

Solidarity and Indirectness:

A discourse analytic study of Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's 2018 Twitter campaign

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Abstract (in Norwegian)

Denne masteroppgaven er en diskursanalytisk studie av kongressrepresentant Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's politiske diskurs på Twitter. Twitters rolle innenfor den politiske diskursen ble først anerkjent etter Barack Obamas valgkamp i 2008 (Zappavigna 2012: 170). Studier av denne valgkampen har argumentert med at Obamas bruk av Twitter bidro til å gjøre Twitter til en legitim kanal i den politiske arenaen (Tumasjan et al. 2011: 402). Siden den gang har flere diskursanalytiske studier fokusert på hvordan politikere bruker Twitter. Denne diskursanalytiske studien tar for seg Twitter-postene til kongressrepresentant Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez fra hennes valgkamp i forkant av primærvalget i 2018. Ocasio-Cortez's politiske diskurs på Twitter er interessant fra et lingvistisk perspektiv fordi flere har pekt på hennes bruk av sosiale medier, særlig Twitter, som vesentlig for hennes politiske suksess. Studiens datasett består av 90 Twitter-poster fra de siste ti dagene før valgdagen. Studien benytter i hovedsak kvalitativ diskursanalyse, men har noen kvantitative elementer.

Denne studiens hovedmål er å finne ut hvilke diskursstrategier Ocasio-Cortez benyttet seg av i valgkampen i 2018. Studien benytter seg av en datadrevet tilnærming. Resultatene av analysen viser blant annet at Ocasio-Cortez benytter seg av indirekte kommunikasjonsstrategier, særlig i hennes kritikk av Joe Crowley, hennes motstander i primærvalget. I tillegg til dette, bruker hun indirekte språk også i promoteringen av sitt kandidatur. Videre viser analysen at Ocasio-Cortez gjennom sine lingvistiske valg bruker språk til å uttrykke solidaritet med ulike grupper. Solidaritet kommer blant annet til uttrykk gjennom utstrakt bruk av flertallspronomen. Videre viser resultatene av studien at Ocasio-Cortez gjennom sine lingvistiske valg uttrykker solidaritet med andre kandidater som hun har fellestrekk med. Effekten av de nevnte diskursstrategiene synes å være at Ocasio-Cortez fremstiller seg selv som en del av de nevnte gruppene, noe som bidrar til å uttrykke fellesskap med hennes følgere på Twitter.

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List of Abbreviations

AOC – Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

CDA – Critical discourse analysis

CL – Corpus linguistics

DFA – Democracy for America

GOTV– Get out the vote

ICE – U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement

NY-14 – New York’s 14th congressional district

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2018, first-time candidate Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (hereafter AOC) ran for Congress against the incumbent representative Joe Crowley. Her campaign was grassroots-funded, meaning that, unlike many other US politicians, she did not receive funding from large corporations. She defeated Crowley in the primary election and won the general election, becoming the youngest woman ever elected to Congress. AOC has since been hugely popular on social media. As of October 2020, she has more than nine million followers on Twitter. By comparison, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi has a Twitter following of 5.4 million. In February 2019, *Business Insider* reported that AOC was by far the member of Congress with the highest number of Twitter followers (*Business Insider*, 2019). In July 2019 *Business Insider* reported that social media content about the (then) newly elected congresswoman was liked and shared far more than content about other democrats (*Business Insider*, 2019). According to the article, her social media interactions even outnumbered those of the 2020 Democratic presidential candidates Bernie Sanders, Joe Biden and Elizabeth Warren.

Twitter's political function was first recognised after Barack Obama's 2008 presidential election (Zappavigna 2012: 170). During this election Obama used Twitter to communicate with the US population, and studies have later claimed that his 2008 Twitter campaign made Twitter a "legitimate and frequently used communication channel in the political arena" (Tumasjan et al. 2011: 402). Research on Twitter and its political function has suggested that while "Twitter offers many advantages over traditional media for all candidates" it may especially offer advantages for candidates the minority (Clark & Evans 2016: 332). For instance, Gainous and Wagner (2014) suggest that members of the out-group may be drawn to Twitter because it can enable them to gain an advantage over the majority group members, because it gives them the opportunity to communicate with voters without going through other media. Thus, AOC's political discourse on Twitter is interesting not only because of her large following and high engagement rates on social media, but also because she differs from many other US politicians in that she is a young woman of colour with a working-class background.

The main aim of the present thesis is to examine the use of discursive strategies of solidarity and indirectness in AOC's 2018 Twitter campaign. The present study used a data driven approach, thus these strategies are the main focus of the study because they appeared

to be the most prominent discursive strategies in the data. As Twitter offers politicians a channel of communication through which they can communicate directly with voters, Twitter, and other social media, might be especially suitable as a medium through which discursive strategies related to solidarity can be realised.

1.1 Political context

This section briefly provides some political context for the campaign which the data for the study is collected from. When AOC challenged the incumbent representative Joe Crowley in the primary election in 2018, it was the first primary election in New York's 14th congressional district in 14 years, due to the fact that Crowley had not had a challenger in his time as a congressional representative for the district. Crowley was the No. 4 Democrat in the House of Representatives, and he was seen as a potential speaker of the House of Representatives one day (Watkins 2018). "His loss [in the primary election of 2018] effectively handed the seat to Ocasio-Cortez, a Latina who has become a key left-wing voice" (Watkins 2018). Throughout the campaign leading up to the election AOC used Twitter to engage with voters, promote her campaign and her candidacy, and to criticise her opponent Joe Crowley. She also used Twitter to support other female candidates, like actress Cynthia Nixon, who at the time was running against New York Governor Andrew Cuomo.

1.2 Twitter

Social media has made it possible for politicians to communicate directly with voters. Most US politicians are now present on social media, and social media undoubtedly plays a role in politics. The introduction of social media has presented politicians with a tool for communicating directly with the public, which appears to have increased the importance of careful and strategic language use.

Twitter is perhaps one of the more suitable social media websites for the analysis of discourse. Although the microblogging platform is multimodal – it allows its users to include pictures, links and videos – it is still largely text based. Until recently, it was also one of the few social media websites which did not have a "stories"-function, where users can post content that disappears within a certain time frame (originally a feature of Snapchat, but both Facebook and Instagram, and now also Twitter, have this function). Until the recent addition of this feature, this meant that the content posted on Twitter was permanent unless the user actively chose to delete it.

The present section will focus on some of the functions of Twitter which are relevant for the study. Originally, Twitter-posts could contain a maximum of 140 characters, but the character limit has been raised to 280 characters. Twitter-posts are called tweets. When a Twitter user publishes a tweet, this tweet will appear in the newsfeed of anyone who has chosen to subscribe to that Twitter user's tweets. Subscribing to a user's content is called following, and subscribers are called followers.

Twitter also allows its users to retweet the tweets of other users. Retweeting is when a user republishes another user's tweet within their own tweet (Zappavigna 2012: 35). This can increase the number of people who read a tweet, because the act of retweeting will make the tweet appear in the feeds of anyone who follows the user who retweets something, even if they do not follow the author of the tweet. The user who retweets can republish the tweet in its original form, but they can also add a response/ comment to it. In the case of the latter, retweeted content will be shown inside the new tweet.

Hashtags allow users to make certain words in their tweets searchable by tagging them with the #-symbol. By doing this the words that are tagged with the symbol becomes a hyperlink. By clicking the hyperlink, a user is directed to a page where all the tweets with that hashtag can be read. A user may also subscribe to a hashtag. Additionally, users may reply to other users' tweets by prefacing someone's username with the @-symbol. This action is called replying, while using someone's username with the @-symbol is called mentioning. Twitter users may also include links in their tweets.

1.3 Thesis structure

The present thesis consists of five chapters. This chapter has provided a brief account of the political context for the studied time period and the data. Furthermore, it has provided a brief introduction to the social media platform Twitter and its role as a medium for political discourse. The remaining part of chapter 1 will present the aim and scope of the present discourse analytic study, as well as the research questions it aims to answer and the hypotheses for these. In chapter 2 the theoretical background for the thesis will be outlined, while the method and data selection will be presented and discussed in chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the data, while chapter 5 contains a summary of the results of the analysis and the discussion on the results. In addition, some areas of further study will be suggested. Finally, the limitations to this study as well as the contribution it attempts to make will be discussed.

1.4 Aim and scope

The present discourse analytic study analyses AOC's tweets from her campaign during the 2018 primary election in New York's 14th congressional district. NY-14 is primarily a Democratic district. Consequently, the winner of the primary election almost certainly wins the general election. Because of this, the focus of the present study is the discursive practices of the campaign for the primary election. The present study aims to examine the discursive strategies AOC employed in her 2018 Congressional campaign. The data set includes 90 tweets from the ten days leading up to the primary election. The study focuses on two main discursive strategies. These are indirectness strategies and solidarity strategies. The present study employed a data driven approach. Thus, these strategies were chosen because they appeared to be especially prevalent in the data.

1.5 Research questions and hypotheses

The research questions that the present thesis aims to answer are as follows:

R1: Which discursive strategies does AOC most frequently employ in the promotion of her campaign? And which discursive means are used to realise these strategies?

R2: Does AOC use language to create a sense of solidarity with her Twitter audience? If so, which discursive means are used to realise strategies of solidarity?

R3: Which discursive strategies does AOC employ when criticising her opponent Joe Crowley?

R4: What are the combined effects of the discursive strategies that AOC employs in her Twitter campaign?

The hypotheses for the research questions are as follows:

H1: AOC employs strategies of indirectness and solidarity in the promotion of her campaign.

A previous study (Jaruseviciute 2019)¹ on AOC's political discourse on Twitter found that AOC uses inclusive plural pronouns in order to position herself in the same group as her Twitter audience and to create common ground with her Twitter audience, thus the present thesis hypothesises that:

H2: AOC uses various linguistic means to express solidarity with her Twitter audience. Solidarity is expressed through the strategic use of pronominal choices, and AOC uses inclusive plural pronouns to position herself in the same group as the voters.

H3: AOC employs strategies of indirectness when criticising her opponent.

H4: The various discursive strategies employed by AOC in her Twitter campaign collectively attempt to position AOC as a part of the community of NY-14. Moreover, they contribute to creating common ground with the electorate.

¹ This study will be outlined in chapter 2.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter provides the theoretical background for the present thesis. It gives a brief introduction to the field of political discourse and how social media such as Twitter can be used to disseminate political messages. In addition, it focuses on some linguistic theories and terms, which are relevant to the present study. Furthermore, it will provide insight into some linguistic features of political discourse and the discourse of Twitter. Finally, some previous research, both on political discourse on Twitter in general and on AOC's political discourse on Twitter specifically, will be outlined.

2.1 What is political discourse?

According to Wilson (2015: 775) the term political discourse can refer to multiple types of spoken or written language. First, it can refer to discourse which is part of a political production, for example political speeches, debates, slogans etc. Second, it can refer to any type of spoken or written language that is either about politics or is politically motivated. Third, family talk about politics may also be referred to as political discourse. Furthermore, some have also argued that language is inherently political and that consequently all language use may be referred to as "political discourse" (ibid). Van Dijk argues that because politicians are not the only participants in the domain of politics, political discourse cannot be limited to only discourse produced by politicians (1997: 13). Furthermore, Wilson states that "in a more restricted sense, "political discourse" refers to the study of political language where the focus is on aspects of language structure as it constitutes and displays specific political functions" (2015: 776). Thus, Wilson (2015: 788) states that "one of the core goals of political discourse analysis is to seek out ways in which language choice is manipulated for specific political effect".

Political discourse and rhetoric have often been associated with one another. As Johnstone (2018:77) puts it, "political speeches, advertising campaigns, and many other genres of discourse are judged by what they were intended to do and whether they succeeded in fulfilling their producers' purposes". In this sense, political discourse and rhetoric are similar, because political speeches and debates largely intend to persuade. However, the term political discourse covers a broader range of language use than the term rhetoric does, as discourse analytic studies of political discourse are not merely concerned with studying means of persuasion, but also other discursive practices.

So how does political discourse differ from other types of discourses and what is political discourse like? Woods (2006) argues that political discourse is a lot like the discourse of advertising, and that political discourse has become increasingly similar to the discourse of advertising because of media such as television. In comparing the discourse of advertising and the discourse of politics, Woods also emphasises that advertising often needs to be subtle in order to persuade its audience. She claims that this is also true for political discourse and points out that it is often not “in the advertiser’s interest to appear overly promotional...”. Consequently, politicians might benefit from finding ways to promote themselves in a less obvious manner. The risks associated with appearing overly promotional, according to Woods, are especially high if a campaign is being funded from the public, or if the product or the policy being promoted might seem to be at odds with the public good. In such circumstances an advertisement might be better received if it gives the impression of merely imparting information” (Woods 2006: 7). Woods argues that this is transferable to political promotion, and that it is thus preferable for the producer of political discourse to not appear overly promotional. A study of the social media use of the members of the US Congress, however, found that they used Twitter primarily for self-promotion rather than for direct communication with citizens (Zappavigna 2012: 171).

2.1.1 The language of political discourse

As all producers of discourse do, politicians also make various linguistic choices when attempting to convey their message. Woods emphasises that “[c]areful and selective use of words is a crucial aspect of the construction of political discourse” (2006: 59). An example of this is the former prime minister of Britain, Tony Blair, who talked about the difficult decision to go to war “in Iraq”. The use of the preposition “in” instead of “on” gave the idea that Britain was at war and that the war was simply taking place in Iraq (Woods 2006: 59). Although this difference might seem small, it is an important one, as it gave the impression that there was no war *against* Iraq.

Similarly, Wilson (2015) argues that “the world is not given to us directly but is continually mediated by language” (p. 777). This means that producers of discourse through their linguistic choices can influence how the representation of events, people, and political decisions. For example, certain linguistic choices were made in the political discourse surrounding the US’ war with Iraq. The war was not merely a war on Iraq, it was a part of “operation *Iraqi Freedom*” (ibid.). Without doubt, the word “war” carries a number of

negative connotations, and so the decision to phrase it as such was likely a conscious one. Furthermore, keeping the United States safe from attack was not only referred to as “security” but “homeland security”. Moreover, the legislation for the protection of the homeland became known as the PATRIOT act, which looks like an acronym, but critics argued that it was in fact a “backronym” - that it was intentionally designed to spell out the word “patriot” (Wilson 2015: 775). In summary, both in Britain and the US, politicians used language in order to influence public opinion on the war. In Britain, prime minister Tony Blair, through his strategic choice of one preposition over another, gave the impression that there was no war against Iraq, while in the US the word war was avoided altogether. Thus, Wilson and Wood’s respective examples show how language can be manipulated in order to serve a specific political aim.

2.2 Framing and positioning

Framing and positioning are theoretical frameworks for “investigating the everyday interactions by which people live and construct their social worlds” (Gordon 2015, 324). Framing and positioning have much in common with each other, in that they both concern social and psychological aspects of interaction. Discourse analysts use these theories to study how interlocutors create and negotiate relationships, meanings, and identities through the use of linguistic and paralinguistic means (Gordon 2015: 324). According to Gordon, “[f]raming refers to how people establish definitions of a situation,” while positioning is referred to as “the discursive construction of selves” (2015: 325). Although framing and positioning have much in common, the theories were developed within somewhat different disciplines. While framing was developed within sociology and anthropology, positioning was developed within sociology and psychology.

The term “frame” has multiple meanings. This is partially due to its multidisciplinary use. The term can be traced back to anthropologist Gregory Bateson’s 1972 essay entitled “A theory of play and fantasy” (Gordon 2015: 325). In the essay Bateson uses monkeys in a zoo as an example. He argues that biting, which would otherwise be seen as an act of aggression, can be acceptable within a “play frame”. Goffman (1974) draws on Bateson’s essay in his idea of framing. Goffman considers framing to be social and situational. He argues that frames are “definitions of a situation”, which interlocutors establish in their interaction (Gordon 2015: 327).

The theory of positioning was developed to better understand personhood (Gordon 2015: 331). In positioning the self, one also positions the others. Positioning can be deliberate or unintentional. This is referred to as intentional positioning and tacit positioning (Gordon 2015: 332). Although positioning theory is applicable to all types of discourse, it has primarily been used to explore identity construction in narrative (Gordon 2015: 331). Gordon (2015) states that “[t]he theory conceptualizes an individual- a self- as emergent in interaction” (p. 331). Framing and positioning are relevant within political discourse analysis because, as pointed out by Bramley (2001) and Allen (2004), politicians construct their identities in order to appeal to their audiences. Furthermore, Allen (2004: 2) states that “[t]he way politicians discursively represent their identities, by referring to themselves, to their opposition and to their audience can be used as a persuasive mean”.

2.3 Linguistic strategies of solidarity

As one of the aims of the present thesis is to explore how AOC used Twitter in order to create a sense of solidarity with her audience, this section will outline some linguistic strategies related to solidarity. Power and solidarity are two key terms when it comes to how social relations and discourse affect each other (Johnstone 2018: 145). Power refers to how relationships can be asymmetrical, while solidarity refers to how they can be symmetrical. Johnson (2018: 145) states that “[h]umans need ways to claim membership in groups and to show that they are thereby, in some senses, in symmetrical relationships with their group members”. Still, access to power can often differ from group to group. For instance, the power relations between an elected politician and a voter are not symmetrical, as one part is in possession of power that the other does not possess. However, politicians can choose to discursively present the relationship between themselves and their constituents as symmetrical.

2.3.1 Political discourse and pronominal choices

One of the ways in which solidarity can be expressed through linguistic choices is through the strategic use of pronouns. Wilson (1990: 45) states that pronouns are not merely categorical and thus they are not merely a way of expressing person, number and sex. The way in which we interpret the meaning of pronouns is affected by context and a range of social and personal factors. For instance, pronouns can be used as a linguistic tool to create a sense of solidarity and community. This can for example be achieved through using pronouns in order to

position oneself inside or outside of a group. Furthermore, pronouns can be used realise a strategy of positive self-representation and negative other representation. This is otherwise referred to as an *us vs. them* dichotomy (Van Dijk 2005, Wilson 2015). The following section will outline some studies on the use of pronouns in political discourse.

Wilson (2015: 779) states that “[h]ow one refers to oneself or others is not, or not always, neutral act, and can be affected by context, culture, and interactional practice”. This can also be seen in politicians’ manipulation of pronouns; making a distinction between ‘them’ and ‘us’ for example. Carefully distributing personal roles or responsibility can be achieved through what is called speaker-inclusive and speaker-exclusive use of ‘we’ (Wilson 2015: 779). In grammatical terms, one would usually expect ‘we’ to include the speaker and one or more others, however, in actual talk speakers might use ‘we’ even when they are not technically included in the group to which they are referring. Wilson (1990) states that “the distribution of I/we (exclusive and inclusive) is clearly marked in political interaction” (p. 50). The reason, according to Wilson, is that as politicians are in need of the support of the people, they are dependent on the people believing that the decisions they make are the right ones, however, no one can guarantee the outcome of any political decision. Thus, it is helpful to use language to communicate that any actions are not only, or fully, the responsibility of one individual (*ibid.*).

Switching between first-person singular and first-person plural pronouns can be used a strategy to either place focus on personal involvement or to deflect attention from personal responsibility. Wilson uses the presidential debates between Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford in 1976 as an example. In the debate, Carter answers a question about a promise he made to reduce the number of government agencies. In his response, Carter switches between ‘we’ and ‘I’ and in doing so marks his relation to positive and negative issues (1990: 51). The effect of using ‘we’ rather than ‘I’ is that Carter is not interpreted as having an individual responsibility for an issue. For instance, one might use ‘I’ for self-reference when talking about a situation in which one paints a positive picture of oneself. By contrast, one might choose to refer to oneself by using ‘we’ when talking about a situation in which one is not put in a positive light.

In *Politically Speaking* (1990) John Wilson analysed the pronominal choices in speeches from three different UK politicians. The politicians were Margaret Thatcher, who at the time of writing was the leader of the Conservative Party, Neil Kinnock, who was the current leader of the Labour Party and Michael Foot, who was a former leader of the Labour Party and a Labour Party member of parliament. In total, Wilson analysed nine pre-scripted

speeches, three for each politician. The speeches were given in similar contexts, as they were all given at party meetings where the politicians addressed members of their own party (1990: 60). Wilson focuses on three main areas when looking at the speeches. These areas are self-reference, relations of contrast and other referencing. Wilson focuses mainly on the pronouns used for self-reference, and consequently does not go into much detail about the pronouns 'you' and 'they'. In investigating the use of pronouns in these politician's speeches, Wilson found that first-person plural references were used less frequently in spoken discourse than in written discourse, and that singular first-person references were also more frequent in unscripted speeches than in scripted speeches (1990:54). This means first-person singular references are more frequently used in spontaneous speech.

Wilson states that self-reference by other means than 'I' or 'we' is said to represent a distancing mechanism on the part of the speaker (1990: 62). In his analysis of first-person singular pronouns, Wilson found that Margaret Thatcher used 'I' as a way to establish rapport with the audience as well as to express personal involvement and commitment (1990: 62). Furthermore, he found that 'I' was often used together with mental-process verbs ('think', 'want', 'wish'), in order to communicate sincerity (1990: 62). In addition, he found that Thatcher also made use of a *block* of pronouns. A block is when the same pronominal form is used in the same syntactic position in three or more successive sentences. For example, Thatcher made use of a block of the first-person singular pronoun 'I' in her speech:

"I am prepared to defend to the utmost the things in which I believe and I wish to hand on to our children as our forefathers handed them unto us. Of, course I want to see nuclear disarmament. Indeed, I should like to see general disarmament as well"
(Wilson 1990: 62).

In addition, Wilson found that Thatcher also employed first-person plural pronouns to signal positive relations. For example, 'we' was often used to reference the government, NATO, the Central Council of the Conservative Party, Britain and President Reagan. Wilson argues that these were all groups and people who supported Thatcher's general perspective. Wilson also notes that Thatcher uses the possessive pronoun 'our' as a determiner in instances where one might expect the definite article (1990: 64). One interesting finding was that Thatcher employed the first-person plural possessive when referring to the young in the phrase "our children are fed on a daily diet of violence" but did not do so when turning to discuss juvenile crime. Instead, Thatcher used the third-person plural possessive distancing mechanism in the phrase "[m]oreover it strengthens the provisions whereby parents may have to pay their

children's fines" (Wilson 1990: 64). Thus, Thatcher also used pronouns in order to express closeness to or distance from a subject.

Turning to the speeches of Kinnock, Wilson notes that interestingly Kinnock makes limited use of the first-person plural 'we'. In Kinnock's speeches, 'we' seems to be mainly used when making a reference the Labour Party, but it is also used to make references to the people of Britain (1990: 65). Kinnock's use of the first-person plural possessive differs from that of Thatcher in that Kinnock uses the form when referring to abstract concepts such as ideals, strength and justice. These concepts are presented as concepts which are possessed by the Labour Party, or as being part of general socialist ideas (1990: 66).

In his analysis of relations of contrast, Wilson states that within the political discourse of the time the conversation often revolved around individuals and their competencies and personalities. For instance, Kinnock frequently portrayed the disagreements between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party as disagreements between himself and Margaret Thatcher. This can be seen in the way Kinnock used I/she constructions in his speeches. Furthermore, government ministers and the Conservative Party were frequently referred to as 'hers', which indicates that Kinnock held Thatcher individually responsible for her Party and its members. Thatcher, on the other hand, frequently used we/they constructions, and thus portrayed disagreements between the two political parties as being between the two parties rather than between herself and Kinnock.

Another interesting finding in Wilson's analysis was that the pronominal choices in Michael Foot's speeches had more in common with Thatcher's pronominal choices than with that of Kinnock's speeches. This was considered surprising as Foot, like Kinnock, was also a Labour Party politician. Overall, Foot used less pronouns in his speeches than both Kinnock and Thatcher. He particularly used the first-person singular infrequently. In one of Foot's speeches this form was only used once (1990: 73).

Wilson (1990) does not go into much detail about the pronouns 'you' and 'they' as he mainly focuses on self-reference. Still, he does mention how these pronouns can be part of a pronominal scale. Pronominal scaling refers to how pronouns can be used by producers of discourse to either distance themselves from or affiliate themselves with what they say. For example, on a pronominal scale, 'I' might be the pronoun used to refer to that which is closest to the speaker, while 'they' might be used to refer to that which is the most distant from the

speaker. However, Wilson (1990) stresses that there is no one pronominal scale that fits all people, as individuals can use various distancing mechanisms. Thus, a normative scale does not have much value (1990: 70).

Wilson (1990) concludes that pronouns can be manipulated for political purposes, and that the pronouns of the English language does not form neat categorical divisions (p. 76). Similar studies on the use of pronouns in political discourse have shown similar results. For example, Bramley (2001) “examines how politicians in the political interview use pronouns to construct ‘self’ and ‘other’”. Bramley argues that pronouns are not merely a way of expressing person, gender and number and aims to show how politicians exploit the flexibility of pronominal reference to construct a view of themselves which favours their image (2001: 1). Bramley takes an interactional approach to study how pronouns are used in the construction of identity in political interviews (Bramley 2001: 16). The data for the study consists of 32 transcribed interviews with Australian politicians. The data includes politicians of both genders, from all political parties, local and federal politicians and politicians with differing length of experience in politics. The interviews used in the study were un-scripted. The study examined the use of the pronouns ‘I’, ‘we’, ‘you’ and ‘they’. ‘He’ and ‘she’ were not examined, as Bramley argues that their use is mainly referential (Bramley 2001: 17).

The study first examined the use of first-person singular ‘I’. Although one could assume that first-person singular pronouns’ referents are easily defined, Bramley (2001) states that first-person pronouns do not merely refer to the speaker of an utterance but can refer to any one of the speaker’s interactionally constructed selves. The analysis found that the politicians used ‘I’ when they wanted to construct an image of themselves as a “good politician” (Bramley 2001: 73). The conclusion was that the “[political] interview is not just a channel of information to the public about the position of the politician, but it is a place where the politician constructs a positive image of him / herself” (p. 74).

Further, Bramley’s study turned its focus to the use of ‘we.’ ‘We’ is used in the political interview to indicate group memberships. Bramley, states that ‘we’ is often used to show “institutional identity,” which is when a person speaks on behalf of or as a representative for an institution. In a political context, this will often be when a politician speaks on behalf of his/ her political party (Bramley 2001: 76). However, it can also be when an elected official speaks on behalf of the nation. ‘We’ was also used to create an “us and them” dichotomy (Bramley 2001: 86). In establishing an “us and them” dichotomy the

politician paints a picture of the group he/ she belongs to as a group with positive attributes and the group which the “other” belongs to as a group with negative attributes. Other uses of ‘we’ included using ‘we’ to make an issue a collective issue, to respond collectively to an issue and to co-implicate people.

Bramley (2001) states that, conclusively, ‘we’ always invokes a collective identity or a group membership, but the different contexts in which ‘we’ occurred enabled politicians to use the pronoun with different effects (p. 126). The main uses were to co-implicate the people, create institutional identities and to deflect attention away from the single (speaking) politician. When ‘we’ was used as a way to deflect attention away from the speaker it was often in the context of criticism towards the speaker. By using ‘we’ the speaker was able to transfer responsibility onto a collective identity rather than onto their individual self (p. 92). In addition, Bramley notes that ‘we’ was often used in the phrase ‘we have’ as a more personal alternative to the impersonal existential marker ‘there is’ (p. 126). The study also showed that politicians had many collective identities. Furthermore, the data in this study also showed that it was not merely the referent of ‘we’ that was important. What was more important was the effect that was achieved through presenting ‘the self’ as a part of this collective identity (Bramley 2001: 127).

Although Bramley’s study also focused on the uses of ‘you’ and ‘they’, I have chosen not to go into detail about the analysis of these pronouns as the present study will focus only on self-reference and the uses of ‘I’ and ‘we’ (and their related forms), thus these findings are not very relevant for the present study. However, the findings will be briefly summarised. The main finding for the pronoun ‘you’ was that the use of ‘you’ was not as straight forward as one might expect. Previous studies have seen ‘you’ as a mainly referring to the addressee in a conversation. ‘You’ can obviously be both the singular and the plural version of the pronoun. However, Bramley found that ‘you’ was not merely referential.

Bramley studied the use of ‘they’ in an oppositional, affiliative and neutral context. She found that politicians often used ‘they’ to distance themselves from ‘other’ when making a negative evaluation of someone/something. In these cases, the pronoun was often used in order to create an oppositional view. Contrastively, ‘they’ was used in an affiliative context when the speaker was making a positive evaluation. ‘They’ was also used in neutral contexts, where the politician did not appear to attempt to either distance themselves or affiliate themselves with what they were talking about (2001: 204).

Bramley concludes that pronouns do not only do referring work but can also do identity work (2001: 265). Shifts in pronouns were also used to indicate a shift in the construction of group memberships. “‘We’ always invokes a collective identity or group membership, but the different contexts in which ‘we’ occurs enables politicians to achieve different effects” (Bramley 2001: 126). Pronouns are central in the creation of identities which Bramley concludes are constructed discursively rather than representing already existing group memberships (p. 91).

Further studies on the use of pronouns in Australian political discourse have been conducted. Allen (2004) states that “[t]he concepts of identity and identification are central to accomplishing the persuasive aspect of political discourse during an election campaign” (p. 2). Furthermore, Allen (2004) argues that “identification is the new persuasion” (p. 3). By this she means that as politics have become more personality-driven and less ideologically driven politicians use various strategies to construct identities with which their audience can identify. Allen also argues that it is in the politicians’ best interest to appear multi-faceted in order to appeal to a diverse audience, and that one way to achieve this is through careful and well thought out use of pronouns. Allen’s study is based on Australian politicians’ campaign speeches and looks at the two major party leaders during the Australian federal election campaign in 2004 (Allen 2004: 3). The study focuses largely on the use of first-person singular ‘I’ versus the use of first-person plural pronouns. The study found that first-person plural pronouns were used by party leaders to refer to the government in general when talking about mistakes made by the government, while first-person singular pronouns were used when presenting “positive aspects of themselves as individual politicians” (p. 9).

Allen’s (2004) study concludes that the studied politicians use plural pronouns to position themselves and their audiences within various groups. They also use pronouns to exclude the opposition and present them negatively. In addition, when asked potentially face-threatening questions, they deflect attention from themselves by using impersonal use and generalised categories. Furthermore, they appeal to diverse audiences by shifting identities through pronoun choice and by using plural pronouns with ambiguous referents (Allen 2004: 12).

So far, this section has focused on pronominal choices in Australian and British politics. More recent studies on American politicians have yielded similar findings. For example, an analysis of Hillary Clinton’s first debate speech of her presidential campaign in 2016 showed that Clinton actively used the pronoun ‘we’ in order to place herself in the same

group as the audience (Pietrus 2018: 119). The study concluded that Clinton's speech actively aimed "to create a strong bond between the speaker and the audience" (Pietrus 2018: 119).

Coltman-Patel (2018) studied the construction of political identity in the speeches of Barack Obama. Coltman-Patel argues that the "intentions behind the linguistic choices in political discourse are to present an express social and political ideologies in addition to generating support and popularity for the politician delivering the speech (p. 2). Coltman-Patel used a combined approach of Corpus Linguistics and CDA. The corpus consisted of speeches from Obama's campaign, UN addresses and State of the Union addresses. Coltman-Patel found that Obama frequently used the first-person plural pronoun 'we' for self-reference. In addition, 'we' was often used in combination with modal verbs (p. 13). Coltman-Patel argues that these verbs express high levels of commitment and that they can therefore be used to influence perceptions of power (ibid.). Furthermore, Coltman-Patel argues that the combination of 'we' and modal verbs can be effectively utilised to imply shared political ideologies. The study concludes that the language in Obama's speeches "has been manipulated to create, maintain and enforce powerful political identities and ideologies" (Coltman-Patel 2018: 24). Furthermore, Coltman-Patel argues that the strategies employed by Obama in his speeches helped construct and image of a powerful yet accessible leader.

The findings of the studies outlined above indicate that politicians use pronouns strategically when doing interviews and making speeches. Thus, pronominal choices in political discourse are not merely grammatical. Pietrus (2018), Allen (2004) and Bramley (2001) found that politicians used pronouns to position themselves in the same group as their intended audience. In these cases, 'we' was often used to indicate group memberships and to create collective identities. As mentioned, Wilson found that self-reference through the use of the first-person singular was less frequent in written than spoken political discourse. This might indicate that self-reference by plural pronouns might be more frequent in political discourse on social media, such as Twitter.

2.3.2 Speech acts of solidarity in political discourse

Speech act theory was first introduced by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969). Johnson (2018) states that saying something is also doing something, meaning that producing a certain utterance is also performing an action. In most cases people do not announce their illocutionary actions. This means that it is possible to make a request without using the phrase "I request that...". In fact, it is often more common to make requests without explicitly stating that one is making a request. However, people do sometimes announce

illocutionary intentions. For instance, saying “I promise” is to make a promise and saying “I order you to...” is to give an order (Johnson 2018: 79). Verbs such as these are called performative verbs. Performative verbs are often used in situations where it is important that the speaker’s intentions are unambiguous.

Critical theorists have often studied political discourse within the framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is primarily concerned with how “social power-abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (Van Dijk 2015: 467). However, analysing political discourse can involve analysing other aspects of language use than just those regarding how power is or can be abused. Because of this Kampf (2016) argues that there is a need for analysing the social aspects of political discourse. Kampf claims that “[e]stablishing sociability and cooperation with others can be achieved by performing solidarity in language” (p. 48). Performing solidarity in language can, according to Kampf, be achieved through a number of speech acts, which serve as linguistic devices that can be utilised in order to initiate, re-affirm, and re-establish relationships (p.49). Kampf identifies seven speech acts which are used to express solidarity. These speech acts are to: congratulate, welcome, thank, support, praise, greet and bless (p. 58). Kampf regards these speech acts as solidarity-enhancing devices, and states that the use of these speech acts appear to be an efficient discursive tool for performing solidarity in political discourse (p. 47).

Kampf (2016) divides the speech acts of solidarity into three categories. These are past-oriented, present-oriented and future-oriented speech acts of solidarity. Kampf (2016: 51) lists thanking and congratulating as examples of past-oriented acts of solidarity. Seasonal greetings are used as an example of present-oriented acts of solidarity, while blessing and wishing are used as examples of future-oriented acts of solidarity. These categories of speech acts of solidarity have in common that they can all be used to reaffirm, reinforce and re-establish relationships (Kampf 2016: 51).

This section has focused on some linguistic means through which solidarity can be expressed. These linguistic means are strategic pronoun usage and speech acts of solidarity. While strategic use of pronouns can be employed in political discourse in order to indicate group memberships, deflect attention from the speaking politician, and present issues as being shared responsibilities, speech acts of solidarity can be used in political discourse in order to maintain good relationships with others. The following section focuses on indirectness and its use in political discourse.

2.4 Indirectness and its use in political discourse

In discourse what is not said can be as important as what is said. As Barbara Johnstone points out, foregrounds are only possible in the context of backgrounds (2018: 70). Sometimes, people communicate just as much through what is left out or communicated indirectly than they do through what is said explicitly. One way to be indirect is through implicature. Contextual facts that people assume that they share do not need to be made explicit (p. 71). Johnstone (2018) states that implicature can both save communicative effort and cause communicative difficulty. The use of implicature can cause communicative difficulty if what one speaker assumes to be shared knowledge is not obvious to the addressee.

Another linguistic choice related to discourse is indirectness. Woods states that “[w]hat a speaker *means* may deviate from what is literally *said*” (Woods 2006: xii). Thus, the true meaning of the utterance relies on the addressee’s interpretation. The addressee must then rely on other factors in order to interpret indirect speech. Such factors include “the nature of the speech situation, the larger linguistic context of the utterance, the aims and goals of the conversation and the background “knowledge” shared between participants in the interactional episode” (Woods 2006: xii).

Another way to express indirectness can be through the use of the passive voice and through presupposition. The use of the passive voice gives interlocutors the opportunity to be indirect about the agents of actions (Johnson 2018: 71), while presupposition can be used to encourage an addressee to make invited inferences. Speakers can employ strategies of indirectness for various reasons. Sometimes choices of indirectness are related to politeness. For example, indirectness can be motivated by politeness when a speaker is making a request. As Johnson (2018) puts it: “Being indirect about illocutionary intentions is often more polite than being explicit, because indirectness gives addressees options for how to interpret utterances” (p.79). Thus, it is possible for the person who makes a request to “save face” if the addressee refuses the request.

In likeness with Johnson, Obeng (1997) also argues that indirectness is motivated by politeness. Obeng studied the use of indirectness in political discourse. He states that “[s]peaking candidly is therefore oftentimes seen as confrontational, impolite and politically risky.” Speaking candidly is regarded as politically risky because politicians must be prepared to be, at a later stage, confronted about what they have said on any occasion. Thus, speaking indirectly is a way of communicating what you want to say, while at the same time minimising the risk of later being confronted about what you said. Obeng concludes that

“[i]ndirectness plays an important role in political discourse, especially in managing verbal conflict and confrontation” (Obeng 1997: 53).

Obeng (1997) lists some strategies through which indirectness is expressed. Among these are evasion, metaphor, circumlocution and innuendo (p. 53). Obeng argues that strategies of indirectness are used by politicians to “‘defend themselves’ and to hold onto power” (p. 64). A strategy of evasion can be realised through ignoring a question, acknowledging a question without answering it, stating that a question has already been answered or through simply declining to answer a question (p. 54). Further, he argues that “a politician may bend or curve an utterance in order or make an oblique allusion to certain persons or personalities” (p. 72). The data in Obeng’s study is from political debates/ interviews. Strategies of indirectness might be realised in different ways on Twitter, as Twitter, and social media in general, will likely allow different discursive strategies than debates and interviews. The next section focuses on political discourse in the digital age.

2.5 Political discourse in the digital age

According to Woods, the discourse of politics has been hugely affected by the media expansion of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (2006: 46). It is perhaps no surprise then, that the introduction of social media, such as the microblogging platform Twitter, would further affect political discourse. In *Discourse of Twitter and Social Media* Zappavigna states that “[t]he 2008 US presidential elections highlighted the role social media are beginning to play in political life” (Zappavigna 2012:170). During this election Obama used Twitter to communicate with the US population, and studies have later claimed that his 2008 Twitter campaign made Twitter a “legitimate and frequently used communication channel in the political arena” (Tumasjan et al. 2011: 402).

The first studies of online political discourse explored political blogging, and then later went on to consider the political implications social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter (Zappavigna 2012: 170). Social media offer citizens the opportunity to easily participate in political conversations, and some studies have argued that this opportunity is fuelling people’s involvement in politics. Most studies on politics on social media have been conducted within the field of political science and have often focused on sentiment. Zappavigna emphasises that “[b]ecause of the disciplinary orientation, most of these types of studies consider discourse as general social phenomenon rather than investigating particular linguistic patterns in political discourse” (p. 171). However, some later studies of politicians’

Twitter discourse, such as Donald Trump's Twitter, have aimed to do this. One of these studies argued that social media allows politicians to "appear closer to the people as they speak to the people directly without mediation" (Kreis 2017: 610).

2.6 Studies of political discourse on Twitter

This section outlines some studies on political discourse. As mentioned, social media has provided politicians with a number of channels through which they can communicate directly with voters. However, "[a] study of the social media use of the members of the US Congress found that they used Twitter primarily for self-promotion rather than for direct communication with citizens" (Zappavigna 2012: 171). This meant that Twitter was used not used for providing insight into congressional activities, but rather for sharing information that would traditionally have been shared via a press release. This finding suggests that politicians do not use Twitter to enhance their communication with voters. However, van Kessel and Castelein (2016: 597) argue that since tweets by politicians are often picked up by mass media, it is important to study not only the nature of politicians' use of Twitter, but also the contents of their tweets.

Clark and Evans (2016) studied the use of Twitter by congressional candidates leading up to the 2012 election for the House of Representatives in order to assess whether there were significant differences in the content of the tweets from female and male candidates. In addition, they discussed some of the advantages Twitter might pose for candidates in various minority groups, arguing that women might be drawn to Twitter because it could benefit their campaign to be in control of the information which is shared about it. The study concluded that women were significantly more likely to discuss policy matters on Twitter than their male counterparts (Clark & Evans 2016: 343). The study also found that women were more likely to tweet about "women's issues" or issues that disproportionately affect women (p. 344). Moreover, Clark and Evans argued that "women will seek to use their outgroup status to their advantage" (p. 329).

2.7 Previous research on AOC's Twitter

This section outlines some of the existing research on AOC's Twitter discourse. AOC's political career started in 2018, although this is quite recent, some recent theses have studied her political discourse on Twitter. Lewinstein (2019) focused on how AOC used Twitter as an agenda setting tool in congress, while Jaruseviciute (2019) focused on how AOC used Twitter

to construct her identity and build common ground with the citizens of her congressional district.

Lewinstein (2019) also focused on how AOC expressed her solidarity with similar candidates as herself in the 2018 primary elections. Due to the fact that this study focused on how AOC used Twitter as a tool to set the agenda in congress, its data set included tweets both from a one-month period during the primary election and a one-month period after Ocasio-Cortez had started her time as a representative. Consequently, part of the data for the mentioned study overlaps with the data of the present study, and it can therefore be used for comparison.

Lewinstein's (2019) study used a mixed method of qualitative discourse analysis and some quantitative aspects. The study divided the data into three categories. The categories were: district-oriented tweets, meaning tweets that focused on NY-14 or the Bronx and Queens, tweets which focused on national issues, and lastly, tweets that did not fall into either of the categories. The aim of this was to see whether AOC tweeted more about national issues and less about district related issues after her inauguration. The study found that AOC tweeted more about national issues and less about district related issues after her inauguration. Furthermore, it found that AOC frequently tweeted her support to similar candidates in other states and districts. This indicates that AOC used Twitter to create a sense of solidarity with other candidates who were also women of colour and who came from an immigrant background.

Another bachelor's thesis studying AOC's tweets was submitted at the University of Malmö in the spring of 2019. This thesis used a combined approach of corpus linguistics (CL) and critical discourse analysis (CDA). The aim was to find out which "linguistic strategies AOC utilised on Twitter to connect with her audience" and to see how she used Twitter to portray her identity (Jaruseviciute 2019: 5).

Jaruseviciute (2019) found that AOC used inclusive plural pronouns in order to position herself in the same group as her audience. Moreover, she often talked more on a collective level than on a personal one. The study concludes that the most notable way in which AOC used Twitter was to relate to the audience by emphasising aspects of her identity which she and her audience might have in common. The study concluded that while theory stresses that people may downplay marginalised aspects of their identity in the public sphere, AOC has emphasised hers, and used them in order to create facilitate a feeling of solidarity and common ground with her audience.

While both studies focused on AOC's political discourse on Twitter and the studied time periods of both studies somewhat overlap with that of the present study, there are also some notable differences. As both of the previous studies are bachelor's theses the present study is larger in scope. Furthermore, Lewinstein's study is not a linguistics thesis and it therefore does not offer much in-depth linguistic analysis. The present thesis investigates the use of solidarity strategies and indirectness strategies in AOC's 2018 Twitter campaign. The present study also distinguishes itself from the studies outlined above in that it is data-driven and thus did not have specific aims to study particular aspects of AOC's political discourse. Furthermore, its main focus is on the strategies and the various discursive means used to achieve these strategies, rather than on the effects of these strategies. This study also differs from the other two studies in that it mainly uses qualitative discourse analysis. As a result of this, both the data set and the time period of the present study are smaller, despite the study being larger in scope. The present study aims to offer a more in-depth linguistic analysis than previous studies have done. For this purpose, a purely discourse analytical approach might have some benefits over using a mixed method of corpus analysis and discourse analysis.

The focus of this chapter has been the theoretical framework for the present study. The next chapter will outline the selection and collection of data as well as the method used in the current study.

3. METHOD AND DATA SELECTION

The present chapter provides an outline of discourse analysis and the some of the methods used within this field. Moreover, some of the abundant definitions of the term “discourse” will be discussed, and the definition the present thesis builds on will be presented. It also presents the selection of the data and the method used in the present study. Furthermore, it discusses the reasons behind the choices that were made regarding the data selection and method for this thesis.

3.1 The term discourse and discourse analysis

This section devotes its attention to the field of discourse analysis and the term “discourse”. The field of discourse analysis is relatively young, and it emerged as a branch of sociolinguistics. Nowadays, discourse analysis is used within many different academic disciplines, therefore, it is no surprise that the term discourse has different definitions to scholars of different fields (Tannen et al. 2015: 1). To linguists, the term discourse has generally been defined as anything “beyond the sentence,” while others have defined discourse as the study of language in use (Tannen et al. 2015: 1). Johnstone (2018: xvii) defines discourse as “actual instances of communicative action in the medium of language.” Furthermore, according to Tannen et al., critical theorists often talk about “discourses of power” and “discourses of racism”. Here, “discourses” not only becomes a count noun, but refers to a set of linguistic and non-linguistic social practices and ideological assumptions that construct or reinforce power or racism. The definitions of “discourse” are so abundant that most textbooks about discourse analysis open with a survey of definitions (Tannen et al. 2015: 1). The abundant definitions of “discourse” all fall into three categories: 1) Anything beyond the sentence, 2) language use, 3) a broader range of social practice that includes non-linguistic and non-specific instances of language (ibid). The present thesis regards discourse as language in use. Thus, it analyses the data in the linguistic context it occurs in.

3.2 Methods of discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is not a method, but a wide approach. This section outlines some of the methods used within discourse analysis. One of the approaches to discourse analysis that is commonly used when analysing political discourse is critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is concerned with how ideological positions are communicated through and reflected by

certain linguistic choices. Its goals are often explicitly political (Johnson 2018: 54). Thus, it differs from other types of linguistic analyses and other approaches to discourse in that it often has a clear aim to uncover social injustice and to encourage change. However, Johnson (2018) stresses that all discourse analysis is critical reading and that “(...) critical reading almost inevitably leads to questioning the status quo and often leads to questions about power and inequality” (p. 25). Thus, discourse analysts should be critical both of their own process of analysis and on the situations which they analyse, whether or not the end goal is social critique (ibid.). The present thesis does not make use of CDA, rather it attempts to employ a more linguistically oriented analysis. The aim is to study the ways in which AOC made use of the linguistic system in her Twitter campaign and the discursive effects of these choices.

A couple of the discourse analytic studies which were outlined in the previous chapter (Coltman-Patel 2018 & Jaruseviciute 2019) used a combined approach of corpus linguistics (CL) and qualitative discourse analysis. One of the benefits of using this mixed method is that the use of CL more easily allows the analysts to study a larger amount of data than with a purely qualitative discourse analytic approach. By using a corpus in order to study the discursive practices of a politician, the analyst is able to identify the most frequent linguistic patterns. However, a method of only qualitative discourse analysis could allow for a more in-depth linguistic analysis of all the data.

3.3 Multimodal discourse analysis

Discourse on social media is almost always multimodal. The term multimodal refers to how discourse can contain multiple modes. Johnson (2018) states that communicative labour used to be specialised, in that writers worked with words and artists with images etc. However, these lines have now been blurred, and one communicator now often works with multiple modes (p. 235). Twitter is multimodal. As mentioned in the introduction, users can include videos, images and links in their posts. Thus, present study makes use of multimodal discourse analysis, as images are included in the analysis of the data. Some tweets in the data contain videos, for these the actual videos are not analysed, however, the video of the tweet is used to provide context in order to analyse the text of the tweet.

3.4 Data selection

After I decided that the topic for this thesis would be AOC’s political discourse on Twitter, I decided that her discursive strategies during her campaign would be the focus of the study.

AOC tweets frequently, usually multiple times a day, therefore, the studied time period had to be limited. After having limited the study to the month of the election, I realised that this would have given me more data than what could be included in the study. Therefore, the present study was limited to the last ten days before the primary election. This decision was made in order to get a manageable number of tweets for the size of the present thesis. As AOC's tweets often contain other elements than text, the number of tweets which would give a manageable amount of data is lower than it would have been if her tweets consisted mainly of text, as there is a lot to analyse within a single tweet.

For the purpose of the study, all tweets from the 17th of June to the 26th of June, 2018 were manually collected. The data for the present thesis was collected by using Twitter's advanced search function. An advanced search allows one to search for posts from a specific Twitter username. It also allows one to specify the dates for one's search. For the purpose of this study, I used an advanced search to search for Twitter posts from the username @AOC, between the dates of June 17th and June 26th, 2018.

The search resulted in 94 tweets. A large number of AOC's tweets are multimodal, and therefore only 25 tweets in the data set are text-only. Out of 94 tweets in the relevant time period, 37 tweets were retweets and thus contained content from other users. This is a common tweet format for AOC. By responding to tweets about news articles and tweets about current events, she manages to engage in ongoing conversations. For the tweets that are retweets, the text of the original tweet will not be subject to analysis; however, it might be commented on for the purpose of analysing how its content is used in AOC's tweets.

Of the 94 tweets in the ten days before the election, 13 tweets and retweets include videos, while 35 tweets and retweets include either pictures or links to articles with pictures. For the tweets that include videos, the videos themselves will not be analysed. However, for the purpose of the analysis of the textual material, a brief synopsis of the content of the videos will be provided. As with retweets, although the actual videos themselves will not be analysed, content from the videos might be commented on and quoted for the purpose of explaining how it relates to the text of the analysed tweet.

It is worth mentioning that AOC's Twitter name during her campaign was @Ocasio2018, however, she changed the name of her account to @AOC after she was elected. Due to this, tweets from the campaign where AOC is mentioned by other Twitter users will have the username @Ocasio2018, but @AOC will be used as the source for her tweets. Furthermore, AOC now has a second Twitter account with the username @RepAOC.

This account was made after AOC was elected and does not contain any tweets from her campaign, thus its contents are not relevant for the present study.

3.4.1 Problems encountered in the process of data collection

I encountered a few problems in the process of compiling my data set. One of these was a discovery that was made in the later stages of analysis. I discovered that the results of Twitter's advanced search had not provided me with all the tweets that were posted between the 17th of June and the 26th of June 2018. When searching for a specific date within the studied time period, the results of the search showed some tweets which were not included in my data set. I then searched for other specific dates within the studied period, and I noticed that this had the same result. Consequently, there are about 20 tweets which were posted by AOC in the time period that is the point of study for this thesis which are not included in the data set. Due to the fact that this was discovered in the later stages of writing this thesis, I made the decision to not include these tweets in my data, as time would not have allowed me to do so. However, as the data set is still quite large, the omission of these posts was not thought to affect the results of the analysis in any significant way.

There are some challenges related to using social media, and other internet-based sources, as a data source. Firstly, some content may have been deleted during the time between the studied time frame and the time of the data collection. I encountered some of these problems when compiling my data set. In the data set there are some cases where AOC had retweeted and responded to other Twitter user's tweets, where the content AOC was responding to had since been deleted. This allowed me to see AOC's response, but not what she was responding to. There were four instances of this in the data for the studied time period. The qualitative analysis employed in this study analyses the content AOC's retweets in relation to the content of the original tweet, thus, as the missing content would make it difficult to analyse these tweets, they were excluded from the data set. As a result, the data set for the present study consists of 90 tweets.

3.5 Methods of analysis

The present thesis is a qualitative discourse analytic study with some quantitative elements. For the present discourse analytic study, I chose a data driven approach. After collecting the data, a process of familiarisation with the data was started. From this the most prominent discursive strategies emerged. These were indirectness strategies and solidarity strategies.

After having briefly analysed all the tweets I chose to focus on the use of these strategies. The tweets were analysed and categorised by strategies. Firstly, the pronominal choices were analysed. Although the pronouns were counted, qualitative analysis was also employed in order to study the strategic use of pronouns in context. Secondly, strategies of indirectness were looked at using a discourse analytic approach. Thirdly, strategies of solidarity were analysed. In order to get a view of how common indirectness strategies were, the number of tweets with each strategy was counted. Thus, even though the present thesis employs qualitative analysis, numbers for how frequent the indirectness strategies were within the data will be presented. Consequently, all tweets with indirectness strategies will not be shown as examples in chapter 4, however, numbers for how many tweets included indirectness strategies will be presented. This will give an idea of how frequently this strategy was used.

One of the previous studies on AOC's discourse on Twitter, which was outlined in chapter 2, used a combined approach of discourse analysis and corpus analysis. The aim of the present study is to offer a more in-depth linguistic analysis therefore the present study does not use this approach. While a smaller data set allows for a more in-depth linguistic analysis, it does mean that the findings of the analysis may not be generalised. In this respect, a combined method of CL and qualitative discourse analysis has some benefits. However, CL shows tendencies, and thus, in a study which uses this approach findings which do not show up in the main tendencies might go undetected.

3.5.1 Frequency of pronouns

The quantitative aspect of the present study was the frequency and distribution of different pronouns in the data. Some considerations had to be taken when counting the frequency of the different pronouns. Firstly, since the source for the data is Twitter, which has a character limit of 280, there were some instances where the subject is implied. Thus, we cannot know which pronoun would have had the function of the subject if it had been explicitly included. I found that the general impression was that implied subjects were often used where it would otherwise have been natural to use first-person singular. However, this aspect was not analysed in detail.

Another issue was whether the instances where AOC uses Ocasio2018 for self-reference instead of 'I' should be interpreted as referring to only herself or to herself and her campaign team. I chose to interpret the use of Ocasio2018 as a means to shift the attention away from herself as a person and candidate. Even though it is her name I interpret it as a way

to place the focus on her campaign and not herself as a candidate. The reason for this is that in these cases where there is a pronoun that refers back to Ocasio2018 it is often a plural pronoun.

In counting the frequency of the various pronouns, I first counted the number of instances of each of the plural pronouns ‘we’, ‘us’, and ‘our’. Secondly, I categorised them according to whom they referred to. The categories are shown in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Categories of pronouns and their referents

AOC + campaign team
AOC + everyone
AOC + other Democrats
AOC + similar candidates
AOC + Latinx people
AOC + citizens of NY-14

While in most cases pronouns referred to someone previously mentioned in other terms (i.e. by name), there were some instances where the pronouns referents were not as easily identifiable. For example, in a thread of tweets, AOC refers to a ‘we’ without specifying who ‘we’ is. This is illustrated by figure 3.1. Due to this, I chose to include a category for general/ambiguous use of pronouns. I chose to call this category AOC + everyone. Figures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 are included to illustrate how I categorised the pronouns. In figure 3.1, AOC uses the pronoun ‘we’ four times. The pronoun does not refer to anyone who has previously been mentioned in other terms, thus it is not immediately obvious who is included in the ‘we’ in this tweet. However, as the third instance of ‘we’ is used in the phrase “if we continue to vote” the instances of ‘we’ in this tweet are interpreted as referring to voters/US citizens. This interpretation is further supported by the fourth instance of ‘we’ which is used in the phrase “we will continue to be a nation in decline”. Thus, the four instances of ‘we’ and the instance of ‘us’ in figure 3.1 was placed in the category AOC + everyone.

Figure 3.1: Example of categorisation of pronouns (1)



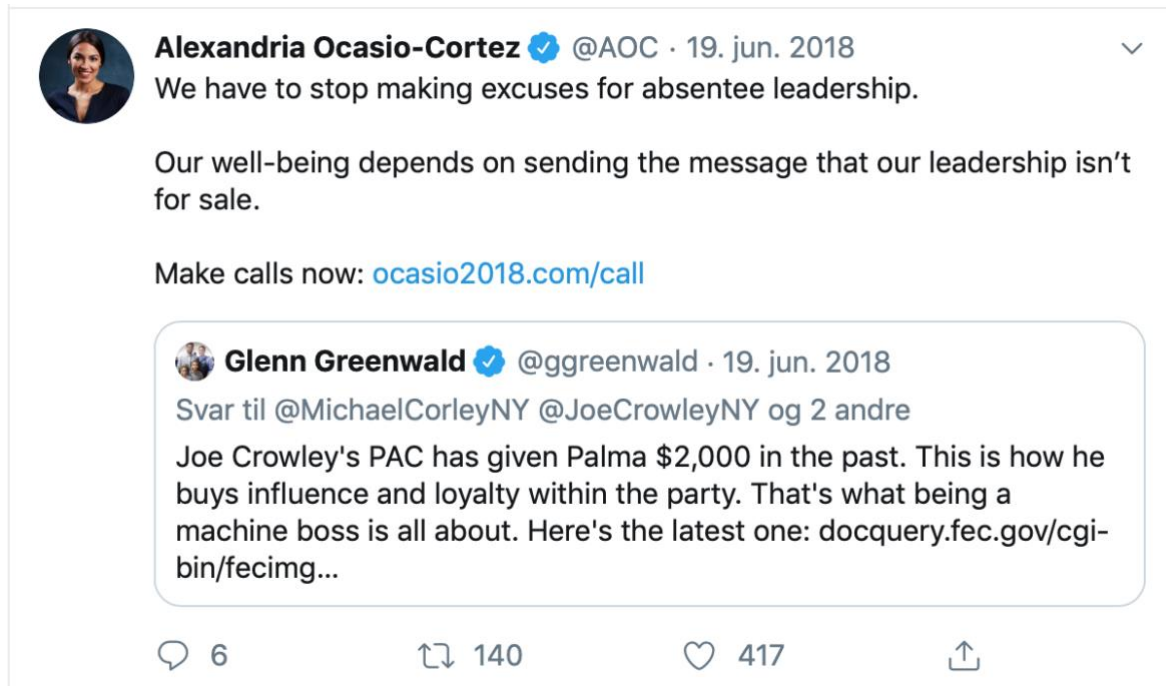
Figure 3.2: Example of categorisation of pronouns (2)



In figure 3.2 AOC states that “(...) we lost the presidency (...)” Here, “we” could refer to AOC and other politicians who are Democrats or AOC and people who vote for Democrats.

However, AOC follows this statement with a statement about the Democratic party. Therefore, I chose to place this instance of ‘we’ in the category labelled AOC + Democrats.

Figure 3.3: Example of categorisation of pronouns (3)



In figure 3.3 ‘we’ is used in the phrase “we have to stop making excuses”. It is unclear who ‘we’ is in this context, and it cannot be inferred by any of the information in the retweeted content either. Because ‘we’ does not seem to refer to someone who is mentioned either previously or later in the tweet, I read this as being a general ‘we’ which refers to AOC and anyone who reads this tweet. Consequently, I chose to put this instance of ‘we’ in the category AOC + everyone. For the same reason, the instance of ‘our’ in figure 3.3 was placed in the same category. The same was done for all similar pronoun use.

Some other choices also had to be made regarding the categorisation of the pronouns. In one instance, the possessive pronoun ‘our’ was used in the phrase “in our time.” In this particular case, I read this instance of ‘our’ as being a part of a fixed expression, rather than referring to someone’s time, and this occurrence of ‘our’ was thus placed in the “general/ambiguous” category.

After categorising and counting plural pronouns, I then counted the instances of self-reference by the use of the first-person singular ‘I’. This was more straight-forward than the count of the plural pronouns, because ‘I’ was almost exclusively used to refer to AOC herself.

However, as the aim was to study self-reference, one instance of the pronoun 'I' where it was used in a tweet in which AOC had quoted speech by another person, the pronoun was excluded from the count. The singular pronouns were then divided into three categories. These categories were 1) campaign talk, 2) private talk and 3) national issues. One of the challenges this posed was that it was sometimes difficult to define which categories some instances of singular pronouns belonged in. Social media often blurs the lines between professional and personal content, it was sometimes difficult to determine whether a tweet should be defined as personal or as regarding the campaign, and consequently whether it should be placed in the personal talk or the campaign talk category. For instance, in one tweet, AOC wished someone who was involved in her campaign a happy birthday. AOC used the opportunity to talk about her campaign, however, a tweet in which she wishes someone happy birthday is also a personal tweet and is not specifically related to the campaign, thus this instance of 'I' was placed in the personal talk category.

This chapter has focused on choices regarding the method used in the present thesis. The next chapter presents the results of the analysis.

4. ANALYSIS

The current chapter presents the analysis. The focus of the present study is on two main strategies, which were especially prevalent in the data. These two strategies are solidarity strategies and indirectness strategies. Firstly, the analysis of tweets containing solidarity strategies and the discursive means used to realise these strategies will be presented. Secondly, the indirectness strategies and the discursive means used to realise these will be presented. Finally, some discursive practices that were prevalent in the data, but were not the focus of this study, will be commented on.

4.1 Solidarity strategies

This section focuses on the solidarity strategies which AOC employed in her Twitter campaign. AOC employed various discursive strategies to create a sense of solidarity with her Twitter audience. The various solidarity strategies are presented in the following sections. Section 4.1.1 presents the solidarity strategy of collective alignment. Section 4.1.2 presents the analysis of tweets where solidarity was expressed through the use of singular pronouns, while section 4.1.3 presents the solidarity strategy of retweeting endorsements, tweeting endorsements featuring regular citizens of NY-14, engaging with tweets from constituents, and tweeting in support of candidates which AOC shared similarities with.

4.1.1 Collective alignment

The current section presents the solidarity strategy of collective alignment, which was realised through the use of plural pronouns. The quantitative aspect of the present study was the frequency of the different pronouns in the data. The results of the count can be seen in table 4.1 and table 4.2. The results of the count suggest that plural pronouns were used in order to realise a strategy of collective alignment. The strategy of collective alignment refers to the strategy of using plural pronouns in order to make a discursively constructed parallel connection between the producer of discourse and various other people or groups of people.

Table 4.1: Distribution of plural pronouns in the data and the groups which they refer to

	We	Us	Our
AOC + everyone	18	2	2

AOC + Campaign team	12	8	12
AOC + Democrats	2	0	0
AOC + similar candidates	1	1	1
AOC + Latinx people	1	0	0
AOC + citizens of NY-14	0	0	1

Table 4.1 shows the number of times different forms of the first-person plural was used. As one can see in table 4.1, ‘we’ was most often used to refer to AOC and the citizens of the United States and to AOC and her campaign team. This means that these were the groups which AOC most frequently chose to align herself with. As can be gathered from the numbers in the table, AOC appears to use plural pronouns in order to direct the attention towards her campaign and her campaign team, rather than towards herself and her own person, as well as to give the idea that she is a member of the intended audience. First-person plural pronouns seem to be used in order to appear more inclusive, as their function seems to be to position AOC and the voters/ her Twitter audience, AOC and similar candidates or AOC and her campaign team in the same groups. Thus, the use of pronouns to realise a strategy of collective alignment is interpreted a solidarity strategy.

There were eight instances where the use of ‘we’ was either ambiguous or general, this was interpreted as referring to AOC and the citizens of the United States. These instances are shown in table 4.1 as AOC + everyone. In two instances ‘we’ was used to refer to AOC and other Democrats, this means that AOC did not choose to align herself with the group “Democrats” as frequently as with the general US population and her campaign team. ‘We’ was also used one time to refer to AOC and Latinx people and one time to refer to AOC and similar candidates. The distribution of the pronoun ‘us’ was similar to the distribution of the pronoun ‘we’, in that it was also most frequently used to refer to either AOC and her campaign team or AOC and the citizens of the US. In one instance ‘us’ referred to AOC and similar candidates. ‘Our’ was used 13 times to refer to AOC and her campaign team, three times to refer to AOC and the citizens of the US, one time to refer to AOC and similar candidates and one time to refer to AOC and the citizens of the congressional district NY-14. Thus, the findings for the possessive pronoun ‘our’ is similar to that of the pronouns ‘we’ and

‘us’ in that it was most frequently used to refer to AOC and her campaign team. Overall, the groups which AOC most frequently aligned herself with were her campaign team and the citizens of the United States.

The use of singular pronouns was also studied. Table 4.2 shows the frequency of singular pronouns and which connections they were used in. For the purpose of studying the use of singular pronouns, the tweets were divided into three categories. These categories were 1) campaign talk, 2) private talk and 3) talk about national issues. The campaign talk-category was by far the largest category and included 69 tweets. The private talk-category included eleven tweets, while the national issues-category included 14 tweets. In some instances, tweets about the campaign were also of a personal nature. One example of this was a tweet in which AOC thanked a member of her campaign team for encouraging her to run for office and wished her a happy birthday. As discussed in the method section, this tweet was placed in the private talk-category.

Table 4.2: Singular pronouns and their use

	I	Me	My
Campaign talk	18	9	11
Private talk	11	0	2
Talk about national issues	7	1	0

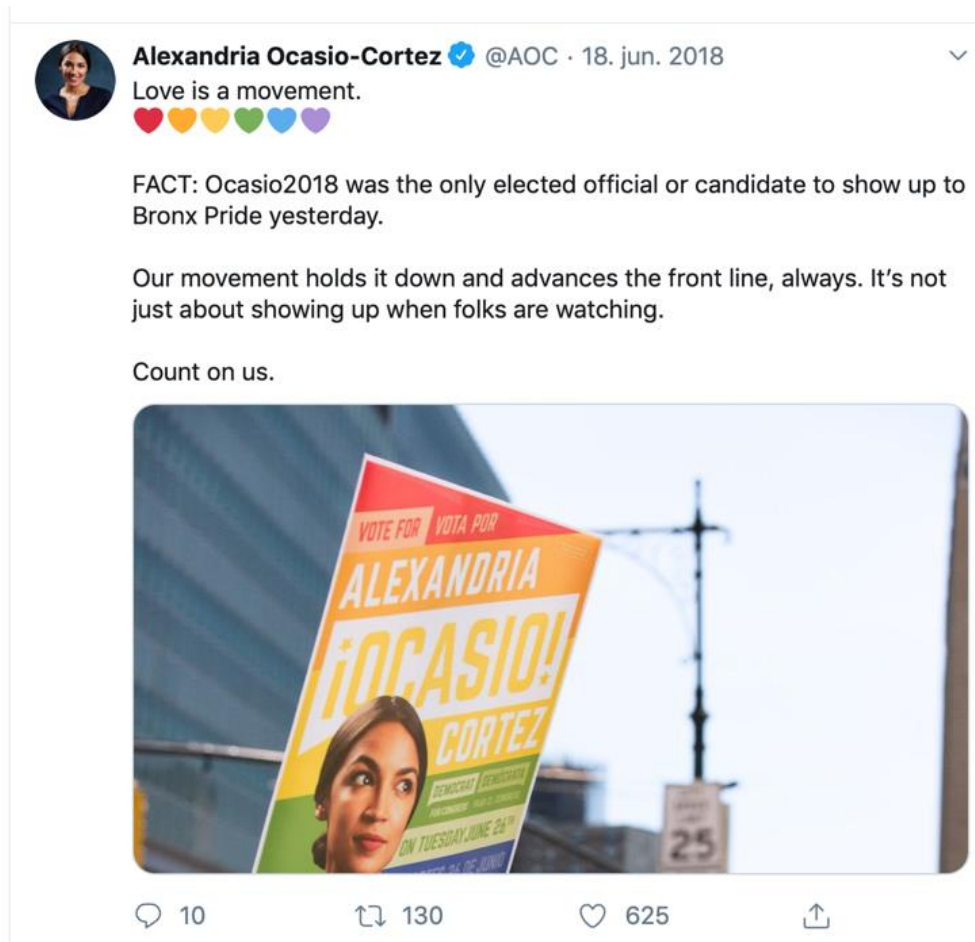
As seen in table 4.1 and table 4.2 there were 36 instances of ‘I’ and 38 instances of ‘we’ in the data. In other words, there is no significant difference in the frequency of the first-person singular and the first-person plural pronouns. For example, ‘I’ is used almost as many times as ‘we’. The differences, however, are clearer when it comes to how and in which cases singular and plural pronouns are used. For instance, AOC rarely uses the first-person singular when she promotes her campaign. First-person singular is mostly used when AOC refers to herself personally or to express a high level of personal commitment to a cause, and not when she refers to her candidacy. The differences in the use of plural and singular pronouns will be exemplified by figure 4.1 and figure 4.2.

Figure 4.1: Example showing the strategy of collective alignment (1)



In figure 4.1 AOC responds to questions she received about the lipstick colour she wore in a televised debate. The tweet includes a picture of AOC from the debate. In the text of the tweet, AOC uses the first-person singular pronoun in subject position twice. While the lipstick colour which is the subject of the tweet was worn in a political debate, it is difficult to argue that the topic of this tweet is politics or even AOC's campaign. This shows then, that when talking about herself personally AOC uses singular pronouns. Admittedly, this choice is not a surprising one, as it is natural to refer to oneself personally by first-person pronouns. What is interesting though is the contrast between the pronominal choices made in figure 4.1 and the pronominal choices made in figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Example showing the strategy of collective alignment (2)



By contrast, when AOC tweets about her candidacy and promotes herself, she often uses her campaign name, Ocasio2018 in combination with plural pronouns. In figure 4.2 AOC has tweeted about Bronx Pride. The tweet includes a picture, which shows an Ocasio2018 campaign poster. The poster in the picture has a picture of AOC on it, and it also has her name written on it in capital letters. In the text of the tweet, AOC uses Ocasio2018 to refer to herself, instead of the first-person singular pronoun ‘I’. This places the focus on her campaign rather than on herself. However, she uses the words “official” and “candidate” which refer to a single person. AOC also refers to “our movement”² instead of using first-person pronouns, when claiming that their “movement” always “advances the frontline.” The emphasis on a movement signals that her campaign is a part of something larger than herself. She finishes with the phrase “count on us.” Even though she is the one who will become a member of

² Other tweets in the data set refer to a “movement” thus this instance of the phrase is interpreted as referencing the campaign as a movement/ part of a movement and not as a reference to the movement for LGBTQ+ rights. See figure 4.20.

Congress if elected, she uses plural ‘us’ instead of singular ‘me’. This further enhances the impression that her campaign is part of a larger movement. In addition, there is a stark contrast between the choice to use Ocasio2018 instead of the first-person singular pronoun ‘I’ for self-reference and the use of the words “official” and “candidate” in their singular forms, and the plural pronouns in this tweet. Conclusively, when AOC is promoting herself as a candidate, she uses plural pronouns and refers to herself and her candidacy by using her campaign name, Ocasio2018, but when she answers a personal question, she tends to use singular pronouns.

One of the most prevalent solidarity strategies was the use of pronouns, specifically the use of inclusive plural pronouns. Plural pronouns were used to realise a strategy of collective alignment. The discursive effect of this was that it positioned AOC in various groups. As seen in table 4.1, first-person plural pronouns were used to refer to AOC and her campaign team, AOC and similar candidates, AOC and Latinx people, AOC and Democrats, AOC and the citizens of NY-14, and AOC and “everyone”. The following example shows how AOC used plural pronouns to align herself with the group “Democrats willing to take on the billionaire class”.

Figure 4.3: Example showing the strategy of collective alignment (3)



Figure 4.3 shows one of AOC’s retweets. After Senator Elizabeth Warren said in an interview that “not enough democrats in power are willing to take on the billionaire class” AOC replied through retweeting a tweet with a link to the article. By responding to Warren’s criticism of

the Democrats and pointing out that she is different, AOC used Warren’s statement to promote her own campaign. AOC uses the pronoun ‘us’ to position herself in the group “Democrats who are willing to take on the billionaire class”. In figure 4.1 AOC used her campaign name, Ocasio2018, instead of saying ‘I’, and claims that her campaign has “captured national attention”. It appears that AOC uses Ocasio2018 when the statement she is making is something that shows her in a positive light. However, she then says “my existence”, using the first-person singular possessive pronoun. Conversely, she uses singular pronouns for self-reference when she is not the agent of the clause. This indicates that AOC uses first-person plural pronouns to realise a strategy of collective alignment. In addition, the use of Ocasio2018 instead of ‘I’ combined with the use of the singular possessive pronoun ‘my’ suggests that using Ocasio2018 as a way to refer to the campaign is a linguistic device used to realise the strategy of collective alignment.

Figure 4.2 also illustrates how AOC uses plural pronouns as a way to realise the strategy of collective alignment.

Figure 4.4: Example showing the strategy of collective alignment (4)



In figure 4.4, AOC has retweeted a tweet from the Twitter account @MoveOn. The picture in the original tweet shows AOC. The text in the picture reads: “MoveOn members in New York’s 14th Congressional District have voted to endorse Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez for the U.S. House of Representatives”. The author of the original tweet has chosen to use AOC’s full name twice in the text of the picture. However, in the text of the original tweet they have mentioned AOC’s Twitter account, @Ocasio2018, by using the @-symbol. In AOC’s own retweet, she writes “Holy smokes- we just got endorsed by @MoveOn!”. AOC chooses to use the inclusive plural pronoun ‘we’ in her retweet of the endorsement. The contrast between the picture of AOC combined with the use of her full name in the original tweet and AOC’s use of ‘we’ in her tweet, suggests that the use of ‘we’ in this instance is a discursive mean used to realise the solidarity strategy of collective alignment.

This section has focused on the use of plural pronouns as a discursive mean to realise a strategy of collective alignment. The following section focuses on the use of singular pronouns in order to realise the solidarity strategy of expressing solidarity with minority groups.

4.1.2 Pronoun use related to expressing solidarity

While AOC frequently used plural pronouns when she discussed her campaign, she often used first-person singular pronouns in tweets where she talked about national issues or policies, such as immigration. This section shows how AOC also used singular pronouns in order to realise the solidarity strategy of expressing solidarity with minority groups. Throughout her campaign AOC frequently tweeted about immigration and the treatment of immigrants. In these instances, AOC made use of blocks of pronouns, where the same pronoun was used three or more times in the same syntactical function in successive sentences (Wilson 1990: 63). This strategy was also reflected in the frequently used hashtag “#AbolishICE”. The use of this hashtag and the frequency of tweets related to immigration was interpreted as being part of a solidarity strategy because of the diverse population of the district AOC was running in. Thus, portraying herself as a candidate who is pro-immigration and pro-immigrant rights, would likely contribute to creating a sense of solidarity with her Twitter audience and potential voters.

In figure 4.5 AOC has used a block of the pronoun ‘I’. The repetition of the pronominal form seems to emphasise the degree to which AOC finds this issue to be

important. In the three first sentences, which has the first-person singular pronoun 'I' in the subject position, AOC also uses the active voice. The combination of the repetition of the pronominal form and the active voice communicates a willingness to get involved in issues that one finds important. The use of such a block gives the impression that AOC is expressing a high level of personal involvement and commitment. Moreover, the use of a block of pronouns with the first-person singular in the subject position combined with the active voice gives the impression of AOC as someone who "gets things done". This impression is further enhanced by the last sentence of the tweet: "This is a crisis and cannot wait". Similar usage of block pronouns is seen in figure 4.6.

Figure 4.5: Example of solidarity strategy (1)

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez @AOC · 20. jun. 2018

I absolutely refuse to stand by and do nothing as infants are ripped away & thrown in cages.

I will be flying to an ICE detention center on the border this weekend.

I have full trust in our supporters to carry the campaign torch for 24-48h.

This is a crisis and cannot wait.

Shaun King @shaunking · 20. jun. 2018

This is Rachel Maddow upon getting the breaking news that Trump has established detention centers for babies who've been forcefully taken from their parents.

FULL STORY: apnews.com/dc0c9a5134d148...

[Vis denne tråden](#)

Figure 4.6: Example of solidarity strategy (2)



Only a few days prior to the primary election, AOC left New York and travelled to one of the immigrant detention-centres by the US-Mexico border. In figure 4.6 AOC has tweeted a video from one of the detention centres. The video shows a group of people standing in front of a fence. One of the people in front of the fence is AOC. In the text of the tweet, AOC uses the active voice and singular pronouns, and writes that she told the border officers “exactly what they are responsible for”. In this phrase she uses the word “are” and by doing that she presents her statement as undeniable fact. She also states that she addressed them by their names, when doing so, and this indicates that she holds them personally responsible for the immigration centres. In the phrase “I spoke, I saw, we can dismantle this”, AOC uses the singular pronoun ‘I’ twice in a row and then switches to the first-person plural ‘we’. The use of the pronoun ‘we’ in the last phrase conveys the message that even though she previously stated that the border officers were responsible, she also holds the general population responsible. The discursive effect of the switch to the first-person plural is that it signals that this is a collective

responsibility (see Bramley 2001: 92). In addition to the use of first-person singular pronouns and the use of ‘we’ in the last sentence, AOC has also made use of the hashtag “#AbolishICE, which is used in an almost slogan-like manner. This is interpreted as a solidarity strategy because the combination of the singular pronouns and the active voice, which together express a high level of personal commitment to the cause, expresses solidarity with minorities.

Figure 4.7 illustrates another way in which pronouns are used to show solidarity and to invoke a sense of collective responsibility.

Figure 4.7: Example of solidarity strategy (3)



In figure 4.7 AOC has tweeted a video of a televised debate between herself and Crowley. In the video, AOC confronts Crowley about his statements on ICE and how he defends his decision to not take a stance to abolish it. AOC argues that is a moral issue, and not just a

political question. In her comment on the video, AOC uses the first-person plural pronoun ‘we’. In this context ‘we’ seems to refer to what Bramley (2001) refers to as an institutional identity, which is when a politician, or in this case a candidate, speaks on behalf of the people. The first-person plural pronoun is used in combination with the word “must”. The modal verb “MUST” is written in capital letters, which emphasises how important AOC considers this issue to be and expresses a sense of urgency. As was noted in Coltman-Patel (2018: 13), modal verbs used in combination with first-person plural pronouns can be utilised both in order to express shared ideologies and in order to invite the audience to adopt these ideologies. Here this practice is used for the purpose of emphasising AOC’s high level of commitment to the cause, as well as to invite the audience to share this commitment.

This section has focused on the discursive practices of tweets related to immigration. In these tweets, AOC uses first-person plural pronouns to invoke a sense of collective responsibility. In addition, she makes use of blocks of singular pronouns, which express a high level of personal commitment to the issue. Furthermore, the first-person plural pronoun ‘we’ is used in combination with the modal verb ‘must’, which invites the audience to adopt the same view on the matter as the one AOC communicates.

This section has focused on the use of pronouns to realise the solidarity strategy of showing solidarity with minority groups. This is interpreted as a solidarity strategy because the district AOC was running in has a population with many immigrants and people who come from an immigrant background. The following section focuses on the use of endorsements as a solidarity strategy. This includes the discursive practice of using endorsements from other people in order to promote her own campaign as well as the discursive practice of tweeting her own endorsements of and support to candidates that are similar to herself in order to show solidarity with them.

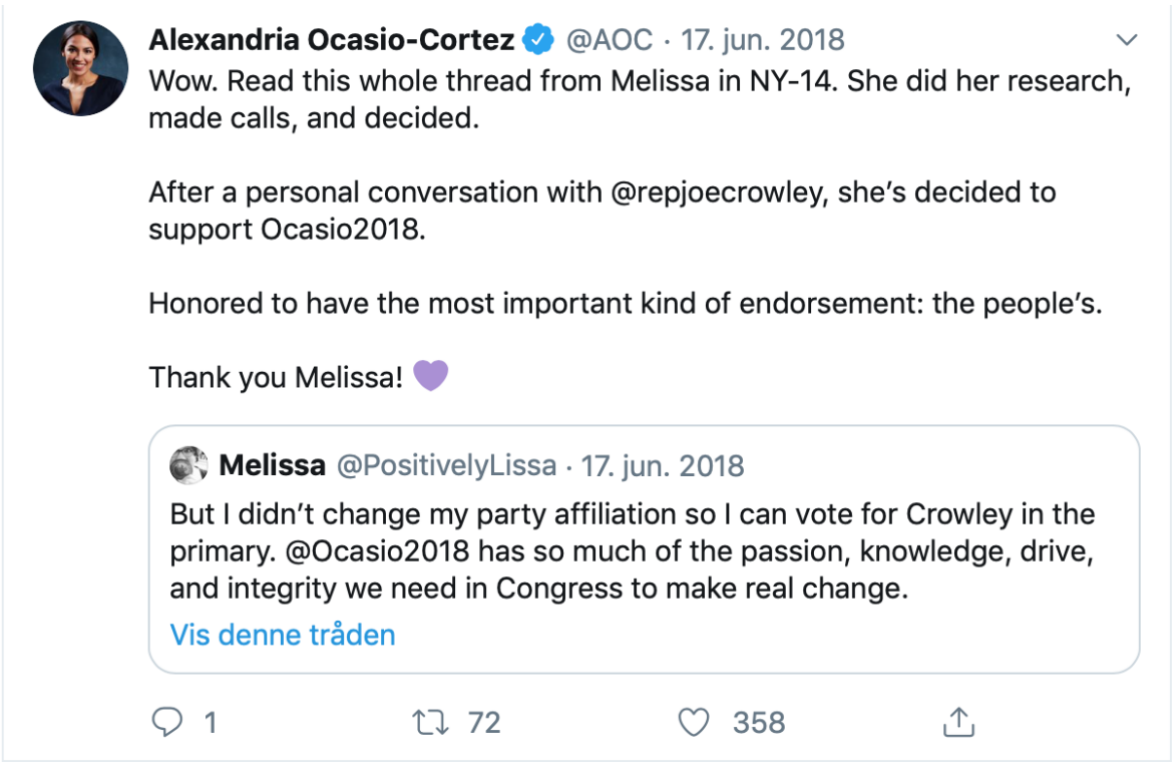
4.1.3 Endorsements used as a solidarity strategy

A commonly used solidarity strategy was AOC’s tweets about endorsements from citizens, which she claimed were her “most cherished endorsements” (see figure 4.9). Retweeting endorsements from other Twitter users was here interpreted as a solidarity strategy because the effect of this discursive practice was that it positioned AOC as a part of the community of the district in which she was running for Congress. Another aspect of AOC’s tweets which appears to be a solidarity strategy was the way she in some tweets showed that she knows the district she was running in well. Again, this was interpreted as a discursive mean used to

express solidarity as the effect of this was that AOC positioned herself as a part of the community in NY-14. Furthermore, AOC posted videos on Twitter which showed ordinary citizens of NY-14 who endorsed AOC. This was interpreted as a solidarity strategy because it presented the relationship between AOC and her constituents as symmetrical.

AOC’s use of endorsements, both her endorsements of other candidates and other’s endorsements of her campaign, conveys a strategy of solidarity. This section will include the analysis of the tweets where AOC responds to endorsements from citizens, supports other candidates that are similar to herself, as well as tweets where AOC replies to others’ endorsements of her campaign. In these tweets the analysis showed that AOC used speech acts of solidarity (i.e., thanking and congratulating) (Kampf 2016: 51).

Figure 4.8: Example of solidarity strategy (4)



In the promotion of her campaign, AOC responded to tweets from citizens of NY-14. In figure 4.8 AOC has retweeted Twitter user @PositivelyLissa and responded to her tweet. AOC states that she is honoured to have the most important kind of endorsement “the people’s”. In her response, AOC refers to herself by using Ocasio2018. AOC thanks the Twitter user, and stresses that the most important endorsements are those from “the people”. According to Kampf (2016: 51) thanking someone can be a way of expressing political

agreement and support for someone’s decision. Here, AOC thanks @PositivelyLissa and thus expresses her agreement with her decision to support AOC’s candidacy.

In addition to retweeting and responding to tweets in which people showed support for AOC’s campaign, AOC also tweeted endorsement videos from citizens of NY-14. This can be seen in figure 4.9 and 4.10.

Figure 4.9: Example of solidarity strategy (5)



Figure 4.9 and figure 4.10 both show tweets where AOC has posted a video of a citizen from NY-14. In the videos, the citizens explain why they support AOC in her campaign against Crowley. The citizen in the first video says that she supports AOC because she (the citizen) “really appreciates what she believes and what she is fighting for”. She also states that she “appreciates the position she has on Puerto Rico” and “the solidarity she has with the people

who are American and are voiceless”. She ends her endorsement with saying that she “will be voting for Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez”.

Figure 4.10: Example of solidarity strategy (6)



The citizen in the second video says that people should vote for AOC because she “is going to make sure your opinion gets heard”. In figure 4.9, AOC states that her “most cherished” endorsements are those from citizens of NY-14. In figure 4.10, AOC uses the statements of the citizen in the video to point out that she knows a lot about schools in Queens, even though she is from the Bronx herself. By making this statement AOC is also able to highlight the fact that she is from the Bronx, which is important not only because she frequently criticised Crowley for absentee leadership and for not being a native of the district he represented, but also because positioning herself as a part of the community expresses solidarity.

The use of endorsements from citizens of the district supports AOC’s claims that she is a candidate who will fight for the many and not the few, as the emphasis on these endorsements expresses concern with the lives of everyday citizens of the district. This

impression is further supported by AOC's emphasis on how these endorsements are her "most cherished endorsements". Letting other people promote her campaign rather stating why people should vote for her herself can also be seen as a way to seem humble. This further contributes to positioning AOC as a part of the community of the district she is running in. The tweeting of endorsements from citizens and the emphasis placed on these endorsements discursively bridges the gap between the citizens and the candidate, as it presents the relationship between AOC and the voters as symmetrical (see Johnstone 2018: 145).

AOC also used her own endorsements of candidates with whom she shared similarities as a way to express solidarity. Figure 4.11 is an example of this.

Figure 4.11: Example of solidarity strategy (7)



Figure 4.11 shows a tweet in which AOC has retweeted and to responded Cynthia Nixon's endorsement of AOC's candidacy. In her response to the original tweet, AOC reciprocates Nixon's endorsement of herself. Cynthia Nixon ran against Governor Andrew Cuomo. Nixon shared some similarities with AOC in that she too was a woman and a first-time candidate who ran against an established politician. In her tweet, AOC uses phrases which express solidarity. For instance, she uses the phrases "join forces" and "come together". She ends her tweet with the phrase "Here's to a New York for the Many". This phrase also expresses solidarity as it focuses on "the many" over "the few". Supporting other women who are

running for public office also expresses solidarity with women in general. Figure 4.9 shows another way in which AOC used Twitter in order to show solidarity with candidates with whom she had similarities.

Figure 4.12: Example of solidarity strategy (8)



Figure 4.12 shows a tweet in which AOC has thanked candidates for supporting her campaign. Her language expresses solidarity in various ways. Firstly, she uses the term “sisterhood”. In addition to this, AOC thanks these candidates for helping with her campaign. As stated by Kampf (2016: 51), thanking others can be seen as an act of solidarity in that it expresses support for their decision. Thus, expressing her support for their decision to support and assist her campaign can be seen as a solidarity strategy.

This section has focused on AOC’s discursive practice of tweeting about endorsements in order to show solidarity with similar candidates and potential voters. The analysis shows that AOC used endorsements from citizens as a way to bridge the gap between politicians and constituents, as these endorsement videos (figure 4.9 and 4.10) presents the relationship between AOC and the voters as symmetrical. The discursive effects of using endorsements from citizens is that it gives the impression that AOC is a candidate who not only cares about the citizens of the district, but also their opinions. The previous section has focused on the discursive practices which conveyed a strategy of solidarity. The following section focuses on the use of indirectness.

4.2 Indirectness strategies

This section discusses the various discursive practices which together conveyed a strategy of indirectness. The discursive practice of indirectness was found in many of AOC's tweets, especially in ones where she criticises her opponent Joe Crowley or promotes her candidacy. When indirectness was used as a strategy to criticise Crowley, this effect was commonly achieved through using other people's words either in the form of retweets or tweeting with links to articles where Crowley was criticised by other people and adding a response or comment to this criticism. In these instances, the tone of the article or retweeted content was often harsher than that of AOC's own words. Furthermore, in the retweeted content, the criticism was often more direct and explicit. Using the words of other people, either by quoting someone or by referring to idioms or sayings, is one of the ways in which indirectness can be expressed (Obeng 1997: 53). In addition, omission and invited inferences were commonly used in realising the discursive strategy of indirectness. When indirectness was used as a strategy to promote AOC's campaign, it was often achieved through retweeting endorsements from other people and organisations, as well as through the use of pronouns as a distancing mechanism. The indirectness strategies AOC employed in her criticism against Crowley will be presented in sub-section 4.2.1, while the indirectness strategies she employed in the promotion of her campaign will be presented in sub-section 4.2.2.

4.2.1 Indirectness strategies used to criticise an opponent

AOC employed strategies of indirectness in her tweets when criticising her opponent Joe Crowley. Figure 4.13 shows how AOC indirectly criticised Crowley through omission, using a known saying, and through retweeting the content of other Twitter users.

Figure 4.13: Example of indirectness strategy used to criticise an opponent (1)



In figure 4.13 AOC has retweeted Twitter user @sludge. The original tweet is a list of some of the donors to Crowley’s campaign. In her own tweet, AOC writes that an “enormous amount of Republican financing” is going towards supporting Crowley. She then quotes her grandmother in Spanish. The Spanish quote translates to “Tell me who your friends are ...” Although the last part of the saying is omitted, this likely refers to the saying “Tell me who your friends are, and I’ll tell you who you are.” Through the use of this saying, AOC implies that if Crowley has Republican donors, he might also have Republican views or might be inclined to support Republican interests in political questions. This is interpreted as criticism because Crowley himself is a Democrat. Figure 4.13 shows how AOC’s use of indirectness is multi-layered. Firstly, it is indirect in that it is a retweet, meaning that AOC has, in part, let the retweeted Twitter user’s words speak for her. Secondly, it is indirect in that she is quoting her grandmother, thus “hiding behind” her grandmother’s words. Thirdly, it is indirect because AOC’s criticism is expressed through the use of an analogy, rather than it being expressed explicitly. Lastly, the second part of the saying is omitted, which makes the accusation that Crowley has ties to the Republican Party implicit. As AOC is quoting not only her grandmother but also makes use of a common expression, the criticism is indirect. Thus, the

strategy of indirectness is realised through omission, invited inference and quoting. In figure 4.14, AOC employed a similar strategy.

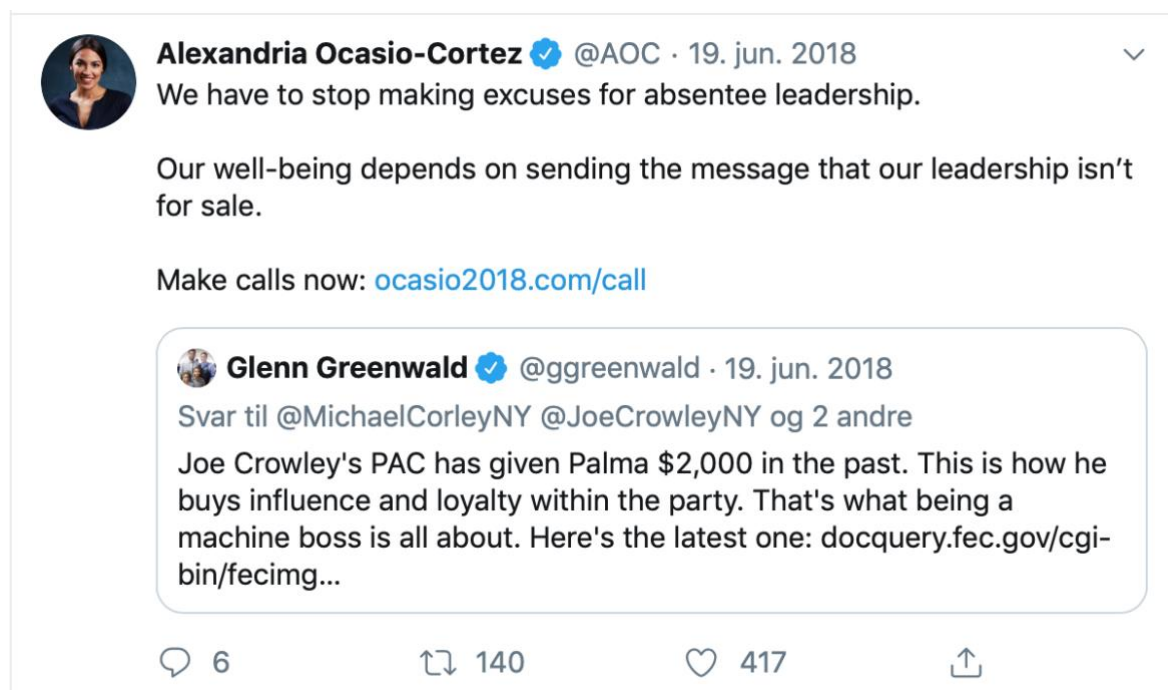
Figure 4.14: Example of indirectness strategy used to criticise an opponent (2)



In figure 4.14, AOC writes that Blackstone is Crowley’s second largest “all-time career donor,” which implies that Crowley is not only being sponsored by these corporations in this campaign, but his whole career is in fact sponsored by them. AOC also claims this particular sponsor profits from immigrant detention centres, a cause to which AOC gave much attention in her campaign. At the time, this issue was frequently in the news, which means that AOC used current events to direct criticism against Crowley. AOC then states that this corporation also funded the Trump campaign, and that Crowley was the “guest of honour” at a Republican fundraiser held by donors to Trump’s campaign. During the time leading up to the election, Crowley had frequently criticised Trump on his own Twitter account. Being affiliated with Trump’s donors was therefore likely disadvantageous for Crowley and his campaign. Furthermore, the explicit claim that Crowley is affiliated with Trump’s donors, makes the

implication that he can be affiliated with Trump himself. In addition, calling Crowley the “guest of honour” at a GOP fundraiser implies that Republicans like Crowley who is a Democrat. This gives the impression that AOC is communicating that Crowley is not running his campaign for the benefit of the citizens of NY-14. AOC ‘s claim that Crowley receives funding from Republican donors also implies that Crowley can be “bought”. To sum up, the tweet shown in figure 4.14 uses both implications and quoting to express indirectness. In addition to this, AOC has added a link to an article, which gives the impression that the article supports her claim. The implication that Crowley’s opinions can be bought is further supported in the tweet in figure 4.15.

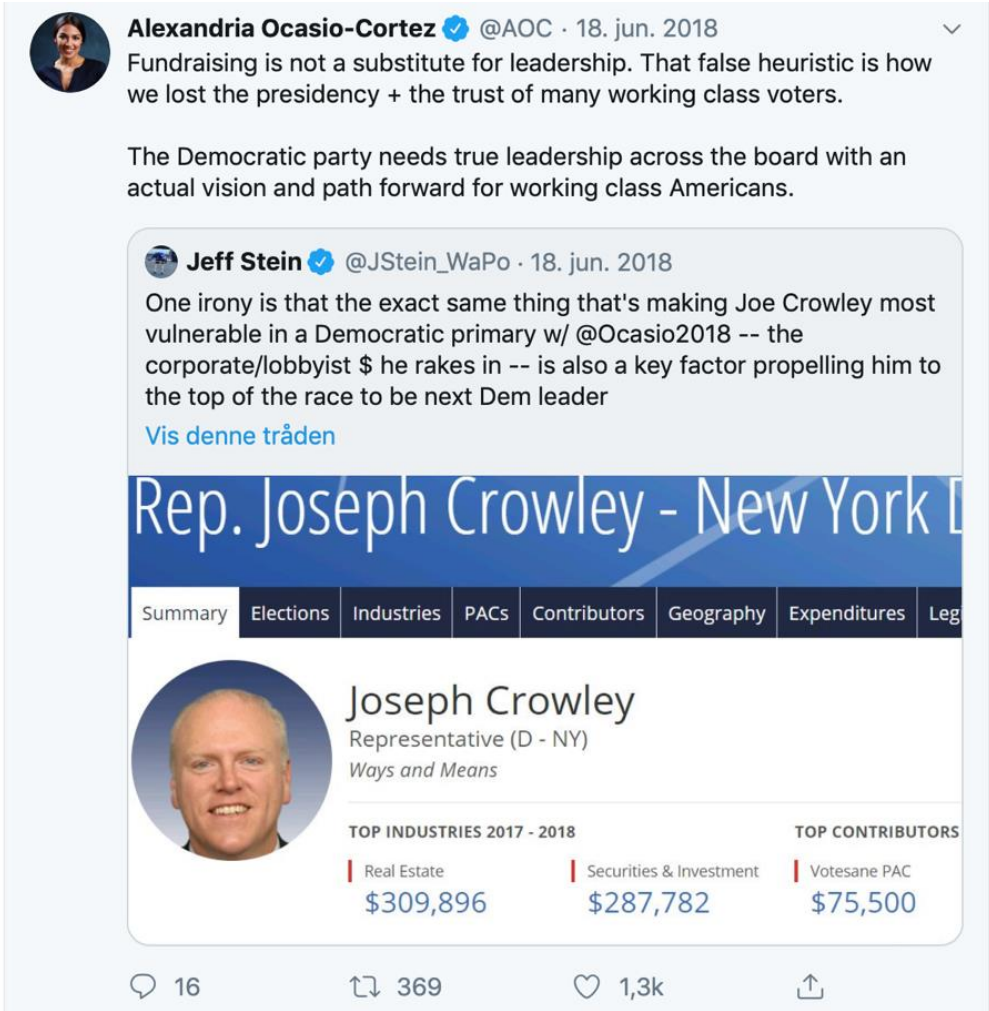
Figure 4.15: Example of indirectness strategy used to criticise an opponent (3)



In figure 4.15, AOC has retweeted and responded to a tweet in which Twitter user @ggreenwald criticised Crowley for his funding. The phrase “We have to stop making excuses for absentee leadership” presupposes that people have made and/ or are making excuses for Crowley’s absentee leadership. The same can be said for the phrase “Our well-being depends on sending the message that our leadership isn’t for sale”, which presupposes that other people think or have thought that their leadership *is* for sale. Furthermore, because the retweeted content mentions Crowley, it implies that Crowley has bought his leadership role. In this instance, AOC has not even mentioned Crowley’s name herself. Without the

retweeted content it would have been difficult to infer that AOC is directing this criticism towards Crowley. By neglecting to mention Crowley herself AOC is able to present her criticism of him in such a way that it gives the impression that she is simply sharing her opinions on absentee leadership and bought political influence. Thus, this tweet makes use of the linguistic devices of omission and presupposition in order to realise a strategy of indirectness. Lastly, this tweet is also an example of how AOC uses other people’s criticism of her opponent as a way to promote herself. In this instance she has responded to the tweet, added her own criticism, and encouraged people to make campaign calls for her campaign and added a link to her campaign website.

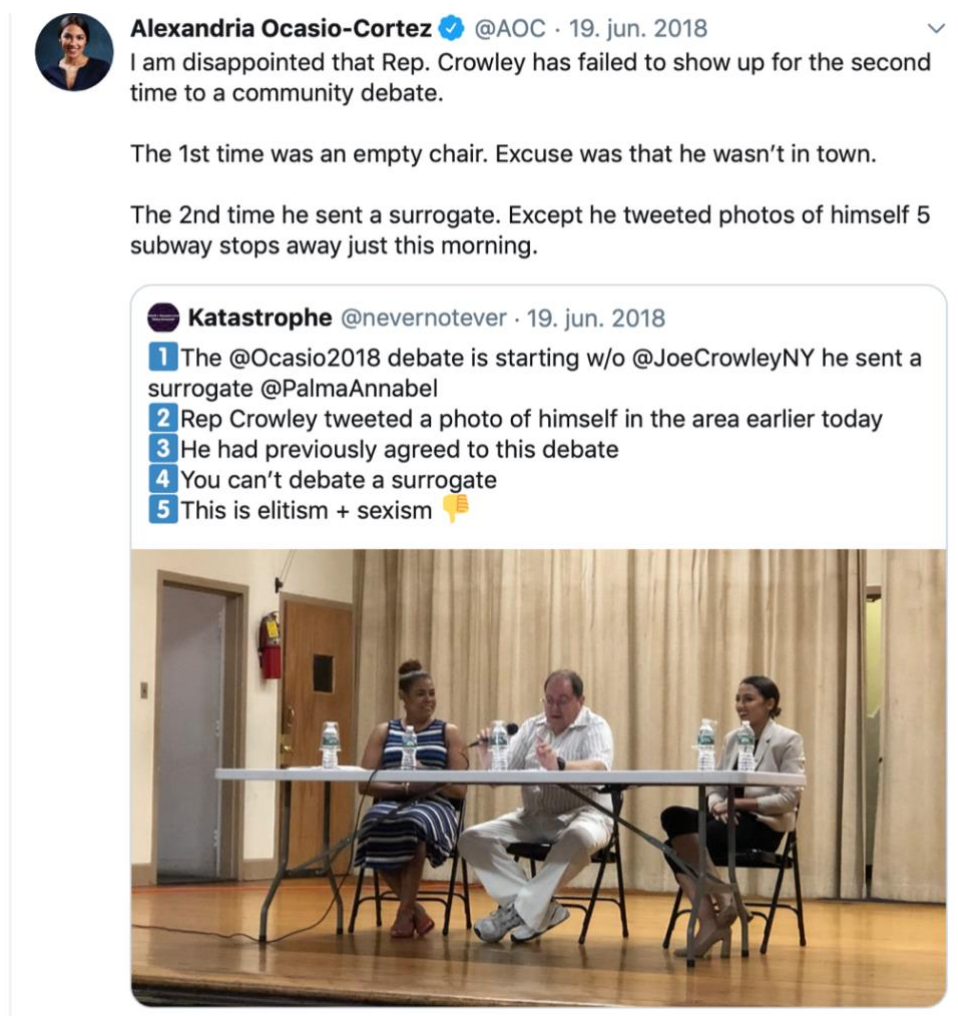
Figure 4.16: Example of indirectness strategy used to criticise an opponent (4)



In figure 4.16, AOC has retweeted another Twitter user’s criticism of Crowley. In her response to the original tweet, AOC writes that “The Democratic party needs true leadership

across the board with an actual vision and path forward for working class Americans”. In making this statement AOC presupposes that the Democratic party does not have “true leadership” or “an actual vision” and a “path forward”. As in figure 4.15, AOC does not mention Crowley at all in her response to the original tweets. However, the original tweet does mention Crowley’s name and also contains a picture of him. Thus, she gives the impression that she is simply stating an opinion. It is only from the retweeted content that the reader is able to infer that this criticism is directed at/ applies to Crowley.

Figure 4.17: Example of indirectness strategy used to criticise an opponent (5)



After Crowley did not show up to a community debate, AOC posted three retweets in which she criticised Crowley for this. Figure 4.17 shows one of these retweets. Here, AOC states that this is the second time Crowley has neglected to show up to a debate. AOC mentions the first time this happened and says that “The 1st time was an empty chair”. She then states that

the “Excuse was that he wasn’t in town”. AOC then writes that Crowley sent a surrogate the second time. She finishes the tweet with the phrase “Except he tweeted photos of himself 5 subway stops away just this morning”. By listing these two incidents and pointing out that Crowley was nearby, five subway stops away, the second time AOC implies that Crowley might not have been far away the first time either. This implication is further supported by the use of the word ‘excuse’ in the first sentence, which communicates that AOC is not of the impression that Crowley had a legitimate reason for not showing up to the debate.

With the phrase “Except he tweeted photos of himself 5 subway stops away this morning”, AOC shows that clearly Crowley could be in New York the morning after the debate, this could be an indirect way of saying that he could also have been in New York the evening before and that maybe it is not the logistics of travelling to New York that led him to not show up to debate with AOC. AOC uses “5 subway stops” as a measurement, which shows that AOC knows the district well. Also, it shows that Crowley could easily have showed up to the debate.

Figure 4.18: Example of indirectness strategy used to criticise an opponent (6)



Figure 4.18 shows the second tweet in which AOC criticised Crowley for not showing up to a debate. In figure 4.18 AOC does not mention Annabel Palma, the woman in the debate, by name. This omission gives the impression that her name is irrelevant, and that it does not matter who turned up to the debate, it matters that Crowley did not. Instead of using the name of the woman, AOC refers to her as the “5th worst ranked former councilmember”. Referring to the woman in this way indicates that not only did Crowley not see it as necessary to come to the debate himself, but he also might not have thought that it mattered very much who he sent. This could imply that AOC is of the impression that Crowley does not see her as a real challenge. Furthermore, the use of the conjunction ‘while’, in the phrase “while he posted photos nearby” implies that Crowley was not only in the geographic vicinity, but that he was posting photos nearby simultaneously as the debate was taking place. This is what Wilson (1990) refers to as an invited inference. AOC uses this implication to sow seeds of doubt by inviting the reader to make the inference that Crowley was nearby as the debate took place. With this strategy, AOC attempts to make it obvious that Crowley could have participated in the debate. AOC also used her criticism of Crowley to encourage people to volunteer for her own campaign. The last line of the tweet encourages people to engage in making a change and includes a link to Ocasio2018’s website.

In her criticism of Crowley, AOC also used inclusive plural pronouns to position herself in the same group as the citizens of NY-14. In figure 4.18, AOC again criticised Crowley for not showing up to the community debate and stated that “Our community deserves so much better than this”. In making this claim and in using the pronoun ‘our’ she makes it seem as if she is not criticising Crowley because his disadvantages in the election will work to her advantage, but because she cares about the community, which she is also a part of. Lastly, in stating that the community deserves better than “this” instead of “better than him” she also gives the impression that the criticism is not personal, because “this” seems to refer to Crowley’s behaviour and not Crowley himself.

Figure 4.19: Example of indirectness strategy used to criticise an opponent (7)



Figure 4.19 shows the third tweet in which AOC criticised Crowley for not participating in the community debate. Again, AOC refers to Crowley's surrogate, however she still does not use her name. In figure 4.18, she was "worst ranked fmr councilwoman" now she is referred to as a "woman with slight resemblance to me". Thus, the woman is almost made to not be a person of her own, both AOC not calling her by her name and by her being "sent" by Crowley. Again, this gives the impression that AOC sees Crowley's absence as a sign of disrespect toward AOC and the woman who debated in his place.

In summary, these three tweets, which all feature the same picture, make use of various discursive means to realise a strategy of indirectness. These discursive means are omission, invited inferences, and the use of other people's criticism. As with the other examples, the retweeted content criticises Crowley in a harsher, more explicit and more direct manner than AOC does in her own content. Consider, for example, the contrast between AOC's statement, in figure 4.19, that Crowley sent "a woman with slight resemblance to me

as his official surrogate to last's night debate" and the accusation made by the retweeted Twitter user that Crowley is "pitting one woman of Latin descent against another".

This section has focused on the use of indirectness strategies which AOC employed in her criticism of her opponent, and the discursive means used to realise these strategies. The following section focuses on the indirectness strategies AOC employed in the promotion of her campaign and the discursive means used to realise these strategies.

4.2.2 Indirectness strategies used to promote her own campaign

The most prominent indirectness strategies which AOC employed in the promotion of her campaign was the use of pronouns as a discursive means to distance herself from the topic at hand and the retweeting of endorsements from other candidates, organisations, citizens of NY-14, and other elected representatives. Through these discursive practices AOC was able to promote her campaign and ask for donations to and volunteers for the campaign in an indirect manner. Figure 4.20 shows an example of the discursive practice of retweeting others' endorsements in order to promote the campaign.

Figure 4.20: Example of indirectness strategy used to promote campaign (1)



Figure 4.20 is a retweet. AOC has tweeted about an endorsement from the organisation Democracy for America (DFA). AOC introduces the endorsement with the word “BREAKING,” which is written in capital letters. The discursive effect of this is that the following information is perceived to be of significant importance. Furthermore, it presents the news that follows the word as breaking news. In her tweet, AOC thanks DFA for their “bold and ambitious support.” AOC promotes herself through the retweeting of the endorsement. She says little of her campaign herself, and merely thanks Democracy for America for their endorsements. She says nothing about herself as a candidate. Instead, she focuses on the “movement” she is a part of. AOC describes the movement as “unapologetic” and “for working class Americans”. In addition, she uses the plural possessive pronoun ‘our’. The discursive effect of this is that she deflects the focus away from herself as a single candidate. She also repeats some of the words from the endorsement, for example DFA uses the word “bold” twice in their endorsement, and AOC in turn calls their endorsement of her “bold and ambitious”.

Pronouns can also be used to function as determiners. This can be exemplified by figure 4.18 where AOC has referred to NY-14 as “our community” in tweet in which she directed criticism towards Crowley. AOC also made a similar choice in figure 4.20, where she referred to her campaign as “our movement”. However, in figure 4.21 she appears to have done the opposite.

Figure 4.21: Example of indirectness strategy used to promote campaign (2)



In figure 4.21 AOC uses what Wilson (1990) refers to as a distancing mechanism. AOC’s tweet is a retweet in which she thanks the original tweeter who praised AOC and her campaign. The original tweeter wrote: “God I love when competent badass millennials run campaigns and for office”. The Twitter user then claimed that people who were not supporting AOC should be and referred to a thread (of tweets), which she claimed showed why she was “obsessed” with AOC/ her campaign. In many other tweets AOC refers to her campaign as “our campaign”, however, in this case she has written “this campaign”. The original tweeter’s statements include some very positive remarks about AOC herself and there is a stark contrast between these remarks and the way AOC typically promotes herself and her campaign. Thus, using ‘this’ instead of ‘our’ or ‘my’ when talking about her campaign in this tweet can be seen a distancing mechanism.

AOC also used pronouns as a distancing mechanism when asking for volunteers and donations for her campaign. The three following examples show how AOC balances the line

between placing the focus on herself and her campaign and on her campaign and her campaign team. Through the careful and strategic use of pronouns she is able to make explicit requests for people’s help, either as volunteers or in the form of donations, without appearing as if she is asking for something for herself. In figure 4.22 AOC does the opposite of what she does in figure 4.23. In figure 4.23 she starts the tweet with plural pronouns and then uses the first-person singular when she makes the request, while in figure 4.22 she starts by using singular pronouns and then switches to plural pronouns when she makes the explicit request. Even though AOC uses the singular pronoun ‘I’ in figure 4.22 when she makes the request, the use of the plural pronouns in the rest of the tweet gives the impression that she is asking on behalf of the team. In figure 4.24, with the exception of the first line, AOC uses only plural pronouns. This example also differs from the other two because she is asking for donations and not for volunteers. While the request itself is made more personal in figure 4.22 through the use of the singular pronoun ‘I’, the request in figure 4.24 is made less personal by the use of the phrase “I’m told...” in the introduction of the tweet.

Figure 4.22: Example of indirectness strategy used to promote campaign (3)



In figure 4.22, AOC retweeted and responded to a tweet that said: “You have a nation of progressives that want to see you and your constituents win”. In her response, AOC uses first-person singular pronouns, but not in subject position. AOC uses first-person singular

pronouns, but she switches to plural pronouns when talking about the campaign. The author of the original tweet has distinguished between AOC and her campaign team in that they write “you and your constituents”. AOC, on the other hand, does not do this. She thanks the writer of the tweet, and in doing so refers to herself by using the pronoun ‘me’, but then she switches to ‘we’, which here refers to herself and her campaign team. AOC could have mirrored the language of the author of the original tweet and written “my constituents and I” or, less formally, “me and my constituents”, however, she has chosen to refer to herself and her team of campaigners as ‘we’. What is noteworthy about the different pronouns used in this tweet is how AOC switches from singular to plural pronouns when she goes from thanking the original tweeter for their support to asking for people’s help and encouraging them to volunteer for the campaign. The discursive effect of this is that AOC’s request for volunteers to her campaign seems politer, because the use of pronouns helps present the request in such a way that it does not seem as if she is asking for something for herself, but rather as if she is asking for something on behalf of her campaign team.

Figure 4.23 shows another example of how AOC switches between plural and singular pronouns when asking for volunteers for her campaign.

Figure 4.23: Example of indirectness strategy used to promote campaign (4)



In figure 4.23 AOC states that “Ocasio2018 has caught fire”. AOC has used a fire emoji as a substitute for the word “fire”. As in figure 4.22, she uses Ocasio2018 when making a positive statement about her campaign. However, she also writes that her campaign is “still being outspent 10-1” and needs volunteers. She uses first-person plural pronouns when referring to her campaign and states that “we can win this”. In the final line of the tweet, she writes “If you have ANY time this week, I am asking you to give it”, finally referring to herself by using first-person singular pronouns. This gives the impression that the campaign needs donations, and that she is only a “messenger”. The choices outlined above indicates that AOC is attempting to shift the focus from away from herself as an individual. This is seen as an indirect way of asking for volunteers for her campaign. However, she does ask explicitly, since the sentence cited above is a direct request, and the effect of the change from plural to singular pronouns makes the request more personal. Thus, in tweet shown in figure 4.23, AOC makes use of an indirectness strategy which is realised through the discursive means of using plural pronouns as a way to distance herself from the topic at hand. However, the

request itself is communicated directly and is made more personal by the use of the first-person singular.

Figure 4.24: Example of indirectness strategy used to promote campaign (5)



In figure 4.24 AOC asks for donations for her campaign. The first line of the tweet reads: “I’m told we need one last major fundraising push for GOTV”. The acronym “GOTV” is short for “get out the vote”, which refers to the organised effort by campaigns to encourage people to vote in the upcoming election. The use of the passive voice avoids stating the source of this fundraising directive. The use of the passive voice in the phrase “I’m told...” prompts the question “by whom?”. It also gives the impression that she is not the one who is asking for donations and that she is only a messenger who is communicating what someone else has told her. She also uses the plural pronoun ‘we’ in the phrase “we need it now more than ever” and the discursive effect of this is that AOC deflects the attention away from herself and towards

her campaign team. To summarise, indirectness is realised here through the use of pronouns as a distancing mechanism and through the use of the passive voice.

In summary, AOC employed strategic use of pronouns in order to deflect attention away from herself when promoting her campaign and when asking for donations and volunteers for her campaign. Furthermore, the use of endorsements as a means to promote the campaign is in itself an indirectness strategy. Lastly, in one of the examples AOC also used the passive voice as a means to realise a discursive strategy of indirectness.

4.3 Other discursive practices

The focus of the present study has been on the use of solidarity strategies and indirectness strategies. Some other discursive practices were prevalent in the data but have not been the main focus of the present study. One of these is AOC's use of Spanish words and phrases. On the one hand, code-mixing could be seen as part of a solidarity strategy because it reflects the diversity of NY-14, which is one of the most diverse districts and which has a large immigrant population. The district's Hispanic and Latino population is 347 621 out of a total population 696 664 (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Thus, roughly half the population is Hispanic or Latino. However, the use of Spanish could also be alienating to people who are not part of the Hispanic population or who do not speak Spanish. Still, the use of Spanish could remind people of AOC's background, and they might subsequently see her as a more "immigrant friendly" or inclusive candidate. Thus, code-mixing could be seen as a solidarity strategy, even though some citizens might not speak Spanish. Furthermore, the use of code-mixing contributes to positioning AOC as a part of the community of the district. AOC's use of code-mixing is limited to certain words and phrases. These are often words and phrases that even those who do not speak Spanish are familiar with. The words mostly have to do with family relations, for example, in figure 4.13, AOC referred to her grandmother as "abuela", the Spanish word for grandmother. Although this is an interesting aspect of AOC's political discourse on Twitter this aspect was not studied further, due to limits of time and space.

The focus of this chapter has been on the analysis of the data. The next chapter summarises the results of the analysis and discusses them in light of the theory presented in chapter 2.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter the results of the analysis will be summarised and discussed in light of the theory presented in the second chapter. In addition, the research questions of the present study will be answered and discussed in relation to the proposed hypotheses. In addition, some limitations to this study will be discussed. Furthermore, some areas of further study will be suggested. Lastly, the contribution the thesis aims to provide is briefly discussed.

5.1 Discursive strategies used to promote candidacy

This section discusses the first research question (R1) of the present study. R1 asked: Which discursive strategies does AOC most frequently employ in her campaign? And which discursive means are used to realise these strategies? The present study found that the discursive strategies AOC most frequently employed in the promotion of her campaign were indirectness strategies and strategies related to solidarity. One of the discursive means related to the realisation of solidarity strategies was the use of plural pronouns. Plural pronouns were used to signal various group memberships, to invoke a sense of collective responsibility and to construct an image of a politician with a great degree of personal involvement and commitment. Furthermore, pronouns were also used as a distancing mechanism in order to deflect the attention away from AOC. Thus, pronouns were also strategically employed in the realisation of indirectness strategies, as well as in the realisation of strategies related to solidarity. Indirectness strategies were frequently employed in the criticism of AOC's opponent Joe Crowley, but AOC also employed indirectness strategies in the promotion of her campaign and when asking for donations to and volunteers for her campaign. In the data, 20 tweets in which the campaign was promoted contained indirectness strategies, while 15 of the tweets in which Crowley was criticised contained indirectness strategies. These findings are in accordance with hypothesis 1 (H1), which hypothesised that AOC would employ strategies of indirectness and solidarity in the promotion of her campaign. An overview of the discursive strategies AOC employed in her campaign, their use, and the discursive means through which the strategies are realised can be seen in table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Overview of strategies, their use, and the discursive means through which they are realised

Strategy:	Used to:	Discursive means used to realise this strategy:
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Indirectness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criticise an opponent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invited inferences • Distancing through the use of pronouns • Omission • Using known expressions/ sayings • Quoting others • Retweets of other Twitter users' criticism of Crowley
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for volunteers/ donations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distancing through the use of pronouns. • Use of the passive voice
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distancing through the use of pronouns. • Retweets of endorsements.
Collective alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position 'self' as a member of various groups (i.e. the electorate, Latin American citizens, progressive Democrats). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plural pronouns (inclusive)
Endorsements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express solidarity • Present the relationship between herself and the voters as symmetrical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retweets. • Positioning. • Speech acts of solidarity.
Expression of solidarity with minority groups through the strategic use of pronouns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show solidarity with immigrants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Block pronouns (singular). • Combination of active voice, modal verbs and singular pronouns. • Use of plural pronouns to invite the listener to adopt similar a view. • Use of plural pronouns to signal collective responsibility.
Engaging with the campaigns of similar candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show solidarity with other candidates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of plural pronouns in order to signal connection. • Speech acts of solidarity.

This section has focused on R1 and H1 and has summarised the results of the analysis. The following section focuses on the various solidarity strategies which AOC employed in her campaign and discusses R2 in relation to H2.

5.2 Solidarity strategies

The second research question (R2) aimed to examine whether AOC used language to create a sense of solidarity with her Twitter audience, and if so, which discursive means she utilised to achieve this. It was hypothesised in H2 that AOC would employ strategic use of pronouns and that she would use inclusive plural pronouns to position herself in the same group as her Twitter audience. In accordance with H2, the present study found that AOC often used plural pronouns with this effect. Furthermore, the analysis showed that AOC used plural pronouns to position herself as a part of the general American population, the Democratic Party and as a citizen of NY-14. In addition to the use of plural pronouns, AOC also used other discursive means to position herself as a part of various groups. These discursive means will be discussed in section 5.4, which discusses the combined effect of the strategies AOC employed in her Twitter campaign.

The analysis of the data for the present study showed that AOC used inclusive plural pronouns to create a sense of solidarity with her Twitter audience. In doing so, she positioned herself in the same group as her Twitter audience. Her opponent Joe Crowley, on the other hand, was frequently positioned as an outsider. Thus, AOC used pronouns to create a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’/ ‘him’, where AOC and her Twitter audience represented ‘us’ and Crowley represented ‘them’. Although AOC established an *us vs. them* distinction between AOC and her Twitter audience (‘us’) and Crowley (‘them’/ ‘him’), she also made similar distinctions between other groups. For example, AOC made a distinction between herself and other Democrats (see figure 4.1). Thus, the findings show that although pronouns can be used to include, they can also signify exclusion. For instance, pronouns can be used to create a division between ‘us’ and ‘them’. This is often achieved through positive self-representation and negative other representation (Van Dijk 2005: 67).

Furthermore, the analysis of AOC’s pronoun use showed that while AOC frequently referred to herself as a part of a ‘we’, Crowley was in many cases not a part of a ‘them’. Crowley, however, was often referred to with singular pronouns. In his analysis, Wilson (1990) found that “Kinnock [the leader of the Labour Party at the time of Wilson’s analysis]

frequently portrayed the disagreements between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party as being between himself and [Margaret] Thatcher”. This could be seen in the way he used I/she constructions when discussing the differences between the two political parties (p. 67). AOC employs a similar strategy in her campaign tweets, where she frequently refers to herself as part of a ‘we’, while Crowley is often referred to as ‘he’/ with singular pronouns. Thus, AOC represents herself and the district she is running in, while Crowley is portrayed as an outsider who represents only himself and not the citizens of the district.

As AOC represents the political left, one might assume that she would use inclusive plural pronouns, because the use of plural pronouns could seem more inclusive and the left-oriented politicians often state that they are “for the many, not for the few”. Wilson (1990) stated that the use of pronouns in political discourse can be linked with political ideology, and that one might expect left-oriented politicians to use more plural pronouns than other politicians. The findings of the present study suggest the expectation that left-wing politicians, such as AOC, is true. However, comparison with discourse analytic studies of politicians with opposing views are perhaps needed in order to be able to draw a conclusion as to whether or not politicians like AOC employ strategic use of plural pronouns to a larger extent than other politicians. Moreover, the expectation that candidates oriented on the left will use inclusive plural pronouns, does not necessarily mean that other politicians will use less inclusive plural pronouns.

The present study also found that AOC used plural pronouns to signal positive relations. For instance, AOC used plural pronouns to refer to herself and similar candidates. These candidates were often showed in a positive light. Furthermore, she used ‘we’ to refer to herself and the citizens of the United States. Similarly, Wilson (1990) found that Margaret Thatcher used first-person plural pronouns to signal positive relations. For instance, Thatcher frequently used ‘we’ to refer to Thatcher and NATO, Thatcher and the government, and Thatcher and the British people (Wilson 1990: 64).

In addition to using plural pronouns to signal positive relations, the analysis in this study also found that AOC used plural pronouns in order to present an issue as a collective issue. Similarly, Bramley (2001) showed that another way in which politicians used plural pronouns, was to co-implicate people and to signal collective responsibility. The present study found that AOC also used plural pronouns this way. This was particularly used when AOC tweeted about immigration and ICE. In these instances, AOC used the first-person plural to indicate collective responsibility (see figure 4.6).

The present study analysed the use of singular pronouns as well as the use of plural pronouns. On the use of singular pronouns in political discourse, Bramley (2001: 73) found that politicians used first-person singular pronouns when constructing an image of themselves as a ‘good politician’. The present study found that AOC also used first-person singular pronouns to construct an image of herself as a ‘good politician’. In the construction of herself as a ‘good politician’ AOC portrayed herself as a politician who accomplishes what she says she will accomplish. This was achieved through the use of a block of pronouns, which is when the same pronoun is used three or more times in the same syntactical function in successive sentences (Wilson 1990: 62). AOC particularly used block pronouns in combination with the use of the active voice. The discursive effect of this was that she gave the impression of being a politician with a great deal of personal commitment.

In addition to combining blocks of singular pronouns with the active voice, the present study found that AOC made use of modal verbs in combination with the first-person singular pronoun ‘I’. In a similar way, Coltman-Patel (2018: 24) found that Barack Obama used this combination of pronouns and verbs in order to construct an image of himself as a strong and powerful yet accessible leader. In AOC’s tweets this combination was used in tweets where she talked about issues related to immigration policies (see figures 4.5 and 4.6). Somewhat similarly, Wilson (1990) found that Thatcher often first-person singular pronouns in combination with mental-process verbs (i.e. “think”, “want”, and “wish”). Fetzer (2008) states that cognitive verbs can be used in order to invite the audience to adopt the same stance as the speaker. In the data for the present study, this effect was visible in the way AOC used a combination of the first-person plural pronoun ‘we’ and the modal verb ‘must’.

So far, the focus of this section has been on the use of plural pronouns and their role in realising solidarity strategies. The use of pronouns as a discursive mean to realise solidarity strategies was in accordance with H2, however, the present study also found that AOC used other discursive means than plural pronouns in order to express solidarity with various groups and people, which H2 did not predict. One the ways through which AOC expressed solidarity was through the use of speech acts of solidarity. For instance, AOC both thanked similar candidates for their support and congratulated them on their own success. Kampf (2016) stated that performing solidarity in language can be done through speech acts of solidarity. These speech acts are: to congratulate, to greet/ welcome, and to bless (Kampf 2016: 48). Thanking was also seen as a speech act which expresses solidarity. In the tweets in which AOC showed solidarity with candidates with whom she shared similarities the linguistic choices often expressed solidarity in multiple ways. Firstly, AOC used speech acts of

solidarity, such as thanking. Secondly, she used words and phrases which expressed solidarity. Some examples of this are “sisterhood”, “come together” and “join forces” (see figure 4.8 and 4.9). Along the same lines, Lewinstein (2019) found that AOC tweeted in support of other similar candidates in a way which showed solidarity with these candidates (p. 31-32).

Another solidarity strategy which AOC employed in her campaign was tweeting endorsements from organisations, other candidates, and citizens of the district. The use of endorsements from citizens was interpreted as a solidarity strategy because highlighting these specific endorsements gave an impression that AOC was a candidate who cared about the citizens and their lives and opinions. The discursive effect of this was that it positioned AOC as a part of the community of the district in which she was running. Furthermore, it contributed to presenting the relationship between AOC and the voters as symmetrical (see Johnstone 2018: 145). Positioning played a significant role in the realisation of solidarity strategies. Although positioning was largely achieved through the use of plural pronouns, positioning was also achieved through other discursive means. For instance, by mentioning details of local geography, AOC showed in some of her tweets that she was someone who knew the district she was running in well. One example of this can be seen in figure 4.12, where AOC used the phrase “5 subway stops away” as a measurement for distance. This phrase showed that AOC knew the district she was running in well, and it thus helped position her as a part of the community in the district.

Jaruseviciute (2019) found that AOC emphasised certain aspects of her identity in order to create common ground with her Twitter audience. Some aspects of AOC’s identity which Jaruseviciute found that AOC emphasised were her identity as a Puerto Rican American, her identity as a native of the Bronx, and her identity as a woman. The emphasis on certain aspects of AOC’s identities was also observable in the data for the current study. For instance, AOC used her identity as a native of the Bronx as part of a solidarity strategy. This strategy was realised through showing that she knew the district well and through emphasising that she was a native of the district she was running in. By contrast, AOC’s opponent Joe Crowley was positioned as an outsider and as someone who did not know the district for which he was the incumbent representative for well enough. For instance, AOC frequently criticised Crowley for not living in the district he was representing in Congress.

The current study also found that AOC used positioning and group memberships as a solidarity strategy. Previous studies on AOC’s Twitter discourse found that her image was “carefully crafted in a way that could make her appear approachable and kindle a sense of

familiarity” (Jaruseviciute 2019: 33). Jaruseviciute argues that the way in which AOC emphasised aspects of her identity could appeal not only to those who share aspects of her identity, but also to anyone who has experienced some form of societal oppression or exclusion (p. 34). Moreover, Jaruseviciute argued that AOC portrayed the various aspects of her identity as closely interlinked and did not foreground any particular aspect in favour of another, thus avoiding alienating others (ibid.). In the present study these aspects were visible in the discursive practice of code-mixing, which emphasised AOC’s identity as a Puerto Rican American. These aspects were also visible in the way that AOC supported other female candidates. Furthermore, AOC presented herself as a candidate who was different from other candidates.

The findings of this study showed that AOC used pronouns to position herself in various groups. These groups include Democrats, similar candidates, and her Twitter audience. Furthermore, the findings showed that AOC used pronouns in order to realise a strategy of positive self-representation and negative representation of others, where Crowley was positioned as ‘the other’. Similarly, Jaruseviciute’s study concluded that AOC used the strategy of creating an ‘us vs. them’ division to position herself in the same group as the voters and position long-established politicians in the role of ‘the other’ (p. 34). As mentioned, this study also found that AOC employed a strategy of collective alignment in which plural pronouns were used to discursively construct parallel connections between AOC and various other groups.

5.3 Indirectness strategies

R3 asked: Which discursive strategies does AOC employ when criticising her opponent Joe Crowley? H3 hypothesised that AOC employed strategies of indirectness when criticising her opponent Joe Crowley. According to Obeng (1997: 53), indirectness plays an important role in political discourse, especially in managing verbal conflict and confrontation. In accordance with H3, the present study found that AOC frequently employed strategies of indirectness when criticising her opponent Joe Crowley. One of the discursive means used to realise strategies of indirectness was invited inferences. In addition, strategies of indirectness were realised through the use of the retweet function and through omission. In multiple instances, AOC retweeted other Twitter user’s criticism of Crowley and added her own criticism but did not mention Crowley’s name herself. In these cases, the omission of Crowley’s name gave the impression that AOC was simply stating an opinion on a matter which was seemingly not

related to Crowley. However, through the content of the original tweets it was possible for the reader to infer that this criticism was directed at Crowley. Typically, the tone of the criticism in the retweeted content was much harsher than the tone of AOC's own words. Furthermore, AOC's use of indirectness was often multi-layered. Thus, multiple discursive practices which conveyed a strategy of indirectness were present within a single tweet.

Obeng (1997) found that one of the means through which indirectness strategies were realised in political discourse was circumlocution. Circumlocution refers to using more words than strictly necessary in order to say something without saying it explicitly. This was not found in AOC's tweets from her campaign. As Twitter has a limit of 280 characters per post, this might limit the potential for the use of this specific way to employ a strategy of indirectness.

In addition to employing strategies of indirectness when criticising her opponent, AOC also employed strategies of indirectness when asking for donations and volunteers for her campaign. In these instances, as illustrated by figures 4.22, 4.23 and 4.24, indirectness was achieved through the use of the passive voice and plural pronouns which directed the attention away from AOC and towards her campaign team. The present study also found that AOC typically used plural pronouns to deflect attention away from herself when responding to "praise" and when promoting her campaign and her candidacy. Along the same lines, Bramley (2001) found that 'we' was often used to deflect attention from the speaking politician. In Bramley's data, however, this was frequently done when the politician was responding to criticism, while the present study found AOC frequently used plural pronouns to deflect attention from herself when responding to positive feedback and endorsements.

Indirectness also plays a role in politeness. As stated by Johnson (2018) and Obeng (1997), being indirect when making requests is often motivated by politeness. According to Johnson (2018) being indirect about requests may seem politer than asking explicitly, because indirectness gives the addressee options for how to interpret an utterance (p. 79). In this way, AOC used a known politeness strategy when requesting donations and volunteers. In addition, the present study found that AOC used pronouns in order to express distance from a topic. Wilson (1990: 62) stated that pronouns could be used a distancing mechanism, and that self-reference by other means than first-person pronouns could be said to represent such a distancing mechanism. AOC used pronouns in order to distance herself from the topic at hand when asking for volunteers for and donations to her campaign. In addition to using pronouns as a distancing mechanism when asking for donations and volunteers, AOC also used

pronouns as a distancing mechanism when responding to praise and positive feedback from other Twitter users.

The present study also found that AOC promoted her campaign in an indirect manner, through retweeting others' endorsements of her campaign. Previous studies of AOC's campaign tweets have presented similar findings. Lewinstein (2019: 28) points out that AOC uses "two methods of explaining to voters why they should vote for her: retweeting and highlighting her endorsements and responding to individual tweets from constituents". Lewinstein does not analyse the ways in which AOC uses endorsements to promote her candidacy, however, the observation that AOC often promotes her candidacy through retweeting endorsements could suggest that AOC rarely promotes her candidacy in a direct manner. This is in line with Woods (2006: 7) who postulated that both advertisements and political campaigns might be better received, and thus more efficient, if they give the impression of simply sharing information, rather than being explicitly promotional.

The present study has found that throughout her campaign AOC frequently criticised her opponent Joe Crowley. Lewinstein (2019) found that AOC "campaigned on Twitter by demonstrating knowledge and experience of Bronx and Queens related issues, retweeting and highlighting her endorsements, and posting attack tweets about her opponent, incumbent Joe Crowley" (p. 25). Clark and Evans (2016: 344) stated that female candidates posted significantly more "attack-style" tweets than their male counterparts. The present study, however, found that AOC's criticism against Crowley was often masked through the use of various indirectness strategies, thus these tweets cannot aptly be labelled as "attack tweets". Lewinstein (2019: 27), however, argues that AOC criticises Crowley on Twitter by using a "humorous voice", however, this was not visible in the data for the present study.

5.4 The combined effects of these strategies

R4 aimed to find out what the combined effects of the discursive strategies that AOC employs in her Twitter campaign were. In H4 it was hypothesised that the various discursive strategies employed by AOC in her Twitter campaign collectively attempt to position AOC as a part of the community of NY-14. It was also hypothesised that these discursive strategies contribute to creating common ground with the electorate. The present study found that AOC used inclusive plural pronouns, which positioned her in the same group as the community of NY-14. The pronominal choices also reflect AOC's political stance and the message of her campaign. She argues that she wants to create "a New York for the many, not for the few,"

and therefore using plural pronouns and positioning herself in the same group as her Twitter audience seems to support this claim.

Tannen (1994: 19-52) states that power and solidarity are present in every relationship, while Johnstone (2018) states that solidarity has to do with symmetrical aspects of human relationships. Furthermore, Johnstone points out that “solidarity can be thought of as the counterpart of power” (p. 145). The present study found that AOC employed various discursive strategies related to solidarity. One of these strategies was the use of endorsement videos which showed regular citizens endorsements of AOC. It was mentioned earlier that the discursive effect of these endorsements was that it presented the relationship between AOC and the voters as symmetrical, because, through posting these endorsements, AOC emphasised the degree to which she found the opinions of these citizens to be important. Furthermore, the emphasis on these endorsements signalled that AOC had the same priorities and wanted to achieve the same goals as the citizens. This can be seen as a way to claim common ground with the voters.

In addition to discursive strategies of solidarity, the present study also found that AOC used various indirectness strategies in order to create an image of a humble personality. This was achieved through promoting her campaign through retweeting endorsements from other Twitter users. In responding to endorsements and positive feedback from other users of Twitter, AOC used pronouns as a distancing mechanism. In addition, she made use of speech acts of solidarity. While plural pronouns were used to construct collective identities and indicate group memberships, first-person singular pronouns were often used in combination with the active voice. The effect of this was an impression of AOC as someone who actively works towards change. This shows that AOC used singular pronouns when constructing an image of a ‘good politician’. This is in line with Bramley’s (2001) findings.

Studies have shown that Twitter might be especially beneficial for candidates who challenge established politicians. The limited space Twitter offers, with its limit of 280 characters, offers more opportunities for politicians who have a clear and unambiguous message than for those with more nuanced messages (van Kessel and Castelein 2016: 596). Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that Twitter appears to have been an efficient campaign tool in AOC’s 2018 campaign. As AOC entered the campaign as a challenger, her campaign had a clear and unambiguous message – that she was a better alternative than the incumbent representative Joe Crowley.

5.5 Limitations to the study and suggested areas of further study

Certain limitations and choices had to be made in the process of conducting this study. There are some sources of error in the present study. One of these is in the compilation of the data set, in which some tweets from the studied time period was omitted. However, as discussed in the methodology section, this was not considered to be a major issue, as the main impact this had is that there are 20 fewer tweets in the data set. The tweets in the data set are the results of a search with Twitter's advanced search function, thus they were not selected by the analyst.

Another limitation to this study is that the use of qualitative analysis limits the amount of data that is analysed. The study focuses on a limited time period of the campaign, and thus might show only a small portion of the discursive strategies which AOC employed in her campaign. However, this might also be a strength, in that it makes it possible to offer a more in-depth linguistic analysis of all the data. Furthermore, one the strengths of a qualitative approach is that it the analyst engages first-hand with all the data. For instance, the present study found that AOC employed strategies of indirectness in her campaign. As indirectness has to with communicating through what is left unsaid, strategies of indirectness might go undetected when searching in a corpus, as a corpus search might not show indirectness strategies realised through, for example, the use of omission.

Another limitation due to the smaller amount of data for the present study is that the results of the analysis only show which discursive strategies AOC employed in the last ten days of her campaign. A corpus linguistics approach would have allowed a larger data set, and consequently the studied time period could have been larger. Corpus based studies show tendencies, and a combined approach of corpus linguistics and qualitative discourse analysis allows the analyst to first find the main tendencies in the data set and then analyse them more thoroughly. While a smaller data set allows for a more in-depth linguistic analysis, a larger data set also has some advantages. For instance, the present study found that the national issue AOC most frequently tweeted about was immigration and the treatment of immigrants. In this study, this was interpreted as a solidarity strategy, because of frequency of these tweets in the data and the discursive practices of these tweets. However, as the present study focuses on a short period of time, it is also possible that the frequent tweeting about this issue simply had to with relevance; that these issues were also frequently in the news at the time. Thus, a study with a larger data set might have found that AOC also frequently tweeted about other national issues, such as issues related to climate changes. Furthermore, that might have affected whether it could be argued that frequently tweeting about immigration was a solidarity strategy.

The focus of the present study has been on the use of solidarity strategies and indirectness strategies in AOC's Twitter campaign. In analysing the data some other discursive practices were also noticeable, but due to limitations of time and space these were not included in this study. One such discursive practice is the use of Spanish words and phrases in some campaign tweets. This discursive practice is particularly interesting as the use of Spanish could be seen as both inclusive and exclusive. Another discursive practice which could be interesting for further study is the use of informal language in political tweets, which Kreis (2017: 610) argues can be utilised by politicians in order to appear closer to the people. Furthermore, the inclusion of personal content in political tweets and its role in creating identities in political discourse could be an interesting topic for further study. In addition, AOC was recently re-elected. Therefore, it could be interesting to study her second Twitter campaign in comparison with her first campaign. Such a study could lend insight into the potential differences in the discursive strategies employed in a re-election campaign and the campaign of a first-time candidate.

5.6 Contributions

In general, social media is often used by politicians as well as advertisers to facilitate and maintain a "relationship" with its audiences. This is often done in an attempt to persuade the audience, either to support a person in a position of power or perhaps to buy a certain product. It is therefore interesting to examine how social media can influence political discourse. While many discourse analytic studies have focused on political discourse on Twitter, they have often focused on the Twitter discourse of more established politicians, with the exception of Donald Trump. Many discourse analytic studies have examined the tweets of Donald Trump (Kreis 2017, Ott 2017). As AOC is a younger politician the way in which she utilises Twitter (and other social media) in her campaign seems to differ from other politicians. Although Donald Trump can be used as an example of someone who has been successful in utilising Twitter in a political campaign, studies of Trump's political discourse on Twitter found that he generally tweets in one mode, meaning that his tweets rarely include pictures and videos or content from other Twitter users (Kreis 2017: 610). Furthermore, Kreis (2017) found that Trump did not use Twitter in an interactive way, as he used the mentioning function only 44 times in 216 tweets (p. 616). In this respect, and likely many others, his political discourse on Twitter differs greatly from that of AOC, as her campaign tweets were rarely text-only and often included content from other Twitter users.

The present study has attempted to provide insight into the discursive practices of Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's political discourse on Twitter. Twitter, as well as other social media sites, seems to be an increasingly important tool within today's political arena. It seems that Twitter, and social media in general, can be quite efficient tools within political discourse, especially when it comes to appealing to and creating common ground with voters. Therefore, it is important to provide insight into how social media is used as a medium for political discourse.

The findings of the present study indicate that while social media has provided politicians with a new medium through which political messages can be disseminated, the discursive strategies that politicians employ remain largely the same. However, the discursive means through which these strategies are realised are somewhat different from political discourse in other media. For instance, Obeng (1997) studied indirectness in political discourse. His data was from speeches by and interviews with politicians. While the findings of the present study suggest that, as Obeng found, indirectness is used in order to avoid verbal conflict, the present study also found that AOC used indirectness in this way. Thus, indirectness strategies seem to be used for the same purposes in political discourse on social media as in political discourse in general. However, the discursive means through which indirectness strategies are realised appear to be somewhat different in political discourse on Twitter than in other political discourse. For instance, AOC frequently realised indirectness strategies through the use of the retweet function. While Obeng (1997) found that politicians used circumlocution as a discursive mean to express indirectness, the present study did not find that AOC used circumlocution to realise strategies of indirectness. Earlier in the chapter, it was postulated that circumlocution might not be a frequently used discursive device in political discourse on Twitter due to the character limit of the microblogging platform. The use of circumlocution as a means to communicate indirectly on a platform which is characterised by its brevity, might make a strategy of indirectness too obvious to be effective.

In addition, the present study's findings on the use of pronouns were similar to that of the previous studies outlined in chapter 2. Furthermore, regarding the way language can be used in order to express solidarity, there are seemingly no significant differences in the discursive practices of political discourse on Twitter and political discourse in other media. However, Twitter offers politicians a communication channel through which strategies of solidarity can be realised effectively, due to the opportunity of speaking directly to voters. Thus, the opportunities a communication channel like Twitter provides can prove to be quite useful for politicians, as it gives them the opportunity to be more in control of the content and

the information which is shared about them. This can be utilised as a powerful persuasive tool in a political campaign, even if the linguistic practices of political Tweets do not differ greatly from the linguistic practices of political speeches and interviews.

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