worldview enables him to deflect the blame from being unable to repeal the Act in the time he said he would. In addition, given that dramatism approaches human motives as part of an ongoing theatrical drama, this method is very fitting for a presidential administration that is often described as a "reality show" by the public (Cillizza, 2018).

The five key elements in Burke's pentad are act, agent, scene, agency, and purpose. These elements are determined subjectively by the rhetor and therefore can be used to identify the inherent motives of the rhetor (Burke, 1989). The act is the rhetor's presentation of the major action taken by the agent. The agent is the main character of the situation presented in the artifact. The agency is the means by which the agent performs the act. The scene is the background location or situation where the act takes place. Finally, the purpose is what the agent intends to accomplish through the act (Foss, pg. 370, 2017). The elements of the pentad are dependent on the rhetor and the specific situation of the speech, therefore it can shift and change. Because of this, any trends and similarities in the pentads are worth taking note of.

After identifying the five elements of Trump's pentads in his speeches, I investigated the relationships between the elements in order to determine which term is dominant. To determine the dominant term in the pentad, I paired up each term in the pentad in "ratios" in order to discover whether the first term influences the nature of the second term (Burke, 1989). This allowed me to analyze what aspect of

the pentad contributes the most to the construction of Trump's worldview: act, agent, scene, agency, or purpose. Each of the terms in the pentad have a corresponding philosophical school that provides the audience with a more in-depth view of the rhetor's motives. The dominant term and the school it matches with can help the critic understand the underlying philosophy behind the motives of a rhetor (Foss, 2017).

The final step of analyzing the pentad is determining the pentadic cartography found within the context of the speeches. The primary goal of a pentadic cartography is to determine whether "particular vocabularies of motive open or close the universe of discourse," (Anderson and Prelli, pg. 15, 2001). An open universe of discourse occurs when all perspectives on an issue are included and engaged. A closed universe of discourse occurs when some perspectives are included and validated, while others are not (Foss, 2017). Determining the pentadic cartography allows the critic to investigate the implications of this pentad and the effects that it can have on the world outside of this specific issue.

The two speeches I focused on were Donald Trump's Response to Republican Health Care Bill Failure and the Signing of the Executive Order to Dismantle Obamacare. I analyzed two of his speeches in order to determine whether or not his motives are consistent over multiple rhetorical artifacts and time.

Response to Republican Health Care Bill Failure

On March 6th, 2017, The House released a new health care bill that would repeal Obamacare entitled the American Health Care Act. Proponents of the AHCA said that the bill would allow for more choice for consumers and will lower

premiums, however critics countered that the cost of premiums would vary based on the individual's situation (specifically raising premiums for older and less healthy people) and the weakened consumer protections could hurt everyone, even those with employer coverage (Adamczyk and O'Brien, 2017). After going up for debate in the House, the Trump administration withdrew the bill on March 21st, 2017 due to having a lack of votes to pass the bill, being the first major blow to the Republican and President Trump's promise to repeal and replace Obamacare (Reilly, 2017). In this speech President Trump went over the specifics of the failure, then took questions from reporters.

This occurred forty-four days into Trump's Presidency, meaning that he was already almost halfway through his timeline in which he promised the repeal and replacement of Obamacare. Therefore, there was a fair amount of pressure on him to explain why he wasn't able to repeal the bill at this point and what he is going to do in order to repeal the bill by his self-appointed deadline. This was one of the first instances in which Trump's credibility to achieve the things he had promised was threatened, and he had to find a way to maintain his credibility to his constituents within this speech.

In this speech, I found two primary pentads: one that puts a focus on the Republican Party and their intentions and goals, and one that focuses on the Democratic Party and their efforts to stop progress. The pentad that is the most present out of the two was the one that focused more on the Democratic Party, with the *act* being destroying the American Healthcare System, *agent* as the Democrats,

agency as Obamacare, *scene* as Broken Washington, and the *purpose* as stopping President Trump from making progress and positive change.

Act. The *act* in a pentad refers to the rhetor's presentation of the action that the protagonist or antagonist (also known as the agent) takes. In President Trump's response, he states within the first minute that "I've been saying for the last year and half that the best thing we can do politically speaking is let Obamacare explode. It is exploding right now. It's – many states have big problems, almost all states have big problems" (Reilly, 2017). In this quote he is talking about why allowing Obamacare to run as the current healthcare system is causing many problems in unmentioned states, and that there is nothing to stop it from exploding and further destroying the American healthcare system. He continues to discuss how if the Democrats would have simply allowed for the bill to pass, then they would be able to have a health care bill that would actually benefit Americans. Because of this, the *act* being conducted in this pentad is the destruction of healthcare system.

Agent. The *agent* in a pentad is the group or individual that is being presented as the protagonist of the pentad by the rhetor. One thing that is very apparent in this speech is that President Trump consistently directs the blame towards the Democrats in congress for the inability to pass the Republican Healthcare Bill, therefore showing the Democrats as the *agent* of the speech because they are the group that is causing the *act* to occur. In a portion of his speech he states "With no Democrat support we couldn't quite get there, we were just a very small number of votes short in terms of getting our bill passed" (Reilly, 2017). In this example, he directly blames the Democrats in congress for not giving him support to pass his bill, therefore causing

the *act*. Additionally, he calls out dominant Democrats in congress, Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer for being the “owners” of Obamacare that is ruining the healthcare system. That being said, towards the end of the speech during the questioning portion, he has a call to action to the Democrats in which he says “I know some Democrats, and they’re good people, I honestly believe the Democrats will come to us and say, look, let’s get together and get a great health care bill or plan that’s really great for the people of our country” (Reilly, 2017). So not only does he shift the blame to the Democrats, but he calls them out and says what he wants them to do in order to allow for change. Therefore, the *agent* in this pentad are Democrats because he makes it their responsibility.

Agency. The *agency* is the means by which the agent performs the act as presented by the rhetor. Because President Trump says that the “best thing we can do politically speaking is let Obamacare explode,” Obamacare is the *agency* of this pentad. Throughout the majority of the speech, he discusses the negative effects of Obamacare, which was the form of “Democrat health care” that is allowing for the destruction of the healthcare system (Reilly, 2017). He also says that “Obamacare was rammed down everyone’s throat, 100 percent Democrat” (Reilly, 2017). Therefore, he is directly calling out Obamacare as being the *agency* by which the Democrats were working to destroy the American Healthcare system.

Scene. The *scene* is the location or situation in which the pentad takes place according to the rhetor. I identified the *scene* of this pentad to be “Broken Washington,” which has been a common theme throughout Trump’s campaign and presidency. Considering that our governmental system is intended to be a democracy

of various ideas coming together in order to determine the best course of action for the American people, the isolation of parties lends to a polarized bipartisanship that directly goes against the ideals of our democracy. This then lends to the idea that our government is “broken.” President Trump perpetuates this by shifting the blame to one specific party, saying that right now congress is divided by Republican and Democrat, and that is why there is no progress being made and our government is not functioning the way it should. Because of this, he builds the *scene* of “Broken Washington,” which he has brought up multiple times before.

Purpose. Finally, the purpose of the Democrats in this pentad is to stop progress and positive change by Trump and his agenda in regards to healthcare. While he doesn’t explicitly say this, he frames it by stating that Obamacare is causing “problems,” and that the Democrats’ unwillingness to be “civilized” is keeping the government from creating a “great health care bill for the people of this country,” (Reilly, 2017). By stating that Obamacare and the Democrats are causing these problems and are unwilling to make change, he insinuates that they are purposely trying to stop progress and positive change in order to maintain their agenda over President Trump’s and the Republican Party.

Ratios. In order to determine the dominant term of the pentad, I paired up each aspect in order to determine which has more of an effect on the others. When going through the various ratios, I determined that the agent and the purpose are equally the most dominant terms of this particular pentad. The agent being the Democrats and the purpose being to stop progress and positive change equally affect

the other terms as much as the other, and while other terms have an effect on others, none of them have as much of an effect as agent and purpose.

Signing of Executive Order Analysis

Just over six months after the failure of AHCA, on October 12th, 2017, President Trump signed an executive order that began the process of dismantling Obamacare. The executive order allowed for the increase of health care competition and choice, and would remove protections provided with Obamacare for individuals with pre-existing conditions. It would also allow for governmentally-associated health plans to sell plans with lower premiums but with fewer benefits (Liptak and Luhby, 2017). This executive order went into effect as of April (affecting the 2019 insurance year), and as of this writing Congress has yet to vote on an official repeal of Obamacare. This executive order is simply seen as a starting point for these efforts. Therefore, in this speech he had to show his constituents, supporters, and opponents that his previous failures were not because of his wrongdoings or mistakes, and that this executive order was the right move for the country. I argue that he does this by constructing a specific worldview where he has power over the Democrats that are working hard to stop progress for his audience in order to maintain his credibility after initially failing to repeal and replace Obamacare

Due to the implications of the Executive Order and the continuous polarizing effect it has on the political system and the fact that he had failed to fulfill his promise regarding Obamacare to that point, President Trump had a lot riding on how he presented his decision in a speech given that day. President Trump not only had to go over the specific changes this order would lead to and why it would benefit

Americans, but also bolster his credibility and support from the GOP and the American people.

In this speech, I identified two primary pentads. The one that I will be focusing on in this essay is as follows: the act is breaking the American healthcare system, the agent is Democrats, the agency is Obamacare, the scene is broken Washington, and the purpose is to stop progress and the Trump agenda in the United States. This proved incredibly similar to the pentad found within the first speech analyzed. In that speech, Trump was focusing on differentiation in order to maintain his credibility, therefore he made the agent the Democrats in order to shift the blame on to someone else. In this speech however, he was making moves to fulfill the promises – therefore beginning to have some policy success – yet he still felt the need to focus the pentad in the speech on the Democrats further attempting to stop him.

Act. In President Trump’s speech, he focuses on the idea that the healthcare system needs to be fixed, hence the need for the executive order. While he does discuss the action of him repealing Obamacare as an *act*, he also talks about the Democrats and Obamacare destroying healthcare in America. At one point, he states “But seven years ago, congressional democrats broke the American healthcare system by forcing the Obamacare nightmare onto the American people,” (Office of the Press Secretary, 2017). Because of this, the *act* in this pentad is breaking the American healthcare system, as President Trump says in his speech.

Agent. As can be taken from the quote used in the paragraph before, the *agent* in that sentence itself is the Democrats. In this pentad, the Democrats are the one that are destroying the healthcare system. Further on in the speech, he says “Every

congressional Democrat has blocked the effort to save Americans from Obamacare,” (Office of the Press Secretary, 2017). While he does also mention the few Republicans that have blocked the repeal of Obamacare, he only brings them up as contributing to the act that one time. The Democrats causing this destruction in the healthcare system is brought up multiple times within the speech, therefore they are the main *agent* in this specific pentad.

Agency. The ways in which the Democrats managed to destroy healthcare in America is through the implementation of Obamacare as a federal healthcare system in the United States. He mentioned Obamacare as the main *agency* of these issues not just in the quotes mentioned previously, but multiple other times throughout the speech. He even brings up an example of how the Democrats not repealing Obamacare has led to the inability for one family to afford health care for their families by saying “after Obamacare, they were unable to afford their association plan. So they had a great thing, their employees were happy, and then it ended like so many more” (Office of the Press Secretary, 2017). He also says that “the cost of Obamacare has been so outrageous it is absolutely destroying everything in its wake,” (Office of the Press Secretary, 2017). Because of the constant messaging of Obamacare being the cause of the problems in the United States, it serves as the *agency* in this pentad.

Scene. I identified the *scene* in this speech as “broken Washington.” President Trump had referred to Washington being “broken” throughout his presidential campaign. Multiple times throughout his speech, he discusses that he is going to fix the certain state of things in our country, continuing to lend to the broken

Washington *scene*. He also develops two very different sides of this *scene* by splitting up himself and his administration versus the Democrats. This again assists with painting the picture of having a broken Washington because it shows the bipartisanship that has been dividing our government for a long time, which historically has led to the inability to pass bills and make change for our country and is exactly the issue keeping Congress from passing this repeal. It also allows him to deflect the blame of his failures to the system and those perpetuating it. This is presented in the way that it continues to assist in constructing the worldview in which President Trump is the only answer to the broken system that he is currently leading.

Purpose. The final element of the pentad is the *purpose*. In this speech, the *purpose* of the Democrats that President Trump portrays is to stop progress or the Trump agenda in the United States. He uses the verbiage of “blocking efforts” when it comes to providing the American people with “Obamacare relief,” insinuating that they are purposefully attempting to stop Trump from achieving his goals of repeal and replace (Office of the Press Secretary, 2017). He doesn’t once mention the potential positive policy reasons as to why the Democrats may want to keep Obamacare as an active healthcare bill. According to his pentad, the only reason why the Democrats are continuously blocking his efforts is to stop Trump and to maintain this policy from the Obama Administration. The omission of other alternative purposes for why the Democrats may be committing this act points to the fact that the primary *purpose* of this pentad is to stop progress and Trump’s agenda in the United States.

Ratios. To determine the dominant term in the pentad, I paired up each term with one another to see which one has the largest effect on every other element of the pentad. When looking closely at the relationships between the elements of the pentad, I would argue that there are two dominant terms in this pentad: *agent* as the Democrats and *purpose* to stop progress in the United States. Each of the other terms have an impact on some of the other aspects of the pentad, however agent and purpose have a dominant relationship over every other element.

Dominant Terms and Philosophical Schools

President Trump presenting the same pentad in two of his speeches illustrates the fact that this isn't an isolated incident among his rhetoric, and it also shows that he presents consistent motives over a period of time. Additionally, he presents the same dominant terms in each of the pentads, with the agent and the purpose having the most effect on the other.

The agent being Democrats has a huge impact on every element of each pentad. The agent controls the act in the two pentads; if it weren't for the Democrats and their vision for the United States, they wouldn't have been destroying the American healthcare system. Had the agent been different, the act that took place would not look the way that it did in Trump's pentads. It also has a huge impact on the agency for a similar reason. The agency of Obamacare was constructed by the Democrats, and may not have ever been able to go into effect had it not been for the Democrats pushing that bill into law. Trump also insinuates the idea of broken Washington (the scene) being the state that we are in is because the Democrats are leading this division in order to carry out the act and have been doing so while in

power for the last eight years. Finally, the agent has a huge effect on the purpose because if the agent were different (as republicans, Trump himself, etc.) the purpose would shift and wouldn't be focused on stopping progress brought through the Trump agenda. Because the agent being Democrats requires every other aspect of the pentad to be a certain way, it is a dominant term in this pentad.

That being said, not every pentad has a clear dominant term that can lend to the motivation of the rhetor. The pentads found in Trump's rhetoric are an example of that. He doesn't have one clear motive, but more shows a mixture of multiple motives within his rhetoric. When examining these relationships, I found that the purpose has an equal effect on every aspect of the pentads as well. The purpose of stopping progress in the United States is what leads to the breaking of the American healthcare system and is the driving reason as to why America is broken. It also has an effect on the agent. In Trump's pentads, the Democrat's sole goal is to stop his efforts. Part of the reason as to why they are Democrats is because they are wanting to stop the Trump agenda. He doesn't connect the Democrats to any other initiatives or characteristics than blocking progress. The purpose has an impact on the agent, Obamacare, because it is what led to the development and implementation of that healthcare bill. Finally, the purpose has a dominating effect on the scene as well. The act of stopping progress in the United States, or hurting the Trump agenda, requires this state of the broken, divided Washington. Because of this, purpose is a second dominant term from this pentad.

While it is more of a commonality for there to be a single dominant term in a pentad, it is not unheard of to have two. It also lends to some interesting insight in

regards to the motives behind President Trump. The idea of finding the dominant term is to assist in uncovering the motives of the rhetor using the dominant term's corresponding philosophical school. If the agent is the dominant term, Burke suggests that the dominant philosophy would be idealism. This is the system that "views the mind or spirit as each person experiences it as fundamentally real, with the universe seen as mind or spirit in its essence," (Foss, pg. 377, 2017). The central tenant of idealism is that ideas are the only true reality (Cohen, 1999). The philosophical school behind the second dominant term, purpose, is mysticism. In mysticism, the element of unity is the focus to the point that the idea of individuality disappears. The identification one has is so closely unified with some sort of universal purpose (Foss, pg. 377, 2017).

This brings up an interesting point in regards to Trump's overall motive behind these particular speeches. When there are two dominant terms in a pentad, it can hint at the potential of the rhetor's motives being spread out among the two terms, or for it to be an intertwining of the two terms. I argue that his motives are found within an intertwining of the two terms and corresponding philosophical schools. On one hand, you have the school of idealism ruling the motives here, suggesting that President Trump's motives are found within his ideas and his belief that his ideas are the only true reality. When pairing that with the philosophical school of mysticism, it suggests that his motives are to encourage those to unify behind his ideas. Therefore, the motivating force behind President Trump's rhetoric is that he believes that his ideas are the only reality and that we all must unite behind them, and that

individuality or straying from his beliefs does not fit in with what is now the American belief system as presented by him.

As evidenced by his motives behind these specific speeches, he frames the Democrats and their desire to limit him from reaching his goals as the primary villainous source for his failure to repeal and replace Obamacare. According to him, they are the reason for the lack of progress and success in the United States, allowing him to play himself off as a savior for the American people even though he has yet to come through on a majority of the promises that got him elected into the position in the first place. This helps him maintain a worldview in which he is the only answer for the American people to “make America great again.”

The issue with this worldview, however, is that it doesn't allow for an open discourse. As I mentioned in my analysis, he doesn't once offer up any other view on the Democrats or why they may want to continue to have Obamacare in effect outside of his negative portrayals. He doesn't discuss the positive reasons why Obamacare was implemented in the first place. While he does a thorough job of discussing his version of reality through this speech, there is no other perspective included in the discourse. Because of the ideological backing of this, it seems as though he doesn't see any other perspective outside of his own as being valid. Considering how polarizing the issue of health care is currently in the United States, there most definitely are further perspectives that should be explored and acknowledged.

Implications and Conclusion

While a couple speeches on a single healthcare bill may not be the most high-profile and imminent artifact to be studied, it is important to understand how he

constructs his worldview because you can see its exemplification across President Trump's rhetoric and beyond. Despite the fact that there is significant evidence that President Trump blames Democrats for a majority of policy failures, he does not blame them for all other failures that he has had in his presidency. It is important to note that this analysis is focusing primarily on how he addresses policy failures and nothing outside of it. Throughout his campaign the idea that he will "Make America Great Again," as well as his villainizing those who oppose him, continues to perpetuate these idealistic and mystical philosophies. While it is difficult to say if this worldview will effect the population and his presidency long-term, it can most definitely have an effect on his ability to maintain his credibility despite these policy failures. In addition to that, this philosophy is seen perpetuated by him in other issues via social media and by others through various news outlets.

There is a strong culture of "us vs. them" when it comes to political rhetoric, especially due to the competitiveness found in political campaigns. Therefore, villainizing another party isn't unheard of. Because campaigns aren't simply confined to the few weeks before a campaign, the competitive rhetoric is constantly integrated into political discussion, despite the fact that once an individual takes office, the goal is for cooperation and teamwork. In addition to that, media coverage both through news outlets and social media are constantly focused on the election cycle rather than the bi-partisan work that is going on in congress, and that is the information the American public has the easiest access to. Because of this, the job of the president is to focus on unity in their rhetoric to combat this constant competitive feel. That is why the president does an inaugural address, to reunite the nation after a

polarizing election. There is always a divide, but it is seen as part of a president's job not to highlight that. When it comes to President Trump, this is where he differs from previous presidents. He specifically highlights this divide, even though he has already won the competition to take over as president. He contributes to this "us vs. them" mentality by continuously singling out a specific group as a villain, and he does this over multiple channels and topics.

President Trump is known to be relatively uncensored when it comes to his Tweeting, which is a relatively new communication field that allows someone who is more high profile, such as the president, to reach a much larger audience quicker. Through Twitter, President Trump has been perpetuating the ideologies about Obamacare in the same way that was illustrated through his speeches. On July 25th, 2017, President Trump tweeted "ObamaCare is torturing the American People. The Democrats have fooled the people long enough. Repeal or Repeal & Replace! I have pen in hand," (Donald Trump, 2017). In this tweet, Trump coins Obamacare as "torturing" the American people, which is exactly what he shows through the rhetoric analyzed above. In addition, he calls out the Democrats for tricking the American people, shifting the blame to them like he does in his rhetoric. He then positions himself as the savior of the Democrats causing this problem, which fits in with his philosophical schools. When looking through Donald Trump's Twitter feed, there are many tweets that look exactly like this, with Trump addressing a problem, shifting the blame to the Democrats, and then saying that he is taking action.

This phenomena isn't limited to just the topic of health care, it perpetuates throughout almost all political topics. For example, during the government shutdown

of January 2018, Donald Trump tweeted “This is the One Year Anniversary of my Presidency and the Democrats wanted to give me a nice present.

#DemocratShutdown,” (Trump, 2018). Here he directly blames Democrats for the shutdown of the government, even including a hashtag that connects the shutdown to that party only. After the State of the Union address in February 2018 – which was largely focusing on the theme of unity – Donald Trump tweeted "Heading to beautiful West Virginia to be with great members of the Republican Party. Will be planning Infrastructure and discussing Immigration and DACA, not easy when we have no support from the Democrats," (Trump, 2018). Again, in this tweet he talks about making progress and fulfilling plans, and then shows that it will be hard because the Democrats are stopping him.

President Trump has perpetuated this type of pentad through a lot of his rhetoric, however it is also found in the media from other outlets, specifically the network news group *Fox News*. There have been many articles posted by journalists that mirror this same pentad, blaming the Democrats for stopping all kinds of progress in the country. On December 21st, 2017, Fox posted a news article entitled “Tax bill strikes major blow to ObamaCare: Will it survive?” that contains nearly an identical pentad to the ones examined in this analysis (Singman, 2017). This same phenomenon is found through many articles published by conservative news sites, which shows the growth of these motives or worldviews outside of just President Trump’s rhetoric. This illustrates the fact that his motives are working. His motives in his speech showed that he carries the worldview in which his ideas are the only reality, and that we must all agree. The fact that this worldview is being perpetuated

throughout media shows that there is a huge effect from his motives themselves because others are agreeing with the fact that his ideas are reality, and they are trying to spread that ideology to the public.

Understanding the motives behind how someone constructs a worldview, especially if it is someone who holds as much political and social power as President Trump, is incredibly important when it comes to evaluating the effects that his rhetoric, policy changes, and movements may have based on consistent motives over multiple artifacts. If a main motive behind a majority of his rhetoric has these characteristics, we can understand primary motives for most of his decisions in the role of the most powerful man in the United States. To further determine if this is an isolated incident, it is important for future researchers to look if these motivational trend can be found in President Trump's rhetoric on other topics outside of healthcare. Additionally, looking at the correlations of his motives and their perpetuation in media to see the effect that his rhetoric has on individuals can lead to a much better understanding of the importance of understanding motives in presidential rhetoric.

President Trump's rhetoric focuses on uniting the American people behind his ideologies, and he maintains this by framing the Democrats as villains that are solely focused on stopping progress. In a time where our politics is greatly polarized, this poses a problem because it reinforces a bipartisan divide in our government. Because President Trump is using this ideology through his rhetoric and the media, this is perpetuated on an incredibly wide scale that is easily accessed. His worldview as presented through his rhetoric also doesn't allow for other ideologies, which is

troublesome because a primary aspect of democracy is the allowance of various ideologies to be showcased and determined upon by the voting population. This is not to say that President Trump is openly attempting to silence free thought, but it is still important to note that according to this analysis, he is motivated by the fact that he believes his ideas are the only true reality and that we all must agree as an American population, while at the same time he actively divides the population. When isolated this doesn't present much of an issue, but when it becomes a trend that is then perpetuated outside of his rhetoric, it presents a problem to a nation that prides itself on democracy and freedom of speech and thought.

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