Making America Great Again? Considering Regimes of Truth in the Trump Campaign

by

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Abstract

Drawing on social constructionist theory, this thesis conducts a critical discourse analysis of four of Donald Trump's rallies from the 2015-2016 American federal election campaign. This project analyzes candidate Trump's discursive construction of racialized minorities, including Black Americans, Syrian refugees, and undocumented Mexican immigrants, as "threatening Others." This project examines how Trump's campaign statements establish a foundation of credibility, positioning him as an "authentic" populist candidate freed from established norms (and the "corrupting" influence) of official politics. This discursive framework bolsters the perceived legitimacy of Trump's statements about racialized minorities as "threatening" to national interests and security, and taps into and fuels white supremacist ideas about "making America great again." Ultimately, this thesis contends that in his campaign, Trump engages in a politics of fear that serves to justify policy and legislative decisions with material consequences that disproportionately target and impact the United States' most vulnerable populations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

'Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!' cries she
With silent lips. 'Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!'

- Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus"

The 2016 American federal election campaign and the subsequent election were unprecedented on several counts, beginning with the announcement in 2015 that businessman and television personality Donald Trump would be running for president. While some praise the politician for his seemingly uninhibited engagement with pressing issues facing Americans, others have expressed deep concern over rhetoric that they caution is fundamentally misguided and divisive. Indeed, Trump's rise to electoral success has been controversial at best, and his rhetorical style has been the subject of extensive analysis since his formal entrance into the American political sphere and following his election as the forty-fifth President of the United States in January 2017.

In particular, Trump's campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again," has drawn a great deal of attention from voters and political pundits alike. For what set the tone of Trump's campaign from its earliest days was not a set of well-defined political perspectives or economic plans that broadly aligned the candidate ideologically and politically with past Republican politicians. Instead, Trump's contentious campaign centred largely around his dubious promise to "make America great again." Such a promise seemed all too good a prospect for some supportive Americans, while others feared the phrase "invoke[d] an idealized, mythologized past" (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2000, p. 421)—signalling a nostalgic longing for a return to an earlier, whiter, and more ethnically homogenous America. Trump's slogan thus raised significant

questions for American voters: if America is not currently great, under what circumstances was it so? To which America, whose history is scarred by the painful legacies of colonialism, racism, and patriarchal rule, must Trump and his associates desire a return? And, importantly, whose interests does this vision ultimately serve? Trump's stringent and unorthodox focus in his political speech on the perceived threats posed by domestic and foreign minority populations continues, one year into his presidency, to confound much of the American electorate, particularly as he taps into broader concerns about what it means to be American and exactly who "makes America great."

This project focuses on Trump's discursive constructions of racialized minorities as "threatening Others," as communicated in his 2015 and 2016 campaign rallies. In particular, this thesis argues that Trump's discourses construct Black Americans, Syrian refugees, and undocumented Mexican immigrants as threatening Others, which ultimately serves to support white supremacist narratives of a nation under threat from racialized minority groups. This thesis employs critical discourse analysis to consider how language is bound up in power relations that shape whose perspectives gain popularity (eventually becoming naturalized or common-sense within a group's dominant discourse) and whose perspectives remain largely untold and distorted in popular political accounts and negotiations (van Dijk, 1993; van Dijk, 1995). Drawing on social constructionist theory by Stuart Hall (2013), Michel Foucault (Mills, 1997), and Benedict Anderson (1983), this project assumes that language—as the set of shared symbols guiding a public's sense of mutual understanding and, thus, their perspectives of the events and people around them—is central to citizens' perceptions of political reality. This thesis thus contends that shared symbols make possible the construction of broader narratives (discourses) by the most powerful in any society. These discourses, when in support of unfounded and stereotyped

thinking about others, set a precedent for racist and xenophobic policy decisions that disproportionately disadvantage the vulnerable subjects of such narratives.

This thesis explores the ways in which Trump capitalizes on fear-based discourses in his campaign speeches to construct an image of a nation endangered by "the Other." Fear of the racialized Other has grown significantly since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 and in the wake of a globalized world defined increasingly by ethnic and religious diversity. To analyze Trump's discourses of fear and constructions of the Other in his campaign, this project begins by laying out its theoretical foundations and considering some of the academic literature that addresses constructions of racialized Others within Western (with a focus on American) political discourse. This project's methodology is then discussed and applied to an analysis of Trump's speeches from the 2015-2016 election campaign.

This project ultimately seeks to answer the question: how do Donald Trump's campaign speeches construct a narrative of a nation under threat? While past American presidents employed discourses of fear to pit a perceived enemy against the smooth functioning and cultural values of the American imagined community (Altheide, 2006; Brown, 2016; Lazar & Lazar, 2007; Mustapha, 2011; Tsui, 2015), Trump's campaign discourses involve an unprecedented level of anti-intellectualism and disregard for established voices of critique and dissent. These discourses serve to "[unburden] people of any responsibility to challenge, let alone collectively transform, the fundamental precepts of a society torn asunder by blatant misogyny, massive inequality, open bigotry, and violence against immigrants, Muslims, and poor minorities of color" (Giroux, 2017a, p. 20). This style of rhetoric is evocative of Cold War-era discourses "in which America is pitted against an inchoate group of enemies who include nearly everyone else" (Brown, 2016, p. 326), and appeals to the concerns and prejudices of a largely white, uneducated

electorate seeking consolation in the face of an evolving national makeup that looks and thinks increasingly like the Others they so revile (Yang, 2017).

It is in this socio-political context that Trump—leading his change-hungry followers not with the pledge to make America safer or more economically secure, but to make it "great again"—appealed to the most divisive and primitive human instincts in which fear of the racialized Other undermines and even erases the Other's humanity in "an overbearing fetish for security" (Fitzgerald, 2017, para. 22). At its extreme, this fetish manifests in plans to construct a multi-billion-dollar border wall around the most powerful nation in the world, in lieu of working to alleviate the heavy burden that lack of funding and other resources has left on those seeking adequate healthcare, education, and housing in the United States. This project contends that the right-wing populist appeals iterated in Trump's campaign speeches go beyond xenophobic invocations of American belonging and exclusion, eventually translating into racist policies, legislation, and other material efforts whose impacts unduly harm minority populations. Trump's discourses therefore serve to support white supremacist notions of the racialized Other as threatening and legitimize aggressive policies that explicitly target those considered to be outside the purview of a "great" American nation.

Trump has continued to capitalize on the racist and xenophobic views iterated in his campaign, cultivating sustained suspicion of the racialized Other through his politics of fear. This fear directly contradicts the hope given by the prototypical American promise enshrined on the Statue of Liberty and referenced in this chapter's opening epigraph—a promise that proclaims, to the assurance of the refugee and the downtrodden, "[g]ive me your tired, your poor/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." This project represents just one of many recent efforts to challenge and denaturalize Trump's politics of fear, which has brought terror

and uncertainty to many since the 2015-2016 presidential campaign. I ultimately seek to engage in what Lazar (2007) terms "analytical activism," contributing to a growing body of scholarly "radical emancipatory" work (p. 145) that aims "to generate social change and promote social justice" around contemporary political issues and the people most impacted by them (Perez Marin, 2016, p. 31). To this end, the closing chapter discusses the importance of working toward "hope in action" (Giroux, 2017b, p. 905) as a way to meaningfully contest and overcome the culture of fear made terrifyingly tangible in the time of Trump.

Chapter 2: Theory and Literature Review

Discourse

Discourse is a popular concept through which cultural theorists have come to analyze spoken, written, and visual texts. The term "discourse" itself has been subject to many interpretations and uses over the past 50 years, however, depending largely on the field of study to which it has been applied. The term is also common among laypeople, understood generally as spoken or written forms of communication. Indeed, the term has become a familiar one, a "common currency" both within and outside of academia to the extent "that it is frequently left undefined, as if its usage were simply common knowledge" (Mills, 1997, p. 1). Establishing a clear definition of discourse and some of the theoretical frameworks informing the concept is thus essential to the groundwork of this analysis.

Many scholars posit that language plays an essential role in the social construction of knowledge and reality. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall made significant contributions to the constructionist field of thought, which sees "social problems as social constructions, that is, as the products of claims-making and constitutive definitional processes" (Miller & Holstein, 2007, p. 5). The social constructionist perspective considers the ways in which the taken-for-granted "truths" and knowledges held by social groups are produced and legitimized through the process of interaction with others. Hall (2013) argues that language facilitates the production and interpretation of meaning, offering shared symbols and concepts through which people can meaningfully represent, interpret, and organize the social world and their understandings of it. In this view, representation—"the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds"—is a necessarily constructionist phenomenon because it considers that "meaning is *not* in the object or person or thing, nor is it *in* the word. It is we who fix the meaning so firmly that, after a while, it

comes to seem natural and inevitable*" (Hall, 2013, p. 3, 7). This framework makes it possible to consider how understanding and knowledge are constantly in flux because they are "the result of a system of social conventions specific to each society and to specific historical moments" (Hall, 2013, p. 17). Social constructionism stands in opposition to essentialist thought, which sees "people, practices, institutions and other social phenomena as having fixed identities which deterministically produce fixed, uniform outcomes" (Sayer, 1997, p. 454). This thesis adopts Hall's (2013) social constructionist perspective, arguing that knowledge is made common-sense through the process of representation.

Building on Hall's foundational work, Michel Foucault was particularly influential for his (re)conceptualization of discourse in the 1960s. While Foucault's own use of the term "discourse" was contextual and changed over time, he generally used it to refer to "all utterances or texts which have meaning and which have some effects in the real world" (Mills, 1997, p. 7). Whereas previous perspectives on discourse often focused on the linguistic and sociological elements of representation, Foucault's contributions fundamentally moved scholarly attention beyond the nuts and bolts of language, and toward considering "the rules and practices that produced meaningful statements and regulated discourse in different historical periods" (Hall, 2013, p. 29). Mills (1997) acknowledges this transition, claiming that "the use of the term discourse signalled a major break with previous views of language and representation. Rather than seeing language as simply expressive, … [theorists] saw language as a system … with its own determining effect on the way that individuals think and express themselves" (p. 8). Foucault's contributions to the framework of discourse have been groundbreaking for scholars seeking to evaluate why, how, and under what circumstances meaning is discursively (re)produced and legitimized.

One of Foucault's most important contributions to the field of cultural studies was his careful consideration of the ways in which power is implicated in the meaning-making process (Hall, 2013). For Foucault, power is paramount to understanding discourse because it is "always being applied to the regulation of social conduct in practice" (Hall, 2013, p. 32). By considering how power is at work in everyday social relations, rather than as originating and oppressing from a single source, we can consider the ways that we, and those around us, are not "simply … the recipients of power, but [are] the 'place' where power is enacted and the place where it is resisted" (Mills, 2003, p. 35). In this view, people both wield and are subjected to power, and this power is ultimately used to determine "whether and in what circumstances knowledge is to be applied or not" (Hall, 2013, p. 33). Power thus legitimizes and normalizes certain perspectives, helping them to become part of a group's dominant discourse.

Foucault's ideas around discourse reflect the constructionist perspective that "truth"— what might be understood as the widely accepted discourses that circulate within society—is a construct that is subject to variation and reinterpretation across different contexts. Therefore, this framework suggests that knowledge and truth are not necessarily inevitable or natural conclusions as they may seem, but are, rather, "relative and contextual" (van Dijk, 2011, p. 385) phenomena that, when "linked to power[,] not only [assume] the authority of 'the truth,' but [have] the power to make [themselves] true" (Hall, 2013, p. 33). In this view, then, any "factual" or objective truth of discourse is secondary, since "knowledge, once applied in the real world, has real effects and, in that sense at least, 'becomes true'" (Hall, 2013, p. 33). As different discourses come to occupy positions of credibility within the collective imagination, they are rendered true in their ideological and material consequences (Hall, 2013).

If knowledge is not, in fact, inevitable or natural, but is constructed and legitimized through representation and power, then it is possible to talk "not of 'truth' of knowledge in the absolute sense … but of a discursive formation sustaining a regime of truth" (Hall, 2013, p. 34). Regimes of truth may be understood as the narratives that have been "accepted as fact," and whose maintenance cause them to "become 'true' in terms of [their] real effects" (Hall, 2013, p. 34). Carroll, Motha, and Price (2008) note that

> [i]n order for an assumption to become a regime of truth, it must be accepted as fact by the community in which it exists. It then becomes unquestioned and unquestionable, and its arbitrariness becomes invisible. … Such images, beliefs, and practices, being unquestioned and normalized, exert a tremendous force upon consciousness, encouraging compliance and making resistance difficult. (p. 167)

Knowledge and truth become sites of constant negotiation as socio-political groups "[struggle] … over whose version of events is sanctioned"—or, in other words, which regimes of truth are legitimized while others are "treated with suspicion and … housed both metaphorically and literally at the margins of society" (Mills, 1997, p. 19, 21). Dominant discourses thus impact how people and their experiences are understood and treated, a fact that can lead to important material consequences for the subjects of such discourse (more on this idea later).

van Dijk (2011) discusses the relationship between dominant discourse and ideology. Ideologies, as he defines them, "are general systems of basic ideas shared by the members of a social group, ideas that will influence their interpretation of social events and situations and control their discourse and other social practices as group members" (p. 380). While discourse does not always reflect ideas shared broadly by group members, this is often the case, "because it is largely through discourse and other semiotic messages, rather than by other ideological

practices, that the content of ideologies can be explicitly *articulated*, *justified* or *explained*" (p. 387). Through discourse, groups position themselves and their ideologies in relation "to other—dominant, dominated or competing—groups" (p. 383). Therefore, ideology may be oppressive—as in, for example, xenophobic and racist "anti-immigration stance[s]" that see foreigners as dangerous—or resistant, as witnessed in anti-racist frameworks that contest and deconstruct racist practices and systems of oppression (van Dijk, 2011). Careful discourse analysis is often necessary in order to elucidate a group's ideological underpinnings, and to uncover "the *pragmatics* of discourse" (p. 392) that hide or obscure the full scope of a group's ideologies in certain social contexts due to, for instance, "politeness, fear of ridicule, and" other forms of social and rhetorical etiquette (p. 394).

In theorizing discourse, Foucault was interested in "the arbitrariness of this range of discourses, the strangeness of those discourses, in spite of their familiarity" and perceived status as uncontested truth (Mills, 1997, p. 26). Despite the constructed nature of discourse, however, Foucault emphasized that it nevertheless has important material consequences for its subjects, since, according to this theory, "the body [acts as] a sort of surface on which different regimes of power/knowledge write their meanings and effects" (Hall, 2013, p. 35). In other words, people's personal and material experiences are directly implicated in the process of knowledge production.

Some scholars are critical of Foucault's framework, arguing that it obscures any notion of materiality outside of discourse (Mills, 1997). Hall (2013) acknowledges these concerns, conceding that a focus on the constructed nature of meaning may lead theorists "to neglect the influence of the material, economic, and structural factors in the operation of power/knowledge" (p. 36). However, Mills (2003) contends that

Foucault is not denying that there are physical objects in the world and he is not

suggesting that there is nothing but discourse, but what he is stating is that we can only

think about and experience material objects and the world as a whole through discourse

and the structures it imposes on our thinking. In the process of thinking about the world,

we categorise and interpret experience and events according to the structures available to

us and in the process of interpreting, we lend these structures a solidity and a normality

which it is often difficult to question. (p. 56)

Therefore, while Foucault and Hall recognize physical reality, they situate discourse at the centre

of the meaning-making process. In this view, the physical world has meaning insofar as socially

constructed and widely accepted discourses imbue it with significance.

According to Hall, Foucault, and other social constructionists interested in the production

and circulation of regimes of truth, representations ascribe meaning to the world in ways that

have important consequences. One way these ideas play out is in discourses about the nation and

national identity that construct narratives of belonging and exclusion around different imagined

communities. The socially constructed nature of nationhood, particularly within the

contemporary American political climate, will be considered below.

Imagined Communities

In his 1983 foundational book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and*

Spread of Nationalism, Benedict Anderson details his idea of "imagined communities," a

framework that has had tremendous influence in cultural studies to this day. Anderson (1983)

defines a nation as "an imagined political community … because the members of even the

smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them,

yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 6). In this view, the pervasive sentiments of commonality and devotion that come to exist among members of a nation are not the natural and inevitable results of sharing land and space between physical border walls. Rather, "nationality, or … nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind" (Anderson, 1983, p. 4) whose meanings are constantly negotiated as members come to terms with the evolving state of their imagined communities and their own place within them. Therefore, nationality and belonging, according to Anderson's framework, are not unlike other discursive constructions. Anderson's concept of imagined communities is useful for considering the ways in which notions of belonging (and, necessarily, exclusion) are discursively (re)produced in the contemporary American political context.

While Anderson's (1983) framework considers the discursive construction of national belonging, he also acknowledges the important emotional elements involved in such imaginings. He describes imagined communities as "command[ing] such profound emotional legitimacy" (p. 4) that, for example, "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (p. 7). In other words, despite any amount of disunity or injustice that may plague a nation at any historical moment, the nation still provokes deeply personal sentiments among its members, often manifesting in an unrelenting willingness to love, protect, and serve one's country no matter the cost (Anderson, 1983).

Wodak (2015) argues that the "deep-seated feelings of belonging" (p. 75) cemented in a nation's popular imagination can give rise to a host of anxieties if members feel their sense of security is threatened. As feelings of belonging get tied up with "shared emotional dispositions," Wodak (2015) claims that people tend to develop "solidarity with [their] own group as well as

animosity towards or, at least, clear-cut distinctions from 'Others' by excluding them from this constructed collective" (p. 77). In this process, particular subjects may get labeled as Other and set in opposition to those deemed the true bearers of a shared imagined identity. When the perception of threat is involved, such fears "are functionalized more and more as legitimation for drawing new borders between 'Us' and 'Them' … and for deciding on ever more restrictive measures to keep 'Others' out" (Wodak, 2015, p. 79).

While Wodak's (2015) work highlights some of the ideological and emotional underpinnings of nationalistic discourses, it also points to a broader point that is worth repeating: discourses of belonging and nationalism, even while ideological in nature, can have important political, social, and material ramifications when outcasts get treated as Other, demonized on the basis of perceived incompatibility to a particular imagined identity. As discussed earlier, an emphasis on the imagined, or socially constructed, nature of nationhood should not be taken to suggest that sentiments of national belonging manifest only within the mind. Indeed, when deep-seated emotional allegiance to one's nation is threatened by perceived danger or disruption to the status quo, the Other becomes vulnerable to, for instance, verbal and physical abuse, prejudiced policy, and violent militaristic measures aimed at ridding the nation of the outsider's perceived threat.

For Anderson (1983), it is imagined, or constructed, feelings of national belonging that permit its members to have a shared sense of commonality and pride in a country as diverse, large, and, at times, divided on political and social issues as the United States. Using the concept of imaged communities will thus be useful for considering the ways in which Donald Trump employs a rhetoric of nationality to tap into his supporters' emotions and fears about the racialized Other, and how these discourses contribute to "the reproduction of dominance and

inequality" in the United States (van Dijk, 1993, p. 253). This framework will also help "to throw light on the largely contingent and imaginary character of nation and to sharpen awareness of dogmatic, essentialist and naturalizing concepts of nation and national identity" that serve to exclude and alienate groups of people who don't fit within a particular vision of America (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 9). Of interest here are the ways in which different discourses become "unquestioned and unquestionable" to the extent that their "arbitrariness becomes invisible" (Carroll, Motha, & Price, 2008, p. 167). Discourses of threat and fear can unduly disadvantage minority populations by painting "a composite picture of the Other as a culturally bellicose people," and perceived threat may be used as justification for aggressive interventions aimed at defending against the Other (Lazar & Lazar, 2007, p. 46). The discursive construction of the Other as a threat in political discourse is considered in the next section.

Constructing the "Other" in Political Discourse

Constructionist frameworks lend themselves to considering how "nationalism is an eminently discursive phenomenon" often used to justify building symbolic and real boundaries between people (Wodak, 2015, p. 78). Scholars who consider the construction of threat and fear in Western political discourse often speak in terms of a "politics of fear." In her book *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*, linguist Ruth Wodak (2015) explains that a politics of fear positions "some kind of ethnic/religious/linguistic/political minority as a *scapegoat* for most if not all current woes and subsequently construe[s] the respective group as dangerous and a threat '*to us*', to 'our' nation" (p. 2). Stocchetti (2007) also examines the role of fear and threat in political discourse, defining a politics of fear as "a specific type of social activity that has indiscriminate violence as its main resource and the compliance of

masses as its main objective" (p. 223). Stocchetti (2007) is interested in the ways in which such rhetoric can be employed in order to "make safety of paramount value" to the electorate (p. 223-224), even when the notion of danger is merely perceived.

Fear and threat are popular means through which elected officials frame contemporary socio-political issues. Gale (2004), exploring discourses of nationhood and representations of visible minority refugees in Australian, European, and North American media, broadly considers the implications of political discourses that mark particular marginalized groups as Other. He notes that, in the latter decades of the twentieth century, there was "a shift in language towards the formation of exclusive symbolic national boundaries" (p. 323). In this turn toward a more covert, "'post-modern racism,'" political attention has tended to focus "on the presence of those seen as 'aliens' and how this presence is assumed to be a threat to the nation and national identity" (p. 323). In this contemporary climate, news media commonly portray refugees and their "cultures and values … as 'alien' and a threat to whiteness, and western, core values or democracy itself" (p. 323). Gale underscores Hall's assertions that "racism … operates by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories," and that "representation constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalise the difference between belongingness and otherness" (as cited in Gale, 2004, p. 324). The efforts of news media and politicians to construct the Other as dangerous through racist and misleading representations are of great concern to academics studying political communication.

Brown (2016) examines the use of "racially divisive appeals" (RDAs) in the 2007-2008 and 2011-2012 American election campaigns (p. 315). RDAs are "a rhetorical strategy wherein the speaker denigrates a particular minority, frames that group as a threat to the target audience, advocates for special restrictions against them, or reassures the audience of their rightfully

privileged position vis a vis [*sic*] the problematized group" (p. 315). Brown notes that, while minority groups and immigrants are statistically less likely to commit crime, they are nevertheless largely framed in political rhetoric as its main perpetrators (p. 319). Brown's analysis indicates that the use of RDAs has evolved in recent years, with politicians tending to use rhetoric that "denigrate[s] minority populations but do[es] so obliquely enough to allow the speaker room for deniability if challenged"—a style known as "'dog whistle' rhetoric" (p. 317). These findings also support Gale's (2014) observations on "'post-modern racism'" in contemporary politics (p. 323).

The relative covertness of different articulations of racism and xenophobia in the contemporary Western political context is worth expanding upon. Gale (2014), in his discussion of post-modern racism mentioned above, refers to "the complexities of contemporary racism in the West" (p. 326). This racism is often articulated as "part of a discourse of 'Anglo decline'" (p. 325) in globalizing and increasingly diverse Western nations that privilege (and seek to sustain) whiteness. Racist and xenophobic ideologies are thus "a feature of colonial discourse," often manifesting in expressions of fear toward foreign and domestic Others whose (non-white) race is marked as oppositional, inferior, and dangerous to "the imagined community of insiders and outsiders" of a Western nation (p. 324-325).

Goldstein (2017) discusses these forms of racism as they play out in the current American context through a "surreal mix of gendered and racialized nostalgia embedded in [President] Trump's iconography and message" (p. 397). Such nostalgia is expressed in the campaign slogan "Make America Great Again," which "speaks patriotism to the faithful who brought Trump to victory" (p. 398-399)—a largely white electorate convinced and concerned by Trump's dog

whistle articulations of the "brown and black bodies" living in America (p. 402). Goldstein claims, for instance, that

> Trump's political style was signaling all along to white people a derogated representation of depraved inner cities filled with black and brown people—locations reviled as places needing more law and order, living hells that white people did not wish to inhabit, forgotten sites that demand government intervention. In this way, Trump stoked a revived white nationalism while denying its racist content. (p. 402)

In this American context, a post-modern racism thus manifests not only in reference to foreign racialized Others (for example, undocumented immigrants or refugees), but also to "the 'outsider within'" (Saeed, 2007, p. 451) that threatens to disrupt particular white supremacist visions of American "greatness."

Another famous articulation of the Other was conceptualized by postcolonial scholar Edward Said who, in his foundational 1978 work *Orientalism*, argued that discourses coming out of the nineteenth century began to construct "the Orient as a repository of Western knowledge, rather than as a society and culture functioning on its own terms" (Mills, 1997, p. 107). Amir Saeed (2007) explains that Said's concept can help shed light on discursive practices framing "the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them' or 'the other')" (p. 447). This framing of Eastern subjects and cultures as alien is "one of [the West's] deepest and recurring images of 'the other'" (Sharifi, Ansari, & Asadollahzadeh, 2016, p. 49), serving to support Islamophobic thinking about Muslims and those who appear to be of Middle-Eastern descent (Saeed, 2007). An "unfounded hostility towards Islam" (Weedon, as cited in Saeed, 2007, p. 456) is especially common since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, and Middle-Eastern subjects are increasingly represented as dangerous in media and political

deliberation (Powell, 2011). Said's framework is useful for unpacking Western discourses that construct Middle-Eastern subjects as alien Others.

Various conceptualizations of the Other have been identified by scholars analyzing contemporary political discourse and media representations. Some examples include: "'evil Others'" (Altheide, 2006, p. 429); "the 'illegal', non-western, non-Christian Other" (Gale, 2004, p. 334); "the aberrant 'Other,'" the "hypersignified Other," and Others framed through a lens of "'criminalization,' 'enemization,' 'evilification' and 'orientalization'" (Lazar & Lazar, 2007, p. 45-46); the "pathological and alien" Other (Mustapha, 2011, p. 489); "the threatening Other," "the historical Other of the 'Western' identity, the 'Muslim,'" and "the antagonistic Other" (Mylonas, 2012, p. 410, 413, 421); "the evil other" (Powell, 2011, p. 107); the "threatening other," "the 'alien within,'" and "the 'outsider within'" (Saeed, 2007, p. 458, 451); and the demonized Other (Rogin, 1987). While certainly not exhaustive, this list gives cursory insight into the significant range of Othering discourses constructed around those who are perceived as unwelcome threats to the members of any imagined community.

A large body of scholarship examines the use of fear and threat in contemporary political realms, which often involves constructing Others as a threat to national safety. Altheide (2006) analyzes 18 months of news reports from before and after the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 to examine differences in the ways in which fear, terrorism, and crime are discussed before and after the events. He employs the "politics of fear thesis" (p. 416) to consider how political figures and news media capitalize on narratives of fear and terror as a way to justify "surveillance, protection, revenge, and punishment to protect us, to save us" (p. 418). The concern here is that when the public, in their longtime "disposition to panic" (Furedi, as cited in Stenvall, 2007, p. 219), is led to feel a sense of urgent national threat, they will more readily

acquiesce to a government's militarized response strategy that tends to risk others' security and wellbeing in exchange for their own (Stenvall, 2007).

Interestingly, Lazar and Lazar (2007) observe that past presidents engaged in a form of "double-speak" when justifying use of violence against perceived threats (p. 57). For instance, President George H. W. Bush, when discussing militaristic interventions against Iraq in 1991, employed a "strategy of re-lexicalization" by using the terms "war" and "peace" interchangeably, and thus "offer[ed] a euphemistic way of talking about war as a necessary precursor to peace" (p. 58). However, the authors suggest that this "strikingly Orwellian" (p. 58) rhetorical move is hypocritical, as other nations' militaristic moves are not given the same benefit of the doubt. This research speaks to the subjectivity bound up in conceptualizations of war, peace, threat, and security, and suggests that peace for one nation often necessarily entails fear for another. The authors' insights point to the privileging of Western perspectives and the undermining of foreign interests in American presidential rhetoric. This research also supports the social constructionist model maintained throughout this project as it suggests that fear and threat are discursively constructed phenomena legitimized by those with great power.

Furthermore, Tsui (2015) examines the use of fear and threat in the "war on terror" narratives employed by George W. Bush throughout his presidency. Tsui notes, however, that this style of discourse did not originate with President Bush, but that its foundations were laid decades earlier by political leaders as far back as Ronald Reagan. By building on the "apocalyptic scenarios" (p. 80) cemented in the public's minds by the administrations before them, Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush were able to mobilize around threats and fear of the Other, eventually garnering citizens' support for aggressive counterterrorist strategies. Tsui argues that "the interpretation of terrorist threat … sustains a counter-terrorism 'regime of

truth' that defines what can be meaningfully said and discussed about the subject" (p. 67). War on terror narratives can thus serve to legitimize and normalize discourses that see Others as imminent threats worthy of political intervention.

Mustapha (2011) also explores President George W. Bush's war on terror rhetoric as well as the material consequences of these discourses. She argues that Bush's discourses recalled Cold War discourses of fear, threat, and militaristic intervention as a means to sustain American hegemonic interests and beliefs in "the US as a defender of freedom and upholder of civilization" (p. 489). Mustapha also notes that increased perceptions and fears of terrorism perpetuated by the Bush administration influenced decisions such as America's post-September 11 invasion of Iraq. She argues that such serious political and legislative decisions were facilitated by two key developments in areas of public perception: "American *fear*, which arose out of an inflated threat assessment of terrorism vis-à-vis Saddam Hussein; and an American sense of *responsibility*, which arose out of a latter-day Wilsonian *mission civilisatrice* to cure the world of its undemocratic ills" (p. 490). Thus, "the discursive construction of threat is intrinsic to the *practice* of security" (p. 490-491), as illustrated by politicians' attempts to garner support for interventions assumed to defeat a perceived enemy.

Significantly, Mustapha (2011) notes that threat discourses may actually work *against* the goals of militaristic interventions, as they can "[encourage] the development of new grievances for militant groups that *do* display a willingness to deploy violence against civilians" (p. 497). In this way, fear may act as "a self-fulfilling prophecy," contributing to the very terroristic outlooks and actions they seek to eradicate (Altheide, 2006, p. 420). Reductive discourses around groups deemed dangerous can also serve to depoliticize the historical and cultural contexts in which terrorism arises (Altheide, 2006). Such narratives overlook "the political nature of grievances

such as opposition to the US attacks on Iraq and Afghanistan" (Hamilton-Hart, as cited in Mustapha, 2011, p. 494) as well as other acts that, were the roles reversed, might incite similar action on behalf of the United States' government (Mustapha, 2011).

The research outlined in this section suggests that fear has been a significant part of presidential discourse in recent decades. In an interesting cycle, American presidents, in their positions of authority, have extraordinary power to guide the public's perceptions of threat, and these perceptions, in turn, legitimize leaders' authority to make choices on behalf of the electorate. Critically analyzing political discourse is therefore important for unpacking discursive constructions of the Other and the ways in which such discourses gain legitimacy among electorates. Analyzing President Trump's discourses of threat can thus shed light on some of the ways in which the current American president constructs discourses about the dangerous Other, continuing the long presidential legacy identified by Tsui (2015). The following chapter outlines this project's methodology, which will serve as important groundwork for unpacking the campaign discourses that paved the way for what has been a curious, contentious, and highly unprecedented Trump presidency.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a popular multidisciplinary approach used to analyze the social, political, and cultural effects of discourse in society. Fairclough (2012) claims that CDA is not a methodology in its own right, but that it encompasses "a variety of approaches towards the social analysis of discourse" and considers the role of discourses in "contemporary processes of social change" (p. 452). Wodak and Meyer note that CDA includes various approaches to the study of discourse, arguing that it "has never been and has never attempted to be or to provide one single or specific theory. Neither is one specific methodology characteristic of research in CDA. Quite the contrary, studies in CDA are multifarious" (as cited in Caballero Mengibar, 2015, p. 40). Scholars in a wide array of disciplines have employed CDA to critically analyze discourses and their relationships with the broader socio-political contexts in which they exist.

Critical discourse analysis is fundamentally concerned with carefully examining the ways in which discourses serve to produce and maintain power structures that advantage the most powerful in society. Teun van Dijk (1993) explains that "CDA should deal primarily with the discourse dimensions of power abuse and the injustice and inequality that result from it" (p. 252). van Dijk (1993) emphasizes the importance of unpacking the forms of dominance produced and maintained through discourse, defining dominance "as the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality" (p. 249). van Dijk's (1995) emphasis on the discursive production and maintenance of knowledge by society's elites is significant to his conceptualization of CDA. He argues that, due to their positions of power and prestige,

politicians, academics, and journalists "have access to and control over a vast array of both informal as well as public and institutional forms of text and talk," affording them "more or less preferential access to the most influential and important genres of discourse in society" (1995, p. 20). Elites' disproportionate degree of influence over major communication networks gives them significant power to construct and legitimize dominant discourses (van Dijk, 1995).

It must be stated that occupying positions of power and thus having some degree of influence and control over dominant texts and communication systems does not necessarily make one complicit in the production of problematic discourses and power structures. Indeed, as van Dijk (1995) argues, elites' access to and influence over dominant political, academic, and media discourses is unproblematic by itself. However, CDA specifically aims to interrogate the ways in which elites abuse their social and political power by "engag[ing] in talk or text that otherwise limits the freedom or rights of other participants" (van Dijk, 1995, p. 21). Put another way, CDA can be used "to uncover the implicit arguments and meanings in texts which tend to marginalize non-dominant groups, while justifying the values, beliefs, and ideologies of dominant groups" (Ricento, 2003, p. 615). CDA is primarily concerned with the ways in which elites abuse their power by justifying, facilitating, or turning a blind eye toward discourses that disadvantage minority groups (van Dijk, 1993).

Due to its fundamental goal of unveiling the (re)production of inequality and power in dominance discourse, the practice of CDA is political in nature, employed by scholars to enact "change through critical understanding" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 252). Drawing a distinction between CDA and other analytical frameworks, van Dijk (1993) explains that CDA is generally concerned with unpacking discourses to analyze the ways in which different social issues and

groups are discursively constructed and understood. Significantly, Wodak et al. (2009) note that, given its critical and political objectives, CDA

> does not pretend to be able to assume an objective, socially neutral analytical stance. Indeed, practitioners of Critical Discourse Analysis believe that such ostensible political indifference ultimately assists in maintaining an unjust status quo. Critical Discourse Analysis, which is committed to an emancipatory, socially critical approach, allies itself with those who suffer political and social injustice. Its aim is therefore to intervene discursively in given social and political practices. (p. 8)

Proponents of CDA thus challenge popular expectations that scholarly work and journalism be objective and neutral (Fairclough, 2012; van Dijk, 1993; Wodak et al., 2009). Such scholars recognize that there is "a dialectical relationship between discourse acts and the situations, institutions and social structures in which they are embedded" (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 8). From this perspective, there is much to lose in being silent, and thus complicit, to inequality and injustice, and critical discourse analysts engage in scholarship to stand in "solidarity with those who need it most" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 252).

While many praise CDA for its usefulness in identifying power dynamics and inequalities in popular discourse, others have criticized CDA, arguing that it ignores the socio-political and cultural contexts of inequality (Caballero Mengibar, 2015). Caballero Mengibar concedes that CDA is useful for "identifying the existence of unequal social relations in society," but she argues that this in itself "is not sufficient to enact social change" (p. 40). Instead, she believes that "finding the roots of the problems causing social inequality is an imperative" in order "to uncover why these particular productions of knowledge contribute to the structuring of unequal power relations" (p. 52). While this project acknowledges such concerns and agrees with the

importance of moving beyond language to address the sociocultural and political contexts of inequality, it contends that CDA is a practical and important framework for uncovering and addressing discriminatory discourses that too often go uncontested and unaddressed by social groups in positions of power.

Despite these criticisms, this thesis argues that CDA is an important framework for analyzing the power relations that shape discourse and its effects. In particular, critiquing racist and xenophobic discourses can "serve to uncover manipulative manœuvres in politics and the media, which aim at linguistic homogenisation or discriminatory exclusion of human beings, and to heighten the awareness of the rhetorical strategies which are used to impose certain political beliefs, values, and goals" (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 9). CDA can thus pave the way for social change by exposing power dynamics in dominant discourses and educating the public about the ways in which "dominance may be enacted and reproduced by subtle, routine, everyday forms of text and talk" that may "seem natural until they begin to be challenged'" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 254-255). Even if the focus of CDA is not explicitly historical, as its critics claim, this critical framework is influential for its multifaceted "account of intricate relationships between text, talk, social cognition, power, society and culture" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 253). Indeed, CDA is complex and "far from easy" as "it requires true multidisciplinarity" and a comprehensive understanding of sociocultural forces in order to effectively analyze discourses and their implications (van Dijk, 1993, p. 253). This project thus contends that a CDA framework offers important tools for evaluating contemporary political discourses and the culture(s) in which they circulate.

To this end, this project employs critical discourse analysis to examine four of Donald Trump's 2015-2016 presidential campaign speeches in order to identify and evaluate discourses of threat and fear perpetuated by candidate Trump. I analyze Trump's campaign speeches

because that period was important for establishing his large support base and expressing his political perspectives early on. Analyzing speeches rather than leaders' debates and other forms of political discourse also makes it possible to focus exclusively on Trump's rhetoric without interjection or provocation from other candidates. Additionally, a great deal of critical media and political commentary has interrogated the extent to which Trump's campaign and presidential speeches are expressions of his distinctive—and, some suggest, dictatorial (Collinson, 2017; Giroux, 2018)—political style. Trump's campaign speeches are noteworthy and interesting phenomena unto themselves, and a continued interest in these events into his presidency speak to their importance as political and cultural artifacts. Thus, it is worthwhile to critically examine Trump's unique rally style and the discourses communicated during his campaign.

To determine which of Trump's campaign videos to include in this analysis, I searched YouTube for "Donald Trump campaign rally 2015" and "Donald Trump campaign rally 2016." I sorted the results by relevance, which filtered out the majority of incomplete videos as well as those falling outside of the scope of this study. I then skimmed a small selection of videos from each search that fell between June 16, 2015 (the day Trump launched his campaign) and November 8, 2016 (the day Trump was elected) in order to gain a general understanding of the range of topics addressed at Trump's rallies. Of these videos, I selected four (two from each year) in which Trump seemed to cover the greatest range of topics and that sufficiently discussed racialized minority groups and national security. This somewhat selective approach to data selection can be effective for elucidating discourses and themes relevant to this project's research question concerning constructions of fear within the Trump campaign (Tonkiss, 2004). This approach also ensures that, as much as possible, my dataset is not overly repetitive (i.e. that Trump did not use large portions of the same speech in two videos).

I analyze videos from 2015 and 2016 to consider how Trump's rhetoric played out in both years of his campaign. The four speeches included in this analysis are:

1. September 14, 2015 rally in Dallas, Texas (FOX 10 Phoenix [FoxA])

2. December 5, 2015 rally in Davenport, Iowa (Right Side Broadcasting Network [RSBN])

3. August 19, 2016 rally in Dimondale, Michigan (FOX 10 Phoenix [FoxB])

4. November 7, 2016 rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan (DONALD TRUMP SPEECHES [DTS])

The speeches are relatively consistent in format and length, with each being between about 45 and 70 minutes long (not including introductory comments made by other leaders). I examine longer speeches as this allows greater opportunity to access Trump's off-the-cuff rhetoric and to gain insight into his personal perspectives on the wide range of issues for which he received much criticism throughout his campaign. Analyzing entire speeches is also useful for understanding Trump's comments within larger contexts, in contrast to the (often polarizing) sound bites that circulate through news and social media.

After transcribing the videos, I analyzed each of the four speeches and identified two broad themes. First, Trump's campaign statements establish a foundation of credibility, positioning him as an "authentic" presidential candidate freed from established norms (including the "corrupting" influence) of official politics. Second, this discursive framework bolsters the perceived legitimacy of Trump's statements about racialized minorities, including Black Americans, Syrian refugees, and undocumented Mexican immigrants, as "threatening Others." I identified key statements that contribute to the production of discourses that see the Other as a threat to American national security and ways of life, and I considered the ways in which these discourses undermine and distort the experiences of racialized minority groups and articulate a

particular vision of a "great" American nation. This project is ultimately interested in interrogating how Trump's discourses "eventually [became] a 'reality' explicitly articulated in numerous official documents and … accepted as a common 'grid of intelligibility'" (Tsui, 2015, p. 77). While there is clearly a large body of scholarship investigating fear in political discourse, little published work currently examines Trump's campaign discourses and the ways in which his rhetoric is already impacting some of the world's most vulnerable populations. By critically analyzing this particular moment of the Trump political chapter, this project aims to shed light on and denaturalize the politics of fear informing candidate Trump's early rise to power.

Chapter 4: Analysis

In this chapter, I analyze discursive constructions of the "threatening Other" in four of Donald Trump's campaign speeches. To do so, I focus on Trump's use of three distinct talking points—"inner cities," "illegal immigrants," and "the wall"—to demonstrate how his campaign taps into and fuels racist and xenophobic discourses of a threatening Other, which ultimately helps delineate a white nationalist vision of American "greatness." First, I consider the ways in which Trump's "unpresidential" discourse, characterized by the use of superlatives and snark, constructs a power hierarchy between himself, his opponents, and news media as a source of political knowledge. Trump's discursive moves—of making clear to audiences his excellence, popularity, and legitimacy, while disregarding and even ridiculing his opponents—serve to establish the candidate as the most credible (if unconventional) source of political expertise. I then discuss how Trump's self-aggrandizement works to legitimize the discourses he constructs around minority groups—including Black Americans, Syrian refugees, and undocumented Mexican immigrants—as racialized Others.

Establishing Credibility

Throughout the four campaign speeches, Trump engages in a range of discursive strategies that serve to highlight his credibility as a presidential candidate. Rather than exhibiting qualities that position him as the traditional candidate, however, Trump uses largely unprecedented and unpresidential discourse as a way to establish his credibility as a political expert. In particular, Trump makes frequent use of superlatives and snark in order to position himself as an outlier removed from established norms of official politics. In doing so, Trump situates himself as an authentic, populist leader working in the interests of the "everyday, hard-

working American" desiring grassroots political change—a sentiment that, importantly,

underscores the eventual support Trump garners around his views on racialized Others.

In his speeches, Trump frequently uses superlatives as a way to establish his credibility,

namely by highlighting his business and commercial success and trustworthiness as (apparent)

measure of his unique ability to serve as the nation's leader. For example, Trump regularly draws

attention to the size of his support base by commenting on the amount of public favour he has

garnered on a range of political issues, even referring to himself as "the king" of certain policies

(RSBN, 2015, 52:17). He frequently gives an overview of the day's poll results in his rallies

(DTS, 2016; FoxA, 2015; RSBN, 2015), and draws attention to the large crowds gathered at his

events, saying, "we had 31,000 people, which is by far the largest, they say, like, ever, for an

early primary—it's probably true" (FoxA, 2015, 4:22). Trump praises his own accomplishments

by highlighting the success of his television show, *The Apprentice*, calling it "a tremendous

success—one of the great successes on television" (FoxA, 2015, 17:01). He also embellishes the

qualities of his personal and business acquaintances using terms such as "great," "best," and

"incredible" (FoxA, 2015). This is illustrated when Trump says, "a friend of mine, who's a very,

very successful guy … very smart" (RSBN, 2015, 57:02). Within the broader context of his

speeches, this consistent use of superlatives and self-aggrandizement constructs Trump's

position as successful, relatable, and credible.

Trump also engages in snark—incessant ridiculing and undermining of his opponents—in

order to establish his credibility and authenticity as a candidate separate from the interests of the

purportedly "corrupt" political elite. This plays out notably in the range of defamatory nicknames

Trump gives his opponents. For example, he notoriously dubbed the Democratic nominee,

Hillary Clinton, "crooked" leading up to the election (FoxB, 2016, 10:39), and referred to her as

"the most corrupt person ever to seek the office of the presidency of the United States" (DTS, 2016, 41:54). Trump also situates himself as outside of the perceived political elite, a category he largely reserves for his Democrat opponents. In a move characteristic of right-wing populist leaders who "[reject] existing political consensus and usually [combine] laissez-faire liberalism and anti-elitism" in their "appeal to the 'common man/woman' as opposed to the elites" (Wodak, 2015, p. 7), Trump asks on one occasion, "do you want America to be ruled by the corrupt political class or do you want America to be ruled by you—the people" (DTS, 2016, 38:28). Trump's contention that "[t]oday is our Independence Day" (DTS, 2016, 39:30) brings his apparent intention for grassroots change to the fore.

Trump also expresses blunt disapproval of those who criticize or oppose him. He regularly defames media organizations in particular, claiming they undermine his campaign by publishing stories that frame him negatively. He refers to the "dishonesty" of media organizations (RSBN, 2015, 59:18), and accuses them of attempting to undermine his support base—in effect, lying in their television coverage of his events (DTS, 2016). Throughout the campaign, Trump's followers expressed appreciation and support for the politician's blunt and often derisive rhetorical style, considering it a mark of his authenticity and refusal to obey established norms of "political correctness."

However, many scholars and political pundits have commented on the significance of Trump's continual degradation of media organizations, particularly as it marks a broader "blatant disregard for the truth" that serves to "undermine freedom of speech and truthfulness as core democratic values" (Giroux, 2017a, p. 26). Such efforts not only reflect attempts on Trump's part to discredit the systems that function to keep political figures like him accountable (by discounting lies and analyzing political decisions), but they also signal "a strategy for asserting

power, while encouraging if not emboldening his followers to think the unthinkable ethically and politically" (Giroux, 2017a, p. 26). These degrading discourses thus represent attempts to "[discredit] traditional sources of facts and analysis" and to "[undermine] the public's grip on evidence, facts and informed judgement [*sic*]" (Giroux, 2017b, p. 895-896) in order to frame Trump's own statements as credible in the political realm.

Rather than dismissing these as mere acts of vanity or narcissism, I argue that Trump's consistent use of superlatives (by emphasizing his popularity and success, as well as the apparently positive qualities of his acquaintances) and snark (by dismissing his opponents as "corrupt," "crooked," and "dishonest") are acts of self-aggrandizement and ridicule that work to clearly distinguish candidate Trump from other nominees and past presidents. Trump's "unfiltered" and derisive rhetoric is quite unprecedented in contemporary American politics; however, rather than hurting audiences' perceptions of the candidate, this rhetoric works in his favour, situating him within a right-wing populist framework in which voters feel frustrated with "[the perceived inability of elites] to restore the sense of security and prosperity" in "a context of growing public pessimism, anxiety, and disaffection" (Betz, as cited in Wodak, 2015, p. 7). Trump's populist appeals—simultaneously disavowing the legitimacy of his opponents while assuring his followers that "[he], and only [he], represent[s] the people" (Müller, 2016, para. 4)—were well received by his supporters, who were no doubt familiar with the politician's untraditional (politically inexperienced) entry into the political realm. Such appeals feed into an apparent discontentment with a political status quo marked by respectful and balanced presidential rhetoric (what Trump often calls "politically correct" language) as well as policies and legislation that many Republicans consider to be too lax in the face of America's concerns around immigration and terrorism (Smith, 2016).

Trump clearly capitalizes on his supporters' sense of alienation, using his very inexperience as a platform on which to build his credibility during the campaign. Trump's extraordinary campaign rhetoric therefore serves to legitimize his statements and sets the foundation for him to undermine and distort the experiences of racialized minority groups. Giroux (2017a) explains that "[t]he malleability of truth has made it easier for … the Trump administration to wage an ongoing and ruthless assault on the immigrants, … poor minorities," and other populations seen as a threat to Trump's mission to "make America great again" (p. 27). Analyzing Trump's discursive constructions of the racialized Other in the next section will serve as an important step in denaturalizing and contesting discourses that misrepresent, undermine, and negatively impact the experiences of the marginalized.

Constructing the "Other"

"Inner Cities" and Black Americans

Trump discusses "inner cities" in two of the four speeches: on August 19, 2016 in Dimondale, Michigan, and on November 7, 2016 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In both instances, he speaks about the poverty and danger present in inner cities across America, and discursively constructs these communities in disparaging ways. This talking point is significant because Trump correlates inner cities with Black American life. He suggests that these are synonymous experiences, and that the country's predominantly Black neighbourhoods are underdeveloped and dangerous areas that must be "fixed" (DTS, 2016, 55:27). Importantly, Trump mentions Black Americans' interests almost exclusively in the context of inner city crime, violence, and poverty. When making appeals to garner Black Americans' votes, Trump frames these populations in disparaging ways by positioning their (assumed) neighbourhoods as particularly

desolate areas in need of political intervention. These discourses overlook the other demographics to which Black Americans belong, and reinforce stereotypical associations of Black Americans as dangerous, criminal, and impoverished Others.

Trump's references to the inner city require a careful "read[ing] *against* the grain of the text, to look to silences or gaps" in order to unpack the discourse of Black Americans as threatening Others (Tonkiss, 2004, p. 379). First, while it is indeed true that people of colour and other racialized minorities experience disproportionate levels of poverty and violence due to structural inequalities and deep-rooted systems of oppression, Trump overlooks important facts that would otherwise lend specificity and context to African Americans' experiences. For example, he states, "[y]ou walk to the store to pick up a loaf of bread, you get shot. … The inner cities are unbelievably dangerous, the education is no good, the safety is horrible, and there are no jobs" (DTS, 2016, 55:31). Also significant is Trump's reliance on stereotypes of Black Americans as a way to situate and lend legitimacy to his efforts to garner this group's votes. For example, he says, "[y]ou're living in poverty, your schools are no good, you have no jobs, 58% of your youth is unemployed. … I will produce for the inner cities, and I will produce for the African Americans" (FoxB, 2016, 12:00).

Contrary to Trump's assertions, however, African Americans predominantly live neither in poverty nor in the inner cities of America. Semuels (2016) points out that "[t]here might have been a time when conflating inner cities and African Americans was appropriate shorthand, but it's just not accurate anymore. The majority of African Americans are living both above the poverty line and outside of the inner cities, rendering Trump's comments misleading and factually inaccurate" (para. 2). Furthermore, in his attempt to cultivate African Americans' votes, Trump constructs an ostensibly positive narrative of his administration's promises to halt the

supposed deterioration (by violence and poverty) of Black communities. However, his assertions are based on the implied conflation of inner city violence with Black communities—a relationship that fundamentally reiterates the stereotype about Black identity and criminality. This discourse illustrates Trump's use of dog whistle rhetoric as a way to subtly "denigrate minority populations" while retaining "room for deniability if challenged" (Brown, 2016, p. 317), and reflects Gale's (2014) "post-modern racism" (p. 323).

In the speeches, Trump also situates himself as the one candidate who can ameliorate the danger of inner cities, which he accomplishes by critiquing Democratic approaches to redressing high rates of violence and joblessness in these communities. For example, Trump claims that Democratic "policies have produced only poverty, joblessness, failing schools, and broken homes" (FoxB, 2016, 9:06), and blames these issues on the fact that **"**inner cities … have been run by the Democratic Party for more than fifty years" (FoxB, 2016, 8:55). He positions himself as a concerned friend to the Black community, arguing that Clinton and her party have just "taken advantage of your [African Americans'] vote" (FoxB, 2016, 13:15).

However, Trump's political concern is complicated by his (apparent) inability to talk about Black Americans' interests outside the discursive framework of inner city criminality and poverty (as well as by his vocal support of the "birther" movement and violations of the Fair Housing Act in the 1970s). As Semuels (2016) notes, "trying to help African Americans by just looking at the inner cities would miss whole swaths of the population" that live outside of inner city communities and whose experiences do not align with those articulated by Trump (para. 11). Rather than engaging these issues constructively and offering up specific policies aimed at addressing issues of poverty and violence in marginalized communities across the United States, Trump reinforces generalizations about African American populations that perpetuate racist

stereotypes about dangerous Black Others. These stereotypes get taken up in other articulations of the racialized Other, as will be discussed below.

"Illegal Immigrants" – Syrian Refugees and Undocumented Mexicans

In his speeches, Trump also makes "illegal immigrants" a distinct talking point. Trump focuses extensively on Syrian refugees and undocumented (typically Mexican) immigrants in each of the four speeches, frequently making use of the term "illegal" as a way to highlight the criminality of undocumented immigrants. Trump's speeches tend to conflate these distinct groups, subsuming them to xenophobic narratives that construct these migrant populations as a terror threat. To this end, Trump also draws on highly affective tales of migrant violence to support calls for stricter screening processes for those seeking citizenship or asylum in the United States. Trump's narratives amplify his audiences' fears of the foreign Other by painting a picture of wide-open American borders through which outsiders can openly enter and cause destruction.

In his campaign speeches, Trump taps into and fuels anti-Muslim (Islamophobic) and xenophobic sentiment. He accomplishes this by conflating Syrian refugees (and undocumented immigrants from Muslim-majority countries) with "radical Islamic terrorists," a phrase he uses to refer to people of Middle-Eastern descent who conduct domestic or foreign terrorist acts. By connecting refugees and immigrants with (radical Islamic) terrorist acts, Trump suggests that those seeking refuge and residence in the United States intend to cause (religiously-motivated) destruction in the country in order to impart fear and disrupt American cultural values. This discourse is illustrated when Trump states, "Hillary Clinton wants a 550% increase in Syrian refugees pouring into our country and virtually unlimited immigration from the most dangerous

regions of the world, including regions overrun and controlled by ISIS. Her plan will import generations of terrorism, extremism, and radicalism into your schools and throughout your communities" (DTS, 2016, 56:37).

These narratives are destructive and problematic for several reasons. First, they serve to naturalize connections between Muslims (and those from predominantly Muslim countries) and terrorism—a relationship that "bears significant ramifications for the lives of countless human beings who cease to live as ordinary citizens, but as 'potential terrorists'" (Fitzgerald, 2017, para. 5). This construct supports longstanding Orientalist myths perpetuated in Western media and politics about the "dangerous" Muslim Other (Powell, 2011; Saeed, 2007; Sharifi, Ansari, & Asadollahzadeh, 2016). Discounting such myths, Pérez-Peña (2017) notes that "available evidence does not support the idea that undocumented immigrants commit a disproportionate share of crime" (para. 2). Fitzgerald (2017) agrees, claiming that terrorism levels "pale in comparison with the number of attacks/deaths attributed to terrorism in the West throughout the 1970s and 1980s" (para. 4), even despite the global increase in immigrants and refugees in recent decades (OHCHR, 2016). These findings confirm Brown's (2016) claim that "[a]lthough 'illegal' immigrants are no more likely to engage in non-immigration related law violations than other groups—indeed, evidence suggests they are less likely to do so …[—]they are nonetheless seen as a particularly crime-prone segment of the population" (p. 319). Trump's narratives about refugees and immigrants effectively target and victimize the world's most vulnerable populations seeking asylum in the United States.

Trump also draws on anecdotal evidence of Americans hurt and killed by undocumented Mexican immigrants to illustrate the perceived danger that these groups pose to the country. He tells the story of Kate Steinle who "was murdered by an illegal immigrant deported at least five

times" (DTS, 2016, 59:52). Trump highlights others killed or hurt by undocumented immigrants, including a "66-year-old veteran raped recently by an illegal immigrant in California—raped, sodomized, and killed" (RSBN, 2015, 40:10). He also mentions that "I just saw backstage some of the families who were decimated—their families were decimated. Their sons, their daughters, killed by illegal immigrants. And it's a massive problem" (FoxA, 2015, 36:06). Significantly, the murders of Kate Steinle and the veteran were carried out by Mexican undocumented immigrants. These individual stories are intended by Trump to be generalizable—wherein one "illegal's" actions are meant to stand in for the entire group—and serve to foment anti-Mexican sentiment in his base. Trump paints a grim, detailed picture of brutal violence wrought by undocumented Mexican immigrants living in the United States and fuels public concern about foreigners as dangerous Others.

These discourses ignore the fact that "the vast majority of unauthorized immigrants do not fit Trump's description of aggravated felons, whose crimes include murder" (Lee, 2017, para. 3), and they support myths that foreigners in America are dangerous Others prone to kill. Furthermore, Trump offers no discussion of the systemic issues contributing to the pervasive culture of violence that exists in the United States, and he fails to acknowledge the fact that "violent right-wing extremists have been responsible for more deaths in the US and Europe for the past 15 years than violent Jihadists" (Fitzgerald, 2017, n.p.).

Finally, Trump promises to enforce stricter screening processes to ensure refugees and immigrants entering the United States do not pose security threats. These narratives support Trump's broader efforts to frame racialized foreigners as dangerous Others by suggesting that these groups attempt to bypass security measures, presumably to cause destruction in the United States. Trump illustrates these discourses when he says, "we're not going to issue visas where

inadequate screening controls take place. We are going to make sure that we have total screening" (FoxB, 2016, 39:00).

These narratives amplify fear and xenophobia of the racialized Other by giving the impression of unregulated American borders through which perceived criminals and terrorists can pass. These findings align with Fitzgerald's (2017) claim that

it has become a mainstay of increasingly right-wing political and (social) media discourse to collapse the categories of 'refugee' and 'migrant' into one another … The purpose of this vocabulary is to suggest that without adequate means of defense—such as a sweeping travel ban—these powerful forces have the potential to overwhelm the sovereign and cultural boundaries that define a nation state; that which secures 'us' against 'them' and provides a sense of collective self-identify in the process. (para. 7)

Presumably, Trump's politics of fear is particularly compelling for those supporters who, like Trump, believe that foreign and domestic racialized minorities threaten America's safety and ways of life. The question of "American" culture is important and will be considered further in the next section.

"The Wall" and Mexico

Early in his campaign, Trump began proposing plans to build a security wall along the Mexico-United States border and adamantly proclaimed that Mexico would pay for it. Trump makes several references to these plans in the four speeches, situating the wall as a strategy to ensure the United States' protection from racialized minorities who ostensibly threaten the country. Despite Trump's considerable emphasis on the wall in his speeches, he does not explicitly delineate his motivations for these plans. However, Trump had made, since the early

days of his campaign, several controversial claims about Mexico, including, "[w]hen [they send their] people, they're not sending their best … They're sending people that have lots of problems … They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists" (Phillips, 2017, n.p.). In light of this context, and given Trump's passionate declaration that Mexico would pay for this intervention, "the wall" as a campaign talking point represents another part of the politician's project to construct threat and xenophobia around the racialized Other—in this case, Mexicans. The prospect of the wall thus serves as both a symbolic and material site around which a white nationalistic vision of America and its values can be imagined and imposed. The wall strengthens and legitimizes narratives of Mexicans as criminal threats, fuelling Trump's politics of fear centred around the racialized Other.

In the four speeches, Trump fails to offer justification for and substantial details around the wall's planned execution, despite the fact that this was one of his most popular campaign promises. He also regularly and adamantly asserts that Mexico will pay for the wall, making statements such as "Mexico is going to pay. And they'll be happy" (FoxA, 2015, 1:03:47). This lack of clarity points to the symbolic function of the wall to stand in for a range of fears around racialized Others, regardless of the actual feasibility of the physical project. That Trump has nevertheless garnered widespread support for the wall—and that his followers generally remain supportive despite his failure, one year into his presidency, to convince Mexico to pay for it— reinforces the wall's power and resonance as a symbol of American hegemony.

Yang (2017) uses the term "neocolonial humiliation" (para. 13) to refer to Trump's insistence that Mexico should be burdened with the wall's bill. One year into his presidency, Trump has not yet had success negotiating with Mexico in the building of the wall, and he has

been forced to start making alternative plans to fund it, including through Americans' tax dollars. Giroux (2017a) illustrates the peculiarity of this situation when he states,

> [u]nleashing promises he had made to his angry, die-hard ultra-nationalists, and white supremacist supporters, the billionaire populist played on the desires and desperation of a range of groups whom he believes have no place in U.S. society. … Little did his [Trump's] cheering crowds suspect that they would be paying for the wall through massive taxation on imports from Mexico. (p. 29)

Wade (2017) echoes these sentiments, arguing that Trump

> has the data that shows that illegal immigration from Mexico is net zero. He knows our jobs are being stolen by robots and not dark-skinned people. He knows our illegal immigration problem is primarily caused by visitors overstaying their visas, something a wall won't fix. But Trump moved forward anyway, even if Americans have to pay for it. (para. 2-3)

These quotes highlight the racist and xenophobic nature of Trump's proposed border wall plans as well as the curiosity of continued support of these interventions despite the inability of Trump's campaign promises to come to fruition.

According to Trump, a key purpose for building the border wall is to help protect and restore "American" cultures and ways of life. Referring to a readily distinguishable set of American values supports the framing of Mexicans as foreign Others and reinforces fears about Mexicans entering the United States. Trump illustrates this fear, saying,

> [o]ur border will be protected and our children will be safe—very, very safe. And we will build the wall … Law and order will be restored. And the poorest places in our country will know safety and peace again. American values and cultures will be cherished, and I mean cherished, and celebrated once again. (FoxB, 2016, 6:31)

On another occasion, he states, "we are only going to admit individuals into our country who support our values" (FoxB, 2016, 38:55). These assertions raise significant questions about what constitutes "American" values and whose values are therefore deemed illegitimate in Trump's vision of America.

Yang (2017) argues that Trump, throughout his campaign, appeals to demographics who, largely uneducated, "believe that their economic opportunities are taken away by Mexicans and other foreigners, worry that Spanish is taking over English, that American values get eroded due to legal or illegal immigrants, and that co-existence with non-Christian traditions and non-white European heritages threatens what they grew up with" (para. 4). These ideologies inform discursive constructs of racialized minorities—both domestic and foreign—as dangerous Others who will infiltrate the nation, cause destruction, and subvert Americans' ways of life. By claiming that there is an identifiable set of American values and traditions, and that the wall will help restore and uphold such values by keeping out those who threaten them, Trump draws on white nationalist fears of the Other and summons divisive beliefs in the power of walls to prevent cultural deterioration by a perceived enemy. As Yang (2017) argues,

> [t]he Trump Wall, in the name of 'Make America Great Again,' excludes more than includes. More than a brick-and-mortar construction, the Trump Wall is a cultural divide. … A divisive wall-mindset draws an ethno-, culture-, and power-hierarchy, and fuels fear, bigotry, and distrust. It has energized the alt-right movement that advocates white supremacy and entitlement; it rejects a diverse society and a multicultural/multiracial democracy. Trump enables the wall to be more vertical and visible than before, reminding us of an era when democracy and unalienable human rights were only meaningful to certain groups and not to all. (para. 32)

Trump's wall discourses seem to tap into the most divisive and primitive human instincts, appealing to colonialist and white supremacist fears of the Other in a time of increasing diversity in the United States. Under the shadow of Trump's campaign promise to "make America great again," the wall thus serves not so much as a meaningful effort to combat crime and work toward prosperity for the whole of the country, but, rather, symbolizes the height of xenophobic distrust in the Other—a fear that has long found its way into American politics and served as justification for excluding, undermining, and building walls around perceived threats. The wall is a powerful symbol of manipulation, intimidation, and threat, and ultimately works to dehumanize racialized Others—including Black Americans, Syrian refugees, and undocumented Mexican immigrants—by reducing them to stereotyped assumptions. The wall thus presents a logical extension of the politics of fear leveraged by Trump and supported by his followers, offering a material solution to the threat posed by the dangerous Others he constructs throughout his campaign.

Trump's wall discourses present, to the politician's fearful electorate, a solution for overcoming the threat of the dangerous Other. In the context of Trump's campaign, "surrounded by people united only by their desire to 'bring down the United States of America,' voters are given no choice but to support whichever candidate pledges to build the highest and strongest walls between 'us' and 'all of them'" (Brown, 2016, p. 326). If Brown's contention holds true, it seems that Trump—as the candidate who appealed to the electorate's fear of the Other by proposing physical (however foggy) plans to keep this Other out—was the clear choice for voters seeking tangible solutions in the wake of the perceived threats facing their imagined community and its security, culture, and values.

Saeed (2007) argues that contemporary Othering practices are often not as overtly racist as past iterations, and that a "'new racism' has … instead forged links between race, nationhood,

patriotism and nationalism. It has done so by defining the nation as a unified cultural community, a national culture ethnically pure and homogeneous in its whiteness" (p. 445). To this end, Trump's campaign discourses illustrate the politician's efforts to discursively position Black Americans, (racialized) refugees, and undocumented immigrants as national and racial outsiders to the American imagined community. These discourses ultimately manifest in racist material efforts—including but certainly not limited to border walls—that clearly demarcate the boundaries between the imagined community of "legitimate" and "great" Americans and that of the "dangerous" enemy. These findings confirm Wodak's (2015) contention that "alleged or real threats to European [or Western] and national security (to 'Us') are functionalized more and more as legitimation for drawing new borders between 'Us' and 'Them', the 'real [Americans]' … and 'Others', and for deciding on ever more restrictive measures to keep 'Others' out" (p. 79). Indeed, Trump's politics of fear and discourses of the Other are nothing new; however, the politician's relentless efforts to establish his credibility—in part by undermining any and all voices of dissent—and his pursuit of white supremacist visions of America through discursive constructions of the dangerous Other make Trump's discourses unique in their "unprecedented shift towards neo-fascism" (Giroux, 2017a, p. 21). Trump's discourses of fear, ultimately rooted in white supremacist and xenophobic convictions about how to "make America great again," therefore serve to justify aggressive political and legislative decisions that, one year into his presidency, directly target the United States' most vulnerable populations who exist outside of the purview of the white, protestant identity largely envisioned and embodied by Trump and his administration.

The final section of this project will consider how Trump's campaign discourses extend beyond the realm of language, ultimately manifesting in tangible policies that aim to build walls

and other aggressive preventive measures to stop the perceived threat of the Other. I argue that Trump's border wall proposal is the ultimate manifestation of the politics of fear he leverages throughout his campaign as he moves beyond ideological efforts in the attempt to physically keep out Others deemed a threat to his vision of a "great" American nation. I will discuss some of Trump's recent political and legislative attempts and offer suggestions for challenging the continued culture of fear and division leveraged by Trump and his administration since the campaign.

Chapter 5: Toward "Hope in Action"

This project has followed the different ways in which Trump, throughout his campaign, establishes credibility as a political figure by positioning himself as the authentic candidate, then leverages this power to construct discourses about America's Black communities, racialized refugees, and undocumented immigrants as dangerous Others. Trump's narratives about the border wall represent the ultimate material extension of these discourses, as a physical barrier is meant to insulate America against those groups constructed to be a threat to American "greatness." While this analysis has highlighted three distinct talking points—"inner cities," "illegal immigrants," and "the wall"—that arise throughout the four campaign speeches under study here, much overlap exists between Trump's various articulations of the threatening Other. Trump's discursive framing of minority populations according to damaging stereotypes suggests that his campaign engages in a politics of fear meant to foster divisive and white supremacist beliefs about the racialized Other coming to and living in America. These discourses take on added significance against the backdrop of Trump's promise to "make America great again." Indeed, for many minority groups inhabiting and seeking shelter in the United States, Trump's slogan functions not as a promise of hope and prosperity, but as a deeply personal warning to those deemed Other. Such a warning threatens, ultimately, to rid the country of those considered dangerous and at odds with the values of "a white Christian nation governed by biblical values" (Giroux, 2017a, p. 27) and other characteristics deemed by Trump and his administration to be "American" and "great."

Since the January 2017 American election, Trump and the Republican Party have made various attempts to pass legislation that unfairly and disproportionately affects vulnerable minority populations both in the United States and abroad. In the first few months of his term,

for instance, Trump signed two highly controversial executive orders that banned travellers from seven predominantly Muslim nations from entering the United States. Citing Title 8 of the United States Code, which permits the president to "suspend the entry of all aliens or any class of aliens as immigrants or nonimmigrants … [w]henever [he] finds that [their entry] into the United States would be detrimental to the interests of the United States" (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, Section 14f), the executive orders make legally and politically discernible the racist and xenophobic rhetoric that Trump waged against refugees and Muslims during the election campaign.

While Trump's executive orders were quickly suspended—and many of his other divisive legislative attempts have also been shut down—these various efforts continue to have troubling, long-term consequences for minority groups that should not be overlooked. For these groups—as the subjects and targets of racist discourses and legislative attempts—the president's discourses "[legitimate] a form of state sponsored racial and religious purging" (Giroux, 2017a, p. 27) borne of a white supremacist vision for ethnic, racial, religious, cultural, and linguistic homogeneity in the American imagined community. Fitzgerald (2017) astutely affirms the broader social and political impacts of these discourses and legislative attempts, observing: "the number of terrorist attacks on US soil attributed to individuals from the proscribed countries? Zero. The number of individuals placed under indefinite suspicion as a result of the executive order? Approximately 227,000,000" (para. 21). The "indefinite suspicion" burdening these vulnerable populations as a result of Trump's politics of fear weighs heavily, and remains one reason that citizens, educators, and politicians must continually challenge Trump's discursive claims and legislative acts.

In the wake of Trump's incessant attempts to incite fear and division in the United States and around the world, academics have urged citizens to engage in countermeasures that

explicitly and meaningfully contest the current administration's politics of fear while working to educate others about the structural elements—including racism, colonialism, and patriarchy—that support xenophobic discourses and legislation. Giroux (2017b) advocates a set of radical political and pedagogical tools for "resist[ing] the further descent of the United States into authoritarianism" (p. 904). He explains,

> [h]ope in the abstract is not enough. We need a form of militant hope and practice that engages with the forces of authoritarianism on the educational and political fronts so as to become a foundation for what might be called hope in action; that is, a new force of collective resistance and a vehicle for anger transformed into collective struggle—a principle for making despair unconvincing and struggle possible. Education must become central to any politics of resistance because it is fundamental to how subjectivities are produced, desire is constructed and behavior takes place. (p. 905)

In the days, weeks, and months since Trump's election, citizens have already been resisting this right-wing politics of fear by engaging in Girouxian efforts of "hope in action." The day after Trump's inauguration, for instance, millions of people around the world gathered in the 2017 Women's March to collectively protest the politician's oppressive rhetoric and politics. This event constitutes the largest single-day protest in the history of the United States, and similar efforts, including the 2018 Women's March one year later, illustrate the continued and pressing acknowledgment by citizens that "[p]ower concedes nothing without a demand" (Douglass, as cited in Giroux, 2017a, p. 38). Continued acts of resistance—including marching, educating, and voting—are essential for contesting Trump's politics of fear and proclaiming a refusal to comply with the racism, xenophobia, and violence waged against the world's most vulnerable populations by the United States' current Republican administration.

This project has sought to identify and unpack discourses of fear articulated by Trump throughout his presidential campaign. I have argued that Trump's discursive constructions of racialized minority groups as threatening Others can (and must) be challenged as fostering a culture of fear that also gives leverage to discriminatory policy with material consequences for uniquely disadvantaged minority groups. The persistence of racist and xenophobic discourses also risks normalizing and further entrenching white supremacist ideology, while marginalizing the experiences of the subjects of such rhetoric. Reflecting some of America's worst impulses reminiscent of its colonialist past, Trump's discourses function to perpetuate, within twenty-first century American consciousness and political life, white supremacist visions of what it means to be American and therefore who, ultimately, makes America "great." Trump, during the 2015-2016 presidential campaign, thus "offer[ed] his followers an imagined community organized around the symbols of fear and disposability in which the nation is deemed synonymous with a white Christian public sphere" (Giroux, 2017b, p. 900). One year into Trump's leadership, Giroux's (2017a) contention holds true: "collective opposition is no longer an option; it is a necessity" (p. 39). It behooves all who value progress and democracy to resist and contest Trump's politics of fear, working to denaturalize regimes of truth waged in the service of deep-seated distrust in those whose humanity, lest we forget, give us—all of us—much more in common than our fears would have us believe.

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