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Abstract

Philosophical pragmatism originated in the United States in the late 19th century. Some historians of philosophy have described the history of American pragmatism in terms of an "eclipse narrative": dominant in the early 20th century, followed by a mid-century decline and, eventually, a late-century resurgence. Defenders of this narrative often point to the influx of European philosophers around WWII, and the rise of "analytic" philosophy, as the main reasons for pragmatism's initial eclipse. While the eclipse narrative is common in the philosophical literature, it is not without controversy. Unfortunately, the contemporary debate tends to rely on anecdotal evidence and contested lines of influence between prominent philosophers. My approach in this thesis is uniquely different. I instead approach the history of pragmatism empirically by using modern bibliometric techniques and using a large data set of papers (nearly 90,000 in all) to track the mentions of salient words connected to American pragmatism over several decades. This allows us to determine what American philosophers were actually talking about and when they were talking about it. My method provides a valuable perspective into a contemporary debate in the history of philosophy and, I conclude, is very much in the spirit of pragmatism itself.

I. Introduction

American pragmatism is a method of philosophy that focuses on practical results. Pragmatism originated in the late 19th century (Menand, 2001): since then, like many intellectual movements, it has been more or less prominent, and more or less central to ongoing philosophical debates. Some historians of philosophy have described pragmatism's history in terms of an "eclipse narrative" (though not all: see Misak, 2013, 2016). This means that when pragmatism was first formulated by Peirce, James, and Dewey in the late nineteenth century it was widely viewed as a serious way of doing philosophy. However, the story goes, after World War II and with the influx of European philosophers into American universities, pragmatism was "eclipsed" by newly dominant forms of European philosophy.

At the time this would have primarily been the logical positivism and logical empiricism inspired by the work of Russell, the early Wittgenstein, the Vienna Circle, and other early proponents of "analytic" philosophy (Frost-Arnold, 2017). Many decades later pragmatism was then *un*-eclipsed thanks to work of "neopragmatists" who revitalized the pragmatic method by reinterpreting and updating Peirce, James, and Dewey's distinctive approach to philosophical problems.

The eclipse narrative, while common in the philosophical literature (Rorty 1982, Kitcher 2012), is not without controversy (Misak 2013, 2016). Some historians of philosophy have argued that it fails to accurately describe what happened to pragmatism after WWII and how (or even if) it rebounded in the late twentieth century. Unfortunately, the contemporary debate tends to depend on anecdotal evidence and contested lines of influence between prominent philosophers. These methods serve to emphasize *important* pragmatist, and may miss some nuances. These interpretations of history may be biased; they may not. My main issue with these methods is the interpretations of history allow for many narratives which makes progress minimal.

My approach in this thesis will be different. I propose that empirical methods can be used to reveal when and whether there was intellectual influence. Rather than analyzing the history by reading books and papers, and then distilling this into a narrative, I will instead approach the history of pragmatism empirically by using modern bibliometric techniques. For this thesis I collected a large data set of papers (nearly 90,000 in all) from JSTOR, which I then used to track the mentions of salient words connected to American pragmatism over 136 years. This gives a picture of how words were actually used and whose name was mentioned. It allows us to see what philosophers were actually talking about and when they were talking about it. Not only does this provide a valuable perspective into a contemporary debate in the

history of philosophy, but I would argue that this empirical method is very much in the spirit of pragmatism itself.

II. Pragmatism

In order to understand the controversy over whether or not pragmatism was eclipsed and when, it's important to say something about what pragmatism is and how it entered academic philosophy. This is because the debate about pragmatism's eclipse is, at least in part, a debate about whether distinctively pragmatic ideas continue to be philosophically relevant in the 21st century. And the answer to that question depends on how pragmatism itself is understood.

<u>Charles Sanders Peirce</u>

Pragmatism can be traced to the writings of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). Peirce worked in many fields including logic, linguistics, chemistry, and mathematics. During his life he held only one official teaching position, at John Hopkins University from 1879-1884. To survive financially he worked primarily at the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, where he specialized in measuring the earth's gravitational field. Perhaps it is because of his work in these practical fields that Peirce developed pragmatism.

For Peirce pragmatism was a philosophy that defined the meaning of concepts in terms of the practical effects it has. Take for example the concept of *truth*. For Peirce, to understand *truth* we need not look to an abstract conception of *truth*; rather we should look at the practical effects *truth* has on us. It is through our use of and interaction with the concept of *truth* that it becomes a clear concept in our minds. Unlike other philosophical

approaches which locate meaning "in the head," Peirce places meaning out in the world, where it is a function of how we interact with the concept in question. As Peirce writes:

> Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings,
> we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our
> conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the
> object. (Peirce 1878, 8)

This for Peirce is what it means to understand something or for a concept to have meaning. The concept *must* in some way have a practical effect for us: once we identify the practical effects then we've identified the meaning. Take again, for instance, Peirce's example of *hardness*. For Peirce "the whole conception of this quality (hardness), as for every other, lies in its conceived effects." That is, for us to even conceive of an object as *hard* we need to have some awareness of that object's effects; we need to have dealt with something hard in our lives. As Peirce writes in "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (1878):

> We may, in the present case, modify our question, and ask what
> prevents us from saying that all hard bodies remain perfectly soft
> until they are touched, when their hardness increases with the
> pressure until they are scratched. Reflection will show that the reply is
> this: there would be no falsity in such modes of speech. They would
> involve a modification of our present usage of speech with regard to
> the words hard and soft, but not of their meanings. (Peirce 1878, 9).

For Peirce meaning did not exist in the abstract: it was something formed through our real-world interactions with concepts and with the objects embodying those concepts. This is a pragmatic theory of meaning and it arguably lies at the heart of what became known as American pragmatism. It's fair to say, then, that Peirce's two main contributions to pragmatism are 1) he first proposed a pragmatic account of meaning, and 2) he laid the foundation upon which future pragmatists such as James and Dewey would build.

<u>William James</u>

At a young age, William James (1842-1910) developed an interest in painting and science. While his family jumped back and forth between America and Europe, James likewise hopped between studying the sciences and the arts. James, much like Peirce, did not confine himself to philosophy. James' work also spans the fields of physiology and psychology. In 1890 he published his master work on psychology: *The Principles of Psychology*.

One of James' many contributions to pragmatism was his work on the pragmatic theory of truth. While Peirce also developed a pragmatic account of truth—roughly, that true beliefs are those that will stand up to indefinite scrutiny—James focused especially on what truth *means* to the pragmatist. Typically, we may take a statement *p* to be true when it is in accordance with reality. Take for example a statement like "Joe Biden won the race for President of the United States." Initially, we might say that this is true because it is in accordance with the facts: for example, the fact that Joe Biden got more Electoral College votes than Donald Trump. That is, there is an accordance between the statement about Biden winning and his actual winning of electoral college votes. However, recall that, according to Peirce, meaning is use. James then asks us to consider the meaning of *truth* by considering how we use this concept. James's answer is that a proposition is *true* when we find it dependable and action-worthy. In *Pragmatism* (1907) James writes:

> True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot. That is the practical difference it makes to us to have true ideas; that, therefore, is the meaning of truth, for it is all that truth is known-as. (James 1907, Lecture VI)

Here there is evidently no appeal to some stagnant ideal of a proposition. A true proposition is, as James says, one that *we* can assimilate and validate: the emphasis is on the person holding the belief, and not on reality; a true belief is useful because it is useful *to us*. For example, *we* validate the earlier statement by looking at the Electoral College votes for the 2020 presidential election.

Due to James' success popularizing pragmatism, within a few years we also begin to see critiques. Recall that for James a proposition is true when it is "assimilated, validated, corroborated and verified." Another way James expresses this is that "we cannot reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it" (James, 1907). This would appear to mean that, if we take some proposition p and we can benefit from p in some way, then we must conclude that p is true. Bertrand Russell later had some choice words to say about this. He writes:

> James's doctrine is an attempt to build a superstructure of belief
> upon a foundation of skepticism, and like all such attempts it is
> dependent on fallacies. [It is] a form of the subjectivistic madness
> which is characteristic of most modern philosophy. (Russell, 1945)

Russell's critique of James' pragmatism seems to be pointing at a foundational issue. For Russell pragmatism is built atop a base of inappropriate skepticism, and so rests on fallacies. Pragmatism, unlike Russell's philosophy, deals with the effects of a belief which tells us whether it is true or false. This is contrary to Russell's philosophy which—like many kinds of empiricism—deals with the causes of a belief. It is this shifting of perspective that sets pragmatism apart from other methods of philosophy before it, and it was a continuing reason for pragmatism to receive attention (both positive and negative) through the middle of the twentieth century.

<u>John Dewey</u>

Next in the pragmatic lineage is John Dewey (1859-1952). Dewey, like Peirce and James, worked across a wide range of fields spanning political and educational theory, ethics, epistemology, metaphysics and logic. To understand what Dewey added to pragmatism we first need to recall what James and Peirce did.

Misak and Talisse suggest that the heart of the difference between James and Peirce is their opposing interpretation of what Misak and Talisse call "the pragmatic maxim," or the central goal of pragmatist philosophy (2019). For Peirce the maxim was a way to purge nonsense from philosophy so that we could focus, instead, on what we can and need to answer. James, on the other hand, treated the pragmatic maxim as a way for us to clarify and answer those questions that Peirce would have cast aside.

Dewey, however, disagreed with both James and Peirce. He saw pragmatism not just as way to ascertain the meaning of (useful) metaphysical notions, nor as a way to drill down to what was really true. For Dewey pragmatism was the best—and perhaps only—way of doing philosophy in a scientific, post-Darwinian age. He thought that many previous philosophical problems were a result of misguided metaphysical systems and, since they had no bearing on real-world problems, should be completely abandoned. As Misak and Talisse point out again:

> Dewey contended that, since these conditions no longer obtain, the traditional philosophical problems should be simply abandoned as 'chaff,' replaced by new difficulties arising from Darwinian science. In Dewey's view, Darwinism shows that the world contains no fixed essences or immutable natures. The realization sets the problems of revising our philosophical and moral ideas so that they are better

suited to serve as tools for directing change. According to Dewey, the leading philosophical problem for a post-Darwin epoch is that of keeping our values in step with our technological power, so that they might guide society towards greater freedom (Misak and Talisse, 2019).

Thus, for Dewey pragmatism is not a just a method for making our ideas clear, nor is is it just a way to settle our metaphysical arguments. As Misak and Talisse point out the problem for philosophy is how exactly we keep our values in line with rapid technological developments.

From this it can be seen how pragmatism went through many stages as it progressed from a novel proposal to a well-established theory. It began as a theory of meaning formulated by Peirce to weed out senseless metaphysical disputes: in short, a method for helping us become clear on what we mean. Then, with James, pragmatism's theory of truth was developed further. Unlike Peirce, James saw many metaphysical disputes as ones that should be resolved—not merely dismissed—and that pragmatism was the way to resolve them. Lastly, we have Dewey, who disagreed with both Peirce and James and, under the influence of Darwin, claimed that many previous philosophical methods were invalid. According to Dewey, we should simply opt out of previous metaphysical disputes.

Pragmatism after Dewey

By the early and mid-part of the 20th century, it would seem self-evident that pragmatism was on the upswing. The main years that Peirce, James, and Dewey were publishing was from the early 1900's to the 1940's. However, this rise in popularity would not last. In *Pragmatism Endures* Misak and Talisse quote Rorty who said:

Along about 1945, American philosophers were, for better or worse, bored with Dewey, and thus with pragmatism. They were sick of being told that pragmatism was the philosophy of American democracy, that Dewey was the great American intellectual figure of their century, and the like. They wanted something new, something they could get their philosophical teeth into. What showed up, thanks to Hitler and various other historical contingencies, was logical empiricism, an early version of what we now call 'analytic philosophy'. (Misak and Talisse, 2019)

Rorty is claiming that, by the end of WWII, the pragmatism of Dewey, James, and Peirce was old news, and American philosophers were ready to move on to a new set of approaches. Rorty claims that these new ideas came in the form of logical positivist theories of truth, knowledge, and meaning that had been developed in Berlin and Vienna before the outbreak of World War II and that became central to philosophy in the United States due to immigration from Germany, Austria, and Poland. This, finally, brings us to the "eclipse narrative."

III. The "Eclipse Narrative"

Historians and philosophers disagree on pragmatism's trajectory after Peirce, James, and Dewey. As mentioned earlier, one common account is the "eclipse narrative." Before discussing the eclipse narrative, it will first help to describe what supposedly eclipsed pragmatism: logical positivism (or "analytic" philosophy in general). Like pragmatism, logical positivism was scientifically oriented, empirically minded, and generally supportive of liberal political positions. Major thinkers associated with logical positivism and early analytic philosophy include Rudolf Carnap, A.J. Ayer, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Bertrand Russell, and many others. The eclipse narrative says that due to an influx of positivist philosophers into

American universities around WWII, American philosophy eventually turned away from

pragmatism and sided with the competing theories of freshly arrived positivist philosophers.

As Misak and Talisee write in "Pragmatism Endures" (2019):

> In other words, [Rorty's] popular 'eclipse narrative' (as we'll call it)
> holds that pragmatism dominated professional philosophy in
> America throughout Dewey's heyday, from the early 1900s until the
> early '40s. Then, largely due to the war in Europe and the resulting
> influx of academics to the US, professional philosophy in the US
> took a 'linguistic turn' and began fixating on the technical and
> methodological issues that today are associated with 'analytic
> philosophy', a tradition originating in the work of Gottlob Frege in
> Germany; Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore and Ludwig Wittgenstein in
> England; and Rudolf Carnap and Moritz Schlick in Austria. (Misak &
> Talisse, 2019)

While other factors may have contributed to the supposed eclipse of pragmatism,

this theory is that its eclipse was primarily the result of the freshly arrived positivist thinkers

who had a general disdain for pragmatism. Thus, most defenders of the eclipse narrative

point to logical positivism, logical empiricism and what became known as "analytic"

philosophy as the schools of thought that eclipsed pragmatism in the 1930s and 1940s. This

interpretation would also be supported by the excerpts from Russell cited above: Russell,

obviously, was a champion of positivism and a major figure in early analytic philosophy.

IV. Neopragmatism and the Re-emergence of Pragmatism

The eclipse narrative has a flip-side. After all, eclipses are temporary, not permanent,

phenomena. According to many proponents of the eclipse narrative, even though

pragmatism was eclipsed around WWII, it did eventually reemerge into the philosophical

spotlight. According to Rorty's own version of the eclipse narrative, there was eventually a rebirth of pragmatism in America following the positivist influx. The new brand of pragmatism that came to fruition in the 1970s and '80s has been termed "neopragmatism" and is closely associated with Rorty, Hilary Putnam, Cornel West and others (Rorty 1982, Putnam 1992, West 1989). While these thinkers did revitalize interest in pragmatism, their work did not come without criticism.

Some have argued that neopragmatism is too analytic and insufficiently pragmatic. What this means is that while there is a pragmatic undertone to what the neopragmatists were doing, they were not sufficiently faithful to the original. Think of this as when a popular comic or book is adapted into a film, and the fans of the source material complain that the movie skipped some scenes. Because of neopragmatism's perceived unfaithfulness to pragmatism's origins, some have argued that pragmatism has remained eclipsed. That is, because neopragmatism is not faithful to the source material, there was actually never a rebirth of pragmatism but just a change of who was doing the eclipsing.

Others disagree with the eclipse narrative for different reasons, holding that pragmatism was never big enough to be eclipsed in the first place. Those who hold this position would say that the work of Peirce, James, and Dewey was never sufficiently dominant in American philosophy departments. Therefore, when the logical positivists came to America, there was nothing for them to eclipse: they merely set up shop.

Given this disagreement over pragmatism's trajectory—was it eclipsed and, if so, how and to what extent? I hope to provide some evidence that will make a unique contribution to addressing this question. As Talisse says in his review of Misak's *Cambridge Pragmatism*: if we are to believe the eclipse narrative then "there has to be a neglect of or a refusal to engage with pragmatism on the part of the 'analytic' philosophers" (Talisse, 2016).

That is, if the eclipse narrative is true then we should see a lack of engagement with pragmatism in the years preceding and following WWII. Hence the purpose of my analysis: if we can find evidence of interaction and uptake, then the eclipse narrative does not give the correct view of pragmatism's trajectory, and we should revise our

Journal	Number of Papers	Time Span
Ethics	9,706	1890-2015
Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism	7,809	1941-2016
The Journal of Philosophy	19,640	1904-2014
Mind	11,030	1876-2014
The Philosophical Review	11,961	1892-2014
Philosophy and Phenomenological Research	8,018	1940-2014
Philosophy of Science	5,903	1934-2015
The Review of Metaphysics	9,422	1947-2016
Synthese	7,201	1936-2016

Table 1: Selected journals with counts and year span

understanding of the history of 20th century American philosophy accordingly.

V. Methods

To address the question of whether and to what degree pragmatism was "eclipsed" in the post-WWII era, I undertook a bibliometric analysis of over 90690 articles published in nine prominent philosophy journals between 1890 and 2016. In contrast with previous work that relies on anecdote or first-person recollections of that period, my empirical approach has the advantage of being able to quantify—year by year and decade by decade—how pragmatism

fared in the scholarly literature. It also allows for a comparative analysis between pragmatism and other contemporaneous philosophical movements.

I performed this analysis by gathering a dataset from JSTOR that pulled all journal articles published from the set of target journals. JSTOR's data sets contain two types of files: n-grams and metadata files. N-gram files count how many times a word or name appears in a paper. It is from these files that I extracted the number of papers where a given word or name appears. The metadata file contains XML files. These are files which have a tree structure that contains publishing information about each paper and which allow me to get a count of how many papers were published each year.

To perform this analysis, I first defined a "mention." I define a "mention" as a given word or name *w* appearing in a paper at least once. This definition of "mention" is neutral. That is, it does not distinguish between positive or negative mentions of *w*. Take for example the name "Dewey." My method counts a negative mention such as this:

> Statements like these above have worried critics and supporters of
> Dewey's theory. In an early review of Dewey's aesthetics Eliseo Vivas
> charged Dewey with being inconsistent. One cannot appear to assert
> and yet deny that art has emotion for its content, he argued. In a
> recent commentary on Dewey's aesthetics Philip M. Zeltner notes
> that "Dewey is at his obfuscating best in his discussion of emotion,"
> and indeed, "appears to be equivocal in his use of the term 'emotion.'
> (Whitehouse 1978)

And it also counts a positive mention such as this:

> And Dewey embodied the pragmatic commitment to unifying theory
> and practice. He was a tireless public intellectual whose activities ran
> the gamut from marching in support of women's suffrage to helping
> to found the NAACP to presiding over the Trotsky trial in Mexico. It

> is with good reason, then, that contemporary philosophers who are
> most keen to ally themselves with this "classical" pragmatist
> movement tend to idolize Dewey. (Aikin and Talisse, 2011)

It could also be the case that a mention is neither positive or negative.

I define "mention" in a neutral way because I am interested in looking at a word or name's currency, not its reputation. If w is in circulation in the set of journals selected, then it follows that it is a topic with some level of familiarity and interest among philosophers.

To see whether mentions of a particular word w were trending upwards, downwards, or neutral over time, I used Matlab's "ischange" function. This is a numeric method which creates a trend line for a given data set, where abrupt shifts in the data change the slope of the trend line based on these shifts. For example, if there is not much variation in mentions then the trend line would stay flat, but if mentions were increasing or decreasing over a certain time span then there will be a positive or negative slope to the associated trend line.

I chose the journals in Table 1 based primarily on longevity: each of the journals has a several-decade long track record. This allowed me to track mentions over a longer period and source papers from a consistent set of representative journals. In addition, I chose these journals because they are either generalist (covering a range of philosophical topics) or because they are leading journals in a specific subfield. For example, *The Journal of Philosophy* publishes articles on a wide range of topics including epistemology, ethics, philosophy of language, and political theory. Including it (as well as other generalist journals such as *Mind* and *The Philosophical Review*) ensures that I was able to compare mentions of target words and names against mentions of other widely (and not-so-widely) used philosophical terms. Other more specialized journals, such as *Ethics* and *Philosophy of Science,* were chosen to ensure that I covered important philosophical subfields that might otherwise be underrepresented by

focusing solely on generalist journals. By selecting generalist journals, I also have the ability to see how other philosophical approaches tracked over time in comparison to pragmatism. This allows me to compare pragmatism's trajectory with other philosophical approaches. If mentions of pragmatism decline, but so do mentions of other approaches, this may have less to do with pragmatism specifically and more to do with philosophy becoming more crowded with new approaches.

I chose the date range of 1890-2016 not only because it captured the earliest publishing dates for all the selected journals but also because it captures the period when pragmatism began to play a key role in academic philosophy, through its "eclipse" by other theories, and up through the emergence of neo-pragmatism.

VI. Results

The ultimate goal of my analysis is to see if there is a correlation between a) how frequently a word or name is mentioned over my selected time period and b) how philosophers and historians of philosophy describe this same period. As stated before, one dominant view of the history of pragmatism is the eclipse narrative. The story asserts that, with the influx of positivist thinkers into American universities post-WWII, there was a turn away from pragmatism and the pragmatic method in academic philosophy. However, once again we must keep in mind that for the eclipse narrative to be a valid description of the history of pragmatism, there should be a noticeable disengagement with pragmatism and its thinkers in the post WWII era. There is however a second, alternative, narrative.

This second narrative asserts that when the positivists came to America post-WWII, they came to a country that was already primed and ready for their views. On this interpretation, pragmatism had already prepared the ground for logical positivism by

developing positions that were at least adjacent to those arriving from Europe. This would mean that rather than pragmatism being eclipsed, pragmatists and positivists were able to make common cause. Cheryl Misak offers a version of this narrative: her view is that rather than an eclipse of pragmatism, positivism and pragmatism commingled in the same pond. (Misak also makes much larger claims as to what *pragmatism* is, but these go beyond the scope of this thesis). Misak also notes that many of the most prominent analytic philosophers who succeeded Peirce, James, and Dewey were either pragmatist (in some sense at least: e.g., Lewis, Rorty, Quine, Goodman and Putnam), fans of pragmatism (Ramsey, possibly Wittgenstein), or at the very least interacted with them at some point (Ayer, Carnap, and Chisholm, e.g.).

Figures 1 and 2 give us a picture of what was happening in the dataset and whether it corresponds to either of the narratives described above. Based on Figures 1 and 2 there is a large spike in mentions of "pragmatism" around 1908 and 1909 when papers containing at least one mention of pragmatism make up 23% of all papers published in these years. This is what we would expect, given that James' *Pragmatism* was published in 1907 and *The Meaning of Truth* was published in 1909, both providing pragmatism with an obvious jolt of publicity. However, starting in the 1920s, we see the beginning of a general downward trend of mentions of "pragmatism" extending until the late 20th century. While we do see a resurgence of mentions in 2000 (when papers with at least one mention of pragmatism make up 9% of all papers published), this surge is short lived, and mentions continued to trend downward.

It's not a surprise that we see a downward trend after an initial spike of interest: like any other phenomena we'd expect a flurry of interest followed by sagging attention as time goes on. However, as Figure 1 shows, this is not a steep decline to little to no mentions.

Even after Jame's death in 1910 pragmatism was still very much part of the philosophical conversation. This is likely due to the fact that Dewey was entering one of his most fertile periods, with the publication of *Democracy and Education* (1916), *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1919), *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922), *Experience and Nature* (1925), *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), and *The Quest for Certainty* (1929), among many other books and articles that appeared in the 1910s and 1920s. In addition, Peirce's *Collected Papers,* edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, also began to appear (Volume 1 was published in 1931 and Volume 5 (*Pragmatism and Pragmaticism*) was published in 1934).

We then see another spike in mentions in the last few decades of the 20th century. This is probably due to the emergence of neopragmatists such as Richard Rorty, Hilary Putnam, Richard Bernstein and others (Rorty 1990, Putnam 1995, Bernstein 2010).

Despite this, if we focus solely on Figure 1 we find that while pragmatism was mentioned in 23% of all papers in 1908, by 1940 pragmatism was mentioned in only 8% of all papers published in the selected journals. From 1940-1960 the percentage declines even more, with papers mentioning "pragmatism" making up only 3% of the papers published in these journals. This suggests a notable decrease in number of mentions of pragmatism and would seem to support the eclipse narrative.

However, "pragmatism" is not the only word that is of importance. If we also look at the names of prominent pragmatist philosophers, we will gain a more nuanced picture. For example, I also tracked mentions of "Dewey." Since Dewey largely avoided the term "pragmatism"—opting instead to go with "instrumentalism"—this will catch uptake of his work that, while thoroughly pragmatic in spirit and in substance, would not contain an explicit mention of "pragmatism." Even though Dewey preferred to describe his position as

a kind of "instrumentalism" he is recognized as one of the most important pragmatist philosophers (Maddux 2015, Quirk 2000).

If Rorty's narrative is correct (again, that "along about 1945, American philosophers were, for better or worse, bored with Dewey, and thus with pragmatism") then there should be low mentions of "Dewey" in the years preceding the positivist arrival in America. Looking at Figures 3 and 4 it appears that Rorty's narrative fails to capture the actual history. Instead of a decrease in interest in Dewey, Figures 3 and 4 show the *highest* number of mentions of "Dewey" in the entire dataset from 1940-1950. In fact, at the time when philosophers were supposedly "bored" with Dewey there were 174 papers that mentioned him in 1950 alone—or 17% of all papers published that year.

Perhaps there is something strange or anomalous about this spike in 1950. Dewey was still active even in that year (he died in 1952 at age 92). In 1949 he published his final book *Knowing and the Known*, and was continuing to publish in journals (e.g., "Experience and Existence: A Comment" (1949) in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research).* One interesting fact about Dewey is that he continued to be mentioned across a wide swath of journals, including those that had taken a more "analytic" turn. (This idea comes from Katzav and Vaesen (2017).) As Table 1 notes, 7,809 papers from *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* are included in my data set. Dewey published *Art as Experience* in 1934 and looking at JSTOR we can see many papers that tackle Dewey's aesthetics. Despite this, there is still a decrease in mentions of "Dewey" after the influx of positivist thinkers. So, while this might agree with Rorty's claim that American philosophers were "bored" with Dewey, it's not clear that this boredom was the reason Dewey was mentioned less; in any case, the decline in Dewey mentions seems to have come in the late 1940s and early 1950s, not with the end of WWII as Rorty suggests. While this is perhaps only a minor shift in the narrative it does help paint

a more accurate picture of what philosophers were writing about during the post-WWII period.

With regards to neopragmatism, we should also look at Rorty to see how his unique version of pragmatism fared in the post-Dewey era. The reason I chose to look at "Rorty" rather than "neopragmatism" is that Rorty was closely tied to the neopragmatist movement, and so using his name (like using "Dewey" as a proxy for "pragmatism") will give a more nuanced picture of what was taking place. From Figures 5 and 6 we can see that from 1980 up to the late 1990's there is an increase in mentions of Rorty. This may give us some indication that while James' and Dewey's pragmatism may have been eclipsed by analytic philosophy in the 1950s, Rorty's neopragmatism represented a genuine resurgence.

However, at the same time, it cannot be forgotten that neopragmatism also spurred renewed interest in the first generation of American pragmatists: Peirce, James, and Dewey. Philosophers and historians often discovered that the neo-pragmatist appropriation of classical pragmatism was selective and partial. Meanwhile, philosophers and historians who had kept the pragmatist light burning through the lean years of the 1950s-1970s resented those whose first exposure to pragmatism came via neopragmatism. As Misak and Talisee note, "the resurrection [of pragmatism] is tinged with resentment." The idea here is that the neopragmatism of Rorty, Putnam, and West is too analytic for many traditional pragmatists. Due to what some view as a crude appropriation of pragmatism by neopragmatists, there was significant work being done by scholars of classical pragmatism to reintroduce philosophers to Dewey's brand of pragmatism.

We might also ask whether, after the initial influx of positivism in the 1940's, there was a decline in interaction with positivist ideas. This led me to track the mentions of *positivist* terms to see if Rorty's eclipse narrative accurately captures the history. If Rorty is

correct, then we should see that names and terms associated with positivism have higher mentions than names and terms associated with pragmatism.

Figures 7 and 8 show how mentions of "positivism" have ebbed and flowed over time. As expected there is a massive spike in mentions from 1940-1950, but after this it falls off. From 1940-1960 papers with mentions of "positivism" make up 8% of all papers. And in 1951 it reaches a maximum with 14% of papers in my dataset containing at least one mention of "positivism." Interestingly, in 1951, 163 papers in my data set mentioned Dewey (18% of all papers from this year); and so, in that year, Dewey was mentioned more frequently than positivism. It's also noteworthy that by the 1960s "positivism" mentions were falling. By 1996 mentions of "positivism" made up only 4% of all papers in my dataset.

In "On the Emergence of American Analytic Philosophy" Katzav and Vaesen point out that from from 1930-48 *The Philosophical Review* published papers from a variety of traditions drawing on a variety of philosophical methods. However, they discovered that around 1948 there was a shift to a more analytic style and content. From 1950-1955 around 65% of papers published in *The Philosophical Review* were on analytic philosophy (Katzav and Vaesen, 2017). What this shows is that the large spike in mentions of positivism in the 1950s could in part be due to this shift in the editorial scope of *The Philosophical Review* and its sway with other journals. After this spike, however, there is still a drop in mentions of positivism.

The decline in mentions of positivism could also be related to the fact that over time positivists stopped calling themselves by that name and began calling themselves empiricists and analytic philosophers instead. Another possible reason could be related to changes in Wittgenstein's philosophical position. Wittgenstein is one the most important figures in 20th century analytic philosophy, and while at the beginning of his philosophical career in the 1920s he was aligned with positivism, his later works (such as *On Certainty* (composed before

his death in 1951 but published in 1969) and *Philosophical Investigations* (1953)) have a much more pragmatic character (Haack 1982). That is, the later Wittgenstein rejected the positivist project, and leaned more towards a pragmatic mode of philosophy (though, as Haack points out, it is a mistake to call Wittgenstein a pragmatist). More accurate would be to say that he agreed with a large part of pragmatism's tenets but still had disagreements with their ideas. We might surmise that, just as Wittgenstein's views shifted from positivism to pragmatism, so too did the views of others, either independently or as a direct response to Wittgenstein's influence.

Misak argues for a different view of the history of pragmatism in both *The American Pragmatists (2013)* and *Cambridge Pragmatism: From Peirce and James to Ramsey and Wittgenstein* (2016). Misak claims out that there was actually no eclipse of pragmatism, but rather that when positivism came to the United States it found a receptive philosophical landscape. If this were the case, then there should be little to no decline in mentions of pragmatism and pragmatism-adjacent terms in the data set.

As we've seen this is indeed the case for "Dewey." From 1950-1960 papers with at least one mention of "Dewey" made up 15% of all papers published in the dataset. Also, during this time, papers with at least one mention of "pragmatism" made up 7% of all papers. Looking then at "positivism," papers with at least one mention of "positivism" made up for 8% of all papers in the dataset. Just as we looked at mentions of "Dewey" to gain a more nuanced understanding of pragmatism, we can look at mentions of specific positivists and early analytical philosophers to gain a more refined understanding of positivism. If we look at mentions of "Russell" over the years of 1950-1960 we find that Russell, like Dewey, was mentioned in 15% of all papers published in these years. This may suggest that philosophers are more likely to mention other philosophers by name than to mention the

corresponding school of thought. But this also suggests that there may not have been an eclipse of pragmatism at all: if there had been an eclipse we would expect to see a marked decrease in interaction with pragmatism and pragmatic adjacent terms (such as "Dewey"). Given that mentions of "Dewey" and "Russell" are roughly the same during the immediate post-WWII period, this would suggest that the eclipse narrative misrepresents the actual history.

VII. Conclusion

The history of pragmatism is often described as an eclipse: a homegrown philosophy overshadowed by the influx of positivism around WWII. In addition, as we've seen, pragmatism is itself a contested term: its founders did not all agree on a common meaning, and such disagreements have continued until the present time among pragmatists, neopragmatists, and "new" pragmatists. But, despite all of this, pragmatism had a resurgence in the post-positivist era since the late 1970s and is, today, a topic of serious philosophical consideration.

Granted, if only mentions of "pragmatism" are counted then there would be reason to believe the eclipse narrative. In the post-WWII period only 3% of articles mention "pragmatism": this is much less than either "positivism" or "Russell" during that time period. But the number of mentions of "Dewey" during this period demonstrates that many philosophers were still interacting with pragmatist ideas. It would be a mistake, as a result, to whole-heartedly commit to Rorty's version of the eclipse narrative. And that would suggest that we should look more deeply and more carefully into how thinkers in both the positivist camp and the pragmatic camp interacted with each other. Misak and others point out that,

like positivism, pragmatism was a type of empiricism. Hence when positivism came to the United States it was arriving in a country already deeply committed to empirical approaches. Misak also notes the effect that the mathematician and philosopher Frank Ramsey had on the future direction of analytic philosophy (in part by turning Wittgenstein in a more pragmatic direction)—and Ramsey was, perhaps surprisingly, deeply influenced by Peirce (Misak, 2016).

Thus, as is usually the case in history, the picture becomes more complicated. But the analysis done here would suggest that the eclipse narrative does not capture the full picture of American philosophy in the 20th century. My analysis also shows that a bibliometric approach to the history of philosophy allows us to gain a clearer picture, and when combined with traditional historical analysis, offers a deeper understanding and appreciation of the history of American pragmatism.
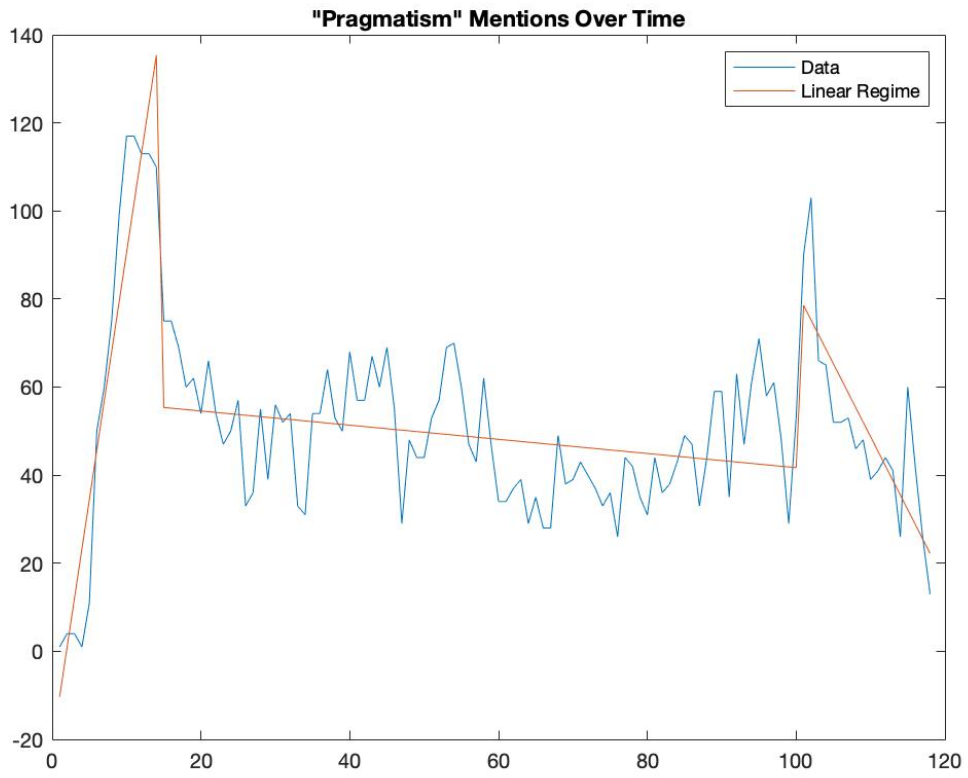
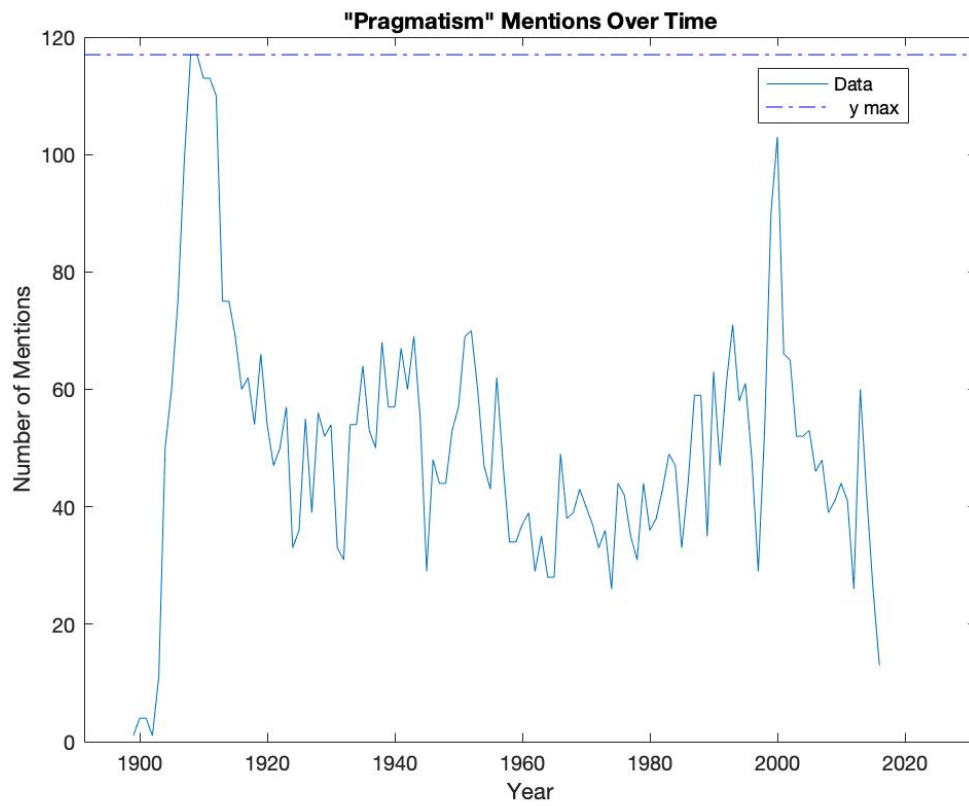*Figure 1: Graph of "pragmatism" mentions over time with linear change line.*

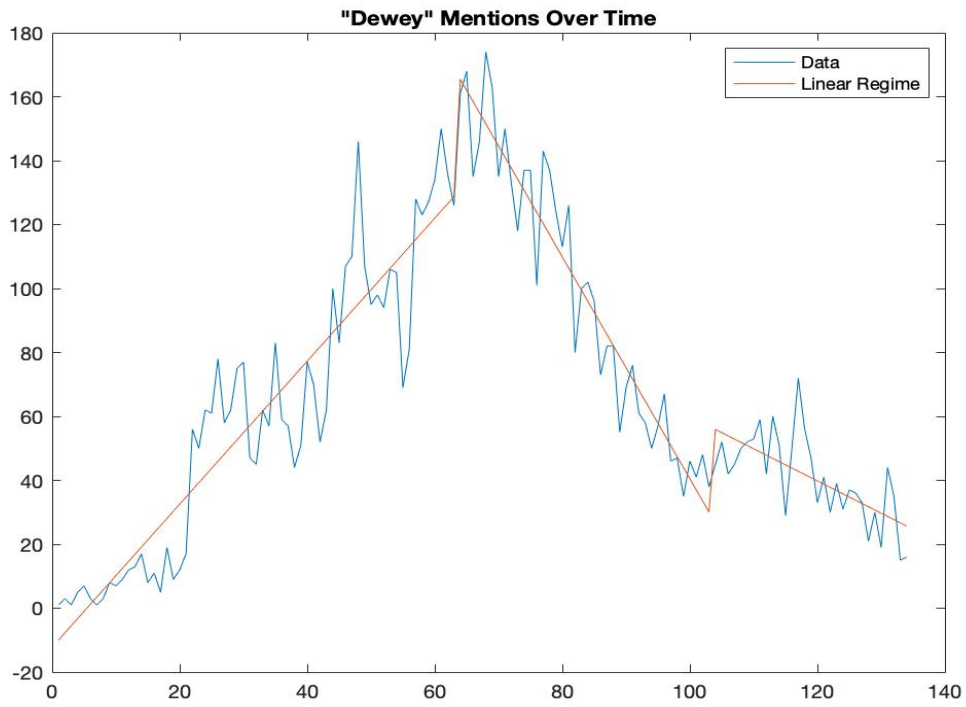Figure 2: Graph of "pragmatism" mentions over time.

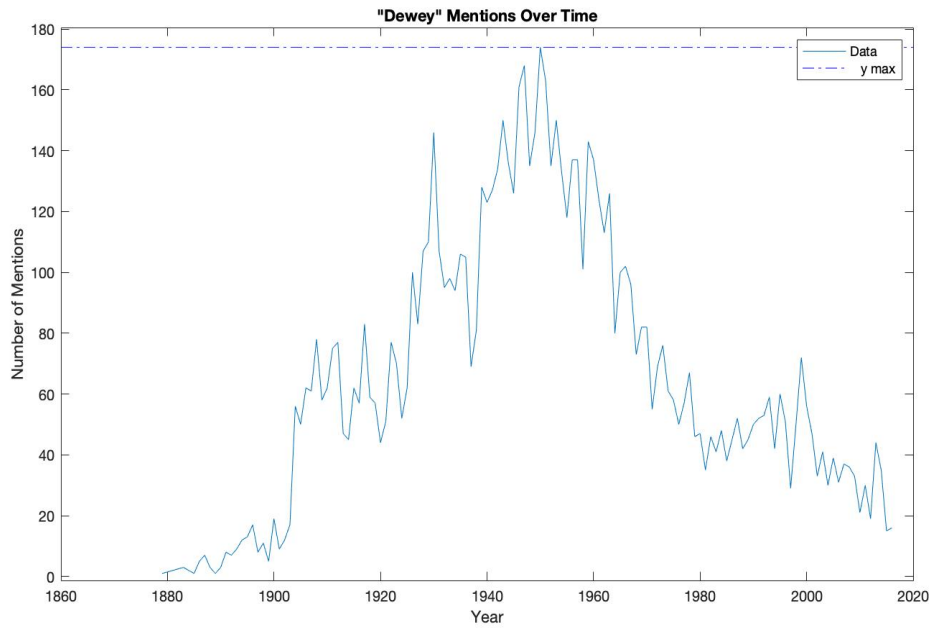*Figure 3: Graph of "Dewey" mentions over time with a linear change line.*

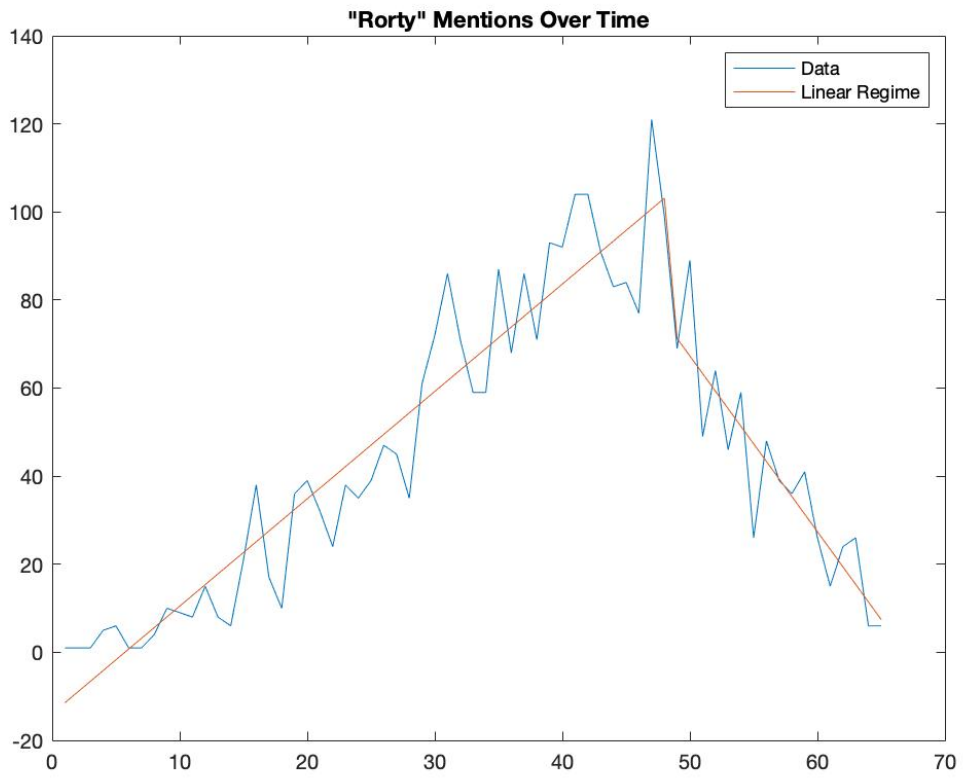*Figure 4:Graph of "Dewey" mentions over time.*

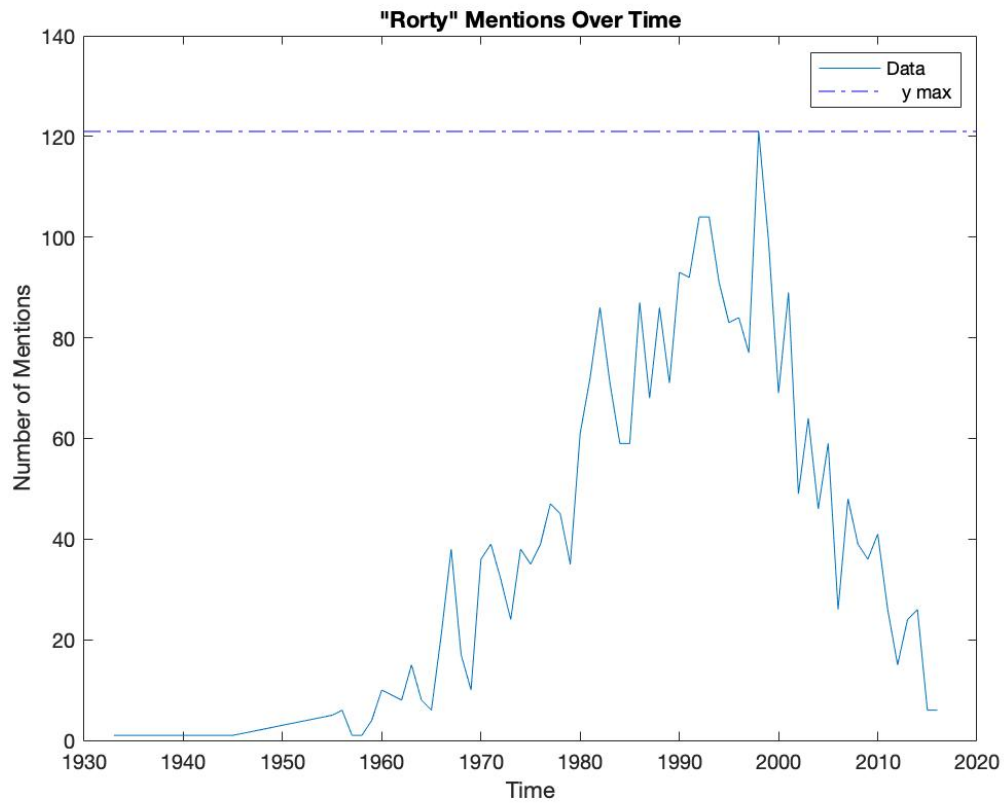*Figure 5: Graph of "Rorty" mentions over time with linear change line.*

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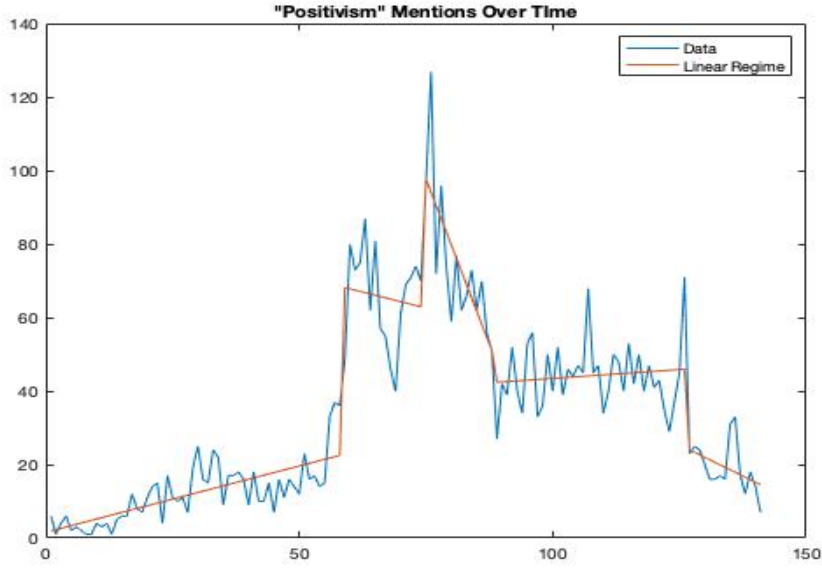*Figure 6: Graph of "Rorty" mentions over time.*

Figure 7: Graph of "Positivism" mentions over time with linear change line.
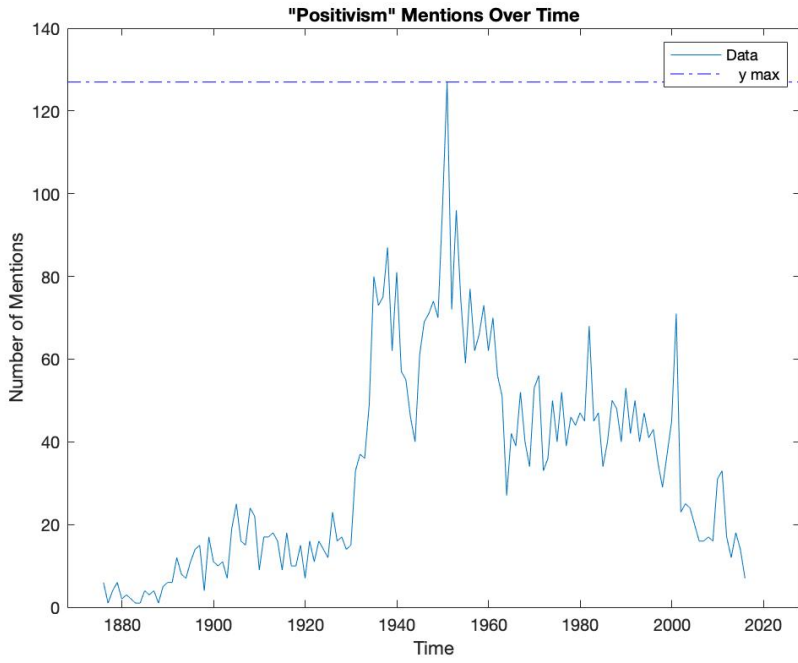

Figure 8: Graph of "Positivism" mentions over time.

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