

**(Re)defining the Political Opposition: A Corpus-Based  
Critical Discourse Analysis of Urban Dictionary  
Definitions of Political Identities**

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A thesis submitted to  
Auckland University of Technology  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of English and New Media Studies

August 2019

School of Language and Culture

## Abstract

Political polarisation is increasing in America, with politically motivated acts of terrorism and hate crimes also on the rise. At the root of these problems is the internet, in particular, the unmoderated, anonymous sites where people with similar views can cluster together and categorise those with opposing views, typically ascribing them vulgar and negative attributes. An example of such a site is Urban Dictionary, where certain individual and groups are defined and negatively stereotyped. In order to examine the contribution of such unmoderated online platforms to polarisation, this study employs methods of corpus analysis and critical discourse to analyse Urban Dictionary definitions of the political identities of Democrats and Republicans. The analysis focused specifically on the metaphors and membership categorisations used to construct Democrat and Republican identities, some of which reproduced the ideological values, of the author's political affiliation and their beliefs about the party they were defining. Many of the characteristics attributed to the party identities, however, were negative attributes universally found in discourses of Othering. This analysis concluded that Urban Dictionary both reflects and affects political polarisation in America, as the platform's lack of interactive features prevents the discussion and the consideration of alternate perspectives that are needed to develop a healthy and informed opinion of America's current political landscape.

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## Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date: 09/08/2019

## Acknowledgements

I would like to say an enormous thank you to the people who have enabled me to complete this thesis. Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Darryl Hocking, for providing direction and encouragement throughout the research process. Secondly, I would like to thank Dr. Tof Ecklund and Dr. Philippa Smith for teaching the courses that laid the foundation on which I built this thesis, and for guiding me in the early stages of developing my thesis proposal. Thirdly, I would like to thank my employer Auckland Libraries and my Team Leader Erin Beer for providing me with the necessary leave to get this thesis completed on time. I am hugely thankful for that. Lastly, I would like to thank my friends and family for supporting and encouraging me through this process, especially my parents who have made me countless cups of tea over the last twelve months – all of which were greatly appreciated.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Political polarisation

Political polarisation in the United States of America has been steadily increasing over recent years, primarily due to people clustering - geographically, digitally and socially - with those who share their worldviews (Iyengar, Sood & Lelkes, 2012; Motyl, 2016; Mutz, 2006). These people are also less likely to discuss their views with those whose beliefs differ from their own (Mutz, 2006). According to Campbell (2016), political polarisation has very real and frightening consequences. It induces conflict - as evident in recent acts of terrorism in America (Bush, 2019) - and creates deep divisions between different groups of people (Baldassarri & Galman, 2007).

This polarisation was undoubtedly exacerbated by the presidential election in 2016 (Bump, 2019; Jacobson, 2016) with Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton as the two least-liked presidential candidates in American history (Yglesias, 2017). Trump's "divisive and disruptive candidacy" (Jacobson, 2016, p. 227) led to his unexpected election as president (Flegenheimer & Barbaro, 2016). This exacerbated polarisation was illustrated by the protests that took place around the globe in the days following the election (Bromwich, 2016; Hanna & Ansari, 2017).

## **1.2 Donald Trump and the language of categorisation**

In the years since his election, Trump has continued to maintain his status as the most polarising president ever elected in the United States (Bump, 2019). One cause of this polarisation is his consistently negative categorisations of people of colour, often expressed through his personal but very public Twitter account, @realDonaldTrump. In his tweets, Trump has categorised Mexicans as “Gang Members”, “very bad people” and invaders of America (Rivas, 2019). He has also negatively categorised congresswomen of colour through his tweets suggesting that they return to their countries of origin, even though two of the three he addressed were born in America, and all three of these congresswomen were U.S. citizens (Cole, 2019). The use of such language has inevitably contributed to the political polarisation in America (Jensen et al., 2012) and has been seen as the motivation behind a number of horrific acts (Frazin, 2019; Aratani, 2019). The white nationalist manifesto posted by the El Paso shooter, who killed 22 people in August 2019, contained references to people of colour that bore many similarities to the language that Trump had used to describe people of colour in his tweets, such as accusing Mexicans of “invading” the country (Aratani, 2019).

## **1.3 The internet and political polarisation**

The internet is also clearly contributing to the political polarisation of liberals and conservatives within America. Following Trump’s election, former president Barack Obama criticised social media for allowing people to “paint the opposition in wildly negative light without any rebuttal” (as cited in Boxell, Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2017). Furthermore, Clinton

attributed her election loss to Facebook and Russian intervention (Boxell et al. 2017), while recent reports have accused Russian intelligence officials of “exploiting existing political and racial divisions in American society” (Ward, 2018, para. 2) through social media. While some have argued that this polarisation is caused by the “echo chambers” that social media creates, more recent arguments state that online exposure to the other party’s views actually increases the polarisation (Bail et al., 2018). Regardless, both arguments point to social media and the internet as a cause for the increasing polarisation. Furthermore, in a recent study of the Twitter activity of Democrats and Republicans in response to mass shootings, Demszky et al. (2019) found that Republicans and Democrats talked about mass shootings in polarising ways. Democrats, for example, talk about the victims and put out calls to action while Republicans talk about the shooter and the events that occurred.

Unmoderated sites such as 8chan, a radical online platform that is linked to many of the mass shootings around the world, have been under fire recently for their dissemination of hate speech and polarising discourses (Broderick, 2019; Kates, 2019; van Hagen, 2019). Unmoderated anonymous discussion boards like 8chan allow people to describe others in vulgar and negative ways that reflect their own political views, with no accountability or consequence. The American public is calling for sites like 8chan to be shut down, and infrastructure providers are responding to these calls (Kates, 2019). Although as shown by 8chan and its predecessor, 4chan, when one opportunity to spread hate comes to an end, another will arise (van Hagen, 2019).

## 1.4 Urban Dictionary

Urban Dictionary is another unmoderated, anonymous online platform that may also contribute to the increase in political polarisation. Urban Dictionary is a crowdsourced online dictionary that was created by freshman computer science student Aaron Peckham in 1999 as a parody of dictionary.com (Heaton, 2010). As an “online democratic dictionary shaped by the masses” (R. Smith, 2011), it was created to challenge the extant authority of dictionaries, and has become an amusing and informative online reference source whose definitions provide either an explanation of the meaning and origin of slang language or an uncensored commentary on anything from a person or type of person to an inanimate object.

Urban Dictionary has been used as an authoritative dictionary of slang language in legal cases due to its fluidity. This is because the slang definitions in traditional dictionaries can go out of date extremely quickly, given the time traditional dictionaries usually take to publish (Kaufman, 2013). Urban Dictionary is also commonly used in news articles or blog posts in order to define contemporary slang terms that may be relevant to the story (Baldeosingh, 2019; R. Smith, 2011; Vega, 2019). It has not always been an entirely constructive addition to the internet, however. Urban Dictionary’s controversial definitions have been in the news in recent years, both in the United States and in other countries. Sexist and racist definitions have been addressed by online news providers (Hanna, 2018; Lawson, 2017) and when Aaron Peckham was questioned about the occurrence of offensive definitions on Urban Dictionary, he riposted that they were inevitable and could not be censored given the nature of the website (Heaton, 2010).

Using the definitions in Urban Dictionary as data, and given the role that the categorisation and description of others plays in reproducing harmful discourses, this research seeks to examine how political communities describe members of other political communities in an unmoderated, anonymous online setting. Given that the majority of political entries on Urban Dictionary define Republicans and Democrats - and as political polarisation is a significant driver of this study - only definitions of these two polarising party identities will be analysed, no moderate or third party identities.

## **1.5 Organisation of chapters**

The remaining 6 chapters are organised as follows. Chapter 2 provides a review of the available literature on the topics of crowdsourced reference websites, dictionaries and political discourse. The focus on crowdsourced reference websites covers the few studies involving Urban Dictionary, as well as studies related to Wiktionary and Wikipedia, including analyses of the quality of the crowdsourced content and of the crowdsourcing process. The focus on dictionaries reviews studies that discuss dictionary ideology as well as studies that investigate the nature of political dictionaries and the political content found in standard dictionaries. Lastly, the focus on political discourse reviews studies that focus on online political discourse, discourses of political supporters, metaphor in political discourse and political identity construction.

Chapter 3 outlines the two research questions for this study before providing a broad overview of its methodology, corpus-based critical discourse analysis. Then it describes the

data collected from Urban Dictionary and the process of collecting and preparing the data for analysis. Thirdly, it identifies the two tools that were used for this study, Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) and AntConc. In doing so the chapter discusses the functions of these corpus software tools and how each is used in this study to supplement the other. Chapter 3 also outlines the process in which the tools and the methods of critical discourse analysis were selected in order to answer the research questions.

Chapters 4 to 6 identify and discuss the results of the analysis. Chapter 4 focuses on words found in the Urban Dictionary corpus that refer to sex and sexuality. Chapter 5 focuses on words found that reference physical and mental health, and Chapter 6 focuses on words related to ingestion, digestion and excretion. Each of these chapters includes a frequency analysis of the quantitative results found using LIWC and AntConc as well as metaphor and membership categorisation analyses of extracts that were identified using the LIWC and AntConc tools. Lastly, Chapter 7 discusses the key observations of this study and their implications. It then identifies the study's overall contributions to knowledge before critically evaluating the research process and discussing its limitations. The chapter concludes by identifying opportunities for future research, before discussing final reflections.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.0 Introduction**

The following literature review focuses on the three main fields relevant to this study: crowdsourced reference websites, dictionaries and political discourse. As political discourse is a popular field of academic study, this literature review aims to simply give a taste of the literature from that field that is most relevant to this thesis.

### **2.1 Crowdsourced reference websites**

#### **2.1.1 Urban dictionary**

Crowdsourcing is “a type of participatory online activity in which an individual [...] or company proposes to a group of individuals of varying knowledge, heterogeneity, and number, via flexible open call, the voluntary undertaking of a task” (Brabham, 2013, pp. 2-3). Crowdsourced reference websites are a genre of new media consisting mainly of online dictionaries, encyclopedias and bibliographies whose entries have been written, edited and/or moderated by the general public. Urban Dictionary is a crowdsourced reference website. Like Wikipedia, those contributing to the crowdsourced websites involved hold a significant amount of power - a bottom-up dynamic - as the websites’ founders and staff have little influence on the content on these websites (Brabham, 2013). Due to the small quantity of literature available on Urban Dictionary, I have also included literature in this chapter about other crowdsourced reference websites, such as Wiktionary (a crowdsourced online

dictionary, like Urban Dictionary) and its sister site Wikipedia (a crowdsourced online encyclopedia).

Nguyen, McGillivray and Yasseri (2018) performed a large scale analysis of Urban Dictionary's two million entries using a combination of quantitative, qualitative, computational and manual methods. They were interested in finding out the features of Urban Dictionary definitions, particularly in terms of growth, coverage and types of content. They were also interested in evaluating its suitability for language innovation research. Nguyen et al. found that most words had only one definition, and words with multiple definitions were proportionately fewer. Similarly, they found that most users only posted one definition each. Nguyen et al. then compared Urban Dictionary definitions with Wiktionary definitions and found that a very small percentage of words being defined could be found in both online dictionaries. Even after removing words with only one definition (the majority of Urban Dictionary definitions), they still found that the majority of the words being defined in Urban Dictionary were not defined in Wiktionary. Lastly, they facilitated a crowdsourced content analysis of Urban Dictionary definitions. Contributors to this content analysis were required to assign individual definitions the following values: 'proper noun' or 'not a proper noun', 'meaning', 'opinion' or 'both', 'familiar' or 'unfamiliar' and lastly 'formal', 'informal' or 'unclear'. They then had the contributors give a value of offensiveness for each definition on a scale of one to three. Nguyen et al. found that the majority of definitions were opinion definitions, informal, unfamiliar and/or proper nouns. There was also a high presence of offensive definitions. They concluded that Urban Dictionary enables quick and easy recording of new words and meanings, but that both helps and hinders its usefulness as a resource to study language innovation as "spam and vandalism" can easily occur.

R. Smith (2011) looked at Urban Dictionary from a linguistic anthropological perspective in response to an occurrence at an American high school in 2009 where, due to its overuse by students, “saying or displaying the word *meep* would entail suspension” (p. 43). Some students found it ironic as they did not consider *meep* to be a word, but instead a sound. News reporters, on the other hand, used Urban Dictionary definitions of the word *meep*, of which there were many, in order to explain the students’ use of *meep*. R. Smith, inspired by this occurrence, aimed to answer two questions. Firstly, "How was [the] division [of language and non-language] historically created and how is it maintained?" (p.44). She did so by looking at the history of languages and how power was given to dictionaries to dictate what is and what is not the English language. She argued that prescriptivism still exists in current dictionaries - for example, lexicographers have the power of deciding if a word is, in fact, a word and should be included in their dictionary. R. Smith concluded her response to this question by asserting that Urban Dictionary is a way that youth subvert traditional lexicography and prescriptivism. Her second question was "How can we understand the internet as a social site for youth to question dominant language paradigms and ideologies?" (p. 44). R. Smith answered this by briefly analysing Urban Dictionary definitions of the terms that challenge language ideologies, such as “dictionary’, ‘slanguage’ and ‘spelling’. Lastly, she identified four types of Urban Dictionary definitions: standard words with standard definitions, standard words with non-standard definitions, new words comprising completely new morphemes and new words that combine old morphemes for new meanings. She found that the last type was the most commonly found type of definition. R. Smith concluded that Urban Dictionary can be seen as a movement away from rationalist language ideologies

towards an understanding that these ideologies are “historically situated and politically constructed” (p. 47).

Urban Dictionary data has also been used in research in order to detect, classify or analyse slang, neologisms and derogatory terms. Alexandrovna (2016) used Urban Dictionary definitions as well as other dictionary definitions, to develop a classification system for ‘derogatory marked ethnonyms’, names given to certain ethnic groups, based on their word formation method. They looked at ethnonyms from Canadian, Australian and New Zealand English and found that they had three main categories of origin: normal word formation methods such as abbreviation or borrowing (e.g., ‘queeb’ as an abbreviation of Quebec, or ‘abbo’ as an abbreviation of aborigine), semantic transfers such as metaphors or puns (e.g. ‘pepsi’, i.e., a cheaper brand of soda, referring to French Canadians in Quebec), and deliberate phonetic distortion (e.g., ‘boong’ from the slang word ‘bung’, meaning dead). Mattiello (2017) used Urban Dictionary definitions to support their argument that slang does not undergo standard semantic and morphological processes. They focused on neologisms semantically related to the terms ‘error’, ‘mistake’ or ‘misconduct, concluding that slang neologisms have “enriched the twentieth/twenty-first century English lexicon” (p. 37). Kundi et al (2014) constructed a framework for detecting and scoring slang found on the internet using Urban Dictionary data. This was constructed with the intention to improve sentiment analysis, as social media data contained large quantities of slang and abbreviations that were unidentifiable by the existing software. Kundi et al. managed to create a system that outperformed existing sentiment analysis systems.

### **2.1.2 Wikipedia and Wiktionary**

Wiktionary and Wikipedia, as mentioned above, are sister crowdsourced reference websites. Wikipedia is the fifth most used website globally, while Wiktionary is the five hundredth most used website (Alexa n.d.-b, n.d.-c). Given their popularity and the accessibility of their content, it is unsurprising that they have been the subject of a fair amount of recent research. There have been hundreds of studies that use Wikipedia or Wiktionary content but considering the large quantity and lack of relevance to this research, I have chosen to focus on literature from two areas: the quality of the crowdsourced content and the crowdsourcing process.

There have been multiple studies in which the content of Wikipedia or Wiktionary has been compared with the content of traditional, professionally written encyclopedias or dictionaries. Creese (2017), for example, analysed the representation of neologisms in Wiktionary and in traditional dictionaries. They found that Wiktionary contained more detailed definitions of the neologisms than traditional dictionaries. Meyer & Gurevych (2012) compared Wiktionary's definitions to those from traditional, 'expert-built' dictionaries. They found that while there was a surprisingly small overlap of lexemes (basic lexical units) from the dictionaries compared, only 11% of Wikipedia lexemes could be found in the other English dictionaries. They looked closely into this and found that Wikipedia included thorough coverage of word types not often covered by dictionaries, such as multi-word expressions and informal lexemes, as well as topics not often covered, such as natural sciences and sports. They examined the costs and benefits of 'collaborative lexicography', concluding that it will not replace expert-built lexicography, but will instead supplement it by providing alternative perspectives and broader coverage.

Rosenzweig (2006) evaluated Wikipedia from a historian's perspective. He compared 25 Wikipedia biographies to similar entries from expert-written online resources *Encarta* and *American National Biography Online (ANBO)* and found that Wikipedia exceeded the number of biographical entries that *Encarta* contained but only had half as many entries as *ANBO* did. In regards to length, Rosenzweig found that *ANBO* entries were four times as long as *Wikipedia* entries, and *Wikipedia* entries were four times as long as *Encarta* entries. Quality-wise, Rosenzweig found that only four *Wikipedia* entries out of the 25 contained errors, while three of the ten *Encarta* entries contained factual errors and at least one of the 25 *ANBO* entries contained errors. He also noticed a bias of the quality and quantity of entries on certain topics: science fiction novelist Isaac Asimov's *Wikipedia* entry was longer than US president Woodrow Wilson's, whereas with *ANBO*, Wilson's entry was considerably, and proportionally, longer than Asimov's. Rosenzweig concluded that *Wikipedia* was overall a better online encyclopedia than *Encarta*, but that *ANBO* was still a better biographical resource than *Wikipedia*, given its vast coverage and high quality of its entries. It is important to note that this article was written 12 years ago so some of his observations may now be redundant. Regardless, it is valuable to see a historian's perspective towards the value of a crowdsourced reference website that contains mostly historical content.

A similar study facilitated by academic journal *Nature*, which involved a comparison of *Wikipedia* and *Encyclopedia Britannica* science articles, caused great dispute between the researchers involved and *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Giles, 2005). *Nature* used the peer review process to compare *Wikipedia* and *Encyclopedia Britannica* science articles and found that both contained similar numbers of errors per article: four and three, respectively. Academics

were sent articles from one of the two online reference works (without their knowledge of where it was from) and reviewed it. They found the same number of serious errors or “misinterpretations of important concepts” (Giles, 2005, para 10), four from each, and similar numbers of small errors which included “factual errors, omissions or misleading statements” (Giles, 2005, para 10). However, Britannica disputed these claims. First, they claimed that the difference in the number of errors was not minimal and “the journal simply misrepresented its own results” (Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 2006, p. 3). Secondly, they claimed that they replicated the experiment and found no such inaccuracies. Thirdly, they claimed that some of the articles were not from Encyclopedia Britannica but from their other publications, and some were not written by them at all. *Nature* responded to the dispute, asserting that the experiment was blinded so the methodology should not “adversely affect one publication more than the other” (Britannica Attacks, 2006, para 4). *Nature* also argued Encyclopedia Britannica’s other claims were unfounded and lacked evidence to support their claims.

There have also been content analyses that compared Wikipedia and Wiktionary to non-traditional reference works. Krizhanovsky (2012) performed a quantitative analysis of English Wiktionary, Russian Wiktionary and the lexical database WordNet. They found that the English Wiktionary was the largest corpus with the highest number of words and meanings. They focused on the polysemy (number of meanings) of different parts of speech and found that in both the Russian and English Wiktionary, the part of speech that had the highest average number of meanings was verbs. The part of speech with the lowest average number of meanings was adverbs in English Wiktionary and nouns for Russian Wiktionary.

One aspect of crowdsourcing that has been analysed in regards to Wiktionary and Wikipedia, but not in regards to Urban Dictionary, is the crowdsourcing process. Wolfer & Muller-Spitzer (2016) performed quantitative analyses of German and English Wiktionary revisions, focusing on the process rather than the result. They were interested in finding out if there are really a large number of people contributing to Wiktionary's definitions and concluded that very few authors do the majority of the work, which questions the 'collaborative' nature of crowdsourcing. Interestingly, Paul, Sultana, Matei & Gavrilova (2018) proposed a new method to reduce authorship ambiguity on Wikipedia, using contributors' idiosyncratic features to distinguish between them and create editing profiles. They criticised Wikipedia's crowdsourcing model that allows anyone to edit the articles without any sort of background check or accountability. Paul et al. also discussed the danger of anonymity and the ability to make multiple accounts in social media sites and introduced a way, using a natural language processing information retrieval method called k-nearest neighbour, for ambiguity to be reduced by establishing authorship to differentiate between trustworthy and suspicious contributors. Oreg & Nov (2008) explored Wikipedia contributors' motives, finding that the content contributors identified altruistic motivations, instead of self-development or reputation-development motivations. They added, however, that there might have been a bias in their results as one may like to be considered more altruistic than interested in developing one's reputation. Lastly, Kittur & Kraut (2008) looked closely at the relationship between the number of editors, their methods of coordination and the resulting quality of Wikipedia articles. They distinguished two types of coordination: explicit coordination and implicit coordination. Explicit coordination is when editors actively plan and communicate their planning directly with the other editors, using the article talk page, for example. Implicit coordination, on the other hand, is when editors structure the Wikipedia article in a certain

order and those contributing to that article then use that structure to guide their work on the article. Kittur & Kraut found that both types of coordination were more valuable than the other in certain settings: implicit coordination thrived when there were few editors involved and explicit coordination when there were many editors. They also found that different combinations of coordination and communication were beneficial during the different periods of the articles' development, particularly in regards to the number of editors involved: a core few at the start to put it on the right track, followed by a larger group of editors as the article matures. Given the number and scope of these articles, there is clearly a growing interest and importance in studying crowdsourced and collaborative reference sites, as well as the complexities of their contributors' motives and accountabilities.

## **2.2 Dictionaries**

### **2.2.1 Dictionaries and lexicography**

The term 'lexicography' can refer to the writing and compilation of dictionaries (also referred to as practical lexicography), as well as the study of dictionaries (also referred to as lexicography theory or metalexicography) (Jackson, 2013). Although this section of the literature review will be about the study of dictionaries, I will be making reference to practical lexicography when using the word 'lexicography'.

Dictionaries have been considered disproportionately important to languages, particularly the English language. Cameron (2012) discussed how dictionaries have been perceived as "monuments of scholarship" when, in fact, they are often written by amateurs (p. xxi), and

suggested that dictionaries may function as prescriptors of Standard English even though they are meant to serve as descriptors, given the level of authority that society holds them to. She argued, furthermore, that even dictionaries' descriptions of language use will have been influenced by prescriptions that can be found in other publications such as in-house style guides. Abecassis (2008) and Seargeant (2011) showed how dictionaries are seen as authoritative, accurate and complete when in reality the concept of a standard language is highly subjective. Abecassis differentiated between prescriptivist and descriptivist dictionaries, stating that descriptivism is becoming the norm, although there is still room for improvement in current descriptivist practices, for example, lexicographers labelling non-standard words as 'vulgar' in the dictionary could be considered both subjective and prescriptive. Furthermore, Seargeant argued that contrary to popular belief, dictionary definitions are no more than indications of how language is, or more precisely was, used. Seargeant also identified that the way that dictionaries are so frequently referred to as 'the dictionary' rather than 'a dictionary' or, for example, 'the Concise Oxford Dictionary'. This often reflects the belief that there is one unitary English language.

Traditional lexicography (i.e., expert-written, not crowdsourced lexicography) has been studied critically, particularly in regards to the inevitable biases that can be found within seemingly objective definitions. Hornscheidt (2008) analysed German, Danish and Swedish dictionaries, using critical discourse analysis to look at their "production and negotiation of racism in the context of colonialism" (p. 108). He looked at how meaning is constructed as core, neutral and objective in dictionaries and also considered how ideologies manifested in dictionary definitions. Hornscheidt found the existence or non-existence of certain words in those dictionaries reflected socio-cultural factors such as ethnocentrism. He also looked at

the definitions of 'racism', finding that they did not portray racism as strictly negative but as a neutral concept. This neutral portrayal of a negative concept can also be found in Loomba's evaluation of Oxford English Dictionary's definition of the word 'colonialism' (2015). He found that it speaks only of the colonisers' experiences, not that of the colonised, thus omitting the injustice commonly associated with colonisation. Similarly, Ball (1998) endeavoured to find if and how "dictionaries reflect society's persistent prejudices and stereotypes" (Abstract section, para. 1). He analysed lexical items in multiple dictionaries relating to gay, lesbian and bisexual communities finding that there is an underrepresentation of those communities in dictionaries. He also found that in situations where they were represented, the representation was inherently biased. This presence of ideological bias in traditional expert-written dictionaries suggests bias will undoubtedly, and perhaps more explicitly, be found within Urban Dictionary definitions.

Iamartino (2014) studied the presence of censorship in lexicography and found that it is considerably easier for someone to detect bias retrospectively than at the time of a dictionary's publication; the lexicographers themselves may be "victims of their own prejudiced society", unaware that their definitions have been influenced by their own and their speech community's ideologies (Mackintosh, as cited in Iamartino, 2014, p. 172). Iamartino added that the efficiency and authority with which definitions are written make it difficult for readers to consider them anything other than objective. So the bias is not only subtle, it is unexpected. He mentioned that dictionary users want dictionary definitions to reflect "what is generally thought to be good or bad in the society in which they live" (Béjoint, as cited in Iamartino, 2014, p. 187). The paradox of expecting lexicographers to be objective

and authoritative, as well as expecting them to reflect the people's opinions, creates a difficult situation for lexicographers.

### **2.2.2 Dictionaries and politics**

Specific dictionaries have been studied in terms of their political content. In particular, Samuel Johnson's *A dictionary of the English language* has been the subject of much research since its publication in 1755. DeMaria (1989) analysed the political references found in definitions from Johnson's dictionary. He argued that there is "inevitably a politics" (p. 64) in Johnson's dictionary, giving an example of the words 'Tory' and 'Whig' - both political parties, yet the former (which is the party Johnson affiliated himself with) inspired a far more detailed and accurate definition than the latter. DeMaria looked specifically at the "illustrative quotations" in the definitions and found that a significant proportion of the quotations were taken from Jonathan Swift's political pamphlets, although, these quotations were mostly non-partisan and merely "reinforced [...] common discourse" (1989, p. 66). Definitions of common words such as 'his' were also found to have quotations taken from political discourse, showing that Johnson was using these political extracts out of want not necessity. Similarly, O. Smith (1986) and Reddick (1996) found Johnson's definitions to be biased and perpetuating class distinctions. This notion was then disputed by Hudson (1998), who argued that Johnson "by no means attempted to serve the linguistic demands of the rich and powerful, or to exclude the idiom of the poor or vulgar" (p. 78). Hudson's argument, however, lacked salience as it focused on the sole fact that Johnson did include some lower-class and cant terms in their dictionary, and although Hudson acknowledged the opposing arguments that Johnson's dictionary was biased, he failed to address the specific examples

of hegemony and bias given by Smith, DeMaria and Reddick. Lastly, Hudson failed to acknowledge any literature on the practice of lexicography which shows that biases undoubtedly can and do exist within dictionaries. Together, these studies show the significant effect that political bias can have on the processes of writing dictionary definitions and also analysing those definitions. The latter is something that will need to be addressed and kept in mind during the analysis of the Urban Dictionary data.

Jang (2016) analysed British radicalist Charles Pigott's *A political dictionary: Explaining the true meaning of words, a satirical dictionary of political terms from 1795*. Jang found that Pigott's satirical definitions were intentionally biased against certain political views and contained references to past political events. As the subtitle, *Explaining the true meaning of words*, suggests, Jang identified that Pigott's *Political dictionary* was a protest against political systems and dictionaries, as at the time of its publication, dictionaries "held linguistic authority" (Mitchell, as cited in Jang, 2016, p. 253). Written well after it was published in 1755, Pigott directly referred to Samuel Johnson's *A dictionary of the English language* within his own definitions, alongside sarcastic comments, which Jang said is because "Pigott refuses to accept Johnson's standard definitions as accurate" (2016, p. 253). Jang concluded that Pigott "adapted the genre of dictionary-making to his political purposes" (p. 269), i.e., to utilize and challenge the power and authority that dictionaries and lexicographers had in the eighteenth century.

Veisbergs (2002) compared definitions of political terms in the *Concise English Dictionary 10th Edition* and found that some political ideologies were defined primarily as a system (capitalism and fascism, for example) while others were defined as a theory, policy, doctrine

or belief (socialism, maoism and imperialism, for example). He argued that this lack of consistency indicated “varying and biased attitude” (p. 663), as they should all have the same *genus proximus*, or superordinate concepts such as ‘system’ or ‘ideology’. He then compared this with a Latvian dictionary and found that their political ideology definitions were also inconsistent and evidently biased. Veisbergs concludes that dictionaries have become less biased over time, however there are still subtle hints of bias in the more recent editions that he had analysed. He noted that this bias was generally left-leaning and that the inconsistency in political definitions was “alarmingly large” (p. 666).

## **2.3 Political discourse**

As there has been a significant amount of research into political discourse, only four subcategories of political discourse research will be discussed in this literature review. They are online political discourse, discourses of political supporters, metaphor in political discourse, and political identity construction. The term ‘discourse’ is used broadly here, as the type of discourse analytic methods typically associated with applied and corpus linguistics are not the only methods used in this literature. There are also more sociological methods such as interviews and surveys which still were relevant to this topic and, more importantly, to this thesis.

### **2.3.1 Online political discourse**

As online discourse has become a particularly fruitful and interesting medium of discourse, online political discourse is resultantly becoming a popular strand of political discourse studies. As there are many different ways that one can voice their opinion online, through blogs, vlogs, tweets, etcetera, there is a much variety in the literature on this topic.

Papacharissi (2002) discussed the potential ways that the internet can assist or inhibit the notion that “the internet and its surrounding technologies hold the promise of reviving the public sphere” (p. 9) as a place of online political debate. She argued that although promising features such as online archiving and information retrieval would allow people to access information more easily, the lack of equality in access to internet technologies - both financial and literacy-based inequalities - reduces the value of that feature. Similarly, Papacharissi proposes that the increased access to discourses of people from the other side of the world would provide opportunities for people to develop broader opinions on the topics of discussion. Yet, Papacharissi argues, it is also common for people to seek out people with similar ideologies, so tribalisation - or fragmentation - may be achieved, rather than globalisation. Similarly, Fuchs (2014) looked at Twitter’s potential to function as a digital alternative to Habermas’ public sphere. He looked at the perspectives of online activism experts, eventually aligning himself with those that viewed it negatively, ultimately due to the lack of commitment involved in online movements. He concluded that social media enhances freedom of expression, but cannot replace physical (as opposed to digital) collective action. Halpern & Gibbs (2013) looked at citizens’ discussions on the White House’s Facebook and YouTube pages in relation to Habermas’ public sphere. They found that Facebook discussions were more polite than those found on YouTube pages and

attributed this to the more anonymous nature of Youtube. Although Urban Dictionary is not a social networking site, it still has many of these capabilities and flaws as an alternative public sphere, such as the lack of accountability - similar to YouTube - due to its anonymity.

Brundidge, Reid, Choi & Muddiman (2014) analysed prominent U.S. political blogs written by non-elites targeted towards like-minded communities. They selected this genre of political discourse because “blogs [...] present a kind of window into how conservatives and liberals construct arguments when intergroup dynamics are more or less absent” (p. 744). They used Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) software to perform the analysis, with the hypothesis that conservatives would use more integratively simple language than liberals. They looked at psycholinguistic factors such as emotional language used, issues discussed and psychological distancing, as well as integrative language which includes exclusive language (e.g., unless, without), negations (e.g., not, never), conjunctions (e.g., because, however) and tentative language (e.g., partly, apparently). They found that psychological distancing, i.e., constructing an ‘Us’ and a ‘Them’, was stronger among conservative bloggers, which is reflective of their hierarchical (as opposed to egalitarian) leadership style. They also found that conservative and liberal bloggers had different linguistic styles, and, furthermore, these styles weren’t affected by the topic at hand, so they were robust, trait-based differences.

Kreis (2017) performed a Critical Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump’s right-wing populist tweets posted between his inauguration and his first address to congress. They used the Discourse-Historical approach to analyse the meaning and function of the 216 tweets

collected. They identified seven of the tweets that best illustrated Trump's discourse, finding that Trump's tweets contained elements of populist discourse. For example, Trump constructed an identity for himself as a representative for the people, in contrast with the "out-of-touch elite" (p. 612) and constructed a collective identity for foreigners as evil, bad or perilous.

### **2.3.2 Discourses of political supporters**

Although political discourse has been the topic of much research, one type of political discourse needs further investigation in order to catch up with the research on discourses of political figures or newspapers. That is the discourses of political supporters. It is a growing field, now that the online discourse analysis is becoming popular yet there are still relatively few studies that look at the discourses of supporters of political groups rather than representatives from those political groups. One example of such a study was carried out by Mutz (2006). Mutz examined the tendencies of political discussion carried out by supporters of different US political parties. She surveyed a random sample of Americans on the type of people they had had political discussions with and found "remarkably consistent" stories (p. 21). Firstly, she found that political discussion was usually shared between people with similar political alignment. Secondly, Mutz found that political discussion between people with opposing political views (cross-cutting) tended to take place between acquaintances rather than close friends or family members. Thirdly, she established that people of higher socioeconomic status were more likely to partake in cross-cutting, as were people with stronger political views. She identified that although there are benefits to hearing the 'other side', it can also polarize and lead to physical violence. She argued that normalising political discussion could decrease the likelihood of such violence

occurring. Mutz concluded that the “highly politicized mindset of “us” versus “them”” is only maintainable by alienating the opposition completely, and that in order to achieve greater social harmony we should “downgrade the importance of politics in our everyday lives” (p. 126).

### **2.3.3 Metaphor in political discourse**

Metaphor is a discursive feature commonly found in political discourse. As metaphors emerged as a significant element in the findings of this study, key research on political metaphors will be discussed in this literature review. Political metaphors have been studied extensively but there are three main experts that will be drawn upon for this discussion of the important literature about metaphors in political discourse: Lakoff, Charteris-Black and Musolff. Firstly, Lakoff & Johnson (1980) theorised that metaphors comprise a source object and a target object and named it conceptual metaphor theory, a theory commonly cited in political metaphor analyses (Chilton, 2004; Howe, 1988; Slavičková, 2013). In 1996, Lakoff used metaphor as an explanation of the strong division between US political parties Democrats and Republicans based on their different interpretations of morality. He proposed the metaphoric model of the strict father and nurturant mother, based on the parenting model with the same name, as a way for each party to better understand the other party. He proposed that morality to conservatives, i.e. Republicans, consists of self-discipline and self-reliance which is built through ‘tough love’, whereas morality to progressives, i.e., Democrats, consists of supporting, understanding and respecting each other, in particular, understanding that the world is not fair and particular effort should be employed to improve its ‘fairness’. These theories of conceptual metaphor and of parenting metaphors in US politics were both influential on the then-future research of Charteris-

Black and Musolff.

Charteris-Black (2004, 2011) drew from Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory when he developed the methodology of critical metaphor analysis, a method that uses corpus linguistics to assist the critical analysis of metaphors in discourse. Charteris-Black illustrated his approach to critical metaphor analysis using predominantly political discourse, including American presidential speeches and British party political manifestos. In Charteris-Black's later publication, he developed a theory in regards to the persuasive power that metaphors have in political discourse (2011). His theory claimed that a politician has to convince the audience that they are 'right' and "have the right intentions" (p. 311), which can be achieved through using metaphors to "create sets of associations that... contain implicit cause and effect arguments" (p. 312). He gave the example of Margaret Thatcher associating socialism with negative phenomena such as death and disease through metaphor, claiming that it thus "became construed as its cause" (p. 312).

Musolff (2007, 2016) developed the methodological approach of political metaphor analysis, drawing from Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (2001), Charteris-Black's critical metaphor analysis and Wodak's discourse-historical approach (2001). Musolff identified flaws with Lakoff's strict father and nurturant parent model, arguing that Lakoff provided very little empirical evidence for his theory and had much stronger arguments in regards to the presence of the strict father metaphor in politicians' discourse than the nurturant parent metaphor. Musolff argued that this was because it was not a conceptual metaphor but instead a "discourse-based conceptual structure" (p.30) - or 'metaphor scenario' - that was influenced by many

millennia of gender bias combined with the authoritative status of politicians. A similar argument has been made by others (Deignan, 2010; Cameron, 2010), yet, as mentioned above, many - including Charteris-Black - still use Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory as the foundation of their research. As there are respectable arguments on both sides, this study will consider both sides during metaphor analysis yet lean towards Lakoff's parenting model, as Musolff's argument only really accounts for the strict father metaphor's use in political discourse, not the nurturant parent's. Furthermore, his analyses focus on discourses of political figures rather than political communities, who do not have the same level of authority that political figures do.

Both Charteris-Black's and Musolff's works focus on metaphor in the discourses of political figures. Very little literature exists on the analysis of metaphor in the discourses of political supporters, as identified by Bougher (2012). Bougher argued that more research needs to look at the metaphors found in the political discourses of the general public, not just the discourses of politicians which tend to be favoured in metaphor analyses. This study contributes to filling this gap in political metaphor research.

#### **2.3.4 Political identity construction**

The term political identity generally refers to the political party or system that one most strongly identifies with, such as liberal or Republican (Han, Jung, Mittal, Zyung & Adam, 2019). But, the following literature shows that it can also loosely be interpreted as any identity related to politics, such as voter or politician. It could be as broad as identifying as 'Us' or 'Them'. This literature also shows that identities do not have to be individual or human identities, they can be collective identities or national identities.

In order to examine the power of collective (national) identities and politics, Sindac (2015) analysed interviews with Scottish politicians discussing Scottish independence and its membership in the European Union. Sindac looked at the uses of *us/we* and *them/they*, arguing that using these pronouns declare a divide between the UK and the rest of the EU countries as well as declaring EU countries as powerful in relation to the issue of Scottish independence.

Leuder, Marsland & Nekvapil (2004) performed a membership categorisation analysis of public addresses made by George W. Bush, Tony Blair, Muslim British MP Khalid Mahmood and Osama Bin Laden in response to the 9/11 attacks. Leuder et al. compared the ways they distinguished between ‘us’ and ‘them’ - those that they identified with and those that they did not. They observed that Bin Laden used religion to align himself with those involved in the attack, whereas the other three - including fellow Muslim Mahmood - used moral, political and social views to distance themselves from the attackers and align themselves with the British and American people that were affected by the event. They observed that the category ‘Muslim’ was separated into two subcategories: “Muslim fundamentalists” and “decent law-abiding Muslims” (p. 255).

Iyengar, Sood & Lelkes (2012) analysed national and cross-national surveys of the US public that were collected over fifty years with the goal to “document the extent of affective polarization” between the political identities of Democrats and Republicans and observe whether levels of dislike towards the other party have risen over time. They argue that affect - not defined in this article but, according to Oxford Dictionaries, refers to

emotion that influences behaviour - is a better indicator of polarisation than ideology.

Iyenger et al. used multiple methods to gauge the polarisation between Democrats and Republicans. Firstly, survey participants were asked to rate Democrats and Republicans using a thermometer rating system where 0 represented feeling very 'cold' towards a group and 100 represented feeling very 'warm' towards a group. Secondly, participants were asked if they would be pleased, displeased or indifferent if their son or daughter married a Democrat or Republican. Thirdly, the participants were asked to describe supporters of each party using a pre-selected list of positive and negative adjectives. Lastly, participants were asked to identify which party they supported and to whether they considered themselves a strong or a weak supporter of that party. Using these four measures, they found that in-party results (i.e., when Republicans were asked to rate Republicans, or Democrats to rate Democrats) stayed relatively consistent over the fifty years, while out-party results (Republicans rating Democrats and vice versa) grew consistently negative over time, particularly when Republicans were rating Democrats. They concluded that Americans were growing consistently more divided over time, and suggested this may be due to the negative advertising style used for political parties these days as well as Americans' ability to choose to read only agreeable news articles written by reporters who share their views.

Van Dijk (2009) analysed a speech given by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair to the British Parliament about the war in Iraq. He found that throughout the speech, Blair performed different social and political identities - for instance, as Prime Minister, as Labour Party leader, as a member of parliament and a supporter of the war in Iraq, among others - dependant on what he was trying to achieve. For example, Blair assumed his Member of

Parliament identity when they wanted to appeal to the majority of MPs by stating that democracy is “our right” (p. 214) or assumed an activist identity, instead of a less passionate Prime Minister identity, when expressing personal emotions. Lastly, van Dijk examined how Blair discursively constructed the identity of the main and minor parties in his speech, often to the dislike of the smaller parties. He found that Blair divided the parties and the members of parliament by identifying them as separate entities instead of one collective entity, which was received with discontent.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

The literature discussed in this literature review covers popular research topics like political discourse and less popular research topics such as dictionaries and lexicography. These topics, plus the topic of crowdsourced reference websites, formulate the theoretical background of this thesis. This literature review is not exhaustive, but it did aim to cover the broader themes of this research in order to provide an overview of the previous theoretical and applied works that are based on these themes. As identified in this literature review, there is a gap in the research of political discourses. Although there is a plethora of research on the discourses of politicians, there is a lack of research about the political discourses of citizens (or political supporters). This is a growing field, however, as analyses of online political discourse are becoming more common. The literature discussed in this chapter guided the decisions that were made in regards to the methodology of this study, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 3. Data and Methodology

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at the data, tools and methodologies that were selected for this research and the process through which these decisions were made. This research sought to answer the question ‘How do political communities describe members of other political communities in an unmoderated, anonymous online setting?’ In order to answer this question, the infamously unmoderated, anonymous social media platform Urban Dictionary (hereafter UD) was selected as the focus and source of data for the study. It was also decided that definitions of the words *democrat* and *republican* would be selected as the specific data to be collected and developed as corpora for the analysis, given the higher frequency of UD definitions for these political identities in comparison to others such as *liberal* and *conservative*. After performing a pilot analysis of the data using conventional corpus analysis tools such as AntConc (Anthony, 2018), few observations of any significance were found. This was largely due to the relatively small size of the corpus, but also because of the creative use of language and diverse range of content in the corpus, simple frequency and keyword analyses were inconclusive. After searching through the various literature, the corpus analysis tool Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (hereafter LIWC) was employed for this analysis, primarily due to its ability to group words into particular syntactic, semantic and psycholinguistic categories – something often done manually in qualitative discourse analysis. It had also been successfully used a number of times for political science research (Tumasjen et al., 2010; Dang-Xuan & Stieglitz, 2012; Preoțiu-Pietro et al., 2017). A pilot

study was then executed, which confirmed that LIWC could identify variances between the discourses of Republicans and Democrats in the UD definitions.

Although LIWC is a linguistic analysis software, it had not been used much for discourse analysis, other than more computational linguistic research such as sentiment analysis (Gonçalves, Araújo, Benevenuto & Cha, 2013; Tumasjen et al., 2010). As a result, this research, although still focused on the above question, also sought to answer the secondary question ‘To what extent is LIWC a suitable tool for corpus-based discourse analysis?’ Hence, this research was both an exploration of political community identity construction online and an investigation into the suitability of LIWC for the critical analysis of discourse, which will be outlined in more depth in Section 3.3.1.

This remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections, organised by the order in which these decisions were made: overview of methodology, data, tools and methods of critical discourse analysis. The overview of methodology section will provide an overview of corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis and why it was selected as the methodology for this study. The data section will describe UD definition entries, including the process in which they are added to the website, before describing the range of data itself in greater detail. The tools section will explain the software LIWC in more depth and why it was selected for this study. It will also identify the other analytical tools used to supplement LIWC’s corpus analysis abilities. Lastly, the methods of critical discourse analysis section will describe the two specific methods of critical discourse analysis that were selected in response to the data and tools used in this study and discuss why they were selected for this research.

### **3.1 Overview of methodology**

Corpus-based critical discourse analysis - a combination of corpus linguistics (CL) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) - was selected as the methodology for this research given its combination of qualitative and quantitative methods that would suit both the expected size of the corpus and the close analysis of text in context that is necessary in order to answer the primary research question. Both CL and CDA can be - and commonly are - used independently of the other, yet they complement each other well (Cheng, 2013; Hardt-Mautner, 1995). CL can provide empirical evidence to support CDA's intuitive interpretations (Cheng, 2013), and CL provides opportunities to critically analyse larger corpora, which cannot be done well with CDA alone (Hardt-Mautner, 1995). Corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis are outlined below.

#### **3.1.1 Corpus linguistics**

Corpus linguistics is “the study of language based on examples of ‘real life’ language use” (McEnery & Wilson, 2001, p. ii). It is the analysis of “repositories of naturally occurring language” (Baker, 2010), or, more specifically, the practice in which large collections of spoken or written texts are analysed using specialised software, although these factors may vary (Charteris-Black, 2004; McEnery & Hardy, 2012; Weisser, 2016). Corpora can be smaller than one hundred words or larger than one million words, depending on the type of corpus and the data within the corpus. Reference corpora are generally on the larger side as they aim to “represent language in its broadest sense” (Reppen & Simpson, as cited in Paltridge, 2012) while specialised corpora are smaller due to the more limited range of data available, the method of data collection and the purpose of the research.

Different corpus analysis software can perform a wide range of functions but the majority provide frequency lists, concordances and keyword lists from a corpus (see Section 3.3 for more information about the corpus tools selected for this study and their features). A frequency list contains every word in a corpus and the number of times it occurs in the corpus while a keyword list identifies words that, when compared to another corpus, are “statistical abstractions from frequency lists” (McEnery & Hardie, 2012, 41), i.e., they are located more highly on one corpus’ frequency list than the other. A concordance locates all the occurrences of a particular term or phrase and displays them in context, i.e., it displays the words found before and after the word of interest (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). Despite its predominantly quantitative methodology, corpus linguistics generally depends on both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques (Biber, Conrad & Reppen, 1998), which is why it has been paired with critical discourse analysis for this study.

### **3.1.2 Critical discourse analysis**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a method of discourse analysis that considers language a “social practice” and identifies context as crucial for determining meaning. It sees discourse as “socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned”, that is, that discourse shapes and is shaped by society (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 258). CDA views discourse as having a ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ level. The micro-level considers the language itself: the written, spoken or visual text. The macro-level considers the social and cultural ideologies that have been constructed over time and have influenced (and has been influenced by) the discourse being analysed. CDA considers both the micro and macro levels, analysing the relationship

between the two (Fairclough, 2010). For example, the use of growth metaphors in economics discourse provides insight into the ideologies held by business communities (White, 2003).

CDA is often used when one is interested in how power is asserted and identity is constructed through text, based on the philosophy that discourse is “both socially constitutive and socially shaped” (KhosraviNik, 2013, p. 283). It is seen as an interdisciplinary method as it includes linguistic, political, sociological and many other theoretical concepts (Fairclough, 2010). Fairclough specifies that for an analysis to be a critical discourse analysis, it must analyse the relationship between discourse and social process, not just the discourse by itself; it must include a systemic analysis of the text rather than a general discussion; and it must not just be descriptive, one also needs to interpret and discuss the themes and ideologies present in the discourse (Fairclough, 2010). One of the most defining characteristics of critical discourse analysis is the range of methodologies that can be used within it to assist with the critical analysis. Two methodologies were selected in response to the data and will be outlined in section 3.4.

## **3.2 The Data**

### **3.2.1 Urban Dictionary definitions**

Urban Dictionary is a crowdsourced online dictionary. As a result, definitions can be created by anyone who has an account. Accounts are free to make, as long as you volunteer your email address. You are required to create a pseudonym, rather than a username, and the form specifically discourages you from using your real name. So although Urban Dictionary posts

are technically pseudonymous, they are essentially anonymous, as anonymity (or identity suppression) is encouraged. Creating a definition requires filling in a form with five fields: i) the word being defined, ii) the definition<sup>1</sup>, iii) an example of the word in a sentence, iv) tags for the word and/or definition and v) an optional gif. Not all of these fields have existed since UD's inception. The tags field seems to have appeared in 2006 and the gif field in 2018. Once published, UD definitions have a specific format (see Figure 3.1). The word being defined is large, blue and bold; the definition is in small black standard font; the example is in small black italicised font, the tags are in small blue font. In the process of developing the corpus (see Section 3.2.2) these formatting features were removed as the focus of the analysis was on textual content. Furthermore, only the definition and the example were included in the corpus as the other text - the tags, pseudonym, date published and votes for and against the definition, which can all be seen in Figure 3.1 - were considered metadata.

Figure 3.1: Examples of UD definitions of *republican* and *democrat*

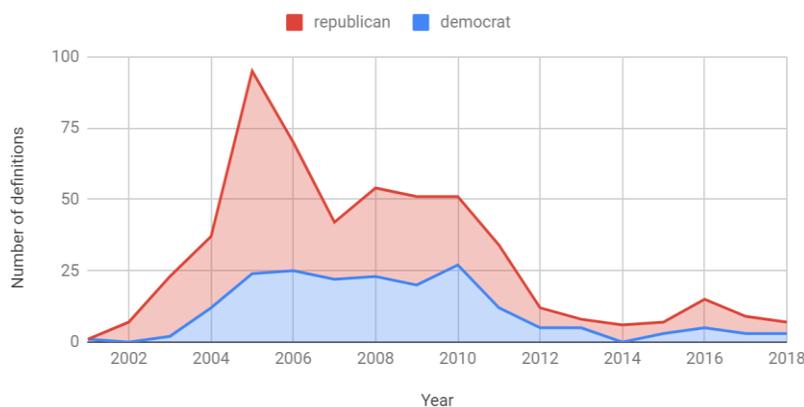


<sup>1</sup> In order to avoid confusion, the term 'definition' hereafter refers to the whole UD entry which includes the definition and the example, unless otherwise specified.

### 3.2.2 Constructing the corpus

In order to carry out an analysis of the UD definitions of *republican* and *democrat*, a specialised corpus was manually built. This involved collecting all definitions of *republican* and *democrat* from Urban Dictionary from 1999 to November 2018. As mentioned above, only the definition and example sections of each definition entry were included in the corpus. The resulting raw corpus contained 61,745 tokens. Figure 3.2 provides an indication of the overall number of UD entries since its inception in 1999. It can be seen that most definitions were published between 2004 and 2010, and that published definitions of *republicans* and *democrats* combined peaked in 2005, though published definitions of *democrats* alone peaked in 2010. 2001 was the year that the fewest definitions were written (only one), followed by 2014 when only six were written. It seems that the number of definitions written each year was related less to American political events than Urban Dictionary’s popularity, although there was a small spike in 2016, which is the year Donald Trump campaigned for US presidency and was eventually elected. Overall there are more *republican* definitions than *democrat* definitions.

Figure 3.2: Number of UD definitions of *republican* and *democrat* over time



In order to compare and contrast the discourses of each political group, it was decided that the corpus would be divided into two subcorpora: *republican* and *democrat*. Entries were sorted by the political party the author identified with explicitly or implicitly, rather than the political party that was being defined. This was because a definition of the term *democrat* could be written by a person who identifies as a Democrat or by one who identifies as a Republican, and due to their respective political bias, the content of the two definitions would be very different. In contrast, the negative definitions of Democrats and positive definitions of Republicans were very similar, as each definition tended to include both positive self-talk and negative other-talk. This segregation of the data into two subcorpora was done manually, and was based primarily on self-identification, i.e., the author of an entry stating “I am a Democrat”, when possible but more often than not the writer would not explicitly state their political views so this had to be deduced based on their statements for and against each party.

The data was manually scraped and saved as plain text files in UTF8 so they could be read by the corpus analysis software (see Section 3.3). Following Baker’s recommendations (2006), the data was cleaned which involved removing metadata, images and links to other web pages. Also, entries in which the author explicitly or implicitly identified as a third party supporter were removed from the corpus, as only definitions written by supporters of the Democratic or Republican Parties were relevant to the research question. Duplicates were also removed. The resulting corpus contained 53,514 tokens: 21,471 in the *democrat* subcorpus and 32,043 in the *republican* subcorpus. This suggests that Republicans are either more frequent Urban Dictionary contributors in general or there were simply more Republicans than Democrats overall during the period between Urban Dictionary’s inception and the date the data was collected.

## 3.3 Tools

### 3.3.1 Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count 2015 (hereafter referred to as LIWC) is the primary software being used for this research. It is atypical corpus analysis software in that it has no concordance, keyword or frequency analysis function. Instead, it has two unique functions: firstly, it calculates the percentage of the corpus for a range of syntactic, semantic and psycholinguistic categories. For example, as shown in Table 3.1, sexual words make up 0.86% of the *democrat* subcorpus and 0.60% of the *republican* subcorpus. This functions similarly to the way that relative frequencies do in traditional corpus linguistics (McEnery & Hardie, 2012), by calculating the frequencies of words relative to the size of the corpus. These percentages show that if both subcorpora contained 10,000 words, 86 of them would be sexual words in the *democrat* subcorpus and 60 of them would be sexual words in the *republican* subcorpus. Secondly, it provides a list of each word in the corpus and each category that word was assigned using its “psychometrically validated internal dictionary” (Collins, 2019). For example, the word *stupid* is assigned three word categories: adjective, negative emotion and anger, while the word *helps* is assigned five: verb, positive emotion, social, affiliation and present tense. LIWC’s dictionary consists of more than six thousand words and word stems (Pennebaker, Boyd, Jordan & Blackburn, 2015). The LIWC program has only rarely been used in regards to critical discourse analysis and corpus analysis, perhaps as these were not its intended uses. Regardless, it showed much potential for identifying trends in a small corpus of diverse and creative internet discourse through calculating the frequencies of groups of similar words rather than of individual words. Furthermore, its

ability to group semantically similar words allows the manual task commonly performed in qualitative methods, such as metaphor analysis as well as other discourse analysis methods, to be done automatically (Todd & Low, 2010).

As seen in the following chapters, the analysis focused on the topics which were grouped under the name ‘biological processes’ in LIWC: body, health, sexual and ingestion (see Table 3.1 for more information about what the biological processes category includes). The biological processes category was selected for further investigation due to three main factors. Firstly, as seen in Table 3.2, there was a significant difference between the percentage of biological processes words in the *republican* and *democrat* subcorpora (see Table 3.2). Secondly, as seen in Table 3.3, both subcorpora had a higher percentage of biological processes words than the reference corpus, which is made up of extracts from novels, blogs, emotional writing, spoken discourse, science articles and control writing. This shows that there is not only distinct variation between the *democrat* and *republican* subcorpora, but that there is variation between those two subcorpora and other corpora. Lastly, body and health metaphors appear frequently in political discourse (Musolff, 2016; Efeoğlu & Işık-Güler, 2017; Andrews, 2015), so it was decided to look more closely at these biological processes words and how they were used in UD definitions of ‘Republican’ and ‘Democrat’.

Table 3.1: Words in LIWC biological processes category and its subcategories

Categories	Examples	# of words in category
Biological processes	eat, blood, pain	748
Body	cheek, hands, spit	215
Health	clinic, flu, pill	294

Sexual	horny, love, incest	131
Ingestion	dish, eat, pizza	184

Note. Adapted from "The Development and Psychometric Properties of LIWC2015" by J. W. Pennebaker et al. 2015. Copyright 2015 by University of Texas at Austin.

Table 3.2: Democrat and Republican LIWC biological processes scores and their significance

	Biological processes	body	health	sexual	ingestion
Democrat	2.63	0.80	0.98	0.86	0.30
Republican	1.97	0.57	0.77	0.60	0.19
Significance <sup>2</sup>	0.002 **	0.049 *	0.112	0.032 *	0.115

Table 3.3: Democrat and Republican LIWC biological processes scores compared with the mean scores of reference corpora

	Biological processes	body	health	sexual	ingestion
Democrat	2.63	0.80	0.98	0.86	0.30
Republican	1.97	0.57	0.77	0.60	0.19
Reference corpus	1.94	0.73	0.55	0.23	0.50

\*From Pennebaker et al, 2007

As mentioned above, the biological processes category has four subcategories: sexual, ingestion, health and body. Upon closer inspection of these subcategories, it was discovered that the body subcategory contains many words that overlap into the other subcategories, for example *vagina* is classed as a sexual word as well as a body word, or *fat* is categorised as a

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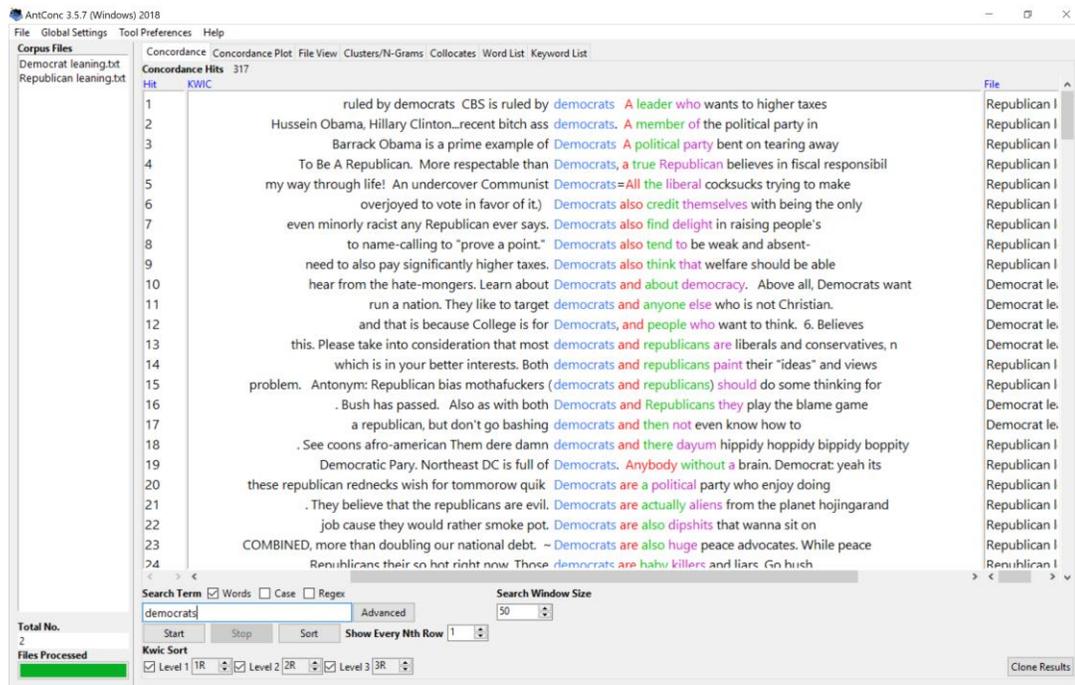
<sup>2</sup> \*\*\* = very significant, \*\* = quite significant, \* = somewhat significant

body, health and ingestion word. There were also many body words that LIWC did not class as sexual, health or ingestion words that really should be classed as such. For example, *ass* and *anal* were both categorised by LIWC as body words, yet both are involved in digestion and, to an extent, sexual processes. In response, it was decided that the subcategories would be adapted in order to avoid ambiguity. An extended subcategory - ingestion, digestion and excretion - was constructed in order to keep words related to the broader digestive process together. Lastly, relevant words from the body subcategory were moved into one of the remaining three categories: sex, health, and ingestion, digestion and excretion. Each results chapter will be dedicated to one of these subcategories.

### **3.3.2 AntConc**

AntConc corpus software (Anthony, 2018) was used to perform the corpus analytic methods necessary for this analysis that LIWC could not do itself: that is, calculating word frequencies and assembling concordances (see Section 3.1.1 for more information about these functions). LIWC only shows the percentage of the subcorpora that each category and subcategory accounted for and the list of words in each category and subcategory. Antconc was used to search for each word listed in the relevant LIWC subcategories so that its frequency could be recorded and the total frequencies of a subcategory or a topic within a subcategory could be calculated. Concordances, or lists of words in context as shown in Figure 3.3, were created for words with higher frequencies in order to look more closely at how those words were used, rather than just how many times the words occurred in the corpus.

Figure 3.3: A screenshot of AntConc's concordance function



### 3.4 Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis

For this research, critical metaphor analysis (Charteris-Black, 2011) and membership categorisation analysis (Sacks, 1992) were selected based on their relevance to the research questions and the data. Metaphor is “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5), for example, the metaphor TIME IS MONEY, found in commonly used phrases such as *spending/wasting/saving/investing* time, shows that people view time similarly to the way they view money: it is a valuable and finite resource (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphor is commonly found in political discourse, and has thus been studied extensively in that context, as it is “essential to human communication and is of high social, ethical and political significance” (Musolff, 2016, p. 2) and “activates

unconscious emotional associations” (Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 28). Membership categorisation, on the other hand, is the act of assigning categories, such as ‘teacher’ or ‘student’, to people and inferring that people within those categories bear certain qualities or perform certain actions based on “presumed common-sense knowledge of social structures” (Fitzgerald & Housley, 2015, p. 4). It is used to construct identities of the ‘Other’, or people who do not belong to or identify with the same group as the speaker (Staszak, 2008). So through critical metaphor analysis and membership categorisation analysis, this research aims to analyse the construction of political identities through Urban Dictionary definitions. Furthermore, there is often overlap between membership categorisation and metaphor. For example, the phrase *Democrats eat ass* both communicates a category-bound activity (see below) and a metaphor. Sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 below go into more detail about what these two methods of analysis entail and how they have been used in this research.

### **3.4.1 Membership categorisation analysis**

Social identity is “something people in society do, achieve, negotiate, attribute things to and act upon as part of their daily lives” (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2015, p. 2-3). Membership categorisation analysis (MCA) is a method of analysing the discursive construction of the social identity of ‘Others’ in discourse based on “how social categories are expected or assumed to act in general and in particular situations.” (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2015, p. 10). MCA involves identifying and dissecting situations in which one assigns a membership group or ‘category’ to an individual or group, and assigns certain characteristics and values to that category. “Categorizing someone as belonging to a particular membership group generates inferences about that person” (Gordon & Ikizoglu, 2017, p. 257). Created by Sacks in the early 1970s, MCA is a method of ethnomethodology commonly associated with

conversation analysis. Resultantly, MCA is commonly used to analyse spoken discourse, although it can be used for written discourse. There are three main aspects of membership categorisation analysis: membership categories, membership categorisation devices (MCDs) and category-bound activities (CBAs) (Lepper, 2000). Membership categories are categories that are assigned to people, such as ‘mother’, ‘doctor’, ‘politician’, ‘Jew’. MCDs group these categories into collective categories, such as ‘religious groups’ for ‘Jew’, ‘Christian’, and ‘Muslim’. CBAs link certain actions to certain categories of people. For example, a baby would be expected to cry; a mother would be expected to soothe or feed their crying baby (Stokoe, 2012; Lepper, 2010; Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000). ‘Democrat’ and ‘Republican’ are categories themselves, and they are both part of the membership categorisation device of ‘political parties’. The purpose of this part of the research is to see what generalisations are made about these categories and relate them to the ideologies of those that constructed them.

### **3.4.2 Critical metaphor analysis**

Critical metaphor analysis “aims to reveal the covert... intentions of language users” (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 34) by identifying metaphors (defined above) in use and analysing the underlying ideologies. This method is based on Charteris-Black’s critical metaphor analysis method, in which there are three stages: metaphor identification, metaphor interpretation and metaphor explanation (Charteris-Black, 2004). Although, unlike in Charteris-Black’s method, the metaphor identification stage was performed by identifying the sexual, health and ingestion words through LIWC and then searching those words individually in order to find occurrences of metaphor. Those occurrences were then extracted for further interpretation and explanation. The metaphor interpretation was performed by

analysing the metaphor choices that were made by the person constructing the discourse that contained the metaphor(s) and identifying the conceptual metaphors<sup>3</sup> behind them. Lastly, metaphor explanation was then performed by identifying the social and ideological motivations of the metaphor that was produced.

### **3.5 Bias and subjectivity in critical discourse analysis**

The political parties that this research is focussing on are polarising, and I, the researcher, have a side that I support more strongly than the other. I am aware of how this may affect the research and went into this research keeping that in mind as “researching a biased text with a set of preconceived goals results in another biased analysis” (Twardzisz, 2013). As someone who aligns with the values of the Democrat party, I found that I could relate to and understand the Democrat supporters’ discourse more so than the Republican supporters’. Yet I was still surprised and concerned by some of the statements Democrat supporters made, which eventually led to more of a psychological distancing from the Democrats as well as an awareness that both parties are human and resorted to similarly cruel statements when describing the other (see Chapters 5 to 7 for examples). All analyses were performed with this bias in mind.

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<sup>3</sup> Underlying (cognitive) metaphors which manifest as surface (linguistic) metaphors (Charteris-Black, 2004); “fundamental principles of thought and reasoning” (Musolff, 2016, p. 9).

### 3.6 Conclusion

This study aims to answer the question ‘How do political communities describe members of other political communities in an unmoderated, anonymous online setting?’ by analysing Urban Dictionary definitions of *republican* and *democrat*. Critical discourse analysis and corpus analysis were selected as the methodologies for this study based on their relevance to the data being used and the research question. The tools *AntConc* and *LIWC2015* were selected to be used for the corpus analysis aspects of this study based on their supplementary features, such as semantic grouping and concordancing. Lastly, critical metaphor analysis and membership categorisation analysis were selected as the methods of critical discourse analysis due to their frequent use in studies related to politics and identity construction. The next three chapters will describe and discuss the results of these analyses that were performed on the Urban Dictionary data, starting with the sex subcategory.

## 4. Sex and sexuality

### 4.0 Introduction

Sex is the first subcategory of biological processes in this analysis. This subcategory includes sexual organ words such as *penis* and *boob*, sexual preference words such as *lesbians* or *bestiality*, sexual state words such as *pregnant* or *erect* and sexual act words such as *masturbate* or *incest*, among others. While sex and reproduction have been increasingly politicised in western countries throughout the previous two centuries (Weeks, 2018), in the United States, the last sixty or so years - beginning with the sexual revolution in the 1960s - has seen significant political action towards (and sometimes against) sexual culture and identities (Hansen, 2014). One could argue that beliefs about sex and reproduction, as well as the nature of ‘family values’, create the largest moral divisions between those who support the Republican Party and those who support the Democratic Party. In order to investigate how sex-related words have been used to construct the identity of the opposing parties, this chapter examines the occurrence of sex metaphors and sexual categories in the UD corpus and the way their use differs between Republican and Democrat supporters

### 4.1 Frequency analysis

Antconc’s concordance feature was used to find the frequencies of each ‘sexual’ word identified by the LIWC2015 software in the Republican and Democrat subcorpora. These

words were then manually organised into five groups: sexual preferences, sex workers, sexual organs, sexual states and sexual acts. The overall frequencies of these groups in the Democrat and Republican subcorpora can be seen in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Frequencies and relative frequencies of sex-related words

	Democrat subcorpus		Republican subcorpus		P value
	Frequency	Relative frequency	Frequency	Relative frequency	
sexual preferences	65	30.27	61	19.04	0.009 **
sex workers	0	0	5	1.56	-
sexual organs	11	5.12	18	5.62	0.809
sexual states	45	20.96	53	16.54	0.245
sexual acts	76	35.4	74	23.09	0.009 **
total	197	91.75	211	65.85	0.001 ***

\*\*\* = very significant, \*\* = quite significant, \* = somewhat significant

There are some points of interest in the table, three of which will be explored in greater detail below. The first is that the Democrat subcorpus contained higher relative frequencies than the Republican subcorpus for each group from the sexual subcategory except one: sex workers. This shall be discussed further in Section 4.2. The second is that the sexual acts group had the highest frequency of all the groups - including those from the health and ingestion categories - in both the Democrat and Republican subcorpora. This shall be discussed further in Section 4.3 which will look at the use of the word *fuck* and related words

from the sexual acts group. The third point of interest is that there is a significant variation in the relative frequencies of sexual preferences terms in the Democrat and Republican subcorpora, with a p value of 0.009 ( $p < 0.05$  indicates significance). This shall be discussed in Section 4.4. Overall, as shown by the p value of the total frequencies of the sex category, there are significantly more sex and sexuality words in the Democrat subcorpus than in the Republican subcorpus. This may be related to the Republican's more conservative and suppressive stance towards sex as perhaps illustrated by Republican President George W. Bush's administrations' excessive funding for abstinence-only sexual education programs in 2006 (Patel & Rushefsky, 2015).

## **4.2. Sex workers, gender and sexuality**

This section focuses on the analysis of words from the sex worker group, which, as mentioned above, can only be found in the Republican subcorpus. Although the overall frequency of sex worker words is not significantly high, their notable absence in one subcorpus and multiple occurrences in another inspired further investigation into their use. There were five total occurrences of sex worker words in the corpus; four of the five have been selected for closer interpretation. The following four extracts provide examples of Republican supporters construct an association between Democrats and sex workers:

- 1) *An insanely disconnected gang of prostitutes and ChoMos from California and New York.* (D)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> (R) = Republican subcorpus, (D) = Democrat subcorpus

- 2) [...] *democrats= whores, democrats = mofos riding bros* [...] (D)
- 3) *if you're a democrat, that means your mother's a whore.* (D)
- 4) *Why should I give my money away that I made with my own blood and sweat and tears to some ass hole that lives in an apartment and probably just spends it all on cocaine, beer, hookers, and marijuana?!?* (D)

To construct this association, Extracts 1-4 employ both membership categorisation and metaphors. The following sections will examine this in detail.

#### **4.2.1 Sex worker as membership category**

Membership categorisation is employed in all four of the above extracts. Extracts 1 and 2 assign the categories of sex workers or sexual offenders - child molesters (*ChoMos*) or incestuous homosexuals (*mofos riding bros*) - to Democrats. These two category attributes are gender-bound to an extent: the former to women and the latter to men. Prostitution is a female-dominated industry, motivated primarily by the predominantly straight male client base (Pheterson, 1993). Similarly, sexual offenders are generally assumed to be male as the overwhelming majority of registered offenders are male (Finkelhor, 2009; Dworkin, 2011). Both categories are viewed as immoral - especially from a conservative perspective - as prostitution, incest and, unsurprisingly, child sexual abuse are all illegal in the United States.

In Extract 3, unlike Extracts 1 and 2, a sex worker category is assigned to the mother of a Democrat. In the extract, the Republican author perhaps considers the hypothetical Democrat to be male and less likely to be a sex worker himself. Alternatively, the author stereotypes Democrats as coming from lower class backgrounds than Republicans. The categorisation of

Democrats as ‘child of sex-worker’ classifies the opposition’s mother as opposing the maternal ideal: a “moral and asexual” being (Rosenman & Klaver, 2008, p. 9). More so, in American culture, the ideal mother is viewed to be a middle-class, white stay-at-home mother married to a breadwinning father (Samtani & Trejos-Castillo, 2015; Dow, 2016). Having a mother as a sex worker constitutes the typical family of a Democrat as having neither a breadwinning father, nor a stay-at-home mother, but has instead a working mother who has to fulfil the roles of both nurturer and provider.

In Extract 4, sex workers are not attributed to a political position; rather, they are listed as a service commonly used by members of a specific political party. The writer employs membership categorisation by asserting, firstly, that Democrats are commonly recipients of government financial assistance - rather than simply supporters of it - and, secondly, that they spend their unearned financial support on sinful and indulgent goods and services, such as sex workers and drugs. The frequent use of the words *I* and *my* at the beginning of Extract 4 show the Republican supporter feels personally affected by the financial habits of Democrats. The phrases *I give* and *I made* show that this definition entry author feels a sense of agency in the way that the government acquires its funds and, as a result, deserves a level of agency in the way these funds are spent. They identify as the *taxpayer* rather than the recipient of government assistance. The use of the idiom *blood and sweat and tears* is both a continuation of the author’s expression of agency as well as characteristic of Republicans given its religious origins and ‘strict father’ morality.

Gender assumptions have been made in all four of the above extracts. In Extract 4, it is implied that the “ass hole” is male by the choice of masculine words *beer* and *hookers* (as

opposed to wine or escorts). In Extracts 1 and 2, prostitutes are generally female, child molesters are predominantly, although not exclusively, male and *mofos* - an abbreviation of 'mother fuckers' - is also a dominantly male referent. This positions Democrats as exclusively one or the other, a prostitute or child molester, depending on their gender.

#### **4.2.2 Sex worker as metaphor**

Although Extracts 1 to 3 contain membership categorisations of Democrat women as sex workers, these categorisations also involve the use of metaphors. An example is the word *whore*, seen in Extract 3. According to Stanton (2014), the metaphoric deployment of the word *whore* has "various political and social implications [...] for all women" ( p. 17). This is because it is frequently employed to comment pejoratively on sexual, professional, financial and social aspects of a woman's identity. It is also commonly used as a term of dishonour, both literally and figuratively, based on unsubstantiated assumptions of sex workers' working conditions, work ethic and sexual relationships (Pheterson, 1993). Dusenberre says "to call a woman a whore [...] not only casts aspersions on her morals, but takes away her place in society" (as cited in Stanton, 2014, p. 81). For men, "being caught with a whore is socially uncouth, if not actually humiliating" (Pheterson, 1993, p. 47). This extends the meaning of the metaphor as referring to someone who is a social outcast due to their own behaviour and lifestyle.

It is worth reiterating that no sex worker metaphors or membership categorisations were found in the Democrat subcorpus, which perhaps indicates that the two groups have contrasting views of sex workers, or of women in general. Perhaps Democrats' views of women are founded less on their sexual or career choices than those of the Republicans.

### **4.3 Sexual acts**

This section focuses on the analysis of sexual act verbs as metaphors. In both subcorpora, *fuck*, *sex* and *rape* were the three most frequently occurring sexual acts words. There is a noticeable difference between these three words and the other sexual acts words found in the two corpora, with the frequency of the third most frequent sexual acts word (*rape*) being more than two and a half times the frequency of the fourth most frequently used sexual acts word (*screw*). However, because the word *sex* can also refer to gender - a topic that could be found in discourses referring to feminist or LGBT policies - the word *sex* was ignored and the words *fuck* and *rape* were selected for closer inspection. *Fuck* - although commonly considered merely a vulgar variation of the word *sex* - has also been identified as a metaphor of male sexual aggression (Hobbs, 2013). From that perspective, it is in fact quite similar to the word *rape*. The following two sections will discuss the occurrences of the words *rape* and *fuck* in the two subcorpora.

#### **4.3.1 Rape as metaphor**

Sexual assault words are part of the sexual acts subcategory, which as mentioned above was the most commonly occurring subcategory in both the Republican and Democrat corpus. Similarly, both Republicans and Democrats included sexual assault metaphors (as opposed to literal references to sexual assault, which also were found in both subcorpora) in their descriptions of the other party. The word *rape* occurred in both subcorpora, with the relative frequencies of 4.06 for the Republican subcorpus and 6.5 for the Democrat subcorpus, although some were literal uses of the word *rape*. Four metaphoric occurrences of sexual

assault words were identified in the subcorpora: 3 from the Democrat subcorpus and 1 from the Republican subcorpus, with the relative frequencies of 1.86 and 0.31, respectively. These occurrences are displayed below in context. Extract 5 is from the Republican subcorpus while Extracts 6, 7 and 8 are from the Democrat subcorpus.

5) *Democrats believe that the best way to create jobs is to attack businesses with excessive taxes and regulations, that the honest and hard-working should be financially raped by the lazy and ignorant, that we can tax our way to victory [...]* (R)

6) *A person that has an utter disrespect for moral values, defiling and raping the economy for thier own benifit in order to squander as much personal profit as possible.* (D)

7) *A party of dumbasses which rape the world and destroy the nation with mass corruption.* (D)

8) *Middle class white men who pretend that they benefit from republican policies even when said policies are raping them in the ass.* (D)

The first point to make is that there are more rape metaphors in the Democrat subcorpus than in the Republican subcorpus. This might simply be due to the higher frequency of the word *rape* in general in the Democrat subcorpus, which occurs more than one and half times the frequency of *rape* in the Republican subcorpus. On the other hand, it could be reflective of metaphor use in general for each party, i.e., that Democrats use metaphors more often than Republicans do. Lastly, it could reflect that the metaphor EXERTION OF POWER IS RAPE is a metaphor that Democrats associate with Republicans more often than Republicans associate with Democrats. This could be linked to the progressive ideologies of Democrats

to support minorities and disestablish majoritarian power through defending civil rights with the intention of ending discrimination (Democratic National Committee, 2016).

Rape is a symbol of power, with a perpetrator as the *powerful* and a victim as the *powerless*. As a transitive verb, *rape* requires an actor to perform the action, a metaphoric rapist, and a goal to undergo the action and be affected by it, a metaphoric rape victim (Halliday, 2014).

Table 4.2 compares the actors and goals of each *rape* metaphor from the two subcorpora. Like any assaultive word, *rape* connotes negative, aggressive and powerful characteristics of the rapist and weak, defenseless characteristics of the rape victim.

Table 4.2: Actors and goals of the verb *rape* in Democrat and Republican subcorpora

Extract	Subcorpus	Actor/Rapist(s)	Goal/Victim(s)
5	Republican	The lazy and ignorant (i.e., Democrats)	The honest and hard working (i.e., Republicans)
6	Democrat	A person that has an utter disrespect for moral values (i.e., Republicans)	The economy
7	Democrat	A party of dumbasses (i.e., Republicans)	The world
8	Democrat	[Republican] policies	Middle class white men (i.e., Republicans)

Not all of these victims, however, are viewed sympathetically. Looking at the goal/victim(s) column, one can see that Democrats are not identified as victims by either party, yet

Republicans have been identified as the victim in extracts from both parties. It is interesting that Democrats do not identify themselves as victim to the actions of Republicans. Instead, in Extracts 6 and 7, the victims are impersonal and large-scale beings, *the economy* or *the world* and in extract 8 Republicans are constructed as victims of themselves. In stark contrast, the one Republican use of the *rape* metaphor identifies Republicans as victims to the actions of Democrats. In Extract 5, the rape victims are Republicans, the definition author's own party. The rapist is the opposition, the Democrats. This victim/perpetrator dichotomous pair is furthered by the use of two pairs of opposing descriptors for the opposing parties: *hard-working* versus *lazy* and *honest* versus *ignorant*. *Honest* and *ignorant*, although not technically opposites, are framed as a moral and immoral dichotomy. It implies that honesty is founded not just on communicating the truth but also on knowing the truth. Ironically, the *lazy and ignorant* party is the actor and the perpetrator in this situation, implying that Democrats and their policies - despite their 'laziness' - have a level of power over the Republicans.

In Extracts 6 and 7, the verb *rape* co-occurs with another negative and aggressive verb: *defile* or *destroy*. Both of these verbs connote large-scale aggression. They can also both be used when the goal is an inanimate object, unlike rape which requires an animate goal. These additional verbs support the victimisation of inanimate, intangible and large-scale goals *the economy* and *the world*.

A final note on this topic is that Extract 8, a Democrat extract, frames homosexuality in a negative way, which is surprising given the pro-LGBT stance that Democrats usually share (Democratic National Committee, 2016.). The victims being identified as men followed by

the phrase *raping them in the ass* implies that this metaphorical rape is homosexual rape. It is framed negatively as Republicans - the opposition - are constructed as both the victim and perpetrator of the rape. This is not the only homophobic utterance found in the Democrat subcorpus; Section 4.4 discusses negative depictions of the LGBT community in the Democrat subcorpus in more detail.

In summary, these extracts show that a Republican supporter used a rape metaphor to construct the Democrats' effect on Republicans. They self-victimise and identify the 'Other' - in this case the Democrats - as the metaphoric rapist. This is not uncommon for Republican political discourse: Bush used the metaphoric expression *the rape of Kuwait* to describe Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, identifying Iraq - the 'Other' in this situation - as the rapist (Rohrer, 1995). Democrats used rape metaphors to describe Republicans' effect on large-scale concepts such as the economy and the world as well as their effect on themselves. They do not identify themselves as the victims directly.

#### **4.3.2 Fuck as metaphor**

Other than *abortion*, which has been excluded from this analysis as it is a policy-related term with surprisingly no metaphoric uses in this corpus, the most frequently occurring sex-related word in both subcorpora is *fuck*, with relative frequencies of 15.83 in the Democrat subcorpus and 12.18 in the Republican subcorpus. Similarly to the *rape* metaphors, *fuck* can denote sexual aggression as it "presents a penetrative version of sexual intercourse that is both hostile and demeaning" (Hobbs, 2013, p.154). It is also a transitive verb that requires an actor and a goal. There were four occurrences of *fuck* (verb) metaphors in the Democrat subcorpus

(Extracts 9 to 12) while there were two occurrences (Extracts 13 and 14) from the Republican subcorpus.

9) *They try to privatize and totally fuck up healthcare and social security [...]* (D)

10) *[...] honestly believes that "God" is guiding them, even though half of the world has already been fucked over.* (D)

11) *would YOU want to have to go through 9 months, your reputation being fucked up [...]* (D)

12) *A bunch of bitter white dudes that love fucking over other races [...]* (D)

13) *[...] I suggest you go fuck yourself.* (R)

14) *That jackoff Democrat wants to add more social welfare programs, but it's only going to fuck the people making money.* (R)

*Fuck* verb metaphors occur twice as frequently in the Democrat subcorpus as in the Republican subcorpus. Using Halliday's transitivity analysis (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), Tables 4.3 and 4.4 show that although no patterns emerge from the type of actors or goals occurring in these transitive verb phrases, a clear pattern can be found in the material processes.

Table 4.3: Democrat *fuck* verb metaphors

	Actor	Material process	Goal
9	They [Republicans]	try to privatize and totally fuck up	healthcare and social security

10	-	has already been fucked over	half of the world
11	-	being fucked up	your reputation
12	A bunch of bitter white dudes	love fucking over	other races

Table 4.4: Republican *fuck* verb metaphors

	Actor	Material process	Goal
13	You [the reader]	go fuck	yourself
14	[Democrats adding more social welfare programs]	going to fuck	the people making money

Although there are very few occurrences from which to draw generalisable conclusions from, it can nevertheless be seen in these extracts that Democrats only use the phrases *fuck up* and *fuck over*, while Republicans only use the phrase *go fuck*. The former are in past or present tense (predominantly past) and descriptive and the latter are in the present and future tense, either as a command or a prediction. The occurrences from the Democrat subcorpus all co-occur with preposition words, although they are not syntactically prepositional as they function as adverbs (something that is common for *up* but not for *over*<sup>5</sup>). Like *fuck* in these examples, the spatial adverbs are also metaphoric. The phrases *fuck up* and *fuck over* have very different meanings: the first relates to failure and destruction; the second relates to

<sup>5</sup> As shown in Oxford Dictionaries definitions of the two words.

disadvantaging and deception. All four metaphoric occurrences of *fuck* from the Democrat subcorpus are accusatory, while only one of the metaphoric occurrences of *fuck* from the Republican subcorpus is. In Extract 14 from the Republican subcorpus, the verb phrase *going to fuck* implies that this event has yet to occur, therefore it is speculative and bears less weight than the accusations from the Democrat subcorpus which imply that the processes have already occurred (Extracts 9 to 11) or are currently occurring (Extract 12). Overall, the word *fuck* occurred more frequently and with more weight in the Democrat subcorpus than in the Republican subcorpus. The occurrences from the Democrats subcorpus are accusatory of Republicans and, when *fuck* was used passively (Extracts 10 and 11), of society in general, which may be referring to American or western culture. As Hobbs identifies the word *fuck* as a metaphor for male sexual aggression (2013), these occurrences of *fuck* may have been used in reference to the patriarchal society that America is, has been and that the Republicans wish to perpetuate (Cohen, 2012; Kray, Mandell & Carroll, 2018; Richards, 2010).

#### **4.4 Sexual preferences**

This section focuses on the sexual preferences word group, in which there was a significant difference ( $p$  value = 0.009) between the frequencies in each subcorpus. The sexual preferences words (such as *gay* or *incest*) found in the two subcorpora were primarily used to either assign a category (or category related action) to a party, or to discuss a party's political position regarding sexual preferences, for example, their views on gay marriage. The former - assigning a category - was often done with the intent of insulting the opposing party. Almost all of the sexual preferences words refer to homosexuality (90.6% in the

Democrat subcorpus and 90% in the Republican subcorpus). Table 4.5 shows the relative frequencies for each of the sexual preferences words in the two subcorpora. As can be seen in the table, the Democrat subcorpus includes more sexual preferences words in general, with a total relative frequency of 30.84, more than one and a half times the total relative frequency of Republican sexual preferences words (19.04). This suggests that Democrat supporters are more likely to make references to sexual preferences than Republican supporters. Note that the words *bestiality*, *pedophile* and *incest* are included in the sexual preferences word group even though it seems insensitive and perhaps inaccurate to compare them to other sexual preference words such as *gay* or *lesbian*. Although *pedophilia* and *bestiality* (also referred to as ‘zoophilia’) are both classified as mental disorders in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-V* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), the World Health Organisation describes them as “disorders of sexual preference” (2010, section F65), so for the sake of this study, they have been included in this sexual preferences word group with no offense intended.

Table 4.5: Relative frequencies of sexual preferences words

Democrat		Republican	
Word	Relative Frequency	Word	Relative Frequency
sexuality	0.47	sexuality	0.31
heterosexual	0.47	heterosexual	0.31
homosexual	6.99	homosexual	3.74
homophobe	4.19	homophobe	1.25

gay	13.97	gay	10.29
incest	0.93	incest	0.62
lesbian	0.93	lesbian	0.31
bestiality	0.47	bestiality	0.31
faggot	1.86	faggot	0.94
pedophile	0.47	pedophile	0.31
		transvestite	0.62
Total	30.84	Total	19.04

Both subcorpora include sexual preferences words with negative connotations. These included *bestiality*, *incest*, *faggot* and *pedophile* in the Democrat subcorpus and *bestiality*, *incest*, *faggot*, *transvestite* and *pedophile* in the Republican subcorpus. Although there is a wider range of negative sexual preferences words in the Republican subcorpus, the overall relative frequency of such words was slightly higher in the Democrat subcorpus: 3.73 compared to 2.8. However, when the ratio between negative and non-negative sexual preferences words was examined, it was found that only 12.1% of Democrat sexual preferences words and 14.7% of Republican sexual preference words were negative. Given these low, and comparable, percentages, it is hard to conclude from these numbers alone which of the two parties' supporters were more or less inclined to use negative sexuality words to insultingly categorise the opposition. Nevertheless, negative sexual preference words were used in this way, and this is discussed in the following section.

#### 4.4.1 Sexual preferences as membership categories

In both the Democrat and the Republican subcorpora, the political opposition in general or specific people (like Obama) were categorised using one or more of the negative sexuality words mentioned above (*bestiality* or *faggot*, for example). Below are extracts from each subcorpora that contain derogatory sexuality words. Extracts 15 to 17 are from the Democrat subcorpus while Extracts 18 to 20 are from the Republican subcorpus.

15) *a man of decent, wholesome traditional values that involves him spitting on the poor, protecting the sanctity of marriage by using gay chat sites and engaging in bestiality...* (D)

16) *People who CLAIM to Morally Conservative, but turn out to be just as sodomnic and faggot as all the other parties.* (D)

17) *Oh, and now you stand up for your republican Pedophile buddies and instead talk about CLINTON!!* (D)

In Extracts 15, 16 and 17, the writers portray Republicans' sexualities as morally wrong and contradictory to their conservative policies. However, there seems to be some ambiguity when it comes to homosexuality for these Democrat writers, as homosexuality appears to be framed derogatorily in Extracts 15 and 16, for example by collocating *using gay chat sites* and *engaging in bestiality*, or accusing Republicans as being *sodomnic and faggot*, two pejorative words commonly associated with homosexuality. However, their negative categorisations of Republicans as 'homosexual' seem to be based primarily on Republicans' hypocrisy. For example, in Extract 15, the Democrat author claims Republicans fail to uphold their *wholesome traditional values* by not *protecting the sanctity of [their] marriage*. In Extract 16 the author describes Republicans as *just as sodomnic and faggot as all the other*

*parties*, inferring that Republicans' piety is an act. Although there is no excuse for that Democrat author's use of the offensive term *faggot*, it appears to be used to categorise Republicans negatively as hypocrites rather than as homosexuals. Lastly, in Extract 17, Republicans are categorised as hypocrites for being critical of Democrat President Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky in the late 1990s while a number of Republican politicians have been convicted of pedophilia crimes (Associated Press, 1990; Nichols, 2017).

18) *Person A: Hey did you vote for Obama in the '08 election?*

*Person B: No, I voted for McCain because i am NOT a faggot-ass Democrat.*

*Person A: . . . (R)*

19) *Little kid: Mommy, why is that man look like he is a gay pedophile?*

*Mommy: Because he is a democrat (R)*

20) *... you have to believe that homosexual parades displaying drag, transvestites and bestiality should be constitutionally protected and manger scenes at Christmas should be illegal. (R)*

In Extracts 18 to 20, the Republican writers negatively categorise Democrat supporters as homosexuals, LGBT allies, pedophiles or zoophiles. In Extract 18, they use the term *faggot-ass* with the suffix *-ass* intensifying the derogation; in Extract 19 they use the phrase *gay pedophile* to imply that both homosexuality and pedophilia are equally bad. In Extract 20, the author of that definition entry groups homosexuality and terms related to cross-dressing, i.e., *drag* and *transvestites*, with the objectively immoral activity of *bestiality*, as if they are all equally immoral. They categorise Democrats as morally corrupt by supporting "immoral"

acts and opposing “moral” (or morally neutral) religious traditions. Furthermore, the author simultaneously decries sexual freedom and promotes religious freedom, two freedoms that have been in tension with one another in recent years (Eskridge & Wilson, 2018; Seglow, 2018).

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined the frequencies of sex-related words in the Democrat and Republican subcorpora, as well as the use of metaphors and membership categorisations within the occurrences of these sex-related words. It was found that Democrats tend to use more sex-related metaphors than sex-related membership categorisations to describe Republicans and their views or actions while Republicans tend to use more sex-related membership categories than sex-related metaphors to describe Democrats.

Differing views of sexual morality seem to be a major contributing factor to the variance between the use of sexual words in each subcorpus. For example, Republicans categorise Democrats as sex workers or homosexuals, using pejorative terms such as *prostitute* and *faggot* to negatively describe them, yet Democrats generally would not take offense to those categorisations due to their party’s views on sexual freedom (Democratic National Committee, 2016). Although the legalisation of sex workers is not unanimously supported by Democrats, the party and its supporters have been leaning towards it in recent years (McKinley, 2019; Moore, 2015). As the majority of Democrats do not agree with Republicans’ views of sexual morality, Democrats predominantly used the category of

‘(sexual) hypocrite’ to describe Republicans. The words *rape* and *fuck* were the most frequently occurring sexual metaphors, and they occurred more than twice as frequently in the Democrat subcorpus than in the Republican subcorpus, perhaps in reference to patriarchal America as the offender. The following chapter, Physical and Mental Health, will discuss the metaphors and membership categorisations related to physical and mental health from the UD subcorpora.

## 5. Physical and mental health

### 5.0 Introduction

The second subcategory of biological processes is health. The concept of health can refer to a wide range of topics such as physical, mental, sexual, spiritual and many other varieties of health. Health is a common topic of discussion in politics as governments often make decisions as to how a country's health system is run. In U.S. politics, this is particularly common as the two dominant parties, Republicans and Democrats, have strong views of what is the best political approach to healthcare. Democrats have supported government-subsidised healthcare for decades, with Lyndon B. Johnson establishing Medicare & Medicaid in 1965 founded on the belief that healthcare is a right, not a privilege (Scott, 2016). Republicans, on the other hand, have championed private healthcare. Ronald Reagan's election in 1981 took the government and its healthcare policies in a more conservative direction, reducing the government's input into the healthcare system and promoting the private healthcare market (Patel & Rushefsky, 2015). Focusing on physical and mental health, this chapter examines the language of *republican* and *democrat* UD definition entries to reveal how supporters of the two parties portray certain aspects of health and diseases as qualities signature to the opposing party, both through the use of metaphor and membership categorisation.

## 5.1 Frequency analysis

The words from the health category were manually organised into two groups: health system words, such as *doctor*, *hospital* and *medicaid*, and personal health and diseases words, such as *cancer*, *vomit* and *pain*. As can be seen in Table 5.1 below, the Democrat subcorpus had more than double the relative frequency of total health words that the Republican subcorpus contained: 48.44 and 23.41, respectively. In both the Democrat and Republican subcorpora, there were slightly more health system words than personal health and diseases words (52% and 48% respectively in the Democrat corpus; 55% and 45% respectively in the Republican corpus). As health system words were generally used literally as references to the current, previous and potential future US health policies, health system words will not be looked at more closely. It is worth noting that, as indicated by the p values in Table 5.1 below, Democrats used significantly more health system words and personal health and diseases words than the Republicans ( $p < 0.001$ ). This may be a reflection of the importance that each party places on governmental assistance with health and medicine.

Table 5.1: Frequencies and relative frequencies of health-related words

	Democrat subcorpus		Republican subcorpus		P values
	Frequencies	Relative frequencies	Frequencies	Relative frequencies	
personal health and diseases	50	23.29	34	10.61	< 0.001 ***
health system	54	25.15	41	12.8	0.001 **
total	104	48.44	75	23.41	< 0.001 ***

\*\*\* = very significant, \*\* = quite significant, \* = somewhat significant

Upon closer inspection of the personal health and diseases words, it was decided that the group should be split into two subgroups: physical health and mental health. Mental health isn't explicitly covered by LIWC2015, but a cursory analysis of the corpus' health words picked up a number of extracts using the words *diagnosis* and *symptoms* in a mental health context. This motivated a manual search for mental health words: general mental health words like *mental*, *crazy*, *retard* and more specific ones like *anxiety* and *personality disorder*. Due to its lack of coverage in LIWC2015, as well as the overlap of some terminology in both the physical and mental health subcategories, the total frequencies of each subcategory could not be calculated by the software. As a result, the two subcategories have instead been qualitatively analysed in Sections 5.2 and 5.3. The following section examines the physical health words, looking in particular at their metaphoric use in the two subcorpora. Following that, Section 5.3 will examine the way that physical health words in the two subcorpora were often used as membership categorisations.

## **5.2 Physical health metaphors**

Physical health (and physical diseases) metaphors are commonly found in political discourse, such as in Hitler's *Mein Kampf* where he describes the German nation as a body needing to be shielded or cured from a disease that was spread by the Jewish parasites (Musolff, 2007), or, more recently, in a Washington Post column that described Trump as a "a cancer on the presidency" (Kelly, 2018, p. 293). In the two subcorpora, physical health metaphors were found much more frequently in the Democrat subcorpus than in the Republican subcorpus, although there were some found in each, as will be discussed in Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2.

### 5.2.1 Metaphors of poison and toxicity

Both of the two health-related metaphors found in the Republican subcorpus were surprisingly based on the same conceptual metaphor: DEMOCRATS ARE POISON. These two extracts are below:

- 1) *A skilled group of toxic self-serving hippies who financially and managerially refuse to support the policies they insist upon. (R)*
- 2) *An individual who believes that... Republicans... hijacked the government and ran it straight into the ground in an attempt to fight off the atheist commie terrorists poisoning the minds of children with their twisted propaganda. (R)*

Extracts 1 and 2 contain metaphors of poison with the adjective *toxic* in the former and the verb *poisoning* in the latter. Both are referring to the political ‘Other’ as the poison, either directly describing Democrats or by indirectly referring to them (and perhaps other left-wing political parties) as *atheist commie [communist] terrorists*. This is a commonly used metaphor, so common in fact that the words *poisonous* and *toxic* both have definitions of their metaphoric use in the Oxford Dictionary: “Poisonous. Adj. **1.2** Extremely unpleasant or malicious. *‘there was a poisonous atmosphere at the office’*” (Poisonous, n.d.); “Toxic. Adj. **1.2** Very bad, unpleasant, or harmful. *‘a toxic relationship’*” (Toxic, n.d.).

Poison metaphors are also commonly found in political discourse as a descriptor of the “Other” - whether that “Other” is a party, a politician or a people. For example, Chinese newspaper Ta Kung Pao described the Hong Kong democrats as *poison*, stating that if they

weren't *leached* from the metaphoric body of Hong Kong, Hong Kong would perish (Flowerdew & Leong, 2007). The same concept is implied in these metaphors of the US Democratic Party: if left untreated, they could kill America.

### **5.2.2 Metaphors of pain**

In the Democrat subcorpus, there are many physical health-related metaphors, including an extended metaphor (see Extract 3). The most common metaphor was REPUBLICANS ARE INDUCERS OF PAIN. Below are the four extracts containing that metaphor, all from the Democrat subcorpus:

- 3) *A group of heartless, callous, murderous, but painfully reasonable people.* (D)
- 4) *Republican: one who likes to cause your pain.* (D)
- 5) *An itching painful mass of enlarged veins found in red swollen anal tissue. Also called Hemorrhoids.* (D)

There is also one extract that shows a contrasting metaphor, REPUBLICANS ARE FEELERS OF PAIN:

- 6) *The angriest of all species, poor sports & sore losers.* (D)

All four examples show that pain metaphors are often used to communicate negative emotions such as frustration, sadness and shame. Lakoff, Espenson, & Schwartz (1991) identify this cognitive metaphor as “Psychological harm is physical injury”, giving the example metaphor “my pride was wounded” (p. 45). Extract 3, for example, describes

Republicans as *painfully reasonable people* despite their *heartless*-ness. Painfulness, in this context, is referring to the frustration caused because Republicans are conceived as reasonable and thus it is hard to challenge them and their *murderous* views. The phrase *painfully reasonable* is also oxymoronic, as reasonableness is usually considered a positive attribute. In Extract 6, the metaphor of *sore losers* is similar to the ‘wounded pride’ metaphor, where pain is used to tangibly illustrate the shame and embarrassment felt when loses. In Extract 4, pain is being used to characterise the level of hardship that they believe Republicans cause by not endorsing Government-funded support for those who need it.

Lastly, Extract 5 compares Republicans to *painful* hemorrhoids in great detail using a particularly creative physical health metaphor. This extended metaphor is degrading due to its relation to the anus (see Chapter 6 for more about excretion metaphors), although the writer does not describe Republicans as the anus itself but as a disease that is affecting the anus. The metaphorical location does infer something about the quality or value of Republicans - that they belong with other things that come out of one’s butt. As *itching* and *painful* are the two primary adjectives used to describe Republicans, one can deduce that the writer is using those metaphors to communicate the inconvenience and frustration that they cause.

### **5.3 Physical health and membership categorisation**

Although there are distinct differences between the ways that Republicans and Democrats categorise supporters of the other party, there are some similarities when it comes to physical

health categorisations. Negative health characteristics such as weakness and unhealthy lifestyles are attributed by the supporters of both parties to the opposing party. There are also more belief- or policy-centred accusations, for example, that the opposing party only supports the health, or that they exploit government-funded healthcare. Both of those accusations can be linked back to the parties' ideologies, such as the strict father versus nurturant parent model (Lakoff, 2016), which shall be briefly described here as it is relevant to this section (as well as other sections of this study). The strict father versus nurturant parent model is a metaphoric model of American politics, proposing that the divide between liberals and conservatives is based on the way they view their country (the family) and government (the parents). Lakoff proposes that liberals believe parents should be predominantly caring, express through open communication and provide the freedom to learn and grow without continually resorting to punishment in order to teach good behaviour and morals. With conservatives, Lakoff proposes that they believe the father should be strict and use punishment to teach good behaviour and morals with a 'tough love' mentality in order for the child to develop independence from the family. These can be translated to government support, such as Democrats believing the government should continually support those who need support, whereas Republicans believe the government should limit the support they provide for those that need it in order to prevent a dependence on the government as "welfare interferes with the only societal apparatus that can produce "good" people" (Lakoff, 2016, p. 64). These two contrasting metaphors are evident in the following sections which examine the ways that supporters of each party categorise the supporters of the opposing party in relation to health identities and ideologies.

### 5.3.1 Democrats, health policies and membership categorisation

Both membership categorisations in the Republican subcorpus categorise Democrats in ways that are related to their health policies. The two membership categorisations are below:

7) *A democrat is a left sided individual who most likely believes the following:*

*That an eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind so we'll give them medication for that. (R)*

8) *I called in sick today, so I'll be demming it up at home. (R)*

Although at a glance Extracts 7 and 8 probably seem quite different, they are both very accusatory of Democrats in regards to their views of healthcare. In Extract 7, the writer categorises Democrats as people who try to solve problems by prescribing medicine. The writer constructs Democrats as people who believe medication should be prescribed liberally, even when it is not necessary. This may be linked to the party's general support for improved access to healthcare, such as Obamacare (Democratic National Committee, 2016.). This extract also contains the metaphoric phrase *an eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind*, a statement which challenges consequential punishment and encourages graciousness instead. The phrase *eye for an eye* can be found in the Old Testament of the Bible: "eye for eye; tooth for tooth" (Leviticus 24:19-21), although Jesus denounced that statement in Matthew 5:38-39. It is unclear whether the author intentionally referenced progressive icon Martin Luther King Jr. (albeit loosely) who said "The reason I can't follow the old eye-for-an-eye philosophy is that it ends up leaving everyone blind" (as cited in Helmke, 2011). Regardless the writer distances themselves from the statement by framing it as something Democrats - the Other - would say, rather than Republicans - the Self. The writer of this entry categorises

Democrats as too forgiving, a characteristic that the strict father's 'tough love' mentality wouldn't allow (Lakoff, 2016).

In the UD definition that Extract 8 is from, the writer defines *Democrat* as 'a euphemism for a lazy person'. Extract 8 is the example from that definition (See Section 3.1 for more information about the structure of Urban Dictionary definitions). The example asserts that it is characteristic of Democrats to call in sick, constructing it as a membership category action of Democrats. Following the original definition, it likens laziness to calling in sick. This is may be linked to the American ideology that sickness, and taking sick leave in particular, is a sign of weakness (DeRigne, as quoted in Wheeler, 2016); an ideology which is particularly prominent among Republicans, and evidenced in Republican President George H. W. Bush's veto of medical leave acts in 1990 and 1992 (Wines, 1992). In contrast, Democrats tend to believe that the sick and disabled should be supported by the government, as shown by the Family and Medical Leave Act that was signed into law by Democrat President Bill Clinton in 1993 and subsequent Democratic Party policies.

### **5.3.2 Republicans, personal health and membership categorisation**

Extracts 9 and 10 below show examples of physical health-related membership categorisation from the Democrat subcorpus:

- 9) *As a Republican, I believe that we should invade all countries that are not like the United States and lay waste to all peoples who do not ascribe to our ideals, but I can't help cuz I got a bum elbow. And I get dizzy if I see blood. Go USA! (D)*

*10) a selfish ignorant sadist who will one day contribute to the suffering and destruction of the whole of humanity except a few of richest, most selfish, most fundamentalist christians who are all white, physically healthy and straight. (D)*

Ironically, the two extracts are somewhat opposing in the attributes they assign to Republicans. Extract 9 categorises Republicans as having poor physical health by attributing to them a *bum elbow* and the tendency to *get dizzy if I see blood*. Both could be considered attributes of weakness: an injury and a predisposed weakness. Written in satirical first person, the self-described Republican character states that they want aggressive action taken against *all peoples who do not ascribe to our ideals* yet is incapable of partaking in such action themselves due to their somewhat poor health. Extract 10, on the other hand, implicitly categorises Republicans as majoritarian; more specifically it describes Republicans as supporters solely of people who are like them, for example, *physically healthy*. This attribute of support for the physically healthy implies that Republicans do not support the disabled, a characteristic that will have been inspired by their dispreference of government support for people with disabilities and people who cannot afford health insurance. It also categorises Republicans as social Darwinists, which has been a conflicting ideology for Republicans over the last few centuries (Lynerd, 2014). Darwinism, a distorted interpretation of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, discourages assisting the diseased and disabled thus 'playing God' and delaying the necessary "perishing of the weak" (Lynerd, 2014, p. 138).

### **5.3.3 Republicans, Democrats and weight**

Continuing on from the membership categorisation of Republicans as either unfit or in perfect health, the following extracts are occurrences of the word *fat* in the two subcorpora. The

following six extracts, 11-13 from the Republican subcorpus and 14-16 from the Democrat subcorpus, categorise each party as *fat*:

11) *The superior political party who believes in being practical and working hard to succeed rather than sitting on their fat ass and live off of welfare like a democrat. (R)*

12) *Democrats are party of politicians that think "fair" is taxing the asses off of people that succeed at life just to give it to some Fat Bastard that sits in his apartment all day watching t.v and pissing and moaning that life dealt him " a bad hand" and expects everyone to support him for it. (R)*

13) *That fat bitch votes Democrat because she needs the government's money to sit at home. (R)*

14) *-A rich person trying to help himself; -fat; -Mainly from the south [...]. (D)*

15) *Maybe you should start raising a commotion over the fact that your nation is being controlled by a small group of fat rich white men who don't give a shit about anyone but themselves. (D)*

16) *When Europeans think of America, they think of fat, SUV-driving, bigoted hicks. They think of Republicans. (D)*

Notably, each occurrence of *fat* collocated with one of two words: *rich* or *sit*, depending which subcorpus it is from. Extracts from the Democrat subcorpus collocated *fat* with *rich* and extracts from the Republican subcorpus collocated *fat* with *sit*. The concepts of sitting and being rich can be linked to each party's view on wealth redistribution and government-run welfare programs. Republicans are known to support self-earned income, particularly for

the middle-class (Republican National Committee, 2016). They view taxes as taking their own hard-earned money away from them and giving it to someone else who did not work to earn it - hence the use of the membership category action *sit* - characterising Democrats as lazy, not hard-working and, as a result, fat. The words *welfare*, *taxing* and *government's money* in Extracts 11-13 show that this perception is based primarily on the Democratic Party's policies.

Democrats, contrastively, support wealth redistribution through increased taxes and government spending on welfare programs (Democratic National Committee, 2016). The use of the collocate *rich* (or *SUV-driving* which implies rich) constructs Republicans as having too much money to spend and as a result are fat. This is probably tied to the belief that they are big consumers in general and, as discussed above, predominantly eat meat which has been linked to obesity (Wang & Beydoun, 2009). The words *himself*, *themselves*, and *bigoted* in Extracts 14-16 show that Democrats consider Republicans - and their desire to withhold taxes and the resulting government support for those who need it - as selfish and greedy.

## **5.4 Mental health**

As mentioned above, mental health is not a category (or subcategory) within LIWC2015, nor are mental health words included in the health subcategory. However, through an examination of the words in the LIWC health subcategory, which included words not exclusive to physical health such as *symptoms* and *diagnosis*, mental health words were found in the UD subcorpora and then searched for manually (using AntConc) in order to find more

mental health words. General mental health words like *mental*, *crazy*, *retard* were searched for, as well as more specific mental health terms like *anxiety* and *personality disorder*. It was found that the Democrat subcorpus had more than three times the relative frequency of mental health words than the Republican corpus. They were generally used derogatively. Table 5.2 shows the frequencies of mental health words in each subcorpus.

Table 5.2: Frequencies and relative frequencies of mental health words in Democrat and Republican subcorpora

Democrat subcorpus		Republican subcorpus	
Frequency	Relative frequency	Frequency	Relative frequency
23	10.71	11	3.43

The most frequently used mental health word in both subcorpora is *retard* so it was decided to look more closely at its use in the two subcorpora. *Retard* has 7 occurrences in the Republican subcorpus (relative frequency = 2.18) and 12 in the Democrat subcorpus (relative frequency = 5.6).

#### 5.4.1 *Retard* as metaphor and membership categorisation

Mental illnesses and intellectual disabilities have often been viewed negatively, hence the contemporary use of the words *idiot*, *imbecile* and *moron* as insult words, when they originally referred to intellectual disabilities in a health setting (Halmari, 2011; Sherry & Neller, 2016). It is now inappropriate for these words to be used in a health setting (or any formal or professional setting) due to their offensiveness. Similarly, the word *retard* has

pejorated significantly since its original use as medical terminology, so much so a call emerged for its prohibition in medical journals (Danforth, 2002; Gelb, 2002; Goode, 2002; Schalock, 2002; J. D. Smith, 2002, Turnbull, Turnbull, Warren, Eidelman & Marchand, 2002; Wolfensberger, 2002). In 2007, the journal *Mental Retardation* rebranded as *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* in response to the change in meaning of the word *retard* and its variants. From 2000 to 2010, governments, media and the general public also fought back against its usage (Ouch Team, n.d.; Diament, 2010; Spread the Word, 2019). The majority of the Urban Dictionary data collected was from 2005 to 2010 and almost 70% of the entries extracted for analysis were from this time period (for more information, see Section 3.1). It is interesting, yet unsurprising given Urban Dictionary's reputation, that the word *retard* is found relatively frequently in this corpus. What is surprising, however, is that the subcorpus with the highest relative frequency of *retard* words is the Democrat subcorpus (see Tables 6.4 and 6.5), even though Democrats are known for striving to end discrimination towards people with mental illnesses, as stated in their 2004 Democratic National Platform (Democratic National Committee, 2004). This could be because people (or perhaps Democrats in particular) forget their moral standings when in verbal combat with the opposition, or, simply, because there is a strong association between political views and mental illness, and it isn't necessarily exclusive to one party's discourses. On Twitter, the hashtag #liberalismisamentaldisorder has taken off since Trump's election in 2016. Used by far-right Trump supporters, it likens liberal beliefs to insanity. On the other side of the political spectrum, left-wing Trump critics argue that Trump himself - the epitome of Republican ideology - is mentally ill (Baldwin, 2017). Overall, it is surprising that Democrats use mental health stigma words more often than Republicans, as in multiple studies they have

been associated with less hostility towards mental illnesses (DeLuca & Yanos, 2016; Alexander & Link, 2003).

Tables 5.3 and 5.4 show the occurrences of *retard* in context. In the Republican subcorpus, there are six occurrences of the adjective *retarded* (lines 1-4, 6,7) and one occurrence of the noun *retard* (line 5). Three of the occurrences of *retarded* are used metaphorically to describe Democrat policies, beliefs or practices as inferior or flawed (lines 2, 6 and 7). Two of the occurrences of *retarded* are membership categorisations (lines 3 and 4), and the one occurrence of *retard* (line 5) is a membership categorisation. These three membership categorisations assign mental disability as characteristic of Democrats. These categorisations are also metaphoric as they equate having a contrasting belief to an intellectual or developmental disability. The final occurrence of *retarded* in the Republican categorises Democrats as being incapable of sufficiently caring for a disabled baby.

Table 5.3: Concordance of *retard* occurrences in Republican subcorpus

1	they were raped or the baby was severely	retarded	and the parents couldn't handle it. Also,
2	just wind up in more debt. Obama's	retarded	health care plan is typical of a Democrat
3	arrogant, overbearing, inconsiderate, heartless	retarded,	hypocritical, brainless, parasitic fragments of
4	make themselves feel better about being mentally	retarded	2.someone who hates republicans but joins the
5	YOU'RE AN INSENSITIVE RACIST DORK POOPHEAD	RETARD	STUPID BUTTFACE JERK!!!! A democrat is a person
6	are over in Iraq for Oil is fucking	Retarded.	To fight against having our troops in Iraq
7	billions into a save the whale foundation is	retarded	yet every liberal idiot believes it is an

In the Democrat subcorpus, there are twelve occurrences of the root word *retard*. There are four occurrences of the noun *retard* (lines 1, 6, 7 and 11), seven occurrences of the adjective *retarded* (lines 2, 3, 5, 8-10 and 12) and one occurrence of the noun *retardation* (line 4).

Unlike in the Republican subcorpus, *retarded* is never used to describe policies, beliefs or practices. Instead, ten of the twelve refer to Republicans as retarded, one refers to Republican’s tendency to *pander[...]* to the marginally retarded (line 5), and, intriguingly, just as there was in the Republican subcorpus, the Democrat subcorpus also contains one reference to their offspring as being retarded (line 8). Also, two of the references to Republicans as retarded specifically describe a president or presidential candidate as retarded (line 6 and 7). There are no such references in the Republican subcorpus. Lastly, three of the twelve occurrences are found in proper dictionary definition-style entries where the word *republican* is defined as a synonym for *retard* or *retarded*.

Table 5.4: Concordance of *retard* occurrences in Democrat subcorpus

1	this political party, you’re either a	retard,	a redneck, a person who hates technology,
2	an insult to replace words such as	‘retarded’	and ‘gay’. 2. A word to describe something
3	rich people’s political party. Some are	retarded	and most are bribed. If you vote
4	abundance of violence, misdirected hatred, mental	retardation,	drunken offspring, inbreeding, political misconduct
5	to religious zealots, racists, and the marginally	retarded.	Fortunately for the Republicans, the issues that
6	democrats crackheads without realizing that the	retard	in office is the only crackhead around.
7	political term used as a synonym for	Retard.	Intellectual 1: Mitt Romney was such a republican
8	their sister is fucked up, and makes	retarded	kids. They also are proud of being
9	Stupid their party is. Person 1: Are you	retarded	Person2: No Im just republican. A hypocrite
10	his mom hates gay people. A completetly	retarded	political party that tries to force their
11	Dad would love it.” (noun) a political	retard.	Republican: If we follow the Bible we
12	to describe something as shitty, ‘gay’ or	‘retarded’,	stupid, nonsensical, outrageous, etc., because

To conclude this section, Democrats and Republicans both used the words *retard*, *retarded* and *retardation* when defining the other party on Urban Dictionary. Republican supporters tended to use the word *retarded* metaphorically to describe the policies, whereas Democrat supporters tended to use the word *retarded* as a descriptor of the Republican people. Both

parties usage of this word is discriminatory towards people with intellectual disabilities, although the Democrat supporters' use of it is far more surprising as it goes against the party policies explicitly stated in their platform (Democrat National Committee, 2016).

## 5.5 Conclusion

A number of concluding observations have emerged from this chapter. Firstly, supporters of each party attributed characteristics of poor physical and mental health to the opposing party using words such as *fat* and *retarded*. In some instances, while supporters of both parties deployed the same words, they were used in different ways. An example of this is the Democrat supporters' collocation of *fat* with *rich* and the Republican supporters' collocation of *fat* with *lazy*.

Secondly, and unlike the previous chapter, there are references to specific party policies in these health-related metaphors and membership categorisations. It is noticeable, though, that this only really occurs in extracts from the Republican subcorpus. As shown in Section 5.3.1, for example, Democrats were categorised as - and implicitly critiqued for - utilising and being dependent on the public health system. No such assertions were made by Democrats in regards to how Republicans use the health system.

Thirdly, while the Republican critiques of Democrats was relatively consistent, Democrats' critiques of Republicans were at times contradictory. This can be seen in Section 5.3.2, where Democrat supporters contradict each other by attributing opposing physical characteristics to

Republicans. In one extract Republicans are characterised as being *physically healthy* (alongside other majoritarian traits such as being white and straight) while in the other extract Republicans are characterised as having a *bum elbow* plus other traits depicting their overall weakness such as getting *dizzy when I see blood*.

Lastly, it is interesting that the metaphors that were exclusive to each party - pain metaphors from the Democrat subcorpus and poison metaphors from the Republican subcorpus - have no direct relationship to each party, ideologically or historically. They are both commonly associated with Othering, so it is unsurprising that they existed in the corpus, yet it is surprising, and at this stage unexplainable, that each metaphor was only found in one of the two subcorpora.

## 6. Ingestion, digestion and excretion

### 6.0 Introduction

As discussed in Section 3.3.1, the last subcategory of the biological processes category that occurs in LIWC is ingestion. The words that LIWC recognises as belonging in this subcategory are mainly items being ingested, such as *breakfast*, *burger* or *alcohol*, though it also recognises some words related to digestion such as *digest*, or to lack of ingestion, such as *starve*. Some words related to digestion, however, were not recognised by LIWC as belonging to this subcategory, such as *stomach* or *gut*, and neither were words related to the process of excretion, such as *anus* and *crap*. As explained in Chapter 3, some manual reorganisation of words into their relevant categories was necessary. As part of this process, digestion and excretion words were included in the same category as ingestion words, which was subsequently titled ingestion, digestion and excretion (IDE), as a result of that process.

Although food and digestion are not commonly associated with politics, they have been of particular political importance in the twenty-first century in response to America's obesity epidemic (Biltekoff, 2013) and global warming (Soret et al., 2014). Diet is also routinely associated with identities, such as national, ethnic and socio-economic identities (Sebastian, 2016; Caplan, 1997). This chapter focuses on diet identities of each political group and metaphors of feeding and excretion.

## 6.1 Frequency analysis

The words from the ingestion, digestion and excretion subcategory were manually organised into groups of words in order to see if there were any differences between the frequencies of words in these groups in each subcorpus. The five groups were consumables such as *lunch*, *cheese*, or *beer*; states, such as *hungry* or *drunk*; verbs such as *digest* or *taste*; ingestion, digestion and excretion-related organs, such as *stomach* or *anus*; and lastly, excrement, such as *shit* and *poop*. As seen in Table 6.1, there are no significant differences between each subtopic's frequencies in the two subcorpora ( $p < .05$ ). The p values in the table confirm that any difference between the frequencies of each subtopic in each subcorpus could simply be caused by chance. This is the only results chapter whose frequency analysis shows no significant differences between quantitative results from each subcorpus.

Table 6.1: Frequencies of ingestion-, digestion- and excretion-related words

	Democrat subcorpus		Republican subcorpus		p value
	frequency	relative frequency	frequency	relative frequency	
consumables	21	9.78	24	7.49	0.374
states	7	3.26	4	1.25	0.116
IDE verbs	12	5.59	16	4.99	0.769
IDE organs	47	21.9	57	17.79	0.294
excrement	29	13.51	43	13.42	0.979
total	116	54.03	144	44.94	0.142

As the quantitative analysis did not indicate any significant areas of interest, all five groups were searched for metaphors and membership categorisations. As a result, the following three topics were selected for closer analysis: diet, identity and membership categorisation (see Section 6.2), feeding metaphors (see Section 6.3) and excretion metaphors (see Section 6.4).

## **6.2 Diet, identity and membership categorisation**

Although humankind is generally omnivorous, the food one eats and the diet one follows - consciously or otherwise - says a lot about one's culture and identity (Fischler, 1988; Hastorf, 2017). This may have originally been affected by environmental factors such as access, or lack thereof, to certain natural food types, or cultural factors such as religious dietary restrictions or specific recipes passed down through family. Nowadays, with the ability to import food from all around the world, cultural, ethical and economic factors are more likely to affect one's diet (Fischler, 1988).

In the definitions of Democrats and Republicans on Urban Dictionary, inferences are made in relation to their diets. When searching through the IDE verbs, the word *eat*, a transitive verb, was often followed by what it is that a people generally eat - their diet. Democrats are categorised as vegans/vegetarians whereas Republicans are categorised as barbecue and/or red meat eaters. It is interesting that the two party-specific diets are binary opposites.

### **6.2.1 Democrats as vegans**

Below are three extracts in which Democrats are categorised as vegans or vegetarians and Republicans as opposing veganism/vegetarianism. Extract 1 and 2 are from the Republican subcorpus and Extract 3 is from the Democrat subcorpus. Extract 1 and 2 are the examples given for two UD definitions (see Section 3.2 for more information on the structure of UD definitions) which often, as in these extracts, are statements written as if they were from an ally's or opposition's mouth. Extract 3 is from the main definition, rather than the example.

- 1) *Meat is Murder! That cow is probably your grandma. Don't eat it for dinner. And ban rodeo and circus animals too.* (R)
- 2) *"So you don't eat meat? What are you, some kind of DEMOCRAT?"* (R)
- 3) *It is not uncommon to be given dirty looks by the Republican for wearing... a PETA shirt... Never tell them that you are a vegetarian....* (D)

Extracts 1 and 3 categorise Democrats as vegans/vegetarians as well as, implicitly, PETA activists. In Extract 1, they assign the discourses of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatments of Animals) activists to Democrats. *Meat is Murder!* and *And ban rodeo and circus animals too* are both statements that PETA have made (Mika, 2006; PETA, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Extract 3 explicitly categorises Democrats as vegetarians and PETA supporters and Republicans as haters of vegetarians and PETA supporters.

Extract 2 constructs vegetarianism as characteristic of Democrats and categorises Democrats as vegetarians. Both identities, Democrats and vegetarians, pride themselves in being progressive and ethical, yet are perceived negatively due to the way they distance themselves from traditional views as if they are immoral (Minson & Monin, 2012). Furthermore, in this extract, being a Democrat and being vegetarian are both portrayed as definitively negative traits. The phrase "What are you, some kind of \_\_\_\_\_?" is commonly completed with a negative identity word, such as freak or moron. For example, when that phrase is searched for in the *Corpus of Global Web-based English*, the sentence is completed using the words *moron*, *masochist* and *socialist* (Davies, 2013). These three extracts, which represent the voices of both Republican and Democrat supporters, all work to construct Democrats as

vegetarian and Republicans as strong against both Democrats and vegetarians, with the latter two categorisations constituted as one and the same.

### 6.2.2 Republicans as meat eaters

Continuing on from the identity construction of Republicans as people who dislike vegetarians, below are two extracts from the Democrat subcorpus in which Republicans are constructed as meat- and/or BBQ-eaters.

4) *Members of the Republican Party, believed to once be a cult, they try to demolish the States and the rest of the world with the following: [...] eating BBQ[...] Lets watch the e-lek-ti-un coverage whiles we eats us some BBQ at Mom's!* (D)

5) *Pre-diabetic people [...] usually identified by their: [...] allergies to non-red-meat foods.* (D)

Barbecue (or BBQ) has a strong social history in American culture as its “only authentic cuisine” (LaCombe, 2013, 863). Its real and invented origin in Native American and Caribbean culture is ironic given that it is today considered the “national dish of the South” which is a largely white, largely Republican part of the United States (Reed, 2007, 138). Extract 4 lists eating BBQ as one of the ways that Republicans are trying to destroy the world. It then gives an example of a Republican talking about eating BBQ: *Lets watch the e-lek-ti-un coverage whiles we eats us some BBQ at Mom's!* The choice of vocabulary and grammar used construct Republicans as unintelligent and lacking English speaking skills, as though these are traits that co-occur with BBQ eating.

The writer of Extract 5 categorises Republicans as meat-eaters and as people with unhealthy lifestyles. The use of the word *allergies* as opposed to personal distaste characterises Republicans as so dependent on eating red meat that they are physically incapable of eating anything else. Furthermore, it constructs their inability to eat food other than red meat as the result of a poor diet and lack of exposure to a broader range of foods. The use of this allergy metaphor bears similarities to the physical health metaphors in Chapter 5. Allergy metaphors have been identified in political discourse before (Hook, 1984), and, as Nettleton, Woods, Burrows & Kerr (2009) state, “notions of the ‘self’ and the ‘non-self’ form the essence of immunology; the immune system functions precisely because it is able to distinguish that which is ‘foreign’, ‘an invade’ or ‘an allergen’” (p. 658). The level of dislike towards BBQ- and meat-eaters found in the subcorpora is less intense than the level of dislike found towards vegetarians, as was evidenced in the previous section. This may be because the relationship between meat-eating and Republicans seems less emblematic than vegetarianism is for Democrats.

### **6.3 Feeding metaphors**

Following on from looking at the verb *eat*, metaphors of the verb *feed* and its variants were identified and analysed. Two metaphorical uses of the word *feed/fed* (Extracts 6 and 8 below) were found in the subcorpora, along with another extract which does not contain the word *feed/fed*, but did have a similar motherly feeding metaphor (Extract 7). Extract 7 was discovered when searching LIWC’s sexual wordlist yet it had more relevance,

metaphorically, to feeding than sex so was manually added to the IDE wordlist. All three extracts are from the Republican subcorpus.

6) *liberalism promotes spoon feeding the incompetent, while conservatism promotes hard work and having each citizen make their own living and moreover, control their own lives.*

(R)

7) *Someone who won't let go of the government's tit....they rely on it so badly.* (R)

8) *An incredibly ignorant person fed their daily knowledge by the likes of Dan Rather and Jon Stewart.* (R)

Extracts 6 and 7 contain motherly feeding metaphors - *spoon feeding the incompetent* and *won't let go of the government's tit* - that can be linked to the conceptual metaphor of NATION AS FAMILY/GOVERNMENT AS PARENT, or the strict father versus nurturant parent model (see Section 5.3 for more information about this model). In this model, Republicans believe the government should function like a strict father, while in contrast Democrats believe the government should function like a nurturant parent (Lakoff, 2016). Independence is a significant part of the strict father model, with dependence on the parent/government, as shown in these extracts, seen as the result of Democrat governance.

The act of feeding, even without an inferred spoon or breast, still suggests infantilisation and dependence on the part of those who are being fed as well as power for that who is doing the feeding (Hunter, 1997). Extract 8 refers to people of the media - journalist Dan Rather and satirical talk show host Jon Stewart, rather than the government - as the ones feeding the Democrats. The metaphor of feeding *daily knowledge* to the Democrats constructs Democrats

as acquiring political alongside other information (or *knowledge*) from liberal media outlets like CBS or Comedy Central. This metaphor communicates ignorance and selective media consumption as characteristic of Democrats. This is another example of membership categorisation and metaphor co-occurring. This metaphor also constructs the media as using their power to feed Democrats propaganda-esque information, another membership categorisation.

#### **6.4 Excretion metaphors**

Excrement words were found frequently in both subcorpora, as the word group with the second highest frequency in the ingestion, digestion and excretion subcategory. Excrement words are considered taboo so the process of excretion - and the trials and tribulations one might face during this process - is not often discussed, and when it is it uses euphemism (Allan & Burrige, 2006). Thus the frequent use of excrement words in these subcorpora was noticeable and intriguing. Most of the occurrences were used as metaphors. Metaphors of excretion are often used to devalue a person or object by associating it with something that humans have been ashamed of for centuries (El Maarouf, 2016). One takes a 'shit' behind closed doors for a reason, and there are extensive systems to dispose of such 'shit' with as little human contact as possible (Bussey, 2015; Jones 2017). People like to have as little to do with their own, and others', 'shit' as possible, so likening someone or something to shit asserts that they are unpleasant, unlikeable or simply have no value.

#### 6.4.1 Frequencies of excrement words

As seen in Table 6.1 above, excrement words were relatively common in both subcorpora, and as evidenced by the p value of 0.979, they were used very evenly in both subcorpora. Table 6.2 below shows the frequencies of individual excretion-related words. This includes excrement words, such as *shit* and *poop*, as well as the organ words that are relevant to excretion such as *ass* and *anal*.

Table 6.2: Frequencies of words related to excretion

Word stem	Democrat subcorpus		Republican subcorpus		P value
	Frequency	Relative frequency	Frequency	Relative frequency	
shit	25	11.64	33	10.29	0.644
poo/poop	3	1.39	1	0.31	0.157
crap	1	0.47	9	2.81	0.033 *
ass	33	15.37	45	14.04	0.695
bum/butt	1	0.47	8	2.5	0.053
anus/anal	3	1.39	1	0.31	0.157
Total	66	30.74	97	30.27	0.924

As indicated by the p values in Table 6.2, only the difference in relative frequencies of *crap* is of any interest as the p values of the other words suggest that they occur relatively evenly across both subcorpora. *Bum/butt*, however, with a near significant p value of 0.053 may also warrant further attention. Both *crap* and *bum/butt* were found more frequently in the Republican subcorpus, which is potentially due to the respective idiolects of the two groups in that *crap* and *bum/butt* are both slightly more conservative alternatives to *shit* and *ass*, and are therefore more likely to be employed by Republicans than Democrats.

Although *shit* had occurred reasonably evenly in both subcorpora, it was decided that it would be interesting to look at the way that each party used the word *shit* when talking about the other party. This was especially due to the fact that some Republicans used the conservative alternatives *crap* and *poop*, yet the word *shit* occurred almost as frequently in the Republican subcorpus as in the Democrat subcorpus.

According to Waltner-Toews (2013) the word *shit* has many metaphoric meanings:

*Shit is used as an expression of dismay and disgust (a piece of shit) or frustration (oh shit), surprise or incredulity (no shit?!), or to describe trouble (in deep shit, up the creek without a paddle), casual conversation (shoot the shit), cowardice (chickenshit), fear (shit one's pants), hysteria (apeshit), insincerity (horseshit, bullshit), care (to give a shit), anything that one doesn't like (looks like shit, tastes like shit), or substances, particularly illegal drugs, one likes (best shit I ever had).*

- David Waltner-Toews, 2013, p 6.

Remarkably, almost all of the 58 occurrences in the corpus referred to something someone disliked.

#### **6.4.2 Extended excretion metaphors**

Within these 58 occurrences of *shit* in the two subcorpora, a number of extended excretion metaphors were also found in the corpus. These can be evidenced in Extracts 5 and 6, from the Democrat subcorpus, and Extract 7, from the Republican subcorpus.

5) *Maybe if you wiped the shit off of your ass those fucking Republicans would go away.*

(D)

6) *an anus. anal retentive. ass squeezer. perfect narcissist bitch-hole.aka: asshole, poop-chute, george bush, georges mom and poo poo daughter girls. i wanna billy bob a squeert me ins me republican with his taters-balls sauce.* (D)

7) *A BiG friggin' butt-hole*

*Bush Sr: That sob Democrat Obama's about to flush America down the toilet, son!*

*Bush Jr: Yeah dad... he's a big friggin' butt-hole, ain't he pops! He fooled us once... he's not gonna fool us again!* (R)

Extract 5 is the example provided for a definition of Republicans examined earlier in Section 5.2.2 which stated: *An itching painful mass of enlarged veins found in red swollen anal tissue. Also called Hemorrhoids.* As a result, Republicans are metaphorised as haemorrhoids in this extract (see Section 5.2.2 for further discussion on this metaphor), which also gives rise to the metaphor that *wip[ing] the shit off of your ass* is the best way to get rid of Republicans. The latter is an extended metaphor which can be interpreted as a metaphor of taking action (*wiped... off*) to end or prevent Republican policies (*the shit*) that are negatively affecting one's country - in this case, America - (*your ass*). Extended metaphors are "powerful argumentative devices" commonly found in political discourses (Oswald & Rihs, 2014, p. 134). Through extended metaphors the "implications are repeatedly emphasized, discovered and rediscovered, and carried forth into new applications" (Brummett, 2009, p. 81), which can then lead to the metaphor being "considered as a literal statement" (Oswald & Rihs, 2014, p. 144).

Extract 6 is full of metaphors and membership categorisations related to the anus. The metaphors, *an anus...*, *asshole*, *poop-chute*, are all different words for anus (*poop-chute* is a slang term that refers to the anus) and *anal retentive* and *ass squeezer* are membership categorisations assigned to Republicans. The former, *anal retentive*, refers to someone who is controlling and obsessive over small details. *Ass squeezer* is not a commonly used slang or colloquial term, per se, but similar terms like *butt squeeze* refer to squeezing someone's (usually a women's) bottom cheeks to sexually arouse the squeezer or the squeezee. The overall purpose of this definition seems to be relating Republicans to the anus/ass both metaphorically and through assigning anus-related category-bound actions to them. That is, Republicans are anuses themselves, and they do things related to anuses, thus their value is equal to that of anuses.

Extract 7 uses the word *butt-hole* instead of *anus* or *asshole*, most probably due to the Republicans' preference for conservative language choice, as mentioned above. It also includes the only occurrence of the word *toilet* in the corpus. The first metaphor constructs Obama's actions as president akin to flushing America down the toilet; that is, his actions are ruining America and bringing it shame by treating it like excrement. This metaphor is also extended, going on to constitute Obama as a *big friggin' butt-hole*; in that he produces excrement himself and that his policies and actions as president are of a similar quality to excrement. It is particularly evident - and worth noting - that these extended metaphors have no direct references to real life events or occurrences, or even ideologies specific to a party. They are vague and derogate the other party, or specific politicians from the other party such as Obama, in general. All three extended metaphors could be used in regards to either party.

The only aspect that differentiates the two is the choice of excrement words: *shit* and *ass* in the two Democrat extracts and *butt-hole* in the Republican extract.

## 6.5 Conclusion

Although the analysis in this chapter had little quantitative variation between the two subcorpora in terms of the occurrence of ingestion, digestion and excretion words, a qualitative examination of the two subcorpora did find clear differences between the use of these words as metaphors and membership categorisations. Similarly to Chapter 4, it could be argued that some of the differences identified could be linked to the particular idiolect of the extract writer (for example, the choice between *shit* and *poop* or *ass* and *butt*) and determined by their affiliation with the more conservative values of the Republicans or the more liberal values of the Democrats.

Lastly, the diet membership categorisations created a significant divide between the two parties based on diet alone, as diet is an important representation of one's morals. In regards to the metaphors that were analysed, the first group - feeding metaphors - were exclusively found in the Republican subcorpus and evidently communicated an ideology shared by Republicans whereas the second group - excretion metaphors - showed little variation between the two subcorpora, including no real ideological differences.

## 7. Discussion and conclusion

### **7.0 Introduction**

This chapter will summarise the key observations of this research in response to the two research questions before discussing its overall contributions to knowledge, its limitations, opportunities for future research and the final conclusions.

### **7.1 Key observations**

In response to research question 1, ‘How do political communities describe members of other political communities in an unmoderated, anonymous online setting?’ this study has found that both Republicans and Democrats use metaphors and membership categorisation related to health, sex and ingestion, digestion and excretion, albeit to different extents, when describing the opposing party in Urban Dictionary.

Seven key observations related to this finding have emerged from the study. These involve the use of membership categorisation and metaphor in Urban Dictionary definitions (Section 7.1.1); the relationship between metaphor, membership categorisation and ideology (Section 7.1.2); negative identity construction (Section 7.1.3); strict father and nurturant parent metaphors (Section 7.1.4) and lastly the political polarisation that is reflected and affected by

the Urban Dictionary definitions. These will be summarised in further detail in the sections below.

### **7.1.1 Use of membership categorisation and metaphor**

An important observation that emerged from the study was that there were distinct differences in the ways that Democrats and Republicans used metaphor and membership categorisations when describing the opposing party. For example, the metaphors of *pain* only occurred in the Democrat subcorpus and metaphors of *poison* only occurred in the Republican subcorpus. This suggests that each party's supporters construct the identity of the other party's supporters in different ways.

Furthermore, Republicans seem to attribute characteristics to the opposing party more literally, mostly using membership categorisations such as *fat* and *lazy*. In contrast, the Democrats tended to describe the Republicans more metaphorically, for example likening them to hemorrhoids in order to communicate that they induce negative emotions such as frustration or sadness. This may suggest that right-wing supporters are less metaphorical in their online language use than left-wing supporters. Interestingly, Musolff (2007), in a study that perhaps runs counter to the observations here.

It was also observed that membership categorisation and metaphor often coexist. An example of this is the phrase *allergies to non-red-meat foods* (from the Democrat subcorpus). This phrase primarily categorises Republicans as exclusively eaters of red meat, while at the same time the use of *allergies* metaphorises the Republicans having a physical weakness. Another example is the frequent use of the strict father and nurturant mother metaphor alongside

membership categorisations (see Section 5.3 for examples). As indicated, these are deeply ingrained metaphors that provide insight into supporters of the two parties and their relationships with the government (Lakoff, 2016). This co-occurrence of membership categorisation and metaphor has also been observed in other studies (Housley, Webb, Edwards, Procter & Jirotko, 2017; Nartey, 2018) although there has been no discussion, to the researcher's knowledge, of the importance or the implications of their co-occurrence.

Lastly, it was observed that at times it was difficult to discern whether a word or phrase was an example of membership categorisation, or if it was an example of metaphor. For example, *retard* and *prostitute* can both be membership categories as, like *vegetarian*, they are identities that can be assigned to people. However, they also could be considered metaphors, as *retard* and *prostitute*, the source domains, could be used to communicate certain characteristics such as ineptness or promiscuity, the target domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This confirms and expands the statement above, that the relationship between metaphor and membership categorisation requires further attention. This will be discussed in Section 7.5.4.

### **7.1.2 Relationship between metaphor, membership categorisation and ideology**

A number of findings emerged regarding the relationship between metaphor, membership categorisation and ideology.

Firstly, while some metaphors found in the two subcorpora specifically reflected the values and beliefs of the party supported by the writer of the definitions (for example, the Republican beliefs that government intervention is bad and their construction of Democrats

as spoon fed), most were in fact metaphors used universally to criticise others (i.e. Othering metaphors). These metaphors, such as *shit*, worked to distance the writer from the subject they were speaking of by associating them with negative phenomena. In contrast, while some of the membership categorisations, such as *fat* and *bestiality*, that appeared in the two subcorpora were of a more universal nature, most membership categorisations, however, assigned categories that reflected the specific values and beliefs of the party supported by the writer of the definitions, including their beliefs about the nature of the opposing party. For example, the Democrats were categorised by Republicans as vegetarians, sex workers and people who take sick leave, while Republicans were categorised by Democrats as meat-eaters and majoritarians.

Interestingly, however, the beliefs held by one party about the other are often discursively constructed stereotypes and are not representative of actuality. Fewer than 10% of the American population identifies as vegetarian or vegan (McCarthy, 2018) for example, while between 30 and 50% of the American population percent have identified as Democrats over the last fifteen years (Gallup, n.d.). Similarly, it is estimated that there are between 500,000 and one million prostitutes in the United States, which is only 0.15% to 0.3% of the population (Charpenel, 2012).

Secondly, the supporters of both parties resorted to cruel, dehumanising language to communicate their disdain towards the other. In doing so, there were some occurrences in the discourse where the author's language choices were inconsistent with their party's ideologies. Such inconsistencies can be seen in the use of *retard* and *faggot* membership

categories used by Democrats to describe Republicans, and, to a lesser extent, in the *fuck* and *shit* metaphors used by Republicans to describe Democrats. Both parties were equally guilty of using the words *retard* and *faggot*, and both should be criticised for using such offensive language. However, it seems particularly incongruous for Democrat supporters to be using such language, as it directly violates their party's platform on homosexuality and disabilities (Democratic National Committee, 2016). Both *retard* and *faggot* are derogatory terms for minorities that the Democratic Party aims to restore rights to, so this discourse is incompatible with Democrat ideologies. The Democrats' use of these derogatory terms could be due to the fact that "public opinions move more to the right" (McDermott & Hatemi, 2018, p. 2) when one - or even simply one's worldviews - feel threatened. Surprisingly, this ideological incongruity in informal political debates has not, to my knowledge, been discussed in a discourse analytical setting, although it could explain why political debate is infamous for its aggressive nature. Democratic consultant Tony Schwartz once said that "The presidency is the only job interview in the world for which all the applicants show up at the interview and attack each other" (quoted in Seiter & Gass, 2010, p. 222). Such occurrences of language use by party supporters being inconsistent with party ideologies has also been identified in the news (Wolcott, 2008). Associations have been made between fear and conservatism (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski & Sulloway, 2003) and how this can translate into the use and acceptance of biased and offensive language in order to defend oneself (McDermott & Hatemi, 2018). These inconsistencies between language use and ideology found in the Democrat corpus leads to the question, is it harder to be a Democrat than it is to be a Republican? Conservatism seems to be more innate than liberalism. Liberalism has, in fact, been described as "evolutionarily novel" (Kanazawa, 2010, p. 286) as liberals genuinely care not only for their family but also for those who are in no way related to them.

### **7.1.3 Negative identity construction**

Overall, there was very little positive - or even neutral - communication towards the other party, showing that the data consisted mainly of extremist discourses against the political 'Other'. As each author considered one party the Self and the other party the Other, it is unsurprising that there was more negative than positive or neutral language. Of course, there is nothing to prevent an author from positively discussing certain aspects of the opposing party's actions or political ideologies in an Urban Dictionary entry, but such behaviour is unlikely when 'Othering' occurs (Staszak, 2008).

One aspect of negative identity construction that deserves discussion is the way that subjectively negative discourses were used to describe the 'Other'. For example, Democrats were categorised as homosexuals, a category that Republicans view negatively, whereas Democrats generally view it neutrally (Democratic National Committee, 2016). The US LGBT community have been fighting for freedom for decades (Bailey, 1997) and have had full support from the Democratic Party since the 1980s (Levy, 2019). This reason that this is most interesting is because it is no secret that Democrats support LGBT rights, so categorising them as homosexuals both using pejorative words such as *faggot* and neutral words like *homosexual* indicates that they may be writing their definitions to be read by fellow Republicans, rather than by Democrats.

#### **7.1.4 Strict father and nurturant parent metaphor model**

As mentioned above, aspects of Lakoff's (2016) strict father and nurturant parent model appeared throughout the subcorpora as (or alongside) metaphors or membership categorisations related to sex, health and ingestion, digestion and excretion, confirming Lakoff's theory regarding the way Democrats and Republicans characterise the government. Although only a few direct parenting metaphors were found in the corpus (perhaps with the exception of the feeding metaphors in Section 6.3) the signature strict father ideologies of 'tough love' and working hard to earn one's keep (Lakoff, 2016) appear in metaphors and membership categorisations throughout this analysis. Furthermore, strict father values appeared more frequently than nurturing parent ones, which may be due to the Republicans' "elaborate language of their moral politics" (Lakoff, 2016, p. 386), which Democrats have failed to develop, putting them at a "disadvantage in any public discourse" (p. 386). Interestingly, most prevalent nurturant parent value of seeing reward and punishment systems as flawed (Lakoff, 2016) did not stand out in this analysis.

#### **7.1.5 Political polarisation and fragmentation: Reflected or affected by Urban Dictionary definitions?**

It has been identified that political polarisation in America is increasing (Iyengar, Sood & Lelkes, 2012; Mutz, 2006) and that a significant cause of this polarisation is the lack of deliberation, i.e, the lack of considering multiple perspectives (Brundidge et al., 2014; Mutz, 2006). Papacharissi (2013) considers it a fault of the internet, as it does not properly fulfil its potential as a public sphere. What this means is that the internet should, in theory, provide opportunities for people to discuss politics with diverse peoples from all over the globe, yet people still choose to talk to those with views and experiences similar to their own. This

fragmentation - where people “segregate themselves into myriad, homogenous in-groups” (Bimber, 2008) - prevents internet users from accessing information or discussion written from the perspective of the opposing party. Urban Dictionary definitions of *democrat* and *republican* both reflect and affect this political polarisation and, to an extent, the fragmentation that exacerbates it.

Firstly, the unmoderated nature of Urban Dictionary contributes to this polarisation. It does so by providing an opportunity for any individual to define an identity without any editorial oversight or control. As evidenced in the previous chapters, this facilitates the creation of extreme stereotypes, Democrats as the extreme left and Republicans as the extreme right, whereas in reality both Democrat and Republican communities consist of a diverse range of conservatives, liberals and centrists (Desilver, 2014). Furthermore, authors of definition entries of *democrat* and *republican* create binary opposites, for example, vegetarians and meat-eaters or, more broadly, minorities and majorities. These binary opposite identities, in reality, only represent a small proportion of Democrat supporters and they exclude Republican supporters that are vegetarians and minorities.

Secondly, the definition entry authors in UD tend to evoke dictionary-like authority and objectivity in their definitions of *democrat* and *republican* (Hornscheidt, 2008). As a result, their definitions state that people *are* a certain way, not that they *think* people are a certain way. The authors of these definition entries have constructed themselves as lexicographers. Similarly to the way that youth give meaning to new words through Urban Dictionary (R. Smith, 2011), these definition entry authors are giving new meaning to what it means to be a Democrat or a Republican, as seen through the eyes of a member of the opposing party. These

definition entries lack deliberation - i.e., they do not consider alternate perspectives - which leads to polarisation (Brundidge et al, 2014; Mutz, 2006). As Brundidge et al. (2014) noted, this lack of deliberation is particularly common in Republican discourses, as is their “more formalised and socially distant communication style” (p. 743) in order to avoid appearing uncertain of their points or cause others to be uncertain (Brundidge et al, 2014). This could explain why there were more definition entries written by Republican authors than Democrat authors. Perhaps Republicans prefer expressing their political views through Urban Dictionary as dictionary definitions are more formal and socially distant than other user-generated content sites like Twitter or YouTube.

Thirdly, unlike other user-generated content sites readers cannot comment on the UD definition entries so they cannot directly discuss the entries with others online. Even the process of creating traditional print dictionaries involves an ongoing process of dialogue and interaction (Stamper, 2017). Given this lack of deliberation, the author of a UD definition receives no verbal feedback nor has the opportunity to rebut alternative views.

## **7.2 The use of LIWC for corpus linguistics**

In response to the second research question, ‘To what extent is LIWC a suitable tool for corpus-based discourse analysis?’, the study found that there were advantages to using the LIWC software which alleviates the need for the researcher to manually group many kinds of words into semantic categories. Overall, however, using LIWC for corpus linguistics still required a degree of manual work. The software’s dictionary, for example, did not include

some words that should have been included, such as *cunt*. These words were not counted by the software, but given the nature of this study, still needed to be included in the frequency analysis. As a result it was necessary to work through the texts in the corpus to identify words that were not automatically included by LIWC and add them manually to the relevant frequency counts. Furthermore, the software also failed to detect some words that were in its dictionary. This lack of ability to detect and semantically categorise a number of words was perhaps due to the appearance in the UD corpus of atypical affixes, such as *fucktarpublican*.

## **7.3 Overall contributions to knowledge**

### **7.3.1 Researching discourses of political communities**

This study contributes to the surprisingly little research that has been carried out on the discourses of political communities, as opposed to that of politicians or political news reporters, although interest in the discourses of political communities seems to be increasing as interest in online discourses increases (e.g., Christensen, 2011; Maireder & Ausserhofer, 2014). This is an analytical setting that could be examined in much more depth. As political communities - the voters - make the decision of who is in power, it is important to look at how they communicate. This study shows that analysing such data does not necessarily lead to the expected results, for example, Democrats using language that was incongruent with the party's ideologies. Although much of the data collected from UD was repetitive in the way it identified and criticised the policies of the respective parties, a closer look at the statements produced in the UD definition entries that were not discussing policies yielded

some interesting insights about how supporters of each party communicate their thoughts on the other party in an unmoderated setting.

### **7.3.2 Evaluating LIWC's suitability as a tool for discourse analysis**

This research also draws conclusions on LIWC's strengths and weaknesses as a corpus analysis tool, something that has yet to be done and should be looked into further. It found that LIWC did much categorisation work that would normally be carried out manually, yet overall, the software would have been more useful as a corpus analytical tool had it included other analytical features such as word frequency and concordancing. It also had limitations in terms of the range of words it could identify and its ability to identify lexemes or alternate forms of words. I would argue that it best functions as a starting point for the grouping of words into semantic and psycholinguistic categories, although other manual work is required to calculate word frequency and to find, and include in the analysis, words not detected by LIWC.

## **7.4 Limitations**

### **7.4.1 Limitations of the data**

One limitation of the study resulted from the lack of information in the UD entries about the actual (political) identities of those who posted UD definition entries, i.e., whether those claiming to be Democrats were really Democrats. Therefore, the organisation of the data into the two subcorpora for comparison was carried out manually. As stated in Section 3.2.2, this organisation was based primarily on deductions regarding the user's particular allegiance to

a party which drew upon the content of the text in their entry. While some explicitly identified as a member or supporter of one of the political parties, for example, by stating “I am a Democrat”, more often than not the author would not explicitly state their political identity.

There was also a surprising amount of third party supporters - those who support a party that was not the Democratic or Republican Party - who would describe both parties critically. Data representing this latter group was removed from the corpus as it did not allow for as clear a comparison of identity construction of parties by opposing parties. Perhaps a more significant limitation is simply the lack of inclusion of third party discourses, as they may have shown another side to political party identity construction.

A second possible limitation of the study was that it was not possible to confirm whether the entries were written by individuals or if a number of them were written by the same person. According to Lefever, Dal & Matthíasdóttir (2006), this is a limitation of online data in general.

#### **7.4.2 Limitations of the tools**

As already mentioned, LIWC had many weaknesses when looking at it from a corpus analysis perspective. This - in retrospect - is not all that surprising, given that it had not been designed for such a purpose, as it is a psycholinguistic analysis tool not a corpus analysis tool. Nor had it been used much for corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis in the past, although it was recently recommended as a tool for analysing corpora by Collins (2019). The main limitation of LIWC was its dictionary: only so many words and word stems were included in its dictionary and much cruder and more colloquial language was not included in its analysis.

This means that there may be words that one would consider to be relevant to these categories that were not identified by the software at all and may have gone unanalysed as a result. Some words - or groups of words, for example, the mental illness words in Chapter 5 - were added manually after being found to collocate with some of the words that were identified by LIWC.

#### **7.4.3 Limitations of the methodologies**

Critical discourse analysis has been criticised by many academics for its susceptibility to bias in both the selection and analysis of the data (Cheng, 2013) and, as discussed in Section 3.5, I, the researcher, am biased towards the views of the Democratic Party so this is a legitimate concern for this study. Using corpus linguistics to complement critical discourse analysis, however, reduces the chances of implicit bias affecting the results of the analysis, to an extent, both by adding a quantitative, empirical approach to the analysis as well as allowing the researcher to consult a larger quantity of texts in order to draw conclusions (Cheng, 2013; Hardt-Mautner, 1995). Although I am confident, more or less, in the identification of metaphors and membership categorisations, there is always the possibility that if this same study had been performed by someone who was biased towards the views of the Republican Party, they would have found different interpretations of the metaphors and membership categorisations. Also, they may have chosen different extracts to analyse more closely.

Another limitation of this methodology is that, although using LIWC's categories gave some much needed direction for this study, restricting the topic to biological processes and its subtopics made it difficult to find some of the more deeply ingrained metaphors or metaphors

that use function words rather than more semantic words, such as Halliday & Matthiessen's (2014) grammatical metaphors or Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) orientational metaphors.

## **7.5 Possibilities for future research**

### **7.5.1 Future research using Urban Dictionary data**

Urban Dictionary is a plethora of freely accessible lexical data that could be used for a wide variety of discourse analyses. As there are more than 2 million definition entries, there are plenty of options for future research using Urban Dictionary data. For example, this study could be replicated using completely different 'identity' definitions, that is, definitions of certain types of people, such as Christians, Kiwis or teachers. Also, as mentioned above, there are many other types of metaphors that could be analysed using the same definitions of *republican* and *democrat*.

### **7.5.2 Future research using LIWC**

As there are many different psycholinguistic, semantic and grammatical categories that LIWC can group data into, there are plenty of opportunities for it to be used for future research. In regards to the subcategories that were used in this research, an interesting opportunity for future research would be to investigate the LIWC biological processes results of a corpus consisting of all Urban Dictionary definitions, rather than only *republican* and *democrat* entries, to ascertain if the use of biological processes words were more frequent in *republican* and *democrat* entries or if similar amounts of biological processes words were found in other Urban Dictionary definitions.

On a similar note, future research might also examine the LIWC biological processes results for other political discourses - such as political speeches or blogs - to see if similar metaphors and membership categorisations can be found in these different political discourses. In particular, it would be interesting to see how the LIWC biological processes results vary between politicians and political supporters.

### **7.5.3 Future research of identity construction of political groups**

Unfortunately this research cannot be replicated using other political identities given that there are too few (or no) UD definitions of most other political identities, such as third party American political groups or New Zealand political parties. The same question could be answered, perhaps *better* answered, using different sets of data. The collection and comparative analysis of semi-structured interviews carried out with supporters of both the Republican Party and Democratic Party about their feelings towards the opposing party could provide interesting results that would probably bear similarities as well as many differences to this study. The discourses found would most likely be quite different to those found in the UD data, given that they would not be anonymous and would be verbal answers. In order to create a study that could be more closely compared to this study, online political discourse could be used, although there are much more limited options for New Zealand online political discourse than for American online political discourse, mainly due to New Zealand's significantly smaller population.

#### **7.5.4 Future research of metaphor and membership categorisation**

As mentioned in Section 7.1.1, the relationship between metaphor and membership categorisation could be studied in further detail because, as far as the researcher is aware, there are very few studies that examine their co-occurrence. Perhaps one could examine situations in which it is difficult to discern if an utterance is a metaphor or a membership categorisation, such as the *retard* and *sex worker* examples discussed in Section 7.1.1.

#### **7.6 Final reflections of a biased researcher**

This study caused me to reflect on my views of U.S. politics and the two dominant political parties, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. Although still more aligned with the Democratic Party, I now have a better understanding of how Republicans think, thanks to this study's analysis of the definitions written by Republicans and through my reading of the literature about Republican perspectives, in particular Lakoff's *Moral politics* (2016). I am also more aware of my own biases in interpreting Republican discourses and the way that the interpretation is affected by the foreignness of Republican views in comparison to the familiarity of Democrat views. Perhaps my most appreciated observation from this study is that Democrats are held to an incredibly high level of accountability due to their more selfless ideologies. This does not mean that Democrats themselves are selfless for choosing to support the rights of others, but simply that they are aiming towards a world of equal opportunity and true freedom. As Kanazawa (2010) discussed, liberalism goes against basic evolutionary psychology, whereas conservatism does not. Similarly, people are more likely to act conservatively if they feel under threat (Jost et al., 2003). Lastly, as no one is unbiased,

this makes it harder for those who are trying to reduce bias as they are held accountable to their particular biases, whereas parties that care little about reducing bias are not held to such high standards. I believe these factors should be kept in mind when criticising the Democrats.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

To conclude this chapter and study, three key observations were made in this study. Firstly, that Democrats sometimes resort to derogatory language when describing Republicans. This use of derogatory language by Democrats has been little explored in areas other than in evolutionary psychology, and could be examined further from a discourse analytic perspective in order to identify such occurrences in everyday life situations. It may also help to develop a greater understanding of why Democrats use such pejorative language when it is inconsistent with their ideologies.

Secondly, I would argue that UD as an unmoderated online platform contributes to the type of political polarisation increasingly occurring throughout the world by preventing deliberation and the discussion of political views and identities. The lack of online interactivity found in UD definition entries - unlike other online spaces where political debate is common - prevents definition entry authors from having to respond to questions or criticisms of their definitions.

Lastly, more research should be done using UD. It is an enormous source of online discourse and has so much potential for corpus-based research, in particular. With its two main

purposes - defining neologisms and redefining pre-existing words and phrases - the freely available data could be used to draw conclusions on a wide range of linguistic and sociological phenomena. I hope that this research inspires others to explore the UD data, perhaps also with identity construction in mind, although the opportunities are endless.

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