JOURNAL OF HATE STUDIES

Journal of Hate Studies

The Journal of Hate Studies is published by the Gonzaga University Institute for Hate Studies. The purpose of the Journal is to promote the sharing of interdisciplinary ideas and research relating to the study of what hate is, where it comes from, and how to combat it. The Institute for Hate Studies operates under the auspices of Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. Articles and submissions are solely the views of the authors and not those of the University or Institute and do not in any way imply approval or endorsement by Gonzaga.

The Journal welcomes unsolicited manuscripts (including essays and shorter pieces) and suggestions for improving the Journal. Manuscripts and other communications should be sent to Director, Gonzaga University Institute for Hate Studies, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA USA 992580099.

For more information about the Gonzaga University Institute for Hate Studies and the Journal of Hate Studies, please visit www.gonzaga.edu/hatestudies.

JOURNAL OF HATE STUDIES

"INTERROGATING THE PLACE OF HATE IN THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN"

CONTENTS

The Resurgence of Hate: Introductory Notes on the 2016 US Presidential Campaign

C. Richard King
Columbia College Chicago
David J. Leonard
Washington State University

On June 16, 2015, Donald J. Trump launched his presidential campaign in a rambling speech that lamented that state of the American republic, damned the status quo, celebrated his achievements, and struck the populist tone that would prove central to his run for the republican nomination and ultimately the White House. Throughout his remarks, he would set aside conventional conservative talking points, including tax cuts, state's rights, and family values, opting instead to cast the US, and especially his target audience, the white voter, as the victim of the establishment, globalization, particularly trade imbalances with Asia, immigration, the media, political correctness, and a failure of leadership by then President Barak Obama. These forces, and the communities they empower he asserted, had diminished the nation and degraded the possibilities of the average American. "We need somebody," he declared, "that literally will take this country and make it great again" (DelReal, 2015, para. 2). Not surprisingly, he asserted, "We can do that" (DelReal, 2015, para. 2). In this initial address, he anchored his appeal in the language of hate, a language and spirit that would define his campaign and many of its supporters. Speaking of immigration from Mexico, for instance, Trump invoked familiar nativist trope of deviance, violation, and impropriety:

> When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.

Formulaic to be sure, but the rhetoric of hate effectively distinguishes between self and other, good and evil, order and chaos, recycling falsehoods and fears in condensed stereotypes to mobilize (identity) politics (Full text: Donald Trump announces, 2015).

Over the next 18 months of his campaign, Trump would make the case for "making America great again," not through a hopeful vision, coalition building, or respectful discourse, but through dehumanizing rhetoric that would play on longstanding histories of white supremacy, xenophobia, anti-

Semitism, and countless more hate. He would continue to marshal anti-immigrant sentiment to advance his campaign and his oft repeated call for a border wall., portraying migrants and refugees from Latin America as bad hombres, criminals, largely through references to M13, and unassimilable, even hostile, outsiders (Mendoza-Denton, 2017). Over time, he would add an almost unending range of others to his hate list. While he regularly belittled his opponents, resorting to name calling and disparagement to undermine them and their standing, he took to twitter seemingly at all hours to bully critics and journalists.

More than antipathy for individuals, Trump used dehumanizing rhetorics and tactics to channel collective resentment and anxiety against entire groups of people, restating longstanding negative association and restabilizing persistent social hierarchies. In addition to immigrants from Mexico, he also weaponized xenophobia, drawing on the pronounced Islamophobia in American life to question the patriotism of Muslims in the US and to call for a Muslim ban (Amaney, 2017; Gomez, 2018; Grose, 2018). Less overtly, his campaign recycled a variety of established racial rhetorics (O'Connor & Marens, 2017). It used anti-Semitic tropes to speak to elements of its base, even as it offered strong support for the state of Israel (Moshin, 2017). Trump himself took pleasure in anti-Indianism, mocking Elizabeth Warren's claim to Native American heritage through the dismissive moniker Pocahontas, while supporting the propriety of the racial slur used by the NFL franchise in Washington, DC. He leveraged ideologies of anti-black racism, from his questioning of Barack Obama's citizenship to his incessant disparagement of Chicago, from his peddling of false and racist narratives about crime within the black community to his reluctance to repudiate white supremacism movements and organizations, from his willingness to attack black politicians and celebrities to his policy decisions, to mobilize white voters (Desjardins, 2017). Beyond race, he targeted other marginalized and disempowered groups as well. Infamous for his philandering, Trump displayed pronounced misogyny on the campaign trail, particularly when targeting Hillary Clinton. And, in word and deed, he invoked ableism to diminish opponents, describe the state of America, and advance himself (Harnish, 2017). Trump demonstrated an unrivaled capacity to dehumanize, belittle, and bully in the 2016 US presidential campaign. His use of hate is not especially surprising, nor particularly exceptional.

All of these themes and the broader implications inspired this special issue. In fact, more than the election, the centrality of hate in the 2016 election, one that not only pitted Donald Trump against Hillary Clinton, a Republican versus a Democrat, but one that brought the fissures and divisions in the nation to the forefront, anchor this special issue. Each of the authors seeks to look at the hate that was the 2016 election, offering a his-

toric, rhetorical, and sociological autopsy of not only the election but the rise in hate crimes, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, white supremacy, and a resurgent white nationalist movement.

While the hate, antipathy, racist appeals, misogyny, nostalgia, and divisiveness feels unprecedented, the 2016 election was a window into a larger history. On the one hand, antipathy, anxiety, and xenophobia have deep roots in American politics. Nativism, racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and sexism have played a role in campaigning and elections since the founding of the republic. The shock caused by the vitriol at the heart of the Trump campaign in 2016 reflects a consensus of sorts that emerged in the wake of the civil rights movement that had effectively policed overt expressions of hate, while arguably encouraging the proliferation of a coded discourse of dehumanization and marginalization.

On the other hand, Trump was not alone in his use of hate. His chief opponent in the election, Hillary Clinton, famously described black youth as "super predators," and did little to embrace or empower Black Lives Matter and Dakota Access pipeline activists. Likewise, her policy positions are neither colorblind in their historic foundation and significance (Savali, 2016) nor anti-racist in their prescriptions. And, so called Bernie Bros, young men noteworthy for their support of Bernie Sanders presidential run, like Trump, employed misogynistic framing to discredit Hillary Clinton during the primaries (Wilz, 2016). Of course, each of their, their campaigns, and their supporters embrace, use, and deployment of the ideologies of hate have different contexts, meanings, and consequences, given their different connections to history and power.

Moreover, as evident in the essays within this special issue, Trump hated on almost everyone in the 2016 presidential campaign, he did so in unique ways. First, his rhetoric was noteworthy for its openness and intensity, its refusal of the post-civil rights consensus, and the manner in which it exploited a notion of political correctness to surface and mobilize prejudice and antipathy. Second, his use of social media allowed his campaign to easily speak to a range of audiences across platforms and to leverage media outrage to amplify its message (A short history of how. . ., 2017). Third, Trump brought marginal positions to the center (Barkun, 2017). This is especially true of his embrace of white nationalism and the so-called alt right and with them an emergent movement and ideology rooted in white identity politics (Daniels, 2016). Finally, it is important to note that the politics of fear and loathing that propelled Trump into office must be seen as a backlash against the presidency of Barack Obama and oddly endow hate today with an uneasy utopian, even redemptive, quality. This backlash has its roots in a sense of imperiled whiteness, which Trump exploited throughout his campaign. Indeed, making America great again, meant for

many of Trump's supporters a nostalgic longing for a return to something that never really existed, that is the hope for something better through the recentering of American life around the supremacy of whiteness, Christianity, patriarchy, and heteronormativity. Trump breathe oxygen into movements, ideologies, and communities, resulting in not only embrace of policy that further injures marginalized communities but a level of openness in the everyday and systemic politics of hate and violence

Hate has become the new normal in the US. Its ascendance was almost immediate after the election: on the day after Trump's election, the Southern Poverty law Center identified 202 incidents of hate across the country, part of a ten period in which over 850 acts of harassment, intimidation and violence were perpetrated (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). Far from a momentary spike, name calling, bullying, assault, and terrorism have a longer lasting presence, trending upward. Hate crimes reached a new high in 2017, continuing a recent trend. Muslim Americans experienced a second straight year of increased incidents of hate in 2017 (U.S. anti-Muslim hate crimes rose 15 percent in 2017, 2018). Only by the post-9/11 rivals the Trump era for the prevalence and intensity of hate (Modi & SAALT, 2018). And, according to the Anti-Defamation League, anti-Semitic incidents rose by nearly 60% in 2017 (*Anti-Semitic incidents surged nearly 60% in 2017*, 2018). Equally disturbing, Trump has legitimated formerly marginalized white power movements ideology, setting the stage for the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville (Perry, 2018). In a very real way, Trump has not only spewed hate and encouraged others to do the same, he has become the embodiment of hate: his name itself is now a racial jeer that attackers use to belittle and threaten their victims in schools and on streets (Barry & Eligon, 2017). In fact, South Asian Americans Leading Together (Modi & SAALT, 2018), a civil rights organization, found not only a spike in hate directed at Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus, but also that nearly one in five attacks referenced the president or his policies during their commission (Modi & SAALT, 2018). Finally, since taking office, Trump has continued to lean on language that divides, demeans, and demonizes, while implementing policies that exacerbate inequalities.

It is within this context that this special issue came about. We sought pieces that not only examine the centrality of hate – racism, misogyny, homophobia, anti-Semitism, ableism, xenophobia – to the 2016 election not only as an effort to restate what we already know but, in an effort, to move this conversation forward. We hope these pieces highlight the different places that "hate" materialized during the 2016 election; we hope each reveal that consequences beyond "victories" and "losses" but in the form of increased violence and policies that leave the marginalized even more vulnerable. Collectively, these pieces reveal the extent to which the 2016 elec-

tion was one where hate was at its core; it is no wonder that 1.5 years since the 45th president was decided, the vitriol, the demonization of communities of color, and the advancement of racist and xenophobic policies remain a prominent reality. For those who saw hate as something unique to 2016 or part of campaigning, the daily headlines and hidden realities tell a different story. Given its resurgence, nay, its normalization, since the last election cycle, one has to imagine that hate will play a prominent role in the 2020 US presidential campaign as well. Making it all the crucial that we understand the 2016 election, a task the essays that follow initiate in powerful ways.

References

A short history of how Donald Trump amplifies extremism & hate on Twitter. [Blog]. (2017, November 29). Retrieved from https://www.adl.org/blog/a-short-history-of-how-donald-trump-amplifies-extremism-hate-on-twitter

Anti-Semitic incidents surged nearly 60% in 2017, according to new ADL report. [Press Release]. (2018, February 27). Retrieved from https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/anti-semitic-incidents-surged-nearly-60-in-2017-according-to-new-adl-report

Barkun, M. (2017, 04). President Trump and the "Fringe". *Terrorism and Political Violence, 29*(3), 437-443. doi:10.1080/09546553.2017.1313649

Barry, D., & Eligon, J. (2017, December 16). 'Trump, Trump, Trump!' How a President's name became a racial jeer. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/16/us/trump-racial-jeers.html

Daniels, J. (2016). Understanding the Trump moment: Reality TV, birtherism, the alt right and the white women's vote. *Racism Review*. Retrieved from http://www.racismreview.com/blog/2016/11/09/understanding-trump-moment/

DelReal, J. A. (2015, June 16). Donald Trump announces presidential bid. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/06/16/donald-trump-to-announce-his-presidential-plans-today/?utm_term=.17f04811479d

Desjardins, L. (2017, August 22). Every moment in Trump's charged relationship with race. Retrieved from https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/every-moment-donald-trumps-long-complicated-history-race

Full text: Donald Trump announces a presidential bid. (2015, June 16). Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/06/16/full-text-donald-trump-announces-a-presidential-bid/?utm_term=.3ccc107c6dd9

Gomez, S.L. (2018). "Not White/not quite:" Racial/ethnic hybridity and the rhetoric of the "Muslim Ban." *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric, 8*(1/2), 72-83.

Harnish, A. (2017). Ableism and the Trump phenomenon. *Disability & Society, 32*(3), 423- 428. doi:10.1080/09687599.2017.1288684

JOURNAL OF HATE STUDIES

Jamal, A. A. (2017). Trump(ing) on Muslim women. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies, 13*(3), 472-475. doi:10.1215/15525864-4179144

Modi, R., & SAALT, (2018). Communities on fire: Confronting hate violence and xenophobic political rhetoric. Retrieved from http://saalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Communities-on-Fire.pdf

Moshin, J. (2018). Hello darkness: Antisemitism and rhetorical silence in the "Trump era." *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*, *8*(1/2), 26-43.

O'Connor, L., & Marans, D. (2017, February 17). Here are 16 examples of Donald Trump being racist. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/president-donald-trump-racist-examples_us_584f2ccae4b0bd9c3dfe5566

Perry, S. (2018). President Trump and Charlottesville: Uncivil mourning and White supremacy. *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*, *8*(1/2), 57-71.

Reilly, K. (2016, September 10). Hillary Clinton transcript: 'Basket of deplorables' comment. Retrieved from http://time.com/4486502/hillary-clinton-basket-of-deplorables-transcript

Savali, K. W. (2017, November 13). For the record: 'Superpredators' is absolutely a racist term. Retrieved from https://www.theroot.com/for-the-record-superpredators-is-absolutely-a-racist-t-1790857020

Southern Poverty Law Center. (2016, November 29). New SPLC reports reveal alarming pattern of hate incidents and bullying across country since election. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/news/2016/11/29/new-splc-reports-reveal-alarming-pattern-hate-incidents-and-bullying-across-country

U.S. anti-Muslim hate crimes rose 15 percent in 2017. (2018, April 23). Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-islam-hatecrime/u-s-anti-muslim-hate-crimes-rose-15-percent-in-2017-advocacy-group-idUSKBN1HU240

Wilz, K. (2016). Bernie bros and woman cards: Rhetorics of sexism, misogyny, and constructed masculinity in the 2016 election. *Women's Studies in Communication, 39*(4), 357-360. doi:10.1080/07491409.2016.1227178

Fear and Hate in Alabama and Beyond: Narratives of Immigration in the Trump Campaign

Silvia Giagnoni

ABSTRACT

In August 2015, in one of his first appearances as President-hopeful, Donald Trump galvanized his audience in Mobile, Alabama, by criminalizing immigrants and attacking sanctuary cities. Capitalizing on fear, he referred to the tragic deaths of two white women by the hands of undocumented immigrants. Trump knew those high-profile cases would resonate with Alabamians who have been fed similar rhetoric by Fox News and its echo chamber on the web. This essay explores the use of hate speech and negative portrayals of immigrants during the presidential campaign of Donald Trump with particular attention to the progressive criminalization of foreign-born individuals and Mexicans specifically. It also points to the current discourse dominated today in conservative media by the narrative of security, a narrative that today lumps together illegal immigration, crime, and terrorism.

The essay investigates how such narrative has been reproduced by politicians and media pundits: to begin with, by Kansas Secretary of State and attorney Kris Kobach, who drafted the harshest state-level, anti-immigration bill that passed in 2011 in Alabama, HB 56, which represented an experiment in the "removal by attrition" (or self-deportation) strategy; by the former U.S. Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, once a U.S. Senator from Mobile, renown for being "tough on crime" and for his restrictionist stance on immigration; and by the once-Fox News TV host, Bill O'Reilly, who spearheaded the efforts to pass a law that further criminalize immigrants by establishing mandatory minimums for illegal reentry. The essay explores the role played by self-segregation in reinforcing stereotypical ideas about "the Other;" explains why immigration is the perfect topic to spin; and illustrates the lingering influence of cable TV in "cultivating" views about immigrants. The essay concludes by pointing to the emergence of alternative narratives of immigration in Alabama and beyond and provides further directions for research on the topic.

Keywords: immigration; narrative; Alabama; criminalization; self-segregation; cultivation theory; terrorism; security

> "Give us your tired, your poor, your terrorists."
> Jack McCoy (Sam Waterston) in *Law & Order*

INTRODUCTION

"The other day in California, last week. . ." said then President-hopeful Donald Trump pausing to capture the attention of his cheering audience in Mobile, Alabama. "A woman, 66-year-old, a veteran. . . was killed, raped, sodomized, and tortured by an illegal immigrant. We have to do it, we have to do something. We have to do something" (Fox 10 Phoenix, 2015, 02:08-2:23).

It was a rainy, typically muggy day of August in South Alabama, and Trump began his speech by referring to the case of Marylin Pharis who was brutally murdered by an unauthorized Mexican immigrant who was on probation at the time of the crime (Panzar, 2015).

According to the Donald Trump for President Campaign, around 30,000 (mostly white) people showed up at the Ladd-Peebles Stadium that day of August 2015, a sizeable turnout since the event had been put together in less than three days. In his first appearance in Alabama as a Presidential candidate, Trump opened with remarks on illegal immigration and alleged his position on the issue was not politically expedient ("I took a lot of heat, that I can tell you" - Fox 10 Phoenix, 2015, 01:42-01:45), in the effort to position himself once again as the anti-establishment candidate.

"Illegal immigrants" made up 1.3 percent of Alabama's population (a total of 65,000), a small percentage if compared to states like Arizona or Texas (Pew Research Center, 2014). Alabama seemed to have other, more urgent issues that needed political solutions—high levels of child poverty, overcrowded prisons and one of the worst education systems in the country.[1]

Yet, Trump's decision to stop in Mobile and open his speech with illegal immigration was not coincidental. He knew this was a topic that resonated with the GOP base in the state. In 2011, the Republican-controlled Legislature had passed what was then considered the most restrictive state-level, anti-immigration bill in the nation. The Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act (also known as HB56) had provisions that made the lives of many immigrants impossible in Alabama, as documented by the Southern Poverty Law Center report *Alabama's Shame* (Bauer, 2012): a certain number left the state, though most only temporarily, some "self-deported," after the bill passed. Even though HB56 was challenged by the courts and mostly struck down and has been considered a failure, its xenophobic appeal and intent definitely activated dormant, anti-immigrant feelings and attitudes in the state. In addition, HB56 previewed locally immigration policies that Trump promised on the campaign trail to implement (once he became President) with the help of the staunchest GOP immigration restrictionists.

Shocked and confused: illegal immigration, crime, terrorism,
and the narrative of security

In Mobile, the Presidential candidate also mentioned 32-year-old Kate Steinle who had been killed by an undocumented immigrant with prior convictions just a few weeks before; Steinle was randomly shot while walking on the San Francisco pier with her father. The case had sparked much controversy due to San Francisco's status as a "sanctuary city." This wasn't an isolated rhetorical move for Donald Trump. During his Presidential campaign, he routinely utilized the deaths of U.S. citizens to call for restrictive immigration policies and, most infamously, the deportation of all (over 11 million) "illegals." His was an effort to capitalize on the shock-value of a handful of fatal crimes involving unauthorized immigrants. Trump knew what buttons to push with the base of the Republican Party who had been fed similar propaganda by Fox News and the "echo chamber" on the web. That *was* politically expedient.

But this wasn't a novel strategy, just like the election of Donald Trump to the Presidency should have not been "shocking" as many described it. *Horror* better explained what many people felt— as Naomi Klein (2017) put it, "the horror of recognition that we feel when we read effective dystopian fiction or watch good dystopian film" (p. 258).

As Klein (2017) has suggested, racial fear and current xenophobia are rooted into the societal shock wave produced by 9/11, which helped spread Islamophobia and a more generalized fear of *any* "Other." American ideals of inclusion and openness to the world, epitomized by Emma Lazarus's poem on the Statue of Liberty ("Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free") have now turned into an oxymoron, the "cosmopolitan bias" Stephen Miller, Trump's senior policy adviser, recently referred to in his quarrel with CNN's journalist Jim Acosta (Swenson, 2017, August 3). "Like the terrorized prisoner who gives up their names of comrades and renounces his faith, shocked societies often give up things they would otherwise fiercely protect" (Klein, 2007, p.17). In fact, the long-lasting shock of 9/11 and the constant threat of terrorism, reignited by new attacks (or aftershocks) upset the hierarchy of values of lots of folks who ended up endorsing policies meant to produce a perceived sense of security.

In post-9/11 America (and Europe), the enemy was now foreign and was not White. Like most Western societies, the United States has been undergoing a radical demographic transformation, which many increasingly see as a threat to the identity of White America. In addition, racial tension has built up since the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2012 as well as underlying anti-immigrant sentiments resurfaced and became more and more

acceptable to the point that in 2015 Trump could present his outlandish idea of building a 2,000- mile wall across the southern border and still manage to win the Presidential election the following year.

During the campaign, fighting illegal immigration became synonymous of fighting crime and terror, as Trump capitalized on the progressive criminalization of immigrants. This phenomenon was jump-started after the post 9/11 expansion of the definition of "criminal alien;" in fact, the 2005 immigration enforcement program called "Operation Streamline" began the criminal persecution and imprisonment of unlawful border crossers, which explains the recent rise in federal crimes: unlawful reentry into the United States is now criminal (Pew Research Center, 2014). Political analysts, judges, and immigrants advocates "criticized the program for monopolizing federal court and enforcement resources and for preventing the prosecution of more serious offenses" (MPI, 2010). In its second term, the Obama administration tried to counter this trend by prioritizing the removal of individuals with prior felony convictions via the Priority Enforcement Program (PEP), which was terminated by Trump.

The Apprentice host set the tone for the rest of his campaign in the June 2015 speech in which he announced his Presidential candidacy: to him, only "some" Mexican immigrants were "good people." The rest are "bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists" (Lerner, 2015, para.13).

Plascencia (2009) has pointed out how the terms "illegal" and "undocumented" migrant has been associated primarily with "ethnic Mexicans." Yet, the unauthorized population of Mexicans has been actually declining: they were estimated to represent 59% in 2012 according to the Department of Homeland Security, but they now barely reach half of it, whereas undocumented migrants from Asia and Central America were on the rise as of 2016, according to the Pew Research Center (2017).

To further the association of illegal immigration with crimes, Trump claimed that they were "two, it could even be three million, people with criminal records" among the ones in the country illegally in a post-election CBS's 60 Minutes interview (CBS, 2016, 09:52-56). But the Migration Policy Institute came up with an estimate of 820,000 of undocumented immigrants removable based on the DHS criteria of criminal convictions (Rosenblum, 2015). And only 300,000, or less than 3 percent of the 11.2 million undocumented immigrants present in the country, have been convicted of a felony (Yee, Davis & Patel, 2017, March 6).

Yet, Trump was able to exploit the issue thanks to the master narrative of fear and hate, prevalent in conservative media and spearheaded by Fox News, a narrative that today lumps together illegal immigration, crime, and terrorism. He also understood the importance of culture and politics and

tailored his campaign to gather votes where the electorate was more prone to receive his message. In this scenario, Alabama was the perfect receptacle for his propaganda machine, and immigration the ideal issue.

At the 2016 Republican National Convention, Trump brought in new evidence in his politically expedient crusade against sanctuary city policies: Sabine Durden and Mary Ann Mendoza, whose children had been killed by undocumented immigrants, gave their testimonies. Durden, a broken-hearted parent in search of a way to get justice of some sort over the loss of her son, was another pawn in Trump's plan to further his harsh immigration policies. These two cases were carefully selected by the Trump campaign: Dominic Daniel Durden, 30, born in Germany, was a 911 dispatcher; Sgt. Brandon Mendoza, 32, was a police officer. Both victims were young men of color—Durden was biracial as attested by his close-up shot, camping behind his mother at the podium at the convention in Cleveland; Mendoza was, as many in the mestizo state of Arizona, of Mexican descent. Both were men of service, so to speak. They serve their communities—Durden in Riverside, California, and Mendoza in Mesa, Arizona. They were, in other words, model, non-White citizens. They embodied the desirable way to be non-White in Trump America, and they proved that all-American virtues were not at all confined to the realm of whiteness. Thus, they also serve to counter the idea that the GOP had become "the White people" party.

Upon accepting the nomination, Trump referred once again to those cases. " 'My opponent wants sanctuary cities,' (. . .). 'But where was sanctuary for Kate Steinle? Where was sanctuary for the children of Mary Ann, Sabine and Jamiel?' " (Politico, 2016) and little mattered that those deaths did not actually take place within a sanctuary city (Sakuma, 2016).

Despite Trump's rhetoric, there is evidence that public safety actually *improves* in sanctuary cities as a result of increasing trust and better relations between immigrant communities and the police (Cornelius, García, & Varsanyi, 2017). Fact-based research consistently shows that both documented and undocumented immigrants are *less likely* than U.S. citizens to commit serious crimes (among others, see Norwrasteh, 2015). Despite the claims that Mexico is sending its worst kind of people, immigrants, including Mexicans, are contributors to local economies. For instance, they thrive in small entrepreneurship. According to the Fiscal Policy Institute (2012), in Alabama, immigrants are in fact 10 percent more likely than U.S. born residents to be small business owners. Yet, this is not the perception of large part of the public opinion.

If there aren't alternative facts, there surely are alternative realities. The Trump campaign reaped the benefits of the alternative reality that Fox News, Breitbart, and the rest of the conservative media have created for them in the last few years. A reality in which "the American people" are at

risk, not safe, economically disadvantaged, all because of one foreign enemy or another. Trump's discourse tapped into the pervasive misconceptions and stereotypes about immigrants, Mexicans, and Latin@s in general. It has taken advantage of the conflation of terms "illegal," "Mexican," and "criminal," and of the progressive criminalization of dark-skinned immigrants in the aftermath of 9/11.

Historically, representations of immigrants have taken on a variety of connotations. When the Immigration and Nationality Act passed in 1965, immigrants were considered contributors to the country, and the idea of the United States as a nation of immigrants prevailed. Sure, Mexicans were not even considered immigrants at that time; the term chiefly referred to Eastern and Southern Europeans who had finally reached key power positions and thus had been allowed to partake to the American Dream—and thus "whitened" in the process. Mae Ngai (2004) pointed out how the very notion of national origin was invented for Europeans (p. 4).

The dominant representations of the immigrants today are not positive: they are here to "take our jobs," and "reap off the benefits of our system" rather than contribute to the economy, the culture, and the diversity of the United States of America. Leo Chavez (2013) has debunked "the Latino Threat narrative" the idea that Latin@s (and Mexicans specifically) are radically different from other groups, unwilling to integrate into the national community, threatening the American way of life, and ultimately eager to reconquer land once their own.

Otto Santa Ana (2013) specifically argues that representations of Latinos as criminals are now dominant. The public understands immigrants *metaphorically*, he maintains; while during the 1990s the prevalent metaphor for immigrants in U.S. public discourse was animals, by 2004 immigrants became increasingly "metaphorized" as criminals (p.159 -161). Mexicans, often conflated with 'immigrants' and 'illegals' in the public discourses, have been routinely associated with crime by new nativists as also shown by Robin Dale Jacobson's book (2008) on Proposition 187 and the related debate over immigration.

Media and cultural representations affect the way people make sense of reality; the stories that they are routinely told about the immigrants influence their understanding of them; in other words, attention should be given to the *narratives* that are being used to report on immigrants and immigration. The Trump campaign could in fact capitalize on tragedies like the ones mentioned above because of the post-9/11, overarching narrative of hate and fear spread by Fox News and its neonativist, echo chamber on the web, a narrative that poses the foreign-born as a threat and the lax policies of the Obama administration as endangering "the American people."

Such master narrative has been accompanied by a narrative of security,

which conflates two perceived needs: the one "to protect the country" from criminals bringing in drugs and diseases from south of the border and the one "to protect the country" from foreign-born, Muslim terrorists. In the process, the Wall became a symbol, a physical barrier against all-things-Un-American: a way to protect the whiteness of the nation while claiming to secure the border. And little matter, as Santa Ana (2013) noted, that "the appeal of narrative is not 'empirical', or factual," (p. 215). It worked.

Nowrasteh (2016) has pointed out that "[t]he chance of an American being murdered in an attack committed by an illegal immigrant is an astronomical 1 in 10.9 *billion* a year," according to a risk analysis conducted by the Cato Institute (p. 1). Yet, Santa Ana (2013) found that media-generated perceptions regarding immigrants or foreign individuals are much more effective because "narrative demonstrates its 'dramaturgical' power to embody fears, hopes, and prejudices of the audiences" (p.215). Take *Law & Order*, a show popular among Trump supporters (Katz, 2016). In the finale of the 12th season ("Patriot"), Tasker (2012) has noted that a former Special Forces officer, Frank Miller, played by Terry Serpico, murders an undocumented Yemenite immigrant who is suspected of plotting a terrorist attack (p.56). Regardless of the narrative of the episode, the status (or, rather, the lack thereof) of the foreign-born individual is linked to the issue of terrorism.

It's worth recalling that no one of the 9/11 attackers was in the country illegally - eighteen were on tourist visas, and one was on a student visa; as Nowrasteh (2016) found, between 1975 and 2015, ten terrorists were without legal status in the U.S., a mere 6.5 percent of all terrorists (p. 8).

Despite the ubiquity of social media, television still influences the priorities of millions of Americans; in other words, it sets their agenda. People form their opinions about issues on the basis of what they watch, how much of it, and the trusted people they talk to. Television offers a centralized system of storytelling while constantly providing myths, representations, and lessons that help us make sense of the social world and legitimize its order, as Morgan et al. (2009) found. Up until 2013, Gallup (2013) reported that television still constituted the number one source of news. And while network TV news was stable in 2015, the Pew Research Center (2016) found that cable TV news experienced a growth bump partially driven by the public's interest in the 2016 presidential campaign.

Social media and the Internet often work to reinforce beliefs and attitudes previously held by its users. Evidence of that comes from trends that show that the social networks of Americans tend to be more homogeneous today than in the past, and that is even more so when it comes to White Americans. Forty percent of them, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll (2013), and 25 percent of non-White Americans are surrounded exclusively by

friends of their own race. In addition, a 2013 American Values Survey showed that Whites tend to hang out with other White Americans (91 percent) and that 75 percent of them reported to discuss important matters only with other Whites. This trend to self-segregate also explain, in my opinion, why Black America and Hispanic America and Asia America look at race relations differently. They just see a different country. They look at the shootings of unarmed men of color as part of a broader pattern and the widespread law enforcement practices of racial profiling, whereas most Whites look at these cases as isolated incidents that need to be contextualized and often excused in the name of the police officers' own protection, as reported by The Atlantic (2014). Social media doesn't "de-segregate us." Conversely, it has often contributed to insulate us further by reinforcing pre-existing ideas about others.

The Pew Research Center (2012) has shown that divisions between conservatives and liberals along party lines have never been so clear with corresponding dramatically different worldviews and value systems. Yet, it is still "the American people" that is posed as a term of reference in the public discourses. But when it comes to attitudes towards immigrants, television consumption is more influential than party affiliation—a more accurate way to describe the electorate should be then "the Fox News people" or "the CNN people."

Fox News specifically has played a key role in creating an alternative reality for conservative viewers while disseminating xenophobia and hate. At the time of Trump's victory in the presidential election, Fox News scored the most-watched month since 2012 (Katz, 2016). In November 2016, "Fox News claimed 14 of the top 15 cable news programs in total viewers and 13 of the top 15 in the 25-54 demo," as reported by AdWeek.

Perceptions of media credibility are driven by ideology and partisanship; yet, according to the findings from the 2014 Public Religion Research and Brookings Institutions' Religion, Values, and Immigration Reform Survey, being a Republican has only a modest impact on opinions about immigration reform, while trust in Fox News is a determining factor (p. 2). Six in ten Republicans whose most trusted news source is Fox News say that immigrants are a burden, while one-third say immigrants strengthen the country because of their hard work and talents. In contrast, among Republicans who most trust other news sources, 56 percent say immigrants today strengthen the country because of their hard work and talents, while 38 percent deem immigrants a burden (p. 9).

In the election year of 2016, *The O'Reilly Factor* was the most watched cable news program with an average of 4.1 million viewers. On the Fox News show, O'Reilly conflated the issues of illegal immigration, crime, and terrorism in the name of security for "the American people." The

latter entity is cast by both O'Reilly and Trump alike as ethically superior, resilient, yet "under attack." "The American people" then becomes what Richard Weaver (1985) has called an "ultimate term," a rhetorical absolute "to which the very highest respect is paid" (p. 212). "The American people" is an uncontested term because of America's self-perceived sense of superiority. Its people are resilient, and that is why America will be "great again." Appealing to "the American people" in political and public discourses in general has a sort of legitimizing effect as if this entity is deserving of all the attention, and, rhetorically, the term accrues whatever sentiments and needs the speaker wants it to have. In other words, actual Americans may have very diverging takes and opinions on a variety of issues, including immigration; yet, rhetorically, they are presented as if they didn't actually and all shared similar fears and xenophobic sentiments.

The "Talking Points" commentary segment aired on November 23, 2015, "The Real Story about Syrian Refugees," is a case in point (Fox News, 2015). The commentary opens on the issue of the "Syrian crisis," which presumes that Syrian refugees are *all* Muslim and, as such, present a terroristic threat to the United States—while the latter have never committed a terroristic attack in the U.S. as Friedman pointed out in *The Atlantic* (2017, January 30).

At 1:20 of the segment, O'Reilly shifts its focus to the issue of immigration. The following slide appears on the screen.

Illegal immigrant children crossing the southwest border

- Nearly 5,000 unaccompanied children caught in October.
- Nearly 3,000 caught in first half of November

(Washington Times, citing Border Patrol data)

"The fact," O'Reilly continues, the southern border remains "porous." At 1:45, the host drives his point home: "the Obama administration has not been able to secure the southern border, despite the deadly terror threat facing America," we/he read(s) on the slide that appears behind him. Then O'Reilly goes on to provide some data regarding the convicted criminal aliens freed in 2013 based on "a document obtained by the Center for Immigration Studies,"[2] O'Reilly claims President Obama lost "all credibility on matter of security."

In a rhetorical move meant to provide a sense of objectivity, as if a collective of experts and journalists had come to such conclusion, O'Reilly hides behind his moniker, "Talking Points," while stating his opinion: "no more generosity to overseas visitors"(Fox News, 2015, 03:44-47). The commentary shifts focus once more to reframe the discussion over border

security as the host advances his own policy proposal regarding mandatory minimums for illegal reentry. In fact, in a clear example of how the media agenda majorly influences (if not actually sets) the political agenda, O'Reilly spearheaded the efforts to pass the so-called "Kate's Law," the Establishing Mandatory Minimums for Illegal Reentry Act of 2015, which "amends the Immigration and Nationality Act to increase penalties applicable to aliens who unlawfully reenter the United States after being removed" (Congress.gov, 2015). The bill was named after Kate Steinle, who was killed at the hand of a convicted felon and undocumented immigrant on the San Francisco pier. The law intended to establish mandatory minimums for illegal reentry, which would, as a result, provide a constant flow of immigrants in detention centers across the country.

In his commentary, O'Reilly uses dubious research provided by Fox News polls and the Center for Immigration Studies, a spin-off of the Federation for American Immigration Reform founded by John Tanton and labeled a "hate group" by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Among others, CIS put out a report authored by Camarota and Vaughan (2009) in which it was falsely claimed that immigrants have higher rates of criminality than U.S. born citizens. For instance, it claimed that foreign-born comprised one-fourth of the inmate population, while the Bureau of Judicial Statistics says it's only 5 percent (September 2014).

O'Reilly uses ultimate terms such as "truth," "fact," and "The American people" to advance a xenophobic narrative of security and promote a framework of understanding to conservative viewers. The real chance of being murdered by a refugee in a terroristic attack is in the United States of America is 1 in 3,64 billion (Nowrasteh, 2016, p. 1). Yet, O'Reilly gets away with his rhetoric because the dominant representations (post 9/11) are consistent with the narratives he is proposing.

Another politician who has been pivotal in spreading the idea that refugees are potential terrorists is Kris Kobach, as he recently illustrated in his first op-ed for Breitbart in July 2017 titled "Refugees and Terrorism: A Massive Vulnerability in our Immigration System." After all, it was Kobach that, while serving as U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft's chief advisor, authored the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, the controversial program (shut down in 2011) that required fingerprinting of Muslim and Middle Eastern visa holders. And it was Kobach who drafted HB56 and promoted the doctrine of "removal by attrition" (or "self-deportation"), a foe of immigrants indeed, and champion of "legalism," as I illustrated in *Here We May Rest* (2017).

In addition, asylum seekers and refugees, often products of the very wars in the Middle East the United States triggered, are constructed as deviant and threatening types, their bodies made invisible, confined in intern-

ment camps, symbols of the new world order (Mirzoeff, 2005, p. 145); in the United States, hidden in the hundreds of detention centers that dot middle-of-nowhere America.

Capitalizing on these negative portrayals, O'Reilly's *Talking Points* offered an often seemingly logical frame of understanding for conservative voters. During the 2016 Presidential campaign, O'Reilly helped cast Donald Trump as an anti-establishment figure, "a tough-talking political novice" who represented the real alternative to those Democrats and Republicans who have failed to give "the American people" the answers to the daunting problems—be it "the ISIS terror threat" or "the immigration mess"—they expected.

O'Reilly cherry-picks the data in his effort to create a seemingly coherent and persuasive narrative in a prime example of what Kovach and Rosenstiel (2010) call "journalism of affirmation" (p. 147). During the campaign, *Talking Points* provided the needed haven for those who were looking for answers to the Trump phenomenon. O'Reilly stood out because of his large following,[3] but today the dominant source of information for topics like immigration *is* journalism of affirmation, where evidence tends to be preselected to prove a point and becomes a tool in an argument.

To sum up, the media sources people use, the TV channels they decide to expose themselves to, shape their understanding of the world today more than ever. Trump further mainstreamed hate speech and anti-immigrant sentiments. Yet O'Reilly was there to excuse Trump for his excesses in the name of some needed "anti-political correctness," and, thus, routinely justified the Republican Presidential frontrunner's highly controversial policy positions and inflammatory rhetoric, as Media Matters (2015) put it, "defending the candidate even while disagreeing with him" (para.1). Thus, O'Reilly offered reluctant conservative voters a rationale to vote for Trump by tapping into the shortcomings of the Obama Administration and mostly their perceived need for security.

The complicated business of immigration & the Alabamafication of America.[4]

The lingering question is: why immigration? Why choosing an issue in such a need of fixing, through a bipartisan, comprehensive reform, to spur, instead, controversy, reignite hate politics, and ultimately further divisions in the country?

Immigration is indeed one of those subject matters whose "outcomes are difficult to observe and are often not realized until long after the report is made," as Gentzkow and Shapiro (2006) have shown (p. 286)—in fact, policymaking about the issue seems not to follow actual immigration trends

but to react more to how public opinion feels about the issue at that point in time. "The relative openness or restrictiveness of U.S. policies," Massey and Pren (2012) maintain, are "more strongly shaped by prevailing economic circumstances and political ideologies" (p. 2) as well as by the dominant media representations of immigrants.

More direct and observable outcomes, such as stock returns, sporting events, and weather forecasts are less likely to have bias, whereas coverage of a foreign war or discussions over the economic impact of an immigration bill are what Gentzkow and Shapiro (2006) call "low-feedback topics," complicated issues that are subject to more spinning than others. Rather than being lessened by the multiplying of sources of information, this trend is also more prevalent today due to the reduced competition among news outlets, a direct consequence of the segmentation of the market along political lines and the high concentration of media ownership.

Immigration in the age of the journalism of affirmation is thus a malleable topic, ideal for campaign talk, given the many years of failed U.S. immigration policies and the problematic reality of 11 million undocumented immigrants residing on U.S. soil. The legal problems the so-called Muslim ban encountered are proof of that, but they also show how implementing policies based on hatred and discrimination (in this case, based on nationality) is difficult given the check and balance system operating in the American democracy.

In defending the President's travel ban, former mayor of New York City Rudolph Giuliani unsurprisingly claimed (on Fox News) a need for security, as he pointed to "danger," not nationality as the focus of the administration, thus once again perpetuating the master narrative of fear and hate (cit. in Friedman, 2017). But if the concern was security why did the original ban include Syrian refugees?[5]

Trump's xenophobic rhetoric triumphed in Alabama. A News-5/Strategy Research poll in August 2015, at the time of his Mobile rally, found that Trump was overwhelmingly the candidate of choice among Alabama Republicans (Albrecht, 2015). On Super Tuesday, he collected 36 delegates and 43.4 percent of the votes among Republicans—Ted Cruz gained 13 delegates and 21.1 percent of the votes (Frye, 2016). In the general elections, he received 62.8 percent of the votes, which meant all the 9 state's electoral votes, according to the final election results reported by Politico.com.

In the conservative state, TV is still a dominant influencer, and Fox News is the channel of choice. According to ratings and Nielsen data, Alabamians, in fact, watch television more than residents of any other state. They also love reality shows and especially, top reality game shows, *American Idol*, *Dancing with the Stars*, *X-Factor*, and, of course, *The Apprentice*

(Solomon, 2012). No wonder Alabamians love Trump. The real estate mag-nate and reality game TV sensation multi-billionaire is an American Silvio Berlusconi (Merelli, 2016), but to most in the South he is chiefly an updated, improved 21st century version of George Wallace. Just like the beloved, long-time racist governor, Trump hates *The New York Times*; as the Alabama politician's daughter, Peggy Wallace Kennedy, pointed out to *Buzz Feed*, Trump has adopted "the notion that fear and hate are the two greatest motivators of voters." "My father (. . .) was able to "tap into the fears of poor and working-class White people" (Kaczynski & McDermott, 2016).

Little mattered that Alabama has one of the smallest number of immi-grants in the United States. The *perception* was different. People experience innumeracy, the tendency to perceive immigrant and minority populations as larger than they are in reality, which contributed to the "racial threat" phenomenon, as Herda (2010) has found. Yes, the recent exponential growth of the immigrant population was real. In Alabama, the foreign-born share rose from 1.1 percent in 1990, to 2.0 percent in 2000, to 3.4 percent in 2011, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. And most significantly, "the browning of America" was now transforming Alabama also. A new destina-tion for immigrants from Mexico and Central America, Alabama had wit-nessed a dramatic demographic shift. If the top three countries of birth countries of birth of the foreign-born in 1990 were Germany (9.8 percent), the United Kingdom (8.0 percent), and Canada (6.0 percent), by 2010, the top three were Mexico (40.6 percent), Guatemala (5.7), and India (4.6 per-cent) (Batalova/MPI Data Hub, 2015, November 5, personal communica-tion). Alabama followed a geographic trend seen in other Southern and Midwestern states: a high demand for cheap, pliable labor force has been a major magnet for the vertically-integrated poultry production industry located in the rural South. Several other factors contributed to these novel pathways: the labor market saturation in traditional immigrant hubs; the aggressive recruitment in Central America and Mexico of meat processing, forestry, and carpet manufacturing industries; the liberalization of Mexican economy in the 1990s with its dire consequences for small farmers in Southern Mexico; and the increased geographic mobility for 2.3 million newly legalized workers after the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act.

But the general public is rarely offered these sociological, historical, and economic explanations. Our visual culture trumps (no pun intended) all that. All one sees on TV are images of the "humiliated and hunted" deported, faceless bodies otherwise breaking their backs in the fields of rural America or daily jeopardizing their limps working in the fast lines of the chicken plants of Arkansas or Alabama, as an SPLC report (2013)

showed. In an editorial that appeared in *The New York Times*, Héctor Tobar (2017) aptly called such approach to immigration "porn." But there is also qualitative evidence that TV exposure heightens innumeracy, which is a way to say that our perceptions are altered by what we watch, as Gallagher (2013) found. Actually, it's not even *what* we watch, but *how much* of it. According to cultivation theory, heavy TV consumers are more prone to espouse the dominant ideas and representations (Morgan et al. 2009, p. 42). Resentment and general attitudes towards immigrants have been *cultivated* with persistent negative media and cultural representations of immigrants as well as negative discourses around immigration—the lack of diversity of images deprives the represented of their dignity, and, in the end, of their humanity, thus objectifying them in the process: pornographic indeed.

On the campaign trail, Trump kept on proposing his "quick and easy" recipe to fix the immigration: "deport them all" and "build a Chinese Wall between the United States and Mexico." "I am 'the Law and Order' candidate," Trump said.

Trump's cultural reference, for instance, was not casual and turned out to be rather telling: as Forbes revealed, his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, did in fact engineer a campaign by mapping which shows were popular where - "NCIS for anti-ObamaCare voters or The Walking Dead for people worried about immigration" (Bertoni, 2016, para. 4) . Rural Americans were watching more than elsewhere *Duck Dynasty*, *NCIS* and *Criminal Minds* (as in Clanton, Alabama) (Katz, 2016, December 26). They may not personally know the immigrant that works in one of the many local chicken-processing plants—the state of Alabama is second only to Arkansas in broiler production—but they surely know and recognize the one that appears on TV because it has been *repeatedly* seen—stereotypically criminalized or, at the very least, deprived of dignity, in representations that are, indeed, "pornographic." It so happened that Trump referred to Mexican immigrants as "bad hombres" and got away with it (CNN, 2016).

In Mobile, Trump called a short, white-haired senator on stage. This was the senator's hometown, the place where as the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Alabama he had risen through the ranks and become renown for being "tough on crime." Mobile was also the county where the last lynching case of an African American young man has been recorded in the not-so-long-ago 1981. Perhaps the general public didn't know Senator Jeff Sessions well at that time, but black civil rights activists in Alabama did, and so did immigrant advocates. Sessions' racist and politically charged actions as an U.S. attorney first and his staunch restrictionist take on immigration as a U.S. senator later spoke volumes regarding his linings.

As it turned out, Trump became President and Sessions Attorney General. One of Trump's first executive orders promised a crackdown on sanc-

tuary cities; Trump threatened withholding federal funds and grants if sanctuary cities and counties were not to comply with immigration law. Shortly after, Sessions added fuel to the fire in a guest appearance to the White House Press Briefing: the now-Attorney General repeated the myth of the "criminal illegal aliens," a mix bag of rapists, murderers, and child molesters, terrorizing all-American and immigrant communities alike. At the time of writing, the battle over sanctuary cities is still ongoing; and as Pema Levy (2017) has pointed out, if Trump succeeds in implementing his executive orders regarding it, his may well be a self-fulfilling prophecy—withholding federal grants will negatively affect law enforcement and thus hurt public safety.

The current narratives of immigration, based on hate and fear of "the Other," camouflaged in the name of security, have consequences—one price tag price: thousands have been victims of the hate crimes since the election with a 6%-increase estimated as of June 2017 by the Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism.

Discriminatory and xenophobic rhetoric produce individuals who feel entitled to act upon their most hateful sentiments. And to step up their game, they don't need an army as the "lone wolf" phenomenon has shown (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017). Unsurprisingly, the number of hate groups in the United States continues to rise for the third year in a row as the radical right was energized by Trump, according to the SPLC's (2018) annual census of hate groups and extremist organizations.

Alternative Narratives

Alternative narratives do exist. They create welcoming realities, places where tolerance and unity are priorities and appropriate, and non-offensive, inclusive language is regarded as a shared value and not as much despised "political correctness." The tragic deaths of U.S. citizens by the hands of undocumented immigrants have also activated narratives of love and compassion that counter the ones capitalizing on fear and tragedy the Trump campaign deployed.

In fact, for every Sabine Durden there is an Ellin Jimmerson. A Huntsville-based Baptist minister, a film maker and a long-time advocate for the immigrants, Rev. Jimmerson's daughter and her boyfriend were killed in car accident by an undocumented immigrant who was under the influence. Leigh Anna was only 16. That was 2009, and yet, such a tragedy has not stopped Jimmerson from advocating for sensible, comprehensive immigration reform. In a July 2011, anti-HB56 rally held in Huntsville, the reverend gave a speech, which was later published in the local papers as an open letter to Gov. Robert Bentley and the sponsors of the immigration bill, Sen.

Scott Beason and Rep. Mickey Hammon. In the letter, Jimmerson recalled an event she participated in with Leigh Anna, in Athens, Alabama, about two years before her death. "The Ku Klux Klan was holding an anti-immigrant protest. We went to participate in a counter-protest. And I remember her holding a neon—yellow sign, as big as she was, that had one word written on it in big, black letters: LOVE" (Jimmerson, 2011, para. 8 & 9). In the August of 2017, in the aftermath of the tragic events in Charlottesville, where white nationalists assaulted peaceful counter-protesters, and a Nazi sympathizer, James Alex Field, plowed into the crowd killing one young woman, Jimmerson posted on her Facebook page: "Love You Back. One of my favorites memories of Leigh Anna keeps running through my head today." (Jimmerson, 2017, Facebook status update) In recalling that rally she participated in with her daughter, Jimmerson wrote, "a Klansman said something rude to her. She never would tell me what it was he had said. But I heard her laugh and shout to him: 'Love you back!'" (Jimmerson, 2017, Facebook status update).

In the 2011 open letter, Jimmerson pleaded the Alabama leaders to repeal HB56; she recognized that "recklessness does not belong only to drunk drivers (. . .) it "also belongs to powers, princes, and potentates who wash their hands of the grieving people they accept as the collateral damage of their policies and programs" (Jimmerson, 2011, para. 16 &17). The pastor likened HB56 to John Newton's "deadly ship filled with desperate, grieving human beings bound for slavery:" "HB 56 is a deadly ship (. . .) filled with nothing but more broken families, more broken hearts, and more broken dreams" (Jimmerson, 2011, para. 24). Jimmerson also joined other religious leaders and pastors across the state in a lawsuit against HB56.

Finally, there is another important narrative that needs to be changed: the one that racializes terror. Fact is, if one excludes 9/11, White Americans are the cause of the largest number of terrorism-related deaths on U.S. soil. "Nationals of the seven countries singled out by Trump have killed zero people in terrorist attacks on U.S. soil between 1975 and 2015" (Friedman, 2017, para. 5). Terrorism is living in a country where people cannot go to the school or to the movies without watching over their shoulders and wonder "what if a guy with an AR-15 walks in here now. . . what do I do?" This is terror.

Domestic terrorism is as much of a threat as foreign-born terrorism: the difference is, we have known it for a long time but have failed to acknowledge it publicly, call it for what it is. From the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing where 168 people were killed to the 2015 Black church mass shooting at the hands of Dylann Roof in Charleston, South Carolina, up until the Charlottesville, Virginia, domestic terrorism *is* a product of White America, and more specifically of White Male America—it is often the

angry, extreme response to the demographics transformation and civil rights advancements of the nation; it is also often a form of "mass hate crime" towards those minorities, including the immigrants, who are affecting such change.

Back in Alabama, a change in the narrative is already happening. In December 2017, Doug Jones won the Senate seat that once was Sessions' with a platform based on reasonable, moderate politics. Most important, he won over Roy Moore, a Christian, gun-lover, fanatic with lots of sympathizers in the state. (*Perhaps that was a step in the directions of a de-Alabamafication of American politics?*)

In the capital of Montgomery, a museum dedicated to lynching, the first of its kind, opened in April 2018. Attorney and Equal Justice Initiative founder, Bryan Stevenson, and his team have launched the cultural project to change the narrative of terrorism in the United States. The idea is both to memorialize and mark the territory, to unearth and make visible the sites where acts of White-on-Black terrorism occurred. Because if you change the narrative (and the landscape), you are a step away from changing the reality of people. Even in the South. Even in Alabama. Only then, the immigrants will really find their sweet home in Alabama.

FURTHER DIRECTIONS AND RESEARCH

The full extent of the role played by fake news in spreading hate and fostering xenophobic sentiments during the 2016 presidential campaign and beyond is worth further attention. Case in point is what happened in Twin Falls, Idaho, where a sexual assault involving three children (a white American girl, age 5 and two refugees, age 7 and 10 from Iraq and Sudan) was turned by right-wing media with the aid of the Russian government into a false story that brought a media maelstrom to the small town, as reported by Caitlin Dickerson of *The New York Times* (2017). In the mounting of fake reporting, Syrian refugees were said to be involved (whereas they were none living in the town), ISIS was brought in and generally right-wing media gave the idea that Twin Falls was "under attack" by religiously-motivated (read, Muslim) fanatics. Fake Facebook accounts linked to the Russian government made real life events happened in the town on the basis of completely fabricated information, which became the first know Russian attempt to have a political rally on U.S. soil, as reported by Dickerson.

The general hysteria generated by this case signals to worrying tendencies enabled by self-segregation and selective exposure, which results in having audiences becoming oblivious to factual information; ultimately, it points to the difficult task citizens have nowadays to get to the truth of the matter.

Lastly, Fact Check (2018) has pointed out how the Trump Administration and its right-wing media allies have also developed the habit of constantly calling for "fake news" as a dismissal strategy. The rhetorical use of "fake news" as a buzzword should be further investigated.

NOTES

1. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, 27 percent of children in Alabama (vs. 21% nationwide) live in poverty—the estimate is conservative because the United States still measures poverty according to outdated standards (NCCP, 2015). In Alabama, "more than 24,00 inmates are housed in a system for half that number" (Brown, 2016). In 2016, Alabama placed 5th worst in the country and received a D+ report card (*Education Week*, 2016).

2. Here is the link to the CIS report cited by O'Reilly http://cis.org/ICE-Document-Details-36000-Criminal-Aliens-Release-in-2013.

3. Since this essay was first conceived, O'Reilly has been fired by Fox News over sexual harassment allegations. It's worth noting that Fox News did not fire the host until advertisers began to divest from the channel. Neither O'Reilly nor former Fox News chairman Roger Ailes also accused of sexual harassment ever publicly apologized to their audience (Hoover, 2017).

4. I borrowed the expression and used it loosely from Kyle Whitmire (2016) who first coined in Roy Moore, Robert Bentley, Mike Hubbard and the Alabamafication of America.

5. The revised executive order, released in March 2017 lifted the indefinite ban on Syrian refugees (White House, 2017).

REFERENCES

Albrecht, P. (2015, August 12). Alabama Republicans favor Trump by large margin. *Wkrg.com*. Retrieved from http://wkrg.com/2015/08/12/alabama-republicans-favor-trump-by-wide-margin/

Al Jazeera (2017, June 13). The Muslim ban is Trump's 'Muslim ban' dealt new blow by US appeals court." Retrieved from http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/trump-muslim-ban-dealt-blow-appeals-court-170613005531086.html

Bauer, M. (2012, January 31). *Alabama's shame: HB 56 and the war on immigrants*. A Report by Southern Poverty Law Center. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/20120131/alabamas-shame-hb-56-and-war-immigrants

Bertoni, S. (2016, November 22). Exclusive interview: How Jared Kushner won Trump the White House. *Forbes*. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/

sites/stevenbertoni/2016/11/22/exclusive-interview-how-jared-kushner-won-trump-the-white-house/#75c601783af6

Brown, J. (2016, April 8). Violent, overcrowded Alabama prisons, hit a breaking point. *PBS*. Retrieved from http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/violent-overcrowded-alabama-prisons-hit-a-breaking-point%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B/

Camarota, S.A., & Vaughan J. M. (2009). *Backgrounder. Immigration and crime. Assessing a conflicting issue. Center for Immigration Studies*. Retrieved from https://cis.org/sites/cis.org/files/articles/2009/crime.pdf

Carson, A. (September 2014). Prisoners in 2013. *Bureau of Justice Statistics*. Retrieved from https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p13.pdf

CBS News. (2016, November 13). 60 minutes interview: President-elect Donald Trump. [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/60-minutes-interview-president-elect-donald-trump/

CNN. (2016, October 20). Donald Trump: We need to get out 'bad hombres.' Retrieved from http://edition.cnn.com/videos/politics/2016/10/20/final-presidential-debate-recap-origwx-jpm.cnn/video/playlists/third-presidential-debate-2016/

C-SPAN (2015, June 16). Donald Trump Presidential Campaign Announcement Full Speech [Video file]. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apjNfkysjbM

Chavez, L. R. (2013). The Latino threat: Constructing immigrants, citizens, and the nation. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Chishti, M., & Mittelstadt M. (2016). Unauthorized immigrants with criminal convictions: Who might be a priority for removal? *Migration Policy Institute*. Retrieved from: http://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/unauthorized-immigrants-criminal-convictions-who-might-be-priority-removal

Congress.gov. H.R. 3011 (2015). All information except text for H.R. 3011. Kate's Law. Retrieved from https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/3011/all-info

Cornelius W. A., García A. S., & Varsanyi M. W. (2017, February 2). Giving sanctuary to undocumented immigrants doesn't threaten the public safety—it increases it. *LA Times*. Retrieved from http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-sanctuary-cities-trump-20170202-story.html

Democracy Now. (2016, January15). *Donald Trump, the new George Wallace? Head of segregationist's 1968 bid on GOP front-runner's racism*. [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.democracynow.org/2016/1/15/donald_trump_the_new_george_wallace

Dickerson, C. (2017, September 26). How fake news turned a small town upside down. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/26/magazine/how-fake-news-turned-a-small-town-upside-down.html

Dunsmuir, L. (2013, August 8). Many Americans have no friends of another race. *Reuters*. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-poll-race/

many-americans-have-no-friends-of-another-race-poll-idUSBRE97704320130808

Edgemon, E. (2017, April 12). Construction underway on Nation's first lynching memorial, racial justice museum in Montgomery. *AL.com*. Retrieved from http://www.al.com/news/montgomery/index.ssf/2017/04/construction_underway_on_racia.html

Education Week (2016, January 26). Quality Counts 2016: State Report Cards Map – Alabama. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/2016/2016-state-report-cards-map.html?intc=EW-QC16-LFTNAV

Fiscal Policy Institute, (2012, June). Alabama: Immigrant Small Business Owners: A Significant and Growing Part of the Economy." - Immigration Research Initiative, Retrieved from www.fiscalpolicy.org/immigrant-small-business-owners-FPI-20120614.pdf

Fox 10 Phoenix. (2015, August 2015). *FNN: Full - Donald Trump, GOP presidential front runner, at Mobile, AL rally*. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=7&v=zrBx3eRnKDE

Fox News (2015, November 23). *The real story about the Syrian refugees*. [Video file]. Retrieved from http://video.foxnews.com/v/4628875313001/?#sp=show-clips

Friedman, U. (2017, January 30). Where America's terrorists actually come from. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/01/trump-immigration-ban-terrorism/514361/

Frietzsche, T. (2013). Unsafe at these speeds. Alabama's poultry industry and its disposable workers. *Southern Poverty Law Center and Alabama Appleseed*. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/20130228/unsafe-these-speeds

Frye, S. (2016, March 1). Trump, Clinton win big in Alabama, Sen. Richard Shelby victorious: Alabama primary results. *AL.com*. Retrieved from http://www.al.com/news/index.ssf/2016/03/super_tuesday_2016_live_update.html

Gallagher, C. (Fall 2013). Miscounting race: Explaining Whites' misperceptions of racial group size. *Sociological Perspectives, 46*(3), 381-396. https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2003.46.3.381

Gentzkow, M., & Shapiro J. (April 2006). Media bias and reputation. *Journal of Political Economy,* 114 (2), 280–316.

Giagnoni, S. (2017). *Here we may rest. Alabama immigrants in the age of HB56*. Montgomery, AL: NewSouth Books.

Gonzalez, P. (2015, August 7). Illegal immigrant held in rape, murder of California Woman Was on Probation. *Fox News*. Retrieved from http://www.foxnews.com/us/2015/08/07/illegal-immigrant-held-in-rape-murder-california-woman-was-on-probation.html

Herda, D. (2010). How many immigrants? Foreign-born population innumeracy in Europe. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 74* (4), 674–695.

Holcomb, J. (2016, June 15). Cable news: Fact sheet – State of the news media 2016. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from http://www.journalism.org/2016/06/15/cable-news-fact-sheet/

Hoover, M. (2017, April 20). Bill O'Reilly's sexual harassment was 'unconservative.' *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes .com/2017/04/20/opinion/bill-oreillys-sexual-harassment-was-unconservative .html

Jacobson, R. D. (2008). *The new nativism. Proposition 187 and the debate over immigration*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Jimmerson, E. (2011, August 7). Repeal reckless, cruel Alabama immigration law (insight). Retrieved from http://blog.al.com/press-register-commentary/2011/ 08/repeal_reckless_cruel_alabama.html

Jimmerson, E. (2017, August 14). Love you back. One of my favorites memories of Leigh Anna keeps running through my head today. (Facebook status update) Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=15937690773105 96&set=a.475229332497915&type=3&permPage=1

Jones, R. O. (2014, August 21). Self-segregation: Why it's so hard for Whites to understand Ferguson. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic .com/national/archive/2014/08/self-segregation-why-its-hard-for-whites-to-un derstand-ferguson/378928/

Jones, R.P., Cox D., Navarro-Rivera J., Dionne E.J., & Galston W. A. (2014, June 10). What Americans Want from Immigration Reform in 2014: Findings from the Public Religion Research and Brookings Institutions' Religion, Values, and Immigration Reform Survey. Panel Call Back, Washington DC: Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI). *Brookings Institute*. Retrieved from https:/ /www.prri.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Final-Immigration-Survey.pdf

Kaczynski A., & McDermott N. (2016, January 6). George Wallace's family, former staff: Donald Trump is doing what he did. *Buzz Feed*. Retrieved from http://www.buzzfeed.com/andrewkaczynski/george-wallaces-family-former- staff-donald-trump-is-doing-wh#.jdr84PpD0

Katz, A. J. (2016, November 20). November 2016 ratings: Fox News has most- watched month since 2012. *Adweek*. Retrieved from http://www.adweek.com/ tvnewser/   november-2016-ratings-fox-news-has-most-watched-month-since- 2012/312609.

Katz, J. (2016, December 26). 'Duck Dynasty' vs 'Modern Family:' 50 Maps of the U.S. cultural divide. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.ny times.com/interactive/2016/12/26/upshot/duck-dynasty-vs-modern-family-tele vision-maps.html?_r=1

Kerwin, D., & McCabe K. (2010, April 29). Arrested on entry: Operation Streamline and the prosecution of immigration crimes. *Migration Policy Institute*. Retrieved from https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/arrested- entry-operation-streamline-and-prosecution-immigration-crimes

Khabeer, S. A. (2017, January 29). Trump's Muslim ban is a dangerous distraction. *Al Jezeera*. Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/ 01/trump-muslim-ban-dangerous-distraction-170128144523073.html

Kiely, E. (2018). Trump's phony 'fake news claims.' *Factcheck.org*. Retrieved from https://www.factcheck.org/2018/01/trumps-phony-fake-news-claims/

Klein, N. (2007). *The shock doctrine. The rise of disaster capitalism.* New York: Metropolitan Books.

Klein, N. (2017). *No is not enough. Resisting Trump' shock politics and winning the world we need.* Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.

Kobach, K. W. (2017, June 21). Kobach – Refugees and terrorism: A massive vulnerability in our immigration system. *Breitbart.com.* Retrieved from http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2017/06/21/kobach-refugees-and-terrorism-a-massive-vulnerability-in-our-immigration-system-2/

Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel T. (2010). *Blur: How to know what's true in the age of information overload.* New York: Bloomsbury.

Lerner, A. B., (2015, June 16). The 10 best lines from Donald Trump's announcement speech. *Politico.com.* Retrieved from https://www.politico.com/story/2015/06/donald-trump-2016-announcement-10-best-lines-119066

Levy, P. (2017, March 27). Invoking immigrant-induced mayhem, Sessions announces crackdown on sanctuary cities. *Mother Jones.* Retrieved from http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/03/attorney-general-jeff-sessions-announces-crackdown-sanctuary-jurisdictions/

Levy, P. (May/June 2017). What Jeff Sessions prosecutor's days in Alabama portend for the DOJ's new war on crime. *Mother Jones.* Retrieved from http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/04/jeff-sessions-alabama-trump-voting

Levin, B. (2017, June 29). Hate crimes rise in major American localities in 2016. *Center for Study of Hate & Extremism.* Retrieved from https://csbs.csusb.edu/sites/csusb_csbs/files/Levin%20DOJ%20Summit%202.pdf

Light, M. T., Lopez M. H., & Gonzalez-Barrera A. (2014, March 18). The rise of federal immigration crimes. *Pew Research Center.* Retrieved from http://www.pewhispanic.org/2014/03/18/the-rise-of-federal-immigration-crimes/

Massey, D. S., & Pren, K. A. (2012). *Unintended Consequences of US Immigration Policy: Explaining the Post-1965 Surge from Latin America. Population and Development Review, 38* (1), 1–29.

McLaughlin, E.C. (2015, August 10). Police chief blames immigration, crime policies in murder of California woman. *CNN.* Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/09/us/undocumented-immigrant-charged-with-killing-air-force-vet/

Merelli, A. (216, February 26). Donald Trump is not a joke: A warning to Americans from an Italian who survived Berlusconi. *Quartz Media.* Retrieved from http://qz.com/624065/a-tip-to-americans-from-an-italian-who-saw-berlusconi-get-elected-again-and-again-and-again/

Mirzoeff, N. (2005). *Watching Babylon: The war in Iraq and global visual culture.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Morgan, M., Shanahan, J., & Signorelli N. (2009). Growing up with television. In Bryant, J., & Oliver M. B., (Ed.) *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research.* 3rd Edition. (pp. 34–49). New York: Routledge.

National Center for Children in Poverty (2015). Alabama demographics for poor children. Retrieved from http://www.nccp.org/profiles/AL_profile_7.html

Ngai, M. (2004). *Impossible subjects: Illegal aliens and the making of modern America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Norwrasteh, A. (2015, July 14). Immigration and crime – What the research says. *Cato Institute*. Retrieved from https://www.cato.org/blog/immigration-crime-what-research-says.

Norwrasteh, A. (2016, September 13). Terrorism and Immigration. A Risk Analysis. *Cato Institute*. (798). Retrieved from https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa798_2.pdf.

Panzar, J. (2015, August 13). Man in U.S. illegally pleads not guilty to killing Santa Barbara county woman. *LA Times*. Retrieved from http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-man-in-u-s-illegally-to-appear-in-court-on-murder-charge-20150812-story.html

Passel, J., & Cohn D. (2017, April 25). As Mexican share declined, U.S. unauthorized immigrant fell in 2015 below recession level. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/25/as-mexican-share-declined-u-s-unauthorized-immigrant-population-fell-in-2015-below-recession-level/

Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2012, June 4). Partisan Polarization Surges in Bush, Obama Years. Trends in American Values: 1987-2012. Retrieved from http://www.people-press.org/2012/06/04/partisan-polarization-surges-in-bush-obama-years/

Pew Research Center -Hispanic Trends. (2014). U.S. Unauthorized Immigration Population Estimates. Updated November 3, 2016. Retrieved from http://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/unauthorized-immigrants/

Plascencia, L. F.B. (2009). The "undocumented." Mexican migration question: Re-examining the framing of law and illegalization in the United States. *Urban Anthropology*. *38* (2-4), 375-434.

Politico.com (2016, July 21). Full text: Donald Trump 2016 RNC draft speech transcript. Retrieved from https://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/full-transcript-donald-trump-nomination-acceptance-speech-at-rnc-225974

Politico.com (2016, December 13). 2016 Presidential Election Results. Retrieved from http://www.politico.com/2016-election/results/map/president

Riosmena, F., & Massey D. S. (Spring 2012). Pathways to El Norte: Origins, destinations, and characteristics of Mexican migrants to the United States. *International Migration Review*. *46* (1), 3–36.

Rosenblum, M. R. (July 2015). Understanding the potential iimpact of executive action on immigration enforcement. *Migration Policy Institute*. Retrieved from http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/understanding-potential-impact-executive-action-immigration-enforcement

Saad, L. (2013). "TV is Americans' main source of news." *Gallup*. Retrieved from 2016, http://www. gallup.com/poll/163412/americans-main-source-news.aspx

Sakuma, A. (2016). No safe place. *MSNBN*. Retrieved from http://www.msnbc.com/specials/migrant-crisis/sanctuary-cities

Santa Ana, O. (2013). *Juan in a hundred. The representation of Latinos on network news*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Schreckinger, B. (2015, August 21). Trump, Alabama and the ghost of George Wallace. (Updated August 23, 2015). *Politico.com*. Retrieved from http://www.politico.com/story/2015/08/donald-trump-2016-mobile-alabama-rally-ghost-george-wallace-121627

Sharp, J. (2015, August 19). Why is Trump coming to Mobile? *AL.com* Retrieved from http://www.al.com/news/mobile/index.ssf/2015/08/why_donald_trump_is_coming_to.html

Sharp, J. (2015, August 28). Why there wasn't an accurate crowd count at the Donald Trump's Mobile rally (updated). *AL.com* Retrieved from http://www.al.com/news/mobile/index.ssf/2015/08/why_wasnt_there_an_accurate_cr.html

Solomon, J. (2012, October 1). Alabama loves its TV time, especially a good contest. *AL.com*. Retrieved from http://www.al.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2012/10/alabama_loves_its_tv_time_espe.html

Southern Poverty Law Center (2017, February 11). Age of the Wolf. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/d6_legacy_files/downloads/publication/lone_wolf_special_report_0.pdf

Southern Poverty Law Center. (Spring 2017). The year in hate and extremism. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2017/year-hate-and-extremism

Southern Poverty Law Center (2018, February 20). Hate map. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map

Suen, B. (2015, December 10). "And here is where Donald Trump is correct": How Bill O'Reilly apologizes for Trump." *MediaMatters.org*. Retrieved from http://mediamatters.org/research/2015/12/10/and-here-is-where-donald-trump-is-correct-how-b/207401

Swenson, K. (2017, August 3). Acosta vs. Miller: A lurking ideological conflict about the Statue of Liberty. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2017/08/03/acosta-versus-miller-a-lurking-ideological-conflict-about-the-statue-of-liberty/?utm_term=.dc479c1935bc

Tasker, Y. (Summer 2012). Television crime drama and Homeland Security: From "Law & Order" to "terror TV." *Cinema Journal*, *51* (4), 44-65.

Tobar, H. (2017, August 9). Immigration as a type of popular porn. *The New York Times*. International edition, pp. 1, 13.

Yee, V. (2017, June 25). For Grieving parents, Trump is 'speaking for the dead' on immigration. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/25/us/trump-undocumented-victims.html

Yee, V., Davis, K., & Patel J.K. (2017, March 6). Here's the reality about illegal immigrants in the United States. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/06/us/politics/undocumented-illegal-immigrants.html

Weaver, R. (1985). *The ethics of rhetoric*. Davis, CA.: Hermagoras press.

Weigel, D. (2015, August 22) Alabama tried a Donald Trump-style. It failed in a big way. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost .com/politics/alabama-tried-a-donald-trump-style-immigration-law-it-failed-in-a-big-way/2015/08/22/2ae239a6-48f2-11e5-846d-02792f854297_story .html?utm_term=.55b189825a78

White House. (2017, March 6). Executive order protecting the nation from foreign terrorist entry into the United States. Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse .gov/the-press-office/2017/03/06/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states

Whitmire, K. (2016, May 7). Roy Moore, Robert Bentley, Mike Hubbard and the Alabamafication of America. *AL.com*. Retrieved from http://www.al.com/ opinion/index.ssf/2016/05/roy_moore_robert_bentley_mike.html

Whitmire, K. (2017, March 2). With Sessions scandal, the Alabamafication of America is Complete. Retrieved from http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/ 2017/03/the_alabamafication_of_america.html

Make America Hate Again: Donald Trump and the Birther Conspiracy

Stephanie Kelley-Romano
Bates College
Kathryn L. Carew
Bates College

ABSTRACT

One of the most publicized and commonly embraced political conspiracies has been the "birther movement." The conspiracy, which gained traction amid the 2008 Presidential election, alleged that Barack Obama was ineligible for the Presidency on grounds he was not born in the United States. Though the movement was continuously debunked by a myriad of people, birthers remarkably managed to keep the conspiracy alive and relevant, due in large part to Donald Trump. Analysis of birther rhetoric, and specifically Donald Trump's use of it to continually undermine Barack Obama, provides a particularly robust understanding of the rhetorical forms that facilitate the resiliency of conspiracy. In this essay, we combine Richard Hofstadter's concept of the *paranoid style* with generic approaches to conspiracy to unpack the ways birther rhetoric functions—both formally and stylistically—to advance a rhetoric of white supremacy. Furthermore, we analyze Donald Trump's role as conspiracy advocate and the specific rhetorical strategies he employs to use the birther controversy for his political advantage.

Keywords: Barack Obama, birther movement, white supremacy, hate speech

INTRODUCTION

In March of 2011, appearing on "The View" Donald Trump asked, "Why doesn't he show his birth certificate?" (ABC, 2011, 5:45). Trump was referring to then President Barack Obama and the "birther" conspiracy theory that claimed Obama was born outside of the United States and was therefore ineligible to be President. Over the next five years Trump would assume the position of conspiracy advocate for the birther movement and raise questions about Obama's identity and legitimacy. Despite unequivocal proof that Obama was born in the United States, Trump jumped "from fifth place to a virtual tie for first" early in 2012 among his Republican counterparts vying for the nomination (Parker & Eder, 2016, para. 10)

33

helped, in part, by the persistence of his commitment to the birther conspiracy.

Among others, Jesse Jackson described Trump's birther rhetoric as "coded and covert rhetoric for stirring up racial fears" (Parker & Eder, 2016, para. 15) and several mainstream media commentators have noted the parallels between Trump's rhetoric and the "Southern strategy" embraced by Nixon, Goldwater, Reagan and other Republicans to attract white, conservative voters (Beinart, 2016; Devega, 2016; Jones, 2016). Understanding how the birther movement represents the latest incarnation of the Southern strategy is essential to understanding its historic significance and its continuation of a history of racist appeals. Edge (2010) notes how the "Southern Strategy 2.0" uses "Obama's racial identity and politics to challenge whether he is 'American' enough to lead the nation" (p. 426). Hughey (2012) similarly recognizes that to simply dismiss Birthers obfuscates the "contemporary, normative, and widespread logic of white supremacy" (p. 174). The embrace of birtherism reveals the degree to which Obama's presidency was unsettling to "the white right-wing political imagination" (Devega, 2016, para. 8). Parlett (2014) recognizes how "for some, the event of his election is the end of racial injustice and for others the source of its modern manifestations" (p. 4). This essay, while recognizing the centrality of white supremacist logic, furthers the conversation through focusing on how specific strategies deployed expose the overall structure of conspiracy.

Analysis of birther rhetoric, and specifically Donald Trump's use of it in an effort to undermine Barack Obama, provides a particularly robust understanding of the rhetorical forms that facilitate the resiliency of conspiracy. As such, we employ a generic approach to unpack the ways birther rhetoric functions—both formally and stylistically—to advance a rhetoric of white supremacy. To accomplish this, we first provide the history relevant to the movement as it relates to Donald Trump. Second, we outline a generic approach to conspiracy rhetoric that highlights "the problem of evil" as the internal dynamic that holds the genre together (Creps, 1980). Finally, we discuss the formal and stylistic quality of the major themes of Trump's birther rhetoric and discuss the consequences of his rhetoric.

TRUMP THE BIRTHER

The birther conspiracy first emerged following Barack Obama's infamous 2004 speech at the Democratic National Convention, when Andy Martin, a fringe political candidate, alleged "Obama is a Muslim who has concealed his religion" (Parlett, 2014, p. 4). Although quickly disproven, the "othering process" had begun. Mark Penn, chief strategist of Hillary

Clinton's 2008 campaign write that Obama's connection to "basic American values and culture are at best limited" (Penn Strategy Memo in Green, 2008, p. 3), suggesting that the Clinton campaign should capitalize on his multicultural background. Although Clinton refused to embrace this strategy, various leaked emails between her staffers are often cited as how the birther narrative "formally began" (Warner & Neville-Shepard, 2014, p. 4). From the onset, the birther conspiracy was grounded in difference[1]

During the 2008 campaign, as social media amplified the birther conspiracy, Obama was compelled to release a birth certificate to quash the growing rumors which included that "he was born in Kenya. . . His middle name is not 'Hussein' but 'Muhammad'. . . [and] that his mother did not want to name him after his father, and his birth certificate says 'Barry'" (Geraghty, 2008, para. 7&9). Obama posted the certificate on his *Fight the Smears* webpage. *FactCheck.org, Politifact,* and the director of Hawaii State Department of Health all confirmed its authenticity.

Still the lies persisted. By summer of 2009, a Pew survey found that 81% respondents nationwide had heard at least something about "some people who claim that Barack Obama was not born in the US and therefore not eligible to be president" (Bowman & Rugg, 2013, p. 35). The resilience of birtherism, in many ways, is the result of its embrace by Donald Trump who was the first birther with "the ability to get the theory into the mainstream" (Stelter, 2011, para. 10). Beginning in the spring of 2011 as he contemplated challenging Obama, Trump used the birther issue to gain the attention of the media and mobilize white voters. On the "Today Show" he admitted he had "real doubts" about the legitimacy of the birth certificate (McGraw, 2011, para. 1), and on *CNN* characterized the questions about Obama's place of birth as a "strange situation" (*CNN,* April 10, 2011). In a *New York Times* editorial response to Gail Collins, he opined "there's at least a good chance that Barack Hussein Obama has made mincemeat out of our great and cherished Constitution" (Trump, April 8, 2011, para. 6)! He also appeared on *The View*, MSNBC's *Morning Joe*, *The Laura Ingraham Show*, and of course, *Fox News*—all between mid-March and the end of April 2011. Dan Pfeiffer, then White House communications director, described the Trump birther campaign as "basically a message blocker that was preventing us from talking about the issues we needed to talk about because the press was chasing Donald Trump around for the next crazy thing he was going to say" (Parker & Eder, 2016, para. 35). Yet, Trump's birther campaign showed no sign of letting up. So, that spring, Obama released the long form of his birth certificate making a statement in which he hoped its release would stop the nation from being "distracted by sideshows and carnival barkers" (Oliphant, April 27, 2011, para. 4). Two Gallup polls, conducted the week before and the week after the release of the

long form birth certificate, indicated that the percentage of people who thought Obama was "definitely born in the United States" went up by only 9%—from 38 to 47% (Morales, 2011, para. 1). Although the release of the form did seem to convince some, "13% of all Americans and nearly one in four Republicans continued to say he was definitely or probably born in another country" (Morales, 2011, para. 1). As conspiracy scholar Joe Uscinski remarked, "it is strange to have a president who tries to use conspiracy theories as much as Trump does" (Scarola, 2017, para. 7). But, as noted by Dean Debnam, President of Public Policy Polling, "Donald Trump's supporters lap up every conspiracy theory he pushes out there" (Public Policy Polling, May 10, 2016, para. 11). While mainstream coverage of the issue dropped off, the issue itself had enough coherence to be activated easily by the "carnival barkers" and the sideshow continued.

Donald Trump seemed to be among those who were not yet convinced as he questioned the validity of the certificate insinuating that Obama's citizenship was illegitimate. Within the mainstream media he was usually more non-committal about the topic – "just wondering," or noting that "people are saying." On his Twitter feed however, he would re-tweet accusations and also tweet URLs to "news" sources that were continuing to "investigate" Obama's citizenship. He even went so far as to post a video on YouTube offering Obama, "the least transparent President in the history of this country," 5 million dollars for the charity of his choice for turning over his college and passport records and applications. Here, Trump promised, "It will end the question, and indeed the anger of many Americans" (Trump, October 24, 2012, 1:22). President Obama ignored Trump and went on to win reelection. Although the issue did not disappear over the next couple of years, Trump did withdraw to Twitter and maintained his "we can't know" stance in more mainstream interviews.

Trump's "I don't know" stance morphed into a "I don't talk about that anymore" in the summer of 2015 once he became a Republican candidate in the Presidential election. Unsurprisingly, he was often asked—under the guise of retrospection—if he was "still on that issue" or if "he regretted bringing it up." Trump consistently dismissed the topic although in September of 2015, he tweeted, "Just remember, the birther movement was started by Hillary Clinton in 2008. She was all in!" (Trump, September 22, 2015). Trump finally stopped publicly avoiding the question in September of 2016 when, at the end of a rally from the lobby of his newest Washington hotel, where he paraded pro-Trump military heroes in front of the waiting media, he admitted that "President Barack Obama was born in the United States, period" (Reilly, 2016, para. 26). Despite the fact he only engaged the racist cornerstone of his campaign in 40 words, he "could not resist in indulging in another falsehood," yet again blaming Hillary Clinton

for birtherism (Barbaro, 2016, para. 19). Never mind that Trump was able to capitalize on the dog whistles and racist undertones of birtherism to his political advantage.

GENERIC APPROACH TO CONSPIRACY

Rhetorical scholars have long been interested in the perversion of logic that is expressed through the contortions of conspiracy. Along with scholars from other disciplines, Goodnight and Poulakous (1981) concluded that conspiracy theories had moved from "ideological extremes to the mainstream of political life" (p. 299). Since then, many scholars have sought to understand conspiracy theories, looking at why some gain traction in the public sphere and others do not. Most relevant to the current analysis are those who examine conspiracy discourse in light of genre (Dorsey, 2002; Goldzwig, 2012; Kelley-Romano, 2008; Soukup, 2002; Stewart, 2002). A generic approach is useful to identify the form and style of conspiracy arguments and to allow critics to expose the "internal dynamic" that holds the genre together and promotes its recurrence (Campbell & Jamieson, 1978). Additionally, a generic approach identifies specific strategies employed and articulates the underlying strategic logic of disempowering, paranoid rhetoric providing a language to challenge, and counter, conspiracy discourse.

Conspiracy rhetoric is characterized by specific formal and stylistic elements held together by an internal dynamic. These two aspects of the genre—form and style—are combined to have what Burke (1968) calls "qualitative progression" or the creation of an after-the-fact feeling of rightness. Creps (1980) described the form broadly as comprised of a "deductive/causal substantive form" (p. 207). Within that form, Hofstadter (1965) notes a "curious leap in imagination that is always made at some critical point in the recital of events" (p. 37). More specifically, Zarefsky (1984) labeled conspiracy arguments as "self-sealing," noting they confirm the thing they question. The formal strategies of association, webbing, equivocation, and semantic switching create and maintain the conspiracy narrative.

Broadly, the strategies of association and webbing create the boundaries of the conspiracy space. Association, the simultaneous consideration of seemingly unrelated pieces of "evidence" (Young, Launer, & Austin 1990, p. 95), allows for an expansive narrative. Examples, statistics, and authoritative evidence that on the surface seem to be entirely unrelated, are able to be explained within the conspiracy frame as evidence. This associative logic coupled with what seems like multiple examples and evidence, compliments the hyperbolic, dramatic style. Similarly, the deductive, associative nature of conspiracy allows for "webbing" or the connection of separate arguments which are then combined to make the larger narrative

more complex. Webbing is similar to Kristeva's (1980) concept of an "intertextual" reference and functions in many of the same ways in that both provide knowledge and compliment the reader/user. Webbing, and associative logic, are able to establish several "strands" of a conspiracy and then re-activate those that have gone dormant when advantageous. The strands of conspiracy are strengthened through more specific rhetorical strategies like equivocation, semantic switching, and leading questions.

Stylistically, conspiracy rhetoric is dense and hyperbolic. Hofstadter (1965) described "heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy" as indicative of the "paranoid style" (p. 3). Likewise, Creps (1980) summarizes the style as "massively documented/dramatic" (p. 207). Rhetorically, the use of repetition, qualifiers, adjectives, and vivid language all serve as cues to the presence of conspiracy rhetoric.

The mere presence of one, or even many, of these formal and stylistic elements does not automatically indicate a conspiracy. This constellation of formal stylistic elements is held together by an internal dynamic. Creps (1980) identified the internal dynamic that "motivates and sustains the genre" as "explaining the cause of evil . . . and thereby shifting the blame and guilt away from the community" (p. iv). Relatedly, Hofstadter recognized that the recurring nature of conspiracy movements "involve ultimate schemes of values that bring fundamental fears and hatreds . . . into political action" (p. 39). Therefore, understanding the narrative, and accompanying values that lie under the recurrent formal and stylistic elements of the conspiracy, can expose the internal dynamic underlying, uniting, and sustaining the discourse.

The final aspect of conspiracy rhetoric relevant to the current analysis is the role of the individual who embraces and advances these theories. Called a "spokesman of the paranoid" by Hofstadter (1965), and a "conspiracy advocate" by Creps (1980), this individual assumes a leading role in the defense of "whole systems of human values" (Hofstadter, 1965, p. 29). As a champion of a threatened way of life, "he has all the evidence he needs, he is not a receiver, he is a transmitter" (Hofstadter, 1965, p. 38). The advocate claims "superior knowledge or abilities" and claims to be "persecuted" (Creps, 1980, pp. 208-209). Because of the construction of this ethos, the conspiracy advocate is able to assume a certain amount of resilience when faced with contradictions or challenges.[2]

Several popular sources have recognized the general similarities between the rhetoric of Donald Trump and the paranoid style (Dubose, 2016; Lynch, 2016; McCutcheon, 2015). Lynch and McCutcheon both quoted Hofstadter's opening line that "American politics has often been an arena for angry minds" as prescient of Donald Trump (Hofstadter, 1965, p. 1). Close textual analysis of the birther controversy and Trump's use of

specific strategies can further identify the means and functions of conspiracy rhetoric. For this analysis, we began by searching print and electronic sources for the combination of "Trump" and "birther." From this, we were able to assemble a timeline including over sixty statements, interviews, editorials, and tweets authored by Trump between March 2011 (his appearance on "The View" to address the rumor that he may run against Obama in 2012) and October 2016 (one month after he gave a statement in which he "ended" the controversy). When possible, we went back to the full broadcast/statement and examined the birther rhetoric within the larger context. Unless otherwise indicated, all video transcription was our own.

Trump as Conspiracy Advocate

Donald Trump's role as a conspiracy advocate of the birther conspiracy is not a difficult argument to make. He literally is "manning the barricades of civilization" (Hofstadter, 1965, p. 30) through his immigration policy and continued efforts to build a wall between Mexico and the United States. Stylistically, he is dramatic, and uses what he calls "truthful hyperbole" or "an innocent form of exaggeration" (Price, 2017, para. 12).

Trump firmly established himself as the birther conspiracy advocate by seeming to be a reluctant, but essential, participant in the birther cause. Speaking about Obama early on, Trump stated, "I assumed he was born here" (*Fox News*, April 15, 2011, para. 7). But, after bringing up the issue "just routinely," he claimed, "all of a sudden a lot of facts are emerging" (*Fox News*, March 28, 2011). The self-promotion necessary to advance himself as central to the conspiracy seemed almost second nature for Trump. For example, following the release of the long form, he reported being "really honored, frankly" for playing "such a big role" in "something that nobody else has been able to accomplish" (*C-Span*, April 27, 2011, 00:18). He often remarked that he had "people" who were studying, researching, and reporting back to him. He claimed to be privy to information and evidence that validated his suspicions, but conveniently, couldn't really talk about it. On *MSNBC*'s "Morning Joe" (April of 2011) he alluded to a tape "that's going to be produced fairly soon" and that "somebody is coming out with a book in two weeks" (8:12). Consistent with the conspiracy advocate and the paranoid spokesperson, Trump demonstrated that he had access to information, and is part of the larger network working to expose the conspiracy, find the truth, and protect what is good.

The fact Trump considered himself central to the conspiracy was reinforced throughout his successful Presidential campaign when he refused to answer the question as to whether or not he believed Obama was a legitimate president. When asked, Trump told Chris Matthews, "I don't answer it

because you know what? If I do answer it, that's all people want to talk about" (Campbell, 2015, para. 7). Trump positioned himself as the one who controls the conversation not by design, but because of some self-proclaimed intuitive ability to ask the important questions.

At the same time, Trump's defense of the birthers and his characterization of his continued interest in the issue as the will of the people also strengthened him as the conspiracy advocate. On *CNN* in April of 2011, he remarked, "it's a very sad thing because the people, the birthers, they got labeled . . . so negatively, and even the word 'birther' is a negative word" (*CNN,* April 15, 2011, transcript). *Additionally*, in 2014, *three years* after the release of the long form, at a National Press Club luncheon, Trump reported, "I walk down the street and they're saying 'please don't give up, please don't give up'" ("National Press Club*,"* May 27, 2014, p. 15). Trump assumed the role of man of the people, doing for them what no one else could.

Trump constructed himself as essential to exposing the conspiracy, as the hero within a larger struggle for justice and truth. He initially exposed the issue and also put an end to it, ultimately noting, "I finished it. I finished it." In a written statement released by his campaign, he also blamed the Clinton campaign for first raising the issue in her "very nasty, failed 2008 campaign" yet "as usual, however, Hillary Clinton was too weak to get an answer" (Van Dyke, 2016, para 1). Never, within birtherism, was Donald J. Trump wrong, ineffective, or anything less than righteous.

Forms of Conspiracy Argument

Donald Trump's deployment of birther rhetoric demonstrates the interconnectedness of formal and stylistic elements in constructing conspiracy. Identification of the multiple claims and lines of arguments that Trump was able to associate with birther rhetoric illustrates the depth of this conspiracy and it's grounding in white supremacy. Trump extended the attack Obama's identity by encouraging the association of additional information as evidence. From the release of the long form birth certificate in April of 2011 through the fall of 2015 Trump mostly stopped talking about the issue on mainstream news outlets; instead he used Twitter to continue to destabilize the validity of the birth certificate(s) and while also provocatively connecting Obama's birthplace with other issues in an effort to undermine Obama's legitimacy. For example, six months after the release of the long form, Trump stated to Greta Van Susteren, "I'm not and have never been a major believer. All of a sudden after years and years it was produced out of nowhere. Some people have serious, serious doubts as to its validity" (*Fox News*, October 25, 2011, 01:03). Trump used his characteristically hyper-

bolic style in describing the suddenness of the certificate's emergence dramatically "out of nowhere" to challenge its authenticity.

A major formal characteristic that sustains conspiracy rhetoric, and the birther narrative, is webbing. Webbing is a strategy that functions to distract, and shift the focus from one thing to another while giving the appearance of strengthening the original charges with additional evidence. The birther conspiracy was particularly resilient because of the many different lines of argumentation deployed. Trump attacked Obama's identity on several fronts. Much of the early conspiracy rhetoric generated by Trump revolved around the false dichotomy that "either he wasn't born in the country . . . or there's something on the birth certificate that he doesn't want people to see" (*Fox News*, April 15, 2011, para. 8). Additionally, in 2012, he alleged that Obama changed his name from "Barry Soweto[sic]. Weird." (Trump, March 12, 2012); and wondered, "Why does Barack Obama's ring have an Arabic inscription" (Trump, October 11, 2012)? In each case, Obama was guilty of something that was grounded in his foreignness.

Trump also used webbing to spread doubts about Obama's true identity sufficient enough to produce setbacks. When Obama released his long form birth certificate, Trump necessarily had to stop asking for it. But, by bringing up new topics and accusations, Trump continued the webbing of the birther claims. Almost immediately, he began calling for the release of Obama's school records. Playing on longstanding racist ideologies regarding Black intelligence, and discourses surrounding affirmative action, Trump noted that Obama was a "terrible student" (*C-Span* April 27, 2011) arguing that his attendance at Columbia and Harvard didn't add up. Later, he explicitly stated his suspicion when he posited that Obama "was perhaps born in this country but said he was born in Kenya. Because if you say you were born in Kenya you got aid, and you got into colleges" ("National Press Club," May 27, 2014, p. 15). Trump used multiple issues to extend the breadth of the conspiracy, each rooted in the otherness, and undeservingness, of Obama. In raising issues about ability and access, Trump drew on the major premise of the conspiracy which was that Obama's otherness precluded him from being able to legitimately attain success.

A major strategy that Trump used to expand the scope of Obama's legitimacy is equivocation. In an interview with Wolf Blitzer, he used equivocation to redefine the birther position when he stated, "he's [Mitt Romney] entitled to his opinion and I think that's wonderful. I don't happen to share that opinion. And that's wonderful, also" (*CNN*, May 29, 2012). Equivocation, a well-known logical fallacy, is the use of multiple meanings of a word to deliberately switch the direction of an argument and conceal the truth. While Trump does not toggle between meanings of a specific word central to the issue, he does something even more dangerous in that he

redefines Mitt Romney's evidence based conclusion about Obama's birth as an opinion. He then equivocates in that in he describes both his own opinion and Romney's as equally "wonderful" constructing them as equally valid. Equivocation functions to not only obfuscate and confuse the subject but also allows Trump to avoid the truth, and remain safely in the realm of opinion.

Trump also used the strategy of association to promote the inclusion and consideration of disparate events as part of the larger conspiracy. For example Trump tweeted: "How amazing, the State Health Director who verified copies of Obama's 'birth certificate' died in plane crash today. All others lived" (Trump, December 12, 2013). Here, Trump prompted followers to associate something sinister behind Loretta Fuddy's accidental death. And by adding "all others lived," Trump dramatically indicated the strength and the precision of the sinister forces behind the cover-up.

A related rhetorical strategy employed by Trump that also used associative logic was his use of leading questions. Often, he "wondered" things like, "Why doesn't he show his birth certificate?" (*The View,* March 23, 2011, 05:45). These leading questions were a primary way that Donald Trump extended the web of the birther conspiracy. Over the four years after the long form birth certificate was released, he wondered "how does a bad student go to Columbia and then to Harvard?" (Oliphant, April 27, 2011, para. 11); "wonder[ed] what the answer is on @BarackObama's college application to the question: place of birth?" (Trump, July 17, 2012); wondered why Hawaii revised a statute to "allow an HI resident who doesn't have to be US citizen to procure an official Hawaii birth certificate?" (Trump, July 18, 2012); "Is there something 'foreign' about them [college applications]?" (Trump, September 11, 2012); and "Was it a birth certificate?" (*ABC,* August 11, 201, 02:49). With these questions, Trump legitimizes racist logic through weaponing Obama's imagined otherness as part of a narrative of illegitimacy.

An additional conspiracy strategy Trump used dexterously was semantic switching. Semantic switching was evident in his dismissal of Obama's "certificate of live birth" as "of very little significance" compared to a "birth certificate" (Trump, April 8, 2011). When interviewed by Sean Hannity, Trump noted that "despite what certain liberal press says, that's not a birth certificate, it's a big, big step lower" (*Fox News*, April 15, 2011, para. 7). Stylistically, he exaggerated the difference between the two types of documents by repeating the word "big" and at the same time managed to cast additional suspicion on the "liberal media." His definitive redefinition of a certificate of live birth destabilizes Obama's legitimate documentation.

Semantic switching was also evident when Trump pounced on qualifiers used by interviewers as evidence of doubt. For example, in a 2013 inter-

view with Jonathan Karl of *ABC*, when asked if he still doubts Obama's place of birth, Trump responded, "I'm saying I don't know. Nobody knows. And you don't know either Jonathan" to which Karl responded sarcastically, "I'm pretty sure that. . ." at which point Trump cut him off triumphantly and exclaimed, "Ah ha! Pretty . . . Pretty . . ." as Karl corrected, "totally, without question, born in the United States." Trump continued to talk over Karl, "excuse me, Jonathan you said you're pretty convinced, so let's see what happens . . . but it's not my issue right now" (ABC News, August 11, 2013, 02:59). Trump, without correction or interruption from Karl, effectively stifled Karl's attempt at correction and moved the conversation.

Trump often appealed to the will - or feelings - of the nondescript "people" as justification for continued skepticism and investigation. For example, in a *New York Times* response to Gail Collins' editorial about his birther allegations, Trump wrote, "There is a very large segment of our society who believe that Barack Obama, indeed, was not born in the United States" (Trump, April 8, 2011, para. 2). This line, indeed, was the first line of refutation in the piece, evidencing the importance of popular opinion for Trump. This "appeal to the people" is grounded in the assumption that if enough people believe it, it must be true—or at the very least, there must be something to it. Consistent with the paranoid style, it promoted a general feeling of distrust and paranoia and positioned Trump as the conspiracy advocate willing to uncover the truth. As such, six months after the release of the long form birth certificate, and after a long period of silence on the issue, Trump remarked to Greta Van Susteren, "some people have serious, serious, doubts as to its validity. And I frankly want to get onto much more important subjects. Even though that's an important one. . ." (*Fox News*, October 25, 2011, 01:03). By citing the will of the people, Trump kept the issue, and himself, in the media spotlight while positioning himself as doing the righteous work of the people. Simultaneously, he presented himself as having already moved on, constructing an ethos that was attractive to both birthers and those voters generally dissatisfied with the status quo.

The Internal Dynamic of Birther Rhetoric

Grounded in a logic of white supremacy, the birther conspiracy demonstrates how unsubstantiated claims about citizenship and Obama's true identity sought to destabilize the legitimacy the Obama presidency. Hughey (2012) recognizes "the sustained conflation of citizenship with an ideal or 'hegemonic' form of white racial identity" (p.163). Likewise, this identification of the birther movement strategies reveals the entrenchment of white supremacist logic that unites the varied claims. The presence, and persis-

tence, of birther rhetoric indicates a perceived assault on white supremacy. Many of the accusations function to reinforce the authority and power of the subject position of White Americans. The specific claims are extrapolated from assumptions about Obama's Americanness, religion, and abilities, developed by Trump.

First, Trump mobilized the theme that Obama was not born in the United States, and, thus, he was not appropriately American. In a lively birther discussion on "The View," Whoopi Goldberg remarked that "No one has ever asked George Bush, or said to George Bush. . ." Trump, in a very telling way, talked over her and said, "I guarantee you—and I'm not fan of George Bush—but George Bush was born in this country" (*ABC*, March 23, 201, 7:06). Obama is not afforded the same assumption of citizenship as any previous President because he is not White. Trump's tone of voice reinforced with certainty that Bush's American identity need not be questioned.

Trump's white supremacist rhetoric was also buttressed by hypothesizing that Obama is Muslim. From the beginning, Trump posited that Obama may be reluctant to release the birth certificate because "maybe it says he's Muslim." In 2012, Trump tweeted the question, "Why does Barack Obama's ring have an arabic inscription? Who is this guy?" with a link to a *World Daily Net* article authored by Jerome Corsi alleging that Obama's ring—worn since before he met Michelle—is inscribed with "There is no God but Allah" (Trump, October 11, 2012). Although Trump claimed it "wouldn't bother me. I mean if it's that thing" (*Fox News*, April 15, 2011, para. 19), he continued to drop Muslim associations as accusations throughout the campaign. Underlying these accusations was the association that to be Muslim is diametrically opposed to what it means to be a good American.

Trump also promoted white supremacist ideologies by questioning Obama's intellectual abilities. Claiming that he had "terrible grades," Trump depicted Obama as someone who was dishonest and took advantage of the system in order to attend Columbia and Harvard. In May of 2014, Trump stated, "He was perhaps born in this country but said he was born in Kenya. Because if you say you were born in Kenya you got aid, and you got into colleges" (National Press Club, May 27, 2014, p. 15). He also cited the quality of Obama's first book as evidence he did not write it.[3] In an interview with Sean Hannity, Trump claimed, "He wrote a book that was better than Ernest Hemingway, but his second book was written by an average person" (*Fox News*, April 15, 2011, para. 24). In each of these instances Trump positioned Obama as incapable of doing what a true/White American could do. According to Trump, Obama was incapable of getting into

college on his own, incapable of writing the book that got him elected, and in both instances, was dishonest.

One of the major themes that ran through Trump's rhetoric, which is vital to the sustainability of conspiracy, was that the liberal media was protecting Obama. In a *New York Times* editorial, Trump wrote "for some reason, the press protects President Obama beyond anything or anyone I have ever seen" (Trump, 2011, para. 5). In an extended interview with Sean Hannity, he noted that when he talks about the birther issue, "some reporters you could see are visibly angry at me for even bringing it up." He goes on to note that it is in the best interest of their career if they exposed Obama's "scam," yet they remain quiet (*Fox News*, April 15, 2011). Here again, Trump left much of the reasoning to be filled in by the viewer. By providing this rationale, he made the implicit argument that the media was not uncovering the scam despite the fact doing so would advance their career and provide financial gain. Therefore, the rationale for remaining silent must be powerful and important. Furthermore, the emotional reaction of the media to the raising of the topic served as a sign that Trump, and the birthers, were onto something. Thematically, consistent with conspiracy, Trump constructed the media as a powerful conspiring force protecting an evil sufficient to bring about the destruction of White America.

Trump's birther rhetoric against Obama highlights the way fundamental American values function to perpetuate and promote white supremacy and serve as the internal dynamic that unites multiple fronts of attack. To *not* be American, Christian, or White is to be a threat, and as this analysis demonstrates, enthymematic accusations are sufficient to draw on the power of the myth of white supremacy. Dubose (2016), writing during the election, noted Obama's characterization as "foreign-born Muslim pretender to the American presidency" was exactly the enemy Hofstadter warned against (para. 16). Likewise, Edge (2010) recognized the continuation of the Southern Strategy in positioning Obama as "a noncitizen trying to usurp power" during the 2008 election (p. 428). Conspiracy rhetoric broadly, and Trump's rhetoric specifically, prompted believers to frame the world as an epic battle of good versus evil—of American versus other - with Obama's otherness squarely at the center.

<div align="center">CONCLUSION</div>

Although Trump allegedly ended the controversy in September of 2016 with both a press conference and a public statement, he continued to intimate conspiracy and impugn the character of former President Barack Obama. Just a month later, he invited Obama's half-brother, a Trump supporter and birther, to his final debate against Hillary Clinton. Additionally,

in October, he used air quotes around the word "President" when talking about President Obama. Yet, Trump's embrace of birtherism and his constant questioning of President Obama's legitimacy as president and citizenship isn't simply a rhetorical or campaign strategy leveraging longstanding racism. It is a window into his worldview and his policy profile. Current legislation regarding sanctuary cities requiring the questioning of detainees as to their immigration status, as well as a flurry of legislation to safeguard presidential eligibility are the logical policy consequences of birther rhetoric.

Over the last five years, mainstream media coverage of Trump's embrace of birtherism has consistently highlighted how he "avoided the topic as a candidate" (Parker & Eder, 2016; Rappeport, 2016). While Trump did avoid making direct accusations on mainstream news programs during this time and his statements were more non-committal, this analysis shows that he continued the webbing of the birther conspiracy through Twitter consistently between 2011 and 2016.

Contributing to the staying power of the birther conspiracy was the ethos of the conspiracy advocate—Donald Trump. Constructed as a champion of the people, the advocate symbolically gives voice to those who feel disenfranchised because of racial identity politics. Conspiracy discourse is an attempt by an advocate to rhetorically address the problem of evil. Devega (2016) notes that Trump sits at the "intersection of white racism. . ., nativism, a sense of white victimhood, and grievance mongering in the form of conspiracy theories. . ." (para. 9). The popularity of Trump's use of birther rhetoric can be read as an indication of a perceived increase in the power of the left and a threat to white supremacy. Perception, however, is not reality. Conspiracy rhetoric, then, is a symptom, not the problem itself.

The dramatic, and hyperbolic style of conspiracy theory works in concert with Trump's approach to saturate the news cycle, all the while tapping into general attitudes of distrust and increased political polarization. It also played on longstanding anti-Black racism. Through the birther conspiracy, Trump questioned Obama's citizenship, religion, intellectual capacity, and character. Because of its associative and inferential form, this conspiracy was an effective vehicle for transporting white supremacist values. The birther narrative worked to refuse Obama a place of equal standing and cast him as a representation of that which threatens white supremacy.

Considering the difficulty in proving a negative, the ability to refute conspiracy claims definitively remains elusive. Analysis of conspiracy rhetoric that recognizes formal and stylistic similarities is important in locating conspiracies. At least equally important, however, is the unpacking of underlying values and ideologies that serve as the internal dynamic that holds together the webs of conspiracy arguments. Furthermore, attention to

the personalities that function as conspiracy advocates is essential. When asked if he thought he went overboard on the "whole birther stuff" Trump responded "I don't think I went overboard. Actually, I think it made me very popular, if you want to know the truth, OK? So I do think I know what I'm doing." (*ABC*, August 11, 2013, 2:30). Recognition of the strategies and style of conspiracy discourse allows critics - and citizens - to expose the dynamic, rhetorical means of extending oppressive discourse.

NOTES

1. The othering of Obama and the examination of the racialized fears he activates has been examined by several scholars. Most relevant to the current analysis, Flores and Sims (2016) note how both proponents and opponents of Obama "invoke similar logics of race, ground[ed] notions of strangeness and familiarity" that result in a "zero-sum logic of racism that precludes complex conversation" (206). Likewise, Stevens and King-Meadows (2017) recognize the New Yorker cover "Politics of Fear" drew on several themes common to the Birther conspiracy and "highlighted White anxiety about race and power" (88).

2. Although outside the scope of the current analysis, Mehltretter Drury's (2014) identification of "rogue ethos" in contemporary conservative political culture is certainly relevant to, and resonant of, conspiracy rhetoric.

3. Trump actually alleged several times that it was Bill Ayers who wrote Obama's first book. For example, in an extended interview with Sean Hannity Trump said, "Bill Ayers came out and said he did write the book. Barack Obama wouldn't be president and you know, I wrote many best sellers and also number one best sellers including the *Art of the Deal*, I know something about writing."

REFERENCES

ABC. (2011, March 23). Donald Trump interview. On *The View*. [transcript]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emkDpm_vQDg

ABC. (2013, August 11). One-on-one with Donald Trump. On *This Week*. [video]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FC_wapgQLxw

Barbaro, M. (2016, September 16). Donald Trump clung to 'birther' lie for years, and still isn't apologetic. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/17/us/politics/donald-trump-obama-birther.html?_r=0

Barr, A. (2011, February 14). Birther debate alive across U.S. *Politico*. Retrieved from http://www.politico.com/story/2011/02/birther-debate-alive-across-us-049444?o=1

Beinart, P. (2016 July/August). The white strategy. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/07/the-white-strategy/485612/

Bowman, K. & Rugg, A. (2013). Public opinion on conspiracy theories. *American EnterpriseInstitute for Public Policy Research*. Retrieved from https://www.scribd.com/document/182319629/Public-Opinion-and-Conspiracies-AEI-Public-Opinion-Study

Burke, K. (1968). *Counter-Statement*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Campbell, C. (2015, December 16). MSNBC's Chris Matthews confronted Donald Trump about Obama's birth certificate after the debate. *Business Insider*. Retrieved from https://www.businessinsider.com/chris-matthews-donald-trump-obama-birth-certificate-2015-12

Campbell, K., & Jamieson, K. (1978). Form and genre in rhetorical criticism: An introduction. In K. Campbell & K. Jamieson (Eds.), *Form and genre: Shaping rhetorical action* (pp. 9-32). Falls Church, VA: The Speech Communication Association.

CNN. (2011, April 10). Interview with Donald Trump. *State of the Union*. [interview transcript]. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1104/10/sotu.01.html

CNN. (2012, May 29). Donald Trump interview. *The Situation Room*. [transcript]. Retrieved from http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1205/29/sitroom.03.html

Creps, E.G. (1980). *The conspiracy argument as rhetorical genre*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University.

C-SPAN. (producer). (2011, April 27). Donald Trump remarks on President Obama's birth certificate. [video]. Retrieved from https://www.c-span.org/video/?299230-1/donald-trump-remarks-president-obamas-birth-certificate

Devaga, C. (2016, May 17). Donald Trump, president of the Confederacy: The Southern strategy created the GOP civil war. *Salon*. Retrieved from http://www.salon.com/2016/05/17/donald_trump_president_of_the_confederacy_the_southern_strategy_created_the_gop_civil_war/

Dorsey, L. G. (2002). Re-reading "The X-Files": The trickster in contemporary conspiracy myth. *Western Journal of Communication, 66*, 448-468.

Drury, J. P. M. (2014). The rhetoric of "Rogue Ethos:" Chris Christie's swing from "Boss" to "Bully." *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric, 4*(1/2), 19-38.

Dubose, L. (2016, March 10). Paranoia's back in style: Richard Hofstadter and the Trump-Cruz Republicans. *The Washington Spectator*. Retrieved from http://washingtonspectator.tumblr.com/post/140808124827/paranoias-back-in-style

Edge, T. (2010). Southern strategy 2.0: Conservatives, White voters, and the election of Barack Obama. *Journal of Black Studies, 40*(3), 426-444.

Flores, L. A., & Sims, C. L. (2016). The zero-sum game of race and the familiar strangeness of President Obama. *Southern Communication Journal, 81*(4), 206-222.

Fox News. (Producer). (2011, March 28). Trump on birth certificate: Obama spent millions to "get away from this issue." On *Fox Nation*. [video]. Retrieved from http://nation.foxnews.com/donald-trump/2011/03/28/trump-birth-certifi cate-obama-spent-millions-get-away-issue

Fox News. (Producer). (2011, April 15). Exclusive: Donald Trump talks 2012, calls Obama "The worst President ever." On *Hannity*. [transcript]. Retrieved from http://www.foxnews.com/transcript/2011/04/15/exclusive-donald-trump-rips-into-president-obama-past.html

Fox News. (Producer). (2011, October 25). Donald Trump talks about Pres Obama's birth certificate. *Greta Van Susteren.* [video]. Retrieved from https://archive.org/details/FOXNEWS_20111026_020000_Greta_Van_Susteren/start/60/end/120

Geraghty, J. (2008, June 9). Obama could debunk some of rumors by releasing his birth certificate. *National Review*.

Goldzwig, S.R. (2002). Conspiracy rhetoric at the dawn of a new millennium: A response. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, *45*, 492-506.

Goodnight, G. T., & Poulakos, J. (1981). Conspiracy rhetoric: From pragmatism to fantasy in public discourse. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, *45*, 299-316.

Green, J. (2008, August 11). Penn strategy memo, March 19, 2007. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2008/08/penn-strategy-memo-march-19-2008/37952/

Hofstadter, R. (1965). *The paranoid style in American politics, and other essays*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Hughey, M.W. (2012). Show me your papers! Obama's birth and the whiteness of belonging. *Qualitative Sociology, 35*, 163-181.

Jones, R. P. (2016, August 14). How Trump remixed the Republican 'Southern Strategy.' *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/08/how-trump-remixed-the-republican-southern-strategy/49571 9/

Kelley-Romano, S. (2008). Trust no one: The conspiracy genre on American television. *Southern Communication Journal, 73*, 105-121.

Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lynch, C. (2016, July 7). Paranoid politics: Donald Trump's style perfectly embodies the theories of renowned historian. *Salon.com*. Retrieved August 5, 2016, Retrieved from http://www.salon.com/2016/07/07/paranoid_politics_ donald_trumps_style_perfectly_embodies_the_theories_of_renowned_histori an/

McCutcheon, C. (2015, December 14). In assessing Donald Trump's appeal, some go to phrase "paranoid style." *The Christian Science Monitor.* Retrieved from http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/Politics-Voices/2015/1214/In-assess ing-Donald-Trump-s-appeal-some-go-to-phrase-paranoid-style

McGraw, S. (2011, April 7). Trump: I have "real doubts" Obama was born in U.S.

Today.com. Retrieved from https://www.today.com/news/trump-i-have-real-doubts-obama-was-born-u-s-1C9012173

Mills, C. W. (1997). *The racial contract.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Morales, L. (2011, May 13). Obama's birth certificate convinces some, but not all, skeptics. *Gallup.* Retrieved from https://news.gallup.com/poll/147530/obama-birth-certificate-convinces-not-skeptics.aspxMSNBC. (2011, April 7).

Donald Trump on Morning Joe. *Morning Joe.* [video]. Retrieved from https://archive.org/details/MSNBC_20110407_100000_Morning_Joe

MSNBC. (2015, December 15). Donald Trump takes on tonight's debate. [video]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mARv6CluSe0

National Press Club. (2014, May 27). NPC Luncheon with Donald Trump. [transcript]. Retrieved from https://www.press.org/sites/default/files/20140527_trump.pdf

Neville-Shepard, R. (2018). Rand Paul at Howard University the rhetoric of the new Southern strategy. *Western Journal of Communication, 82* (1), 20-39.

Oliphant, J. (2011, April 27). Trump, Palin boast about birth certificate release. *Los Angeles Times.* Retrieved from http://articles.latimes.com/2011/apr/27/news/la-pn-trump—birth-certificate-release-20110427

Parker, A., & Eder, S. (2016, July 2). Inside the six weeks Donald Trump was a nonstop 'birther'. *The New York Times*, p. A1. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/us/politics/donald-trump-birther-obama.html

Parlett, M. A. (2014). *Demonizing a president: The "foreignization" of Barack Obama.* Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, an imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC.

Pfeiffer, D. (2011, April 27). President Obama's long form birth certificate. *The White House.* Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/04/27/president-obamas-long-form-birth-certificate

Price, E. (2017, April 4). "I call it truthful hyperbole": The most popular quotes from Trump's *The Art of the Deal. Fastcompany.com.* Retrieved from https://www.fastcompany.com/3068552/i-call-it-truthful-hyperbole-the-most-popular-quotes-from-trumps-the-art-of-the-deal

Public Policy Polling. (2016, May 10). GOP quickly unifies around Trump. Retrieved from http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/pdf/2015/PPP_Release_National_51016.pdf

Rappeport, A. (2016, September 8). Mike Pence, breaking with Donald Trump, says Obama was born in America. *The New York Times.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/08/us/politics/mike-pence-campaign.html

Reilly, K. (2016, September 16). Read Donald Trump's speech finally admitting President Obama was born in the U.S. [transcript]. *Time.com.* Retrieved from http://time.com/4497626/donald-trump-birther-address-transcript/

Scarola, C. (2017, February 14). Why Donald Trump is obsessed with conspiracy theories: Professor Joe Uscinski explains why Trump can't stop seeing illegal voters. *Inverse.com.* Retrieved from https://www.inverse.com/article/27833-donald-trump-conspiracy-theories-obsession

Soukup, C. (2002). Television viewing as vicarious resistance: "*The X-Files*" and conspiracy discourse. *Southern Communication Journal, 68*, 14-26.

Stelter, B. (April 27, 2011). In trying to debunk a theory, the news media extended its life. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/28/business/media/28birth.html

Stevens, E. M., & King-Meadows, T. D. (2017). Technicolor racism or caricature assassination? Satirizing White anxiety about the Obama presidency. *Howard Journal of Communications, 28*(1), 72-92.

Stewart, C.J. (2002). The master conspiracy of the John Birch Society: From communism to the new world order. *Western Journal of Communication, 66,* 424-447.

Trump, D. (2011, April 8). Donald Trump responds. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/08/opinion/lweb08trump.html

Trump, D. [realDonaldTrump]. (2012, March 12). When I was 18, people called me Donald Trump. When he was 18, @BarackObama was Barry Soweto. Weird. [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/179228808891731968

Trump, D. [realDonaldTrump]. (2012, May 18). Let's take a closer look at that birth certificate. @BarackObama was described in 2003 as being "born in Kenya." bit.ly/Klc9Uu [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/203568571148800001?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

Trump, D. [realDonaldTrump]. (2012, July 17). I wonder what the answer is on @BarackObama's college application to the question: place of birth? Maybe the (cont) http://tl.gd/icf5vc [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/225258011894104065?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

Trump, D. [realDonaldTrump]. (2012, July 18). Why does HI Revised Statute 338-17.8 allow an HI resident who doesn't have to be US citizen to procure an official Hawaii birth certificate? [Tweet] Retrieved from https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/225622462770061312

Trump, D. [realDonaldTrump]. (2012, July 18). Congratulations to @RealSheriff Joe on his successful Cold Case Posse investigation which claims @BarackObama's 'birth certificate' is fake [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/225620165138726912?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

Trump, D. [2012, August 6]. An 'extremely credible source' has called my office and told me that @BarackObama's birth certificate is a fraud. [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/232572505238433794

Trump, D. [realDonaldTrump]. (2012, August 27). .@BarackObama is petrified of the birther issue so they go on the offensive to try & make the Republicans feel (cont) tl.gd/j27l1e [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/240117754970132480?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

Trump, D. [realDonaldTrump]. (2012, September 10). Obama is taunting the

Republicans on the birther issue. They should call his bluff & demand the REAL facts. He (cont) tl.gd/j87fht [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter .com/realDonaldTrump/status/245255463480999936?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

Trump, D. [realDonaldTrump]. (2012, September 11). Why won't Obama release his college applications? Is there something 'foreign' about them? [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/24559970917825 7408?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

Trump, D. [realDonaldTrump]. (2012, October 11). Why does Barack Obama's ring have an arabic inscription? bit.ly/VMN6Vn Who is this guy? [Tweet]. Retrieved from: https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/25648731151520 9728?lang=en

Trump, D. [ignorantvidz]. (2012, October 24). Donald Trump offers Obama 5 million dollars. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-lWv0cp CnM

Trump, D. [realDonaldTrump]. (2013, December 12). How amazing, the State Health Director who verified copies of Obama's "birth certificate" died in plane crash today. All others lived. [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter .com/realDonaldTrump/status/411247268763676673?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

Van Dyke, M. B. (2016, September 15). Trump believes President Obama was born in the US, campaign says. *BuzzFeedNews.* Retrieved from https://www.buzz feed.com/mbvd/trump-refuses-to-say-obama-was-born-in-the-us?utm_term= .gkwXbKy0p#.vpO80nGNp

Warner, B.R. & Neville-Shepard R. (2014). Echoes of a conspiracy: Birthers, truthers, and the cultivation of extremism. *Communication Quarterly, 62*, 1-17.

Young, M., Launer, M., & Austin, C. (1990). The need for evaluative criteria: Conspiracy argument revisited. *Argumentation and Advocacy*, *26*, 89-107.

Zarefsky, D. (1984). Conspiracy argument in the Lincoln-Douglas debates. *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, *21*, 63-75.

The Dangers of Porous Borders: The "Trump Effect" in Canada

Barbara Perry
University of Ontario Institute of Technology
Tanner Mirrlees
University of Ontario Institute of Technology
Ryan Scrivens
Concordia University

ABSTRACT

Donald J. Trump's journey to the White House signaled the resurgence of right-wing populism in the United States. His campaign and his surprising electoral victory rode a wave of anti-elitism and xenophobia. He masterfully exploited the economic and cultural anxieties of white working class and petite bourgeois Americans by deflecting blame for their woes onto the "usual suspects," among them minorities, liberals, Muslims, professionals and immigrants. His rhetoric touched a chord, and in fact emboldened and energized white supremacist ideologies, identities, movements and practices in the United States and around the world. Indeed, the Trump Effect touched Canada as well. This paper explores how the American politics of hate unleashed by Trump's right-wing populist posturing galvanized Canadian white supremacist ideologies, identities, movements and practices. Following Trump's win, posters plastered on telephone poles in Canadian cities invited "white people" to visit alt-right websites. Neo-Nazis spray painted swastikas on a mosque, a synagogue and a church with a black pastor. Online, a reactionary white supremacist subculture violated hate speech laws with impunity while stereotyping and demonizing non-white people. Most strikingly, in January 2017, Canada witnessed its most deadly homegrown terrorist incident: Alexandre Bissonnete, a right-wing extremist and Trump supporter, murdered six men at the Islamic cultural centre of Quebec City. Our paper provides an overview of the manifestations of the Trump Effect in Canada. We also contextualize the antecedents of Trump's resonance in Canada, highlighting the conditions for and currents and characteristics of right-wing extremism in Canada.

Keywords: White supremacy, Canada, hate politics, 2016 U.S. presidential election

53

Introduction

The outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election capped off a year in which the politics of hate went mainstream. Donald J. Trump, billionaire, former reality TV star and political neophyte, ran an explicitly racist, sexist and xenophobic campaign. Fashioning himself as a right-wing populist representing the interests of white male conservatives generally and white working class and petite bourgeois people in particular (Myerson, 2017; Rosenfeld, 2017; Shihipar, 2017; Taylor, 2017), Trump's campaign constructed minorities, liberals, Muslims, professionals and immigrants as un-American "others" and unfairly blamed "those people" for a number of social problems. His campaign message resonated with white supremacists across the U.S., who hoped that an election victory would "make America great again" by reinstalling white power.

The Trump Effect has been widely discussed by political commentators in the U.S. context (Giroux, 2016; Potok, 2017), but less attention has been paid to its consequences for Canada. This paper explores the Trump Effect in Canada and argues that Trump's right-wing populist and white nationalist political campaign galvanized Canadian-based white supremacist ideologies, identities, movements and practices. We argue that Trump's election victory has reenergized white identity politics as a mainstream form of political expression in Canada. In other words, the resurgence of right-wing extremism (RWE) in Canada that followed Trump's presidential victory was not caused by the shocking election or Canadian RWE alone, but rather, are symptomatic of the continuing legacy of white supremacy.

We examine the impact of the Trump Effect in Canada in four sections. The first section conceptualizes "Trumpism" as a form of right-wing populism convergent with an emboldened white supremacy. The second section gives evidential weight to the Trump Effect in Canada by documenting the recent uptick in Canadian RWE organizing, propagandizing and hate crimes, online and on-the-ground. To contextualize the antecedents of this Trump Effect, the third section highlights the historical and contemporary pre-conditions for the uptake of Trumpism in Canada. We conclude by noting that, at present, resistance to the Trump Effect in the U.S., Canada and worldwide is spreading.

Trumpism: Right-Wing Populism and White Supremacy

Trumpism is the most recent expression of right-wing populism that has enjoyed resurgence of late in many countries around the world. Political parties running on right-wing populist platforms have garnered increasing support and have successfully mobilized around politically divisive issues

such as immigration, free trade and social entitlements (Mudde, 2004). We conceptualize Trumpism as right-wing populism and illustrate how Trump employed populist communication strategies to win the consent of some people to his presidency.

Albertazzi and McDonnell (2008) define populism as an

> Ideology which pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice. (p. 3)

Populism is most suitably conceptualized as a communication strategy used by a plurality of actors – from professional politicians to activists – to construct "the people" and articulate the people to a movement against a real or imagined elite. In a helpful survey of current research on populism, Engesser, Ernst, Esser and Buchel (2016) identify five key communication strategies that populist political actors employ in battles to win the consent of the people to their power, each of which provide a framework to understand Trumpism and the Trump Effect. Populists tend to: (1) emphasize the sovereignty of the people; (2) advocate for the people; (3) attack the elite on behalf of the people; (4) ostracize "bad others" juxtaposed against "good people", especially along racial lines, and; (5) invoke the national community or heartland, typically as a vision under threat from "foreigners" or "outsiders."

Firstly, right-wing populists emphasize the power of the people's will and the sovereignty of the people. They frame their opponents as elites that have deprived "the people" of self-rule. This allows right-wing politicians to portray themselves as the only entities able to restore the sovereignty of the people by replacing the elite and all other representative and intermediary institutions (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Mudde, 2004; Shils, 1956).

Second, they construct and advocate for the people, depicting the "people" in often partial and selective ways, but always as a unified and inherently virtuous group of good, moral and innocent people afflicted in some way by "bad others" (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Jansen, 2011; Taggart, 2000). Populists also represent themselves as hailing from the people, closely related to the people or at least empathetic to the people's real needs and wants (Taggart, 2000).

Third, right-wing populists construct a corrupt (i.e., abusive, guilty, unaccountable, arrogant) "elite" that rules or dominates society against the will or wishes of the "people", and at the people's moral and material expense (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Mudde, 2004; Rooduijn, 2014). In this right-wing populist narrative, elites are represented as an alliance of

educated, cosmopolitan and professionally-minded individuals: in many cases, people of color, non-Christians, feminists, liberals, and intellectuals. These "coastal" elites supposedly occupy positions of power within government institutions, the mainstream news media, and the education system.

Fourth, right-wing populists construct and ostracize "dangerous" and "threatening" others (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Rooduijn 2014). Like elites, these "others" are contrasted to the people and depicted as the enemy of the people. While the populist depicts the elite as internal threats to the interests of the mainstream society, these others are portrayed as external threats, or threats "from below" (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). They are framed as a group that is unfairly or unjustly favored by the elite, or even as the elite's partner in a conspiracy against the people. The right-wing populist lumps various groups into this "other" category: immigrants, ethnic minorities, their political rivals or opponents, religious groups, criminals, and communists (Abts & Rummens, 2007; Betz & Johnson, 2004; Rooduijn, 2014). Finally, right-wing populists construct and invoke an ideal of the "national community" that plays upon nostalgia for a supposedly better time, promising to restore the nation to a time that is better than the present (Taggart, 2004).

Trump's campaign, undeniably, channeled these populist themes. His political rhetoric whipped up the people's angst and resentments at the Democratic Party and elite political structures, channeling white conservative anger toward racial, religious and cultural minorities. Incredibly, Trump's campaign constructed Hillary Clinton as a symbol of a corrupt, liberal globalist power elite as part of his efforts to differentiate himself as a "person of the people." Yet Trump, the inheritor of a family fortune, an Ivy League graduate, a billionaire real estate mogul, and a reality TV celebrity, is very much part of the U.S. economic and political elite, not the common folk. That Trump differentiated himself from this "elite" in the minds of millions of Americans reflects the efficacy of his populist communications campaign. The "people" addressed by and attracted to Trump's populist campaign, however, brought together sections of the white working class and the white petite bourgeoisie, a voting bloc that was in the past, fascism's demographic base (Myerson, 2017; Rosenfeld, 2017; Taylor, 2017). As Shihipar (2017) notes, "white people, of all ages, education statuses, and genders voted for Trump. While it is true that out-of-work coal miners from West Virginia cast ballots for Trump, so too did the affluent in cozy suburbs" (para. 3). Not all white people voted for Trump, but millions of white people—poor and rich, uneducated and educated, rural and suburban—did (Myerson, 2017; Rosenfeld, 2017; Shihipar, 2017; Taylor, 2017). It comes as no surprise, then, that Trump attracted an explicitly white supremacist subculture aimed at re-establishing a white nationalist State. In response to

increasing diversity, political gains made by communities of color, mul-ticultural policies and practices, and increased immigration, white suprema-cist groups claimed that white American citizens were victims that had lost their place in society.

Early in the 2016 U.S. election campaign, some white men saw Trump as someone who would champion them and their "race." Using the moniker of the "alt-right" to distinguish themselves from old-fashioned loathsome white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the American Nazi Party, as well as from mainstream Republicanism, these *rebranded* and digitally savvy white nationalists supported Trump's race to the White House. Keep in mind, however, that the term "alt-right" has not only been embraced by those holding overtly racist or white nationalist beliefs. The "alt-right" is a heterogeneous group of disparate people who may also hold nativist and protectionist ideologies, believe in conspiracy theories, and advocate traditionally conservative values such as limited government, low taxes, patriarchal families, evangelical Christianity and strict crime control policies (Neiwert, 2017). While their messaging retains a distinct nationalist fervor, the variety of personalities and groups bundled together under the moniker of the alt-right seeks to couch their ideology in more sanitized terms. For example, despite their evident ties to white nationalist causes, these mostly young white men claimed that their support for Trump was based purely on his political platform and his promise to "make America great again."

Among the myriad examples, immediately after Trump's win, white power activists in the U.S. such as Andrew Anglin, Richard Spencer, and David Duke tweeted and shared exuberance at the prospects for their racist utopia. These and other white nationalists tend to retweet and promote Trump's tweets when they align with their ideological agenda but ignore or criticize them when they don't. It must be noted, however, that Trump's presidential campaign and subsequent victory did not cause these RWEs to emerge. Rather, his right-wing populist campaign emboldened the haters to openly preach and practice racist hate. In the first few weeks following Trump's election win, The Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC), for example, documented more than 800 reports of hate crimes: a swastika was spray-painted on a Mexican-American family home in Washington; a Geor-gia-based Muslim high school teacher's students left her a note telling her to use her headscarf to "hang herself;" and "TRUMP NATION WHITES ONLY" was painted on the wall of an African American church in Mary-land (Potok, 2017).

Trump's right-wing populist campaign tethered a message of eco-nomic prosperity and political freedom to white nationalist fantasies of returning to a time where the complexion of American society was different

and where the supremacy of whites was unquestioned, reigniting white claims to power. To be sure, many issues gave rise to Donald Trump's appeal: socio-economic inequality, precarious and alienating employment, dissatisfaction with the political process, and anger at a rigged political system designed to work for elites rather than average citizens. Trump's right-wing populist campaign filtered these economic and political grievances through the prism of white victimhood and dreams of reclaiming white power and culture or, in simple terms, to make America great again by making America white again. A similar brand of sentiment made its way north of the U.S., crossing into Canada's border.

Signs of Trumpism in Canada

In the weeks following Trump's stunning victory over Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, Canada saw evidence of increased RWE activity, wherein visible minority communities were targeted – both online and on the ground – at staggering rates. This was a stark reminder that Canadians are not immune to the "appeal" of racialized politics. We discuss this at length below.

A glimpse of Canada's daily media reports following the U.S. election revealed that many Canadians were also attracted to the hateful political rhetoric that had emerged south of its borders, a marquee that Trump's "successful" campaign was built on – Islamophobic, anti-immigration, and anti-LGBTQ sentiment, to name a few. To set the tempo of what was to come, disturbing graffiti was found in a Regina, Saskatchewan neighborhood the morning following the results of the U.S. presidential election: "niggers go to the U.S. and let Trump deal with you" (Sharpe, 2016). Similarly reported incidents and other forms of hatred emerged in Canada, immediately following the results of the U.S. election.

In Ottawa, Canada's capital city, visible minority communities were the targets of several hate-inspired incidents following Trump's victory, which began on November 13th and lasted until November 19th; two synagogues, a Jewish prayer house, a mosque, and a church with a Black minister were vandalized with spray-painted racial slurs, swastikas, and white supremacist symbols (Pfeffer, 2017). Other Canadian cities experienced a similar uptick in targeted hatred against visible minorities coinciding with the outcome of the U.S. election. On November 14th, for example, Toronto residents woke up to find racist posters scattered across city neighborhoods. The hateful propaganda, titled "Hey, white person," encouraged readers to join the alt-right movement and subscribe to a list of "pro-European" websites (McGillivray, 2016). That same morning, residents in a predominantly Chinese community in Richmond, British Columbia, were shocked to find

racist pamphlets in their mailboxes. The flyers stated: "STEP ASIDE, WHITEY! THE CHINESE ARE TAKING OVER" (Chin, 2016). Sources also reported racist graffiti in a neighborhood in Regina, Saskatchewan, wherein alarming messages were scattered across an alleyway, a resident's garage, and a local playground. Some of the messages included "KKK is great" and "fuck niggers" (Martin, 2016). In Toronto that same week, a passer-by stopped in his tracks when he discovered a swastika spray-painted on the windshield of a car in a parking lot (Pelley, 2016).

Within a single week of Trump's election victory, Canadian supporters of the ideal of a liberal, pluralistic and equitable multicultural Canada were shocked by the sheer volume of racist, xenophobic, and homophobic sentiment inspired by Trump's win. However, racist attacks were not limited to the weeks immediately following the American presidential election. In November and December, for example, similar white supremacist-generated propaganda flyers were found in a neighborhood in Hamilton, Ontario, and Edmonton, Alberta, as well as on university campuses in Ontario and Quebec. The flyers read: (1) "Tired of anti-white propaganda? You are not alone" and (2) "It's only racist when white people do it." Flyers also directed viewers to alt-right websites for more information on what they described as a White cultural "struggle" (Carter, 2016a; Clancy, 2016). Of particular interest were those posted on the McGill University campus in Montreal. What was unique about this campaign was their attempt to borrow from Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan, as the messages included: "Tired of anti-white propaganda? It's time to MAKE CANADA GREAT AGAIN!" (Shingler, 2016). The time of "Canadian greatness"— the era in Canadian history which this derivative slogan points backward to—is never qualified or described by these hateful activists. Instead, they are creating a mythical golden age of "white" Anglo-Saxon and Francophone Christian dominance, a period when Canada had fewer non-white minorities and immigrants. They are perhaps harking back to a time when multiculturalism was not Canada's official national culture.

Nonetheless, following Trump's win, Canadians also saw, first hand, levels of hatred escalate from pamphleting and vandalism, to verbal altercations and violence, to first-degree murder. For example, on November 14th a verbal altercation ensued between two men on a Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) streetcar. Caught on camera was a White man throwing racist insults at another man who allegedly punched him, a claim that was not supported by witnesses. When a pedestrian tried to intervene in the attack, calling the offender a "fucking racist," the man claimed that he was proud of it, and he simply said: "Go Trump" (Rieti, 2016).

White supremacist hate and violence escalated on November 26th, as a 15-year-old youth of Muslim faith was brutally attacked by two men with a

baseball bat as he was walking home from a friend's house in Hamilton, Ontario (Carter, 2016b), resulting in serious injuries, including a cracked skull and injuries to his brain, jaw, limbs and spine (CBC News, 2016). While the police found no evidence of hate, the victim's family feared that the incident was a hate crime (Carter, 2016b). The family also showed concern about racial tensions that they have felt in their community since Trump's election win (Carter, 2016b).

The most alarming act of racist violence in Canada following the Trump win occurred on the evening of January 29, 2017. A 27-year-old White male entered the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec in Ste. Foy, Quebec with the intention of killing Muslims. Equipped with a long gun, the lone actor murdered six Muslim men and injured 19 others while they prayed in the Centre (Perreaux & Freeze, 2017). The suspect was described by his friends as a moderate conservative who, over about a year's time, became an apparent xenophobe and racist, one who overtly supported Donald Trump and far-right French politician Marine Le Pen (Dougherty, 2017). In other circles, he was described as an extremist troll who frequently posted alt-right rhetoric on the Web (McKenna, 2017). While communities across Canada banded together to support the victims and communities of the tragedy, another campaign was underway: Montreal police received 29 reports of hate incidents, both on- and offline, just three days following the massacre, with Muslims as the target (Perreaux & Freeze, 2017).

Months following Trump's victory, the intolerant sentiment on which he so boldly built his politics, had rippled across Canada, both in the real world and on the Web. Online, a *Facebook* group, Canadians for Donald Trump, was created in February of 2017 with the purpose of providing Canadian Trump supporters with a space in which they could have "positive" discussions about the effects that the U.S. president would have on Canada, all while demonizing Hillary Clinton and other Trump non-supporters (Krishnan, 2017). Across major Canadian cities, a far-right vigilante group, Soldiers of Odin (SOO), patrolled the streets to "protect" Canadian citizens from what they perceived as the threat: Islam (Makuch, 2017), seeking to silence and marginalize Muslims through intimidation and a show of force. Similarly, the Canadian Coalition for Concerned Citizens (CCCC) and the SOO rallied against a motion, M-103, which was intended to limit Islamophobia and track hate crimes. On March 4th, these groups protested M-103 in Toronto, making the public claim that "Islam is Evil" and clashing with anti-Islamophobic protesters (Khandaker & Krishnan, 2017).

In the virtual realm, a reactionary white supremacist subculture has also stereotyped and attacked non-white people, on platforms ranging from

discussion forums and blogs to social media sites (i.e., *Facebook, Twitter, YouTube*), to questionable alt-right media sources. Far-right Canadian media outlets, for instance, have bombarded its subscribers with all kinds of pro-Trump, racist and xenophobic dialogue, both before and after Trump's victory. Rebel Media, a popular far-right online media platform run by Ezra Levant, a controversial Canadian far-right political activist, writer and broadcaster, has been an outright supporter of Trump, publishing countless extreme-right leaning articles on why to support him. Canadian alt-right groups have also supported Trump, directly or indirectly, by promoting similar anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic discourse online. For example, the Council of European Canadians (CEC), a far-right group that is dedicated to promoting and defending the ethnic interests of European Canadians, made the news when they urged Canadians to consider a candidate of the Conservative Party who supported Trump, Kellie Leitch, and her call for the screening of all visitors, refugees, and immigrants (Browne, 2016).

TRUMPING MULTICULTURALISM: EXPLAINING THE TRUMP EFFECT IN CANADA

A number of political factors pre-existing Trump's presidential campaign and victory established the material and ideological ground for the Trump Effect in Canada. Consider Gramsci's (1971) assertion that the appeal of any political formation depends upon "previously germinated ideologies . . . [which] come into confrontation and conflict, until only one of them, or at least a single combination of them, tends to prevail" (pp. 181-182). Ideologies of any stripe cannot flourish in unprepared soil; rather, there must be some existing conditions, which let them bloom. And indeed, Trump's right-wing populist rhetoric found fertile ground in Canada. To understand the Trump Effect's hold in Canada, we must look outwards *and* inwards to explain the conditions conducive to the ready uptake of right-wing populism in Canada.

A global-level structural factor supporting the Trump Effect in Canada is the economic, geopolitical and technological integration of Canada and the U.S. The economies of Canada and the U.S. are tied together by free-trade agreements, cross-border business partnerships, and two-way trade flows: 85 percent of Canadian exports flow to the U.S. and Canada is the U.S.'s second largest trading partner. In addition, since 9/11 the Canadian security apparatus has aligned with the U.S.'s, and successive Canadian governments have supported the U.S.-led global war on terror (Klassen & Albo, 2012; McQuaig, 2007). The global war on terror and the rise of Islamophobia in the U.S. and Canada march in lockstep: right-wing politicians, think tanks and extremist groups beat the "war on Islam" drum

loudly, spew anti-Muslim rhetoric, engage in anti-Muslim practices, and satisfy anti-Muslim bigots (Kumar, 2012; Kundnani, 2015). Furthermore, the World Wide Web, the spread of smartphones, tablets and laptop computers, and the dominance of U.S.-based digital giants such as *Google*, *You-Tube*, *Facebook* and *Twitter* in Canada (Alexa, 2017) enable cross-border virtual linkages to be formed between Trump and the Canadian public and RWE in both countries. As users of U.S.-owned social media platforms, Canadians are fed a steady diet of Trump's hyperbole. His Twitter feeds reach us; his sound bites have made front page news in the Canadian media; the alt-right social media ecology and forums are accessible – and emulated – here. In short, the economic, geopolitical and technological integration of Canada with the U.S. renders Canada's border porous and enables an uninterrupted flow of American right-wing populism and Trumpism across the border.

Beneath these global-level factors and at the domestic level of politics is the fact that long before Trump burst onto the scene, Canada had already experienced its share of right-wing organizing. Like the U.S., Canada harboured a viable KKK movement in the early part of the twentieth century, giving way to a brief flurry of Nazi activism between WWI and WWII (Barrett, 1987). And again, like the U.S., Canada saw an explosion of RWE activity in the 1970s and 1980s. The atrocities of the WWII and Hitler's anti-Semitism had begun to dim; major changes in Canada's immigration laws were introduced; and unemployment and inflation were rampant (Barrett, 1987). Together, these factors lit a powder keg of pent up frustration and anxiety. Influenced by Britain's far right-wing party the National Front and British white power rock and punk music (i.e., Skrewdriver), neo-Nazi skinheads began to appear in the U.S. and Canada in the late 1970s.

The far right continued to be active in Canada into the 1990s. During this time, the Heritage Front, led by ultra-violent Wolfgang Droege, continued to grow in power, making its mark in urban centres such as Toronto (Kinsella, 2001). In Montreal, various Hammerskin groups, including the Northern Hammerskins and the Vinland Hammerskins made their presence known, engaging in a series of assaults and weapons offenses. George Burdi's band RaHoWa formed in 1989, and the Canadian branch of the World Church of Creator was heavily involved in the RWE movement, pushing the white power music scene across the country (Kinsella, 2001). In 1993, Burdi, who still maintained a close bond with Wolfgang Droege, attempted to advance white power music by launching Resistance Records. He also organized Church of the Creator paramilitary training with a former member of the Canadian Forces Airborne Regiment (Michael, 2006). In Alberta, Terry Long, leader of the Aryan Nations in Canada, and Kelly Scott Lyle, founder of Calgary's Final Solution Skinheads, gained media

attention in a series of racist activities. Matt McKay, member of the Manitoba Klan and the Final Solution Skinheads in Winnipeg was involved in a murder and a number of assaults, and Carney Nerland of Saskatchewan's Aryan Nations led the group in a series of violent crimes (Anti-Racist Canada, 2014).

More recently, as demonstrated in the previous section, right-wing movements seem to be enjoying a renaissance, spurred in large part by the ascendancy of Trump and the self-proclaimed alt-right. However, a crucial backdrop to the uptake of Trumpism in Canada is provided by reactionary trends at federal, provincial and municipal levels of government. On each of these levels, we have seen both historical and contemporary vestiges of the sort of right-wing populism onto which Trumpism could be grafted. At the federal level, the ten-year reign of Stephen Harper's Conservative government (2006-2015) ushered in a turn to the right in Canada unlike any we have seen since at least the early 1900s. Harper emerged out of the Reform party, a formation akin to the Tea Party which harnessed Western Canadian dissatisfaction with the Federal status quo, bemoaned a central Canadian liberal elite, rejected Quebec's "distinct society" claims, rolled back the welfare state, and pushed for enhanced immigration controls – classic populist positions in Canada (Sayers & Denemark, 2014). While the Reform gained traction in the West, it was rejected elsewhere, and ultimately merged with the right-wing Alliance Party to become the 'new' Conservative Party of Canada.

During the "Harper years," the Federal government blended neo-liberalism with social neoconservatism, mixing a pro-business agenda pushing free markets and privatization of collective public goods with regressive public policies extolling in what Porter (2012) described as "strong support for traditional family structures, opposition to abortion and family planning, and getting tough on crime" (p. 19). These years were also marked by militarism, a retreat from human rights, the elimination of hate speech protections, fear mongering and hate, anti-immigrant rhetoric, and restrictions on immigrants and refugees to Canada. Especially pronounced was Harper's vilification of Muslims. After the "terrorist" attacks in Quebec and on Parliament Hill in 2014, Harper introduced Bill C-51 with the claim that "Violent jihadism is not just a danger somewhere else. It seeks to harm us here in Canada" (Campion-Smith, 2015, p. 1). During the 2015 election campaign, Harper ratcheted up his Islamophobia, depicting Muslim culture as contrary to Canadian values and pandering to a bigoted base. He called Islamic culture "anti-women," declared the wearing of the hijab "offensive" and said that "We do not allow people to cover their faces during citizenship ceremonies" (Chase, 2015, p. 2).

As Prime Minister of Canada, Harper pushed for a regressive social

policy regime applauded by the far-right (Mallea, 2001; McDonald, 2011). Some of Harper's policy initiatives included: (1) the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act (2015), to revoke Canadian citizenship for select Canadians for "national security" reasons; (2) Bill C51 (2015), which was a drastic expansion of police powers; (3) the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act (2015), which tacitly targeted Muslims; (4) the Oath of Citizenship Act (2015), which intended to constrain religious observance; (5) refusal of international aid to organizations offering family-planning and birth control counseling; (6) a ban on federal scientists' public discussion of research contradicting party ideologies; and (7) elimination of the long-form census, long used in planning evidence-based public policy.

Cumulatively, the rhetoric, policy proposals and strategies unleashed by the Harper years predated and paralleled some of those mobilized by Trump and supported the growth of a right-wing populist movement in Canada (Chwalisz, 2015; Prince, 2015). However, the move to the right did not end with Harper's electoral defeat in 2015. Significantly, "Trump-lite" figures have emerged in the context of the subsequent 2016/2017 race for leadership of the Conservative party. A key contender, Kellie Leitch, spoke of creating a tip line for reporting "barbaric cultural practices" as well as a mechanism to screen potential immigrants and refugees for "anti-Canadian values" (Tunney, 2016). Channeling Trump's right-wing populism, Leitch tweeted that Trump's election win meant that "our American cousins threw out the elite" and that the win represented an "exciting message that needs to be delivered in Canada as well" (Stone, 2016, p. 2). Observing the groundswell of support for right-wing populism to the south, Kevin O'Leary, a second "Trump-lite" contender, joined the fray in January 2017. O'Leary shared much with Trump: bombast, egotism, and reality TV fame. Like Trump, he promised to "drain the swamp" but at least refrained from capitalizing on Trump's racism and xenophobia. While the Harper administration had the broadest and deepest effect on creating the conditions for a resurgence of the far-right in Canada (Perry & Scrivens, 2016), Trump's win encouraged the embrace of right-wing populism by conservative leadership contenders like Leitch and O'Leary.

At the provincial level of governance, additional signs of a pre-Trump right-wing populist politics in Canada abound: Alberta and Quebec are especially relevant cases in this regard. Alberta has long been an incubator of right-wing populism. It was home to the anti-cultural diversity "Ralph Klein Revolution," headquarters of the moral conservative and religious right-embracing Reform Party and the centre for Harper's political base (Lund, 2006). Alberta continues to be a bastion of right-wing populism (Rayside et al., 2012), with the Wildrose Party being a case in point. Part of the populist Wildrose-Alliance, Wildrose is a far-right party that panders to

the ideology of religious conservatives and moral absolutes (Rayside et al., 2012). For example, in the run-up to the 2012 election, Wildrose's Edmonton candidate, Allan Hunsperger, wrote in a now infamous blog that homosexuals would suffer for eternity in a "lake of fire." Just two days later, another candidate made these racist comments:

I think as a Caucasian I have an advantage [. . .] When different community leaders such as a Sikh leader or a Muslim leader speak, they really speak to their own people in many ways. As a Caucasian, I believe that I can speak to all the community (Graveland, 2012, p. 1).

Initially, the Wildrose Party faithful failed to challenge these divisive statements, lending credence to their characterization as a reactionary right-wing party. In spite of – or perhaps because of – the party's stance on social issues, they led the race right up to the election. While they did not win the election, they had remarkable success in southern and rural areas of the province, and became the official opposition. Clearly, the party touched a resonant chord with voters – a chord very much in tune with the Trumpism that would follow just a few years later.

Arguably, Quebec provides the richest illustration of the readiness of a province in Canada to take up the sort of right-wing populist rhetoric championed by Trump, particularly with respect to Islamophobia. Since the mid-1990s, Quebec has been the "epicentre" for institutional challenges to public expressions of Muslim identity. It is the province where Islamophobic politics is most pronounced and divisive. This is evidenced in multiple ways, from long standing attempts to bar Muslim women and girls from wearing hijabs to school, to 21st century polls expressing a growing public opinion in Quebec that immigration from Islamic countries should be reduced (Helly, 2004), to the creation of a Statement of Values in Herouxville in 2007 and in Gatineau in 2011 aimed at banning people from publicly wearing religious symbols and attire.

The Parti Quebecois (PQ) and its previous Premier, Pauline Marois, were especially prone to this position. In 2012, the PQ proposed a Charter of Values to ban religious expression in the public sector (sans the Christian crucifix). While the Charter was "dressed in the guise of narratives of gender equality and secular values" (Ameli & Merali, 2014, p. 39), it actually targeted Muslims. Far from backing a ban on symbols of Christianity, Judaism or Hinduism, most PQ leaders and supporters focused on removing hijab from public spaces. PQ premier Marois declared the hijab to be an unequivocal symbol of women's oppression; PQ Minister for Democratic Institutions argued that the ban was a necessary defence against the "Islamisization of Quebec"; a TV commentator said she wouldn't trust a nurse wearing a headscarf; and the former president of the Quebec

Women's' Federation said she would change lines in order to avoid being served by a covered woman (Mathelet, 2015).

While Marois' electoral defeat in 2014 put the Charter to rest, the Islamophobic rhetoric did not disappear. The PQ's newest leader (Jean-François Lisée) pushed for a ban on burqas during his election campaign saying that women could hide an AK-47. Islamophobic rhetoric continues to be shored up by "Radio poubelle" (shock radio) and the conservative tabloid news, which also rants against immigrants, non-whites, Muslims, LGBTQ communities, social justice warriors and threatening "Others" in their midst. Most recently, Bill 62, which requires Quebeckers who receive or provide public services to remove their religious face coverings, was passed in Québec in 2017. This has sparked considerable public and political debate, and the 'religious neutrality law' has since been challenged by the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (NCCLA) in Quebec Superior Court on the basis of it targeting Muslim women (Leblanc, 2018).

Given the above, it is no coincidence that RWE groups are probably most visible in Quebec. The German-based Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (PEGIDA), for example, has been a growing presence in Quebec as of 2015 (Toronto Star, 2015), and Quebec was where Alexandre Bissonette, a RWE terrorist and dutiful *Facebook* follower of Marine Le Pen and Donald Trump, shot and killed six Canadian Muslim men at prayer. A final level of analysis for explaining the pre-determinations of the Trump Effect in Canada is municipal. In Toronto, Canada's largest urban centre, then-mayor, Rob Ford, was a masterful populist. Ford shared many of Trump's traits: egotistical, overbearing, an outsider, and someone who would help the people take back the power from entitled elites. Kipfer and Saberi (2014) capture the essence of Ford's right-wing populist strategy, noting that:

Ford's belligerent interventions deepened existing social divides by pitting an imagined "Ford Nation"—car-driving, home-owning suburban family men, proper "taxpayers" like himself—against a range of enemy others: City workers, downtowners, cyclists, transit users, refugees, gays and lesbians, protestors, and "thugs" (gang members). Ford thus laced the anti-establishment mentality of small property and business owners with vengeful homophobic, racist, sexist, anti-labour, and anti-environmentalist elements (p. 134).

The irony was that Ford, like Trump, came from a well-heeled family business and was himself a member of the economic elite. And Ford, like Trump, seemed immune to the rules of politics or society as a whole; no "indiscretion" stuck to them; consequences for them were in short supply. Yet that did not stop either one of them from presenting themselves as

champions of the people against corrupt and smug liberal political insiders. Ford promised to "stop the gravy train," just as Trump promised to "drain the swamp." When caught in compromising and often illegal activities, Ford, like Trump, castigated the so-called "bias" of the news media and chastised his political opponents for conspiring against him (Kipfer & Saberi, 2014). The endless scandals and bombastic claims and deflection of criticisms that characterized Ford's career as mayor of Toronto may be repeated by Donald Trump.

Trumping the Trump Effect in Canada

While the Trump Effect is real in the U.S. and in Canada, its power to shape the hearts and minds of Americans and Canadians is being challenged. Trump is far from "hegemonic" in the U.S., and his presidency does not have the consent or the approval of the majority of American citizens. According to a 2016 Pew Research Centre poll, Trump took office as the most disliked U.S. president in modern history (Waldman, 2016). A year later, Pew found that a mere 16 percent of Americans "liked" how Trump conducts himself (Pew Research Center, 2017b). Moreover, Pew further noted that "Trump and many of his key policies are broadly unpopular around the globe, and ratings for the U.S. have declined steeply in many nations" (Pew Research Center, 2017a, p. 1). In Canada the dislike of Trump is widespread. A Forum Research poll, for example, highlights how Canada's approval of Trump is very low, with 72 percent of Canadians saying they disapprove of Trump's conduct (Forum Research, 2017).

Significantly, Canada represents some countervailing factors that may circumvent the Trump Effect and slow the worldwide spread of right-wing populism. After a decade in power, Canada's then-Prime Minister Stephan Harper was defeated in 2016 by the Liberal Party leader, Justin Trudeau, who at the time promoted Canadian multiculturalism and promised a more inclusive approach to negotiating identities and cultural differences. An additional blow to right-wing populism is reflected in the unpopularity of Kellie Leitch, as well as the defeat of both the Parti Quebecois in Quebec and the Wildrose Party in Alberta. On the whole, the Canadian public is averse to the kind of cultural chauvinism and xenophobia expressed by Trump and the alt-right (Ambrose & Mudde, 2015).

Despite the deep integration of Canada and the U.S., the countries still diverge in important ways. Numerous Environics polls, for example, highlight broad Canadian support for values very distinct from those conveyed by Trump: equality and equity; inclusivity; gender and sexual diversity; women's rights; immigration; and significantly, the role of the Canadian state in safeguarding these through the use of public funds (Adams, 2013).

Canada and the U.S. are still different countries. Although neo-fascists have gained some ideological ground in Canada, Canada's multicultural society and mainstream public opinion is not aligned with the extremist ideology of white nationalism that is capitalizing on and Canadianizing the Trump Effect. Some Canadian politicians, citizens, and social movements have been working to counter ideologies of hate in Parliament, on *Facebook* pages, in the streets – anywhere they can.Moreover, Canada's federal and provincial governments are actively promoting anti-hate initiatives and policies. At the federal level, Member of Parliament (MP) Iqra Khalid introduced M-103 calling for the government to "recognize the need to quell the increasing public climate of hate and fear" and "condemn Islamophobia and all forms of systemic racism and religious discrimination." (Levitz, 2017, para. 4). At the provincial level, governments are also condemning acts of hate. Ontario recently passed a motion that condemns "all forms of hatred, hostility, prejudice, racism and intolerance," rebukes "the growing tide of anti-Muslim rhetoric and sentiments," "denounce[s] hate-attacks, threats of violence and hate crimes against people of the Muslim faith," and "condemn[s] all forms of Islamophobia" (CBC News, 2017, para. 1). That province has also recently enacted its three-year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan, intended to counter systemic racism across the province. Importantly, there is a resurgence of "bottom up" grassroots campaigns to counter the Trump Effect in Canada. Canadians representing diverse social movements drawing from communities of faith, peace and anti-war networks and democratic socialist groups have countered (and outnumbered) every public rally organized by the Trump-loving CCCC (described above) in Canada's major cities. Anti-racist (and anti-fascist) organizing and activism is growing across Canada, and this is a direct expression of organizing "from below." Without such organizing by a plurality of local activist groups - one of the most significant being the Coalition Against White Supremacy and Islamophobia (CAWSI), with over six thousand members—these anti-racist demonstrations would not exist.

At this juncture, there is a need for a progressive Left populist vision for the U.S. and Canada that attempts to ameliorate the real material conditions that give rise to right-wing populists like Trump. In both countries, the richest 1 percent have increased their share of total national income while the poorest and middle-income groups have fallen behind. The typical American CEO pockets about 340 times more than the average worker's wage; Canada's top CEOs take in 193 times the average worker's wage (Conference Board of Canada, 2017; Jackson, 2015; Paddon, 2016; Yalnizvan, 2010). These dire economic conditions and the dispossession and grievances they entail are capitalized on by right-wing populists like Trump and by racist movements more broadly.

Trump and his supporters in the alt-right movement craftily channeled real economic grievances into attacks on racialized and demonized others, not toward "class struggles" aimed at the heavy concentration of wealth and power noted above. Of course, economic conditions do not singularly cause racism, but deteriorating economic conditions have historically shaped receptivity to racist white supremacist ideology, as promulgated by right-wing politicians. Consider the rise of fascism in Germany, or the ascendancy of Thatcher in the U.K. and Reagan in the U.S., which were also tied to the demonization of immigrants and moral panics around racialized urban crime. In periods of capitalist downturns and rising inequality (such as the period we have been living through since the collapse of the world economy in 2008), large numbers of people are drawn to right-wing populists and thus also drawn to taking up "race war" ideology, instead of fighting for social justice, fairer redistribution of wealth and a more equal society. As Taylor (2017) reminds us,

> Trump and the Republican Party explain the inequality experienced by workers — white workers in particular — as the fault of Mexican immigrants who steal jobs; or the fault of black criminals who make us unsafe; or the fault of Muslim terrorists who make us spend billions on defense. And meanwhile, they pursue policies intended to destroy the living standards of those same workers. (para. 41)

To trump the Trump Effect in the U.S. and in Canada, we must challenge right-wing extremism with a multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional response (Scrivens & Perry, 2017). We must also challenge the racist ideology that divides working people and the material conditions that foster the rise of right-wing demagogues. To this end, we conclude with a call for a two-pronged "progressive" strategy: (1) an anti-racist left internationalist populist alternative to the white nationalist populist right; and, (2) participation in and support for the progressive social movements currently struggling at global, national, provincial and local levels and pushing for the development of public policies that aim to take society beyond the material conditions that have historically enabled marginal fascists to go mainstream.

References

Abts, K. & Rummens, S. (2007). Populism versus democracy. *Political Studies, 55*(2), 405-424.

Adams, M. (2013). The myth of Conservative Canada. *Policy Options*. Retrieved from http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/the-age-of-man/adams

Albertazzi, D., & McDonnell, D. (Eds.) (2008). *Twenty-first century populism the specter of Western European democracy*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Alexa. (2017). *Top ten websites in Canada*. Retrieved from http://ww.alexa.com/topsites/countries/CA

Allan, E. (2014). Minority identities in a minority nation: A critical analysis of Quebec's interculturalism policy. *The UBC Journal of Political Studies, 16*(1), 13-21.

Ambrose, E., & Mudde, C. (2015). Canadian multiculturalism and the absence of the far right. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, 21*(2), 213-236.

Ameli, S.R., & Merali, A. (2014). *Only Canadian: The experience of hate moderated differential citizenship for Muslims*. Wembley, UK: Islamic Human Rights Commission.

Angus Reid Inc. (1992). *Le multiculturalisme et les Canadiens: Etude nationale sur les attitudes*. Ottawa, ON: Multiculturalisme et Citoyenneté.

Barrett, S.R. (1987). *Is God a racist? The right wing in Canada*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Betz, H.G., & Johnson, C. (2004). Against the current—stemming the tide: The nostalgic ideology of the contemporary radical populist right. *Journal of Political Ideologies, 9*(3), 311-327.

Browne, R. (2016, December 5). 'I do not want their endorsement:' Part of Canada's so-called alt-right is endorsing Conservative candidate Kellie Leitch. She doesn't seem thrilled. *Vice News*. Retrieved from https://news.vice.com/story/part-of-canadas-so-called-alt-right-is-endorsing-kellie-leitch

Campion-Smith, B. (2015, January 25). Stephen Harper says jihadist terrorism 'seeks to harm us here'. *The Toronto Star*. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/01/25/stephen-harper-says-jihadist-terrorism-seeks-to-harm-us-here.html

Carter, A. (2016a, November 21). Flyers decrying 'anti-white propaganda' found in Hamilton. *CBC News Hamilton*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/hamilton-fliers-1.3860327

Carter, A. (2016b, November 30). Muslim teen left with cracked skull after brutal beating. *CBC News Hamilton*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/teen-attack-1.3874867

CBC News. (2016, December 8). *Police arrest 18-year-old in baseball bat attack on Hamilton teen*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/police-arrest-18-year-old-in-baseball-bat-attack-on-hamilton-teen-1.3886855

CBC News. (2017, March 23). *House of Commons passes anti-Islamophobia motion*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/m-103-islamophobia-motion-vote-1.4038016

Chase, S. (2015, March 10). Niqabs 'rooted in a culture that is anti-women,' Harper says. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/niqabs-rooted-in-a-culture-that-is-anti-women-harper-says/article23395242

Chin, J. (2016, November 21). Richmond racist flyers call on 'whitey' to save city

from Chinese people. *The Huffington Post Canada*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2016/11/21/richmond-racist-flyers_n_13130166.html

Chwalisz, C. (2015). The prairie populist: How Stephen Harper transformed Canada. *Juncture, 22*(3), 225-229.

Clancy, C. (2016, November 21). Posters calling out 'anti-white propaganda' put up in downtown Edmonton. *Edmonton Journal*. Retrieved from http://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/posters-calling-out-anti-white-propaganda-put-up-in-downtown-edmonton

Conference Board of Canada. (2017). *Income inequality*. Retrieved from http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/details/society/income-inequality.aspx

Kumar, D. (2012). *Islamophobia and the politics of empire*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.

Dougherty, K. (2017, January 31). Quebec mosque shooting suspect was a fan of Donald Trump and Marine le Pen. *Independent*. Retrieved from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/quebec-city-mosque-shooting-latest-alexandre-bissonnette-donald-trump-marine-le-pen-facebook-social-a7554451.html

Engesser, S., Ernst, N., Esser, F., & Büchel, F. (2016). Populism and social media: How politicians spread a fragmented ideology. *Information, Communication and Society, 20*(8), 1109-1126.

Forum Research. (2017, September 27). *Donald Trump approval down*. Retrieved from http://poll.forumresearch.com/data/64d0446a-39e6-40a7-8895-3f4476648ca1Donald%20Trump%20Sept%20.pdf

Giroux, H. (2016). Political frauds, Donald Trump, and the ghost of totalitarianism. *Knowledge Cultures, 4*(5), 95-108.

Goldman, J. (2015). Disability represented in/as culturally disruptive bodies within the "Quebec Charter of Values." *Knots: An Undergraduate Journal of Disability Studies, 1*, 54-59.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York, NY: International Publishers.

Graveland, B. (2012, April 17). Wildrose candidate apologizes for suggesting he has a white advantage. *Global News*. Retrieved from http://globalnews.ca/news/235033/wildrose-candidate-apologizes-for-suggesting-he-has-a-white-advantage-3

Helly, D. (2004). Are the Muslims discriminated against in Canada? *Journal of Canadian Ethnic Studies, 36*(1), 24-47.

Jackson, A. (2015). *The return of the Gilded Age: Consequences, causes and solutions*. Ottawa, ON: The Broadbent Institute.

Jagers, J., & Walgrave, S. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium. *European Journal of Political Research, 46*(3), 319-345.

Jansen, R.S. (2011). Populist mobilization: A new theoretical approach to populism. *Sociological Theory, 29*(2), 75-96.

Jeffrey, B. (1999). *Hard right turn: The new face of neo-conservatism in Canada*. Toronto, ON: HarperCollins.

Khandaker, T., & Krishnan, M. (2017, March 4). 'Islam is evil': Protesters clash at Toronto anti-M-103 rally. *Vice News*. Retrieved from https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/protestors-clash-at-pro-islamophobia-anti-m-103-rally-in-toronto

Kinsella, W. (2001). *Web of hate: Inside Canada's far right network*. Toronto, ON: HarperCollins.

Kipfer, S., & Saberi, P. (2014). From "revolution" to farce? Hard-right populism in the making of Toronto. *Studies in Political Economy, 93*(1), 127-152.

Klassen, J., & Albo, G. (Eds.). (2012). *Empire's ally: Canada and the war in Afghanistan*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Krishnan, M. (2017, June 9). 'Canadians for Donald Trump' founder explains how Trump would make Canada great again. *Vice News*. Retrieved from https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/the-founder-of-canadians-for-donald-trump-explains-how-the-donald-would-make-canada-great-again

Kundnani, A. (2015). *The Muslims are coming! Islamophobia, extremism and the domestic war on terror*. New York: Verso.

Leblanc, D. (2018, January 25). Federal government staying out of court challenge to Quebec's face-covering law. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/federal-government-staying-out-of-court-challenge-to-quebecs-face-covering-law/article37741612

Levitz, S. (2017, September 18). Iqra Khalid urges MPs to take unified approach in Islamophobia study. *The Globe and Mail.* Retrieved from https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/iqra-khalid-urges-mps-to-take-unified-approach-in-islamophobia-study/article36287550/

Lund, D. (2006). Social justice activism in the heartland of hate: Countering extremism in Alberta. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 52*(2), 181-194.

Makuch, B. (2017, February 1). Soldiers of Odin: Inside the extremist vigilante group that claims to be preserving Canadian values. *Vice News*. Retrieved from https://news.vice.com/story/soldiers-of-odin-inside-the-extremist-vigilante-group-that-claims-to-be-preserving-canadian-values

Mallea, P. (2011). *Fearmonger*. Toronto, ON: Lorimer.

Martin, A. (2016, November 17). Reginans believe racist graffiti inspired by Trump's election. *Regina Leader-Post*. Retrieved from http://leaderpost.com/news/local-news/reginans-believe-racist-graffiti-inspired-by-trumps-election

Mathelet, S.L. (2015). A hidden ideological scheme under new secularism: Explaining a peak of Islamphobia in Quebec (2013-2014). *Islamophobia Studies Journal, 3*(1), 29-43.

McDonald, M. (2011). *The Armageddon factor: The rise of Christian nationalism in Canada* (2nd Ed.). Toronto, ON: Vintage.

McGillivray, K. (2016, November 14). Racist posters promoting 'alt-right' alarm Toronto residents. *CBC News Toronto*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/east-york-alt-right-racist-posters-1.3850386

McKenna, K. (2017, January 31). Suspect in mosque shooting a moderate conservative turned extremist, say friends, classmates. *CBC News Montreal*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-city-mosque-alexandre-bissonnette-profile-1.3959581

McQuaig, L. (2007). *Holding the bully's coat: Canada and the U.S. empire*. Toronto, ON: Doubleday.

Mudde, C. (2004). The populist zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition, 39*(4), 541-563.

Myerson, J.A. (2017, May 22). Trumpism: It's coming from the suburbs. *The Nation*. Retrieved from https://www.thenation.com/article/trumpism-its-coming-from-the-suburbs

Neiwert, D. (2017). *Alt-America: The rise of the radical right in the age of Trump*. New York: Verso.

Paddon, D. (2016, January 3). Canada's top CEOs to earn average worker's 2017 salary by lunchtime. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2017/01/03/canada-ceo-worker-pay-gap_n_13937686.html

Pelley, L. (November 23, 2016). Toronto man finds 2 swastikas spray-painted in his Queen Street East neighbourhood. *CBC News Toronto*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/anti-semitic-graffiti-spotted-in-downtown-toronto-1.3864466

Perreaux, L., & Freeze, C. (2017, February 1). Arrest made after hate crimes spike following Quebec mosque attack. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/police-report-rise-in-hate-crimes-after-quebec-city-mosque-attack/article33856702

Perry, B., & Scrivens, R. (2016). Uneasy alliances: A look at the right-wing extremist movement in Canada. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *39*(9), 1-23.

Pew Research Center. (2017a, June 16). *U.S. image suffers as publics around world question Trump's leadership*. Retrieved from http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/06/26/u-s-image-suffers-as-publics-around-world-question-trumps-leadership

Pew Research Center. (2017b, August 29). *Republicans divided in views of Trump's conduct; Democrats are broadly critical*. Retrieved from http://www.people-press.org/2017/08/29/republicans-divided-in-views-of-trumps-conduct-democrats-are-broadly-critical

Pfeffer, A. (2017, February 17). Teen who spray-painted racist slurs, swastikas pleads guilty. *CBC News Ottawa*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/teen-swastika-racist-guilty-church-synagogue-mosque-1.3988061

Porter, A. (2012). Neo-conservatism, neo-liberalism and Canadian social policy: Challenges for feminism. *Canadian Woman Studies, 29*(3), 19-31.

Potok, M. (2017, February 15). The Trump effect. *Southern Poverty Law Centre*. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2017/trump-effect

Prince, M.J. (2015). Prime Minister as moral crusader: Stephen Harper's punitive turn in social policy-making. *Canadian Review of Social Policy, 71*(1), 53-69.

Rayside, D., Sabin, J., & Thomas, P. (2012). Faith and party politics in Alberta or "Danielle, this is Alberta, not Alabama." In *Proceedings of the Canadian Political Science Association Annual Conference*, Edmonton, Alberta (Vol. 12).

Rieti, J. (2016, November 14). Video shows man hurling racist insults, threats on Toronto streetcar. *CBC News Toronto*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-streetcar-incident-1.3851108

Rooduijn, M. (2014). The mesmerizing message: The diffusion of populism in public debates in Western European media. *Political Studies, 62*(4), 726-744.

Rosenfeld, S. (2017, May 19). 12 Features of white working class Trump voters confirm depressed and traumatized multitudes voted for him. *Salon*. Retrieved from http://www.salon.com/2017/05/19/12-features-of-white-working-class-trump-voters-confirm-depressed-and-traumatized-multitudes-voted-for-him_partner

Sasson, E. (2016, November 16). Blame Trump's victory on college-educated whites, not the working class. *New Republic*. Retrieved from https://newrepublic.com/article/138754/blame-trumps-victory-college-educated-whites-not-working-class

Sayers, A.M., & Denemark, D. (2014). Radicalism, protest votes and regionalism: Reform and the rise of the New Conservative Party. *Canadian Political Science Review, 8*(1), 3-26.

Scrivens, R., & Perry, B. (2017). Resisting the right: Countering right-wing extremism in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, *59*(4), 534-558.

Sharpe, K. (2016, November 17). Regina homeowners upset after property tagged with racist graffiti. *Global News*. Retrieved from http://globalnews.ca/news/3074086/regina-homeowners-upset-after-property-tagged-with-racist-graffiti

Shihipar, A. (2017, July 4). Why Americans must stop talking about Trump's mythical "white working class" voters. *Quartz*. Retrieved from https://qz.com/991072/why-americans-must-stop-talking-about-the-mythical-homogenous-white-working-class

Shils, E. (1956). *The torment of secrecy*. Glencoa, IL: Free Press.

Shingler, B. (2016, December 8). 'Make Canada great again' flyers with anti-Muslim, anti-gay imagery alarm McGill University community. *CBC News Montreal*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/mcgill-canada-make-canada-great-again-1.3886871

Slate Staff. (2017, February 24). *Hate in America: An updating list*. Retrieved from http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2016/12/hate_in_america_a_list_of_racism_bigotry_and_abuse_since_the_election.html?wpsrc=sh_all_mob_em_top

Stone, L. (2016, November 9). Trump win sends 'exciting message' to Canada: Conservative MP Kellie Leitch. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/trump-message-needs-to-come-to-canada-leitch-says-in-tory-leadership-bid/article32760294

Taggart, P. (2000). *Populism.* Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Taylor, K. (2017, July 12). The speech racists didn't want you to hear.

Jacobin. Retrieved from https://jacobinmag.com/2017/07/free-speech-fox-news-racism-trump-poor-whites

Toronto Star. (2015, March 25). Anti-Islam group on rise in Quebec. p. A10.

Tunney, C. (2016, September 2). Kellie Leitch defends 'anti-Canadian values' survey question. *CBC News*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/leitch-responds-survey-question-1.3746470

Waldman, P. (2016, November 21). Trump takes office as the most disliked president ever. How much will that matter? *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2016/11/21/trump-takes-office-as-the-most-disliked-president-ever-how-much-will-that-matter

Wildrose Alliance. (2008). "Our vision for Alberta." *Wildrose Alliance Election Platform.* Retrieved from http://www.wildrosealliance.ca/home/our-vision-for-alberta

Yalnizyan, A. (2010). *The rise of Canada's richest 1%*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Policy. Alternatives.

The Trump Effect: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Racist Right's Internet Rhetoric

Brett A. Barnett
Slippery Rock University

ABSTRACT

The divisiveness witnessed during Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, a nationwide discord on a scale not witnessed since the tumultuous Nixon-Humphrey-Wallace campaign of 1968, has necessitated an examination of hate within the United States. Characterized by rhetoric of nationalism and isolationism reminiscent of ideologies espoused by white nationalists, Trump's campaign energized the American racist right. Indeed, the most prominent US-based white supremacist websites, the neo-Nazi Stormfront and The Daily Stormer, launched extensive online campaigns supporting Trump's presidential bid, and both sites experienced dramatic increases in traffic. This essay examines some of the divisive rhetoric Trump employed during his presidential campaign and the various ways in which that rhetoric appears to have resonated with US-based white supremacists. Examining white supremacists' Internet rhetoric enables persons to be alerted to the possibility of white supremacist advocacy or activity and to better understand how white supremacists attempt to form, or become a part of, a community of like-minded persons. While several acts of murderous violence in the United States have been associated with white supremacist content appearing online, examinations of US-based white supremacists' Internet rhetoric may assist individuals, including law enforcement and homeland security professionals, in guarding against similar violence in the future.

Keywords: Donald Trump, 2016 presidential campaign, Stormfront, The Daily Stormer, white supremacists

INTRODUCTION

The divisiveness witnessed during Donald Trump's presidential campaign, a nationwide discord on a scale not witnessed since the tumultuous Nixon-Humphrey-Wallace campaign of 1968, has necessitated an examination of hate within the United States. The campaign leading up to the 1968 presidential election, set against the backdrop of American involvement in the Vietnam War and the corresponding military draft, was likely to be a

turbulent campaign had it only involved Democratic nominee Hubert Humphrey and Republican nominee Richard Nixon. However, when pro-white Alabama Governor George Wallace, an outspoken critic of desegregation efforts in the United States, entered the campaign as a third-party candidate representing the American Independent Party, the campaign leading up to the 1968 presidential election was destined to be among the most tumultuous political campaigns in modern American history. The pro-white and pro-segregationist rhetoric communicated by Wallace during his presidential bid helped to divide the nation at a time when many Americans had hoped the civil rights movement of the 1960s was lessening the divisions between persons of different racial and ethnic backgrounds living in the United States. Wallace's pro-white and pro-segregationist political platform infuriated racial minorities and advocates of desegregation but energized those Americans who were opposed to desegregation, particularly white Southerners. Indeed, Wallace received support from some racist right groups concentrated in the South like the White Citizens' Council, and many individuals associated with those groups actively assisted Wallace's campaign efforts. Propelled by a groundswell of support for his pro-white and pro-segregationist views, Wallace won five Southern states (i.e., Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi), received nearly ten million popular votes (9,906,473), and was pledged 46 electoral votes in the 1968 presidential election (Eveleigh, 2016; Pearson, 1998; Woolley & Peters, n.d.). To date, Wallace is the last third-party candidate to receive pledged electoral votes from any state (Kapur, 2016).

Much like Wallace's divisive rhetoric from his late 1960's presidential campaign, the divisive rhetoric communicated by Donald Trump during his bid for the presidency incensed millions of Americans while garnering fervent support from millions of others, including individuals within the racist right (e.g., neo-Nazi, Ku Klux Klan, white nationalists). According to Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), an organization that monitors hate and extremist groups in the United States, "Trump's run for office electrified the radical right, which saw in him a champion of the idea that America is fundamentally a white man's country" (2017, p. 37). The extent to which Trump's presidential campaign rhetoric resonated with the American racist right could be witnessed in the rapid growth of pro-white movements such as the Alternative Right, commonly dubbed the "Alt-Right," as well as the physical, financial, and rhetorical support that US-based white supremacists devoted to Trump's presidential bid.

Given the divisiveness cultivated amongst communities throughout the United States during Trump's presidential campaign, a divisiveness that has only intensified since Trump's election as president, examinations of the rhetoric of the American racist right are critical now more than ever. This

essay examines some of the divisive rhetoric Trump employed during his presidential campaign and the various ways in which that rhetoric appears to have resonated with the American racist right, including many individuals who in turn showed their support for Trump in alarming and unprecedented ways. Particular attention will be afforded to the online campaigns in support of Trump's presidency on the neo-Nazi websites Stormfront and The Daily Stormer, the two most prominent US-based white supremacist websites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In attempting to gain insight into how Donald Trump's divisive presidential campaign rhetoric resonated with the American racist right, an effective starting point for conducting research is the Internet, the modern-day communication medium of choice for many US-based white supremacists. Since the development of the commercial Internet in the early 1990s, US-based white supremacists have expanded their range of hateful rhetoric to the realm of online postings, including websites. Indeed, virtually every organized US-based hate group has maintained its own "hate site," a website containing content disparaging one or more classes of people (Barnett, 2007, p. 3). As the trend of disseminating hateful communications online became apparent, researchers began investigating the Internet rhetoric of US-based hate groups.

Research concerning hate groups' use of the Internet began with Zickmund's (1997) examination of radical newsgroups, also referred to as "radical cyber-sites" (p. 189). Specifically, Zickmund examined the consistently-emerging belief structures on listserves and Usenet newsgroups utilized by various white supremacist groups. Zickmund's analysis demonstrated that white supremacists used the Internet to articulate extremist ideas advocating the persecution of innocent persons within society, particularly Jews, gays, and non-whites, who were framed as the "other" within the discursive culture of the studied newsgroups. Based on analysis, Zickmund opined that these extremist ideas should not be sanctioned and ways of limiting such discourse should be identified.

Following Zickmund's study, communication scholars Apple and Messner (2001) analyzed content appearing on six websites maintained by devotees of Christian Identity, a religious movement grounded on racist and anti-Semitic beliefs (Beirich, 2018, p. 49). Apple and Messner's analysis demonstrated that paranoia and paradox are integral elements of the apocalyptic discourse found on Christian Identity sites. The researchers' findings led them to conclude that mainstream America may be more susceptible to hateful rhetoric as a result of its dissemination over the Internet. Apple and

Messner's study would be followed by several other analyses of hate site content conducted by communication scholars.

Using Bormann's fantasy theme analysis, Duffy (2003) examined four websites maintained by various hate groups (i.e., white nationalist, neo-Nazi, Ku Klux Klan, and black separatist) to gain a better understanding of the worldviews expressed by those groups as well as the potential for persuasion. Duffy's analysis revealed that several enduring fantasy themes identified by Bormann were demonstrated in the examined sites: restoration, "Fetching Good Out of Evil," "holy emigration of God's chosen people," and the preordained drama of "the Christian soldier fighting God's battles and overcoming adversaries to establish the truth church" (Duffy, 2003, pp. 307-308). Duffy also determined that all of the sampled websites shared two common rhetorical visions: "God's Chosen People" and "We Shall Overcome." What is more, Duffy found that each of the four sampled sites included emotional appeals to the principles of fairness and justice, appeals which are powerfully persuasive.

In an even more ambitious study, Bostdorff (2004) analyzed 23 Ku Klux Klan (KKK) websites to determine how hate groups may engage in community building. In conducting analysis, Bostdorff found that the Klan sites attempted to build a community united by an opposition to certain racial and religious groups, particularly Jews, by making appeals to white masculinity and, occasionally, segmented appeals to women, youth, and children. Additionally, Bostdorff found that messages contained on the sampled Klan sites encouraged hateful political activity, including violence, while simultaneously disavowing responsibility for consequences of the online rhetoric. Based on analysis, Bostdorff concluded that the KKK's Internet rhetoric inflamed would-be supporters and discouraged dissenting viewpoints. In the essay, Bostdorff also called for additional examinations of how persons within the hate community respond online to particular public issues.

Following Bostdorff's study, Meddaugh and Kay (2009) analyzed content appearing on the white supremacist website Stormfront. Using the construct of the "other," the researchers showed that discourse contained on Stormfront's website appeared to be less virulent and more palatable to naïve visitors to the site. Meddaugh and Kay concluded that Stormfront may be casting a wider net in attracting audiences by providing a "cyber transition" between traditional hate speech and tempered discourse emphasizing pseudo-rational commentaries regarding race, or what is sometimes referred to as "reasonable racism."

More recently, Barnett (2017) examined how the neo-Confederate group League of the South (LOS) used its website to attract members to its community in the days leading up to the Confederate flag's removal from

South Carolina's state capitol in July 2015. Barnett's analysis revealed that LOS may have aided its community-building efforts by attempting to foster a sense of shared identity within the pro-Confederate community and by employing fear-raising rhetoric relating to the backlash against Confederate symbols. Like Barnett's 2017 study, the present study is a response to Bostdorff's call for research on how persons within the hate community respond online to particular public issues. Now, more than ever, is an appropriate time for analyzing the content of hate sites, particularly those sites maintained by US-based white supremacists, given the myriad ways in which Donald Trump's presidential campaign rhetoric appears to have resonated with the American racist right, a resonance evidenced by this study.

RESEARCH ARTIFACTS AND PROCEDURES

Donald Trump's divisive presidential campaign rhetoric began on June 16, 2015, the first day he announced his intention to run for president and would continue throughout much of 2016 leading up to the presidential election. To demonstrate how Trump's divisive rhetoric resonated with the American racist right, a qualitative analysis was conducted of content appearing throughout the presidential campaign on the neo-Nazi websites Stormfront and The Daily Stormer, the two most prominent US-based white supremacist websites. Specifically, the examination encompassed content from June 28, 2015, the day on which The Daily Stormer first endorsed Trump for president on its website, until November 9, 2016, when celebratory commentary appeared on both The Daily Stormer and Stormfront shortly after election results indicated Trump would win the presidency. Webpages appearing on the The Daily Stormer and Stormfront containing Trump-related content were converted to Portable Document Format (PDF) files to allow for later examination. If content (i.e., video and animation) was not conducive to PDF formatting, the content was immediately examined, and the findings noted.

Stormfront

Don Black, a former Alabama Klan leader and current neo-Nazi, is an iconic figure within the American racist right whose white supremacist activities date back to the 1970s when he was a member of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the KKK group led by infamous white supremacist David Duke ("Don Black," n.d.). Black acquired computer programming skills while serving three years in federal prison for plotting with nine other white supremacists to overthrow the black-run government of the small Caribbean island of Dominica in the early 1980s ("Don Black," n.d.). After

his release from prison, Black moved to West Palm Beach, Florida, where he sought to explore the Internet's potential for bringing white supremacists together, and in March 1995 he established the *stormfront.org* message board, which is widely regarded as the first major online hate site ("Don Black," n.d.; "Stormfront," n.d.). As the first major hate site, the *stormfront.org* message board, which is commonly referred to as Stormfront, garnered the website a great deal of media coverage in newspapers and television interviews (e.g., ABC's *Nightline*), publicity which in turn caused a surge in Internet traffic ("Stormfront," n.d.). During a 1996 interview, Black stated: "The potential of the Net for organizations and movements such as ours is enormous. . . . We're reaching tens of thousands of people who never before had access to our point of view" ("Don Black," n.d., para. 12).

Given the site's notoriety and elevated status as the first hate site, Stormfront has always functioned as one of the Western world's most visited white supremacist community-building forums wherein users can post articles and website links, participate in discussions, and share information about upcoming racist events ("Stormfront," n.d.). Stormfront's interest in building a white supremacist community is evidenced by the site's online motto "White Pride World Wide" and the site's posting guidelines: "Our [Stormfront's] mission is to provide information not available in the controlled news media and to build a community of White activists working for the survival of our people" (Black, 2001, para. 1). Despite technological advances, Stormfront has always been organized as an interactive message board wherein site visitors can communicate with one another (e.g., opinions, feedback), and this interactivity allowed Stormfront to become what the SPLC describes as "a genuine white supremacist cyber-community" ("Stormfront," n.d., para. 9). While many individuals have become Stormfront members, something that allows persons to post messages and view other members' personal information, large numbers of visitors to Stormfront's site simply read the postings without becoming a member ("Don Black," n.d.).

By January 2002, Stormfront had 5,000 members ("Stormfront," n.d.). Later in 2002, Stormfront expanded its white supremacist community-building efforts by encouraging prominent writers within the American racist right, like Sam Dickson of the white nationalist group Council of Conservative Citizens and Willis Carto who publishes the virulently anti-Semitic journal *The Barnes Review*, to begin posting to the site ("Stormfront," n.d.). By 2003, Stormfront had 11,000 members, and by early 2004 Stormfront's membership reached 23,000 ("Don Black," n.d.). Stormfront had 133,000 registered users by 2008 ("Stormfront," n.d.). In March 2015, three months before Trump announced his bid for the presidency, Stormfront had almost 300,000 registered members and a daily radio show capa-

ble of reaching a global audience ("Don Black," n.d.). At the time Trump announced his intention to run for president, Stormfront was regarded as the nation's largest white supremacist Internet forum (Piggott, 2016), and the site had to upgrade its server after user traffic surged during Trump's presidential campaign (Schreckinger, 2015).

The Daily Stormer

Andrew Anglin, a neo-Nazi who has rapidly risen in stature within the ranks of the racist right, has used the Internet to develop a white supremacist cyber-community much like Don Black. On July 4, 2013, Anglin, who is infamous for his venomous rhetorical assaults against Jews, gays, and people of color, became the founder and editor of The Daily Stormer (www .dailystormer.com), a white supremacist site touting itself as "The World's Most Visited Alt-Right Web Site" ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.; Hankes, 2017). The Daily Stormer, which was originally registered to Anglin's father, is named for *Der Stürmer*, the weekly tabloid-style Nazi newspaper that specialized in vile attacks on Jews ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.). Known for its outrageous headlines (e.g., "All Intelligent People in History Disliked the Jews"), The Daily Stormer is dedicated to promoting anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism, and white nationalism ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.; Hankes, 2017). In addition to posting white supremacist rhetoric, The Daily Stormer contains a variety of content (e.g., photos, videos, article excerpts) produced by various media outlets (e.g., ABC, CNN, Fox News, New York Times).

Like Stormfront, The Daily Stormer allows for a high level of interactivity and the site's audience is highly participatory ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.). Indeed, The Daily Stormer has a group of supporters named the "Stormer Troll Army" who perpetrate online harassment at Anglin's behest, and some of this harassment resulted in The Daily Stormer being banned from the blog comment hosting service Disqus in 2015 ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.; Hankes, 2017). Also in 2015, Anglin himself was banned from Twitter after he tweeted false claims about the KKK attending student protests against racism at the University of Missouri and the university's police department being unresponsive ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.). Unlike Stormfront, however, The Daily Stormer is more visually based and technologically sophisticated as the site was fashioned after modern imageboard websites such as 4chan ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.). Digital imaging programs are often used to alter photographs appearing on The Daily Stormer and/or add racist or anti-Semitic imagery (e.g., swastikas), cartoonish images (e.g., superhero Trump), or stylized text (e.g., racist and anti-Semitic comments) to posts and articles on the site. According to the SPLC, "Ultimately, Anglin and his readership are striving to shift the needle on the status quo

for public discussion by creating a kind of juvenile, repulsive humor about topics like the Holocaust" ("Andrew Anglin," n.d., para. 16). Whatever Anglin's motivation, The Daily Stormer became the most popular English-language website of the racist right during Trump's presidential bid, a campaign promoted extensively on both The Daily Stormer and Stormfront websites.

Trump's Presidential Campaign and the Racist Right's Online Response

In the months leading up to the 2016 presidential election, Americans got their first sample of Donald Trump's Wallace-like rhetoric. On June 16, 2015, Trump kicked off his campaign by disparaging Mexican immigrants with a speech in which he stated: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're sending people that have lots of problems. And they're bringing those problems with [to] us. They're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime. They're rapists" (Durkin & Edelman, 2015, para. 5). Later that day, after being heavily criticized by persons inside and outside the political arena, Trump refused to retract his comments in an interview with Fox News' Bill O'Reilly, maintaining that his statements were "totally accurate" (Landy, 2015). Indeed, Trump even added, "The border is a disaster, Bill. People are pouring in – and I mean illegal people, illegal immigrants – and they're pouring in. Three hundred and some odd thousand are in your state jails right now, according to Homeland Security" (Landy, 2015, para. 3). Later that month when CNN's Erin Burnett asked Trump if he regretted his comments, Trump upheld that the United States was becoming a "dumping ground" for some of Mexico's worst (Schleifer, 2015). Trump added, "Some are good and some are rapists and some are killers. We don't even know what we're getting" (Schleifer, 2015, para. 3).

While Trump's commentary on the first day of his campaign infuriated millions, his speech inspired white supremacists who were amazed that a public figure as prominent as Trump was expressing views so closely aligned with their own (Piggott, 2016). Before June 2015 had come to a close, Andrew Anglin announced on The Daily Stormer that he was joining other white supremacists in endorsing Trump for president (Anglin, 2015b; Osnos, 2015). On June 28, Anglin (2015b) posted:

> I am hereby making an official endorsement of Donald Trump as President of America. (para.1) . . . [H]e is absolutely the only candidate who is even talking about anything at all that matters (para. 3). He is certainly going to be a positive influence on the Republican debates, as the modern Fox News Republican has basically accepted the idea that there is no going back from mass immigration, and Trump is willing to say what most Americans think: it's time to deport these people. He is also willing

> to call them out as criminal rapists, murderers and drug dealers (para. 4).
> His announcement contained many important statements, but the most
> important were about Mexicans. (para. 5) . . . I urge all readers of this site
> to do whatever they can to make Donald Trump President. (para. 27)

Throughout the post, Anglin quoted from the controversial speech Trump delivered on the day he launched his presidential campaign.

Anglin reiterated his support for Trump's presidential bid on July 10, 2015, writing in part, "If the Donald gets the nomination, he will almost certainly beat Hillary, as White men such as you and I go out and vote for the first time in our lives for the one man who actually represents our interests" (Anglin, 2015c, para. 10). On July 12, Anglin (2015d) further amplified his support for Trump:

> Immigration is the biggest issue that the United States is facing, and The
> Don is the only one willing to address it. Given that he is not a politician,
> I see no reason why he won't deal with this problem exactly as he says he
> is going to deal with it if he is elected President (para. 3) . . . Perhaps the
> most moving reason for supporting Donald Trump is that absolutely
> nothing bad happens if I do that. There is literally no negative (para. 6).
> . . . My main issue is that Trump is injecting real issues and forcing
> discussion. Trump is a populist, and he is rallying people around populist
> issues, getting people more comfortable talking about things they are told
> by the system they are not allowed to talk about. This cannot possibly be
> viewed as a bad thing (para. 8). . . . That is why I support Donald Trump
> for President. (para. 20)

Anglin's post was accompanied by, among other artifacts, a photograph of Trump delivering a campaign speech and a computer-generated, cartoonish image of Trump standing within the presidential seal. Posts (e.g., text, images) supporting Trump and/or attacking his political rivals and their families would appear on The Daily Stormer throughout Trump's presidential campaign, as would images of several Trump tweets and links to various Trump-related videos (e.g., campaign speeches).

In August 2015, Trump augmented his earlier anti-immigration rhetoric by introducing a six-page immigration plan reminiscent of policies espoused by persons within the US-based anti-immigration movement, consisting of (a) deportation of approximately twelve million individuals living in the United States, (b) having Mexico pay to build a border wall, and (c) revoking the Fourteenth Amendment citizenship guarantee to persons born in the United States (Piggott, 2016). The SPLC reported that shortly after Trump released his immigration plan, dozens of threads regarding the candidate appeared on Stormfront ("Trump stump," 2015). For example, in August 2015 Stormfront's message board contained a "Will you vote for

Donald Trump?" open-forum thread from which site visitors posted comments relating to their level of interest in supporting Trump's presidential bid ("Will you vote," 2015). While support for Trump was mixed on Stormfront's message board, several visitors indicated their support for Trump's presidential bid by offering comments like "Yeah, I think he's worth voting for" ("Will you vote," 2015, para. 7). Another person wrote: "Trump is simply the BEST option for the realistic nationalist that wants to have ANY hope of awaking [*sic*] the GOP base and working class white dems to their common plight—that is he is a USEFUL step in getting to a real Mass Movement" ("Will you vote," 2015, para. 9).

On December 7, 2015, shortly after Islamic State attacks in France left 130 dead the month prior, Trump proposed a "total and complete shutdown" of Muslims entering the United States (Piggott, 2016). The SPLC and the Anti-Defamation League reported that Trump's Muslim ban statements ignited a great deal of online chatter among white supremacists (Schreckinger, 2015). That same day, Andrew Anglin posted a story about Trump's proposed Muslim ban on The Daily Stormer, ending the post, "Heil Donald Trump – THE ULTIMATE SAVIOR. Make America White Again!" (Anglin, 2015a, para. 5-6). After Trump's Muslim ban proposal, Don Black reported an increase in callers and listeners to his phone-in Internet radio show and Stormfront noticed a bump in its own site traffic (Schreckinger, 2015). In an interview with Politico, Black indicated that he believed Trump's campaign rhetoric had been a boon to the white supremacist movement, stating: "He has sparked an insurgency and I don't think it's going to go away" (Schreckinger, 2015, para. 13). Black went on to claim that Stormfront receives a million visitors per month and Trump's presidency contributed to a steady increase in visitors to the site, including thirty to forty percent upswings in site traffic when Trump's rhetoric made news relating to Muslims or immigration (Schreckinger, 2015).

In March 2016, Black joined other white supremacists in endorsing Trump's candidacy like David Duke, the ex-Klan leader and former Republican Louisiana State Representative whose success in getting his white supremacist beliefs accepted within the political mainstream nearly garnered him the governorship of Louisiana in 1991 ("David Duke," n.d.; "Trump stump," 2015). Black encouraged his Internet radio audience to throw their support behind Trump, urging "despite all of our misgivings about not having the perfect candidate here, we are all pulling for him [Trump], voting for him if we can" (Kaczynski & McDermott, 2016, para. 3). Black went on to recount:

> [I]n 1968 . . . when George Wallace ran as an independent from my home state but ran for president as an independent candidate. . . . he got some

of the same kind of audience that Trump is getting, but the issues weren't
as clearly defined back then. Wallace at that point was still speaking in
code words but now things are a lot different. I've seen other campaigns.
The David Duke campaign which is very, very much like the Donald
Trump [campaign] except that David Duke knew more about the issues
and talked about them, but the kind of support he had was very similar.
(Kaczynski & McDermott, 2016, para. 9-10)

Before signing off from his show Black concluded, "I think Trump has
sparked an insurgency in this country, a movement. . . . I'm very optimis-
tic" (Kaczynski & McDermott, 2016, para. 12-13).

   Near the end of April 2016, after Trump received majority support in
the polls for the first time during the Republican primary (Hartig, Lapinski,
& Psyllos, 2016), Andrew Anglin amplified his online campaign in support
of Trump's presidential bid by posting the following message on The Daily
Stormer: "Jews, Blacks and lesbians will be leaving America if Trump gets
elected – and he's [Trump's] happy about it. This alone is enough reason to
put your entire heart and soul into supporting this man" (Anglin, 2016c,
para. 1-2). Throughout Trump's presidential campaign, The Daily Stormer,
which uses the mainstream media to amplify its neo-Nazi message, posted
hundreds of articles supporting Trump or attacking his opponents ("Andrew
Anglin," n.d.). Moreover, Anglin and his supporters referred to Trump as
"Glorious Leader" and "Humble Philosopher" while commending his racist
and xenophobic rhetoric ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.). Oftentimes, new banners
featuring Trump were posted on The Daily Stormer on the days of major
Republican primaries ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.).

   After Trump became the presumptive GOP nominee in May 2016 fol-
lowing the suspension of Ted Cruz's campaign, celebratory comments
appeared on both Stormfront and The Daily Stormer. One Stormfront mem-
ber gleefully exclaimed, "What can I say? The Donald as GOP nominee,
hopefully destroying that anti-white criminal Clinton" ("Incredible day,"
2016, para. 16-17). In addition to celebratory Trump rhetoric, Stormfront
members began posting links to articles about Trump (e.g., Yahoo News) as
well as a series of pro-Trump computer-generated images like a photograph
of Trump with the following text superimposed: "I'm telling you . . . we're
gonna make America white again" (Neiwert, 2016). On The Daily Stormer,
Andrew Anglin exalted, "White men in America and across the planet are
partying like it's 1999 following Trump's decisive victory over the evil
enemies of our race" (Anglin, 2016b, para. 1). Anglin also posted a video in
which Trump, portrayed as a hero, saves white civilization from a group of
non-whites led by Barack Obama, who was thrown into a bottomless pit by
Trump (Neiwert, 2016).

   In the aftermath of the June 2016 massacre of 49 people at the Pulse

nightclub in Orlando, Florida, Trump expanded his Muslim rhetoric to include critical speculations about the motivations of Muslims living within the United States. Trump repeatedly suggested that the Muslim community was somehow complicit in the attack, speculating "for some reason, the Muslim community does not report people like this" even though persons within the community were aware that the attacker "was bad" (Piggott, 2016, para. 31). In another interview, Trump made a similar unsubstantiated claim regarding the December 2015 massacre of 14 people by a Muslim couple in San Bernardino, California, contending "in San Bernardino, many people saw the bombs all over the apartment of the two people that killed 14 and wounded many, many people" and "Muslims have to report the problems when they see them" (Hamilton, 2016, para. 3).

Trump continued to denigrate immigrants while appearing on Michael Savage's radio show *Savage Nation* on July 14, 2016, alleging "people are pouring into this country and, in many cases they're not well people, in many respects" (Piggott, 2016, para. 23). After accepting the Republican nomination, Trump told NBC's *Meet the Press* that he was seeking to expand his planned Muslim immigration ban by restricting entry into the United States from territories deemed to have a terrorism problem (Piggott, 2016). In a somewhat rambling manner, Trump stated: "I'm looking now at territory. People were so upset when I used the word Muslim. Oh, you can't use the word Muslim. Remember this. And I'm OK with that, because I'm talking territory instead of Muslim" (Diamond, 2016, para. 2).

While Trump's rhetoric infuriated millions of Americans during his presidential bid, support for candidate Trump continued to be expressed in postings on The Daily Stormer throughout the remainder of the campaign. On July 18, 2016, shortly after Trump's Muslim ban comments, The Daily Stormer became the most popular English-language website of the racist right, officially eclipsing the status Stormfront had held since being established (Hankes, 2017). In the few remaining months of the presidential campaign, Andrew Anglin repeatedly posted comments and quoted media reports on The Daily Stormer about how Trump was surpassing Hillary Clinton in the polls. To further emphasize Trump's success in the polls, Anglin also posted state-specific (e.g., Ohio, Iowa) and national polling data from various agencies (e.g., Bloomberg, Reuters, LA Times). Many of Anglin's polling-related posts were accompanied by polling charts and/or pro-Trump imagery (e.g., Trump campaign photos, computer-generated images portraying Trump heroically) as well as imagery portraying Hillary Clinton negatively (e.g., computer-generated image of a defeated-looking Clinton with head in hands). Some of Anglin's later pro-Trump campaign rhetoric was not only directed toward convincing visitors to The Daily Stormer that a Trump presidential victory was inevitable but that the white

supremacist community had also played a major role in the ultimate election outcome. Indeed, the day after former FBI Director James Comey's pre-election announcement regarding the re-opening of the investigation of Hillary Clinton's email usage while Secretary of State, Anglin posted an article entitled "Donald J. Trump is Now President of the United States of America." In the post, Anglin (2016a) wrote in part: "The US Presidential election ended yesterday (para. 1). . . . We've won, brothers. All of our hard work this year has paid off. And make no mistake – every meme you posted, every comments section you trolled – all of that is what made this happen" (para. 15-17).

Within hours of election results indicating Trump would win the presidency, celebratory commentary regarding the election outcome began appearing on both Stormfront and The Daily Stormer. Even before Trump's victory speech, a "Donald Trump elected President of the United States" thread appeared on Stormfront's message board, and shortly thereafter several site members posted links to media coverage of the election results (e.g., AP) and/or began expressing their satisfaction with Trump being elected as president. Among the comments appearing on Stormfront following Trump's presidential victory were "I'm happy," "This is amazing," "That wall better be tall," and "LET US REJOICE, WHITE NATIONALIST BROTHERS AND SISTERS!!!!" ("Donald Trump," 2016). Also appearing on Stormfront following Trump's presidential victory were some letters (i.e., initials) and numbers that white supremacists use as a basic shorthand to communicate their ideologies. Among the letters and numbers appearing on Stormfront following the presidential election were "WPWW" (White Pride World Wide), "88" which represents "Heil Hitler" (HH, the eighth letter of the alphabet doubled), and "14" which represents the phrase "14 words" (We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children) ("Donald Trump," 2016). Andrew Anglin enthusiastically posted on The Daily Stormer, "We won, brothers. All of our work. It has paid off. Our Glorious Leader has ascended to God Emperor. Make no mistake about it: we did this. If it were not for us, it wouldn't have been possible" (Anglin, 2016d, para. 1-4). The next day, The Daily Stormer featured a new masthead promoting the site as "Andrew Anglin's The Daily Stormer, 'America's #1 Most-Trusted Republican News Source,' First in Facts – First in Integrity!" (Hankes, 2017). Flanking the masthead's text were photos of Ronald Reagan (left-side) and Donald Trump (right-side). Most disturbing, Anglin also used Trump's election to call for the harassment of Muslims and "any foreigners," writing "We want these people to feel unwanted. We want them to feel that everything around them is against them. And we want them to be afraid" ("SPLC sues," 2017, para. 9).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

For nearly half a century, the groundswell of support George Wallace was able to generate through his divisive campaign rhetoric leading up to the 1968 presidential election appeared to be a relic of the past, not to be witnessed again in the United States. However, the groundswell of support Donald Trump was able to generate through his divisive rhetoric during the most recent presidential campaign reminds us of what celebrated American author William Faulkner once wrote: "The past is never dead. It's not even past." Moreover, the American racist rights' enthusiastic response to Trump's presidential campaign reinforces Daniels' (2009) notion that the election of Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, signified "a blow to white supremacy but not the end of the struggle against it" (p. 193).

Characterized by a rhetoric of nationalism and isolationism reminiscent of ideologies espoused by white nationalists in both the United States and abroad, Trump's presidential campaign energized many within the American racist right in much the same way as George Wallace had leading up to the 1968 presidential election. Like Wallace's campaign, Trump's presidential campaign received assistance from members of the American racist right, including some who actively assisted Trump's campaign efforts at calling centers and politically-oriented rallies.

More disturbing, pro-Trump rallies sometimes even involved whites physically assaulting non-whites (Piggott, 2016). In November 2015, a Black Lives Matter activist was beaten by Trump supporters at a rally in Birmingham, Alabama, and afterwards candidate Trump told Fox News, "Maybe he should have been roughed up, because it was absolutely disgusting what he was doing" (Johnson & Jordan, 2015, para. 7). Matthew Heimbach, a well-known white supremacist within the American racist right, was recorded shoving a black woman at a Trump rally in Louisville, Kentucky, on March 1, 2016 (Piggott, 2016). At a rally in Fayetteville, North Carolina, on March 9, 2016, 78-year-old Trump supporter John McGraw was recorded sucker-punching a black protester even as the protestor was being led away from the rally by police (King, 2016; Piggott, 2016). Trump told news outlets that he was looking into paying McGraw's legal fees, which was consistent with a pledge Trump made during a February 2016 caucus speech in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to pay the legal fees of supporters who beat up protesters at pro-Trump rallies (Piggott, 2016). During that speech, Trump stated: "If you see somebody getting ready to throw a tomato, knock the crap out of them, would you? Seriously. OK? Just knock the hell – I promise you, I will pay for the legal fees" (Terkel, 2016, para. 11).

Also, like Wallace's campaign, Trump's campaign received public support from some racist right groups, and many individuals associated

with those groups actively assisted Trump's campaign efforts. What is more, much like Wallace's 1968 presidential campaign, Trump's presidential campaign could be characterized by its friendly relationship with members of the racist right. During the presidential campaign, Trump's staff gave press credentials to persons affiliated with racist media (Potok, 2017, p. 37). On February 27, 2016, Trump's staff gave press credentials to James Edwards, host of the racist radio show *The Political Cesspool* that has featured many well-known individuals from the American racist right, to cover a Memphis rally (Piggott, 2017). At the rally, Edwards interviewed Trump's son, Donald Trump Jr., who later claimed he had been unaware of Edwards' history (Piggott, 2017; Wilkie, 2016). That same month, Trump received public support for his presidential bid from the American racist right, most notably ex-Klan leader and former Republican Louisiana State Representative David Duke ("David Duke," n.d.; "Trump stump," 2015).

Unlike Wallace, however, Trump's presidential campaign received support from racist right groups from across the United States (e.g., American Nazi Party, Knights Party), rather than just organizations concentrated in the South. Amid Trump's campaign, US-based hate groups grew in number (917), including racist right groups (e.g., neo-Nazi, white nationalist) with the most dramatic growth being the near-tripling of anti-Muslim groups (34 to 101) in 2016 ("Hate groups," 2017; Potok, 2017, p. 38, 43). Also, unlike the presidential campaign that took place in the pre-Internet era of 1968, racist right groups were able to express their support for Trump's 2016 presidential campaign by way of the Internet, which has long been the communication medium of choice for hatemongers. Racist right groups (e.g., KKK, neo-Nazi, white nationalist, racist skinhead) have increasingly taken advantage of the Internet's communicative power, and that trend has continued with the advent of social media and mobile technologies. Indeed, as a growing number of hatemongers have opted to operate mainly online without any formal association with hate groups, the real level of organized hatred in America is likely understated by any census of the number of active US-based hate groups ("Hate groups," 2017).

Certainly, the extent to which Trump's presidential campaign animated the racist right could be witnessed in the rhetoric that US-based white supremacists communicated on the Internet. The two most prominent US-based white supremacist sites, the neo-Nazi websites Stormfront and The Daily Stormer, launched extensive online campaigns in support of Trump's presidential bid, and both sites experienced dramatic increases in traffic during Trump's presidential campaign. Stormfront had to upgrade its server after traffic on the site surged during Trump's presidential campaign, while The Daily Stormer became the most popular English-language website of

the racist right in July 2016, eclipsing the status Stormfront had held for over twenty years.

Given how Trump's presidential campaign fueled the online rhetoric of US-based white supremacists, who in turn utilized the Internet to promote Trump's campaign for presidency, further examination of white supremacists' Internet rhetoric is certainly warranted. Examining white supremacists' Internet rhetoric enables persons to not only be alerted to the possibility of white supremacist advocacy or activity but also to better understand how white supremacists attempt to form, or become a part of, a community of like-minded persons, a community that increasingly includes tech-savvy youth and adolescents. Certainly, there is a need to understand the online shorthand of white supremacists given the rapid proliferation of digital communication technologies, such as mobile devices (e.g., phones, PDAs, portable tablets) and social media sites (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) where online shorthand (e.g., "14," "88," "WPWW") like that posted on the sites examined in this essay abounds.

The relevance of examining US-based white supremacist websites has substantially increased in recent years as the United States has witnessed a series of deadly mass shootings perpetrated by various extremists, and some were apparently motivated by rhetoric they accessed on US-based hate sites (Barnett, 2016). Indeed, the Internet rhetoric of US-based white supremacist groups (e.g., Council of Conservative Citizens, White Aryan Resistance, World Church of the Creator) is believed to have played a role in motivating individuals to perpetrate race-based (e.g., black, Asian) and religion-based (e.g., Jewish) murders since Stormfront, the first US-based hate site, was established in 1995 (Barnett, 2007; Barnett, 2016). Significantly, registered users to Stormfront have been linked to almost one hundred murders ("Stormfront," n.d.). For example, 22-year-old Richard Andrew Poplawski, who fatally shot three Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania police officers and wounded another in 2009, was a registered member of Stormfront for 20 months immediately prior to the shootings and had accessed his account less than four hours before committing the murders (Potok, 2014, pp. 26-30).

Like Stormfront, The Daily Stormer has been associated with murderous violence, including violence perpetrated against people of color. Passages from a manifesto authored by 21-year-old Dylann Roof, who gunned down nine black worshippers participating in Bible study inside Charleston, South Carolina's historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in June 2015, were found almost verbatim to comments posted on The Daily Stormer ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.). The person who posted the comments on The Daily Stormer was dubbed "AryanBlood1488," a username having added significance as the numbers "14" and "88" are well-known white supremacist taglines oftentimes used together ("Andrew

Anglin," n.d.). In March 2017, another individual who frequently visited
The Daily Stormer, 28-year-old James Harris Jackson, allegedly used a 26-
inch sword to murder a 66-year-old black man, Timothy Caughman, in
Manhattan ("Andrew Anglin," n.d.). During a jailhouse interview, Jackson
told a reporter from the *New York Daily News* he communicated with "like-
minded people" online and mentioned The Daily Stormer in particular
(Moynihan & Brown, 2017).

While several acts of murderous violence in the United States have
been associated with white supremacist content appearing online, examina-
tions of US-based white supremacists' Internet rhetoric may assist individu-
als, including law enforcement and homeland security professionals, in
guarding against similar violence in the future. Indeed, considering the
unprecedented ways in which the American racist right has been animated
by Trump's presidential campaign and subsequent election, examinations of
rhetoric appearing on Stormfront, The Daily Stormer, and other US-based
white supremacist websites are needed now more than ever.

REFERENCES

Andrew Anglin. (n.d.). *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved from https://www
.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/andrew-anglin
Anglin, A. (2015a, December 7). Glorious leader calls for complete ban on all
muslims. *The Daily Stormer*. Retrieved from https://www.dailystormer.com/
glorious-leader-calls-for-complete-ban-on-all-moslems/
Anglin, A. (2015b, June 28). The Daily Stormer endorses Donald Trump for
president. *The Daily Stormer*. Retrieved from http://www.dailystormer.com/
the-daily-stormer-endorses-donald-trump-for-president/
Anglin, A. (2015c, July 10). The Donald is polling in first place! Ha! *The Daily
Stormer*. Retrieved from https://www.dailystormer.com/the-donald-is-polling-
in-first-place-ha/
Anglin, A. (2015d, July 12). Why I support Donald Trump for president. *The Daily
Stormer*. Retrieved from https://www.dailystormer.com/why-i-support-don
ald-trump-for-president/
Anglin, A. (2016a, October 29). Donald J. Trump is now President of the United
States of America. *The Daily Stormer*. Retrieved from https://www.dailystorm
er.com/donald-j-trump-is-now-president-of-the-united-states-of-america/
Anglin, A. (2016b, May 4). For Jews, Trump win is like another Holocaust. *The
Daily Stormer*. Retrieved from https://www.dailystormer.com/for-jews-trump-
win-is-like-another-holocaust/
Anglin, A. (2016c, April 26). Get em outta here: Glorious leader calls for kike Lena
Dunham to leave America. *The Daily Stormer*. Retrieved from https://www
.dailystormer.com/get-em-outta-here-glorious-leader-calls-for-kike-lena-dun
ham-to-leave-america/

Anglin, A. (2016d, November 9). We won. *The Daily Stormer*. Retrieved from https://www.dailystormer.com/we-won/

Apple, A. L., & Messner, B. A. (2001). Paranoia and paradox: The apocalyptic rhetoric of Christian Identity. *Western Journal of Communication, 65*(2), 206-227.

Barnett, B. A. (2007). *Untangling the web of hate: Are online 'hate sites' deserving of first amendment protection?* Youngstown, NY: Cambria Press.

Barnett, B. A. (2016). 'Lone wolf' extremists and the US news media. *Ethical Space*, *13*(4), 50-58.

Barnett, B. A. (2015/16). League of the South's Internet rhetoric: Neo-Confederate community-building online. *Journal of Hate Studies*, *13*(1), 151-173.

Beirich, H. (Ed.). (2018, Spring). *Intelligence Report, 164*. (Available from the Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104)

Black, D. (2001, October 26). Welcome: Guidelines for posting. *Stormfront*. Retrieved from https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t4359/

Bostdorff, D. M. (2004). The Internet rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan: A case study in web site community building run amok. *Communication Studies, 55*(2), 340-361.

Daniels, J. (2009). *Cyber racism: White supremacy online and the new attack on civil rights*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

David Duke. (n.d.). *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/david-duke

Diamond, J. (2016, July 24). Trump on latest iteration of Muslim ban: 'You could say it's an expansion.' *CNN*. Retrieved from https://www.cnn.com/2016/07/24/politics/donald-trump-muslim-ban-election-2016/index.html

Don Black. (n.d.). *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/don-black

Donald Trump elected President of the United States. (2016, November 9). *Stormfront*. Retrieved from https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1185559/

Duffy, M. E. (2003). Web of hate: A fantasy theme analysis of the rhetorical vision of hate groups online. *Journal of Communication Inquiry, 27*(3), 291-312.

Durkin, E., & Edelman, A. (2015, June 17). Donald Trump enters 2016 presidential race with bizarre speech insulting Mexican immigrants, lambasting Obama. *New York Daily News*. Retrieved from http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/donald-trump-entering-2016-presidential-race-article-1.2259706

Eveleigh, D. (2016, August 4). The struggles of third-party candidates through the years. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/04/upshot/third-party-candidates-through-the-years.html

Hamilton, M. (2016, October 9). Donald Trump repeats false claim that neighbors saw 'bombs all over' before San Bernardino attack. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-trump-debate-san-bernardino-20161009-snap-story.html

Hankes, K. (2017, February 9). Eye of the Stormer. *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2017/eye-stormer

Hartig, H., Lapinski, J., & Psyllos, S. (2016, April 26). Poll: Trump reaches 50 percent support nationally for the first time. *NBC News*. Retrieved from http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/poll-trump-reaches-50-percent-support-nationally-first-time-n562061

Hate groups increase for second consecutive year as Trump electrifies radical right. (2017, February 15). *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/news/2017/02/15/hate-groups-increase-second-consecutive-year-trump-electrifies-radical-right

Incredible day: Trump wins Indiana, Cruz drops out. (2016, May 4). *Stormfront*. Retrieved from https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1156809/

Johnson, J., & Jordan, M. (2015, November 22). Trump on rally protester: 'Maybe he should have been roughed up.' *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/11/22/black-activist-punched-at-donald-trump-rally-in-birmingham/?utm_term=.cbcc83102b09

Kaczynski, A., & McDermott, N. (2016, March 25). Stormfront founder urged listeners to vote for Trump. *Buzzfeed News*. Retrieved from https://www.buzzfeed.com/andrewkaczynski/stormfront-founder-urged-listeners-to-vote-for-trump?utm_term=.wxl1WkopM#.gk7q8M9yk

Kapur, S. (2016, January 27). The 'bleak' history of third-party presidential bids. *Bloomberg Politics*. Retrieved from https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2016-01-27/the-bleak-history-of-third-party-presidential-bids

King, S. (2016, March 10). KING: Donald Trump is to blame for another black person being assaulted at his rallies. *New York Daily News*. Retrieved from http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/king-blame-trump-rally-assault-black-person-article-1.2559473

Landy, B. (2015, June 30). 'Totally accurate': Trump defends calling Mexican immigrants 'rapists.' *MSNBC*. Retrieved from http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/totally-accurate-trump-defends-calling-mexican-immigrants-rapists

Meddaugh, P. M., & Kay, J. (2009). Hate speech or "reasonable racism?": The other in Stormfront. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 24*(4)*,* 251-268.

Moynihan, E., & Brown, S. R. (2017, March 26). EXCLUSIVE: White supremacist James Jackson reveals deranged desire to kill black men to save white women in jailhouse interview. *New York Daily News*. Retrieved from http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/james-jackson-twisted-regrets-killing-timothy-caughman-article-1.3009736

Neiwert, D. (2016, May 6). Right-wing extremists hail the ascension of 'Emperor Trump' as GOP nominee. *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/05/06/right-wing-extremists-hail-ascension-'emperor-trump'-gop-nominee

Osnos, E. (2015, August 31). The fearful and the frustrated. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/31/the-fearful-and-the-frustrated

Pearson, R. (1998, September 14). Former Ala. Gov. George C. Wallace dies. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/daily/sept98/wallace.htm

Piggott, S. (2016, November 2). Hate in the race. *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2016/hate-race

Potok, M. (Ed.). (2014, Summer). *Intelligence Report, 154*. (Available from the Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104)

Potok, M. (Ed.). (2017, Spring). *Intelligence Report, 162*. (Available from the Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104)

Schleifer, T. (2015, June 25). Trump: Mexican 'rapists' coming now, Middle East 'terrorists' coming soon. *CNN*. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/25/politics/donald-trump-mexicans-terrorists-immigration-2016/

Schreckinger, B. (2015, December 10). White supremacist groups see Trump bump. *Politico*. Retrieved from http://www.politico.com/story/2015/12/donald-trump-white-supremacists-216620

SPLC sues neo-Nazi leader who targeted Jewish woman in anti-Semitic harassment campaign. (2017, April 18). *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/news/2017/04/18/splc-sues-neo-nazi-leader-who-targeted-jewish-woman-anti-semitic-harassment-campaign

Stormfront. (n.d.). *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/stormfront

Terkel, A. (2016, March 11). Donald Trump says his supporters should "hit back" at protesters more often. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-protesters_us_56e2da10e4b0b25c918198c2

Trump stump. (2015, October 27). *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2015/trump-stump

Wilkie, C. (2016, March 3). Here's what happened during Donald Trump Jr.'s interview with a white nationalist. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-jr-james-edwards-interview_us_56d8854ae4b0000de403a77f

Will you vote for Donald Trump? (2015, August 15). *Stormfront*. Retrieved from https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t1115646/

Woolley, J., & Peters, G. (n.d.). 1968 presidential election. *University of California - Santa Barbara*. Retrieved from http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showelection.php?year=1968

Zickmund, S. (1997). Approaching the radical other: The discursive culture of cyberhate. In S. Jones (Ed.), *Virtual culture: Identity and communication in cybersociety* (pp. 185-205). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Misogynistic Hate Speech and its Chilling Effect on Women's Free Expression during the 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign

Caitlin R. Carlson
Seattle University

ABSTRACT

This essay argues that the proliferation of misogynistic hate speech during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign had a dangerous chilling effect on women's free expression. The gendered slurs aimed at women candidates and journalists, both online and in-person, created a hostile political environment, which made it more difficult for women to fully participate in the process of Democratic self-governance. To address this issue, I recommend allocating state and federal tax dollars to counter speech efforts, and call for social media organizations, such as Facebook and Twitter, to reevaluate their hate speech and harassment policies.

Keywords: Hate speech, 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, misogyny

INTRODUCTION

At packed rallies held by Republican candidate Donald Trump, enthusiastic attendees yelled in unison to "Lock the bitch up." The "bitch" in this case was former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, the first woman to receive a major party's nomination to become President of the United States. Outside the rally, t-shirts and buttons reading, "HRC: Two fat thighs, two small breasts, and a left wing," were for sale. Online, people posted memes featuring her husband Bill Clinton's face with the text, "If you saw Hillary naked, you'd rape women too."

From rape memes to the repeated use of gendered slurs at candidate rallies, misogynistic hate speech permeated several aspects of this campaign. I argue here that the casual use of misogynistic hate speech throughout the 2016 U.S. presidential election cycle worked to silence women's free expression by creating a chilling effect, which impeded women's ability to fully participate in the process of Democratic self-governance. The regular use of gendered slurs throughout the campaign left little room dissenting women's voices. Misogynistic hate speech also worked to limit civic engagement online and prevent what Danielle Citron and Helen Norton (2011) refer to as effective digital citizenship. The emergence of the secret Facebook group, "Pantsuit Nation," is evidence that some women

were uncomfortable sharing certain content on their newsfeeds. The misogynistic hate speech directed at women candidates may also discourage other women from running for office because they fear the objectification and harassment likely to accompany that decision.

In this essay, I begin by defining misogynistic hate speech and identifying the harm it causes. In Part II, I trace the use of misogynistic hate speech throughout the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. Next, I discuss how the prolific use of misogynistic hate speech during the campaign had a chilling effect on women's free expression. In the final section, I propose solutions for minimizing misogynistic hate speech in future political campaigns.

DEFINING MISOGYNISTIC HATE SPEECH

In the United States, the First Amendment protects almost all hate speech. Unless expression falls into the categories of incitement to illegal advocacy, true threats, or the rarely invoked fighting words, there are essentially no legal prohibitions against hate speech in the United States. As Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in a recent decision involving the Westboro Baptist Church, which is known for picketing military funerals with signs containing racist and homophobic slurs, the reaction to offensive discourse must not be to punish the speaker. Instead, wrote Roberts for the majority, "this nation has chosen to protect even hurtful speech on public issues to ensure that public debate is not stifled" (Snyder v. Phelps, 2011, p. 178).

This means there are essentially no legal consequences in the United States for the use of hate speech. However, there are societal consequences. Critical race theorist Mari Matsuda says that the most damaging impact of hate speech is when members of the defamed group internalize the messages and come to believe in their own inferiority (1993). In his book, *The Harm in Hate Speech*, Jeremy Waldron (2012) argues that the lack of prohibitions against hate speech in the United States denies those targeted a sense of basic human dignity in exchange for low-value speech.

The United States' permissive approach to hate speech differs greatly from many other Democracies. For example, members of the European Union, Canada, and South Africa all have legal prohibitions against hate speech. In these countries, the use of hate speech is prohibited in person and online. The Council of Europe's Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, which governs online content in European Union countries, defines the term "hate speech" as:

All forms of expression that seek to spread, incite, promote or justify

> racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based
> on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism
> and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities,
> migrants and people of immigrant origin. (Van Blarcum, 2005, p. 781)

Notably, this definition does not address gender-based hatred specifically. The term misogyny does. Literally, misogyny means hatred of women. More broadly it refers to attitudes and behaviors that demonstrate contempt, dislike, and an ingrained prejudice toward women. This differs from sexism, which refers to discrimination based on gender, most often aimed at women. Sexism is often considered a manifestation of misogyny.

Feminist scholars, such as Kelli Wilz (2016), note that sexism in the political sphere often revolves around women candidates failing to be appropriately "feminine." Reactions to this failure are often hostile (Wilz, 2016). However, Wilz cautions against conflating valid criticisms of women candidates with those actually rooted in sexism, or misogyny. Thus, it is essential that any definition offered for misogynistic hate speech effectively delineate between sexism and misogyny.

Sexism in the 2016 U.S. Presidential campaign was evident in a variety of contexts. For example, Republican candidate Donald Trump made comments about Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton's appearance, saying, "I didn't like what I saw [when she walked in front of me]" (McCaskill, 2016, p. 1). Sexism was also evident in the 2016 U.S. Presidential campaign coverage. Some male journalists focused relentlessly on Secretary Clinton's voice and appearance. For example, referring to her acceptance speech for the Democratic Party's nomination, Fox News' Brit Hume said, "She has a great asset as a public person, which is a radiant smile, but she has a not so attractive voice, and I think for much of her speech tonight, she lapsed into that familiar lecturing tone. And I suspect that there were some people that, even who agreed with her words, found the tone off-putting," (Fang, 2016, p. 1). Steve Clemons, editor-at-large for *The Atlantic*, also mentioned Clinton's "lecturing" tone and advised her to "smile," (Fang, 2016). While troubling, these sexist comments do not constitute misogynistic hate speech.

Instead, misogynistic hate speech encompasses the vitriolic expression directed at women as well as direct threats or harassment. For example, during the 2016 U.S. primary campaign season Bernie Sanders' supporter, Daniel Kohn, tweeted at veteran NPR reporter Tamara Keith, "Good job lying about the primary you dumb cunt" (Borchers, 2016, para. 3).

Scholar Karla Mantilla (2009) refers to this form of hatred directed at women online as "gendertrolling," a process marked by the participation of many people, gender-based insults, vicious language, credible threats,

intense/ lengthy attacks, and reactions to women speaking out. Scholar Emma Jane refers to this content simply as "e-bile," a fitting term for the vitriol leveled at some women online (Jane, 2014).

Drawing on these concepts, as well as the existing definitions of hate speech, I propose the following definition of misogynistic hate speech: "All forms of expression that seek to spread, incite, promote, or justify hatred of women." This definition encompasses everything from the casual use of gendered slurs to gender-based threats and harassment aimed at women, both in-person and online.

LOCATING MISOGYNISTIC HATE SPEECH IN THE 2016 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

The 2016 U.S. presidential campaign marked the first time a woman received a major party's nomination in this country. Having a woman candidate for the presidency, arguably the most masculine of U.S. institutions (Katz, 2016), created the conditions for severe backlash. According to a 2010 study by Tyler Okimoto and Victoria Brescoll, this contemptuous reaction to women's power-seeking is to be expected. The authors found that when women candidates were seen as ambitious, it evoked moral outrage on the part of voters. These severe emotional reactions include contempt, anger, and disgust (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010).

The proliferation of misogynistic hate speech during the 2016 U.S. presidential election serves as evidence of the anger and contempt Okimoto and Brescoll (2010) predicted. Online, gendered hate speech was directed at women reporters. Internet radio shows, such as Alex Jones' Infowars, regularly used misogynistic hate speech to describe Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton (Tashman, 2015). In person, misogynistic hate speech was screen-printed onto merchandise and sold at rallies for Republican candidate Donald Trump. The candidate himself was also recorded using misogynistic hate speech to describe his pursuit of a woman in 2005 (McCaskill, 2016). The examples presented below identify the various spaces where misogynistic hate speech proliferated during the 2016 U.S. Presidential campaign season.

To begin, misogynistic hate speech appeared on social media sites like Twitter and was used as a tool to intimidate journalists covering the campaign. Reporter Janell Ross (2016) with the *Washington Post* wrote about the hateful tweets, comments, and email messages she received in response to her coverage of Democratic candidate Bernie Sanders. Despite the progressive stance taken by many Bernie Sanders supporters, Ross said that the messages directed at her told a different story, one that highlights the intersecting issues that women of color must deal with. Ross was subjected to

misogynistic hate speech, as well as race-based insults. The work of legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), who originally identified the concept of intersectionality in anti-discrimination efforts, describes how women of color must deal with both sexism and racism, the combination of which is greater than the sum of its parts. Given these dual barriers, it is necessary to pay close attention to how misogynistic hate speech uniquely burdens women of color. Ross' description of the offensive comments speaks directly to this issue:

> They use a variety of curse words and insults typically reserved for women. More than one has suggested that I deserve to become the victim of a sex crime. They critique the "objectivity" of what is clearly political analysis based on polling data and other facts; they insist that black voters are dumb or that I have a personal obligation to help black voters see the error of their Clinton-voting ways. It is vile. (Ross, 2016)

The gender- and race-based hate comments described by Ross highlight the intersectional nature of the hate speech aimed at women of color, which is simultaneously misogynistic and racist.

The use of misogynistic hate speech to intimidate women journalists is particularly problematic because it impedes the functioning of a free press. According to the 2013 report, "Violence and Harassment Against Women in the News Media," which was commissioned by the International Women's Media Foundation, almost two-thirds of the 149 women journalists polled had experienced intimidation, threats, or abuse in relation to their work (International Women's Media Foundation, 2013). More than 25 percent of the "verbal, written and/or physical intimidation, including threats to family or friends," took place online. Moreover, the study found that digital harassment and threats directed at women differ than those experienced by men because they are misogynistic (International Women's Media Foundation, 2013).

In addition to messages and emails directed at women journalists, Internet radio programs and websites associated with the Alternative Right or "Alt-Right" also served as a hotbed for misogynistic hate speech during the 2016 U.S. presidential election cycle. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) defines the "Alt-Right" as "a set of far-right ideologies, groups, and individuals whose core belief is that 'white identity' is under attack by multicultural forces using 'political correctness' and 'social justice' to undermine white people and 'their' civilization" (SPLC.com, 2017, para. 1).

Notable among the content produced by and for the Alt-Right is the Internet radio show, Infowars, hosted by Alex Jones. On this program, Jones regularly used terms like "bitch" to describe Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. For example, after a mass shooting in Virginia, Hillary

Clinton's campaign tweeted her support for the victims. Alex Jones responded with the following tirade on his Internet radio program / podcast: "Statistically, there's less guns than there were. And Hillary knows that full well. She's got bodyguards. Hey Hillary, you got bodyguards. Are their guns bad too? Why can't I have a gun to protect myself, ya bitch" (Tashman, 2015, para. 2)!

Misogynistic hate speech also proliferated in the comment sections of Alt-Right "news" sites like Breitbart. In an August 2016 story about Secretary Clinton being late to a speech to an American Legion group in Cincinnati one poster wrote: "*hillary* is a "maroon"!!, well, stupid *bitch* comes to mind as well" (Spiering, 2016, para. 16).

According to former Breitbart reporter Milo Yiannopoulos, silencing women is precisely his goal. In an article that appeared on the *Breitbart* website in July of 2016 entitled, "The Solution to Online 'Harassment' is Simple: Women Should Log Off," Yiannopoulos wrote:

> Here's my suggestion to fix the gender wars online: Women should just log off. Given that men built the internet, along with the rest of modern civilization, I think it's only fair that they get to keep it. And given what a miserable time women are having on the web, surely they would welcome an abrupt exit. They could go back to bridge tournaments, or wellness workshops, or swapping apple crumble recipes, or whatever it is women do in their spare time.
>
> I, Donald Trump and the rest of the alpha males will continue to dominate the internet without feminist whining. It will be fun! Like a big fraternity, with jokes and memes and no more worrying about whether an off-colour but harmless remark will suddenly torpedo your career. (2016, para.7-8)

This story is one example among countless posts, videos, and memes across the Internet and on social media that used misogynistic hate speech. Danielle Keats Citron (2011) argues that in recent years, misogyny has moved largely online, where a unique form of cyber gender harassment has emerged. The anonymity of the online environment emboldens these commenters and posters (Citron, 2011).

In addition to the vitriol directed at women online, merchandise sold at the Republican National Convention (RNC), held in Cleveland in July 2016, also prominently featured misogynistic hate speech. *Atlantic* reporter Peter Beinhart covered the RNC convention and chronicled the merchandise being sold outside the hall:

> Black pin reading Don't be a pussy. Vote for Trump in 2016. Black-and-red pin reading Trump 2016: finally someone with balls. White T-shirt

reading Trump that bitch. White T-shirt reading Hillary sucks but not like Monica. Red pin reading life's a bitch: don't vote for one. White pin depicting a boy urinating on the word *Hillary*. Black T-shirt depicting Trump as a biker and Clinton falling off the motorcycle's back alongside the words if you can read this, the bitch fell off. Black T-shirt depicting Trump as a boxer having just knocked Clinton to the floor of the ring, where she lies faceup in a clingy tank top. White pin advertising KFC Hillary special. 2 fat thighs. 2 small breasts . . . left wing. (Beinhart, 2016, para. 4)

In addition to merchandise featuring misogynistic hate speech, a recording of Donald Trump using the terms "bitch" and "pussy" to describe his pursuit of a woman to *Entertainment Tonight* presenter Billy Bush also surfaced during the 2016 general election campaign. On the recording, Trump can be heard saying that he didn't wait for women to agree to his sexual advances, he just "moved on them like a bitch." When you're a star, said Trump, "they let you do it. You can do anything. . . Grab them by the pussy. You can do anything" (Trump, 2016). Trump's statement clearly meets the definition for misogynistic hate speech because he is advocating sexual violence toward women.

Attendees at Trump rallies also used misogynistic hate speech when, on many occasions, they chanted "Lock the bitch up," which was a call to imprison Hillary Clinton for her alleged mishandling of classified emails. For example, on election night in a "small pen across and down the street from where their candidate . . . was holding his election night gathering," Trump supporters chanted "lock the bitch up" in celebration of their candidate's victory (Daileda, 2016).

This repeated use of misogynistic hate speech created a political climate that was unfriendly to women. Its proliferation during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign demonstrates the extent to which this toxic form of expression has become unavoidable, permeating almost all aspects of political discourse. Despite our best efforts, women can no longer "avert their eyes" from this unwanted expression (Cohen v. California, 1971). The current situation is untenable. American women deserve to participate fully in political life by freely engaging in political debate, both online and in person, without fear of hate or harassment.

How Misogynistic Hate Speech Creates a Chilling Effect

According to legal scholar Frederic Schauer (1978), a chilling effect occurs when "individuals seeking to engage in activity protected by the First Amendment are deterred from so doing by governmental regulation not specifically directed at that protected activity" (p. 693). Instead of being

deterred from expression by governmental regulation, I argue here that women of all political parties were dissuaded from certain expressive activities, such as posting on social media or speaking openly with friends about their policy preferences, for fear that the same misogynistic hate speech that was directed at Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton and the reporters covering the campaign would also be used against them.

As legal theorist and activist Catharine MacKinnon (1993) notes in her book, *Only Words*, censorship today occurs less through explicit state policy than through official and unofficial privileging of powerful groups and viewpoints. This is accomplished through silencing in many forms (MacKinnon, 1993). According to MacKinnon (1993), the lack of hate speech regulations in the United States shows insensitivity to the damage done to social equality by hateful expression. It also demonstrates a substantial lack of recognition that some people get a lot more speech than others (MacKinnon, 1993). In the absence of this recognition, the power of those that have speech becomes more exclusive, coercive, violent, and more legally protected (MacKinnon, 1993). The more the speech of the dominant group is protected, the more dominant they become and the less the subordinated are heard from (MacKinnon, 1993).

In the United States, men get "more speech" than women and their voices continue to dominate the public sphere. For example, the Global Media Monitoring Project's 2015 U.S. National Report found that in the United States, women comprised only 25 percent of sources and subjects in political and government-related news (GMMP, 2015). Overall, women were the sources and subjects of only 38 percent of all stories (GMMP, 2015). Not only are women the subjects of fewer news stories, they also produce less news than their male counterparts. For example, women produced only 37.7 percent of news reports at the nation's top 20 news outlets, according to the Status of Women in U.S. Media 2017 Report (Women's Media Center, 2017).

The prevalence of misogynistic hate speech also makes it more difficult for women to participate in the political process. According to Alexander Meiklejohn's self-governance theory, free expression is an essential component of Democracy (1948). Speech on matters of political and public import must be protected, says Meiklejohn, to ensure that all citizens have access to the information needed to make informed decisions about civic matters (Meiklejohn, 1948). The proliferation of misogynistic hate speech in political discourse makes it difficult, if not impossible, for women to effectively engage in that process because of the cacophony of noise created by this particular form of expression. The "noise" associated with hate speech was recognized by the Supreme Court in the seminal hate speech case, R.A.V. v. St. Paul, Minn. (1992). Notably, women of color must deal

with the "noise" created by both racist and misogynistic hate speech. The discrimination that comes with being a member of not one but two protected classes is greater than the sum of its parts (Crenshaw, 1989). Thus, women of color must labor doubly to avoid the vitriol directed at them in order to participate in the political process.

Recognizing the important role online communications plays in the process of self-governance, Danielle Keats Citron and her co-author Helen Norton (2011) developed a theory of digital citizenship. "Digital citizenship" refers to the various ways that online activities deepen civic engagement, political participation, and public conversation. In her 2014 book on the subject, Keats Citron argues that cyber harassment does little to enhance self-governance and instead works to destroy it. Victims cannot participate in their online networks if they are under assault from a barrage of gendered slurs.

Given the important role free expression plays in the process of Democratic self-governance, Owen Fiss argues in *The Irony of Free Speech* (1996) that it is a worthy goal of the state to work to establish the essential preconditions for collective self-government by making sure all sides of an issue are presented to the public. Certain forms of free speech, Fiss argues, violate the equal right to free speech promised by the Fourteenth and First Amendments respectively (Fiss, 1996). Catherine MacKinnon (1993) has noted that unlike the First Amendment, federal statutes for equality have not risen out of the Fourteenth Amendment. Without protections such as these, misogynistic hate speech will continue to limit the public contributions of women and people of color by creating an environment that dissuades them from speaking out.

Noelle-Nueman's (1974) spiral of silence theory helps explain how misogynistic hate speech silences women through self-censorship. According to this theory, individuals feel substantial pressure to conceal their views when they believe those viewpoints are in the minority. This is because of a fear of isolation. Rather than being perceived as out of sync with public opinion, those whose view their position as less popular will adopt a more reserved attitude and will be less likely to assert their opinion. Conversely, those who believe that their position on an issue is the dominant one will confidently voice their opinion in public (Noelle-Nueman, 1974). Given people's unwillingness to share what they believe are nondominant opinions, it is no surprise that the "secret" Facebook group Pantsuit Nation emerged in the final months of the 2016 general election. What started as a small group of friends planning to wear pantsuits on Election Day, quickly exploded into a group with three million members. The group's emphasis, according to its website, is on "going high" and creating

a troll-free space in which Clinton supporters could enthusiastically support their candidate (Pantsuit Nation, 2017).

In addition to making it more difficult for women from all political parties to openly discuss important issues, misogynistic hate speech and cyber harassment directed at women candidates could also discourage qualified women from running for office. Today, only one-fifth of U.S. Congresspeople are women. That number is unlikely to increase if running for office continues to come with the various forms of misogynistic hate speech and cyber harassments that candidates, and the journalists covering them, must currently endure.

SOLUTIONS FOR MINIMIZING MISOGYNISTIC HATE SPEECH

Catharine MacKinnon (2017) coined the term "Butterfly Politics" to describe the impact small attempts to change inequality can have on a political system. According to MacKinnon (2017), the right small human intervention in an unstable political system can sooner or later have large complex reverberations. Small interventions to minimize the amount of misogynistic hate speech in the public sphere include counter speech, in the form of education and outreach efforts by governments and NGOs both, as well as expanding current social media hate speech policies.

Perhaps the greatest tool we have in combatting the silencing effect of misogynistic hate speech is more speech. The casual use of misogynistic hate speech online and in person seeks to intimidate and ultimately silence the women targeted. Counter speech that challenges the social acceptance of that language and all that it implies should be one of the primary solutions for addressing the problem of misogynistic hate speech.

In the United States, several NGOs, such as the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League have been working to address the problem of hate speech through outreach and education. Globally, there are many more substantial, state-funded, efforts in place to combat hate speech. For example, in Canada, the University of Alberta's Institute for Sexual Minority Studies created the website "Nohomophobes.com," which tracks the daily use of words such as "faggot" and terms such as "so gay" on Twitter. The site was produced to "address the prevalence of homophobic and transphobic language in our society" (No Homophobes, 2017, para. 1). A similar effort to draw attention to the casual use of terms like "bitch" and "cunt" could help those terms become less socially acceptable.

In Europe, the Youth Department of the Council of Europe has funded a two-year campaign aimed at minimizing the use of hate speech worldwide (No Hate Speech Movement, 2017). As part of the effort, 45 countries inside and outside of Europe have launched their own anti-hate speech or

anti-discrimination campaigns. From Belgium to Mexico to Azerbaijan, countries around the world have undertaken efforts to raise awareness about the negative impacts of hate speech, particularly on young people (No Hate Speech Movement, 2017). Notably, the United States is not a participant in this effort. Allocating government funds to public information campaigns aimed at minimizing the use of hate speech online or in person is one way the United States could avoid the negative impacts of misogynistic hate speech, including curtailing the free expression of those targeted. In addition to funding public outreach efforts, the United States could also support research into the issue of misogynistic hate speech and its impact on the Democratic process. For example, Sweden and Lithuania both recently contributed funds to support the 2016 study of online harassment of women journalists, entitled "New Challenges to Freedom of Expression- Countering Online Abuse of Female Journalists" (OSCE, 2016).

Hopefully, minimizing the amount of misogynistic hate speech aimed at women political candidates will create an environment in the United States that is more conducive to women candidates running for office. Women are grossly underrepresented at all levels of U.S. government. The continued use of misogynistic hate speech to describe and even harass women candidates may discourage women from running for office, which further limits participation and representation in the Democratic process.

In addition to allocating government funding for public information and outreach efforts, pressure could also be placed on social media organizations to take a more aggressive approach to restricting hate speech on their sites. As private virtual spaces, social media platforms are not required to offer First Amendment protection to users. In fact, the terms of service users must agree to before accessing a particular platform allow these companies to set whatever rules of engagement they like. Commercial ISPs and Social Media Organizations may voluntarily agree to prohibit users from sending racist or bigoted messages over their services (Foxman & Wolf, 2013). Such prohibitions "do not implicate First Amendment rights because they are entered into through private contracts and do not involve government action in some way" (Foxman & Wolf, 2013, p.187). Therefore, these companies can decide how, when, and why they will remove content and can simply update the terms of service accordingly. This suggests that it may be possible to incentivize these companies to do more to regulate hate speech on their platforms.

In countries with laws against hate speech, social media organizations such as Facebook are facing legal challenges calling for them to do more to censor all hate speech, particularly when it is aimed at politicians. For example, an Austrian Appeals Court recently ruled that Facebook must remove posts against Austria's Green Party leader Eva Glawischnig, which

have been deemed hate speech under the country's laws (Wamsley, 2017). Merely blocking the content in Austria was insufficient, the Appeals Court said. Instead, Facebook was forced to delete the content from all versions of its platform (Wamsley, 2017). Along those lines, Germany recently began imposing fines on social media organizations that fail to remove hate speech quickly (Kottasova, & Schmidt, 2017). In the face of this mounting pressure from foreign governments, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media platforms could choose to take more substantial steps to minimize the amount of hate speech on their sites.

Public opinion data suggests that there is an appetite among users to censor hate speech in the name of civility. A recent Pew Research Center survey about online harassment showed that 40 percent of millennials reported that they supported efforts to limit hate speech online (Duggan, 2014). In the United States, pressure from users and advertisers can move social media organizations to act. In response to public pressure and declining user numbers, Twitter suspended the accounts of several high-profile members of the Alt-Right movement in November 2016. Twitter removed the verified account of Richard Spencer (@RichardBSpencer), his think tank, the National Policy Institute (@npiamerica), and his online magazine (@radixjournal) (Guynn, 2016). The accounts of Paul Town, Pax Dickinson, Ricky Vaughn, and John River were also suspended for violating Twitter's rules against targeted abuse and harassment (Guynn, 2016). This is the kind of specific action social media organizations can take to better protect the expression of all users.

Whether it is through greater restrictions on content when and where appropriate or additional public outreach, action must be taken to ensure that the vitriolic misogynistic hate speech does not continue to drown out the voices of women in the public sphere. At a state level, at an organizational level, and even at a personal level, intervening against misogynistic hate speech is essential to let the victims and bystanders know that hatred toward women, particularly in the political arena, will not be tolerated.

Conclusion

The vitriol directed at Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign represented a different kind phenomenon, one based primarily on people's contempt for women in positions of power (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010). As the first woman to be nominated by a major party, Clinton's bid for the nation's highest office was met with misogynistic hate speech directed at her, her supporters, and the women journalists covering her opponents.

The barrage of gendered insults aimed at these women has a dangerous

chilling effect on all women's ability to participate in public debates about matters of political import. The cacophony of noise created by misogynistic hate speech impedes the process of Democratic self-governance originally outlined by Meiklejohn (1948) and the process of digital citizenship described by Citron and Norton (2011). The current situation is unacceptable and untenable. Therefore, immediate solutions must be explored. From allocating federal dollars to public information campaigns to advocating private social media organizations to change their rules, there are several viable ways to address this problem. Regardless of the approach taken, the time to act is now. Otherwise, women candidates, journalists, and voters will continue to remain at a disadvantage.

REFERENCES

Beinart, P. (2016, October). Fear of a female president: Hillary Clinton's candidacy has provoked a wave of misogyny. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/10/fear-of-a-female-president/497564/

Borchers, C. (2016, June 7). The Bernie bros are out in full force harassing female reporters. *The Washington Post.* Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/06/07/the-bernie-bros-are-out-in-full-force-harassing-female-reporters/?utm_term=.5db5b88afaa9

Campbell, K. K. (1998). The discursive performance of femininity: Hating Hillary. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, *1*(1), 1–19.

Citron, D.K., & Norton, H. (2011). Intermediaries and hate speech: Fostering digital citizenship for our information age. *Boston University Law Review, 91*, 1435–84.

Citron, D. K. (2014). *Hate crimes in cyberspace*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Citron, D.K. (2011). Misogynistic cyber hate speech. *Faculty Scholarship.* 1144. doi: http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/fac_pubs/1144

Cohen v. California, 403 U.S. 15 (1971).

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, *1*, 139-167.

Daileda, C. (2016, November 9). A colorful account of how election night played out for Trump fans. *Mashable*. Retrieved from http://mashable.com/2016/11/09/trump-victory-celebrations/#UlYfJveo68q4

Donald Trump's taped comments about women [Video file]. (2016). Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/08/us/donald-trump-tape-transcript.html

Duggan, M. (2014, October 22). Online harassment study. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/10/22/online-harassment/

Fang, M. (2016, July 29). Some people are still complaining about Hillary Clinton's voice. *MSN*. Retrieved from https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/opinion/some-people-are-still-complaining-about-hillary-clintons-voice/ar-BBv0N9y

Fiss, O. (1996). *The irony of free speech*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Foxman, A.H., & Wolf, C. (2013). *Viral hate: Containing its spread on the internet.* Palgrave Macmillan: New York, NY.

Global Media Monitoring Project (2015). *U.S. national report.* Retrieved from http://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp/gmmp-reports/gmmp-2015-reports

Guynn, J. (2016, November 15). Twitter suspends alt-right accounts. *USA Today.* Retrieved from https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2016/11/15/twitter-suspends-alt-right-accounts/93943194/

International Women's Media Foundation. (2013). *Violence and harassment against women in the news media: A global picture.* Retrieved from https://www.iwmf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Violence-and-Harassment-against-Women-in-the-News-Media.pdf

Jane, E.A. (2014). Back to the kitchen, cunt: Speaking the unspeakable about online misogyny. *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies, 28*(4), 558–570.

Katz, J. (2016). *Man enough? Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton and the politics of presidential masculinity.* Northampton, U.K.: Interlink.

Kottasova, I., & Schmidt, N. (2017, April 5). Germany to fine Facebook if it doesn't remove hate speech fast enough. *CNN Money*. Retrieved from http://money.cnn.com/2017/04/05/technology/germany-hate-speech/?iid=EL

MacKinnon C.A. (2017). *Butterfly politics*. Cambridge, MA: The Belkap Press of Harvard University Press.

MacKinnon, C.A. (1993). *Only words.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mantilla, K. (2009). Gendertrolling: Misogyny adapts to new media. *Feminist Studies, 39*(2) 563-570.

Matsuda, M. J. (1993). *Words that wound.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

McCaskill, N.D. (2016, October 14). Trump: "Clinton walked in front of me and 'I wasn't impressed.' *Politico.* Retrieved from http://www.politico.com/story/2016/10/trump-clinton-debate-walk-not-impressed-229810

Meiklejohn, A. (1948). *Political freedom.* New York, NY: Harper Brothers.

Neumann, E.N. (1974). The spiral of silence: A theory of public opinion. *Journal of Communication, 24*(2), 43-51.

No Hate Speech Movement. (2017). Retrieved from https://www.nohatespeechmovement.org/

No Homophobes (2017). *About.* Retrieved from http://www.nohomophobes.com/#!/about/

Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2016). *New challenges to freedom of expression: Countering online abuse of female journalists*. Retrieved from http://www.osce.org/fom/220411?download=true

Okimoto, T. G., & Brescoll, V. L. (2010). The price of power: Power seeking and backlash against female politicians. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *36*(7), 923-936.

Pantsuit Nation. (2017). *About Us*. Retrieved from http://www.pantsuitnation.org/about.html

Poushter, J. (2015, November 20). 40 percent of Millennials okay with limiting online hate speech. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from http://www.pew research.org/fact-tank/2015/11/20/40-of-millennials-ok-with-limiting-speech-offensive-to-minorities/

Ross, J. (2016, March 10). Bernie Sanders's most vitriolic supporters really test the meaning of the word 'progressive.' *The Washington Post.* Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/03/10/bernie-sand erss-most-vitriolic-supporters-really-test-the-meaning-of-the-word-progres sive/?utm_term=.da9eabe788f7

Schauer, F. (1978). Fear, risk and the First Amendment: Unraveling the chilling effect. *Boston University Law Review*, *58*, 685.

Snyder v. Phelps, 131 S. Ct. 1207, 1219-1220. (2011).

Southern Poverty Law Center. (2017). *About the Alt-Right*. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/alternative-right

Spiering, C. (2016, August 31). Hillary Clinton 37 minutes late for American Legion speech [Web log comment]. *Breitbart*. Retrieved from http://www .breitbart.com/2016-presidential-race/2016/08/31/hillary-clinton-37-minutes-late-for-american-legion-speech/

Tashman, B. (2015, August 27). Alex Jones ties 'bitch' Hillary Clinton and 'race war' Obama to Virginia shooting. *Right Wing Watch*. Retrieved from http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/alex-jones-ties-bitch-hillary-clinton-and-race-war-obama-to-virginia-shooting/

Van Blarcum, C.D. (2005). Internet hate speech: The European framework and the emerging American Haven. *Washington & Lee Law Review*, *62,* 781-786.

Waldron, J. (2012). *The harm in hate speech.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wamsley, L. (2017, May 8). Austrian court rules Facebook must delete hate speech. *NPR.* Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/05/08/527398995/austrian-court-rules-facebook-must-delete-hate-speech?plat form=hootsuite

Women's Media Center (2017). *The status of women in the U.S. media 2017.* Retrieved from http://www.womensmediacenter.com/reports/the-status-of-women-in-u.s.-media-2017

Wilz, K. (2016). Bernie bros and woman cards: Rhetorics of sexism, misogyny, and constructed masculinity in the 2016 election. *Women's Studies in Communication*, *39*(4), 357–360.

Yiannopoulos, M. (2016, July 5). The solution to online 'harassment' is simple: Women should log off. *Breitbart.* Retrieved from http://www.breitbart.com/milo/2016/07/05/solution-online-harassment-simple-women-log-off/

'Winning bigly': Sporting Fantasies of White Male Omnipotence in the Rise of Trump and Alt Right White Supremacy

Kyle W. Kusz
University of Rhode Island

ABSTRACT

In this article, the author offers a critical contextual analysis that seeks to answer Giroux's (2015) call for scholars to map and critically examine the "cultural circuits, points of connection, internalized values, discourses and pedagogies. . . responsible for both promoting and legitimating the likes of Donald Trump" (Don't Get Distracted by the Buffoonery section, para. 1). To this end, this essay explores how the Trump candidacy and presidency, the rise of the Alt Right, and the appeal of New England Patriots quarterback, Tom Brady, to his fans who have nicknamed him as the 'Greatest Of All Time' (i.e. The G.O.A.T.), are all linked by 1) the lionization of a particular performance of white masculinity as omnipotent, and 2) a desire to unapologetically revitalize white male privilege and prerogative as the unquestioned norm across American culture. The author articulates these three cultural sites together—Trump's racial and gender performance as a politician, the alt-right's visions of white national manhood, and cultural representations of Brady as the embodiment of white male omnipotence—to emphasize the point that the white supremacist and anti-feminist ideas expressed by Trump, his administration, and the alt-right are not just beliefs held just by a handful of white racists with 'hate in their hearts.' Instead, these retrogressive and anti-democratic ideas about race and gender have been circulating and cross-pollinating across American film, television, and sport media (among other cultural sites) over the past decade and have primed anxious white men to perceive the Alt Right and Trump's efforts to revitalize white male prerogative in American civic life as reasonable.

Keywords: whiteness, masculinity, White male prerogative, popular culture, alt-right, Trumpism

INTRODUCTION

Within weeks of Donald Trump's inauguration as the 45th President of the United States, the New England Patriots—led by quarterback, Tom Brady—staged a historic comeback over the Atlanta Falcons to win Super

Bowl LI. The comeback only reaffirmed the nickname given to Brady by his acolytes—the G.O.A.T.—an acronym for: Greatest Of All Time. At the same time Brady was leading this extraordinary comeback, Richard Spencer—the white supremacist who journalist, Sarah Posner (2016), described as "the Alt-Right's 'it boy' "—began sending out joyous tweets on Twitter about the Patriots' comeback and Brady. At the time, Spencer had only recently emerged from relative obscurity to garner attention as one of the leaders of the then incipient movement of white supremacists dubbed the 'Alt-Right.' Spencer gained notoriety as journalists began to detect links between the Alt-Right and the Trump campaign, namely through some of the latter's re-tweets on Twitter. Ever the opportunist, Spencer welcomed the media's critical gaze and attempted advance the Alt-Right's iteration of white supremacist ideas packaged as they were in rhetoric about identitarianism and white identity politics by hitching them to Trump's wagon. This was perhaps most evident in the days immediately following Trump's unexpected presidential victory, Spencer was caught on video giving a rousing pro-Trump speech in the Ronald Reagan Federal Building in Washington, D.C. In one key passage, Spencer celebrated the idea that, in his view, the U.S. was once again a white country. He ended his speech provocatively by shouting: "Hail Trump, hail our people, hail victory" as an audience filled—not with middle-aged white-hooded Ku Klux Klan members, nor with young skinheads donning swastika tattoos, black jeans, and leather boots—with hundreds of well-dressed, clean-cut, young white men who would not look out of place in Silicon Valley or a college campus, responded with cheers and even a few, open-handed Nazi salutes. (Harkinson, 2016, Editor's Note section, para 1).

But as the Patriots' completed their Super Bowl LI comeback, Spencer made clear through his tweets that he saw the Tom Brady, the Patriots' and Trump's victories as connected to his brand of alt-right white supremacy played out in flesh and blood:

"Brady and Belichick are about to win bigly for Trump, the #AltRight, and White America!"

"Tom Brady: Aryan Avatar #superbowl"

"For the White race, it's never over"

"I was born in Boston, Mass. I'm proud of the NFL's Whitest team! #superbowl"

[Accompanied by a picture of Brady from Fall 2016 in front of locker with Trump 'Make America Great Again' red hat in locker] "#Superbowl

#NewEnglandPatriots #MakeAmericaGreatAgain" (Chabba, 2017, para. 2).

In one final tweet, Spencer drove home the connection he saw between Brady and Trump by referencing two news stories that featured pictures of Tom Brady and Donald Trump standing in almost identical poses. Both stories also highlighted the long odds each faced in winning the Super Bowl and 2016 Presidential election, respectively. Accompanying these images was one final comment from Spencer: "Nothing is written. No fate but what we [read: white men] make. #SuperBowl#Patriots" (Chabba, 2017, para. 6).

While some might dismiss Spencer's tweets as little more than a political opportunist's desperate attempt to be relevant, I want to use them as a starting point from which to answer Giroux's (2015) call for scholars to map and critically examine the "cultural circuits, points of connection, internalized values, discourses and pedagogies. . . responsible for both promoting and legitimating the likes of Donald Trump" and the retrogressive ideas and conditions that enabled his political ascendancy (Don't Get Distracted by the Buffoonery section, para. 1). Mapping these ideas across American culture forces one to reckon with the reality that the ideas that buoyed the Trump campaign and the formation of the Alt-Right—racial separatism, scientific racism, gender essentialism, anti-diversity, anti-feminism, misogyny, and reinvigorating fraternal bonds between white men— are not held just by a few white 'racists' with 'hate in their hearts' who live on the margins of American society. Instead, these ideas have been gaining prominence in contemporary American popular culture over the past decade. As King and Leonard (2014) note, although many Americans want to believe there exists a wide "geographic and ideological binary between the [White] extreme and mainstream," in reality, "the divide. . .is tenuous at best" (p.6).

The "unexpected" rise of Trump and the online alt-right are part of a much broader cultural production of fantasies of an unapologetic, omnipotent white masculinity that have become a prominent feature of American popular culture over the past decade. This fantasy is not confined to a subculture of online chat rooms. It is part of a broader discursive formation that has been cross-pollinating across a network of cultural sites from white supremacist internet sites to Fox News and Breitbart News to sport talk-radio to sport media sites to online gaming cultures to 'bro'/fraternity college lifestyle websites to network and post-network shows to Hollywood films and back again. In this paper, I illuminate how this fantasy of unapologetic, omnipotent white masculinity connects President Trump's political project with the alt right and with cultural representations of New England Patriots' quarterback, Tom Brady. In drawing these links, I argue that being

unapologetic about restoring white male prerogative in American civic life has become *the* preferred representational strategy—as opposed to white men making claims to being victimized, disadvantaged, or minoritized (Carroll, 2011; Leonard, 2017; Savran, 1998)—of this latest wave of white supremacist backlash.

White Male Backlash, circa 2016

White male status anxieties played a crucial role in enabling Trump's unexpected victory in the 2016 United States presidential election (Hochschild, 2017; Myerson, 2017). The way in which Trump won the White House—intentional scapegoating and stereotyping of racial and religious minorities, xenophobia, bullying opponents, and shamelessly stoking of racial violence—suggests we are in the midst of a significant shift in the tactics, rationalizations, and narratives used to re-produce the normativity of whiteness in American culture and society. As Kantrowitz (2000), Alexander (2008), Harris Perry (2010), and Anderson (2016) have each noted, moments of significant racial advancement in the U.S., especially for African-Americans, have often been followed by counter-waves of 'white rage' that contain, blunt, and even roll-back this progress. So perhaps we should not be surprised that yet another virulent white backlash has arisen during Barack Obama's historic interruption of elite white male rule (Feagin & Ducey, 2017) in the Oval Office.

In their book, *The Wrongs of the Right: Language, Race, and the Republican Party*, Hughey and Parks (2014) provide ample evidence that nativism, xenophobia, racial fatigue, and anti-black and anti-immigrant racism were growing on the Right prior to the rise of Trump. Indeed, they document the formation of a disturbing racial hysteria amongst a sizable portion of conservative whites during the Obama years in response to the idea that a black man would be "the most cherished citizen in the land—citizen president, representative, and leader" (p.5). Perhaps most telling, Hughey and Parks' foresaw and foretold the production of "a dangerous. . .white supremacist ideology and practice . . . [that] together reveal[ed] the existence of a Herrenvolk (white master race) democracy in the midst of the supposed 'post-racial' era of Barack Obama" (p. 7). So while it is tempting to cast Trump and his campaign as the origin of a decisive shift in white hegemony in 2016, it is important to recognize how the social and discursive conditions were already in place for an authoritarian, populist candidate willing to exploit growing sentiments of white anger, nativism, xenophobia, and wounded masculinity just as Trump did.

Anthropologist Jeff Maskovsky (2017) argues that Trump has ushered in "a new form of racial politics" called "white nationalist postracialism"

(p. 434). For Maskovsky, white nationalist postracialism "is a paradoxical politics of twenty-first-century white racial resentment. Its proponents seek to do two contradictory things: to reclaim the nation for white Americans while also denying an ideological investment in white supremacy" (p. 434). This mode of racial resentment is expressed by Trump and the alt-right not only through negative rhetoric directed as racial others, but through affirmative rhetoric that seeks to recover an unapologetic, omnipotent performance of white masculinity and make it a metonym of American exceptionalism and the nation itself.

This can be seen in how Trump enacts a fantasy of an all-powerful and unreformed white masculinity that seems to create a reciprocal feeling of omnipotence and vitality in his followers. It is constituted through an alchemy of social class codes: the language, attitude, and distrust of liberal elites and experts that appeals to white working folk (Williams, 2017), combined with an unabashed air of elitism, especially relative to people of color and women. This combination of a blunt, working class rhetorical style of 'telling it how it is,' with the ability to leverage one's wealthy white male habitus to compel the world to bend to your will at least partially explains how Trump can appeal to whites of divergent class positions. Even further, to his followers, Trump represents a brash, guilt-free, successful, non-deferential, unconstrained, and unapologetic way of being white and male that feels good to anxious whites in an era where, according to Hochschild's (2017) ethnographic work, the cultural norms of political correctness have left them feeling silenced, stressed, and ashamed about their investments in the values and norms of post-World War II white suburban conformity that is suspicious of (racial) otherness.

This desire to unapologetically enact an omnipotent white masculinity also appeals to those on the Far Right who identify with right-wing populism (Berlet & Lyons, 2000) and white nationalism (Swain, 2003). That these enactments of unabashed, all-powerful white masculinity increasingly appear both in mainstream American media culture and in white supremacist movements should come as no surprise to those aware of the many studies of white supremacist movements since the 1990s. These studies document how the discourses of the White Right have dovetailed considerably with mainstream American racial discourses (Berlet & Lyons, 2000; Ferber, 1998; Holling, 2014; Lyons, 2017; Swain, 2003). But what seems new with this alt-right iteration of white supremacism is its appeal with young white men who attend college and have been radicalized by the steady stream of conservative assaults on diversity initiatives that they perceive as hostile to white men and their futures. These young white men seem to prefer not to assume a victimized subjectivity in order to make a claim for rights. Instead they seem to prefer to unapologetically assert, in a

way they define as manly, the idea that white men's prerogatives and interests should unquestionably sit at the center of American civic life.

A key facet of the Trump and alt-right projects is an aggressive attempt to reassert white male prerogative as the unquestioned social norm and orienting logic of the American State and civil society (Kantrowitz, 2001). Trump's investment in this project is exemplified in his personal refusal to follow cultural or political norms, social expectations, laws, or even a shared sense of reality that gets in the way of him carrying out his interests and desires as a wealthy white man. Through social policies and executive orders Trump is attempting to dismiss or marginalize diversity logics in order to re-naturalize white male prerogative as an organizing principle in contemporary American civil society. Concrete examples of his reassertion of white male prerogative can be found in his refusal to divest from his businesses upon taking office and in casual misogyny expressed to Billy Bush during the notorious *Access Hollywood* interview, "And when you're a star they let you do it. You can do anything, whatever you want. Grab them by the pussy. You can do anything" (Waxman, 2016, para. 6). It is there in his defense of the fundamentalist Alabama judge, Roy Moore, and White House aide, Rob Porter, amidst accusations of sexual assault and domestic abuse, respectively, when he defends both men to reporters by saying, "He says he's innocent, and I think you have to remember that" (Diamond, 2018, para. 7). It is there in Trump's selective application of the principle of 'due process' to powerful white men, but his refusal to grant it to others, especially his critics. It is there in his dismissal of critical news coverage of him or his administration as 'fake news.' Or, how he and his administration can wield the phrase to dismiss narratives and discursive frames that value and center diversity and feminist values and norms. And while this list could go on and on, it is there in his (and his administration's) criticisms of racial dissent when expressed by black sporting figures like Colin Kaepernick and Jemele Hill, but its absence when expressed by white sports figures like Steve Kerr, Dave Zirin, and Gregg Popovich.

While Trump's blatant refusal to follow widely accepted social and political norms is frequently explained as a product of his celebrity status, such an interpretation overlooks how the intersection of his race, class, and gender enabled his refusals to avoid penalty. And as we have already witnessed through the violent actions of the alt-right in Charlottesville, Virginia in the summer of 2017, Trump's embodied performance of unapologetic, omnipotent white masculinity as U.S. President not only emboldens many millions of anxious or disaffected white American men to take to the streets to reaffirm the taken-for-grantedness of white male prerogative in American civic life, but it gives license for the casual expression of bigotry and enactment of physical violence against all those that do not

share their values and vision. So, diagnosing Trump's performance of white masculinity is important not simply to note a stylistic change in how white masculinity is performed in American culture, but because it signifies a disturbing shift in how white hegemony is being re-configured in the post-Obama era.

The Role of Sport, Games, and Leisure in Promoting Unapologetic White Male Omnipotence in Trumpism and the Alt-Right

Although often overlooked, the homosocial culture and fantasies of omnipotent masculinity that often get constructed through men's sport and leisure activities have been central not only to Trump's unexpected election victory, but to his project of white nationalist post racialism, and this latest wave of alt-right white supremacy.

Much like he has cultivated images of himself as a business titan and playboy, Donald Trump has long used associations with sport to reify the core idea of his brand: Trump = all-powerful white man, and to sell himself as a fantasy to American audiences. During the 2016 campaign, Trump repeatedly used stories involving sport and white sportsmen to advance his politics (Oates & Kusz, forthcoming). Trump ranted about the way the NFL's new rules to promote player protection were a symptom of the feminization of American men and society (Oates, 2017). As if a stereotypical jock in middle school, he ridiculed his opponents with emasculating nicknames—"low energy" Jeb Bush, "Lyin'" Ted Cruz, and "Little" Marco Rubio—during the Republican primary debates. And at various rallies held across the country, Trump name-dropped local sports figures like Tom Brady, Mike Ditka, NASCAR CEO Brian France, and Ben Roethlisberger to ingratiate himself with local audiences, cast himself as a populist, and associate himself with the cultural authority afforded to male athletes. Trump even reportedly wanted to stage a 'winner's evening' at the Republican Convention that featured American athletes because in his view "our country needs to see winners. . .We don't see winners anymore" (Corasaniti, 2016, para. 9).

Trump even invited controversial former college basketball coach, Bobby Knight, to introduce him at several campaign stops. In Knight, Trump chose not just a coach who symbolized 'winning sportsman' and 'manly leader' to represent his campaign, but he selected a white man whose long record of refusing to follow the norms of political correctness, feminism, and multiculturalism signified his investment in upholding white male prerogative. Indeed, Trump's embrace of Knight further exemplified the way the restoration of an unapologetic, omnipotent white masculinity is

a key part of his project to 'make America great again' (Kusz, 2016a, 2016b, 2017).

While any presidential rally aims to generate enthusiasm amongst their supporters, Trump's presidential rallies - which he has continued well into the first year of his presidency - deserve critical analysis because they function as political theater that owes much to sports. Trump's rallies have the feel of a high school pep rally for his overwhelmingly white crowds of supporters. In these spaces, Trump plays the role of the all-powerful white male coach or star quarterback who energizes the crowd and defines who is part of the American 'home team' and who is defined as 'the other.' Of course, these rallies also recall those from nearly a century ago in the age of fascism, where authoritarian strongmen defined a national body politic by cultivating fears of immigrants and refugees defined as others.

These dynamics are evident in Trump's repeated condemnation of former San Francisco 49ers' quarterback, Colin Kaepernick's protest against police brutality and continued racial injustice in the United States at his rallies. While Trump first criticized Kaepernick during his presidential campaign, he renewed his attacks as President on September 22, 2017, at a rally in Huntsville, Alabama when he criticized other African-American NFL players who participated in the growing protest. Through Trump's criticism of Kaepernick and his supporters, it becomes apparent how white nationalist post racialism and white male prerogative operate in the Trump era. In a context where unarmed black Americans are being killed by police and white vigilantes, Trump not only refuses to recognize the legitimacy of Kaepernick's protest but he transforms it into an example of African-American ungratefulness and lack of patriotism. Here, Trump not only tramples on Kaepernick's citizenship rights, but he invites him to "find a country that works better for him, let him try, it's not gonna happen" (Fox News, 2016, para. 2).

So then, the Trump rally is important for several reasons. It functions as a homosocial space and retreat for anxious whites that is a signature feature of Trumpism. It functions as a sporting-like ritual imbued with crucial political and cultural value because it enables a place for Trump to enact this fantasy of being an unapologetic, omnipotent white American man taking back *his* country. When read in this way, we can begin to see how the architecture and ideologies of these rallies share much in common with the way many white male groups associated with the alt-right also create homosocial spaces where they can establish a social world where white male prerogative and fantasies of white male omnipotence reign supreme (Watkins, 2017).

The preference of anxious white men to retreat to homosocial cultures of leisure where they can not only be free to do and say what they please,

but where they can bond with other white men over their shared invest-ments in fantasies of masculine omnipotence is also an oft-overlooked part of the appeal and the formation of the Alt-Right online and in physical spaces like Charlottesville. According to one report, one of the key cultural events instrumental in radicalizing Richard Spencer was the national media spectacle that ensued after three members of the Duke Lacrosse team were accused of raping an African-American female stripper during a private team party in 2007 (Wiedeman, 2017). Spencer was a student at Duke Uni-versity at the time and not only did he defend the accused publicly, but within a year, he quit the doctoral program he attended and began writing for conservative media, ultimately coining the term, "Alternative Right" that has given today's generation of white supremacists their name. In his own words, Spencer said, "In this funny chain of events, the Duke lacrosse case changed the course of my career . . . My life would not have taken the direction it did absent the Duke lacrosse case" (Wiedeman, 2017, para. 4). Spencer reportedly learned from this experience that boldly and unapologet-ically standing up and defending white men in the face of accusations from the 'racial Left' could be both a winning (and career-enhancing) strategy.

Over the next few years, as he began to cultivate his white identitarian beliefs, Spencer would repeatedly return to sport in his writings. In 2010, he wrote, "White Devils: The Unbearable Whiteness of Duke Basketball," where he praised coach, Mike Krzyzewski for creating a top-level men's college basketball program led by a white-dominant roster (Spencer, 2015a). In another, five years later titled, "Where Have All The White Dev-ils Gone?," Spencer (2015b) lamented the changing racial make-up of the starting fives of the Duke Men's basketball teams and floated the conspira-torial idea that Duke's all-black starting fives from 2013-15 were a concilia-tion Coach Krzyzewski made to institutional pressure to present a diversity-friendly picture of Duke in the aftermath of the Duke Lacrosse case.

And not six months into the Trump presidency, Spencer once again embraced an opportunity to use sport to disseminate his racial ideas to broader American audiences. In a 4-part series titled, *American Race*, pro-duced by cable network, *TNT*, Spencer was invited to sit down face-to-face with outspoken African-American former NBA star, Charles Barkley. Not only was Spencer represented as the face of the alt-right on the show, but he also appeared as a clean-cut, articulate, and excessively polite figure—what the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) calls "a suit and tie racist"—who was virtually in awe of Barkley when they first meet on camera. But, once their conversation began, Spencer explained in a plain, direct, unapologetic, and self-assured manner his beliefs of racial separatism and white superior-ity to Barkley, including his desire to "expand and deepen white privilege." Throughout the interview, Spencer proves adept at being able to use a sport

media platform to carry out his political aim—to move the 'Overton window' so that the white supremacism of the Alt-Right could gain more exposure and acceptance within the American mainstream.

Another example of how sport and the preservation of homosocial spaces where white men can retreat and feel like all-powerful men factor into the formation of the alt-right can be seen in Neiwert's (2017) book, *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*. In a chapter detailing the events and figures that helped create the alt-right iteration of white supremacy, Neiwert identifies the Gamergate controversy as a key event. Through his discussion it becomes apparent how, like the Duke Lacrosse Case, efforts to protect homosocial leisure spaces where white men can indulge in fantasies of their own omnipotence has been a recurrent influence on the formation of the Alt-Right. For those who may not know about this controversy, Gamergate began when some young white male gamers objected to a video game created by Zoe Quinn called Depression Quest. They objected to the game because it made visible and challenged the "male-oriented first-person-shooter architecture that still dominates gaming" (Neiwert, 2017, p. 233). On the internet site, 4Chan, one of the sites where serious gamers went to discuss the games they played—and one of the places where the alt-right took shape online (Nagle, 2017)—rumors quickly spread that Quinn received favorable reviews for her game because her new boyfriend was a videogame journalist. Although the allegation was false, the conspiracy theory quickly mobilized white male gamers who feared a challenge from outside to their male-dominant homosocial safespace. According to Neiwert (2017), in response to the creation of *one feminist video game*, these gamers hysterically "claimed [there] was a pro-feminist, pro-liberal, anti-white male bias growing within the computer-game industry" and they launched an all-out personal attack on Quinn via the Internet (p. 234). After criticizing the Gamergaters in an article, cultural critic, Anita Sarkeesian, like Quinn before her, was 'doxxed' (her home address and personal information were published online) by these white male gamers and she received thousands of rape and death threats that even forced to "flee her home" (p. 234).

Particularly interesting about the Gamergate controversy is how it began with young white male gamers reacting hysterically to what they perceived as a female threatening their homosocial safe space to play games that featured fantasies of white male omnipotence. Gamergate also reveals the extreme lengths these young white male gamers would go to protect social spaces they felt it was their prerogative to have only for themselves. In order to protect these safe spaces for themselves they were willing to express a disturbingly violent, yet casual misogyny. And, of course, they rationalized their acts as acceptable because many of them have swallowed

whole the white males in crisis narratives that circulate in conservative discourses, especially within the online right, and they imagine themselves as being under existential threat.

This desire to create homosocial spaces where young white men can create cultures with masculinizing rituals so they can feel like powerful (white) men again is a key feature of a number of groups associated with the alt-right. Take, for example, the Proud Boys, a group created by Gavin McInnes in 2016 that he describes as a "pro-Western fraternal organization" for men who "refuse to apologize for creating the modern world" (Marantz, 2017, para. 8). McInnes originally made his name as a co-founder of Vice Media and Vice Magazine, but went on to become an online media personality, who even occasionally appeared on various Fox News programs. He's known for his hipster style combined with his right-wing political beliefs, especially his pro-men's rights stances. While he is unapologetic about representing the Proud Boys as a fraternal organization, McInnes denies his group is founded on white supremacism. McInnes says men of color are allowed, but only so long as they "recognize that white men are not the problem," and "they don't whine about racism or blame it for their problems" (Disser, 2016, para. 44). Nonetheless, the raison d'etre for the Proud Boys, according to McInnes is to provide a space, much like that of a college fraternity, where young white men can participate in activities—drinking beer or maybe even, fighting—and feel free of racial and gender guilt. An interesting part of the Proud Boys is the way they have attempted to formalize their group creating an initiation process and way of life for group members that include abstention from masturbation and watching pornography so he can become his best manly self.

The centrality of this fantasy of unapologetic white male omnipotence is also apparent in another story involving the organizing of the alt-right. On the Wednesday before the 'Unite the Right' rally that took place in Charlottesville in the summer of 2017, Andrew Anglin, the creator of the *Daily Stormer* white supremacist website, posted what was ostensibly a fashion guide for how alt-right members should look when they 'hit the streets.' In it, he reveals the importance the alt-right places on their projecting a fantasy of white male omnipotence in order to draw new members to their movement:

> We are now at a magical point in history. All of the work we have done in these tubes is paying off, and the Alt-Right is ready to move off of the internet, into the real world. . .
>
> The plan was always to build a real political movement. We now have the numbers to begin that process. . .

Our target audience is white males between the ages of 10 and 30. I include children as young as ten, because an element of this is that *we want to look like superheroes. We want to be something that boys fantasize about being a part of.* That is a core element to this. . . We have to be hip and we have to be sexy.

In fact, that is priority number one, so let me say it again, italicized: we have to be sexy.

If you say, "but I don't care about being sexy," then I say to you: "I don't care about what you care about, *because all I care about is winning*". . .

This means *we have to look good, we have to look dangerous, we have to have humor, we have to look powerful and we have to look like we are in control.*

People who see us have to want to be us. That means you have to go to the gym. . . (Anglin, 2017, para. 1, my italics added)

Anglin's style-guide reveals how a fantasy of omnipotent white masculinity offered as an imagined solution to what they see as a cultural war against white men sits at the center of the Alt Right project. In his own words, Anglin acknowledges how part of the draw of the Alt Right for most young white men is that it offers a homosocial space where this fantasy is not only revered by all, but it is transformed into a way of life by and for white men that puts their prerogatives at the center of their social world. It's a way of life that requires, as it venerates, manly self-control, strict discipline, and hard work in order to turn male flesh into masculine fantasy.

In the next section, I explain how various cultural representations of Tom Brady position him as a living embodiment of the fantasy of white male omnipotence that is remarkably similar to the model Anglin wishes Alt Right white men would perform in public. In pointing this out, I hope to make clear how the aspirational model of white masculinity that organizes the Alt Right imaginary shares much in common with the with the cultural appeal of the white masculinity that Brady embodies and performs in the center of American media culture. Indeed, cultural representations of Tom Brady in advertising, in sport media, and in his recent behind-the-scenes Facebook documentary titled: *Tom vs. Time* (Chopra & Emilani, 2018)— drenched as they are in long standing and quotidian signs and codes of white supremacy—are part of a cultural circuit that enables Alt Right ideas to circulate from the margins to the center of American media culture. This flow of ideas takes place not only when Spencer tweets about Brady as an 'Aryan Avatar' during Super Bowl LI on Twitter, but when Trump tweets about Brady as a 'total winner,' or when Brady appears as the embodiment

of white male omnipotence in a Hollywood film like *Ted 2* (MacFarlane, Clark, Jacobs, & Stuber, 2015) or television commercials for *Beautyrest* mattresses or *UnderArmour* athletic gear.

Brady's Elitist Unapologetic, Omnipotent White Masculinity

In his discussion of the popular appeal of strongman Eugene Sandow at the turn of the 20th century cultural historian John F. Kasson (2001) details how Sandow's muscular body and personal story became potent and complex symbols of a definition of white male perfection that served to naturalize white male privilege at a time of much social, economic, cultural, and technological change. Drawing on Kasson's interpretive framework, I contend that Brady's stellar on-the-field accomplishments and the patterned way he's portrayed off-the-field as being unapologetic about his wealth and privilege and as 'the man who has it all' have transformed him into a similarly potent and complex symbol of white male omnipotence in 2010s America, one whose racial and gender meanings are remarkably aligned with those embraced within the Alt Right. Brady's imaged identity gains these meanings not just from the U.S.' long history of white supremacy, but from contemporary discourses about white male anxiety and crisis that inform this latest wave of white supremacy stoked by Donald Trump and the Alt Right.

Tom Brady deserves special attention in this discussion of Trump, the Alt Right, and this broader contemporary white supremacist backlash not only because a red Trump 'Make America Great Again' was found in his locker in the fall of 2015, but because, in his own words, he identifies Trump as a "good friend of mine" who he's "always enjoyed his company" (Stern, 2016). Even further, Brady's performance of white masculinity deserves critical attention because he has refused to denounce Trump's xenophobia, Islamophobia, misogyny, and racial, ethnic, and religious scapegoating. In his silence, Brady, at best, exemplifies the white American who believes s/he can be neutral in our system of white supremacy. At worst, he signifies the white American who - like the alt-right white nationalist - believes racial, ethnic, and religous injustice and systemic violence and inequalities are not his problem because they happen over there, in communities of color, due to their inherent pathologies of black people (whether defined in biological or cultural terms).

Brady's relationship with Trump further deserves critical attention because, according to Brady, it began when The Donald invited him to be a judge at Miss U.S.A pageant after Brady's first Super Bowl appearance. That Brady's friendship with Trump was, by his own admission, subsequently built through time spent on private, exclusive golf courses—an elite

homosocial sporting space exclusive to wealthy white men where they too often act like boys—begs questions about Brady's own appetite and tolerance for boorish, sexist male behavior given the 'Access Hollywood' revelation about Trump's crude, demeaning way of treating and talking about women in private and his rationalization of it all as innocent 'locker room talk' (Pallotta, 2017).

It is hard to compartmentalize these incidents when Brady himself pridefully posts pictures on social media of his annual 'boys only' trips to the Kentucky Derby with teammates and friends that display similar appetites for the pleasures of fraternal bonding and 'old money' leisure. Even further, the fact that the 'boys' who feature in Brady's photos are an overwhelmingly white lot reveals a disturbing pattern when read in the context of Brady's friendship with Trump and his silence on Trump's racial statements. Brady consistently invites a group dominated by white male teammates to go on his Kentucky Derby 'boys only' trips despite the fact that he plays in a sport where 67% of the players are African-American (Leonard, 2016). And this pattern reveals more than he seems to recognize about the racial company he keeps.

Considering how carefully Brady tries to manage his public identity, these public images of Brady in private tell a more particular story of him; one he is apparently not reluctant to share. It is a vision of Brady as a wealthy, white man who unapologetically enjoys, and has even made a habit out of, spending time with other wealthy white men who treasure 'being with the boys,' choose to run in white-majority groups, and measure their masculinities by their ability to win trophies (both literal and figurative).

Interestingly, this image of Brady is not unlike the one that repeatedly emerges in advertising campaigns through which Brady chooses to construct his personal brand. Take, for example, a recent *Beautyrest* mattress commercial. In it, Brady appears as a James Bond-like figure of wealth, sophistication, exclusivity, and exceptionality. This advertising image of Brady is further reinforced by a deal Brady recently signed to endorse Bond's iconic Aston Martin sportscar (a car priced at $211,000), not to mention other upscale companies that are part of Brady's endorsement portfolio (i.e. UGGS, Tag Heuer). In each of these sites, Brady is figured as an unapologetic embodiment of upper class white exceptionality and manly omnipotence. And while these visions of Brady do not crassly express notions of white male superiority or a desire for a white-only ethno-state, they reveal a distinct pattern where Brady chooses to represent himself and his brand in class exclusive spaces where he's depicted as an elite and people of color are rarely present. In other words, through these promotional and self-representations, Brady brings to life a vision of American social

life (racially segregated and centered on fraternal relations amongst white men) not dissimilar from Trump's xenophobic America First nationalism and from the Alt Right's desire for a white American ethno-state.

This representation of Brady as a white male who's unapologetic about his wealth and privilege is further reinforced in cameos he's made in a television series like *Entourage* (Mylod & Ellin, 2009) and a film like *Ted 2* (MacFarlane, Clark, Jacobs, & Stuber, 2015). In both, Brady plays an idealized version of himself. In *Entourage*, a Brady appears as the 'man who has it all' and casually displays his masculine omnipotence palling around on the golf course with the Entourage band of bros (Mylod & Ellin, 2009). Brady is cast in this role as a star athlete unapologetically living the 'good life' defined as material comforts and an elevated social status that 99% of Americans can only dream about.

In *Ted 2*, Brady is portrayed similarly, but the idea of Brady superior status is taken even further as he is depicted as the embodiment of human perfection, literally (MacFarlane, Clark, Jacobs, & Stuber, 2015). The white everyman main character in the film (played by Mark Wahlberg) will go to almost any length to obtain Brady's sperm so his teddy bear best friend can produce a genetically superior male heir with his new wife. Through this storyline, the film invites audiences to see the white male Brady as the perfect human specimen whose genes are superior to all others. Although guised in sophomoric humor, *Ted 2*'s imagining of Brady reveals how his exceptionality becomes an avenue for the (re)activation of ideas subtly tinged with the residue of scientific racism and eugenics from a previous moment of white supremacy—a time when anti-immigrant and nativist sentiments ran amok, waves of white vigilantism terrorized African-Americans after a brief moment of racial progress, and a Gilded age of capitalists were busy building personal empires of wealth off the backs of recent American immigrants. And as other commentators have already noted, the ideas, logics, and even language of eugenics regularly roll off the tongue of Trump and his white male-dominant legion of advisors (Jones, 2017; Kirby, 2018).

Finally, the idea of Brady as an embodiment of white male omnipotence is even blurred between the promotional representations discussed above and journalistic and documentarian accounts of the real-life Brady especially in laudatory discussions of his hyper-disciplined diet, workout, and ascetic health regime—all done so he can continue playing in the NFL deep into his 40s. While Brady is often reluctant to discuss details of his private life, he has shown a proclivity for going into great detail unabashedly proselytizing to others about the virtues of his radical diet and training regimen with his controversial body coach, Alex Guerrero. And in 2017, Brady authored, *The TB12 Method: How to Achieve A Lifetime of Sustained Peak Performance*, where he laid out the philosophy and prac-

tices that constitute his controversial lifestyle program. Through talk of his diet and training habits, Brady's success is portrayed as largely the product of his personal discipline, ascetic diet, and his masterful willpower. Through these stories, a long-standing myth long used to (re)produce white supremacy especially in its civilizing iterations is brought to life—whites possess an innate quality, or spirit, that can't be empirically located or measured in their bodies, but that explains their innate capacity to be exceptional (Dyer, 1997). It is the idea that enables Richard Spencer to see Brady as an 'Aryan avatar' and that founds his desire for a white ethno-national state. It also explains what Trump means when he calls white sportsmen 'winners' and imagines Brady and himself as ones (Oates & Kusz, forthcoming).

These stories also reveal the complicated ways that the real-life Brady is obsessed with a set of ideas—trying to stay youthful forever and trying to achieve god-like immortality through sport—that reinforce his own apparent desire to live his life as a fantasy of omnipotent white masculinity, that is, to live as: 'Tom Brady, the G.O.A.T. (The Greatest Of All Time).' Interestingly, the best evidence to support this interpretation has been provided by Brady himself through the behind-the-scenes documentary he helped produce for Facebook titled: '*Tom vs. Time*' (Chopra & Emilani, 2018). In the documentary, he lets viewers into his home and social world to construct an image of himself as dedicated to an all-consuming pursuit of becoming the G.O.A.T. and a Super Bowl Champion. When examined critically, *Tom vs. Time* reveals how a logic of white male prerogative organizes Brady's home and family life. He is displayed prioritizing his in-season preparation over all other family responsibilities during the season. Brady is repeatedly shown in *Tom vs. Time* alone retreating into private spaces in his home to watch game tape or to receive massages and treatment from his personal trainer, Alex Guerrero. And although Brady spends much of the documentary ruminating to viewers about his unease with sacrificing so much time the could be spent with family so that he can train and prepare to perform the omnipotent 'G.O.A.T. Brady' for as long as he can, we still see Brady choosing day after day to take time away from his family, even in the off-season, to retreat to homosocial spaces he creates in order to spend time with teammates—'his boys'—in an attempt to perfect their athletic craft and keep the fantasy of self alive for a few years more. At one point, Brady's supermodel wife, Gisele Bunchen, lamentingly jokes that she thinks he loves football and time spent with the boys more than her.

So then, through these cultural representations we see Brady as the omnipotent white male who seems to have it all—he is one of the greatest quarterbacks of all-time, he's married to a supermodel, he's abundantly wealthy, and he's got Hollywood good looks. But, not only is he cast as an

ideal model of white masculinity, but this way of performing white masculinity is coded as deserving public reverence because it is able to unapologetically enjoy having it all without any trace of racial or class related guilt. In this way, part of Brady's public appeal is that he signifies the guilt-free, omnipotent white male who unapologetically embraces the idyllic life his wealth provides. And this part of Brady's performances of white masculinity—both across his advertisements and in his self-representations in social media—shares much in common with the popular appeal of Trump's performance of white masculinity and the fantasy of white masculinity offered by many groups associated with the alt-right.

And if all of this talk of Brady as a contemporary symbol of white supremacy or the alt-right white nationalist iteration of white supremacism should sound far-fetched, one need only watch that 30-second 2015 'Rule Yourself' *UnderArmour* commercial featuring an army of thousands of simulated Tom Bradys, all clad in black and red athletic gear detailed with American stars, stripes and an Army fatigue motif, moving in perfect unison as they work toward athletic perfection. The commercial first aired five days after a Trump hat was found in Brady's locker. It was part of a broader *UnderArmour* campaign that featured basketball player, Steph Curry, golfer Jordan Spieth, and ballerina Misty Copeland. But only in Brady's commercial was the featured athletic performer cast in a red and black color scheme with militaristic sounds echoing in the background.

Upon first glance, the images of Brady in the *UnderArmour* commercial working hard 'every single day' (words he repeats throughout the commercial) might surely be read by many as just another example of a banal sport advert circulating American mythologies of individualism, hard work, and meritocracy. But, such a reading is only possible for those unfamiliar with the cultural roots of the commercial's imagery and blinded by the myths of racial colorblindness and postracialism that govern contemporary popular racial discourse. Once one realizes how this repertoire of images that constitute this vision of Brady trace back to Leni Reifenstahl's (1935) Nazi propaganda film, *Triumph of the Will*, one must reckon with the way that faith in postracialism can allow for a white supremacist fantasy of Brady to be forwarded as the perfect embodied representative of the American nation (Kusz, 2017). The commercial's repetition of discipline and hard work also evinces the producerist ethos that Berlet and Lyons (2000) argue organizes so many right-wing populist and the White Right movements in the past and present. Once all this is seen, it becomes hard to un-see the alarming way Nazi aesthetics and white supremacist ideas converged within a representation of Brady where racial difference is eradicated, uniformity is celebrated, and only idealized white men matter. It is a representation of Brady that alarmingly coincides with the logics of a national vision that the

White Right fantasizes about and one that affectively fuels Trump's project to "make America great again."

<center>CONCLUSION</center>

In a recent interview with Teri Gross (2017) about his new book, *(((Semitism))): Being Jewish in America in the Age of Trump*, Jonathan Weisman highlights the difficulty of how to address and counter the rise of the alt-right for progressives. Should our resistance shed a critical light on the ideas and tactics of the alt-right or is it better just to ignore them because what they desperately want more than anything is the public's attention? Obviously, in this essay, I have chosen the former. I have done so—especially in the context of writing an article for the *Journal of Hate Studies*—because too often our public discourse about white racism in 2018 still conceptualizes racial inequalities as an individual act perpetrated by those who 'have hate in their hearts.' Such an understanding of racism is problematic for at least two reasons: it allows white people not to recognize Bebout and Ladenburg's (2017) point that white supremacy is "a fundamental aspect of our country's social and political fabric" and to imagine themselves as not being complicit in reproducing racism in American institutional and cultural life (para. 2).

Additionally, others' attempts to explain the rise of the alt-right have too often explained their ideas and logics as if they originated in the obscure, isolated sites of the online right or within the wave of white nationalism that has overtaken Europe (Nagle, 2017; Neiwert, 2017). What these analyses of the alt-right fail to recognize is how the ideas and performances of unapologetic white male omnipotence and the impulse to create homosocial spaces for white men to nurture this performance of white masculinity have been circulating all across American popular culture over the past decade and are not specific to the subcultural spaces of the radical right. Consider Hugh Laurie's performance as the irascible, un-politically correct, yet medically omnipotent Gregory House in *House M.D.* (Shore & Singer, 2004); or, Will Ferrell's Ricky Bobby in the film, *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby* (Apatow & McKay, 2006); or Ryan Gosling's phallic lothario, Jacob, guiding Steve Carell's "cuckold" Cal back to respectable manhood in *Crazy. Stupid. Love* (Carrell, DiNovi, Ficarra, & Requa, 2011). Each shares in common an affinity or longing for omnipotent performances of white masculinity and an unapologetic taste for the fraternal bonds of white manhood as an imagined solution to contemporary social conditions in the United States they perceive as compromising their ability to be properly respected manly men.

I have also tried to show how both the Alt Right and Trump advance

their politics of racial and gendered resentment by cultivating public spaces into homosocial spaces (implicitly modeled on the masculinizing relations of sport) where omnipotent performances of white masculinity and the fraternal bonds between strong, tough manly men reign supreme. Finally, I have focused on the ways that cultural representations of sports star, Tom Brady, are another site in the center of American media culture where American audiences are offered a performance of white masculinity whose appeal not only lies, at least in part, in his manly omnipotence and his refusal to apologize for his position of privilege. This white male ontology is a centripetal cultural force that draws anxious, disillusioned white men to the ideas of the Alt Right and to Trump's white nationalist postracialism (Maskovsky, 2017). This force becomes apparent when one acknowledges Trump's use of sport to advance his racial politics, including his lionization of Brady as a 'total winner' and his deep desire to connect himself to Brady, and how these connections were also made by Alt Right leader, Richard Spencer, when he saw Brady as an 'Aryan Avatar' as he led the Patriots to a dramatic comeback victory in Super Bowl LI.

So, while the agents of white hegemony want to explain the extremist ideas of the Alt Right as being unique to, and isolated within, the spaces of the online right, if our goal is to challenge the appeal of these ideologies—especially the models of white masculinity they offer anxious white men—we must recognize the extent to which they proliferate throughout American media culture over the past decade (at least) and how they have primed white men to perceive the ideas and practices of the Alt Right and Trump's efforts to revitalize white male prerogative in American civic life as reasonable. Recognizing the cultural appeal—and threat—of this performance of unapologetic, omnipotent white masculinity for anxious white men is crucial not only to formulate effective strategies and tactics to resist the Trump presidency or the normalization of the white nationalism of the Alt Right, but to at least partially explain the actions of a Dylan Roof, James Alex Fields, Michael Dunn, George Zimmerman, or Sean Urbanski whose senses of entitlement to feel omnipotent as white men was so strong it led them to take the life of (an)other in an attempt to bring it to life.

References

Alexander, M. (2010). The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness. New York: The New Press.

Anderson, C. (2016). White rage: The unspoken truth of our racial divide. New York: Bloomsbury.

Anglin, A. (2017, August 9). PSA: When the Alt-Right hits the street, you wanna

be ready. Daily Stormer. Retrieved from: https://whitelocust.wordpress.com/ 2017/08/09/psa-when-the-alt-right-hits-the-street-you-wanna-be-ready/

Apatow, J. (Producer), & McKay, A. (Director). (2006). Talldega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby [motion picture]. United States: Columbia Pictures Company.

Bebout, L., & Ladenburg, K. (2017, October 13). Nobody's a Nazi, or denying everyday White supremacy and the dangerous lessons of Charlottesville. Activist History Review. Retrieved from: https://activisthistory.com/2017/10/ 13/nobodys-a-nazi-or-denying-everyday-white-supremacy-and-the-dangerous-lesson-of-charlottesville/

Berlet, C., & Lyons, M. (2000). Right-wing populism in America: Too close for comfort. New York: The Guilford Press.

Brady, T. (2017). The TB12 method: How to achieve a lifetime of sustained peak performance. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Carrell, S. (Producer), DiNovi, D. (Producer), Ficarra, G. (Director), & Requa, J. (Director). (2011). Crazy. Stupid. Love. [motion picture]. United States: Carousel Productions.

Carroll, H. (2011). Affirmative reaction: New formations of White masculinity. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Chabba, S. (2017, Feb. 17). Richard Spencer turns Patriots Super Bowl win into racist agenda: Tom Brady's team won for the 'White race,' Alt-Right leader says on Twitter. International Business Times. Retrieved from: http://www .ibtimes.com/richard-spencer-turns-patriots-super-bowl-win-racist-agenda-tom-bradys-team-won-white-2486864

Corasaniti, N. (2016, June 10). Donald Trump wants sports stars, not politicians, on convention stage. The New York Times, Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes .com/2016/06/11/us/politics/donald-trump-republican-convention-sports-celeb rities.html

Diamond, J. (2018, February 9). Trump on Rob Porter: 'We wish him well . . . He did a good job.' CNN. Retrieved from: https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/09/ politics/trump-rob-porter/index.html

Disser, N. (2016, July 28). Gavin McInnes and his 'proud boys' want to make men great again. Bedford and Brewery. Retrieved from: http://bedfordandbowery .com/2016/07/gavin-mcinnes-and-his-proud-boys-want-to-make-white-men-great-again/

Dyer, R. (1997). White: Essays on race and culture. New York: Routledge.

Emilani, N. (Producer). & Chopra, G. (Director). (2018). Tom vs. Time. [documentary]. United States: Dirty Robber & Religion of Sports.

Feagin, J., & Ducey, K. (2017). Elite White men ruling: Who, what, where, when, and how. New York: Routledge.

Ferber, A. (1998). White man falling: Race, gender, and White supremacy. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Fox News. (2016, August 30). Trump calls Kaepernick's refusal to stand for national anthem 'terrible.' Retrieved from: http://www.foxnews.com/politics/

2016/08/30/trump-calls-kaepernicks-refusal-to-stand-for-national-anthem-terri ble.html

Giroux, H. (2015, July 8). Trumping America. Truthout. Retrieved from: http:// www.truth-out.org/news/item/31788-trumping-america

Harkinson, J. (2016, October 27). Meet the White nationalist trying to ride the Trump train to lasting power. Mother Jones. Retrieved from: http://www.moth erjones.com/politics/2016/10/richard-spencer-trump-alt-right-white-national ist/

Harris-Perry, M. (2010). Is this the birth of a nation?: Tea party actions are an act of sedition not just racism. Retrieved from: https://www.thenation.com/article/ birth-nation/

Hochschild, A. R. (2017). Strangers in their own land: Anger and mourning on the American Right. New York: The New Press.

Holling, M. (2011). Patrolling national identity, masking white supremacy: The minutemen project. In K.A. Ono and M.G. Lacy's (Ed). Critical rhetorics of race (pp. 98-116). New York: New York University Press.

Hughey, M., & Parks, G. (2014). The wrongs of the Right: Language, race, and the Republican party in the age of Obama. New York: New York University Press.

Jones, S. (2017, February 15). Trump has turned the GOP into the party of eugenics. The New Republic. Retrieved from: https://newrepublic.com/article/ 140641/trump-turned-gop-party-eugenics

Kantrowitz, S. (2000). Ben Tillman and the reconstruction of White supremacy. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

Kaplan, M.G. (Producer), & Shore, D. (Showrunner).(2004). House, M.D. [Television series]. Hollywood, CA: Fox Broadcasting Company.

Kasson, J. (2001). Houdini, Tarzan, and the perfect man: The White male body and the challenge of modernity in America. New York: Hill & Wang.

King, C.R., & Leonard, D. (2014). Beyond hate: White power and popular culture. New York: Routledge.

Kirby, J. (2018, January 12). "What he said was basically a form of eugenics:" A professor on Trump's "shithole countries" remarks. Vox. Retrieved from: https://www.vox.com/2018/1/12/16882498/trump-shithole-countries-immigra tion-quotas-eugenics

Kusz, K. W. (2016a, June 23). Trump's dog whistle: The white, screwed-over sports icon. The Conversation. Retrieved from: https://theconversation.com/ trumps-dog-whistle-the-white-screwed-over-sports-icon-61070

Kusz, K. W. (2016b, Sept. 15). Notes on Donald Trump's America and Tom Brady as dog-whistle. Sport in American History. Retrieved from: https://ussporthis tory.com/2016/09/15/notes-on-donald-trumps-america-tom-brady-as-dog-whis tle/

Kusz, K. W. (2017). Trumpism, Tom Brady, and the reassertion of white supremacy in militarized post-9/11 America. In M. Butterworth's (Ed.). Global Sport & Militarism (pp. 229-244). New York: Routledge.

Leonard, D. (2016, September 2). The NFL is 67% black. Diversity hasn't helped white players and coaches understand racism. Vox. Retrieved from: https://www.vox.com/2016/9/2/12751694/colin-kaepernick-nfl-protest-racism-national-anthem

Leonard, D. (2017). Playing white white: Privilege and power on and off the field. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Lyons, M. (2017). Ctrl-Alt-Delete: The origins and ideology of the Alternative Right. Political Research Associates. Retrieved from: http://www.politicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Lyons_CtrlAltDelete_PRINT.pdf

MacFarlane, S. Clark, J., Jacobs, J. & Stuber, S. (2015). Ted 2. [motion picture]. United States: Universal Pictures.

Marantz, A. (2017, February 6). Trump supporters at the DeploraBall. The New Yorker. Retrieved from: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/02/06/trumpsupporters-at-the-deploraball

Maskovsky, J. (2017). Toward the anthropology of white nationalist postracialism: Comments inspired by Hall, Goldstein, and Ingram's "The hands of Donald Trump." HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory, 7(1), 433-440.

Myerson, (2017). Trumpism: Its coming from the suburbs. The Nation. Retrieved from: https://www.thenation.com/article/trumpism-its-coming-from-the-suburbs/

Ellin, D. (Writer), & Mylod, M. (Director). (2009). Fore [Television series episode]. In Entourage. Hollywood, CA: Home Box Office.

Nagle, A. (2017). Kill all normies: Online culture wars from 4Chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt Right. Alresford, UK: Zero Books.

Neiwert, P. (2017). Alt America: The rise of the radical Right in the age of Trump. New York: Verso.

Oates, T. (2017). Football and manliness: An unauthorized feminist account of the NFL. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Oates, T., & Kusz, K. (forthcoming). My whole life is about winning: The Trump brand and the political/commercial uses of sport. In D. Grano & M. Butterworth's (Eds.). Sport, Rhetoric, and Political Struggle. New York: Peter Lang.

Osnos, E. (2017, February 6). Trump supporters at the DeploraBall. The New Yorker. Retrieved from: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/02/06/trumpsupporters-at-the-deploraball

Pallotta, F. (2017, May 21). Billy Bush talks Trump 'Access Hollywood' tape: 'I wish I had changed the topic.' CNN Media. Retrieved from: http://money.cnn.com/2017/05/21/media/billy-bush-trump-tape-interview/index.html

Posner, S. (2016, October 18). Meet the Alt-Right 'spokesman' who's thrilled with Trump's rise. Rolling Stone. Retrieved from http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/meet-the-alt-right-spokesman-thrilled-by-trumps-rise-w443902.

Reifenstahl, L. (Producer & Director). (1935). Triumph of the will. [Motion Picture]. Germany: Leni Reifensthal-Produktion.

Savran, D. (1998). Taking it like a man: White masculinity, masochism, and contemporary American culture. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Spencer, R. (2015a). White Devils. Radix Journal. Retrieved from: https://www .radixjournal.com/2015/04/2014-3-21-white-devils/

Spencer, R. (2015b). Where Have All the White Devils Gone? Radix Journal. Retrieved from: https://www.radixjournal.com/2015/04/2014-3-20-where-have-all-the-white-devils-gone/

Stern, M. (2016, October 8). Inside Tom Brady and Donald Trump's 14-year bromance. The Daily Beast. Retrieved from: https://www.thedailybeast.com/inside-tom-brady-and-donald-trumps-14-year-bromance

Swain, C. (2003). The new White nationalism in America: Its challenge to integration. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Watkins, E. (2017, March 21). Trump credits his Twitter wrath for Kaepernick's unemployment. CNN Politics. http://www.cnn.com/2017/03/20/politics/donald-trump-colin-kaepernick/index.html

Waxman, S. (2016, October 7). How 'Access Hollywood' found the Trump tape – and why NBC News Probably Leaked It (Exclusive). The Wrap. Retrieved from: https://www.thewrap.com/how-access-hollywood-found-the-trump-tape-and-why-nbc-news-probably-leaked-it-exclusive/

Weisman, J. (2017). (((Semitism))): Being Jewish in America in the age of Trump. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Wiedeman, R. (2017, April 14). The Duke lacrosse scandal and the birth of the Alt-Right. New York Magazine. Retrieved from: http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/04/the-duke-lacrosse-scandal-and-the-birth-of-the-alt-right.html

Williams, J. (2017). White working class: Overcoming cluelessness in America. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Alternative Facts and Fake News: Digital Mediation and The Affective Spread of Hate in the Era of Trump

Kayla Keener
George Mason University

Abstract

The role of negative affects such as fear and hate, their manifestation in atmospheres, manipulability, and mobilization as a response to threat perception play a pivotal role in the current political conjuncture. This essay traces the dissemination of fake news and the role of affective labor in its digital spread through the example of the recent Pizzagate phenomenon. This particular viral story and its real world fallout speak to the turn to a 'post-truth' politics, which has been embraced by President Trump and his surrogates, through the appropriation of the term 'fake news' and rhetoric of 'alternative facts', to describe all forms of dissent and justification for executive actions, respectively. By examining the circulation and coalescence of negative affects such as fear and hate, and their utility in a moment of political uncertainty defined by divisive populist rhetoric, it becomes clear that a reorientation to affective engagements with digital media and facticity is necessary and pressingly urgent.

Keywords: affect, fake news, populism, digital media, post-truth politics

Introduction

Within the current political conjuncture, the manipulation and mobilization of negative affects as a response to threat perception have become a key tool in the promulgation of hate and fear-based policy, legislation, and democratically damaging rhetoric. Hate has become a uniquely mobilized affect and gathering point for public sentiment in the era of Trump, signaling a dangerous turn toward a politics predicated on distrust and demonization of all imagined outsiders and 'others.' This essay explores the significance of hate in the 2016 U.S. election cycle and its fallout by tracing the dissemination of fake news and the role of affective labor in its digital spread through the example of the recent Pizzagate phenomenon, which was largely perpetuated by hatred for an imagined 'other', embodied by Hillary Clinton among other actors. This particular viral story and its real world fallout speak to the turn to a 'post-truth' politics, which has been

embraced by President Trump and his surrogates, through the appropriation of the term 'fake news' and rhetoric of 'alternative facts', to describe all forms of dissent and justification for executive actions and political policy, respectively. Affect is an apt mode of analysis for the viral spread of fake news as it extends beyond emotion to include the precognitive and unconscious ways that individuals and collectives engage with biases and feelings, particularly here in regards to facticity. By examining the circulation and coalescence of affective atmospheres among Trump supporters and the broader alt-right, and their utility in a moment of political uncertainty defined by divisive populist rhetoric, it becomes clear that a reorientation to more positively productive affective engagements with digital media and facticity are necessary and pressingly urgent.

There has been a growing attention to, and influence of, fake news, understood here as "hoax-based stories that perpetuate hearsay, rumors, and misinformation" (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017, p. 4), and its role in perpetuating and modulating affective responses to news and politics, if not also swaying minds and votes. While it is outside the purview of this essay to discern the origins of fake news in the U.S., or the motivations of its creators, I will examine at least some of the conditions that have allowed for its quick ascendancy as a political tool and lightning rod during the 2016 U.S. election and into the Trump presidency. This essay likewise thinks through not only the political and democratic hazards of a post-truth rhetoric promulgated by fake news, but ends by examining potential means to reorient affect and foster a reinvigorated relationship with media, news, and truth.

The Turn to Post-Truth Politics

While the popularized dissemination of fake news stands out for its brazen assault against the democratic ideal of an informed public and its representativeness of the turn to a post-truth political moment, it is, in many ways, only the most recent and virulent iteration of rumors and disguised agendas being used for affective manipulation and political gain. During World War II, the Office of Strategic Services Planning Group (OSSPG), which was run through the CIA, understood rumor formation to be a central technique of their 'morale operations' branch: "Rumors were designed by the OSSPG to act affectively: to spread confusion and distrust, stimulate feelings of resentment and generate panic" (Anderson, 2014, p. 47). During the same time period, psychologist Gordon Allport – among many others – worked to "control and counter anti-Semitic accusations" through a "rumor clinic" established in the Boston Traveler as they saw prejudice to be a flaw

in the American national character and "a fundamental source of war and a threat to democracy" (Herman, 1996, p. 57).

More contemporarily, cloaked websites have become a key tool of cyber-racists to spread racist propaganda. Jessie Daniels defines cloaked websites as those that are "published by individuals or groups that conceal authorship or feign legitimacy in order to deliberately disguise a hidden political agenda" (Daniels, 2009, p. 661). While "similar to previous versions of print and electronic media propaganda" (Daniels, 2009, p. 661), these particular websites tend to use civil rights rhetoric to popularize "stigmatized knowledge" such as Holocaust revisionism, conspiracy theories and anti-Semitism (Daniels, 2009, p. 673). Noting that "One of the key features of the mainstream right-wing's political success in the USA has been to challenge 'fact-based reality'" (Daniels, 2009, p. 675), Daniels sees the work of cyber-racists as "call[ing] into question what constitutes the 'truth' that we say we know about 'race', racism and racial inequality. . . [and] calls into question how we make and evaluate knowledge claims, as well as our vision for social justice in this new digital terrain" (2009, p. 674). While these represent only a few examples of the ways that rumors and disguised intentions have been used to manipulate public sentiment and make appeals to 'alternative facts', they speak to the historical conditions that have allowed for fake news to rise and function as a powerful political tool in the reconceptualization of truth and knowledge.

As a practiced user of social media, Donald Trump has worked diligently throughout his campaign and into his presidency to harness the political potential of fake news and claims to alternative facts and knowledge. Early in his presidency, Trump "referred to the media as the 'opposition party' to his administration, and he has blamed news organizations for stymieing his agenda" (Grynbaum, 2017, para. 5). He has fostered within his base distrust, if not outright hatred, for mainstream media outlets in an attempt to discredit their work, and any dissent that they may voice, or find evidence of within the general populace or ranks of government. Just a few weeks into his presidency Trump gave his first official press conference – a true media spectacle – in which he remarked to the journalists present that, "The public doesn't believe you people anymore. . . Now, maybe I had something to do with that. I don't know. But they don't believe you" (Grynbaum, 2017, para. 17). Trump's glib statement is indicative of not only his contentious relationship with mainstream media and facts, but also his own role in upending the public's understanding of what constitutes news and what is 'fake'. Just after hitting his first 100 day mark in office, Newsweek (2017) ran an analysis of Trump's tweets which found that the term "fake news" appeared 30 times between January 20th and April 28th – more than any other phrase (Lanktree, 2017). Trump near exclusively uses

this phrase to refer to either the mainstream media, or various news stories that do not reflect his narrative, or which show his administration to be in conflict or trouble. Tweets such as: "Totally make up facts by sleazebag political operatives, both Democrats and Republicans – FAKE NEWS! Russia says nothing exists. Probably. . ."; "Congratulations to @FoxNews for being number one in inauguration ratings. They were many times higher than FAKE NEWS @CNN – public is smart!"; and, "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!" ("Trump Twitter Archive," n.d.) are typical of Trump, and demonstrate the ways that he continuously seeks to undermine mainstream media, while exploiting divisive populist rhetoric, and reorienting the logic of fake news to his own ends. For Trump, what makes fake news 'fake' is not its lack of a fact-based narrative, but *its inability to fall in line with his personal narrative of truth.*

This reorientation to facticity and truth within the usage of fake news is not limited to Trump, however. As Douglas Kellner (2016) notes, "Trump's authoritarian populist supporters are driven by rage: they are really angry at the political establishment and system, the media, and economic and other elites. . . Trump provokes his followers [sic] rage with classic authoritarian propaganda techniques like the Big Lie, which he falsely repeats over and over" (p. 24). Trump has successfully harnessed the preexisting 'rage' of a particular subset of Americans with his electoral victory and the unwavering support of his base. Through the example of Trump and his surrogates, it is clear that the spread of fake news, and its logic and rhetoric, is accomplished not only "from below" (Anderson, 2010, p. 164) through the modulation of collective affects and online affective labor of conspiracy theorists, but, unfortunately, through the top echelons of (the U.S.) government as well. Numerous references by former White House press secretary Sean Spicer to a non-existent terror attack in Atlanta and from KellyAnne Conway of a fictional "Bowling Green Massacre" were used in defense of the president's xenophobic travel ban (Dalrymple, 2017).

These instances of falsified terror events, combined with Conway's defense of alternative facts and negation of the many falsities spread by the administration, such as when she unabashedly asked a CNN anchor, "Are [falsities] more important than the many things that he says that are true that are making a difference in people's lives?" (Watkins, 2017, para. 4), reify the notion that truth is a malleable affectively *felt* fact that is meant to reflect the worldview of the consumer/citizen, and anything that does not is, indeed, fake news. The dismissal of mainstream narratives and defense of actual fake news affirm the felt realities and affective common sense of these possibilities for certain rage-driven populations. As will be seen with

Pizzagate, it doesn't matter if the underground trafficking ring ever existed, and it doesn't matter if the terror events used to justify the implementation of a xenophobic travel ban ever actually occurred – what matters is that they could have happened, that their possible certainty affirms the worldview of Trump supporters and purveyors of fake news, and, specifically, that it *feels* right.

<p style="text-align:center">T<small>RACING</small> P<small>IZZAGATE</small></p>

"This was our worst fear. . . that someone would read all this and come to the block with a gun. And today it happened" (James Alefantis, owner of Comet Ping Pong, quoted in Siddiqui & Svrluga, 2016).

To some people, Edgar Maddison Welch was a nice guy, someone who was trying to recover from an Internet addiction. In the past, Welch told friends about various conspiracy theories he had become obsessed with, particularly surrounding the September 11th, 2001 attacks, and would spend hours reading articles, watching videos, and collecting evidence of government collusion. On Sunday, December 4th 2016, Welch, after driving from North Carolina to Washington, D.C., entered Comet Ping Pong (a pizza restaurant in a wealthy D.C. neighborhood) armed with an AR-15 assault style rifle, a Colt .38 handgun and a shotgun. He intended to rescue the kidnapped and abused children he believed were hidden in a secret labyrinth of tunnels beneath, and between, the pizza shop and neighboring businesses. Welch's actions were the cumulative result of the affective fervor and viral digital spread of the fake news story colloquially known as "Pizzagate."

Pizzagate demonstrates the powerful mobilization of negative effects from atmospheres to action through the deployment and circulation of fake news and conspiracy theories in both the virtual and real worlds. It is representative of a post-truth political moment where facts have been unseated by belief, felt reality, and the rise of 'stigmatized knowledges'. By drawing out this example, I hope to make clear its connection to affective formations that play on populist rhetoric, fears, and demands as a way to legitimate alternative narratives, as well as dangerous action and political policy.

Immediately following the release of the now infamous Access Hollywood tapes featuring then presidential candidate Donald Trump making lewd comments toward women, WikiLeaks released then Chairman of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign John Podesta's emails on October 7th, 2016 (Sharockman, 2016). It was not until October 30th, 2016, two days after then FBI Director James Comey told Congress that he was reopening the investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server, that someone tweeting under the handle @DavidGoldbergNY cited

rumors that the new emails "point to a pedophilia ring and @HillaryClinton is at the center" (Fisher, et al., 2016, para. 8). This rumor was retweeted more than 6,000 times (Fisher, et al., 2016). As users of 4chan and Reddit parsed through more than 2,000 of Podesta's emails (Sharockman, 2016), this particular accusation against Clinton soon merged with other patterns and rumors stemming from the WikiLeaks dump (Fisher, et al., 2016). Some of these anonymously posting users noticed that numerous emails about Podesta's social gatherings mentioned pizza (Breiner, 2016). Naturally, these users "decided that 'pizza' was a complex code for pedophilia" (Breiner, 2016, para. 7) and quickly connected this to emails showing that Podesta occasionally dined at Comet Ping Pong (Fisher, et al., 2016). Pizzagate was born.

The hashtag #pizzagate first appeared on Twitter on November 7th, 2016, and would be tweeted and retweeted between hundreds and thousands of times each day over the next several weeks (Fisher, et al., 2016). A Reddit subforum (/r/Pizzagate) was also created (Breiner, 2016) and quickly garnered more than 20,000 subscribers (Kang, 2016). The theory that Comet Ping Pong was a hub for a ring of child sex-traffickers, led by Hillary Clinton and John Podesta – among other influential Washington figures – began circulating through Reddit, Twitter, Facebook, fake news sites, and vitriol-spewing punditry pages such as the Internet sensation Alex Jones's Infowars (Fisher, et al., 2016). Even former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn shared stories about Clinton's alleged links to pedophilia (Siddiqui & Svrluga, 2016). At the height of hysteria, threats to the restaurant came in online and over the phone, with as many as 150 calls per day (Fisher, et al., 2016) and five #pizzagate Twitter posts per minute (Kang, 2016). Likewise, employees, patrons, performers and business neighbors of Comet Ping Pong received similar threats, accusations of involvement in the alleged sex trafficking ring, and were subject to their (and their children's) personal information being posted online (Breiner, 2016).

This frenzy was further propelled by the questionable search for evidence of an alleged pedophilia ring, which quickly expanded beyond email archives and various forms of harassment. Diligent internet sleuths connected the imagery of stars and moons found in the entryway signage of Comet Ping Pong with generic images associated with Satanism that (incredibly) also depict stars and moons. Wall art within the restaurant and album cover art belonging to bands that have performed at Comet Ping Pong over the years were also caught up in this elaborate decoding process, as well as performance artist Marina Abramoviæ and her 1996 performance piece *Spirit Cooking*, which was briefly referenced in an email to John Podesta's brother, Tony, a progressive D.C. lobbyist (Gotthardt, 2016). Bold sleuths also traveled to the restaurant to collect their own evidence.

On November 16th, 2016 Jack Posobiec, a former Navy Reserve intelligence officer (Fisher, et al., 2016) popularly known for spreading conspiracy theories and pro-Trump tweets, visited Comet Ping Pong and attempted to gather evidence of wrongdoing and stream it all live on his Periscope feed. Posobiec found only a child's birthday party being hosted in the back room, which he was quickly ushered out of, as "It did not seem appropriate for a child's party to be broadcast on a stranger's Periscope feed" (Fisher, et al., 2016, para. 53). The lack of concrete evidence, and his being asked to leave the premises, only further fueled the conspiracy flames. Likewise, as "mainstream media outlets worked to debunk the growing conspiracy theories, their reporting only legitimized the existence of the story and emboldened those perpetuating" the falsities (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017, p. 4).

Finally, the affective tension and fervor built online and through unsuccessful attempts to gather evidence in person, coalesced in the form of Edgar Welch's seemingly ultimate and final act of charging on to the premises, determined to save the children. Welch entered the pizzeria and fired at least one warning shot to ward off interfering employees before he shot the lock off a door and attempted to find the helpless children, while employees fled the building (Breiner, 2016; Siddiqui & Svrluga, 2016). Welch's story ends anticlimactically, as he surrendered himself to police after "he realized there was nothing to find" (Breiner, 2016, para. 16). Several months after being taken into custody, Welch pleaded guilty to the interstate transportation of ammunition and a firearm, a federal charge, in addition to a D.C. charge of assault with a dangerous weapon (Shelbourne, 2017). On June 22nd, 2017 he was sentenced to four years in prison (Hsu, 2017).

Instances such as Pizzagate, along with falsified terror attacks in Atlanta and Bowling Green are made possible through the legitimation of fake news, alternative facts, and other forms of 'reality news' and the concomitant delegitimization of empirically-based, fact-driven news. They are likewise driven by a mobilization of affects through populist rhetoric and calls to retake the nation from an imagined 'other'.

The Proliferation of Fake News

The political moment that produced Pizzagate is defined not only by a turn to post-truth politics and the deft manipulation of collective affects, but the concomitant rise of an infoglut (Andrejevic, 2013) paired with a tendency toward confirmation bias (Strong, 2017). These factors work together to modulate not only one's access to the surplus of information and knowledge available digitally, but affective responses to, and engagements with, such ideological reinforcing rhetorics. This is clearly demonstrated with Pizzagate as attempts from the mainstream media to debunk the story –

which increased significantly following Welch's actions – went unheeded, or even further fueled the conspiracy theorists' efforts. The preexisting bias of Trump supporters and those of the alt-right against mainstream media outlets compounded the legitimacy of Pizzagate through their attempts at fact checking and debunkery, which affirmed the productive value of participants' affective labor in spreading fear and hatred through such "alternative" narratives. The rise of infotainment outlets and the multiplication of available 'news' sources online, in print, and via cable news has produced an infoglut and facilitated a "reconceptualization of news as a customizable commodity subject to the vagaries of taste that govern other forms of consumption" (Andrejevic, 2013, p. 49). This multiplication of sources has led to the (self-guided) creation of filter bubbles, which allow citizens to filter the information they consume and share as it reflects their worldview and reifies the felt reality of the affective facts to which one adheres (Pariser, 2012). This customizability of news, reinforcement of felt realities, and the 'facts' that one chooses to adhere to is affirmed not only by the sheer existence of ideologically-inflected news sources, but the rise in a self-aware rhetoric that upholds this logic. In an interview with BuzzFeed News, "New Right" and "American nationalist" blogger and men's rights activist Mike Cernovich stated in regards to the recent rise in "reality news":

> We've really created parallel institutions. . . Trump supporters didn't think they were being treated fairly or accurately by the media. So many of us weren't sure we could trust the basic facts of what's being reported in the news. And so we created the answer, which is something I call 'reality news.' (Warzel, 2017)

Within this logic, it is not evidence or journalistic standards that is important, but its resonance with the audience; and if the facts do not *feel* right, then alternative media outlets have a duty to create narratives that do. 'Reality news' has become a prominent representation of alt-right Trump supporters' relationship with 'alternative facts' and narratives. Heralded not only by Cernovich but Alex Jones's Infowars and Steve Bannon's former employer Breitbart News, this brand of 'news' traffics not only in conspiracy theories like Pizzagate, but pro-Trump propaganda as well. Ostensibly as a response to the proliferation of 'fake news' surrounding his presidency, Trump launched a 'real news' program on his official Facebook page in late July 2017. Its first videos featured his daughter-in-law, Lara Trump, and former pro-Trump CNN pundit Kayleigh McEnany who both highlighted Trump's perceived 'successes' while in office and downplayed any negative mainstream media attention or guffaws (Koerner, 2017; Blake, 2017). The operative logic of 'reality news' delegitimizes the dominant narrative(s) of mainstream media while creating a false equivalence between

available 'news' options. In simply creating alternative facts that their audience *feels* to be true, branding this work as parallel institutions of 'news,' and promoting alternative narratives, affectively based 'facts' and information that promote hatred, fear and paranoia are given ample space to grow and spread while confusing what exactly *is* a fact or news. This logic regarding far-right Trump supporters' changing and fractured relationship with mainstream media outlets makes clear that instances such as Pizzagate represent a targeting of negative affects vis-à-vis populist rhetorics and a dependency on alternative narratives that affirm biases.

The Mobilization of Affect

In his analysis of the Pizzagate phenomenon, Andrew Breiner (2016) noted, "Conspiracy theories like these seem immune to debunking, and if someone really believes there's satanic darkness at the heart of this lie, perhaps there's no measure too extreme for them to take in response" (para. 15). This logic observed by Breiner reflects Brian Massumi's (2010) articulation of an affective fact, wherein an unactualized threat "will have been real because it was *felt* to be real" (p. 53). In the example of Pizzagate, the affective fact manifests in the unfalsifiable felt reality of the sex trafficking ring, which is immune to any fact checking – or armed charging of the premises on a rescue mission – that ultimately demonstrate otherwise. The affective fact of the underground conspiracy operates as a form of common sense, which, at the level of affect, "feels coherent" and "becomes intuitive" (Anderson, 2015, p. 5), while being mobilized as and through an organization of collective affects that, taken together, further promulgates the hysteria and debunked theory. Along these lines, "In the era of the affective fact, power relies not on the attempt to control and monopolize the realm of empirical facts, but upon channeling this tautological logic: monitoring and modulating the ambient feeling tone that endows non-facts with their 'truthiness'" (Andrejevic, 2013, p. 47). It is not necessary to control the dominant narrative, or the empirical facts of the matter, so long as one can modulate affect and present "alternative facts" as viable (felt) potentials that adequately reflect preexisting worldviews.

Threat and its affective response necessarily operate within a futurity of facticity that projects a sense of anxiety onto the present and provides justification for present and future actions in defense of the (seemingly certain) future possibility. In other words, whether Welch found any kidnapped children at Comet Ping Pong, or anyone ever proves the existence of this underground trafficking ring, does not matter; what is significant is that *it could have happened*, and within the operative logic of the affective fact, this certain potentiality is enough to justify not only the action taken in the

wake of the non-event, but the creation of the falsity in the first place, and its continued circulation. Fear, hate and paranoia work together here in an affective atmosphere of anxiety that coalesced around the Pizzagate story. For Welch, Posobiec, and the countless others who worked to spread Pizzagate rumors online, their preexisting prejudice against Hillary Clinton as the likely first female president, and the possible continued political domination by the 'Left', were given justification and release in the Pizzagate story, which reflected and reaffirmed their intuition that Clinton – and everything she represented – were in fact evil and directly opposed to their imagining of the nation and what it represents.

Empirical facts may have little sway in the face of such strongly felt affectively realities, particularly those based in a sense of danger, fear or anxiety. False beliefs, particularly those stemming from white ignorance or gendered and race-based fears of minorities supplanting their dominance, can be "invested with powerful emotions" to such an extent that individuals and collectives are inhibited from engaging with new or conflicting forms of knowledge (Ioanide, 2015, p. 2-3, 12). As such false beliefs, or structural ideologies, function as public and collective forms of 'common sense' that may seem intuitive to particular dominant populations, they become intrinsically personal as they are inflected with affective feelings such as hate or fear (Ioanide, 2015, p. 6). To the extent, then, that such beliefs become intimately tied to certain individuals' (in this case members of the alt-right or Trump supporters) identity, forms of knowledge that conflict with, or outright contradict, their prejudiced and fear-based beliefs are unacceptable as they not only feel wrong, but undermine one's *very sense of self*. Hate, and other negative affects, play an integral role in the construction of the nation, its unity and its inhabitants for those of the white nationalist alt-right, Trump supporters, and the purveyors of Pizzagate and other fear-based conspiracy theories. While Welch and the other individual investigators of Pizzagate may not have self-identified as white nationalists, the imagining of a nation premised on exclusion and which inherently values certain subjects over others was key to the spread of Pizzagate as a phenomenon and the particular urgency of their response to the threat posed by its (certain) possible (felt) reality. Within this discourse, the ordinary subject is produced "through the mobilization of hate" against "those whom they recognize as strangers, as the ones who are taking away the nation", which functions as a directly oppositional corollary to their "love for the nation" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 118). The recent upswing in far-right populism has embraced this logic, where the "fantasy" of an "ordinary white subject" is brought to life through hate, which "constitute[s] the ordinary as in crisis, and the ordinary person as the real victim. The ordinary becomes that which

is already under threat by imagined others" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 118). Likewise:

> the nation/national subject must defend itself against 'invasion' by others. Such a defensive narrative is not explicitly articulated, but rather . . . produces a differentiation between 'us' and 'them,' whereby 'they' are constituted as the cause or the justification of 'our' feeling of hate. (Ahmed, 2004, p. 123-124)

Hillary Clinton and her imagined co-conspirators in the child trafficking ring, in this instance, become stand-ins for the threat of all imagined others, justifying the hate that is engendered against them and reaffirming the "ordinary" citizens' status and alignment with the nation and their protection of what is 'right'.

The quick ascendancy and fallout of the Pizzagate phenomenon was made possible by the current political moment, which privileges felt realities and affirms hatred, and its coinciding actions, as a defense of the nation against the invasion of 'others'. Propelled by far-right populist rhetorics and the legitimation of alternative forms of 'news', it became thinkable that this conspiracy – and Clinton's involvement – *could* be possible. Yet, even after Clinton ultimately failed to win the presidency, and Republicans secured a majority rule both in Congress and gubernatorial races in the 2016 election, Pizzagate continued to be deployed in defense of the nation and the 'ordinary' citizenry. Shortly following Edgar Welch's March 2017 appearance in court in which he pleaded guilty to a series of charges relating to the incident at Comet Ping Pong, several dozen people gathered outside the White House to demand an investigation into the Pizzagate rumors (Miller, 2017). During the demonstration, "Several protestors said they were motivated to attend the event because of abuse they themselves had suffered or witnessed" (Miller, 2017, para. 19), and further noted that "People don't believe the victims" (Miller, 2017, para. 23). The affective response of fear and hatred operate not only as excesses of affect subject to a nonlinear logic of threat and threat potential, but demonstrate that the affective target is malleable, corresponding to the next potential crisis in the animation of the 'ordinary' subject which perpetuates their (imagined) victim status. The capacity for an affective fact to spread is as much dependent on threat potential and the activation and mediation of (the excess of) affects, as it is on the proliferation of 'news' sources and media outlets, which can never fully address or contain the totality of the story.

AFFECTIVE FUTURES

Much the way that hate can be described as an affective investment in

the 'other' in order to maintain the fantasy of the 'ordinary' citizen whose subjectivity is under attack (Ahmed, 2004), it may also be useful to think of hate as a form of political jouissance employed by Trump supporters and otherwise extremists of the alt-right (W. Mazzarella, personal communication, July 20, 2017). Thinking alongside hate as an investment in the self and one's hate-based community, and in the affective fact of the perceived threat potential, hate as a form of political jouissance is useful in elucidating how hate continues to circulate, despite its failures – as seen with the lack of 'success' in rescuing the children of Pizzagate.

Jouissance demands the existence of a political opponent as such in order to maintain the pleasurable experience derived from acting while remaining stuck – from fixating on what one imagines as standing in the way of their personal and group (political) fulfillment (W. Mazzarella, personal communication, July 20, 2017). Within the current political moment, this has manifested in alt-right extremists thriving on the outrage their affective investment in falsities such as Pizzagate brings to the mainstream media and those they imagine to be on the political Left; or, in their stubborn adoration of Trump's unapologetic trolling, as well as misogynistic, racist and xenophobic behavior both on and offline. To this end, encouraging comprehensive media literacies is not enough, nor is simply encouraging a rational approach to engagement with news. Rather, it is pertinent that alt-right extremists recognize the myriad ways their rage has been harnessed and mobilized by Trump and others for electoral and political gain through such ideological tools as fake news, 'alternative facts' and a multiplication of narratives. While Trump and his surrogates employ hate-based language to simply garner political support from the alt-right, it is those who are dangerously invested in this affective jouissance who end up in prison for brandishing weapons in restaurants or driving cars into crowds of people – *not* the political leaders who so cynically mobilize their ideological convictions. Disarming fake news may be less about debunking its 'alternatively' factual accounts, than unraveling its ideological utility and the work it does to foster an atmosphere of negative affective responses to perceived threat.

While negative affects such as hatred, fear and paranoia are modulated as forms of control, or means by which mistrust is fostered, they can also never be completely consumed or harnessed. Affect's potential may, in fact, lie in its failure to be delimited, its capacity to always escape full confinement or manipulation; and this is to say nothing of the potential of positive affects, or less antagonistic iterations of jouissance. The (collective) cultivation of, and reorientation toward, positive affects and their potential is a politically potent and necessary step at this current conjuncture, where negativity – in all its forms – reigns, and panic is a reflexive response within

political and media narratives. The need to disengage, deemphasize and dis-mantle fake news is only one of many areas in the political arena where such a reorientation toward positively productive forms of logic and inter-activity is necessary, but it is a good place to start. Such a project has the potential to not only reorient affect, but to erase the alternative modifier from fact as well.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, S. (2004). Affective economies. *Social Text*, *22*(2), 117-139.

Anderson, B. (2014). *Encountering affect: Capacities, apparatuses, conditions*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Anderson, B. (2010). Modulating the excess of affect: Morale in a state of 'Total War'. In G. J. Seigworth & M. Gregg (Eds.), *The affect theory reader (pp. 161-185)*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Anderson, B. (2015). Neoliberal affects. *Progress in Human Geography, 40*(6), 734-753. doi:10.1177/0309132515613167

Andrejevic, M. (2013). *Infoglut: How the digital era is changing the way we think about information*. New York: Routledge.

Blake, A. (2017, August 7). Trump TV's 'real news' sounds more like propaganda. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/08/07/trump-tvs-real-news-sounds-more-like-real-propaganda/?utm_term=.6696f97089ad

Breiner, A. (2016, December 10). Pizzagate, explained: Everything you want to know about the Comet Ping Pong pizzeria conspiracy theory but are too afraid to search for it on Reddit. *Salon*. Retrieved from http://www.salon.com/2016/12/10/pizzagate-explained-everything-you-want-to-know-about-the-comet-ping-pong-pizzeria-conspiracy-theory-but-are-too-afraid-to-search-for-on-reddit/

Dalrymple, J. (2017, February 9). Trump's spokesman keeps referring to a terrorist attack on Atlanta that didn't happen. *BuzzFeed News*. Retrieved from https://www.buzzfeed.com/jimdalrympleii/trumps-spokesman-keeps-referring-to-a-terrorist-attack-on-at?utm_term=.af5LzdxjJ#.joG0V4D92

Daniels, J (2009). Cloaked websites: Propaganda, cyber-racism and epistemology in the digital era. *New Media and Society*, *11*(5), 659-683.

Fisher, M., Cox, J. W., & Hermann, P. (2016, December 6). Pizzagate: From rumor, to hashtag, to gunfire in D.C. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/pizzagate-from-rumor-to-hashtag-to-gunfire-in-dc/2016/12/06/4c7def50-bbd4-11e6-94ac-3d324840106c_story.html?utm_term=.9c0033d1b312

Gotthardt, A. (2016, December 22). The story behind the Marina Abramoviæ performance that contributed to Pizzagate. *Artsy*. Retrieved from https://www

.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-the-story-marina-abramovic-performance-that-contributed-pizzagate

Grynbaum, M. M. (2017, February 17). Trump calls the news media the 'Enemy of the American People'. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/17/business/trump-calls-the-news-media-the-enemy-of-the-people.html

Herman, E. (1996). *The romance of American psychology: Political culture in the age of experts*. Berkeley, CA: UC Press.

Hsu, S. (2017, June 22). 'Pizzagate' gunman sentenced to four years in prison, as prosecutors urged judge to deter vigilante justice. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/pizzagate-gunman-sentenced-to-four-years-in-prison-as-prosecutors-urged-judge-to-deter-vigilante-justice/2017/06/22/a10db598-550b-11e7-ba90-f5875b7d1876_story.html?utm_term=.5a9d2e31dc08

Ioanide, P. (2015). *The emotional politics of racism: How feelings trump facts in an era of colorblindness*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Kang, C. (2016, November 21). Fake news onslaught targets pizzeria as nest of child-trafficking. *New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/technology/fact-check-this-pizzeria-is-not-a-child-trafficking-site.html

Kellner, D. (2016). *American nightmare: Donald Trump, media spectacle, and authoritarian populism*. Rotterdam: Sense.

Koerner, C. (2017, August 1). Trump has launched a 'real news' program on his Facebook, hosted by his daughter-in-law. *BuzzFeed News*. Retrieved from https://www.buzzfeed.com/claudiakoerner/trumps-daughter-in-law-hosting-real-news-videos-for-the?utm_term=.wed9x1XqQ#.by07Ym4ov

Kurtzleben, D. (2017, February 17). With 'fake news,' Trump moves from alternative facts to alternative language. *NPR*. Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/2017/02/17/515630467/with-fake-news-trump-moves-from-alternative-facts-to-alternative-language

Lanktree, G. (2017, April 28). Trump's first 100 days show a president obsessed with 'Fake News' - and Twitter. *Newsweek*. Retrieved from http://www.newsweek.com/twitter-trumps-first-100-days-show-president-obsessed-fake-news-591595

Massumi, B. (1995). The autonomy of affect. *Cultural Critique, 31*, 83-109. doi:10.2307/1354446

Massumi, B. (2010). The future birth of the affective fact: The political ontology of threat. In G. J. Seigworth & M. Gregg (Eds.), *The affect theory reader (pp. 52-70)*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Mihailidis, P., & Viotty, S. (2017). Spreadable spectacle in digital culture. *American Behavioral Scientist, 61*(4), 441-454. doi:10.1177/0002764217701217

Miller, M. E. (2017, March 25). Protestors outside White House demand 'Pizzagate' Investigation. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www

.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2017/03/25/protesters-outside-white-house-demand-pizzagate-investigation/?utm_term=.161ce7675703

Pariser, E. (2012). *The filter bubble: How the new personalized web is changing what we read and how we think*. London: Penguin Books.

Sharockman, A. (2016, December 18). True: WikiLeaks dumped Podesta emails hour after Trump video. Retrieved from http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2016/dec/18/john-podesta/its-true-wikileaks-dumped-podesta-emails-hour-afte/

Shelbourne, M. (2017, March 25). Comet Ping Pong shooter pleads guilty. *The Hill*. Retrieved from http://thehill.com/homenews/325788-comet-ping-pong-shooter-pleads-guilty

Siddiqui, F., & Svrluga, S. (2016, December 5). N.C. Man told police he went to D.C. pizzeria with gun to investigate conspiracy theory. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2016/12/04/d-c-police-respond-to-report-of-a-man-with-a-gun-at-comet-ping-pong-restaurant/?utm_term=.9eda06365035

Strong, S. (2017). Alternative facts and the post-truth society: Meeting the challenge. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review Online,165* (1), Article 14.

Trump Twitter Archive. (n.d.). Retrieved May 14, 2017, from http://www.trumptwitterarchive.com/

Warzel, C. (2017, January 24). The Right is building a new media 'upside down' to tell Trump's story. *CNBC*. Retrieved from https://www.cnbc.com/2017/01/24/the-right-is-building-a-new-media-upside-down-to-tell-trumps-story.html

Watkins, E. (2017, February 07). Conway: Do falsehoods matter as much as what we get right? *CNN*. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/07/politics/kellyanne-conway-donald-trump-falsehoods/

Following the 2016 Presidential Election: Positive and Negative Mood Affect and the Impetus Towards Activism

Kem Gambrell
Gonzaga University
Amy Martin
University of San Francisco
Kimberly R. Mungaray
Millikin University

ABSTRACT

Given the tenuousness of the U.S. presidential race and subsequent election, it appears that more individuals are becoming politically active. What remains unclear is how the current political climate has influenced citizens regarding their perceptions of feeling psychologically safe, the related mood affect, and their impetus towards activism. Additionally, the role of social media in today's world is seemingly a key stimulus for individuals who were typically less involved in the past become more so now. Given there may be a number of reasons that individuals feel moved to engage in discourse and action that others might view as unconventional or rebellious, the intent of this study was to investigate activism and mood affect as mediated by social media use to better understand people's motivation for becoming more socially engaged. While historically, there have been numerous movements to address perceived societal and governmental injustices, how safe individuals feel when becoming involved is still up for debate. Findings from this study showed that individuals experienced positive and negative mood affect in both the likelihood they will engage in a variety of activist behaviors in the future, as well as seeing themselves as being politically active. Furthermore, the role of social media also showed a relationship between participant's positive and negative mood affect, as well as sense of activism, demonstrating the impact of social media on how people express their opinions today.

Keywords: activism, mood affect, psychological safety, social media

INTRODUCTION

Many in the United States would agree that the 2016 presidential election was tenuous at best. From the moment the candidates announced their intention to run, the presidential field was teeming with divisive banter.

Even as the potential nominees reduced in number, mudslinging and inso-lent declarations became part of the everyday prattle. Rhetoric, such as sug-gesting immigrants are rapists or opposing supporters being called a "basket of deplorables" has become commonplace (Friedman, 2016). Despite the election of Donald Trump, the divisiveness of the country remains. Perhaps the most telling evidence of this was the "Women's March" held on Janu-ary 21, 2017, the day after Trump's inauguration. This massive global dem-onstration was estimated at over 3.2 million in the U.S. alone (Smith-Spark, 2017). Even more recently, the events in Charlottesville, Virginia where former KKK leader David Duke was quoted as saying that white suprema-cist protesters are "determined to take [our] country back. . .We're going to fulfill the promises of Donald Trump" (Nelson, 2017, para 2). These, along with the #metoo movement among others demonstrate not only the degree of divisiveness, but also how the times are ripe for activism (O'Connor, 2017).

What remains unclear regarding this contentious time is how the politi-cal climate has affected U.S. citizens regarding their perceptions of feeling safe while voicing their political perspectives, and their impetus towards becoming involved in social actions regarding these views. Historically there have been a number of actions to address perceived societal and gov-ernmental injustices; however, "why" individuals who were not previously active in these demonstrations is not understood well. There may be a num-ber of reasons that individuals feel moved to take part in discourse and action, however, some constituents view involvement as nonconformist, deviant or even militant. Furthermore, activist behaviors have, at times, been frowned upon and can lead to the "fear of being labelled ignorant, incompetent or disruptive" (Appelbaum, Dow, Mazmanian, Jundt & Appel-baum, 2016, p. 343). Appelbaum et al. (2016) found that these types of activities can lead to feeling unsafe, or what Carver and Scheier (1990) call low psychological safety. Additionally, positive and negative mood affect, such as feeling enthusiastic or distressed, has been shown to associate with psychological safety. The consequences of these intentionally disruptive activities can impact individuals to the point that one's self-image, social status, career, or even personal safety can be marred (Carver & Scheier, 1990). This may be even truer for marginalized or people of color in such a way that "difference, or otherness, that are constructed as monstrosity in a world that has become more and more conservative" are due to "White fears about the loss of their majority status and sharing privileged spaces with others" (Martinez, 2017, p. 146).

Given the influence and use of social media as a news and event solici-tation tool, these trepidations could be curtailed (Velasquez & LaRose, 2015). Social media may be the platform for those leaning towards activism

to find like-minded people more easily, compelling individuals into action or further engagement. This precarious balance of feeling safe, yet being called into action has limited understanding to date. Research by the Pew Institute indicates that people are "worn out" from the political content that they encounter and that 59% of people engaging with "those with opposing political views" find these interactions to be "stressful and frustrating" (Duggan & Smith, 2016). Due to the limitations of understanding, and the unusual social environment that the 2016 presidential election has perpetuated, the intent of this study was to measure the relationship between mood affect and activism, as moderated by social media use in the context of the election. The goal of the research was to forward our understanding regarding individuals' feeling of safety towards activism identity and behavior, and how the use of social media influenced these impulses.

Activism

Ozymy (2012) suggests that there is a certain "underlying assumption concerning the rationality of political participation" (p. 104) in that "individuals engage in political activity to pursue particular goals, and they decide to participate when the benefits of such activity outweigh the costs" (Leighley 1995, p. 7). Scholars have found that a number of factors are associated with increased political participation or activism, including having social sciences and humanities majors as undergraduates, coming from a higher socioeconomic familial background, and having highly educated parents, among others (Altbach, 1989; Astin, Astin, Bayer, & Bisconti, 1975). In addition, identifying as a person of color and/or woman and having beliefs that come from a marginalized background can also impel the need to become an activist (Linder & Rodriguez, 2012).

To understand the nuances of activism, Klar and Kasser (2008) proposed four dimensions: activist identity, commitment, behavioral intentions, and past behaviors. Activist identity was described as the extent to which one participates in activism and has been associated with one's social or collective identity (Stryker, Owens, & White, 2000). Commitment to activism has been widely discussed in social movement research (e.g., Klandermans, 1997), and findings have suggested that a strong predictor of activist behavior is a person's activist identity in their hierarchy of roles (Stryker, 2000).

Music and Wilson (2008) propose that activism is a collective action for a collective good. Therefore, activists view the social structure as a target of intervention, rather than a framework within which to work. As such, activists seek to create change at the local, regional or global level. In addition to the societal benefits of challenging social structures, Adler con-

tended that interest in fostering the welfare of others is a fundamental human endeavor and that an "expression of social interest was a prerequisite for psychological health" (as cited in Klar & Kasser, 2009, p. 756). Thus, community engagement has been linked to improved personal empowerment (Christens et al., 2011), and political activism and improved individual well-being connections have been found (Klar & Kasser, 2008).

In addition to the benefits of community engagement and activism, the impetus towards action may be explained through a number of lenses. For example, stress levels may play a role. Stanton, LaBar, Saini, Kuhn and Beehner (2010) concluded that individuals supporting a losing political candidate had significantly higher levels of cortisol (a hormone released in response to stress) than those who supported the winning candidate (p. 772). Another motivation includes the extent to which one participates in activism and the association with one's social or collective identity (Stryker, Owens & White, 2000). Stryker, Owens and White's (2000) research suggests that a strong predictor of activist behavior is the relative position of the activist identity in a person's hierarchy of roles. Motivational components are also widely discussed in social movement research (e.g., Klandermans, 1997).

Thus, there are a number of beneficial and motivational factors associated with the impetus towards activism. Based from a definition by Corning and Myers (2002), for the purpose of this research, we are defining activism as the behavior of advocating for some kind of political cause or causes (for example, human rights issues, protecting the environment, or protesting wars). These may range from acts such as posting on social media to more rebellious such as civil disobedience.

Social Media and Activism

One venue that has helped raise the collective consciousness is social media (Martinez, 2017). In the last decade, social media outlets have been a platform to facilitate a global–local orientation to and action the world (Sobré-Denton, 2016). Additionally, social media has been an avenue that has created a new dimension in becoming more socially engaged.

In the U.S. alone after the 2016 U.S. election, news outlets began reporting on various polls conducted on political activism. As one example, Survey Monkey (2017) indicated roughly two-thirds of respondents had been involved in politics or causes within their communities between the time period of January and March 2017, with 34% claiming to have shared their opinions on social media.

Other movements and instances of solidarity have tapped into social media for community building as well. For instance, the Iranian women's

movement transformed cyberspace into a place for social action (Abbas-gholizadeh, 2014). In 2005, cyber resistance was first utilized during the rise of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's radical government (Abbasgholizadeh, 2014). Furthermore, Velasquez and LaRose's (2015) work showed that with college student's political uses of social media might influence their participation in individual (e.g. Bakker and De Vreese, 2011) or collective political actions (e.g. Enjolras et al., 2013). The use of social media to express political views was also explored in Karamat and Farooq's (2016) study of Pakistani graduate students. These authors found that approximately 50% followed political pages on both Facebook and Twitter, and that nearly 50% asked friends to participate in political events or actions (Karamat & Farooq, 2016). More significantly, Karamat and Farooq (2016) discovered that nearly 70% of the participants had not participated in political activism prior to their engagement on social media. Thus, "the tactical deployment of digital communications by activists has been portrayed as an upscaling of interest and participation in contentious politics" (Bastos, Mercea, & Charpentier, 2015, p. 322). These prior studies indicate that social media has a significant impact on users' movement toward activism.

Mood Affect and Psychological Safety

According to Hackman (1992), affect has been recognized as a critical motivation in group environments. Political scientists believe that rational individuals will view the costs and benefits of political activity through the lens of self-interest (Platt 2008). In particular, positive affectivity (PA) and negative affectivity (NA) are "differentially associated with the direction, duration, and intensity with which personal resources are invested in social contexts" (Carver & Scheier, 1990, p. 21). While PA reflects the propensity to be energetic and optimistic (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), "NA increases the tendency to perceive and ruminate over unfavorable information regarding ones' self and others" (Watson et al., 1988, p. 1064). Edmondson and Lei (2014) suggest that these differences are likely to have an influence on the extent to which group environments are perceived as discouraging or encouraging.

Linked to affectivity, psychological safety is generally used to describe a cognitive construct manifested through a perception of intrapersonal risk of individuals within a group or organization (Chen, Gao, Sheng & Ran, 2015). Psychological safety is defined as "the belief that a person can express himself or herself without negative consequences" (Appelbaum et al, 2016, p. 344). Team members have a high level of psychological safety if they feel secure in expressing opinions, being open and honest, and asking for feedback without fear of punishment, sanctions, retribution or ostra-

cism (Chughtai, 2016; Edmondson, 1999; Mayfield, Tombaugh & Lee, 2016). Low-status members can feel anxiety and fear in situations in which they are required to take interpersonal risks. To be psychologically safe, therefore, members of a group need to feel respected and to respect other members within the group (Edmondson, 1999). Additionally, studies have positively correlated the psychological safety felt by followers with a leader's inclusivity and support (Appelbaum et al, 2016; Chughtai, 2016; Edmondson, 1999). Furthermore, Chughtai's (2016) research found a relationship between psychological safety and the perception of supportive leadership.

As a part of mood research, studies were conducted to determine positive (PA) and negative affects (NA) in various settings. These studies demonstrated that a positive affect "reflects the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, active, and alert. . .[whereas] a negative affect is a general dimension of subjective distress" (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988, p. 1066). Findings indicated that PA, and not NA, was related to social involvement, gladness and a prevalence of pleasant events. Moreover, Hood, Bachrach, Zivnuska and Bendoly (2016) found that PA and NA were positively and negatively related to psychological safety respectively. Collectively, studies utilizing PA and NA scales relate mood dimension with behavior. These findings imply that mood affect then might be utilized to predict the impetus toward being more of an activist in social concerns.

METHODS

The intent of this study was to determine the relationship between mood affect and activism, as mediated by social media use after the 2016 presidential election. To measure these variables three instruments were used to test the hypotheses. These instruments included the PANAS, developed by Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988) to measure mood affect, as well as the Activism Orientation Scale (AOS) that measures one's behaviors as an activist (Corning & Myers, 2013), as well as the Activist Identity and Commitment Scale (AICS), by Klar and Kasser (2009) that measures activism identity. Additional questions were created regarding social media use as part of the research.

Sample

Using Facebook, participants were solicited to complete an online questionnaire using Survey Monkey. To gather responses, requests were made to forward the instrument to move beyond a sample of convenience towards a snowball effect. Ultimately, of the 380 individuals who began the

survey, 349 individuals completed it. Of these 380 individuals, 307 were women, 74 were men, and three chose not to respond. The sample was generally well educated, with 34.9% having obtained their undergraduate degree, 34.38% received their master's degree, and 11.72% had completed a terminal degree. While all of the regions listed within the U.S. had some degree of representation, including two individuals outside of the U.S., the majority of the respondents came from the Northwest (27.34%), Midwest (25.52%) or Western regions (22.14%). Additionally, 13% reported they were Republicans, 60% Democrats, and 27 % claimed another political affiliation. Of the entire sample, the significant majority, 96%, stated they voted in the 2016 presidential election (see Table 1).

RESULTS

To analyze the data, statistical software was employed. Data analysis included simple statistics, Cronbach's alpha, factor analysis and correlation analysis to test for relationships (please see tables 7-10 in appendices for descriptive statistics). All of the instruments showed strong reliability ranging from .80-.95 (see Table 2). Initially, due to the construction of the social media instrument, a factor analysis was conducted on the 15 items. The data factorability was tested using Bartlett's test of sphericity (see Snedecor & Cochran, 1989), which was significant ($p < .0001$), suggesting that the data were suitable for factor analysis. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was initially conducted to approximate the number of factors to be retained. The factor communalities (i.e., the estimates of the variance in each variable accounted for by the factor solution) varied between .38 and .73. Based on the examination of the scree plot, it was determined that a two-factor solution should be retained, explaining 46.64% of variance. Descriptive statistics were then run on the four instruments including mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis (see Tables 3-6).

Hypotheses One

Based from the literature and the inconsistent findings regarding the mood affect of becoming active (i.e. see Klar & Kasser, 2008; Stanton, et al., 2010), the first hypothesis was; *There is a relationship between Positive Affect (PA) and Negative Affect (PANAS) and activism (AOS and AICS).* To answer this hypothesis, a regression analysis was ran that included PANAS positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA) as predictors, and AOS as the dependent variable. The regression model explained 47.8% of variance in the AOS scores, with adjusted $R2 = 0.478$. The standardized â coefficients for PA and NA were â = .43 and .53 respectively ($p < .0001$).

When entered as a sole predictor of AOS, the PA accounted for 19.6% of variance and the standardized â coefficient = .44, p < .0001 while the NA accounted for 29.3% of variance in the AOS scores and the standardized â coefficient = .54, p < .0001.

A second regression included PANAS subscales (positive and negative) with the AICS as the dependent variable. Analysis showed that the two PANAS sub-scores were not significantly correlated to one another, thus multicollinearity was not an issue. The regression model between the PANAS and AICS explained 42.3% of variance in the AICS scores, with adjusted R2 = 0.423. The standardized â coefficients for PA and NA were â = .38 and .52 respectively (p < .0001). When entered as a sole predictor of AICS, PA accounted for 15.2% of variance and the standardized â coefficient = .39, p < .0001 while NA on its own accounted for 28.0% of variance in AICS scores and the standardized â coefficient = .53, p < .0001. Thus, hypotheses one was accepted.

Hypotheses Two

Due to implications of Amichai-Hambuger, Gazit, Bar-Ilan, Perez, Aharony and Dyne (2015), and Rau, Gao and Ding (2008) regarding mood and the use of social media, the second hypothesis was: *There is a positive relationship between Positive Affect (PA) and Negative Affect (PANAS) and social media use*. For this analysis, a linear regression equation was tested, with PA and NA scores as the predictors and the social media score as the dependent variable. This model explained 30.9% of variance in social media use, with adjusted R2 = 0.309. The standardized â coefficients for PA and NA were â = .26 and .48 respectively (p < .0001). When entered as a sole predictor of social media use, PA accounted for 7.5% of variance and the standardized â coefficient = .27, p < .0001 while NA on its own accounted for 23.6% of variance with a standardized â coefficient = .48, p < .0001. Thus, hypotheses two was accepted.

Hypotheses Three

As previous research has shown correlations between the use of social media in activism recently (e.g. see Bastos, et al., 2015; Karamat & Farooq, 2016), the third hypothesis was: *There is a relationship between activism (AOS and AICS) and social media use.* A linear regression predicting social media use from AOS and AICS revealed that 43.7% of variance in social media use, with adjusted R2 = 0.437. The standardized â coefficients for AOS and AICS were â = .23 and .46 respectively (p < .0001). (The correlation coefficient between AOS and AICS was r(349) = .78, p < .0001 and

thus the effect size would be inflated if these two variables would be entered in two separate regression models). Thus, hypotheses three was accepted.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Additional statistical analysis was then conducted on related demographic information. First, a t-test was run to compare males and females regarding their activism (AOS and AICS) scores, and social media scores. Significant differences were obtained for the AOC, $t(360) = 4.26$, $p < .0001$ (mean females = 2.36, mean males = 1.98); AICS, $t(344) = 4.95$, $p < .0001$ (mean females = 2.40, mean males = 1.97); and social media use, $t(344) = .74$, $p < .0001$ (mean females = 2.68, mean males = 2.30). This indicates that females viewed themselves significantly higher in regards to being an activist, or displaying activist tendencies on social media then males did.

To continue demographic analysis, an MANOVA was used to explore significant differences between age, political party affiliation, U.S. region, and education groups regarding their activism scores. The multivariate analyses were followed by univariate analyses and Tukey post-hoc analyses. Significant multivariate differences were obtained for political affiliation, $F(4, 288) = 4.11$, $p < .05$. Univariate analyses also revealed significant differences between political affiliation groups regarding both AOS scores, $F(2, 176) = 4.38$, $p < .05$ and AICS scores, $F(2,176) = 1.36$, $p < .05$.

DISCUSSION

The results of our study show several new insights, as well as align with previous research findings. For example, the participants, while overwhelmingly women, showed a relationship between activism and both positive and negative mood affect. This seemingly supports Calazza's (2005) findings that levels of perceived safety have a more significant influence on women's civic engagement than they do on men's. For women as a group, a sense of perceived safety is strongly related to involvement in the community, while a lack of perceived safety is linked to disengagement. These findings also indicate the complicated dynamic of being concerned with the times (NA), having an activist identity (AICS), as well as feeling the impetus to do something about one's trepidations (AOS). Furthermore, the correlation between both the identity of being an activist (AICS) as well as the intent of the perceived behavior of being active (AOS) supports Klar and Klasser's (2009) work. In addition, the relationships between positive mood affect and activism confirmations Zimmerman's (1995) work on empowerment that emphasized the situation-specific nature of this dynamic, sug-

gesting that focused activism, in this case via social media, could improve one's sense of control and safety.

Previous research has also shown that there is growing "convergence in the knowledge that networked communication on social media is germane to protest participation" (Bastos et al., 2015, p. 322). Moreover, the prevalent interest and behavior conducive to political protest (e.g., using social media for news consumption) or embodied in political protests—for example, tweeting hash tagged action updates or expressing emotional support has also been documented (Bastos et al., 2013), and could be forwarded by mood affect, or feeling safe. As Martinez (2017) reflected, as a "Chicana feminist professor-scholar. . .I purposefully tuned in to mass and social media in search of competing interpretations of campaign rhetoric, sometimes seeking an array of perspectives to stay well informed. . .other times seeking solidarity in my sameness silos of like-minded Others" (p.146).

Future Research

While the findings of this study show an interesting relationship between positive and negative affect and activism, further research is needed. This study looked at the relationship between these factors, but why individuals, specifically women, feel more of a tendency towards activist identity and characteristics has not yet been answered. Perhaps given the uptick in political dialogue on social media, women are finding a more comfortable venue for asserting their perceptions and concerns. Another premise may be the sense of community that social media has created (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2015), and this feeling of belonging helps individuals overcome their negative mood affect. Future research could include a qualitative version of this study, inquiring why individuals feel called to become more active, as well as the forums in which they do so. Other research could include a longitudinal account of activism and mood affect, to see if this is a surge of activism that will be maintained, or if this is just a specific place-in-time event.

Table 1

Demographics

	Female		Male		Prefer not to answer	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Age (years)						
18-21	1	0.3	2	2.8	0	0.0
22-30	26	8.5	7	9.9	1	33.3
31-40	72	23.5	15	21.1	1	33.3
41-50	74	24.2	14	19.7	0	0.0
51-60	75	24.5	25	35.2	1	33.3
> 61	58	19.0	8	11.3	0	0.0
Total	(306)	(80.5)	(71)	(18.7)	(3)	(.8)
Education						
HS/GED	4	1.3	1	1.4	1	33.33
Some undergrad	48	15.7	14	19.7	1	33.33
Undergraduate degree	111	36.3	21	29.6	0	0.0
Masters	102	33.3	27	38.0	1	33.33
Terminal	39	12.7	6	8.5	0	0.0
Preferred not to answer	2	0.7	2	2.8	0	0.0
Region						
Southern	19	6.2	5	7.0	0	0.0
Eastern	26	8.5	4	5.6	0	0.0
Midwest	76	24.8	20	28.2	1	33.3
Upper Midwest	17	5.6	3	4.2	0	0.0
Southwest	12	3.9	6	8.5	0	0.0
Western	66	21.6	18	54.4	0	0.0
Northwestern	89	29.1	14	19.7	2	66.7
Outside U.S.	1	.03	1	1.4	0	0.0
Party Affiliation						
Republican	37	12.1	12	16.9	0	0.0
Democratic	196	64.1	31	43.7	1	33.3
Other	73	23.9	28	39.4	2	66.7
Voted in 2016						
Yes	293	95.8	68	95.8	3	100.0
No	13	4.2	3	4.2	0	0.0

Notes: N= 380

TABLE 2

Cronbach's alpha (á)

	#Items	Valid N	(α)
Instrument			
AOS	13	365	.90
AICS	10	349	.93
AOS+AICS	23	349	.95
PANAS	21	362	.86
Social Media	15	349	.80

Notes: N=380

TABLE 3

Pearson correlation coefficients: Activism (AOS & AICS) and the PANAS

		Positive Affect (PA)	Negative Affect (NA)
AOS	Pearson Correlation	.445**	.541**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	.365	.365
AICS	Pearson Correlation	.393**	.531**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	.349	.349

**= Significant at the .01 level

TABLE 4

PANAS and Social Media Pearson Correlations

		Social Media
PANAS PA	Pearson Correlation	.279**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	349
PANAS NA	Pearson Correlation	.488**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	349

**= Significant at the .01 level

TABLE 5

Activism (AOS & AICS) and Social Media Correlations

		Social Media
AOS	Pearson Correlation	.597**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	349
AICS	Pearson Correlation	.647**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	349

**= Significant at the .01 level

TABLE 6

Univariate analyses between political affiliation groups and activism (AOS & AICS)

Dependent Variable	(I) My political affiliation is:	(J) My political affiliation is:	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
AOS	Republican	Democrat	.6657*	.10027	.000
		Other	-.2539	.11036	.058
	Democrat	Republican	.6657*	.10027	.000
		Other	.4118*	.07249	.000
	Other	Republican	.2539	.11036	.058
		Democrat	-.4118*	.07249	.000
AICS	Republican	Democrat	-.7375*	.10141	.000
		Other	-.4771*	.11161	.000
	Democrat	Republican	.7375*	.10141	.000
		Other	.2604*	.07332	.001
	Other	Republican	.4771*	.11161	.000
		Democrat	-.2604*	.07332	.001

*= Significant at the .05 level
**= Significant at the .01 level
AOC= Activism Orientation Scale
AICS= Activist Identity and Commitment Scale

CONCLUSION

Given the nature of activism and the tenuousness of the 2016 U.S. presidential race and subsequent election, it was our premise that more individuals are becoming socially active. This may be due to several distinctive factors; the high use of social media to both inform and organize gatherings, identifying and behaving as an activist, as well as the impetus toward being active, even when one's mood affect is tenuous and uncomfortable.

The intent of this study was to explore several potential factors that may better understand people's impetus for becoming more socially engaged. Findings indicate that participants, while experiencing both positive and negative mood affect, were still willing to engage as an activist, as well as identify as such. As shown, the use of social media had a relationship to participant's positive and negative affect implying that social media is providing a venue for people to voice more of their political perspectives. While previous research had showed this relationship in youth, this study had a predominantly adult population. The findings in this study are consistent with previous research; however, these results also help forward understanding in that previous research had not discussed the connection between mood affect and activism mediated by social media use.

REFERENCES

Abbasgholizadeh, M. (2014). To do something we are unable to do in Iran: Cyberspace, the public sphere, and the Iranian Women's Movement. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 39*(4), 831-840.

Adler, A. (1964). *Social interest: A challenge to mankind*. New York: Capricorn Books. (Original work published in 1938)

Appelbaum, N. P., Dow, A. Mazmanian, P. E., Jundt, D. K., & Appelbaum, E. N. (2016). The effects of power, leadership and psychological safety on resident event reporting. *Medical Education, 50,* 343–350. doi: 10.1111/medu.12947

Bakker, T.P., & De Vreese, C.H. (2011). Good news for the future? Young people, carnternet use, and political participation. *Communication Research, 38*(4), 451–470.

Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (1990). Origins and function of positive and negative affect: A control-process view. *Psychological Review, 97,* 19-35.

Chen, M., Gao, X., Zheng, H., & Ran, B. (2015). A review on psychological safety: Concepts, measurements, antecedents and consequences variables. *International Conference on Social Science and Technology Education (ICSSTE 2015),* 433-440.

Corning, A. F., & Myers, D. J. (2002). Individual orientation toward engagement in social action. *Political Psychology, 23*(4), 703–729.

Edmondson, A. C., & Lei, Z. K. (2014). Psychological safety: The history,

renaissance, and future of an interpersonal construct. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 1,* 23 –43. doi: 10.1146/annurevorgpsych-031413-091305.

Enjolras, B., Steen-Johnsen, K., & Wollebæk, D. (2013). Social media and mobilization to offline demonstrations: Transcending participatory divides? *New Media & Society, 15*(6), 890–908.

Friedman, M. (2016, November 7). *The Absolute Worst Moments of the 2016 Presidential Election*. Elle. Retrieved from https://www.elle.com/culture/ career-politics/news/a40391/worst-election-moments-2016-campaign/.

Hackman, R. J. (1992). Group influences on individuals in organizations. In M. D. Dunnette & L. M. Hough (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (2nd ed., 199–267). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Hood, A.C., Bachrach, D. G., Zivnuska, S., & Bendoly, E. (2015). Mediating effects of psychological safety in the relationship between team affectivity and transactive memory systems. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *37,* 416–435. doi: 10.1002/job.2050

Karamat, A., & Farooq, A. (2016). Emerging role of social media in political activism: Perceptions and practices. *South Asian Studies, 31*(1), 381-396.

Klar, M., & Kasser, T. (2009). Some benefits of being an activist: Measuring activism and its role in psychological well-being. *Political Psychology, 30*(5), 755-777. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9221.2009.00724.

Martinez, A. R. (2017). Monstrosities in the 2016 Presidential election and beyond: Centering Nepantla and intersectional feminist activism. *Women's Studies in Communication 40*(2), 145–149.

Mayfield, C. O., Tombaugh, J. R., & Lee, M. (2016). Psychological collectivism and team effectiveness: Moderating effects of trust and psychological safety. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict, 20*(1), 78-94.

Nelson, L. (2017, August). "Why we voted for Donald Trump": David Duke explains the white supremacist Charlottesville protests. *Vox*. Retrieved from https://www.vox.com/2017/8/12/16138358/charlottesville-protests-david-duke-kkk

O'Connor, R. (2017, August). Charlottesville: John Oliver accuses Donald Trump of 'feeding' Nazis after violent protests in Virginia. *Independent Culture*. Retrieved from: http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/ charlottesville-nazis-john-oliver-donald-trump-racism-rally-protests-riots-a78 91916.html

Snedecor, G. W., & Cochran, W. G. (1989). *Statistical methods* (8th edition). Ames, IA: Iowa University Press.

Stanton, S. J., LaBar, K. S., Saini, E. K., Kuhn, C. M., & Beehner, J. C. (2010). Stressful politics: Voters' cortisol responses to the outcome of the 2008 United States Presidential election. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, *35*, 768-774.

Smith-Spark, L. (2017, January 21). Protesters rally worldwide in solidarity with

Washington march. *CNN Politics.* Retrieved from: http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/21/politics/trump-women-march-on-washington/.

Sobré-Denton, M. (2016). Virtual intercultural bridgework: Social media, virtual cosmopolitanism, and activist community-building. *News Media & Society, 18*(8), 1715-1731.

Velasquez, A., & LaRose, R. (2015). Youth collective activism through social media: The role of collective activism. *New Media and Society, 17*(6), 899-918.

Watson, D., Clark, A. M., & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS Scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 54*(6), 1063-1070.

APPENDIX A
THE PANAS
(WATSON, CLARK & TELLEGEN, 1988)

TABLE 7

PANAS Descriptive Statistics

Instrument words	Mean	SD	Range	Skewness Statistic	Kurtosis Statistic
Negative Affect	3.32	.95	1-5	-.570	-.427
Afraid	2.74	1.33			
Ashamed	4.17	1.46			
Concerned	3.95	1.15			
Distressed	1.49	1.15			
Guilty	.93	.93			
Hostile	2.45	1.28			
Irritable	2.96	1.25			
Jittery	2.71	1.35			
Nervous	3.55	1.24			
Scared	3.51	1.29			
Upset	3.89	1.25			
Positive Affect	2.78	.72	1-5	.304	-.015
Active	2.96	1.13			
Alert	3.57	1.01			
Attentive	3.65	1.01			
Determined	3.30	1.19			
Enthusiastic	1.96	1.15			
Excited	1.87	1.12			
Inspired	2.23	1.24			
Interested	3.97	1.05			
Proud	1.65	1.05			
Strong	2.69	1.18			

Notes: N= 367

Appendix B
Activism Instruments

Table 8

Activism Orientation Scale (AOS) Descriptive Statistics

Instrument questions	M	SD	Skewness Statistic	Kurtosis Statistic
Instrument	2.29	.68	-.161	-.673
Display a poster t-shirt, or bumper sticker with a political message.	2.48	1.15		
Invite a friend to attend a meeting of a political organization or event.	2.59	1.08		
Serve as an officer in a political organization.	1.87	.08		
Engage in a political activity in which you knew you will be arrested.	1.81	.85		
Attend an informational meeting of a political group.	2.08	.94		
Organize a political event (e.g. talk, support group, march).	1.90	.84		
Give a lecture or talk about a social or political issue.	2.04	.95		
Campaign door-to-door for a political candidate.	1.98	.94		
Present facts to contest another person's social or political statement.	2.98	.95		
Donate money to a political candidate.	2.79	1.08		
Engage in a physical confrontation at a political rally.	1.14	.67		
Send a letter or e-mail expressing a political opinion to the editor of a periodical or television show.	2.79	1.07		

Notes: N= 365

TABLE 9

Activist Identity and Commitment Scale (AICS) Descriptive Statistics

Instrument questions	M	SD	Skewness Statistic	Kurtosis Statistic
Instrument	2.32	.65	-.058	-.614
Being an activist is central to who I am.	2.23	.83		
I am truly committed to engage in activism.	2.34	.89		
I identify myself as an activist.	2.15	.82		
I make time for activism, even when I'm busy.	2.17	.85		
People who know me well would call me an activist.	2.10	.83		
Being an activist is an important reflection of who I am.	2.13	.83		
I take the time I need to engage in activism.	2.15	.81		
I have been involved in civil rights organizations for most of my adult life.	2.05	.89		
Political activism was a large part of my upbringing.	1.84	.85		

Notes: N= 349

APPENDIX C
SOCIAL MEDIA QUESTIONS

TABLE 10

Social Media Descriptive Statistics

Instrument questions	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Instrument	2.61	.44	-.058	.788
I access social media often.	3.47	.67		
I use social media as a way to gather news.	3.11	.82		
I feel empowered when I engage with social media sites that share my similar political views.	2.61	.78		
I visit social media sites where there are like-minded individuals.	2.85	.71		
*I feel safe enough to voice my political views to everyone I am connected to on social media.	2.42	.90		
I am careful about the information I share with my connections on social media.	3.01	.76		
In the past sixty days, I have participated in an activism event that I found about on social media.	2.37	1.1		
I have learned a lot about the current political climate from social media.	2.89	.83		
I use social media to learn about political activism events.	2.75	.97		
I have donated money to civil rights organizations as a result of information I have read on social media.	2.35	1.08		
I feel social media presents a wider range of information than regular news outlets.	2.54	.83		
Members of my social media communities are interested in each other as individuals.	2.70	.73		
People in my social media communities reject others for being different.	2.29	.76		
*It is safe to take a risk in my social media community.	2.54	.75		
It is difficult to ask other members of my social media community for help.	2.22	.65		
*In my social media community, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.	2.54	.71		

Notes: N= 349
Factor 1: Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; Factor 2: Items 6, 13, 15
* These items did not represent meaningful factor loadings.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Chapter 1/ Introduction

C. Richard King

Columbia College Chicago

Dr. C. Richard King, professor and chair of Humanities, History, and Social Sciences, studies the racial politics of culture. His publications include *Team Spirits: The Native American Mascot Controversy*, *Animating Difference: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Films for Children*, *Beyond Hate: White Power and Popular Culture*, and most recently *Redskins: Insult and Brand*.

David J. Leonard

Washington State University

Dr. David J. Leonard is a writer, teacher, and scholar. He is the author of several books, including *Playing While White: Privilege and Power on and off the Field* (University of Washington Press, 2017), and *After Arrest: The NBA and the Assault on Blackness* (SUNY Press, 2012). With C. Richard King, he is co-author of *Beyond Hate: White Power and Popular Culture* (Routledge 2014). Follow him on twitter @drdavidjleonard

Chapter 2: Fear and Hate in Alabama and Beyond: Narratives of Immigration in the Trump Campaign

Silvia Giagnoni

Dr. Silvia Giagnoni is an independent scholar and writer who lives between Alabama and Tuscany. She writes both in English and in Italian about immigration and social justice issues. Her most recent book is *Here we May Rest. Alabama Immigrants in the Age of HB56* (NewSouth Books 2017). You may contact the author at sgiagnon@aum.edu

Chapter 3: Make America Hate Again

Stephanie Kelley-Romano

Bates College

Dr. Stephanie Kelley-Romano is an associate professor and Chair of the Rhetoric, Film, and Screen Studies department at Bates College, Lewiston ME. Kelley-Romano would like to thank Lisa Maurizio and Helen Weetman for reading drafts of this essay throughout the spring and summer. In addition, the authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and the editors for their thoughtful comments and suggestions.

Kathryn L. Carew

Bates College

Kathryn Carew graduated from Bates with a degree in Rhetoric in 2017. This essay was based on Carew's thesis work submitted in the fall of 2016.

Chapter 4: The Dangers of Porous Borders

Barbara Perry

University of Ontario Institute of Technology

Dr. Barbara Perry is a Professor in the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, and the Director of the Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism. She has written extensively on hate crime. She is currently working in the areas of anti-Muslim violence, hate crime against LGBTQ communities, the community impacts of hate crime, and right wing extremism in Canada. She is regularly called upon by local, national and international media as an expert on hate crime and right-wing extremism.

Tanner Mirrlees

University of Ontario Institute of Technology

Dr. Tanner Mirrlees is an Associate Professor in the University of Ontario Institute of Technology's Communication and Digital Media

Studies program, and the Vice-President of the Canadian Communication Association (CCA). A critical political economist of communication and media-culture, Mirrlees is the author of Hearts and Mines: The US Empire's Culture Industry (UBC Press) and Global Entertainment Media (Routledge). His recent research collaboration with Dr. Barbara Perry and Dr. Ryan Scrivens examines the convergence of the right wing extremist music and the video sharing site YouTube.

Ryan Scrivens

Concordia University

Dr. Ryan Scrivens is a Horizon Postdoctoral Fellow at Concordia University, working with Project SOMEONE to build resilience against hatred and radicalization leading to violence, both on- and offline. Dr. Scrivens is also a visiting researcher at the VOX-Pol Network of Excellence and a research associate at the International CyberCrime Research Centre at Simon Fraser University.

CHAPTER 5: THE TRUMP EFFECT

Brett A. Barnett

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Brett A. Barnett is Professor of Communication at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of Untangling the Web of Hate: Are Online "Hate Sites" Deserving of First Amendment Protection? (Youngstown, NY: Cambria Press, 2007).

CHAPTER 6: MISOGYNISTIC HATE SPEECH

Caitlin R. Carlson

Seattle University

Dr. Caitlin Ring Carlson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at Seattle University. Her research focuses on media law, policy, and ethics from a Feminist perspective. Her work has appeared in journals such as Communication Law & Policy and the Journal of Mass Media Ethics.

CHAPTER 7: 'WINNING BIGLY': SPORTING FANTASIES OF WHITE MALE OMNIPOTENCE IN THE RISE OF TRUMP AND ALT RIGHT WHITE SUPREMACY

Kyle W. Kusz

University of Rhode Island

Dr. Kyle W. Kusz is Associate Professor of Kinesiology and Gender & Women's Studies at the University of Rhode Island. His research critically examines the cultural politics of white masculinities in sport media. He is the author of Revolt of the White Athlete: Race, Media and the Emergence of Extreme Athletes in America (Peter Lang, 2007).

CHAPTER 8: ALTERNATIVE FACTS AND FAKE NEWS: DIGITAL MEDIATION AND THE AFFECTIVE SPREAD OF HATE IN THE ERA OF TRUMP

Kayla Keener

George Mason University.

Kayla Keener is a PhD candidate in the Cultural Studies Department at George Mason University. She is interested in the formation and performance of identities within a neoliberal political economy. She focuses on contemporaneous modes of digitally mediated labor, including sites of informal, (non)waged, and affective labor.

CHAPTER 9: FOLLOWING THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE MOOD AFFECT AND THE IMPETUS TOWARDS ACTIVISM

Kem Gambrell

Gonzaga University

Dr. Kem Gambrell is an Associate Professor in the Doctoral Program of Leadership Studies at Gonzaga University, Spokane Washington. Her research interests include Social Justice, Culture, Race, Diversity and Ethnicity, and Constructive Development as they relate to Leadership. She can be contacted at gambrell@gonzaga.edu

Amy Martin

University of San Francisco

Dr. Amy Martin received her doctoral degree in Leadership Studies from Gonzaga University. Her research interests include ethnicity, culture, gender in the construction of leadership and identity. Dr. Martin is a part-time instructor in the School of Management at the University of San Francisco.

Kimberly R. Mungaray

Millikin University

Kimberly R. Mungaray, PhD, CPA is an assistant professor of accounting at Millikin University. Kimberly holds a PhD in Leadership Studies from Gonzaga University and a MAcc from the University of North Florida. Kimberly's research interests include women and leadership in accounting and the qualitative aspects of risk assessment.