Playing the Trump Card

A qualitative rhetorical analysis of President Trump’s crisis communication on Hurricane Maria
ABSTRACT

Writer: Julia Holmqvist
Title: Playing the Trump Card
Subtitle: A qualitative rhetorical analysis of President Trump’s crisis communication on Hurricane Maria
Language: English
Pages: 50

In this study, a qualitative rhetorical analysis is done on U.S. president Donald Trump’s crisis communication on Hurricane Maria, which was an Atlantic hurricane that struck areas such as Puerto Rico and Dominica in the autumn of 2017. Given that the former is an unincorporated territory of the U.S., the need for effective relief measures by the Trump administration became of particular importance there. However, in the media, the actual response by the administration was widely criticised as being slow and inefficient by actors like the relief group Oxfam and the humanitarian organisation Refugees International. Therefore, this study critically evaluates Trump’s crisis communication strategies on the hurricane to assess their success. The material consists of statements by Trump in both traditional and social media through official remarks and tweets, which are analysed through the crisis communication theories of image repair theory and situational crisis communication theory. In doing so, of interest is also to examine whether any differences can be seen in the strategies used by Trump in these two kinds of media channels.

To address the hurricane, the findings showed that Trump mainly used the crisis communication strategies of corrective action, bolstering, defeasibility and attack accuser from image repair theory and compensation, reminder, ingratiation, excuse and attack the accuser from situational crisis communication theory. Moreover, no distinctive differences were found in which strategies Trump used in the respective channels, even if the attacks on Twitter were often more aggressive. While both positive and negative evaluations could be made of how Trump used these strategies overall, the main conclusion of the study is that his crisis communication was largely ineffective due to the strategies sometimes being contradictory and inconsistent.

Keywords: crisis communication, image repair theory, situational crisis communication theory, qualitative rhetorical analysis, populism, Donald Trump, Hurricane Maria
# Table of contents

List of tables .......................................................................................................................... 1

1. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 Disposition ..................................................................................................................... 3

2. Background .......................................................................................................................... 4
   2.1 President Trump ............................................................................................................. 4
   2.2 Hurricane Maria ............................................................................................................ 4
   2.3 The Trump administration’s response ........................................................................... 5
   2.4 Criticism of the response .............................................................................................. 5

3. Aim and research questions ................................................................................................. 6
   3.1 Aim ............................................................................................................................... 6
      3.1.1 Motivation of aim ..................................................................................................... 6
   3.2 Research questions .......................................................................................................... 6

4. Previous research ................................................................................................................ 7
   4.1 The field of crisis communication .................................................................................. 7
      4.1.1 Political image repair and crisis communication ...................................................... 7
      4.1.2 Use of media channels ............................................................................................ 10
   4.2 Research gap .................................................................................................................. 10

5. Theoretical frame and concepts .......................................................................................... 11
   5.1 Image repair theory ........................................................................................................ 11
      5.1.1 Strategies ................................................................................................................ 12
      5.1.2 Recommendations for usage .................................................................................. 13
   5.2 Situational crisis communication theory ........................................................................ 13
      5.2.1 Strategies ................................................................................................................ 14
      5.2.2 Recommendations for usage .................................................................................. 15
   5.3 Comparison ..................................................................................................................... 15

6. Method and material ............................................................................................................. 17
   6.1 Qualitative rhetorical analysis ......................................................................................... 17
      6.1.1 Analytical tools ........................................................................................................ 18
   6.2 Material .......................................................................................................................... 20
      6.2.1 Sample ..................................................................................................................... 22
   6.3 Validity and reliability .................................................................................................... 22

7. Analysis and results .............................................................................................................. 24
   7.1 Trump’s statements in traditional media ....................................................................... 24
7.1.1 Remarks by President Trump Before Meeting with Bipartisan Members of the House Committee on Ways and Means (26.09.17 10:48 a.m.) ........................................... 24
7.1.2 Remarks by President Trump and President Rajoy of the Government of Spain in Joint Press Conference (26.09.17 1:56 p.m.) .......................................................... 25
7.1.3 Remarks by President Trump in Briefing on Hurricane Maria Relief Efforts (03.10.17 12:02 p.m.) .......................................................... 26
7.1.4 Remarks by President Trump at Briefing With Senior Military Personnel (03.10.17 2:54 p.m.) .......................................................... 28
7.1.5 Remarks by President Trump, Governor Rosselló of Puerto Rico, and FEMA Administrator Long on Puerto Rico Relief Efforts (18.10.17 11:48 a.m.) ......................... 29

7.2 Trump’s statements in social media .......................................................... 31
7.2.1 Twitter (19.09.17 10:23 p.m.) .......................................................... 31
7.2.2 Twitter (20.09.17 11:13 p.m.) .......................................................... 31
7.2.3 Twitter (25.09.17 8:45 p.m.; 8:50 p.m.; 8:58 p.m.) ................................... 31
7.2.4 Twitter (26.09.17 8:13 a.m.) .......................................................... 31
7.2.5 Twitter (26.09.17 5:34 p.m.) .......................................................... 32
7.2.6 Twitter (28.09.17 10:01 a.m.) .......................................................... 32
7.2.7 Twitter (28.09.17 7:41 p.m.; 7:45 p.m.) ............................................... 32
7.2.8 Twitter (28.09.17 8:03 p.m.) .......................................................... 32
7.2.9 Twitter (29.09.17 7:14 a.m.; 7:18 a.m.) ............................................... 33
7.2.10 Twitter (29.09.17 9:30 a.m.) .......................................................... 33
7.2.11 Twitter (30.09.17 7:19 a.m.; 7:26 a.m.; 7:29 a.m.) ................................ 33
7.2.12 Twitter (30.09.17 7:33 a.m.) .......................................................... 33
7.2.13 Twitter (30.09.17 7:48 a.m.) .......................................................... 34
7.2.14 Twitter (30.09.17 7:55 a.m.) .......................................................... 34
7.2.15 Twitter (30.09.17 8:07 a.m.) .......................................................... 34
7.2.16 Twitter (30.09.17 2:04 P.M.) ......................................................... 34
7.2.17 Twitter (30.09.17 3:19 p.m.) .......................................................... 35
7.2.18 Twitter (30.09.17 3:30 p.m.) .......................................................... 35
7.2.19 Twitter (30.09.17 3:43 p.m.) .......................................................... 35
7.2.20 Twitter (30.09.17 3:53 p.m.) .......................................................... 35
7.2.21 Twitter (30.09.17 3:55 p.m.; 3:56 p.m.) ............................................. 35
7.2.22 Twitter (30.09.17 3:57 p.m.) .......................................................... 36
7.2.23 Twitter (30.09.17 4:37 p.m.) .......................................................... 36
7.2.24 Twitter (30.09.17 6:15 p.m.) .......................................................... 36
7.2.25 Twitter (30.09.17 6:46 p.m.) .......................................................... 36
7.2.26 Twitter (01.10.17 8:22 a.m.; 8:26 a.m.; 8:30 a.m.) ................................ 38
7.2.27 Twitter (03.10.17 5:22 p.m.) .......................................................... 38
7.2.28 Twitter (03.10.17 5:59 p.m.) .......................................................... 38
7.2.29 Twitter (03.10.17 7:02 p.m.) ................................................................. 38
7.2.30 Twitter (03.10.17 8:53 p.m.) ................................................................. 39
7.2.31 Twitter (04.10.17 6:25 a.m.) ................................................................. 39
7.2.32 Twitter (08.10.17 7:37 p.m.) ................................................................. 39
7.2.33 Twitter (12.10.17 6:49 a.m.; 6:58 a.m.; 7:07 a.m.) ......................... 39
7.2.34 Twitter (13.10.17 8:01 a.m.) ................................................................. 40
7.2.35 Twitter (19.10.17 4:40 p.m.) ................................................................. 40
7.3 Evaluation of Trump’s crisis communication ............................................. 40
  7.3.1 RQ1: What crisis communication strategies did Trump use for Hurricane Maria and how effective could these strategies be seen as? .................. 40
  7.3.2 RQ2: What differences or similarities can be seen in Trump’s crisis communication strategies for the hurricane in traditional media versus in social media? .................. 45
8. Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 46
  8.1 Research questions ......................................................................................... 46
  8.2 Connection to previous research ................................................................. 47
  8.3 Suggestions for future research ................................................................. 50
References ................................................................................................................. 51
  Primary sources ................................................................................................. 51
    Tweets .............................................................................................................. 51
    Remarks .......................................................................................................... 55
    Weekly Address .............................................................................................. 56
  Secondary sources .............................................................................................. 56

List of tables

Table 6.1 Image Restoration Strategies ................................................................. 18
Table 6.2 Suggestions for Effective Image Repair Discourse ............................... 19
Table 6.3 SCCT crisis response strategies ............................................................. 19
Table 6.4 Situational Crisis Communication Theory Recommendations for Crisis Response Selection .......................................................... 20
1. Introduction

One thing is certain in this world: crises happen. While they can vary in magnitude and nature, crises are an inevitable part of life. A common definition of a crisis is “the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes” (Coombs, 2012a: 19), whereas crisis communication is “the collection, processing, and dissemination of information required to address a crisis situation” (ibid.: 20). As these negative outcomes of crises include how the image or reputation of an actor accused of wrongdoing can suffer great damage, most crisis communication scholars (e.g. Benoit, 2014a; Coombs, 2007) agree that image repair, or persuasive defence, is a crucial part of the crisis communication response.

An example of a crisis-prone figure in recent times seems to have been the election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States. Indeed, it would hardly be no overstatement to claim that President Trump’s first year in office as what has been called ‘the most powerful man in the world’ has been characterised by numerous crisis-like situations of various sorts both domestically and internationally with everything from claims of Russian involvement in the 2016 presidential election to a travel ban for Muslim people. Another case in point where Trump came under fierce criticism was the U.S. government’s response to Hurricane Maria. This Atlantic hurricane was formed in September 2017 and over the course of about a month, it left tremendous destruction to areas like Puerto Rico and Dominica with the total death toll still left uncertain. Since the island of Puerto Rico has been an unincorporated territory of the U.S. since the 19th century, the latter had a special obligation to provide swift and effective relief efforts. Despite these circumstances, the response by the Trump administration was met with widespread criticism in the media for being of a contrary nature. For example, Oxfam, an international confederation of humanitarian NGOs, released a statement declaring the administration’s response as “slow and inadequate” (Oxfam, 2017a), which was later echoed in a report by the humanitarian organisation Refugees International (Thomas, 2017).

In response to such criticism, Trump issued several statements to defend the relief efforts by the U.S. government to Puerto Rico in two principal communication channels: the more traditional one consisting of official remarks through press conferences and briefings combined with the social media platform Twitter. In this study, a qualitative rhetorical analysis is used to review a strategic selection of these statements through the crisis communication theories of image repair theory (Benoit, 2014a) and situational crisis communication theory (Coombs, 2007) to investigate what crisis communication strategies were used by Trump and to evaluate their effectiveness. To do so, the two sets of crisis communication strategies and recommendations for their usage that are provided in these
theories are used as analytical tools in the study. Thus, this study uses the case of Trump’s crisis communication strategies on Hurricane Maria to gain more knowledge about political image repair in an era of right-wing populism and a post-truth society with alternative facts and fake news. Here, the primary research gap that the study aims to bring insight to is found as until this point, most crisis communication research done in a political context has been more centred around politicians that could be described as less unorthodox than Trump.

Therefore, the need for further research on populist image repair discourse can, as is the case with the related field of rhetoric, or persuasive communication, be traced to the societal importance of holding politicians and other public figures responsible for their actions by gaining knowledge on what kind of strategies they can use when attempting to steer public opinion in the desired direction. In image repair, that direction would be to maintain a favourable public reputation after it having been damaged in some way. Moreover, such knowledge can be of special significance when it concerns populist persons and movements like Trump and Brexit, which may be particularly prone to use somewhat unconventional tactics for their cause when claiming to be a voice of the common people against a powerful elite, which has been shown by recent events. At the same time, one might question whether theories like those above alone can fully be able to explain the success or lack thereof of how populist politicians respond to criticism in the media as the theories may presuppose that both the senders and the receivers of the messages are rational and would use as well as listen to rational arguments, while another problem is that these politicians can sometimes seem to benefit no less from bad press attention than good, at least among their core voters.

Apart from the growth of populism, the other major development in media and communications that makes this study relevant is the emergence of a digital media landscape and the rise of social media, whose far-reaching implications can be seen also in crisis communication. For example, it is discussed by Coombs (2014: 155-157), who notes that while crisis managers traditionally have used indirect channels such as the news media to get their message to the audience or stated this message directly in channels like websites, social media now offers a faster and even more direct way of engaging with stakeholders. Among the benefits of this still rather new form of communication include how it makes it possible to rapidly reach out to a large number of stakeholders with instructing information to keep them out of harm’s way during natural disasters as studied here, for instance, while a potential risk can be found in not being able to live up to stakeholders’ demand for interaction where one could appear as passive when not responding to their queries. Similarly, both a promise and a challenge of social media can be found in stakeholders commenting upon an actor faced with a crisis as voices of a positive nature can help to mend the actor’s image, whereas negative ones could make this work even harder (ibid.: 155-157).
Here, as Trump has shown himself to be an avid user of social media but more reluctant to depend on traditional channels like the news media to communicate with the public, this case also lends itself well to a comparison of what crisis communication strategies that were used by Trump in the two media channels stated earlier made up of the more traditional press conferences and the like versus the social media network Twitter, where different strategies could have been used due to the more informal nature of the latter, for example. Hence, by adding this level of comparison to the study, it is considered whether the employed media channels seem to have influenced what types of crisis communication strategies that were used in this case, which could then give more detailed information about the image repair discourse that can be used by populist politicians such as Trump.

1.1 Disposition

In the following section, a background is given to the rhetorical context of Trump’s crisis communication on Hurricane Maria through summarised information about the president, the hurricane itself, the Trump administration’s response to the hurricane and the criticism of this response. The next section presents the aim and research questions of the study. After that, there is an outline of crisis communication as a research field, the previous research conducted therein and the research gap that this study strives to fill. Then, the theoretical frames and concepts of the study in the form of image repair theory and situational crisis communication theory are explained and contrasted to each other. The succeeding section describes the research method of a qualitative rhetorical analysis and the analysed material consisting of statements by Trump in both traditional and social media, while further detailing the analytical tools used in the study as well. Thereafter, there is a presentation of the analysis and results of the study. Finally, the conclusion answers the research questions and connects the findings to a broader context, while also pointing to further research.
2. Background

The following section provides a summarising background to President Trump, Hurricane Maria, the Trump administration’s response to it and the criticism of the response.

2.1 President Trump

Donald Trump entered the 2016 presidential election as a controversial candidate for the Republican Party due to his lack of prior political experience in favour of a successful career as a businessman and television personality. Ultimately, Trump managed to secure both the Republican nomination and the general election in November 2016, where he defeated Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton through winning the electoral college, while still losing the popular vote. Throughout his campaign and after taking office in January 2017, Trump’s political agenda has been characterised by populism and protectionism through issues such as the renegotiation of trade deals and the withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement. Additionally, Trump has distinguished himself from past American presidents in his preference of using social media over more traditional communication channels and by openly criticising the news media and journalists in general (Nationalencyklopedin, n.d.).

2.2 Hurricane Maria

Hurricane Maria was an Atlantic hurricane that was formed on the 16th of September 2017 and dissipated on the 2nd of October 2017. Besides Puerto Rico, among the areas that were hit hardest in the Caribbean Sea include Dominica and the U.S. Virgin Islands, while its effects could still be felt on the U.S. mainland. Preceded by Hurricane Irma and Harvey in August to September 2017, Hurricane Maria was the result of a hyperactive hurricane season in 2017, where it was the most intense and lethal one. To date, the hurricane is regarded as the worst natural disaster in Dominica and Puerto Rico as it was the first category 5 hurricane to strike the former on record, whereas it is the tenth most intense Atlantic hurricane in history. Until now, at least 112 people have been confirmed dead due to the hurricane, with the majority being in Puerto Rico and Dominica with a total of 64 and 31 deaths, respectively. However, as there are still many people missing primarily from these areas and an unknown number of indirect deaths, the actual number of fatalities is assumed to be much higher, particularly in Puerto Rico. Plus, the results of the hurricane could be seen in damage to nature and buildings. For example, in Puerto Rico, the electrical grid was destroyed, while the population of 3.4 million people was also plagued by flooding and scarce resources, among others. The total cost of the recovery effort after the hurricane is estimated to be around $91.61 billion USD, with the majority of it being directed to Puerto Rico, which made it the third most costly Atlantic hurricane so far (Oxfam, 2017a; Pasch, Penny & Berg, 2018; Thomas, 2017).
2.3 The Trump administration’s response

Shortly after being struck by Hurricane Maria on the 20th of September, Puerto Rico was declared a federal disaster zone, which was also the case with the U.S. Virgin Islands. Before making landfall, evacuation orders had been sent out to Puerto Rico, which like the U.S. Virgin Islands had been struck by Hurricane Irma only weeks earlier. In the federal response, actors such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. First Responders and the U.S. military were engaged in the recovery effort to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands that began to be coordinated on a larger scale around the 25th of September, which was when the first officials from the Trump administration visited Puerto Rico. As part of the response, Trump himself later visited Puerto Rico on the 3rd of October. Thereafter, the Trump administration requested a $4.9 billion loan to Puerto Rico, which was then passed by the U.S. Congress and made available in March 2018 (Brown, 2018; Meyer, 2017).

2.4 Criticism of the response

To begin with, one general source of criticism to the federal response was that the Trump administration had waited until the 28th of September to waive the Jones Act, which made it possible for non-U.S. ships to reach Puerto Rico, by citing a strained port capacity. Similarly, critical comments were directed to that Trump did not hold his first meeting in the Situation Room before the 26th of September. Around that time, Carmen Yulín Cruz, the mayor of Puerto Rico’s capital San Juan, expressed her frustration with the recovery efforts and made a plea to have them accelerated, which was repeated by Puerto Rico’s governor Ricardo Rosselló. To the Trump administration’s defence, the federal response was complicated by Puerto Rico’s geographical position as an island rather than on the mainland, with some 3.5 kilometres distance between them, something that was maintained by government officials (Meyer, 2017; Mitchell, 2017). On the 2nd of October, Oxfam (2017a) published a statement on their website which declared their intention of getting involved in the relief efforts to Puerto Rico. In the statement, it was pointed out that this procedure was unusual for wealthy, Western countries but made necessary due to the inept response by the U.S. government. The statement acknowledged that while the government had engaged in some relief efforts that had been hampered by the previous strings of disasters, more resources were required to satisfy the most urgent needs on the island such as the access to clean water (Oxfam, 2017a). Some weeks later, a follow-up statement with similar content was then released (Oxfam, 2017b). More critical views were then expressed by Refugees International (Thomas, 2017), which in December 2017 issued a report after having visited Puerto Rico. The report set out to assess the assistance to Puerto Rico and found that the response by the federal government and local authorities was “largely uncoordinated and poorly implemented” (Thomas, 2017), while it was also noted that the island was still in need of more help to recover.
3. Aim and research questions

This section presents the study’s aim and research questions, while also motivating the aim.

3.1 Aim

This study aims to critically assess the crisis communication strategies used by president Trump in his response to Hurricane Maria. To do so, the main goal of the study is to, from a mainly sender-oriented perspective, review whether the employed strategies could be regarded as having been effective or not based on the recommendations that are given in image repair theory and situational crisis communication theory, respectively.

3.1.1 Motivation of aim

Thus, the study hopes to contribute to the existing research in the crisis communication field by bringing forth new empirical knowledge on what kind of strategies that can be used by an untraditional, populist politician like Trump when responding to a crisis, which is exemplified here by Hurricane Maria. Apart from the societal importance mentioned earlier, such a study is also validated since previous research has been more focused on somewhat more traditional politicians. Secondly, to make this knowledge more nuanced and on a somewhat subordinate level of importance, the study considers the significance of the choice of media channel in the crisis response and whether any distinctive differences or similarities can be found in the strategies that were used by Trump for the hurricane in traditional versus social media represented by official remarks such as through press conferences and on the social media platform Twitter. The point of this comparison is then to examine whether the chosen media channels seem to have mattered for how the response was formed.

3.2 Research questions

1. RQ1: What crisis communication strategies did Trump use for Hurricane Maria and how effective could these strategies be seen as?

2. RQ2: What differences or similarities can be seen in Trump's crisis communication strategies for the hurricane in traditional media versus in social media?
4. Previous research

The next section outlines the crisis communication field and its previous research together with the research gap that this study hopes to fill.

4.1 The field of crisis communication

Crisis communication is a large and still increasing research field that is situated in the media and communications field as a subfield of public relations and with multiple tightly linked fields such as risk communication, issues management and reputation management, which often exist as discussion points in the research that is done (Coombs, 2012b: 61-62). The field is dominated by qualitative case studies (e.g. Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997) through methods like textual analysis that are examining specific crisis situations as the research is often centred around questions such as how organisational crisis management can be improved by lessons from how past crises were handled and how to best address and aid stakeholders in times of crises. In doing so, this research began as writings by practitioners in non-academic journals about what tended to work and not, which was later taken on by scholars in academic journals that more systematically began to analyse cases through the application of theoretical frameworks and principles. Still, the field’s methodological variety can be seen as experimental studies and other quantitative methods like content analysis have become more common in recent years, which as part of a call for additional theory development have started to test these frameworks and principles with the aim of offering more evidence-based results. In the field, several different theoretical perspectives have emerged alongside each other, of which two of the most common are image repair theory and situational crisis communication theory (An & Cheng, 2012: 67-70, 75-83; Coombs, 2012a: 22-25; Coombs & Holladay, 2012: 91). For instance, other perspectives include integrated crisis mapping (ICM) model (Jin, Pang & Cameron, 2010), covariation-based approach to crisis communication (Schwarz, 2008) and discourse of renewal (Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger, 2017).

4.1.1 Political image repair and crisis communication

In the same manner as crisis communication is a broad research field, image repair theory has been applied to a range of different contexts such as corporations (e.g. Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997), sports (e.g. Benoit, 2013), entertainment (e.g. Benoit & Nill, 1998), and even whole states (e.g. Zhang & Benoit, 2004). On such area that has been researched extensively is image repair discourse as made by politicians or government officials from different countries and levels of government (Benoit, 2014a: 66), thus linking crisis communication to the other research field of political communication. In this research on political crisis communication, other theories like situational crisis communication theory have been used as well (e.g. Edwards, 2013; Sheldon & Sallot, 2009; Strand Hornnes, 2012).
Perhaps the most important previous study as it shares the research subject of Trump’s image repair discourse is Benoit’s (2017) evaluation of Trump’s image repair strategies on the much-contested “Access Hollywood” video that was released in October 2016, where sexist comments were made against women. In the study, it was found that even if Trump used multiple strategies like mortification and attack accuser in different channels such as in the presidential debates and on Twitter, these strategies did not seem to repair his reputation to any great extent. Additionally, other important conclusions are that the messages from other people than the accused or the accuser can have a big impact on the overall success of the image repair discourse, while the threats to reputations can also change over time and then spark different defence strategies. Thus, studies like this can give valuable information as to what strategies Trump has used to defend himself with during past crises.

Also, these different crises types Trump faced recently through Hurricane Maria and the “Access Hollywood” video can then be linked to others like Midtbø (2007 cited in Allern & Pollack, 2012: 14), who names a distinction between scandals related to political policy versus personal norm transgressions by politicians either in their political or private roles. Similarly, Allern et al. (2012: 40-41) note a distinction between scandals inside and outside the political field made up of the three subcategories of political acts, private acts in political roles and private acts in private roles. In the former, Trump’s response to the hurricane is an example of a crisis dealing with policy, while it is a scandal inside the political field within the subcategory of political acts in the latter. In contrast, the former makes the video a crisis concerned with personal norm transgressions in a private role, whereas it is a scandal outside the political field within the subcategory of private acts in private roles in the latter.

Another study similar to the present one as it shares the context of U.S. presidential image repair in relation to a hurricane is Benoit and Henson’s (2009) review of the image repair strategies used by President George W. Bush on Hurricane Katrina in 2005. There, it was found that Bush mainly used the strategies of bolstering, defeasibility and corrective action, which were generally judged to be inefficient as they did not change Bush’s slow response, portrayed him as incapable of solving the problems at hand and lacked direct actions to do so. Hence, lessons can be gained from studies such as this one on how this particular kind of crisis through a hurricane has been dealt with by past presidents. A further study on crisis communication during hurricanes is Edwards (2013) comparative analysis of Hurricane Katrina and Sandy, where the proactive response to the latter in 2012 by government officials and others can serve as an example of an ideal response to this type of crisis.

Furthermore, there are other studies on the subject of U.S. presidential image repair discourse that highlight how presidents have managed other kinds of crises in the past and
the special circumstances pertaining to this discourse. For instance, Benoit (1982) examined President Richard M. Nixon’s rhetorical strategies in relation to the Watergate Scandal in the early 1970’s, where nine such rhetorical strategies were found that did not seem to redeem his tarnished image as the strategies were often unpersuasive, inconsistent and sometimes even unethical. In addition, Benoit, Gullifor and Panici (1991) investigated President Ronald Reagan’s defensive discourse regarding the Iran-Contra affair in 1987, which found three distinctive phases therein of which the last one that conceded guilt and took corrective action was deemed to be the most successful. Likewise, President Barack Obama’s image repair on the health care initiative HealthCare.gov in 2013 was studied by Benoit (2014b), where it was found that the employed strategies seemed fairly effective as the strategy of minimisation can be used to lower expectations of performance, for instance.

Moreover, a cross-cultural analysis of image repair strategies in two sex scandals was done by Garcia (2011) that compared the case of President Bill Clinton’s Lewinsky scandal in 1998 to accusations made against the slightly more populist former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in 2009. There, it was found that while the two politicians used rather different sets of strategies in both content and form, these strategies seemed to work quite well in their respective cultural contexts. Another study that like the present study shares the research subject of populist political image repair was done by Hatakka, Niemi and Välimäki (2017). In the study, three Northwestern European populist parties made up the UK Independence Party, the Finns Party and the Sweden Democrats were compared for their responses to racism accusations in mainstream media. For example, the study found that these parties used both confrontational and submissive discursive strategies to communicate an ambivalent approach to racism. Studies like this can then illustrate how other populist politicians have defended themselves previously when accused of wrongdoing.

Besides the abovementioned cases, studies of political image repair can be found on other kinds of politicians that can still provide useful insights into this case. One example is a study by Strand Hornnes (2012) on female apologia during political scandals in Nordic countries. There, an interesting finding among the researched female politicians was a general lack of showing remorse and making a full apology as they did not any more than men seem to enjoy conceding guilt, although this is often the advice when guilty. Here, this tendency might be linked to Trump’s manner of handling previous crises. Additionally, other examples of studies within political image repair can be found in experimental studies like Sheldon and Sallot (2009), for instance, where it was shown that the accused does not necessarily need a positive performance history in order to achieve well in a current crisis, something which in this case potentially could speak in Trump’s favour.
4.1.2 Use of media channels

One study that like the current study considers the use of different media channels and the potential importance of this choice when forming a crisis response is done by Liu, Austin and Jin (2011), where the social-mediated crisis communication model (SMCC) is evaluated. The study focused on how likely the public is to accept a response based on both information form (traditional media, social media or word-of-mouth) and source (organisation versus third-party). The findings showed that there is a strategic value in matching form and source correctly. For instance, it was shown that traditional media rather than social media or word-of-mouth may be best for making the public accept defensive, supportive and evasive responses, while information in traditional media with a third-party source was reported to create the most attribution independent emotions for the public. Plus, while not being in the field of crisis communication per se, an important contribution on Trump’s previous use of different media channels and populist rhetoric was done by Cornfield (2017). Among the findings included that Trump’s marketing strategy on Twitter for the 2016 presidential election included elements such as celebrity feuding and a blunt vernacular.

4.2 Research gap

As shown in this review of previous research, political image repair and crisis communication is nothing new. However, studies have often been done on somewhat more conventional politicians compared to Trump, which would give a continued importance to research on crisis communication strategies by populist politicians like him on various issues and in different media channels as earlier studies have shown that these strategies can vary significantly from case to case even for the same politician. By comparing how the strategies are used by such a politician in traditional versus social media, other areas within crisis communication that until now seem to have been studied separately are brought together as well to get a broader view on image repair by populist politicians. Moreover, the value of such research can be drawn to Benoit’s (2014a: 95, 132) suggestions for future research on image repair, where this case of Trump’s response to Hurricane Maria ticks most of the boxes. First, it is noted that the rise of new media like Twitter motivates studies on image repair in those media, while a comparison to more traditional channels is made relevant by Coomb’s (2014: 155-157) discussion on the potential benefits and pitfalls of this new channel for crisis communication. Second, it is said that conversation-like series of alternating attacks on image and subsequent defences are worthy of attention, which could be said to be the situation here as Trump issued several defensive statements in response to multiple critics who sometimes made repeated attacks. Third, the merit of research on image repair between different countries with the risk of cultural clashes is pointed out, which, due to the cultural differences, arguably still applies here even if Puerto Rico technically belongs to the U.S.
5. Theoretical frame and concepts

The section below explains the two theoretical perspectives used in the study consisting of image repair theory and situational crisis communication theory, while also comparing them.

5.1 Image repair theory

One well-established theory within crisis communication research is William Benoit’s image repair theory (IRT), which was founded in 1995. In the theory, a set of strategies are offered that can be used both on an individual and organisational level when trying to redeem a damaged public image. To begin with, the theory was known as image restoration theory, but it has undergone a change of its name to better reflect that when used correctly, the strategies that are prescribed in the theory may more realistically be assumed to repair the damaged reputation rather than restore it entirely back to its state before the damage occurred, while the latter still being the end goal of such discourse. The theoretical roots of the theory can mainly be drawn to two main strands of crisis communication research. First, there is the rhetorical perspective often known as *apologia* that has been studied by Ware and Linkugel (1973) among others and deals with manners in which one can publicly defend or apologise for one’s actions. The second is the sociological perspective referred to as “accounts” and “excuses” as researched by Scott and Lyman (1968), for instance, which entails further ways to explain actions that have been criticised (Benoit, 2014a: ix-x, 32-33, 43).

In image repair theory, there are two fundamental assumptions that function as its cornerstones, namely that “[f]irst, communication is best conceptualized as a goal-directed activity. Second, maintaining a positive reputation is one of the central goals of communication” (Benoit, 2014a: 14). Consequently, these assumptions mean that all human communication, in one way or another, seeks to attain designated goals set by the sender, while one of the most central goals of such communication is the very act of upholding a favourable reputation to the public (Benoit, 2014a: 14-20). Additionally, the theory proclaims two components as necessary for image repair discourse to exist: “[f]irst, for one’s reputation to be threatened, a reprehensible act must have been committed” (Benoit, 2014a: 20), while “[t]he second element of an accusation is that the accused must be held responsible for the occurrence of that reprehensible act by the relevant audience” (Benoit, 2014a: 21). Hence, image repair efforts are dependent on both that some kind of wrongful act has been committed and there is some actor that can be blamed for this act as perceived by the affected audience. Thus, perception is key here as an actor accused of wrongdoing can sometimes truly be innocent even if the audience believes the actor to be at fault. Similarly, the accused actor must believe that the audience thinks they have done something wrong or otherwise there would be no need to engage in image repair discourse (Benoit, 2014a: 20-21).
5.1.1 Strategies

The total of fourteen strategies that are offered in image repair theory can be divided into five broad categories: denial, evade responsibility, reduce offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification, some of which have further subcategories (Benoit, 2014a: 22; Benoit, 2017: 245). In the following, each of the strategies is given a summarising explanation.

To start with, the category of denial can be divided into two subcategories made up of simple denial and shift blame. First, simple denial means that the accused has three options at hand: to deny that the wrongful act even occurred, to deny responsibility for this act or to deny that the act is wrongful. Second, shift blame signifies that the accused claims that there is another actor who is responsible for the act instead. The aim of these strategies is then to remove the accused’s blame for the criticised action, except for the denial of it being wrongful which seeks to lower the offensiveness of the act (Benoit, 2017: 245).

The next category is evade responsibility, where four subcategories can be found. First, provocation denotes that the accused can argue that the act in question was a justified response to another wrongful act. Second, defeasibility stands for that the accused argues that they did not know about the act or could not prevent it from happening. Third, the accused could contend that the act happened by accident. A fourth option is to declare that the act was committed with good intentions. Here, the focus is on lowering the accused’s blame while not being able to deny it altogether (Benoit, 2014a: 23; Benoit, 2017: 246-247).

The third category is reduce offensiveness, which entails six different subcategories. First, bolstering can be used to mitigate the wrongful act by pointing to other, more favourable acts or characteristics of the accused. Second, another option is minimisation to make the act seem less offensive. Third, differentiation implies that the accused can try to separate the act from other acts that could be seen as even more repugnant. Fourth, transcendence can be used by the accused to justify the act by putting it into a larger context. The fifth option is attack accuser, where the accuser can try to question the credibility of the accuser, indicate that the victim/s may have been deserving the offensive act, or simply divert attention away from this act. Sixth, compensation addresses how the accused attempts to compensate for, rather than correct, the act by giving money, goods or services to the victim/s. Hence, these strategies do not intend to diminish the accused’s blame but to decrease the harm of the act and create more favourable reviews of the actor (Benoit, 2014a: 24-26; Benoit, 2017: 247).

Corrective action is the fourth main category, where the accused promises to correct the damage that has been done from the wrongful act. There are two options for doing so, where the accused can either say that work will be done to restore the status quo before the act occurred or to prevent the act from occurring again. This strategy then relates to the
offensiveness of the wrongful action. The last category is mortification, which includes an admission of guilt and a plea for forgiveness from the accused (Benoit, 2017: 247).

5.1.2 Recommendations for usage

In order to evaluate the actual practice of these image repair strategies in various contexts, Benoit (1997: 183-185) has issued a number of recommendations for their usage, which are presented in the methods section in the form of a table (see table 6.2 on p. 19). In addition to these suggestions, Benoit (1997: 182-183) lists a few general guidelines for effective crisis communication. First, from an organisational angle, the value of preparing a crisis contingency plan is pointed out, which needs to be updated continuously. Second, the importance of a careful analysis of both the crisis itself and its perceived severity is noted for tailoring a fitting crisis response, as is the identification of the audience/s that could potentially be affected by the crisis. Last, it is argued that there may be circumstances where the accused does not have to respond to the accusations of wrongdoing but may instead be able to redefine the accusations or refocus them on other issues (Benoit, 1997: 182-183).

5.2 Situational crisis communication theory

Another well-known theoretical perspective within crisis communication research is Timothy Coomb’s situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), which began to take form in 1995 (Coombs, 1995) as well before reaching its current form (Coombs, 2007). Traditionally, it has been more focused on crisis response from an organisational rather than individual angle as it presents a collection of strategies that can be used to protect public reputations during times of crises. The theoretical framework of the theory can chiefly be found in attribution theory as researched by Weiner (1985) and others. There, it is claimed that it lies in human nature to search for the causes of events, particularly those that are negative, in order to attribute responsibility for them to some actor, which can then have an influence on both the emotions and actions of people. By using this framework to predict the level of reputational threat that can be caused by different kinds of crises and to prescribe matching crisis response strategies accordingly, the theory could be said to be somewhat more audience-oriented and situation-based than the former theory (Coombs, 2007: 165-166).

Thus, the theory holds that each crisis needs to be examined separately to find appropriate crisis response strategies and to estimate the severity of the reputational threat. To assess this level of reputational threat, three factors come into play: (1) initial crisis responsibility, (2) crisis history and (3) prior relational reputation. First, the initial crisis responsibility is decided by how different crises types, or crisis frames, can be divided into three crisis clusters with rising levels of both attributions of responsibility and reputational threat: the victim cluster, the accidental cluster and the preventable cluster. In the first category, low levels of
responsibility attributions and reputational threat can be found in crises like natural disasters, rumours, workplace violence and product tampering/malevolence. The second category represents moderate levels of responsibility attributions and reputational threat made up of crises such as technical-error accidents and -product harm. The last category portrays the highest levels of responsibility attributions and reputational threat exemplified by crises like human-error accidents and -product harm and organisational misdeed with or without injuries. Additionally, the responsibility attributions and reputational threat may increase if the actor with the damaged reputation has suffered a history of crises and/or has become known for not treating its stakeholders well in the past. Moreover, when discussing a crisis, these different crisis types then describe what dominant cues are used to frame the crisis as in whether it was externally caused or not, for example (Coombs, 2007: 166-169).

5.2.1 Strategies
In situational crisis communication theory, there are four main groups of crisis response strategies: the primary crisis response strategies of deny, diminish and rebuild together with the secondary crisis response strategy of bolstering. Each of these categories can then be further divided into different subcategories (Coombs, 2007: 170). What follows is a summarising description of the total of ten crisis response strategies in the theory.

The first category of deny has three subcategories: attack the accuser, denial and scapegoat. First, attack the accuser can be used to confront the source of the accusations. Second, denial can be used to deny the existence of the crisis. Third, scapegoat is used to transfer blame for the crisis to another actor. This category thus aims to remove the connection between the accused actor and the crisis situation altogether (Coombs, 2007: 171).

The next category of diminish has two subcategories made up of excuse and justification. First, an excuse can be made to argue that one did not have bad intentions or could not control what happened during the crisis, while justification aims to minimise the dangers the crisis caused. This category intends to make the crisis event seem less harmful and preventable when not being able to fully deny responsibility for it (Coombs, 2007: 171).

The rebuild category can then be sorted into compensation and apology, where a compensation represents money or gifts given to victims of the crises while the apology shows a desire to be forgiven. Hence, this category seeks to introduce new, positive information about the accused actor to build more favourable ratings (Coombs, 2007: 172).

The last category of bolstering has three subcategories: reminder, ingratiation and victimage. First, a reminder serves to remind people of good acts done by the accused in the past, while ingratiation praises stakeholders. Third, victimage may be used to argue for that the accused
is a victim of the crisis as well. Here, the tactic is also to create more positive connections between the accused actor and its stakeholders (Coombs, 2007: 172; Coombs, 2014: 149).

5.2.2 Recommendations for usage

When taken together, these crisis response strategies may appear to be quite similar to the strategies in image repair theory, which is explained by how the latter served as a framework to them (Coombs, 2007: 171). Where the two theories do differ more, however, is in the advice for how their strategies ought to be used, which will be turned to in methods section. There, a table (see table 6.4 on p. 20) is presented of a guideline developed by Coombs (2007: 172-173) on how to put the crisis response strategies to practice and select the correct response for each type of crisis. Besides these recommendations, other general suggestions for efficient crisis communication can be found in the theory. For example, these suggestions include the benefits of making fast responses to crises and providing both transparency and consistency in the communication messages to the public (Coombs, 2014: 130-136).

5.3 Comparison

Here, a summarising comparison of the theoretical perspectives of IRT and SCCT is be done, where some of their main differences and similarities are pointed out. There is also a concluding description and motivation of the use of these theories in the study.

To begin with, while they are two related theories in the crisis communication field with some shared basic assumptions, such as that threats to reputations can be mended by communicative efforts, some of their more general differences have already been touched upon in this study. First, their theoretical roots differ as IRT is based on rhetorical studies of *apologia* and sociological “accounts” and “excuses” research, while SCCT is based on attribution theory in social psychology. Second, IRT is based on case studies, while SCCT could be seen as more evidence-based as it is based on experimental research with the scientific testing of hypotheses (Coombs, 2007: 171). Third, IRT has been applied to a more diverse range of contexts made up of both individuals and organisations, while SCCT has traditionally been used primarily regarding organisations. Hence, organisations and are just one of many areas of study in IRT, whereas it is the dominant one in SCCT. Fourth, SCCT could be argued to be more situation-based than IRT by putting more weight on tailoring the response based on different crisis types. Similarly, SCCT might be seen as more stakeholder-oriented as stakeholder reactions are taken into account in this response through different levels of reputational threat. Likewise, SCCT puts more focus on providing instructing and adjusting information to stakeholders as a first priority during a crisis and then work to save reputations (Coombs, 2014: 151), while stakeholders might have a less prominent role in IRT.
Another level of differences and similarities concerns the strategies themselves. First, while some of the strategies like compensation are shared by both, albeit with sometimes differing names, which is the case with shift blame (IRT) and scapegoat (SCCT), for instance, others are specific for each of the theories. In IRT, these include provocation, accident, differentiation, transcendence, and corrective action, while ingratiation and victimage are specific for SCCT. Next, another case is strategies like excuse (SCCT), which has been divided into the two strategies of defeasibility and good intentions in IRT. Furthermore, while some of the strategies may be more or less identical, they may be placed under separate main categories of strategies and then fill somewhat different functions. For example, this is the case with strategies like attack accuser, which is placed under the category of reduce offensiveness in IRT with the aim of making the wrongful act seem less harmful, while SCCT places it under the deny category that intends to sever any connection between the accused actor and the crisis event. Similarly, while some of the more general recommendations for the usage of the strategies are recurring in the theories, such as the importance of corrective action, they are quite different overall due to SCCT’s focus on different crisis types.

In addition, there are more specific differences between the theories. For instance, these differences can be seen in the criticism that the founding fathers of the theories have directed against the other theory. One example concerns the matter of truth, as Benoit (2014a: 38-40) has criticised that SCCT appears to recommend the same strategies regardless if the accused actor is guilty or not, something which now seems to have been slightly updated in later works regarding strategies like denial (Coombs, 2014: 146) as the current recommendation from both theories is that one should avoid using denial when guilty. Still, that IRT might be somewhat more concerned with truth can also be seen in strategies like the apology when guilty, where SCCT in a corporate-minded fashion seem more reserved by stressing the financial and legal complications that can follow from an admission of guilt (Coombs, 2014: 149), while this issue is discussed by Benoit (2014a: 125, 127) as well.

In this study, the theories of IRT and SCCT will both be used as a theoretical framework to analyse Trump’s response to Hurricane Maria from a broader angle than what had been the case if only one of them had been used. Moreover, this choice is motivated by how IRT has more often been applied in cases with a political context and where the accused is a politician since SCCT is more corporate-oriented, whereas SCCT adds a further dimension of how the crisis response strategies can be tailored based on crisis types such as natural disasters like in this case as it is noted that different types of crises may require differing strategies. In doing so, the two sets of crisis communication strategies and recommendations for their usage from these theories are used as analytical tools in the study, which is detailed in the next section on methods where the strategies and recommendations are defined and exemplified further.
6. Method and material

In this section, the method and material that were used in the study are described, while issues like analytical tools, sampling, and validity and reliability are also discussed.

6.1 Qualitative rhetorical analysis

In this study, the material in the form of statements by Trump on Hurricane Maria in both traditional and social media was analysed through the method of a qualitative text analysis. This method is used to analyse different kinds of texts through a close reading of them that with the help of analytical tools can unlock their meanings, which may be somewhat hidden. It is done by a careful analysis of the sum and parts of the texts and their context, where some parts of the material are assumed to be more important than others (Esaiasson et al., 2017: 211-213). While the chosen theoretical perspectives could have allowed for a quantitative approach to count the usage of the crisis communication strategies, for example, as quantitative research is generally interested in the recurrence of data in different contexts, a qualitative approach was then chosen to focus on which strategies from the two theories that can be seen and how and why they are used since qualitative research is more centred around the occurrence of analytical objects in a specific context (Jensen, 1991: 4).

Moreover, qualitative text analyses can be divided into two main groups: those merely systematising and thematising the content of their material and those critically reviewing it as well like in an argumentation analysis (Esaiasson et al., 2017: 213-214), where this study is closest to the latter by scrutinising Trump’s statements. Thus, given that crisis communication and image repair is a form of rhetoric or persuasion in the context of defending one’s reputation after being accused of wrongful acts and as what is of interest in this study is also to evaluate how well the analysed texts achieve their purpose of defending Trump’s reputation by using these strategies, the qualitative text analysis used here can more specifically be said to be a rhetorical analysis or rhetorical criticism. There, various persuasive texts can be scrutinised through an analytical process containing stages such as definition, classification, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation (Jasinski, 2001: 126-139). In the stage of evaluation, or judgement, the effectiveness of these texts can then be assessed by how well they met criteria like audience receptiveness and potential audience effects (Andrews, 1998: 75, 78-81). In this case, that criteria would be how well the employed crisis communication strategies can be assumed to defend Trump’s response to the hurricane based on the recommendations that are given in each of the theories. The interest for such evaluations is seen as Jasinski (2001: 139) notes that “[i]n some cases, the five characteristics of criticism noted previously (define, classify, analyze, interpret, and evaluate) are ends in themselves. Criticism often functions to define, classify, analyze, interpret, and/or evaluate”.
6.1.1 Analytical tools

The material in this study was analysed based on the textual statements about Hurricane Maria that were provided by Trump in the channels of official remarks and tweets, while some minor videos were analysed as part of the latter as well. To do so, each statement was first analysed separately and then all together to answer the research questions. Thus, this study used the crisis communication strategies in IRT and SCCT together with their respective recommendations for usage as analytical tools to assess Trump’s response to the hurricane, where the focus was first on identifying which strategies that were used and then to evaluate their effectiveness. In the following, these analytical tools will be presented more thoroughly in the form of four tables compiled from a literature review, with three of them consisting of original tables (see tables 6.1, 6.3 and 6.4). As the recommendations for the strategies in IRT could not be found in an original table, a table was created from the literature instead (see table 6.2). In cases when the same topic could be found in several tables, the newest and/or most extensive one was chosen to be included here.

Table 6.1 Image Restoration Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denial</th>
<th>Shift Blame</th>
<th>Evade Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple Denial</td>
<td>Another performed offensive</td>
<td>Offense was a response to bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>act</td>
<td>act of victim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did not perform act or act is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>not harmful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I did not take your money.</td>
<td>I broke your laptop because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>you didn’t pick me up after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Icy road caused me to lose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>control of my car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Didn’t see your car when I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hit it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Planned to give you birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>present but I forgot.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defeasibility</th>
<th>Accident</th>
<th>Good Intentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of information or ability</td>
<td>Mishap</td>
<td>Meant well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to prevent offense.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I broke your laptop because</td>
<td>Planned to give you birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you didn’t pick me up after work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Icy road caused me to lose control of my car.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Didn’t see your car when I hit it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planned to give you birthday present but I forgot.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reduce Offensiveness</th>
<th>Bolstering</th>
<th>Minimization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stress positive traits, deeds</td>
<td>Portray offense as less serious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>than it appears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clinton boasted of first-term accomplishments (Lewinsky).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I broke your iPhone but it was a very old model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I didn’t steal your car; I borrowed it without permission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I stole food to feed starving child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monica Lewinsky lied her entire life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcendence</th>
<th>Attack Accuser</th>
<th>Compensation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More important values</td>
<td>Reduce credibility of accuser,</td>
<td>Reimburse victim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or suggest victim deserved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>offense, or divert attention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disabled moviegoers who were denied admission given free movie passes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I stained your sweater; I will have it dry-cleaned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hugh Grant apologized to Elizabeth Hurley.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Benoit, 2017: 246
Table 6.2 Suggestions for Effective Image Repair Discourse

1. First, because image restoration rhetoric is a form of persuasive discourse, suggestions for effectiveness can be derived from our understanding of persuasion generally.
   a) Avoid making false claims.
   b) Provide adequate support for claims.
   c) Develop themes throughout a campaign.
   d) Avoid arguments that may backfire.

2. Second, a company that is at fault should probably admit this immediately.
   a) Attempting to deny true accusations can backfire.

3. Of course, those accused of wrong-doing may, in fact, be innocent.

4. Fourth, at times, it is possible to successfully shift the blame.
   a) However, shifting the blame cannot be viewed as a certain solution to image problems.

5. If factors beyond one's control can be shown to have cause the offensive act, this may alleviate responsibility and help restore a tarnished image.

6. Sixth, it can be extremely important to report plans to correct and/or prevent recurrence of the problem.
   a) This would be especially important for those who admit responsibility.
   b) Even those who are innocent of wrong-doing can benefit from plans for preventing recurrence of the problem.
   c) Of course, corrective action cannot assure success.
   d) There is a risk that this strategy will fail—if not backfire—if one's actions do not fulfill one's promises.

7. Seventh, minimization cannot always be expected to improve one's image.
   a) Trying to make a serious problem seem trivial can create a backlash.

8. Eight, multiple strategies can work together.
   a) Defeasibility may identify causes of the problem that corrective action can resolve.

9. Finally, we must recognize that the powers of persuasion are limited.

Comment: This table was compiled verbatim, with the indicated small grammatical changes, from the section “Suggestions for Effective Image Repair Discourse” in Benoit (1997: 183-185).

Table 6.3 SCCT crisis response strategies

Primary crisis response strategies
Deny crisis response strategies
   Attack the accuser: Crisis manager confronts the person or group claiming something is wrong with the organization.
   Denial: Crisis manager asserts that there is no crisis.
   Scapegoat: Crisis manager blames some person or group outside of the organization for the crisis.

Diminish crisis response strategies
   Excuse: Crisis manager minimizes organizational responsibility by denying intent to do harm and/or claiming inability to control the events that triggered the crisis.
   Justification: Crisis manager minimizes the perceived damage caused by the crisis.

Rebuild crisis response strategies
   Compensation: Crisis manager offers money or other gifts to victims.
   Apology: Crisis manager indicates the organization takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks stakeholders for forgiveness.

Secondary crisis response strategies
Bolstering crisis response strategies
   Reminder: Tell stakeholders about the past good works of the organization.
   Ingratiation: Crisis manager praises stakeholders and/or reminds them of past good works by the organization.
   Victimage: Crisis managers remind stakeholders that the organization is a victim of the crisis too.

Source: Coombs, 2007: 170
### Table 6.4 Situational Crisis Communication Theory Recommendations for Crisis Response Selection

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Provide instructing information to all victims or potential victims in the form of warnings and directions for protecting themselves from harm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. | Provide adjusting information to victims by expressing concern for them and providing corrective action when possible.  
Note: Providing instructing and adjusting information is enough of a response for victim crises in an organization with no crisis history or unfavorable prior reputation. |
| 3. | Use diminishment strategies for accident crises when there is no crisis history or unfavorable prior reputation. |
| 4. | Use diminishment strategies for victim crises when there is a crisis history or unfavorable prior reputation. |
| 5. | Use rebuilding strategies for accident crises when there is a crisis history or unfavorable prior reputation. |
| 7. | Use denial strategies in rumor crises. |
| 8. | Use denial strategies in challenges when the challenge is unwarranted. |
| 9. | Use corrective action (adjusting information) in challenges when other stakeholders are likely to support the challenge. |
| 10. | Use reinforcing strategies as supplements to the other response strategies. |
| 11. | The victimage response strategy should be used only with the victim cluster. |
| 12. | To be consistent, do not mix denial strategies with either the diminishment or rebuilding strategies. |
| 13. | Diminishment and rebuilding strategies can be used in combination with one another. |

Source: Coombs, 2014: 152

### 6.2 Material

The analysed material in this study consists of statements by Trump on Hurricane Maria that were published in both traditional and social media. The former is made up of five transcribed remarks by Trump that were published on the official website of the White House after having been delivered in person on the 26th of September, the 3rd of October and the 18th of October, respectively. On the website, all but one of these remarks can still be found under the main category of “remarks” when searching for the keyword “Hurricane Maria”, with the specific issues divided between “foreign policy”, “budget and spending” and “land and agriculture”. As one of the remarks had since been removed, which could be seen as particularly interesting as one could question what would prompt this removal, it had to be retrieved via the internet archive Wayback Machine (n.d.), where the oldest snapshot was used. More specifically, the remarks consist of press conferences and briefings, which were delivered by Trump in the company of other people such as Puerto Rico Governor Rosselló and Jenniffer Aydin González-Colón, the current Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico, who are sometimes speaking during the remarks as well. To a varying extent, the remarks all include questions and answers, where some questions are asked by the press to President Trump and the other people who are present in the delivery of the remarks, while Trump and these other people also ask questions between themselves. These transcripts were then chosen for analysis since they include all relevant information by being complete, unabridged versions of Trump’s remarks, while important information may have gone missing if the
material had instead been selected among the news media’s reporting of these remarks where the focus could have shifted across news outlets. Similarly, even if the transcripts could have been located elsewhere, it was thought best to use the official versions from the White House’s website to decrease the risk of alterations.

The material in social media is comprised of a total of 46 tweets from President Trump’s official Twitter account @realDonaldTrump during a time period of a month ranging from the 19th of September to the 19th of October 2017. These tweets are all fairly short due to Twitter’s character limit, which at the time of the hurricane was 140 characters per tweet but has now been updated to a maximum of 280 characters per tweet. One way around this issue, which can be seen employed by Trump here, is simply to use several tweets joined by an ellipsis to write one longer statement. In the analysis, such tweets were treated as one unit, which would render the actual statements in Twitter to 35 instead of 46. As the twitter feed of an account only goes back a certain amount of time when accessed directly on the website, which in this case was until January 2018, the website Tweet tunnel (n.d.) was used to find links to the tweets analysed here. Plus, as Twitter normally shows local time zones, the Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) time zone showed on this website was adopted here to have the same time zone for the tweets as the one used by the White House in the remarks.

As these two media channels seem to have been the primary ones employed by Trump to discuss the hurricane, they are then contrasted in this study to examine what kind of crisis communication strategies that are used in each of them and if any significant trends can be seen overall. However, in doing so, one might problematise whether the distinction between concepts such as “old” and “traditional” media versus “new” and “social” media has a clear-cut border or if they may overlap to some extent. While the latter may be true, this study has chosen to use the analysed official remarks and tweets by Trump as representatives for traditional and social media, respectively. This choice is done in accordance with the distinction presented by Coombs (2014: 155), where it is noted that “[c]risis managers have historically used the news media, advertising (primarily newspapers), and websites to deliver the crisis response to stakeholders” and “[c]ombined, we can call news media, advertising, and websites the traditional crisis communication channels”.

These traditional channels can then be connected to Trump’s official remarks as they except for being published as transcripts on the White House’s website were also reported by the news media (e.g. Jackson, 2017; Stracqualursi & Kelsey, 2017) after being delivered, where Coombs’ (2014: 155) definition would seem to cover both. Thus, while the website of the White House here functions as the source of the remarks, and where online communication on websites might generally be argued to be an example of new media, these kinds of
presidential remarks are specifically formed to be accessed chiefly through news reporting often with quotations and/or in televised form. Otherwise, the information provided in the remarks could just have been published directly online, for example. Plus, even if social media content can be the subject of this news reporting as well, it may then be contrasted to press conferences and the like whose main and basic purpose is to reach out to the public via the press. Hence, rather than treating the distinction between the two channels purely as a question of black and white, it might be more fruitful to think of the channels as being more “traditional” versus more “social” as a key difference between them here seems to lie in the level of interactivity with stakeholders, where Twitter might be assumed to provide more such opportunities or at least more direct ones. Similarly, press conferences, for instance, could be seen as a more traditional form of communication than Twitter due to them being used historically not only by emergency officials (Haddow, Bullock & Coppola, 2017: 194) but also by U.S. presidents to address topics like crisis situations (Greenfield, 2017) considering the fact that presidential press conferences have been around since President Woodrow Wilson in 1913 (Kumar, n.d.), which was long before both the Internet and social media.

6.2.1 Sample

The analysed statements by Trump in traditional and social media regarding Hurricane Maria were strategically sampled based on how clearly they addressed the Trump administration’s response to the hurricane. To delimit the material, it was sampled from a time period of September to October 2017, which was when the hurricane itself was active. Any statements released thereafter have then not been considered in this study, which could mean that there exists additional data that has been missed out here. This is also the case for any potential statements released in other channels than the two specified, such as in news interviews. The same applies to statements performed solely by others than Trump. However, in the selected channels and during this time period, an effort was made to collect a total population sampling of the material as any statements addressing the hurricane were selected for analysis by searching for the keyword “Hurricane Maria”. On Twitter, it was necessary to look for the context of the hurricane as well such as in key figures like Governor Rosselló as the hurricane was not always mentioned outright in every tweet by Trump.

6.3 Validity and reliability

The validity of a study is found in the extent to which it measures what it had intended to, while reliability deals with the trustworthiness of these measures. First, regarding reliability, one potential limitation of a qualitative text analysis as a research method in general, as in most research in social science and humanities, is that the analysis of data is perhaps somewhat more than quantitative research dependent on a certain amount of interpretation
by the researcher to give it meaning where people can come to different interpretations when reading the same text due to their differing previous experiences, which could result in bias or overly subjective conclusions (Esaiasson et al., 2017: 228). Moreover, this issue may be particularly evident in the context of controversial figures like Trump, where people may hold very conflicting views. In this study, the issue has been dealt with by using the crisis communication strategies and recommendations for their usage as provided in the theories of IRT and SCCT, respectively, as analytical tools to assess the data. Likewise, it made it necessary to exercise some caution when drawing any conclusions from the results of the study as to not make them influenced by personal opinions about Trump, for example.

Similarly, a potential problem for reliability can be found in the study’s knowledge claims and generalisability on populist political image repair as even the same actor can use quite different crisis communication strategies from one crisis to the next as shown by previous research. However, while the exact strategies that are used could differ, and then be more difficult to generalise, this case may offer a step in understanding this discourse by the basic structures that are found here through these strategies (Ekström & Larsson: 2010: 17-18).

Sampling is another potential problem for reliability as a strategic selection of material means that there is a risk of missing valuable data when some are selected over others, which could also question the conclusions that are drawn, and while the total population sampling technique may be superior in that sense as all possible data is taken into consideration, it may be difficult to do in practice for that reason (Esaiasson et al. 2017: 226). This problem was solved by selecting as many statements as possible from what appeared to be the two most prominently used channels by Trump to address the hurricane during the time when they were most important, which is when the hurricane was active. Thus, while there may exist additional data on Trump’s response, what was chosen seems to have been the most important. A related issue concerns the sampling of material on Twitter, as some tweets might have been missed for selection if it was not obvious that they dealt with the hurricane. For example, this issue could be seen as Trump attacked the news media in some of the selected tweets, but since this is quite common for him, such tweets could have been missed if it was not clear in which context the attack took place. For the sake of validity, the issue was solved by not including data if there was any kind of uncertainty as to whether it dealt with the hurricane or not. Hence, more data could have been missed in the process.

Despite these potential issues, the validity and reliability of the study are assessed to hold an acceptable level. For validity, the study measured what was intended by a rhetorical analysis of Trump’s statements on the hurricane and for reliability, the same analytical tools were used for all material in a systematic fashion, while the procedures and conclusions of the study were made transparent as well and the study is believed to be easily replicated.
7. Analysis and results

Here, the study’s analysis and results are presented, where Trump’s statements are first analysed in a chronological order separated by traditional and social media. For cases with several tweets treated as one unit, the respective times of posting are separated by a semicolon. Next, Trump’s communication is evaluated based on the two research questions.

7.1 Trump’s statements in traditional media

**7.1.1 Remarks by President Trump Before Meeting with Bipartisan Members of the House Committee on Ways and Means (26.09.17 10:48 a.m.)**

Place: Roosevelt Room, White House  
Source: WhiteHouse.gov (2017a)

Trump starts this briefing by responding to a press question on the amount of money required to help Puerto Rico, where corrective action (IRT) is used as Trump answers that the island “needs a lot of money” for the recovery efforts and that as a part of them, he is “going to Puerto Rico on Tuesday” on a scheduled trip and “may also stop at the Virgin Islands”. However, defeasibility (IRT) and excuse (SCCT) can be seen since Trump claims that he is not able to go there any sooner “because of the first responders, and we don’t want to disrupt the relief efforts”, thus arguing that factors beyond his control would delay the trip. Ingratiation (SCCT) is then used as Trump praises a stakeholder in Mayor Cruz of San Juan with kind words like “generous” and “very nice”. There, bolstering (IRT) is seen when Trump emphasises positive actions by claiming that she had thanked the administration for “the great job we’ve done with FEMA”, which is repeated twice when adding “that — we really have” and “[w]e have worked very, very hard in Puerto Rico”.

Next, defeasibility (IRT) and excuse (SCCT) are used again as Trump explains how the recovery is “very tough because it’s an island”, which is further stressed by it being positioned “in the middle of an ocean” and that “it’s a very big ocean”. Here, bolstering (IRT) and reminder (SCCT) are seen when Trump compares Hurricane Maria to the previous hurricanes of Irma and Harvey, where the administration’s relief measures are said to have “gotten A-pluses on Texas and on Florida,” due to their location on the mainland, while Trump contends that this grading will be given “also on Puerto Rico” since “we’re doing a really good job”. More corrective action (IRT) is then used as Trump further details the administration’s relief efforts as they had “shipped massive amounts of food and water and supplies” to the island “on an hourly basis”, which by being material aid are examples of compensation (SCCT), while they were “still looking for people” gone missing as well. Following that, ingratiation (SCCT) is seen again as Trump praises both the “terrific job” of Governor Mapp of the U.S. Virgin Islands and the “incredible” work of FEMA.
To the second press question of whether Puerto Rico is getting all the help it needs from the president, Trump answers by bolstering (IRT) his esteem for Puerto Rico and its “fantastic” people by citing his upbringing in New York, which may additionally function as ingratiation (SCCT) as the Puerto Rican people is praised. Trump then repeats the previously mentioned corrective action (IRT) and compensation (SCCT) of sending resources to the island, while also using bolstering (IRT) to praise the recovery in sayings like “I think we’re really getting really good marks for the work we’re doing” despite noting the difficult circumstances for this work by referring both to the destruction to the airport and runways after the hurricane and how they had to start “from almost scratch” as the “infrastructure was in bad shape” or there was “no infrastructure” even “before the storm”, thus using defeasibility (IRT) and excuse (SCCT). In the end, corrective action (IRT), compensation (SCCT) and bolstering (IRT) are used again as Trump notes that “we’re also getting tremendous efforts and we’re sending tremendous amounts of supplies to the Virgin Islands” as part of the recovery efforts.

7.1.2 Remarks by President Trump and President Rajoy of the Government of Spain in Joint Press Conference (26.09.17 1:56 p.m.)

In this joint press conference with President Rajoy of Spain, Trump begins by expressing his concern for the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, while then declaring that corrective action (IRT) has been initiated to assist these areas as “we’re doing everything in our power to help the hard-hit people of both places”. In doing so, bolstering (IRT) can be seen as Trump stresses that “a massive effort is underway” and that they are working “hard” and doing “a good job”. Ingratiation (SCCT) is used as well since Trump praises the governor and people of these places as they had been “treated very, very nicely”, while praise is also directed to all actors involved in the recovery effort as Trump continues to use bolstering (IRT) to boost its magnitude by noting that “all available federal resources” and “all relevant departments and agencies” had been directed to it. In addition, Trump praises Governor Rosselló again, who is claimed to have said things like “the entire federal workforce is doing great work in Puerto Rico”, which further strengthens Trump’s bolstering (IRT) of the recovery. Additionally, defeasibility (IRT) and excuse (SCCT) are used as Trump notes that “the destructive force of Mother Nature” was the cause of the hurricane. Trump then repeats his plans of “going to Puerto Rico on Tuesday” and that he will “also be going to the U.S. Virgin Islands” as part of the corrective action (IRT). Moving on, Trump uses of bolstering (IRT) and reminder (SCCT) by pointing to past good deeds since “Texas, Louisiana, and Florida are in really good shape and moving along well” due to the previous recovery efforts following Hurricane Irma and Harvey. Similarly, ingratiation (SCCT) is seen again as Trump once more thanks the federal personnel and “all of those impacted” by the hurricanes.
Later, when responding to a press question of what Trump thinks of the criticism that he was more preoccupied with a feud with the National Football League (NFL)\(^1\) than with Puerto Rico, Trump uses simple denial (IRT) and denial (SCCT) to object to this idea by saying “[n]ot at all” as “I have plenty of time on my hands” and “[a]ll I do is work”. Bolstering (IRT) and reminder (SCCT) are then repeated as Trump refers to the praise from Governor Rosselló about “the great job” of the federal effort and the success of the previous recovery efforts in places like Texas, Florida and Louisiana. Defeasibility (IRT) and excuse (SCCT) are also seen as Trump points to Puerto Rico’s location as complicating the relief since “[i]t’s on an island in the middle of the ocean” and “[y]ou can’t just drive your trucks there from other states”.

The next press question deals with whether Trump is truly satisfied with the relief done so far in Puerto Rico and if he will deploy special naval or air assets there, to which Trump responds by continuing his use of bolstering (IRT) and reminder (SCCT) to applaud the recovery as they had gotten “tremendous reviews from government officials” for Puerto Rico like in the previous cases of Texas, Florida and Louisiana. Here, ingratiation (SCCT) is seen as Trump notes that the latter ones have “great governors”, while Governor Rosselló “has been extremely generous”. Trump then discusses the corrective action (IRT) being done, where bolstering (IRT) is used to stress their quality as the recovery involves “top people from FEMA” and “on an hourly basis, massive loads of water and food and supplies for Puerto Rico”, thus using compensation (SCCT) as well. Trump then uses defeasibility (IRT) and excuse (SCCT) by repeating the island’s location as complicating the relief as “[t]his is a thing called the Atlantic Ocean. This is tough stuff”. Further corrective action (IRT) is then seen as Trump notes that “we’re also very much involved in security in Puerto Rico” due to the decimated police force and “[w]e’re going to be deploying Navy ships — they’ve already been deployed”. Trump then rounds off the answer with more bolstering (IRT) to assess the recovery as having “done a really good job” even if “it is a tough situation”.

\section*{7.1.3 Remarks by President Trump in Briefing on Hurricane Maria Relief Efforts (03.10.17 12:02 p.m.)}

\textit{Place: Luis Muñiz Air National Guard Base, Carolina, PR \quad \textit{Source: WhiteHouse.gov (2017c)}}

In this roundtable, Trump and the First Lady are joined by several others in the recovery team. First, Trump starts off with bolstering (IRT) as he testifies his love for the “beautiful place” of Puerto Rico by having visited many times. Second, this strategy is continued as Trump commends the recovery efforts by paying special tribute to the work of some people in

\footnote{Critics argued that Trump was spending more attention on a feud with the NFL where he opposed players who were protesting during the national anthem (Meyer, 2017; Stracqualursi & Kelsey, 2017).}
the team, where ingratiation (SCCT) is used as well. These people include the “unbelievable” FEMA administrator Brock Long, who, by using bolstering (IRT) and reminder (SCCT), is said to have been important for the previous successful relief efforts in Texas, Florida and Louisiana as well, followed by the “incredible” former acting Secretary of Homeland Security Elaine Duke plus the “great” and “fantastic” jobs of former Homeland Security Advisor Tom Bossert and General Jeffrey S. Buchanan. Praise is also given to the “tremendously supportive” Governor Rosselló and to Congresswoman González-Colón, where the latter then strengthens Trump’s appraisal by thanking the administration for the corrective action (IRT) initiated by them like sending in “more people — trucks, drivers, and resources” as “[a]ll the questions and requests that the governor did, the President and his Cabinet accomplished”.

More corrective action (IRT) can then be seen as Trump notes that he intends to keep the recovery personnel in Puerto Rico “for another couple of weeks” after using ingratiation (SCCT) to praise how many of them had gone straight to Puerto Rico after dealing with previous hurricane-ridden areas like Texas, Louisiana and Florida. Additionally, praise is directed to Linda McMahon, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration. Mick Mulvaney, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, is then mentioned, and here Trump says that “I hate to tell you, Puerto Rico, but you’ve thrown our budget a little out of whack because we’ve spent a lot of money on Puerto Rico”, which could be interpreted as a form of attack (IRT/SCCT) by Trump on Puerto Rico and its officials as the question of money to fund the recovery is raised. However, in what might have been an attempt to soften this statement somewhat, Trump adds “and that’s fine” because “[w]e’ve saved a lot of lives”. Minimisation (IRT) and justification (SCCT) can then be seen as Trump attempts to downplay the damage from the hurricane by using differentiation (IRT) to contrast “what happened here with, really, a storm that was just totally overpowering” to “a real catastrophe like Katrina” with “[s]ixteen people versus in the thousands” among the certified casualties.

Moving on, Trump lets representatives from the Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard speak about the corrective action (IRT) done on the island. For example, among the actions that are discussed include how Trump notes that “we’re just in the process of opening” up the docks, while an Air Force representative adds that now “[w]e have four major runways that are fully open and operational”, both of which had suffered massive destruction during the hurricane. These testimonies function as bolstering (IRT) when both Trump and these representatives praise the efficiency and size of the recovery as Trump notes that the Navy had “ships all over the place”, for instance, while the Air Force representative testifies that “[i]t’s been a tremendous team effort”. More ingratiation (SCCT) is then seen as Trump thanks and praises them for their work. Gratitude is also expressed by Trump towards John F. Kelly, the current White House Chief of Staff and a former Marine Corps General, followed by a Customs and
Border Protection representative and Governor Rick Perry of Texas and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt. The word is then given to Governor Rosselló, who starts by thanking the Trump administration for their presence in Puerto Rico and for their relief efforts, where this testimony serves as more bolstering (IRT) as these efforts are praised. Further corrective action (IRT) mentioned by the governor include how “right now our forces are working so that they can deliver food and water to the people of Puerto Rico, so that diesel and fuel can get to the hospitals”, where compensation (SCCT) is used as well through this material aid. Trump then ends the roundtable with more ingratiation (IRT) as he thanks all those involved in the recovery. He also repeats the attack (IRT/SCCT) about the cost of the recovery as “our country has really gone all out to help” and “it’s expensive”, while using bolstering (IRT) to soften this statement by adding that he considers “it a great honor” due to his esteem for Puerto Ricans as a native of New York.

7.1.4 Remarks by President Trump at Briefing With Senior Military Personnel
(03.10.17 2:54 p.m.)

In this briefing, Trump is joined by Governor Mapp of the U.S. Virgin Islands and Governor Rosselló of Puerto Rico. Trump begins with using bolstering (IRT) praise the recovery effort or corrective action (IRT) initiated by the administration as he is speaking fondly of the ship they are located on and its “tremendous service for Puerto Rico and for the U.S. Virgin Islands” by having capacity for “helicopters of all sizes and types”. In addition, ingratiation (SCCT) is used as Trump thanks both an admiral and a captain, presumably among the ship’s crew, while also praising the “generous” Governor Mapp for his approval of the relief efforts and the “great people” of the U.S. Virgin Islands, who are later said to “have been very resilient” as “[t]hey’re already starting the rebuilding process”. Trump then resumes discussing the corrective action (IRT) being done as he notes that the runways had now been reopened and were receiving “a lot of aircraft and a lot of help”.

Governor Mapp then himself expresses the gratitude of him and the U.S. Virgin Island population to the Trump administration “for all the help”, which further serves as an example of bolstering (IRT) to cast these efforts in a favourable light as the governor testifies that “[i]t has hastened our rebuilding”. In doing so, Mapp discusses some of the corrective action (IRT) made possible through the relief efforts such as “opening schools and cruise ships returning”. Going forward, Governor Mapp and Governor Rosselló then exchange their intention to help each other as well. When closing the remark, ingratiation (SCCT) is seen again as Trump thanks Congresswoman González-Colón of Puerto Rico, who is said to be present at the scene but is not speaking during the remark.
In this remark where Trump is joined by Governor Rosselló and FEMA administrator Brock Long, the transcript starts in mid-progress. First, Trump addresses Governor Rosselló and notes that “we’ve gotten to know each other extremely well over the last couple of weeks”, which could function as bolstering (IRT) as it is implied that the recovery had required much cooperation between them. Ingratiation (SCCT) is then seen as Trump praises Governor Rosselló to be “a hardworking governor”, for instance, while later thanking him for his work. Next, Trump goes on to discuss corrective action (IRT) by stating that “we’re looking at designs of a new power plant, a big electrical plant” to secure the energy supply to Puerto Rico as the old one was in bad shape before being destroyed by the hurricane, which is stressed by Trump as to have contributed to the “tough situation” of the recovery compared to previous cases like Texas and Florida as “[s]o much has to be rebuilt, even from before”. Bolstering (IRT) is then used as Trump argues that “I think we’ve done a really great job” despite these difficult circumstances. Another example of the difficulties presented by Trump concerns the corrective action (IRT) and compensation (SCCT) of “getting food there”, where defeasibility (IRT) and excuse (SCCT) can be seen as Trump notes that factors beyond their control made the distribution difficult “because the roads were blocked” due to the hurricane, while they were sometimes in rough shape even “before the storm”.

More corrective action (IRT) can then be seen as Governor Rosselló thanks Trump both for setting up this meeting to “talk about what we’ve done but also the path forward” and for the administration’s relief efforts to the island as Trump is said to have “declared Puerto Rico a disaster area very quickly”, for example, which then function as bolstering (IRT) to praise the recovery effort. Moreover, further actions proposed by the governor include how they together ought to finance the rebuilding of a much more “modern, much stronger platform” for sustainable energy, while the governor notes that similar relief measures could be directed also to “the education sector” and “the healthcare sector”. Trump responds by resuming the discussion on corrective action (IRT) as “[o]ne of the things we have done is delivered to the island massive numbers of generators for electricity” to be used by the hospitals, for example, in wait of this new power plant. There, bolstering (IRT) may be seen again as Trump stresses that it concerns what “got to be pretty close” to record numbers of generators delivered to the island. Furthermore, another corrective action (IRT) discussed by Trump is the “payment plan” that is negotiated between the U.S. Congress and Puerto Rican representatives to fund the recovery. Ingratiation (SCCT) is then seen as Trump praises how “[t]he people of Puerto Rico are amazing” due to their resilience.
Then, there is a press question on how long Trump is willing to use federal resources to the recovery and rebuilding of Puerto Rico plus what the two men know of reports of corruption among local officials in the distribution of emergency supplies on the island. First, regarding the corruption issue, both Trump and Governor Rosselló states that corrective action (IRT) had been taken to solve this issue. For instance, Governor Rosselló states that “[n]umber one, we got the National Guard to go over to all the municipalities and help with the logistics in case it was just a matter of not knowing how to execute”. Second, about the length of the federal assistance, Trump states that even if Puerto Rico is “a more difficult situation” than the previous recoveries in places like Louisiana, Florida and Texas, whose success is praised through bolstering (IRT) and reminder (SCCT), “no matter where you go, they cannot be there forever” as the point of the recovery is to help the locals regain their strength. EPA administrator Brock long then continues discussing the corrective action (IRT) done on the island as he states that “[r]ight now, the focus is on restoring essential services”. For example, these essentials include how “[w]e’ve stabilized a lot of the emergency power needs of hospitals, and we’re starting to focus and work with the governor today on rebuilding power grids going forward, as well as water treatment, waste water, roadway systems”.

In the next press question, Trump is asked to grade the White House response so far on a grade of one and ten, where bolstering (IRT) is used as he grades it “a 10” by citing how the circumstances for the recovery was even “worse than Katrina” and the fact that a category 5 hurricane does not often strike land, while also using ingratiation (SCCT) to praise the work of the federal recovery personnel. In another press question, Trump is asked who is going to pay for the recovery of the infrastructure in Puerto Rico, where he responds by referencing the payment plan negotiated with Congress as mentioned earlier. Here, the island’s existing “massive debt” is brought up, where a modest example of attack accuser (IRT/SCCT) may be seen by referencing this debt. The following press question asks Trump how long before the electricity is fully restored to the island, to which Trump notes that “it’s going to be a period of time” as they either have to build an entirely new power plant or renovate the old one completely as part of the corrective action (IRT). Governor Rosselló is then asked by the press how he would grade the federal response on the same scale as before, where bolstering (IRT) is used as he testifies that “the President has answered all of our petitions”, while this praise of the recovery is later repeated after Trump asks the governor whether they did a good job. These strategies are also continued as Brock Long notes that “[i]t’s been a tremendous effort” by citing federal assistance in “20 different states” during “the last 50 days” due to the previous disaster recoveries during the year. In the last press question, Trump is asked whether government loans or grants will be given to fund the power plant, where corrective action (IRT) and compensation (SCCT) are used as Trump answers that a combination of both is discussed as part of the recovery effort.
7.2 Trump’s statements in social media

7.2.1 Twitter (19.09.17 10:23 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 19 September, 10:23 p.m.)

In his first tweet after Hurricane Maria making landfall, Trump expresses his concern for the Puerto Rican people by urging them to “[b]e careful” as “our hearts are with you”, while also promising corrective action (IRT) from the administration as they “will be there to help!”.

7.2.2 Twitter (20.09.17 11:13 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 20 September, 11:13 p.m.)

In the next tweet, Trump addresses Governor Rosselló directly with further expressions of concern as he pledges that “[w]e are with you and the people of Puerto Rico. Stay safe!”, which may be a form of corrective action (IRT) to mark the intention of helping the island.

7.2.3 Twitter (25.09.17 8:45 p.m.; 8:50 p.m.; 8:58 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 25 September, 8:45 p.m.; 2017, 25 September, 8:50 p.m.; 2017, 25 September, 8:58 p.m.)

In these three tweets joined by an ellipsis, Trump begins by using bolstering (IRT) and reminder (SCCT) to note that “Texas & Florida are doing great” thanks to the previous federal relief efforts after Hurricane Irma and Harvey, while Puerto Rico is said to be “in deep trouble”. Trump then discusses the destruction to Puerto Rico, where its “massive debt” of “billions of dollars” that is “owed to Wall Street and the banks” is pointed out, which could be read as a kind of attack (IRT/SCCT) by Trump on Puerto Rico as the attention is shifted away from the hurricane itself to monetary issues. Additionally, as Trump brings attention to how the island “was already suffering from broken infrastructure” and how its dated electrical grid “was in terrible shape”, Trump appears to be accusing local officials of mismanagement. Corrective action (IRT) and compensation (SCCT) can then be seen as Trump mentions how “[f]ood, water and medical are top priorities” in the relief effort, where bolstering (IRT) is used to boost these priorities as they are claimed to be “doing well”.

7.2.4 Twitter (26.09.17 8:13 a.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 26 September, 8:13 a.m.)

Here, Trump uses ingratiation (SCCT) to thank Mayor Cruz of San Juan “for your kind words on FEMA etc”, where this testimony functions as bolstering (IRT) to praise the recovery, while he also does so by noting that they “are working hard”. Corrective action (IRT) and compensation (SCCT) are then seen as [m]uch food and water” is said to be on the way.
7.2.5 Twitter (26.09.17 5:34 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 26 September, 5:34 p.m.)

In this tweet, Trump expresses more concern for the Puerto Rican people while also directing it to the population of the U.S. Virgin Islands as “America’s hearts & prayers” are said to be with them both. In addition, as Trump then adds that “[w]e will get through this - and we will get through this TOGETHER!”, corrective action (IRT) is used as Trump marks the federal willingness to assist in the recovery process. As part of the tweet, there is a video clip of sections from Trump’s joint press conference with President Rajoy of Spain the same day.

7.2.6 Twitter (28.09.17 10:01 a.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 28 September, 10:01 a.m.)

Corrective action (IRT) is the focus of this tweet as Trump states that “[l]arge numbers of generators are now on Island” due to Puerto Rico’s electrical grid being destroyed, while “[f]ood and water on site” are also examples of compensation (SCCT).

7.2.7 Twitter (28.09.17 7:41 p.m.; 7:45 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 28 September, 7:41 p.m.; 2017, 28 September, 7:45 p.m.)

In these two tweets, Trump starts with ingratiation (SCCT) as he boasts that “FEMA & First Responders are doing a GREAT job in Puerto Rico”, thus functioning to commend the recovery by bolstering (IRT). Bolstering (IRT) can also be seen when mentioning corrective action (IRT) and compensation (SCCT) as “massive” amounts of “food & water” are said to have been delivered to the island. More ingratiation (SCCT) is then used as Trump praises how the local population is “trying really hard to help” even if many of them have lost their homes. As part of the corrective action (IRT) taken, Trump then notes that the “[m]ilitary is now on site” in Puerto Rico and that he “will be there Tuesday”. Next, Trump states that he wishes that the “press would treat fairly!”, which could be seen as an attack (IRT/SCCT) by Trump on the press as it is implied that they usually do not do so.

7.2.8 Twitter (28.09.17 8:03 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 28 September, 8:03 p.m.)

Here, Trump uses ingratiation (SCCT) by praising that “FEMA and First Responders are amazing” despite the massive destruction to Puerto Rico following the hurricane, while Governor Rosselló’s review of the federal effort doing a ”great job!” is also mentioned, where both statements then serve to boost the relief effort through bolstering (IRT).
7.2.9 Twitter (29.09.17 7:14 a.m.; 7:18 a.m.)

Source: Trump (2017, 29 September, 7:14 a.m.; 2017, 29 September, 7:18 a.m.)

More bolstering (IRT) of the relief effort by means of a testimony is seen here as Trump claims that Governor Rosselló had stated that “[t]he Administration and the President, every time we’ve spoken, they’ve delivered”. Then, Trump writes that “[b]ig decisions will have to be made as to the cost of its rebuilding!” regarding Puerto Rico, which might be interpreted as an attack (IRT/SCCT) as the focus is again shifted to money.

7.2.10 Twitter (29.09.17 9:30 a.m.)

Source: Trump (2017, 29 September, 9:30 a.m.)

Ingratiation (SCCT) is seen in this tweet as Trump thanks “FEMA, our great Military & all First Responders”, who, by using bolstering (IRT), Trump notes “are working so hard” and “against terrible odds”. Corrective action (IRT) is then seen as Trump brings up his plans of visiting Puerto Rico the following Tuesday with “[s]ee you Tuesday!”.

7.2.11 Twitter (30.09.17 7:19 a.m.; 7:26 a.m.; 7:29 a.m.)

Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 7:19 a.m.; 2017, 30 September, 7:26 a.m.; 2017, 30 September, 7:29 a.m.)

Attack accuser (IRT/SCCT) is the prominent strategy in this set of tweets as Trump with a noticeably more aggressive tone than in the remarks first directs it to Mayor Cruz of San Juan by arguing that while she was being “very complimentary only a few days ago” she “has now been told by the Democrats that you must be nasty to Trump”, thus attacking the U.S. Democratic Party as well. Trump then continues the attack on Mayor Cruz, which is now also extended to other Puerto Rican government officials, by adding “[s]uch poor leadership ability by the Mayor of San Juan, and others in Puerto Rico, who are not able to get their workers to help” and that they “want everything to be done for them when it should be a community effort”. Trump then uses bolstering (IRT) to boost the recovery as he notes that there are “10,000 Federal workers now on Island doing a fantastic job”, where ingratiation (SCCT) is seen as well since the federal workers are praised for their work.

7.2.12 Twitter (30.09.17 7:33 a.m.)

Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 7:33 a.m.)

In this tweet, Trump uses ingratiation (SCCT) to praise “[t]he military and first responders”, who “despite no electric, roads, phones etc., have done an amazing job”. By stressing the
success of the federal recovery measures to Puerto Rico in the face of these difficult circumstances, bolstering (IRT) can then be seen as well.

7.2.13 Twitter (30.09.17 7:48 a.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 7:48 a.m.)

Here, Trump continues a more aggressive version of attack accuser (IRT/SCCT) by directing it to “Fake News CNN and NBC”, who are said to be “going out of their way to disparage our great First Responders as a way to ‘get Trump’”, which is said to be “[n]ot fair to FR or effort!” In doing so, ingratiation (SCCT) is used as well since the first responders are praised.

7.2.14 Twitter (30.09.17 7:55 a.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 7:55 a.m.)

Corrective action (IRT) is the main strategy here as Trump notes that as a part of the federal relief efforts, he “will be going to Puerto Rico on Tuesday with Melania” and “[w]ill hopefully be able to stop at the U.S. Virgin Islands” as well. Bolstering (IRT) is then seen as Trump adds that people are “working hard” in the recovery.

7.2.15 Twitter (30.09.17 8:07 a.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 8:07 a.m.)

In this tweet, Trump once more uses the strategy of attack accuser (IRT/SCCT) to direct an aggressive attack on the news media by claiming that “[t]he Fake News Networks are working overtime in Puerto Rico” and that they are “doing their best to take the spirit away from our soldiers and first R’s”, something which is said to be a “[s]hame!”

7.2.16 Twitter (30.09.17 2:04 P.M.)
Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 2:04 p.m.)

In the following tweet, the strategy of attack accuser (IRT/SCCT) is seen again as Trump directs further aggressive attacks on the news media and the Democrats by stating that “[d]espite the Fake News Media in conjunction with the Dems, an amazing job is being done in Puerto Rico”, where bolstering (IRT) can then be seen as well since the recovery effort is praised. Ingratiation (SCCT) is also used as Trump adds “[g]reat people!”, where he supposedly refers to the Puerto Rican population.
7.2.17 Twitter (30.09.17 3:19 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 3:19 p.m.)

The strategy of ingratiation (SCCT) is the focus of this tweet as Trump praises Governor Rosselló of Puerto Rico, who is said to be “a great guy and leader who is really working hard”, while Trump also thanks him directly by adding “[t]hank you Ricky!”.

7.2.18 Twitter (30.09.17 3:30 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 3:30 p.m.)

More ingratiation (SCCT) is used here as Trump thanks Governor Mapp of the U.S. Virgin Islands, who is claimed to have “stated that #FEMA and Military are doing a GREAT job!” there, where this testimony thus functions as bolstering (IRT) to praise the federal relief efforts that have been initiated by the administration.

7.2.19 Twitter (30.09.17 3:43 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 3:43 p.m.)

Another clear example of ingratiation (SCCT) is seen in this tweet as Trump thanks Congresswoman González-Colón of Puerto Rico, who is described to have “been wonderful to deal with and a great representative of the people”.

7.2.20 Twitter (30.09.17 3:53 p.m.)
Source: (2017, 30 September, 3:53 p.m.)

Trump uses attack accuser (IRT/SCCT) to direct another aggressive attack on the news media in this tweet by declaring “[t]o the people of Puerto Rico: Do not believe the #FakeNews! #PRStrong”, where the latter hashtag may also function as bolstering (IRT) to praise the recovery in the face of the criticism that has been directed to it.

7.2.21 Twitter (30.09.17 3:55 p.m.; 3:56 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 3:55 p.m.; 2017, 30 September, 3:56 p.m.)

Bolstering (IRT) is the primary strategy in these tweets as Trump begins by discussing corrective action (IRT) by stating “[m]y Administration, Governor @RicardoRossello, and many others are working together to help the people of Puerto Rico in every way”. Bolstering (IRT) can also be seen as Trump claims that they are “getting great marks from the people that truly matter!”, despite that “#FakeNews critics are working overtime”, thus launching yet another aggressive version of attack accuser (IRT/SCCT) on the news media.
7.2.22 Twitter (30.09.17 3:57 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 3:57 p.m.)

Corrective action (IRT) is used here as Trump writes that “[w]e must all be united in offering assistance to everyone suffering in Puerto Rico and elsewhere”, where the gravity of the situation following Hurricane Maria is then stressed as Trump adds that this work must be done “in the wake of this terrible disaster”. Additionally, defeasibility (IRT) and excuse (SCCT) may be seen as nature being the cause of the hurricane is thus alluded to.

7.2.23 Twitter (30.09.17 4:37 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 4:37 p.m.)

More bolstering (IRT) in the context of corrective action (IRT) can be seen here as Trump notes that the “[r]esults of recovery efforts will speak much louder than complaints by San Juan Mayor”, where Mayor Cruz is then subject to another example of attack accuser (IRT/SCCT) by Trump, while Trump also claims that the administration and the federal agencies are “[d]oing everything we can to help great people of PR!” By complementing the Puerto Rican people, ingratiation (SCCT) is then seen as well.

7.2.24 Twitter (30.09.17 6:15 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 6:15 p.m.)

In this tweet, the strategy of corrective action (IRT) can be seen as Trump declares that he “will be in PR on Tues.” to confirm his plans of visiting Puerto Rico the following Tuesday as part of the federal relief efforts. In doing so, bolstering (IRT) can also be seen as Trump declares that we will do so “to further ensure we continue doing everything possible to assist & support the people in their time of great need”.

7.2.25 Twitter (30.09.17 6:46 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 30 September, 6:46 p.m.)

Here, Trump attacks (IRT/SCCT) the news media again by stating that “[b]ecause of #FakeNews my people are not getting the credit they deserve for doing a great job”, thus using ingratiation (SCCT) as well to praise the people involved in the recovery. This statement then functions as bolstering (IRT) to commend the relief efforts, something which is further stressed as Trump adds “[a]s seen here, they are ALL doing a GREAT JOB!” in reference to a video clip that is posted as part of the tweet.

In this compilation clip that has supposedly been put together by the Trump administration, Governor Rosselló is first asked whether Puerto Rico has received all the aid it needs from the
administration and if this aid has arrived soon enough. In response, the governor is heard stating some of the complimentary quotes as referenced earlier by Trump like “every time we have spoken... they have delivered” along with other positive statements about the federal effort such as “they have responded quickly” and “the president and the administration has done everything that they can that we have asked them to do”, which would seemingly validate Trump’s bolstering of the recovery in this tweet. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the response is stressed since the clip details corrective action (IRT) taken by federal actors like the U.S. Marine Corps, who are said to be engaged in activities such as “clearing roadways, setting up communication towers and converting salt water into fresh drinkable water”, where footage from the island is used as evidence. Moreover, compensation (SCCT) can be seen as throughout the clip, footage is shown of federal actors handling resources like water bottles, which are then handed out to the population. Similarly, some shots show the logo of the DoD News Channel, which is a channel for the U.S. Armed Forces, where further relief efforts are described. For instance, these actions include that the “U.S. transportation command is coordinating flights to deliver food, water, communications and security”.

In the end of the clip, a section of Trump’s weekly address from the 29th of September 2017 (WhiteHouse.gov, 2017f) is shown, where Trump addresses Hurricane Maria. There, Trump begins with expressing the sympathy of him and the American people to the populations of Puerto Rico and the U.S Virgin Islands following the hurricane. Trump then uses corrective action (IRT) to discuss the federal relief effort as he pledges that “[w]e are working night and day in cooperation with territorial and local authorities to assist those in need, to help save and sustain lives, and to begin the long recovery and rebuilding effort” before he lists specific measures taken in this process as “[w]e are sending tremendous amounts of supplies, tremendous amounts of food and water, and we are sending great people to help”, thus also using compensation (SCCT). By stressing these positive traits of the recovery like in the amount of resources sent, bolstering (IRT) may then be seen as well.

In a text below the video clip, the previous ingratiation (SCCT) from the tweet itself is seen again as Trump adds “I want everybody on the ground in PR & USVI assisting in Hurricane Maria relief efforts to know that we are grateful & thankful to all of you!” In addition, as

---

2 The Weekly Radio Address of the President of the United States is a weekly speech that is delivered by the president to the American people, which began as radio broadcasts or “fireside chats” by President Franklin D. Roosevelt (Biser, n.d.) but is currently used in video form by President Trump. The particular address that is featured in this tweet (WhiteHouse.gov, 2017f) appeared to have been the only one during September and October 2017 where Trump addressed Hurricane Maria. As the section where Trump was addressing the hurricane was featured almost in its entirety in this tweet, the address was decided not to be analysed on its own under a specific subheading but as part of the tweet.
Trump urges them to “[i]gnore the FAKE NEWS & keep up the GREAT WORK! THANK YOU!”, the attack (IRT/SCCT) on the news media is then repeated.

7.2.26 Twitter (01.10.17 8:22 a.m.; 8:26 a.m.; 8:30 a.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 1 October, 8:22 a.m.; 2017, 1 October, 8:26 a.m.; 2017, 1 October, 8:30 a.m.)

Trump begins with bolstering (IRT) in these tweets by asserting that “[w]e have done a great job with the almost impossible situation in Puerto Rico”. The use of bolstering (IRT) is then continued as he claims that “[o]utside of the Fake News or politically motivated ingrates”, where more attacks (IRT/SCCT) on the news media and political adversaries can be seen, “people are now starting to recognize the amazing work that has been done by FEMA and our great Military”, thus using ingratiation (SCCT) as well to praise the federal personnel. In addition, corrective action (IRT) is discussed as Trump notes that “[a]ll buildings” on the islands have now been inspected “for safety”. Further ingratiation (SCCT) is then used as Trump thanks Governor Rosselló and “all of those who are working so closely with our First Responders”, while also praising them for doing a “[f]antastic job!”

7.2.27 Twitter (03.10.17 5:22 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 3 October, 5:22 p.m.)

In this tweet, Trump announces that his visit to Puerto Rico as part of the corrective action (IRT) initiated by the administration has come to an end since he is [l]eaving Puerto Rico now for D.C.” due to the Las Vegas shooting on the 1st of October 2017.

7.2.28 Twitter (03.10.17 5:59 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 3 October, 5:59 p.m.)

Ingratiation (SCCT) is used in this tweet as Trump writes that he has had a “[g]reat meeting with Governor Mapp of the #USVI”, who is said to be “very thankful for the great job done by @FEMA and First Responders”. This testimony then functions as bolstering (IRT) to commend the federal relief efforts being done.

7.2.29 Twitter (03.10.17 7:02 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 3 October, 7:02 p.m.)

More ingratiation (SCCT) is used here as Trump boasts that he is “[s]o proud of @FEMA, Military, and First Responders!” , while also thanking them directly.
**7.2.30 Twitter (03.10.17 8:53 p.m.)**
Source: Trump (2017, 3 October, 8:53 p.m.)

Corrective action (IRT) is used here as Trump pledges that “[m]y Administration will continue to work around the clock with Governor @RicardoRossello & his team”, while bolstering (IRT) is also seen by adding “[g]reat progress being made!”. As part of the tweet, there is a video clip of footage from Trump’s visit to Puerto Rico, where Trump is shown to be interacting with federal personnel and the local population.

**7.2.31 Twitter (04.10.17 6:25 a.m.)**
Source: Trump (2017, 4 October, 6:25 a.m.)

Here, Trump writes that he had “[a] great day in Puerto Rico yesterday”. He continues by stating that “[w]hile some of the news coverage is Fake”, thus directing another attack (IRT/SCCT) on the news media, “most showed great warmth and friendship”, where this ingratiation (SCCT) presumably refers to the Puerto Rican population.

**7.2.32 Twitter (08.10.17 7:37 p.m.)**
Source: Trump (2017, 8 October, 7:37 p.m.)

The strategy of attack accuser (IRT/SCCT) is used here as Trump begins by directing a general attack on his critics by stating that “[n]obody could have done what I’ve done for #PuertoRico with so little appreciation”, while also using bolstering (IRT) to speak well of his own efforts as he adds “[s]o much work!”.

A specific attack is then directed to the news media since as part of the tweet, there is a video clip that reads “what the fake news media will not show you in Puerto Rico” repeating some of the footage that was shown in the previous video clips and other similar scenes. There, further corrective action (IRT) is also described such as that “[m]ore than 11, 000 DoD personnel are now in Puerto Rico providing aid” and “DoD continues to expand the island-wide commodities distribution and medical support network”, which thus serves as bolstering (IRT) to point to the size and efficiency of the recovery.

**7.2.33 Twitter (12.10.17 6:49 a.m.; 6:58 a.m.; 7:07 a.m.)**
Source: Trump (2017, 12 October, 6:49 a.m.; 2017, 12 October, 6:58 a.m.; 2017, 12 October, 7:07 a.m.)

In this series of tweets, Trump begins by citing Sharyl Attkisson, a host of Sinclair Broadcast Group’s news program Full Measure, as having said “Puerto Rico survived the Hurricanes, now a financial crisis looms largely of their own making”. In doing so, a more aggressive
version of attack accuser (IRT/SCCT) than in the remarks is resumed as Trump appears to be assigning at least part of the blame for the prolonged disaster in Puerto Rico on the island itself due to how the electrical grid and “all infrastructure was disaster before hurricanes”, while also accusing local officials of “a total lack of [.........] accountability” for this situation, which would now prompt “[c]ongress to decide how much to spend” in the recovery. This attack is then continued as Trump adds that “[w]e cannot keep FEMA, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!”, where it appears as if he is urging the locals to take on more responsibility for the recovery process by threatening to withdraw the federal relief personnel from the island. Additionally, by praising the federal relief actors, ingratiation (SCCT) is seen as well.

7.2.34 Twitter (13.10.17 8:01 a.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 13 October, 8:01 a.m.)

Trump uses ingratiation (SCCT) in this tweet as he states that “[t]he wonderful people of Puerto Rico, with their unmatched spirit, know how bad things were before the H’s”. This statement seems to have been issued in response to the previous one where Trump argued that Puerto Rico was in bad shape even before the hurricanes. Moreover, Trump states that “I will always be with them!” about the Puerto Rican population, which could be seen as an example of corrective action (IRT) as he offers his continued support to them.

7.2.35 Twitter (19.10.17 4:40 p.m.)
Source: Trump (2017, 19 October, 4.40 p.m.)

In this tweet, more ingratiation (SCCT) is used as Trump notes that “[i]t was great to have Governor @RicardoRossello of #PuertoRico with us at the @WhiteHouse today”. Corrective action (IRT) is also seen since Trump pledges that “[w]e are with you!” to show the continued support of the administration. In addition, the tweet contains a video clip showing footage from Trump’s meeting with Governor Rossello and sections from what was said there during Trump’s remark on the relief efforts with the governor and FEMA administrator Brock Long.

7.3 Evaluation of Trump’s crisis communication

7.3.1 RQ1: What crisis communication strategies did Trump use for Hurricane Maria and how effective could these strategies be seen as?
When reviewing Trump’s crisis communication strategies on Hurricane Maria in these different statements in both traditional and social media, one may observe how Trump tends to use a recurring set of strategies to defend the relief efforts of his administration to Puerto Rico, which may be seen regarding their response to the U.S. Virgin Islands as well. While
each of these strategies may not be present in every statement, they can be seen throughout the chosen time period either on their own or in various combinations with each other. These principal crisis communication strategies used by Trump are corrective action (IRT) and compensation (SCCT), bolstering (IRT) and reminder (SCCT), defeasibility (IRT) and excuse (SCCT) followed by attack accuser (IRT/SCCT). In addition to these principal strategies, one example each of simple denial (IRT) and denial (SCCT), minimisation (IRT) and justification (SCCT) plus differentiation (IRT) could be seen.

First, corrective action (IRT) is used by Trump to discuss the federal relief measures that had been taken in response to the hurricane. These actions include both those that primarily intend to solve the present destruction brought on by the hurricane like sending federal personnel, resources, food and water to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, where this material aid is an example of compensation (SCCT) as well, while others may also have a preventative function to make these places better equipped to deal with future hurricanes. For example, such actions include the discussions on rebuilding the power plant and other infrastructure in Puerto Rico, where a more robust energy supplier and road network could facilitate future relief efforts. Other corrective action discussed by Trump include his visit to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and other meetings on how to proceed in the recovery, while Puerto Rico’s payment plan for funding is a further example.

Second, bolstering (IRT) is used by Trump to praise these recovery efforts being done, where he often does so by stressing the sheer size of the efforts that have been undertaken or the amount of resources that have been sent, for instance, while another variant is to refer to the praise coming from stakeholders. Moreover, bolstering and reminder (SCCT) are used to remind the audience of the administration’s past good works in the form of the successful hurricane recoveries in places like Florida, Louisiana and Texas, while bolstering is also used by Trump to position himself as having great affection for Puerto Ricans by nature due to having grown up in New York. Third, ingratiation (SCCT) is used by Trump to create a sense of goodwill by praising the efforts of stakeholders like FEMA and others in the federal relief personnel together with local officials such as Governor Rosselló and the local population of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, while then thanking them for their efforts.

Fourth, defeasibility (IRT) and excuse (SCCT) are used by Trump on two levels, where he first notes that nature, rather than man, caused the hurricane and then discusses how the federal relief efforts were delayed by factors outside of the administration’s control, where he points to Puerto Rico’s location as an island and to its poor infrastructure even before the hurricane, while he initially claimed that he did not want to disrupt the first responders as well. Fifth, attack accuser (IRT/SCCT) is used by Trump to attack real or imagined critics like the news
media and Democrats along with local officials such as Mayor Cruz of San Juan, whereas attacks also appeared to be directed to Puerto Rico and its officials for their debt to the U.S. before the hurricane and mismanagement of infrastructure, for example. The purpose of these attacks then seems to have been to divert attention away from the criticism levelled at Trump, undermine the credibility of his critics with phrases like “fake news” and suggest that the island in some sense may have been deserving of the prolonged disaster.

Sixth, Trump used simple denial (IRT) and denial (SCCT) on one occasion to deny being preoccupied with the NFL feud instead of responding to the destruction in Puerto Rico following the hurricane by arguing that he had time for both. Seventh, he used minimisation (IRT) and justification (SCCT) once to downplay the damage from the hurricane by citing the relatively few lives lost. Eight, differentiation (IRT) was used for this purpose as Trump compared Hurricane Maria to Hurricane Katrina, which he claimed as worse by being more of a real catastrophe when considering the number of casualties.

When judging this case through IRT, one may first consider the nature of the attacks on image, or what had prompted the image repair to begin with. Here, the rhetorical situation of Trump’s crisis communication on Hurricane Maria was very similar to that of President Bush’s criticised response to Hurricane Katrina as neither of them could be held responsible for having caused the hurricanes themselves but both were accused of slow and inadequate federal responses to them (Benoit, 2014: 21, 42, 113). The next stage is to examine the specific image repair strategies that were used by Trump, which in this case were centred around corrective action, bolstering, defeasibility and attack accuser, while showing a lesser extent of simple denial, minimisation and differentiation as well.

First, as Benoit (1997: 184) underscores the importance of outlining corrective action following a crisis, Trump’s focus on this strategy could be viewed positively as it was concentrated on concrete federal measures that had been taken when attempting to solve the destruction following the hurricane, such as sending resources, while several initiatives were then proposed that could prevent similar destruction in the future through the funding of a more resistant electrical grid in Puerto Rico, for example. Still, as noted by Benoit (1997: 184), such future promises can be risky if one is not able to deliver on them at some point.

Second, Trump’s use of bolstering to praise the recovery by citing the words of stakeholders appeared quite effective as Benoit (2014: 128) points out that bolstering may work better when coming from others than the accused as they could offer a more balanced view. Plus, Trump’s arguments of having a friendly disposition towards Puerto Ricans by his upbringing in New York and the past good work of the administration through the previous hurricane-recoveries during the year seemed efficient as they were given evidence. However, his heavy
use of bolstering, which was sometimes directly contrasting the voices of other stakeholders like Mayor Cruz of San Juan, could also appear as self-serving or boastful (Benoit, 2014: 128).

Third, Trump’s use of defeasibility seems relatively effective as some valid points were made on why the conditions had been more challenging this time compared to the previous recoveries by the administration. Among these include poor geographical conditions due to Puerto Rico’s location as an island rather than on the mainland and how its infrastructure had been strained even before the hurricane (Benoit, 1997: 184). Yet, the argument of not wanting to disrupt the first responders as a reason for not going to Puerto Rico sooner appears to have been a weaker one as it was not specified why it would have disrupted them.

Moreover, Trump’s use of attack accuser seems ill-advised since it mainly functioned to vilify his critics and even if it is true that Puerto Rico has an existing debt to the U.S., for example, it might not have been the best time to stress this fact as it could be interpreted as a lack of sympathy to Puerto Rico. Similarly, Trump’s use of minimisation and differentiation to make Hurricane Maria seem less like a real catastrophe compared to Hurricane Katrina could be seen as a rather heartless move as Benoit (1997: 184) notes that downplaying the amount of damage of a crisis can result in a backlash. Plus, Trump’s use of simple denial to deny being preoccupied with the NFL feud does not seem to counter that he was fairly silent on Hurricane Maria before the 25th of September, at least in the analysed channels.

Furthermore, as Benoit (2014: 128-129) emphasises that consistency is key in the choice of image repair strategies, one might argue that Trump’s strategies were quite contradictory at times on a general level. For instance, it could be seen regarding the strategies of simple denial and minimisation, where Benoit (2014: 130) points out that this particular combination could make the audience suspicious and question why the accused actor would need to tone down the crisis if this actor has claimed not to be responsible for it. Likewise, Trump’s use of attack accuser came in stark contrast to his corrective action when first arguing that the federal personnel could not stay in Puerto Rico “forever” but then adding that he would “always” be with the Puerto Rican population (see 7.2.34 and 7.2.35 on p. 40).

Next, when looking at the case through SCCT, the first step is to determine its initial crisis responsibility, where Hurricane Maria may be categorised under the lowest level of a victim crisis by exemplifying the subcategory of natural disasters. Here, weak attributions of crisis responsibility and mild reputational threat are found given that the Trump administration was accused of a poor response to the hurricane but had no initial responsibility for causing it. However, as the administration has had a history of crises and may be argued not always to have treated its stakeholders well in the past, the two intensifying factors were fulfilled, which raised the initial assessment of the reputational threat to the middle level of an
accidental crisis (Coombs, 2007: 167-169). However, the categorisation of this case is further complicated by how it was sometimes later framed by critics in the news media and elsewhere as being within the highest level of a preventable crisis based on what was perceived as organisational misdeeds since the criticism of Trump’s response included accusations of it being purposely delayed for reasons such as race (e.g. Lluveras, 2017), where similar accusations had previously been made against President Bush’s response to Hurricane Katrina (Adkins, 2012: 108). These different crisis levels may then offer guidance in the evaluation of Trump’s crisis response strategies, which primarily consisted of compensation, reminder, ingratiation, excuse and attack the accuser but included lesser use of denial and justification. Among these, denial and attack the accuser are found in the deny crisis response strategies, while excuse and justification make up the diminish crisis response strategies, compensation is an example of the rebuilding crisis response strategies and reminder and ingratiation are representatives of the bolstering crisis response strategies.

First, while not being a crisis response strategy in SCCT per se, Trump’s use of corrective action to discuss the relief efforts in the statements should be viewed positively, as should his further use of adjusting information to express concern for the victims and before that, instructing information to protect stakeholders from harm via measures like the disaster declarations (Coombs, 2014: 152). Second, as Coombs (2014: 152) recommends that diminish strategies should be used for victim crises with a crisis history and/or unfavourable prior reputation, positive evaluations at first appear possible on Trump’s use of excuse to claim a lack of ability to respond sooner to the hurricane and justification to downplay the damage from it. However, their effectiveness seemed to have decreased as they were combined with the deny strategies of denial to object to that the federal response itself was a crisis and attack the accuser to confront critics, which is advised against by Coombs (2014: 150, 152) as it creates a contradictory message overall when the former strategies accept that there is a crisis while the latter ones argue that there is none. The same applies to combining deny strategies with rebuilding strategies like compensation to offer gifts to victims, even if rebuilding strategies can work well with diminish strategies (Coombs, 2014: 152). Moreover, Trump could be said to have been overly dependent on the bolstering strategies of reminder to bring up past good works and ingratiation to praise stakeholders as Coombs (2014: 149, 152) advises that these strategies should only be used as supplements to the other strategies since they could come across as egocentric by focusing on the accused actor rather than the crisis.
7.3.2 RQ2: What differences or similarities can be seen in Trump’s crisis communication strategies for the hurricane in traditional media versus in social media?

As noted above, Trump’s crisis communication strategies were mainly comprised of corrective action (IRT) and compensation (SCCT), bolstering (IRT) and reminder (SCCT), ingratiation (SCCT), defeasibility (IRT) and excuse (SCCT) plus attack accuser (IRT/SCCT), while also showing minor use of simple denial (IRT) and denial (SCCT), minimisation (IRT) and justification (SCCT) together with differentiation (IRT). Of these strategies, all of the most commonly used could be observed in both traditional and social media, while the less frequently used ones could only be found in the remarks. These strategies consisted of an example of simple denial (IRT) and denial (SCCT) in one of the remarks, which was later followed by one example each of minimisation (IRT) and justification (SCCT) plus differentiation (IRT) in a later remark. However, even if the choice of strategies were more or less identical in both channels, one could sometimes observe how they were used differently therein. For example, it became most clear regarding the strategy of attack accuser, where the attacks in the tweets often had a more aggressive tone. To illustrate this finding, the phrase “fake news” was not mentioned in any of the remarks but was used in six of the tweets.
8. Conclusion

In this last section, the research questions of the study are finally answered in turn, while the results are also connected to previous research and suggestions for future research are given.

8.1 Research questions

First, in the analysed statements, Trump’s primary crisis communication strategies consisted of corrective action, bolstering, defeasibility and attack accuser from image repair theory and compensation, reminder, ingratiation, excuse and attack the accuser from situational crisis communication theory, while examples of simple denial, minimisation and differentiation from the former and denial and justification from the latter were also used. While some positive evaluations could be made of how Trump used these strategies to address the hurricane based on the recommendations given in one or both of the theories of IRT and SCCT, other evaluations were not as favourable. For example, as both theories highlight the importance of corrective action (Benoit, 1997: 184; Coombs, 2014: 152), among the positives include Trump’s focus on this strategy to deal with the destruction after the hurricane, whereas the inclusion of other strategies like attack accuser to vilify critics and denial to object to the federal response itself being a crisis seemed to decrease the overall effectiveness of the communication as it made for a contradictory message, which is advised against in both theories (Benoit, 2014: 128-129; Coombs, 2014: 152). On these grounds, Trump’s crisis communication strategies in this case are deemed to be largely ineffective. While a direct relationship is not certain, this evaluation seems consistent with Trump’s poor ratings in public opinion polls conducted after the hurricane (e.g. Agiesta, 2017; Blake, 2017).

When considering what these results could mean for the crisis communication field and for the specific research gap of populist political image repair, one can first note that while the recommendations on the respective strategies were not formed exclusively for political crisis communication, some of the suggestions might seem dated in today’s political arena where much has changed and different rules for success now may apply. A study like this could then offer a first step when pondering whether the recommendations would be in need of an upgrade to better deal with contemporary political research subjects. The primary contribution of this study to such an endeavour could then be how Trump’s crisis communication was sometimes found to be contradictory and inconsistent, and while it might not be possible to attribute this finding entirely to populism, it may be assumed to at least have influenced Trump’s somewhat erratic style due to his lack of prior political experience before becoming president. Additionally, as Trump sought to undermine the credibility of his critics by claiming them to be producers of “fake news”, the study highlights this new variant of the strategy of attack accuser as an expression of post-truth society.
Second, in contrast to what was anticipated, no major differences were found in Trump’s crisis communication strategies in traditional and social media represented by the remarks and tweets as the most frequent ones were used in both channels. Based on this study alone, this finding could suggest that a populist politician like Trump would perhaps be less inclined to adapt the choice of strategies in a consistent manner for different channels and rather stick to a similar set of strategies in the channels used, but it needs to be elaborated further. While the range of strategies was almost identical in the channels, they sometimes appeared to be used differently with the prime example being the strategy of attack accuser, where the attacks in the tweets were often found to have a more aggressive tone than those in the remarks exemplified by expressions like “fake news”. This finding might be drawn to how the tweets offered a less formal context than the remarks, while another reason could be that even for the president of the U.S., it might be easier to attack someone through the internet than directly face to face as accusers like Mayor Cruz of San Juan were sometimes present when the remarks were delivered by Trump. Possibly, the difference could also be explained by how the development of the remarks may have been more influenced by the White House staff compared to the tweets that could have been a more direct outlet for his communication.

8.2 Connection to previous research

When considering how the findings of this study can be connected to earlier works in the crisis communication field, some observations can be made. First, the study perhaps closest to the current one is Benoit’s (2017) study of Trump’s image repair on the “Access Hollywood” video, which in contrast to this externally caused crisis of the hurricane dealt with a more personal crisis through Trump’s misogynist comments. There, it was found that the then-presidential candidate used several strategies from IRT in the channels of his website, a video tweet and two of the presidential debates. In total, the following eight strategies were used: (1) transcendence to defend his right to privacy, (2) minimisation to state that the offence happened many years ago, (3) mortification to apologise for his actions, (4) differentiation to argue that he had not done the things he discussed in the video, (5) attack accuser to undermine the credibility of his accusers and deflect attention away from the accusations at him, (6) denial to deny further accusations of harassment, (7) corrective action to promise to mend his ways and (8) bolstering to stress his positive character traits. Third-party image repair was also used by the First Lady in a statement on Trump’s website, where the strategies of mortification, differentiation, transcendence and bolstering were repeated by her. Of the strategies used by Trump, all but transcendence and mortification were recurring in this case as well, while he did not use defeasibility or compensation in the former crisis like he did here. As the previous study used IRT as a theoretical framework but not SCCT, those strategies were then not considered there as they were in this study. This
similarity in strategies could imply that populist politicians like Trump would not tend to adapt their choice of strategies to any great extent based on different crisis types either but rather keep within a similar set of strategies regardless of what the crisis may concern, while it is something that needs to be researched more. Moreover, as the strategy of mortification was notably absent in this case, it could strengthen a hypothesis that Trump does not generally like to apologise for his actions. Here, Trump blamed the delayed response to the hurricane on external factors instead of taking any personal responsibility for it, while the circumstances of the earlier crisis seemed to have pressed his first conditional apology into full apologies later on (Benoit, 2017: 253). Other connections between the two cases is Trump’s prominent use of attack accuser to deflect attention away from the criticism directed at him and how the threat to Trump’s image developed over time as multiple accusers criticised his actions (Benoit, 2017: 255). Plus, as both cases had Trump using third-party image repair, it could be a common strategy of him to depend on the help of others when trying to restore his image. Still, its effectiveness could be questioned as these cases had people mainly echoing a defence that had already been presented by Trump (Benoit, 2017: 254). Additionally, the finding here of how Trump’s strategies were sometimes contradictory and inconsistent can be connected to this previous case as Benoit (2017: 254) in one instance notes that in Trump’s response to some of the later accusations to this image, “[h]is remarks appeared impulsive” and “his style here was antagonistic and demeaning”.

Another very similar case is Benoit and Henson’s (2009) study on President Bush’s image repair discourse on Hurricane Katrina, where Bush was found to use three principal image repair strategies consisting of bolstering, defeasibility and corrective action, which were among the most commonly used by Trump in this case as well. A further link can be seen in how Bush, like Trump, did not use the strategy of mortification but appeared quite unwilling to concede any wrongdoing on his part. This tendency was then argued to be a general feature of Bush’s discourse in other situations as well (Benoit & Henson, 2009: 45), which may apply also to Trump. Moreover, on the subject of hurricanes, a connection can be drawn to Edwards’ (2013: 124) comparative study of the crisis communication during Hurricane Katrina and Sandy, where like here it was found that even if no one may be directly to blame for having caused these kinds of natural disasters, the response to them can then come under intense scrutiny when the media and others select certain cues to frame the crisis. Likewise, as here, Schwarz (2008: 47-48) notes that the crisis type of natural disasters may not always fit into the victim cluster as stakeholders can sometimes perceive organisations as having greater blame in relation to them, such as if buildings were destroyed due to faulty construction. Also, Jin, Pang and Cameron (2010: 432-434) posit that natural disasters tend to invoke both high levels of organisational engagement and cognitive coping from the primary public.
Furthermore, Trump’s unwillingness to apologise for his actions in this case could be connected to García’s (2011: 295) cross-cultural analysis of the image repair discourse by President Clinton and former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi on their respective sex scandals, where the latter, who could be argued to be more populist, did not apologise either. Still, this unwillingness may then not be specific only for populist politicians but seems to be a rather common characteristic of political image repair in general as others like Strand Hornnes (2012: 147-148) have also identified this tendency in more traditional politicians, even if the potential power of an apology and admitting mistakes for successful political image repair has been noted in studies like Sheldon and Sallot (2009: 44-45) and Benoit, Gullifor and Panici (1991). Similarly, outside the world of politics, a resistance to apologise was found in studies like Benoit and Czerwinski (1997: 53-54) about USAir after the crash of its Flight 427. However, that the sometimes contradictory and inconsistent crisis communication style used here by Trump could be a common trait of populist political discourse specifically is strengthened by Hatakka, Niemi and Välimäki (2017)’s study about three European populist parties response to accusations of racism in mainstream news, whose ‘calculated ambivalence’ towards racism could be seen in the contradictory messages of several speakers within the same party, for instance. Yet, inconsistent messages have been found being used by more traditional politicians like President Nixon (Benoit, 1982) as well, while it might be assumed to have been a more inadvertent result of the communication there rather than a direct tactic, which could be the case for populist politicians.

Concerning the use of traditional versus social media for crisis communication, a link can be found to the experimental study by Liu, Austin and Jin’s (2011: 351), where it was found that the public may still be most likely to accept crisis responses delivered in traditional media rather than social media, which could possibly have made the public more accepting of Trump’s response if he had focused on such channels even more.

In addition, other connections can be found between this study and previous works. For example, Benoit and Nill’s (1998: 139) study of Oliver Stone’s defence of the movie JFK showed how the strategy of attack accuser can be used efficiently by giving plausible motivations for what had caused critics to attack one’s image and not just to vilify them, as could be argued to have been the main purpose of Trump’s attacks here. Also, a link can be found to Benoit’s (2013) study on the image repair of Tiger Woods, where, like in this case, the importance of responding quickly to attacks on image was seen as people may otherwise question why the accuser actor did not respond sooner (Benoit, 2014: 78). Plus, as was the case in this study, Zhang and Benoit (2004: 166) study on Saudi Arabia’s image repair after 9/11 showed how some parts of the image repair effort may seem effective, while others do not. Another link can be found to Benoit’s (2014b) study of President Obama’s image repair
on HealthCare.gov, where, like here, the channel of a press conference was used to respond to image problems. Additionally, Ulmer, Sellnow and Seeger’s (2017: 190) theory on discourse of renewal may be connected to this case by how Trump and stakeholders like Governor Rosselló discussed initiatives that could make Puerto Rico more resistant for future hurricanes, such as through the building of a new power plant, as this theory takes a prospective stance by focusing on what can be learnt from a crisis.

Finally, outside the crisis communication field, connections from this case can be drawn to Cornfield’s (2017: 239) study on Trump’s populist rhetoric during the 2016 presidential campaign, where his marketing strategy on Twitter was found to include elements like celebrity feuding and a blunt vernacular, which seem to have been used in Trump’s tweets here as well in the form of his feud with Mayor Cruz of San Juan and a conversation-like tone of writing. Furthermore, this study perhaps inadvertently expresses the basic dilemma of populist political image repair in the form of how “even critical news coverage” can be “a boon to business” (Cornfield, 2017: 242) by referencing a quote by Trump, where states that “[t]he funny thing is that even a critical story, which may be hurtful personally, can be very valuable to your business” (Trump & Schwartz, 1987: 57).

8.3 Suggestions for future research

To conclude this study, some suggestions for future research can be given. To begin with, more research is needed on populist political image repair to better grasp the peculiarities of this discourse. In doing so, it might be fruitful to compare the response to several different kinds of crises by the same populist politician, while another idea is to contrast how multiple populist politicians have responded to crises, where additional cross-cultural analyses would be particularly interesting. As noted earlier, how different communication channels and types of crises may influence the crisis response of populist politicians could also be studied further, as could whether any improvements can be made to the current recommendations for the strategies in IRT and SCCT. Regarding SCCT, something that could be considered there, as noted by Adkins (2012: 107-108) and Benoit (2014: 36-38), is that since complex crises like Trump’s response to Hurricane Maria, and Bush’s response to Hurricane Katrina before it, may develop over time, it can be difficult to categorise them as a specific crisis type within the three crisis clusters. Here, it was seen as the Trump administration’s response to the hurricane might be fitted into all three of them depending on how one looked at it, where contradictory advice could thus be given (Adkins, 2012: 107-108). Moreover, when looking for potential improvements based on populist politicians, one could focus on how successful image repair now should be defined given that an ace up their sleeve, or trump card, is that they may benefit from media attention regardless if it is good or bad.
References

Primary sources

*Tweets*

Trump, D. J. (2017, 19 September, 10:23 p.m.). Puerto Rico being hit hard by new monster Hurricane. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/910328626075389952 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 20 September, 11:13 p.m.). Governor @RicardoRossello- We are with you and the people of Puerto Rico. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/91070340755600386 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 25 September, 8:45 p.m.). Texas & Florida are doing great but Puerto Rico... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/912478274508423168 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 25 September, 8:50 p.m.). ...It's old electrical grid, which was in terrible shape, was devastated. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/912479500511965184 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 25 September, 8:58 p.m.). ...owed to Wall Street and the banks which, sadly, must be dealt with. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/912481556127780865 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 26 September, 8:13 a.m.). Thank you to Carmen Yulin Cruz, the Mayor of San Juan... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/912651215997202432 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 26 September, 5:34 p.m.). America’s hearts & prayers are with the people of #PuertoRico & the #USVI. [Twitter Post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/912792478096302080 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 28 September, 10:01 a.m.). The electric power grid in Puerto Rico is totally shot. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/913403237033742336 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 28 September, 7:41 p.m.). FEMA & First Responders are doing a GREAT job in Puerto Rico. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/913549374227181568 [Accessed 30 May 2018].
Trump, D. J. (2017, 28 September, 7:45 p.m.). ...really hard to help but many have lost their homes. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/913550237377138688 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 28 September, 8:03 p.m.). Puerto Rico is devastated. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/913554705816711168 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 29 September, 7:14 a.m.). Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rossello just stated... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/913723771336392704 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 29 September, 7:18 a.m.). ...The fact is that Puerto Rico has been destroyed by two hurricanes. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/913724766208610304 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 29 September, 9:30 a.m.). Thank you to FEMA, our great Military & all First Responders... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/913757869627133953 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 7:19 a.m.). The Mayor of San Juan, who was very complimentary only a few days ago... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914087234869047296 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 7:26 a.m.). ...Such poor leadership ability by the Mayor of San Juan, and others in Puerto Rico... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914089003745468417 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 7:29 a.m.). ...want everything to be done for them when it should be a community effort. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914089888596754434 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 7:33 a.m.). The military and first responders, despite no electric, roads, phones etc., have done an amazing job. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914090947180470272 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 7:48 a.m.). Fake News CNN and NBC are going out of their way to... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914094625488502784 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 7:55 a.m.). I will be going to Puerto Rico on Tuesday with Melania. [Twitter post]. Available at:

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 8:07 a.m.). The Fake News Networks are working overtime in Puerto Rico... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914099295963553792 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 2:04 p.m.). Despite the Fake News Media in conjunction with the Dems... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914189344533024768 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 3:19 p.m.). The Governor of Puerto Rico, Ricardo Rossello... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914208123564494850 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 3:30 p.m.). Just spoke to Governor Kenneth Mapp of the U.S. Virgin Islands who... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914210813237489666 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 3:43 p.m.). Congresswoman Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon of Puerto Rico... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914214237584674816 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 3:53 p.m.). To the people of Puerto Rico: Do not believe the #FakeNews! #PRStrong. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914216744385904640 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 3:55 p.m.). My Administration, Governor @RicardoRossello, and many others are... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914217117695795201 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 3:56 p.m.). ......#FakeNews critics are working overtime, but we’re getting great marks... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914217477495717889 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 3:57 p.m.). We must all be united in offering assistance to everyone suffering in Puerto Rico... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/91421765851737472 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 4:37 p.m.). Results of recovery efforts will speak much louder than complaints by San Juan Mayor. [Twitter post]. Available at:

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 6:15 p.m.). I will be in PR on Tues. to further ensure we continue doing everything possible... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914252271982178306 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 30 September, 6:46 p.m.). Because of #FakeNews my people are not getting the credit they deserve for doing a great job. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914260261304860672 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 1 October, 8:22 a.m.). We have done a great job with the almost impossible situation in Puerto Rico. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914465475777695744 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 1 October, 8:26 a.m.). ...people are now starting to recognize the amazing work that has been done... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/91446653436569025 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 1 October, 8:30 a.m.). ...for safety. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/914467502251528192 [Accessed 30 May 2018].


Trump, D. J. (2017, 3 October, 5:59 p.m.). Great meeting with Governor Mapp of the #USVI. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/915335645719121920 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 3 October, 7:02 p.m.). So proud of @FEMA, Military, and First Responders! [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/915351470354108417 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 3 October, 8:53 p.m.). My Administration will continue to work around the clock... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/915379231454003200 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 4 October, 6:25 a.m.). A great day in Puerto Rico yesterday. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/915523382686478337 [Accessed 30 May 2018].
Trump, D. J. (2017, 8 October, 7:37 p.m.). Nobody could have done what I’ve done for #PuertoRico with so little appreciation. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/917172144710103040 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 12 October, 6:49 a.m.). "Puerto Rico survived the Hurricanes, now a financial crisis looms... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/918428456869916672 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 12 October, 6:59 a.m.). ...accountability say the Governor. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/918430769776914432 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 12 October, 7:07 a.m.). ...We cannot keep FEMA, the Military & the First Responders... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/91843280802342912 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 13 October, 8:01 a.m.). The wonderful people of Puerto Rico, with their unmatched spirit... [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/918808798059483136 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Trump, D. J. (2017, 19 October, 4.40 p.m.). It was great to have Governor @RicardoRossello of #PuertoRico with us at the @WhiteHouse today. [Twitter post]. Available at: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/921113816053755904 [Accessed 30 May 2018].

**Remarks**


WhiteHouse.gov. (2017e). *Remarks by President Trump, Governor Rosselló of Puerto Rico, and FEMA Administrator Long on Puerto Rico Relief Efforts.* Available at:
Weekly Address

Secondary sources


Tweet Tunnel (n.d.). *Old Tweets – go back to first or earlier tweets*. Available at: https://tweettunnel.com/reverse.php [Accessed 30 May 2018].


