The Consequences of Trump's Refugee Narratives on the Social and Political World

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a powerful catalyst, holding the immense potential to accomplish nearly any social goal when executed correctly. An argument crafted with intentionality has the ability not only to convince others, but also to inform, evoke emotions, and join people together or drive people apart—all consequences of the repeated political dialogue visible within recent years in the United States. Throughout the months leading up to the presidential election of 2016, the topic of immigration was a large topic of conversation between political candidates; as a response news channels covered stories of violent crimes committed by undocumented immigrants, as a result shaping many American's understandings of crime rates and the overarching state of our nation's social world (Gerbner et al., 1994) Just liked moral panics of the past, such as the fear of the Japanese Americans in the 1940s and the fear of the hippies in the 1960s, the public fear of immigrants was largely lead by the politicians in power—in this case, Donald Trump. After Trump won the presidency, the widespread discussion of immigration was not left behind with his campaign. Instead, he used his newfound platform to harness the fear of refugees, immigrants, and other displaced people that had been instilled in many Americans to further increase his following by presenting himself as an immigration and crime panacea.

In this day of vast media and 24-hour television, people have access to news like never before. However, because of the abundance of news channels and outlets to choose from, broadcasting companies have resorted to frequently reporting the biggest, most shocking news stories to attract the most viewers, often which are of crime and assault (O'Hear, 2020). Not only are stories repeated on TV and the covers of newspapers, but all over Snapchat, Instagram, and other social media sites, creating what can only be described as an echo chamber effect (Gao et al., 2023). Due to this, the presence of widespread narratives lacking dimension and discourse in thought has risen in prominence throughout the United States in recent years, emphasizing the power of both collective narrative and narrative paradigm. Although widespread narratives are not inherently harmful at their core, they can quickly become detrimental by promoting and encouraging fixed mindsets and unintentional ignorance through the neglect of contrasting positions offered in the media and conversation.

Beginning with Trump's presidential campaign, the issue of immigration was quickly molded into a widespread narrative in the United States—one that emphasized fear, hate, and racial and cultural "othering." With the rise of the Trump administration and consequentially this widespread narrative, the topic of immigration is especially relevant to explore, for at its

core deals with issues of identity and place but has taken on a vastly negative connotation in recent years in the United States.

Most developed countries are continually navigating issues of immigration reform to reflect current world events; however, in 2015 and 2016 the United States, among many other nations, was facing an especially large amount of people seeking refuge within its borders as a result of political unrest across the Middle East and Central America. In the year and a half leading up to the presidential election, conditions in the Middle East were ever-turbulent, leaving citizens desperate to seek safety and build stable lives for their families in other regions of the world. At this time, Yemen's government was in shambles, and citizens were experiencing both sectarian and militancy violence (UN Human Rights Watch, 2015c), Saudi Arabia gained another king who promised not to deviate from his predecessors conservative policies (BBC, 2015), a Civil War in Syria left 9.5 million people displaced (UN Human Rights Watch, 2015a), violence in Gaza between Hamas and Israeli forces, and the growing threat of ISIS which had taken over large sections of territory in Iraq (UN Human Rights Watch, 2015b). Although less violence-ridden than the Middle East, Latin America was greatly struggling as a region as well. Brazil was facing its largest-ever corruption scandal, in Mexico cartel leader "El Chapo" escaped from prison and distrust of political parties rose to 91%, several leaders in Guatemala's executive branch had to step down amidst a customs fraud scandal, and Venezuela entered a "fiscal tailspin" as a result of changes in oil prices (Gonzalez et al., 2015). As a whole, Central America and the Caribbean saw an influx of gang violence and homicides related to organized crime between 2015 and 2019. Mexico in particular has struggled the most with this issue, and in 2021 made up 77% of all homicide victims in the region (Muggah, 2023). The pressing political, fiscal, and social issues these global regions were facing prompted millions of people to attempt to seek refuge across Europe and America, leading to a widespread conversation about how to address the new vast numbers of people seeking asylum in Western nations.

The quickly approaching United States presidential election, paired with eight years of Democratic Party power and an especially large amount of immigration seekers, was fuel for the Republican Party to become even more determined to regain political power within the nation. Although historically more conservative on immigration than the Democrats, the Republican Party over the past decade has slowly grown even more anti-immigration—for the party of Reagan, who proposed "work[ing] out some recognition of our mutual problems" as opposed to "talking about putting up a fence," Bush's "compassionate conservatism" in regard to migration into the United States was over (Gonyea, 2018). The growing population of far-right

conservatives, led by figures such as Ron DeSantis, Mitch McConnell, and Donald Trump, were looking for something to help spur Trump's run for the 2016 presidency, and this increasingly pertinent immigration issue facing the United States looked continually more tactical to build their campaign off of. Harnessing the fear of the unknown that most people harbor at some level, the Republican Party began crafting effective messaging around the potential threat that immigration seekers posed to United States citizens, intending to help them make strides toward securing the presidency (Kim et al., 2018). Through carefully crafted messages, Trump was able to turn a large facet of the American population into zealous "MAGA" or "Make American Great Again" Trump supporters, with alarming statistics available to exemplify their passion. A recent poll found that "MAGA" supporters are more likely to trust Trump (71%) than their own friends and family (63%) (Blake, 2023), 98% believed Trump's claims that the 2020 election was stolen (Blum & Parker, 2021), and nearly 60% consider violence "usually" to "always" justified to advance at least 1 of 13 political objectives shown to them (Salvanto et al., 2023). Trump's followers are passionate and make up at least 42% of all Republicans in the United States of America (Selzer, 2022).

By utilizing language fraught with fear-inducing quotes from Trump referring to all the "gang members," "drug dealers," and "criminals" invading the country, what began as a political tactic quickly spun into the growth of a negative mass narrative surrounding the moral, political, and security issues immigrants, refugees, and other displaced people would bring into the United States (Finley & Esposito, 2019). This narrative proved foundational during his campaign and presidency, in shaping popular societal beliefs, maintaining power, and establishing a common enemy within American society.

The word "narrative" is frequently synonymous with "story", but it's not just limited to human chronological events—it encompasses phenomena such as theories, explanations, songs, and even jokes. Because humans are inherently relational creatures wired for connection and communication, stories—or narratives—are easily spread, adapted, and ultimately "are major vectors of rapid change in culture, and zeitgeist" that develop by "sometimes merg[ing] with fads and crazes" and oftentimes "savvy marketers and promoters then amplify them in an attempt to profit from them" (Shiller, 2019). Mass narrative is something that generally begins slowly but largely stems from the specific language and even verbal choices that are made when a person, or people, that others listen to are speaking about the issue. Language holds much more power than most people are aware of, and the tone, manner, and specific words spoken not only affect the way in which you view a topic but when continually reinforced, how the people listening to you view that same topic.

Regarding the development of the negative mass narrative of immigrants in the United States, for several years prior, millions of Americans had listened to language from powerful Republican leaders reinforcing the threats refugees, immigrants, and displaced people posed to our country—not only in the explicit things they said but the manner and specific words used as well. Flores (2017) compared anti-immigration laws and public sentiment emphasizing a clear connection—stating that these anti-immigration arguments and proposed laws "commonly use symbols and metaphors that trigger social anxieties, are widely publicized in the media". Additionally, she proposes "we should expect anti-immigrant laws to affect public opinion toward immigrants, even if the laws are blocked by lawsuits, by signaling to the public that immigrants are illegitimate and undesirable since these laws tend to be highly visible" (Flores, 2017, p.6). Inflammatory language, alteration of negative words, vivid imagery, storytelling, comparison, and "othering" are all tactics that were used to craft a persuasive and effective message surrounding the harm these people posed to our country, and when listening to this style of communication constantly for several years, a large percentage of Americans took this perspective on. Trump's "rhetoric has changed the way many Americans view immigrants: nearly a quarter now call immigration a "problem" more than double the percentage who characterized it that way in 2015, and the highest share since Gallup began asking that question a quarter-century ago" (Saad, 2023). One study using data from the Anti-Defamation League found that counties that hosted Trump rallies in 2016 saw a 226% increase in hate crimes over the following months, especially assaults or acts of vandalism, in comparison to counties that did not host Trump rallies. Further supporting this claim, ABC News identified several cases where violence or threats of violence took place, and the perpetrators targeted immigrants or those thought to be immigrants more than any other group of people (Levine, 2020). In addition to tangible acts of violence, this deeply conservative and ofttimes hateful, messaging helped build a widespread disdain towards people "different" than the typical American and helped spur a moral panic surrounding the security of our borders. The effects of this widespread narrative were vast and affected much more than politics, as the social tides changed, and for the first time in generations, "Trump made public expressions of nativism socially acceptable" (Saad, 2023).

This complex phenomenon can be illuminated with the assistance of the theory of narrative paradigm which poses that human beings are natural storytellers, and in an argument a story can be much more compelling than reasoned logic. Throughout the Republican presidential campaign, beginning in 2015, the verbal tactics utilized in rally speeches, public addresses, and interviews fit in rather seamlessly with this theory for a person does not have to

explicitly tell a story for a story to be told. The narrative created around immigration was compiled by a variety of persuasive linguistic devices, stories being one, hoverer the others such as imagery, alteration, and inflammatory language further supported the overarching story—that immigrants, refugees, and displaced people pose a threat to our society as we know it. These stories are inspired by a fear of people who are different from us, and as a result invoked a sense of resilience within large portions of the American population—however, in a negative way. This paper aims (1) to analyze how listening to specific messages and stories can affect individuals' worldviews over time and (2) to use a lens of narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1984) and the communication theory of resilience (Buzzanell, 2010) to highlight the power of political narrative in shaping the social world and in fostering social cohesion through and as resilience.

Through qualitative analysis of Trump's speeches containing the word "refugees" and the observation of the United States' political climate during and after Trump's presidency, I decipher how these two phenomena are connected and how language bridges the gap. I aim to discover to what extent language has the power to shape the reality in which a person sees the world, and how specific literary devices can persuade others through the manner in which they are used. People's opinions on immigration are often complex, personal, and held rather tightly, and the way in which listening to a few years of specific language was enough to alter the views of hundreds of thousands of Americans is not only extremely interesting but a testament to the power of language as a whole. There is undoubtedly a *before* and *after* in regard to the American public's general disposition towards immigration in the years Trump rose to political power, and I hope to crystalize what his specific literary tactics were that powerfully altered a facet of an entire population.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout my work, I will use the theory of narrative paradigm and the communication theory of resilience to craft my argument for both theories deal with issues of persuasion and leadership. These theories address the relevancy of narrative, specific language, and perspective when crafting messaging and were highly relevant all throughout Donald Trump's presidential campaign and presidency at large. My aim for the literature review portion of my thesis in this section is to crystalize how the use of both of these theories were central to Trump's success at shaping a mass narrative around immigrants and refugees, and I plan to detail these connections throughout this section of my research. Because of the relevancy of these theories, this literature review will be structured as follows: (1) analysis of the theory of narrative paradigm, (2) analysis of the communication theory of resilience, and (3) synthesis and research question.

The Theory of Narrative Paradigm:

The practice of storytelling has been overwhelmingly significant in the history of the human experience. Going back to the beginning of humanity, our brains have been molded to hold on to stories, as they were not only the only form of entertainment and a crucial source of connection but integral to our survival as a race. It is only natural then that the human brain has been primed over hundreds of thousands of years to cling to the stories we are told often, informing our relationships, opinions, and ways in which we interact with the world around us. Fisher (1984) argued that the most meaningful communication is in the form of storytelling, or the reporting of events, and human beings participate as storytellers and observers of different narratives (Fisher, 1984). He asserted that, in general, there is not really a difference between stories and arguments, and created the theory of narrative paradigm to help explain the way in which humans can understand complex information through stories and narratives—this theory proves integral in understanding human beings on a relational level, as well as gaining clarity and contextualization around the topic of public framing.

Stemming from Fisher's studies of the American Dream in the 1970s, narrative paradigm theory "explains the force of narration as contributing value justification for human action" and views "each communication as a story and incorporates both rational and symbolic interpretation to assess the narrative values that evoke the listener to act" (Stutts & Barker, 1999). Generally, narrative paradigm works with two principles: coherence and fidelity. Coherence is the degree to which a story logically fits together or how probable the story is at large. The aspect of coherence emphasizes the importance of communicating effectively, stating

that content is only effective if it makes sense to the listener, and coherence is the degree of overall sense-making. The overall effectiveness of a story is influenced by multiple factors including the structure of the narrative, how it compares to similar stories, and credibility of characters—if these three factors of a story seem plausible to the listener, they are much more likely to believe in and be persuaded by the story told.

Fidelity is the second factor that shapes the plausibility of a story and focuses on the credibility of the story and how the listener accepts it to be true. Fidelity has to do with how the story relates to the past experiences, beliefs, values, and narrative of the audience, helping them to assert whether or not the story is believable. Oftentimes this is based on how a specific story compares to other stories or experiences the listener knows to be true. Narrative paradigm asserts that fidelity is often attained by a set of criteria: are the events described really factual? Have the facts been distorted while narrating? What are the reasoning patterns followed while narrating? How does the argument in the story affect the decision making of the listener? What is the importance of the story being narrated? (Fisher, 1984, 1989). Although oftentimes the stories Trump told of displaced people were not true, they held fidelity in comparison to each other and in the minds of millions of Americans who had heard similar stories and feared this reality. Through evaluating both fidelity and coherence, listeners are able to make a decision, informed by the information available, whether or not the story they are listening to is believable and therefore should be trusted.

The power of storytelling cannot be understated—especially when executed in a public manner. Humans are inherently primed to listen to stories, as they are based on our interpersonal need for connection and community; however, this can make acceptance of false stories easy and hard to detect. Although Trump lacked as a leader in a vast variety of areas, his power of speech cannot be overlooked as it was largely this that allowed him to gain such a loyal fan base and encourage millions of Americans to overlook fact and simply accept what he told them to believe. The theory of narrative paradigm is exemplified throughout Trump's presidential campaign and leadership, for arguably if not for this inflammatory manner of storytelling, he would have been unable to arouse such a passionate reaction from the American population surrounding issues of immigration and individuals different from oneself.

The Communication Theory of Resilience

Through the hate speech blatantly abused by Donald Trump and his colleagues throughout his presidential campaign and presidency, not only did the targets of his dialogue become even more marginalized in society, but also those who sided with Trump rose in power

and were supported by millions of Americans growing ever loyal to Trump's administration. As discussed throughout my work, Trump utilized a variety of narrative devices to craft persuasive and targeted messaging; however, arguably, the narrative tactic that had the most divisive and destructive consequences was his employment of resilience language. The communication theory of resilience first was developed by Buzzanell (2010) and details the ways in which communicative practices can develop and strengthen resilience within individuals and groups. Resilience is often viewed as a positive concept, one emphasizing strength that flourishes in times of hardship and centers around the durability of humanity; however, in communication narrative, there lies an antithesis—that of the dark side of resilience, or alt-resilience. Eddington (2022) describes the concept of alt-resilience as the utilization of traditional resilience processes to construct an alternate form of communicative resilience—which assists in the creation and persistence of communities rooted in negativity or hate. When utilizing the alternate or negative side of the resilience processes, pervasive and strong groups centered on hate are easily constructed. When groups are rooted in hate, this hatred can be as powerful, if not more powerful, in the bonding and persistence of the group than positive resilience that comes from groups being bonded through a shared hardship. Throughout this section of my Lit Review, I will detail what both resilience and alt-resilience communication look like from the perspective of Buzzanell (2010) and Eddington (2022) and review a variety of literature that relates to Trump's communication patterns and resilience as a whole.

A variety of studies have been conducted over the years on how people adapt to difficult situations, whether poverty, abuse, physical displacement, or a myriad of other situations. Multiple studies have found that the language in which victims use to describe their situations, and their overall sense-making strategies greatly affect the ways in which they cope, how long it takes them to recover from their setback, and the level of depression they experience during their hardship. One study conducted by Pochwatko and Naydonova (2023) examines the effect of mediated communication on resilience in Ukrainian refugees and found that positive communication was overwhelmingly important in shaping and promoting resilience among refugees (Pochwatko & Naydonoya, 2023). Further supporting this finding, Sánchez, Sánchez and Lillie (2019) stated, "the five communicative resilience processes include crafting normalcy, affirming identity anchors, using communication networks, employing alternative logics, and legitimizing negative feelings while foregrounding productive action" and are by far the largest contributors to how an individual or group will respond to hardship (Buzzanell, 2010).

Beginning with crafting normalcy, which "involves the maintenance and creation of rituals, routines, and stories that normalize life after hardship," as the notion of normalcy is

deeply craved after hardship and the regression, or creation, of stabilizing methods or activities can be instrumental in providing comfort (Buzzanell, 2010). However, it is crucial to include that although hardship can be catastrophic and even life-changing, humans are inherently adaptable and the concept of "normalcy" is constructed, and largely "talked...into being" (Buzzanell, 2010, p.4). Additionally, the process of affirming identity anchors is largely influential in building resilience and adaptability in victims of hardship, as this process includes emphasizing identities that are the most meaningful to them and using stories and evidence to do so. This process may look like parents telling their children stories of challenges they faced and overcame to emphasize how strong they are naturally and how they have already overcome challenges and are capable of doing it again.

The third communicative process of utilizing communication networks involves individuals or groups turning towards a community to help them overcome a hardship, as humans are naturally social creatures, and the support of a larger group of individuals experiencing the same hardship (such as displacement from one's country or survivors of a natural disaster) can provide a unique type of support which can be hard to find elsewhere. The tactic of employing alternative logics has been proven extremely beneficial as well, as it "involves reinterpreting or reframing the situation of hardship to aid in coping," and although "logics may appear counterintuitive, they aid individuals in making sense of their situations to better cognitively, emotionally, or behaviorally manage hardships." However, it is crucial to note that the reframing must have positive impacts for it to be considered a process of resilience building (Sánchez, Sánchez & Lillie, 2019). Lastly, legitimizing negative feelings while foregrounding productive action is the most important action an individual looking to build resilience can take. This is a two-step action where "productive actions are foregrounded, or given emphasis, over negative aspects of the situation" while "accepting that negative emotions—such as anger, sadness, or guilt—are warranted, while still focusing on productive action." These communicative processes are crucial to understand as I begin to analyze Trump's alt-resilience building in the United States society, for in the same manner that these processes can build positive internal strength crucial for future success, they have the power to construct communities of hate and prejudice as well. For example, when acting in opposition of these claims, such as embracing negative emotions without taking any counteractive action, individuals can become enmeshed in negativity and be drawn to people with similar dispositions—constructing unproductive communities rooted in those emotions.

Trump's dialogue surrounding the supposed threats facing the United States during his presidential campaign was inflammatory and pointed. Not only were situations, including the

state of the economy, the issue of immigration, and crime, blown out of proportion, but he also spoke about them in a fear-mongering and dramatized manner. Through his emphasis on the pressing issues threatening the state of our nation, Trump worked to construct an "us versus them" discourse in his public speeches—different from other politicians because of the overwhelmingly informal and negative way he spoke about groups of people different from himself or the "typical American". By appealing to the common American through a communicative style they could relate to, he encouraged the United States population to follow him wholeheartedly with little concern for what his opposition had to say about his leadership. To build a deeply loyal group of supporters and persuade hundreds of thousands of Americans to side with him and his skewed view on real-world issues, he employed several of the communicative resilience processes in negative ways.

Additionally, Trump exemplified the communication network piece of resilience processes by surrounding himself with solely his supporters, affirming solely news pieces that supported him, and criticizing everyone else. He was able to build strong networks of people who wouldn't dare oppose him out of fear of retaliation and was able to utilize these people to progress his political career. Furthermore, he hosted rallies around the country that served as echo chambers of his divisive messages and centralized much of his campaign around these inflammatory events. Although many political candidates host rallies and work to build extremely persuasive messaging, Trump was different for his communication was unprecedentedly negative and informal when addressing those who opposed him and groups of people different from the "typical" American. He frequently used "popular idioms of standup comedy and competitive sports culture" to "[leverage] popular cultural idioms to legitimate politics not as a vocation, but as a business" which set him apart from previous politicians and made him relatable to a large facet of the American population (Karakaya & Edgell, 2022).

Furthermore, as stated by Karakaya and Edgell (2022), through "using the solidarity and collective effervescence created during the rallies, Trump changed the people's story from a lament to an adventure, and in so doing, gave his followers pride, hope, and a chance to win" (Karakaya & Edgell, 2022). This contributed to his ability to "[tap] into his followers' deep story and [fuse] it with a story of national pride and redemption built on a us/them dichotomy, Trump's populism has already paved the way for escalated forms of authoritarianism and ethnonational exclusion" (Karakaya & Edgell, 2022). By appealing to the Americans, who previously felt unrepresented by liberal politicians, through his openly informal and negative manner of speech, Trump was able to garner support by presenting himself as the "everyman" and shifted what was viewed as appropriate for politicians to say publicly.

Utilizing the logical perspectives of narrative paradigm and communication resilience building have proven extremely helpful in analyzing the ways in which Trump's communication methods allowed him to obtain an extremely loyal base of followers and convince an entire facet of the American population that immigrants and refugees were an extreme and pressing threat to our nation and way of life. Through my research and analysis, I aim to answer the following questions regarding Trump's communication methods: How did Trump's usage of alt-resilience and storytelling help shape the social world in the United States from the years 2015-2020? How did the communicative creation of a sense of "others" prove advantageous in Trump's political career? How were alt-resilience and storytelling used by Trump to create a zealous and devout following of supporters? Through the discussion of these topics, the tact and intent behind Trump's communication methods throughout his political career will be clarified—highlighting how his fixation of American immigration policies helped progress his personal and political power.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

To begin studying how Trump's language surrounding refugees, immigrants, and displaced people shaped an entire facet of the United States' stance on immigration, we searched Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network, or C-SPAN, which is an American non-profit that televises proceedings of the US federal government and other public affairs. I chose to gather data from C-SPAN because it has an extremely comprehensive database of all proceedings of the US Federal Government and other political affairs, as well as offers both televised options to review content and detailed transcripts of the proceedings. In addition, C-SPAN is a public nonprofit that reports on political proceedings in an unbiased and objective manner, and as a result, is considered an extremely reliable source to gather data from. It was helpful to work with data that offered a televised option—which provided additional clarification around tone of voice, contextualization, and body language—as well as accurate transcripts for an objective side of what specific words were being used throughout Trump's speeches. This data has been instrumental in helping me answer my question for it has provided evidence spanning years that I would not have had the opportunity to analyze otherwise and has provided me the ability to look at an issue from both a very broad perspective, as well as zero in on specific speeches, themes, and language tactics. I chose to focus on Trump's public speeches rather than all of his statements because his public communication displayed real, tangible effects. The Southern Poverty Law Center [SPLC] (2016a, 2016b), for example, reported that over 400 verified bias-related incidents occurred in the week following election day on November 8, 2016, and another 1,000 incidents happened over the next month, which represented a significant increase over previous months (SPLC, 2016b). Additionally, "FBI data show that since Trump's election there has been an anomalous spike in hate crimes concentrated in counties where Trump won by larger margins. It was the second-largest uptick in hate crimes in the 25 years for which data are available, second only to the spike after September 11, 2001," demonstrating a clear connection between Trump's anti-immigration messaging and crimes rooted in prejudice and hate, and the overall importance of studying his public communication (Edwards & Rushin, 2018, p. 3). Having access to 74 in-depth transcripts helped contextualize his language style at large, for speaking when you know an entire country is watching is different than speaking when you believe you have less viewers, and these transcripts helped further illuminate those trends in regard to Trump.

To accurately obtain a representative collection of Trump's political narrative, I utilized C-SPAN's vast collection of televised proceedings. Using the application programming interface (API), I sorted through their collection by filtering for any time Donald Trump was on record

saying the word "refugees" and limited the search by opting for data within the years of 2015 and 2020. This process left me with a total of 74 detailed transcripts that I then compiled into a document for review. After collecting this large sum of transcripts, I read through each of them and sorted out the ones I felt wouldn't be worth using. I developed strict criteria to determine whether a transcript would be suitable for the project. This included looking at if the transcript was relevant to the topic, and if the transcript was long enough to provide substantive supporting evidence around the issue. Several of the transcripts were just a quote or two about another topic where the specific word "refugee" happened to be said but was not long enough to provide additional insight on the topic itself—such as when the word "refugee" was briefly mentioned during the 58th inaugural prayer service. There frequently were transcripts that were short, usually around 250 words, and because of their length could not provide enough helpful contextualization to the manner, or reason, for which the word was used. Although short quotes can be helpful on occasion, I overwhelmingly found most of them to lack information needed to contextualize the quote, such as the previous nature of the conversation and background on situations being spoken about. Additionally, I deemed transcripts irrelevant if they were not related to immigration or asylum or on occasion because someone else other than Trump or a member of his party brought up the word "refugee," which is what triggered our search. There were several instances where "refugee" was said in an unrelated manner to the issue of immigration or asylum, such as when Trump was speaking about the Great American Outdoors Act and mentioned the "fish and wildlife refuges."

After excluding approximately 20 transcripts, I was left with approximately 55 transcripts which I then read through and annotated by coding. Coding or "the process of exploring the diversity and patterning of meaning from the dataset, developing codes, and applying code labels to specific segments of each data item" allowed me to notice clear themes throughout Donald Trump's communication patterns and helped me to clearly summarize the analytical ideas and data meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As stated by Braun & Clark, "Coding often helps us to shift to fully engage with the data as data- as materials we are grappling with to make analytic sense of, to address a specific question-rather than straightforward sources of information." Through utilizing this method, I was able to organize my data in a more concise and straightforward way, allowing me to come to more meaningful results (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

I began by taking note of the themes I found throughout the 55 transcripts I worked with, such as Trump's frequent storytelling, "othering" of groups of people, undermining of the Democratic Party, and affirmation of the Republican party and his followers, as well as noted

things such as specific language used, literary devices, general content themes, and anything else I believed to be helpful when summarizing my findings. After my initial read through, I went through the transcripts and annotated them again, looking to double check that all the sources I was including fit the criteria I had established for transcripts—I ended up cutting out around eight more transcripts the second time through as well due to them either being too short to provide sufficient contextualization, or because the quote that triggered the filter was unrelated to immigration. After having the final 47 I planned on using, I went through one more time and utilized open and axial coding once again to identify all the themes I found throughout the transcripts. I highlighted specific trends throughout the transcripts which allowed me to "capture a range of meaning abstraction, from the semantic or manifest content of the data, to latent [and] underlying meaning" of Trump's words (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I identified the most important content themes, literary devices, and general trends that I noticed in the transcripts and compiled them into a second document, with the intention of having those be the center focus of my piece.

The sum of transcripts that I was left with after sorting through them have already proved extremely useful in crafting a solid, fact-based argument surrounding the power of language. These transcripts have provided evidence of the communication and narration trends cultivated by Donald Trump throughout his run for presidency and then eventual presidency. Having the exact things that were said over and over again about the issue of immigration has allowed me to carefully notice general trends and pick out specific aspects of the broader argument that was crafted throughout his political career. In addition, accessing such a broad spectrum of Donald Trump's speeches has allowed me to analyze his communication not only over a large span of time, but in a variety of situations—whether it be with foreign leaders, democrats, or members of his own party and see how his use of language shifts in each situation. Lastly, this data further illuminated trends in Trump's communication style, for the majority of the proceedings I analyzed were in situations not closely monitored by the American public or proceedings that were not televised live, and as a result provided more wholistic contextualization for how Trump spoke of refugees and other displaced people both when he had a large audience and when he did not.

Tracy (2004) describes eight "big-tent" indicators of good qualitative research that provide "a simple structure of qualitative methodological best practices can therefore encourage dialogue with members of the scientific, experimental, and quantitative communities" and that "high quality qualitative methodological research is marked by (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h)

meaningful coherence" (p. 3). With that in mind, I worked to embark on qualitative research in a manner that upheld the practice in ethical and practical standards. To be sure that my research was high quality and fit within the qualifications that Tracy set, I began by making sure my topic was worthy by picking something that is relevant and timely—the transcripts I studied were all speeches made within the last five years and are especially relevant for they 1) contributed to the creation of the social and political world in the United States today and 2) Trump is running to be re-elected as the president of the United States this year. Additionally, I used rich rigor through utilizing a variety of samples, contexts, and theoretical constructs—the transcripts I used were from a variety of different years and different political climates and took place in many different locations across the country. In addition, I was guided by two very different theories (narrative paradigm theory and the communication theory of resilience) which provided different lenses from which to analyze my data. Thirdly, I made sure there was sincerity by being transparent about the methods I used to source and analyze my data and worked to be clear in my analysis. Additionally, I upheld the qualifications of credibility as the transcripts I used were all from C-SPAN which is a factual and reliable source. Furthermore, I ensured resonance by making sure my work had transferable findings and naturalistic generalization—the work's ability to provide findings that are applicable to other real-world communicative situations and its ability to offer readers insight through providing real quotations that illuminate Trump's larger narratives. Subsequentially, my work provides significant contributions, as I was able to detail the communicative devices Trump used to shape his persuasive messaging, establish how he built alt-resilience within his followers, and detail how impactful storytelling was in his political career. Lastly, I established ethics and meaningful coherence in my work by conducting my research in a manner that considered procedural, situational, and relational ethics and made sure the study accomplished what it set out to do, using methods that fit its goals (Tracy, 2004).

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Trump was tactical, intentional, and meticulous in his communicative delivery throughout his campaign and sub-sequential presidency. Through utilizing a variety of pointed logical fallacies to the Democratic Party, while building alt-resilience within the American population through recurrent storytelling, he became an extremely successful politician with a very devoted following of Americans. So how did Trump's usage of alt-resilience and storytelling help shape the social world in the United States from the years 2015-2020? Over the next portion of my paper, I will detail how Trump used tactics, narrative framing, and persuasion techniques to cultivate a sense of victimhood, build a sense of "others," and exacerbate one of the largest divisions between the political left and right in the recent history of the United States. For each point, I will briefly give an introduction and provide quotations, then expand on how the theory of narrative paradigm, and the communication theory of resilience helped bolster the results of Trump's political messaging surrounding refugees and immigrants, before lastly giving a synthesis and conclusion.

Victimhood:

The first finding I had after conducting my analysis was that Trump's political messaging and overall communication with the American public emphasized a sense of victimization at the hands of foreigners. His pointed narrative surrounding refugees, immigrants, and people from other nations was overwhelmingly negative and almost always included messaging and anecdotes surrounding claims that foreigners are stealing American jobs, murdering innocent civilians, and are, more often than not, drug dealers, gang members, and rapists. Due to this repeated negative framing of refugees and immigrants and the sub-sequential effects on the American population, a deeply rooted sense of victimhood began to weave itself into the consciousness of Americans across the country.

For more than any of my other findings, the theory of narrative paradigm played a crucial role in allowing Trump to cultivate such a sense of victimization within the American population. Throughout Donald Trump's presidential campaign and following his presidency, he was frequently telling the nation stories—stories of who he was, stories of who the American public was, and stories of "others." One of the biggest topics Trump narrated in a storied manner was that of immigrants and refugees and their supposed threat to our nation and way of life. Stories do not have to necessarily be tales of events with a beginning, middle, and end, and in Trump's case often looked like the narration of dramatized anecdotes, which were frequently isolated and told with inflammatory language. Most often, he described immigrants as "illegal

criminal aliens," "ruthless gang members," and "drug dealers," or even more rarely telling short tales of isolated murders with little evidence to prove the perpetrator was an immigrant, he created a narrative about immigrants based off of storytelling. Although from an outside perspective, or simply reading Trump's public transcripts with no previous knowledge, his storytelling about immigrants and refugees would seem biased and not based in fact—however, for the average American, these stories were captivating and largely believable.

Storytelling has proven itself over and over again to be just as convincing, if not more convincing than a flawless argument, and this portion of my paper serves to illuminate that phenomenon. Through his frequent storytelling about refugees and immigrants, whether in the form of actual anecdotes, in negative side remarks he publicly made about them, or with the adjectives he used to describe them, Trump told a story about who they were and how they mistreated Americans. Although Trump was frequently making disparaging remarks about refugees, immigrants, and foreigners at large, the most frequent ways he employed the theory of narrative paradigm was through using "they are" statements, giving decontextualized anecdotes, and utilizing negative descriptor words.

Frequently Trump made blanket statements surrounding refugees, immigrants, and foreigners generalizing their entire culture or race into one category. He made frequent disparaging remarks about immigrants and the supposed threat they posed; however, arguably what was most damaging was the way in which he categorized every immigrant or refugee into the same negative category. Rarely, if ever, did he speak of the incredible work ethic or high values that many immigrants hold but chose to focus on the negative outliers. Trump's presidential campaign and consequential presidency was fraught with quotes like the following:

> 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. (Presidential Announcement Speech, June 16, 2015)

"I call them illegals" (Trump, April 12, 2019), "my administration is finding illegal immigrants in the criminal gang members, the MS13 killers" (Trump Campaign Rally, Lansing, MI, 2020).

As seen throughout these quotations, Trump generalizes millions of individuals into a singular group at large. He emphasizes the inherent bad in those seeking entrance into the United States while bolstering his own credibility by speaking with overwhelming confidence in himself and what his administration is doing about this so called "bad" group of people.

Through generalizing millions of people into one specific stereotype, Trump painted a blanket picture to the American people of who refugees and immigrants are without hardly ever acknowledging the millions of quality individuals who seek immigration into the United States. In addition to generalizing statements, Trump also gave a variety of decontextualized anecdotes about the violence and crime immigrants have brought and will continue to bring into the United States. These anecdotes were more often than not fairly short, lacking detail and credibility, and from vague sources. The following were anecdotes given by Trump at his rallies, in political speeches, and to the press and display his usage of storytelling, inflammatory language, and lack of contextualizing details:

> Just this week when, as an example, a young woman in San Francisco was viciously killed by a 5-time deported Mexican with a long criminal record, who was forced back into the United States because they didn't want him in Mexico. This is merely one of thousands of similar incidents throughout the United States. In other words, the worst elements in Mexico are being pushed into the United States by the Mexican government (Trump, July 5th 2015).

> On her way to work one morning, down the path along the lake, a tenderhearted woman saw a poor, half frozen snake. His pretty color skin had been all frosted with the dew. Poor thing, she cried, I will take you in and wrapped him up all cozy in a comforter of silk and she laid him by the fire with some honey and some milk. She hurried home from work that night. As soon as she arrived she found that pretty snake she had taken in had been revived. Take me in, oh tender woman, take me in for heaven sake. Take me in, oh tender woman, sighed that vicious snake. She clutched him to her bosom. You are so beautiful, she cried. But I hadn't wrought you and by now you know you would have died. She stroked his pretty skin again and kissed and held him tight, but instead of saying thank you, the snake gave her a bite. Take me and, oh tender woman, take me in for heaven sake. Take me in, oh tender woman sighed that vicious snake. I saved you cried the woman. You bit me, but why? You knew your bite was poisonous and now I am going to die. Shut up silly woman, said the reptile with a grin. You know damn well I was a snake before you took me in… I have been asked by so many people. I have been asked to do that one by so many people. But that pertains a little bit to what we see going on (Trump, Rally in Hickory, NC 2020).

This district attorney in San Francisco put drug dealing illegal aliens into a job and job program instead of into prison. Four months later, the illegal aliens robbed a 29-year-old woman, mowed her down with an SUV, fracturing her skull and ruining her life. We believe our country should be a sanctuary for law-abiding Americans not for criminal aliens" (Trump, 2020 Campaign in Scranton, PA).

It is through the broad portrayal of American cities, groups of people, and isolated instances that the theory of narrative paradigm was enacted all throughout Trump's campaign and presidency. The structure of his storytelling was frequently short but created a pressing sense of realness in the events he spoke of. He would use heavily descriptive words to describe the situation he was speaking of, emphasizing the "bravery" of the Americans and the "ruthlessness" of the immigrants and use such opposing words to craft a clear contrast between the groups of people described. Trump normally kept his actual anecdotes brief, but the alteration of adjectives used were enough to create stories about the immigrants he spoke of and became story enough themselves. He spoke with such confidence and assertion that even when the structure of his story lacked pieces of evidence, the fiery descriptor words and confidence were enough to craft what felt like a structurally sound story.

These generalizations about immigrants, refugees, and people from other nations were storytelling, whether or not it was actually stories that were told. By telling his American listeners who people seeking entrance into the country supposedly were, Trump wove a story over time about how detrimental they, as a group, are to American society and the so-called danger and violence they bring to our country. Additionally, narrative paradigm is extremely evident through Trump's anecdotes as well, for although these were clear stories that were told, they were almost always decontextualized, fraught with inflammatory words, and lacking critical information. His narrative strategies attempted to produce fidelity through relating to life experiences his audience likely related to—such as feeling unrepresented by politicians, not feeling like a priority to their own government, and feeling victim to a large immigrant population.

It was through Trump's frequent use of anecdotes and generalizations over a five-year period that contributed to building a sense of victimhood amongst a large portion of the American population. As illustrated previously, Trump's generalized portrayal of individuals seeking asylum and immigration in the United States was overwhelmingly negative and fraught with inflammatory language that emphasized to the American people—especially those uneducated or with no personal experience socializing with immigrants—how Americans have

been taken advantage of. Furthermore, his direct anecdotes furthered this narrative surrounding the American people's victimization through the often gruesome and detailed manner he went about framing his anecdotes. Additionally, the clear victim/perpetrator dynamic contributed to the building of alt-resilience within his supporters, as this aspect of his storytelling unified them around a common enemy and affirmed the American identity anchors Trump worked to disperse. These two tactics paired together created an overwhelmingly negative story surrounding refugees and immigrants which was soon absorbed into the mass narrative surrounding American immigration.

In addition, Trump's use of generalized statements and anecdotes about refugees and immigrants helped create a further sense of alt-resilience. By narrating just how harmful these people truly are to American society, he created a sense of unity within the American people through the creation of a common enemy—individuals seeking asylum and immigration into the United States. The generalized statement Trump frequently spoke about refugees and immigrants helped build a sense of alt-resilience within a large facet of the American population for his portrayal of these groups of people as being only one way—vicious, dangerous, and posing immediate threat to the American way of life, and made claims like the following: "I said we will get the criminals out, the drug lords, the gang members" (Trump, Drug Cartels and Border Security hearing, 2018), "What can be simpler or more accurately stated? The Mexican Government is forcing their most unwanted people into the United States. They are, in many cases, criminals, drug dealers, rapists, etc." (July 6th, 2015, statement about his June 16th statement).

This manner of communication emphasized to Trump's listeners that those seeking entrance into the United States were violent and would impose harm on society. These quotes call fearful Americans to rally around Trump, as they imply that America's only chance of survival was for us as a country to come together and support Trump's administration.

Furthermore, the importance of Trump's anecdotal patterns cannot be overstated for these specific stories he told furthered his agenda which he had already planted through his negative generalizations of refugees and immigrants. Through his storytelling he was able to weave specific messaging around these issues his campaign and administration was based upon—giving "evidence" to prove his inflammatory descriptions of refugees and immigrants and provide credibility to his argument. These anecdotes were instrumental in building significant alt-resilience within his followers because hearing events that occurred in real life, no matter if they were lacking details or contained highly inflammatory language, can be highly persuasive and furthered Trump's argument that America was in peril and citizens needed to come together

to defeat this imminent danger through their support of him. Trump's specific vocabulary used and manner in which he shaped the anecdotes employed, cultivated a pressing sense of fear within the average American who wasn't researching issues of immigration or asylum on their own, and as a result created a common understanding within Trump's American followers surrounding these issues—that American life as they knew it was in imminent danger at the hands of refugees and immigrants.

It is crucial to mention that the creation of a sense of victimhood is especially relevant to the communicative theory of resilience, for it was through the employment of alt communicative resilience building practices that Trump was able to create that sense within the US population as well as build a base of loyal supporters. Despite Trump's success at employing the first three communicative resilience building practices, Trump did not employ alternative logic or legitimize negative feelings while foregrounding productive action. He often told quick, generalizing anecdotes to warrant a reaction from Americans, such as "No thank you, I don't want people who come into our country and blow up our stores and streets and people" with no mention of statistics of crime or violence, nor the mention of all of the hardworking immigrants in America who fuel the economy (Trump, Martinsburg, PA 2020).

The mentioning of alternative logic would have simply weakened his argument—that the Democrats were ruining our country and that he held all the answers to solve America's problems. Trump focused solely on his own perspective, avoiding others all together, and simply refused to speak about or admit fault in instances when he was in the wrong, whether it be the bankruptcy of several of his businesses or the derogatory things he had been caught on camera saying about women or minorities. He was frequently on record saying things such as "I can never apologize for the truth. I don't mind apologizing for things. But I can't apologize for the truth. I said tremendous crime is coming across. Everybody knows that's true. And it's happening all the time. So, why, when I mention, all of a sudden I'm a racist. I'm not a racist. I don't have a racist bone in my body." (Trump Fox News interview, July 5th 2015).

Additionally, he did not fully legitimize negative feelings while foregrounding productive action—he encouraged negative feelings within the United States population about the state of the nation as a whole, but it was not thorough foregrounding positive action. Despite the several campaign promises he made, he did not follow through on a variety of them. He promised to replace the Affordable Care Act with something "beautiful," and instead left seven million Americans without health insurance. He said he would boost economic growth by 4% a year; however, the unemployment skyrocketed to the highest levels since the Great Depression. He promised to eliminate the federal deficit; however, it rose by more than 60%. He promised the

average family would see a $4,000 pay raise because of his tax cuts for large corporations, but families didn't see any extra money as a result (Reich, 2020). In terms of comparison to other stories, Trump's tales of the violent gang members and drug dealers sneaking in through our Southern border were not spoken about by him alone, but also by his millions of followers across the country. Not only did individuals adopt his stories about immigrants, but so did conservative news channels which reached audiences of millions. The opposition towards alternative logic as discussed in the communication resilience theory portion of my literature review was exemplified here—as conservative news channels became an echo chamber of similar stories of immigrants, painting them to be criminals who murder innocent Americans and steal our jobs. The stories he spoke of about immigrants and the manner in which he described them fit in seamlessly with the narrative that was being dispersed across similar news channels making his specific storytelling seem credible to conservative Americans and those who opposed seeking out alternative logic.

The utilization of narrative paradigm and the communication theory of resilience was instrumental in Trump being able to cultivate such a sense of victimization within a large facet of the American population between the years of 2015 and 2020. Broad statements, decontextualized anecdotes, and the use of inflammatory language, in particular, worked together well in creating and bolstering Trump's argument—that refugees and immigrants are an imminent threat to the American way of life and electing him as president would save our nation from them.

Creating a Sense of "Others"

The second finding I had when conducting my research was that throughout Trump's political messaging he utilized "othering" language to create a deep sense of difference between his American listeners and those seeking entrance into the United States. Through the utilization of a variety of literary devices, Trump was very effective at emphasizing the supposed superiority of Americans compared to those seeking immigration or asylum in our nation and by doing so created a very pervasive sense of "other" within American society.

The theory of narrative paradigm was overwhelmingly relevant in this finding as well, for storytelling was crucial in emphasizing such inherent differences between groups of people. In this case however, Trump utilized a variety of literary devices that contributed to the negative overall story he was painting about refugees and immigrants. Most frequently he utilized persistent repetition of negative words, contrasting positive and negative words placed next to each other in a sentence, comparison words, visual imagery, and inflammatory words to use

communication to further bolster his message. Through employing these literary and narrative tactics, the specific words spoken by Trump were intentional and crafted with purpose—each an opportunity to emphasize to the American people the inherent differences and inferiority between them and those seeking entrance into the United States were made. Nearly every time Trump has publicly spoken about refugees or immigrants, literary devices, such as the ones mentioned previously, have been employed; however, I have included some specific quotes from my research I felt illustrated this point clearly.

As seen throughout the following quotes from Trump, he emphasizes 1) an inherent difference between Americans and those seeking entrance into the United States as well as uses strong contrasting words to describe both groups of people and 2) how unsuccessful the Democratic party is in comparison to the Republican Party. Trump has said a variety of things in his public speeches, such as "Democratic immigration policies are resulting in brutal assault and wicked murders against innocent Americans," and "Far left politicians support deadly sanctuary cities which deliberately released dangerous violent criminal aliens out of the jails and directly on your street" (Rally in Battle Creek Michigan, 2020). "He [Biden] wants to make every community into a sanctuary city for violent criminals—violent criminals. No thank you" (Rally in Gastonia North Carolina, 2020). These quotes display a glimpse into the inflammatory language and visual imagery Trump often used throughout his campaign and presidency narration. By listening to words such as "deadly," "violent criminals," "brutal assault," and "wicked murders," listeners develop more clear images as to what Trump is referring to than if he were describing crimes caused by immigrants in less descriptive or bland terms. As a result, when frequently listening to narration, such as these, about refugees and immigrants, Americans developed deeply rooted mental images of what these crimes against American civilians looked like which invoked powerful emotional reactions.

In addition to the frequent use of inflammatory language and visual imagery, something that Trump employed extremely frequently to emphasize the differences between Americans and refugees and immigrants was repetition of affirming and negative words. In several of his speeches, he repeats the word "alien" over and over again to describe a person of illegal status in the United States. Although not inherently a bad word, when constantly repeated, it frames the person in a negative light—emphasizing that they are otherworldly, foreign, and inherently different from Americans. Furthermore, Trump utilizes repetition frequently in other manners as well, saying things along the lines of: "if the people want to blow us up, if the people want to kill us, if the people hate us, I want a travel ban. Is that so bad?" (Rally in Muskegon, Michigan, 2020). "But it would have allowed what they want. They want to allow virtually unlimited

immigration into our country. They want to allow virtually unlimited access into our country" (Rally in Washington, Michigan, 2020). "So they started moving faster, faster. Put a lot of guys in jail. Put a lot of guys in jail, not good, great. They put a lot go guys in jail" (Rally in Bemidji, Minnesota, 2020). "It was beautiful—a beautiful sight. Law and order. Law and order" (Rally in Bemidji, Minnesota, 2020).

Furthermore, Trump utilized a variety of contrasting and comparison words within his public speeches to assist in bolstering his argument about refugees and immigrants. "You are upper-class. You are the elite. You know the way they talk about the elite. I see them. They are not elite. You are the elite." "I am thrilled to be here with the beautiful, great, hardworking people of this incredible state. You are really hard-working America patriots that is what you are. A lot of peoples have not been treated right until I came along." "Our country is amazing. It is an amazing country. We love this country. We are not going to let radical left socialists/communists take over our country? Ok?" "My ministry should and is keeping terrorists, extremists, and criminals the hell out of our country. We do not want them. We have enough of them." He emphasized stereotypical American identity anchors, to tell the American people as a whole who they are, and what they supposedly deserve as Americans. He frequently utilized alteration repeating over and over how Americans are "hardworking," "honest," and a variety of other positive adjectives which have historically been central values within our culture and politics, and during nearly every public address would affirm Americans as a whole. By affirming Americans in general, he was able to cultivate a narrative that emphasized how Americans are the highest quality of people, deserving of the very best which only he could provide.

As seen through these quotes Trump utilizes, alternation, usage of inflammatory language, contrasting language, comparison words, and visual imagery all contribute to the strength of the story he is weaving about people of other cultures. Trump wove stories of "others" that felt pertinent and real for three main reasons: the structuring of his storytelling, its comparison to other stories, and the credibility of the characters he spoke of. Although lacking in significant fact, Trump's stories had elements of coherence and fidelity that, though flawed, were enough for millions of Americans to accept the stories he told of immigrants and refugees with little questioning. His stories contained elements such as just enough detail, logical sequencing, lacking significant surprises, and vivid descriptions that helped bolster his storytelling in profound ways.

The inclusion of these specific tactics makes the story he tells about people from other countries all the more convincing, as it highlights the supposed differences between Americans and them and inflates negative characteristics and the sense of threat within American society.

Through meticulously building this story with the usage of literary devices, Trump builds a common theme throughout all of his stories about refugees and immigrants—that they are inherently different from Americans, and therefore mistreatment towards them is justified.

Furthermore, with the support of such specific literary devices Trump was able to further contribute to the building of alt-resilience within his supporters. By emphasizing the "inherent" differences between Americans and those seeking entrance into America, he built a sense of unity within his supporters, as nearly every time he spoke publicly, he talked about the admirable qualities of Americans, and nearly every time he spoke about immigrants or refugees, he spoke in detail about their negative qualities. By constantly emphasizing unity of Americans through his affirmation of them versus refugees and immigrants, Trump was able to build a deeply rooted sense of community within his followers, as well as trust in him—for if they felt all the positive things Trump was saying about Americans were true, he would not lie in his description of people seeking entrance into the United States either. Through his storytelling, Trump was able to create extremely persuasive messaging, and paired with the use of othering language, contributed to the building of alt-resilience within the American population.

The use of othering language was instrumental in furthering the building of alt-resilience within the American population.

Division Between the Political Left and Right

Arguably one of the most pervasive legacies of Trump's presidency was the vast division he created between the political left and right within the United States. His presidency created significant change within the social world of the United States in a variety of areas; however, under his leadership the political left and right grew further apart and more estranged than they had ever been in recent years. But how did Trump accomplish such a feat and reshape the culture of our nation to be one when conversations between parties lacked patience, understanding, and empathy? He did this by emphasizing both (a) the differences between Americans and those seeking entrance into the United States and (b) the differences between the Americans who supported him and the Americans who opposed him. Trump's communication was fraught with informal and disparaging remarks. This, coupled with communication reflective of competitive sports culture, was tactical and extremely effective in creating division within the nation. He was the first president in the recent history of the United States to ever make such open and frequent, disparaging remarks about politicians from the other side of the aisle, and he gained attention for doing so. Although many politicians verbally attack their opposition, Trump was unique for his attacks were very frequent, informal, and most often

attacked his opposition as people—rather than just their political stance and various policies. He quickly became infamous for the impolite nicknames he gave to other world leaders and politicians and utilized his Twitter account to publicize inflammatory content about the Democratic Party, among other things, that was often factually incorrect. Even in his public rallies, speeches, and addresses he made very negative remarks about Democrats and their party at large—although there are a variety of examples to pick from, I've included some representative examples of Trump's messaging surrounding Joe Biden below:

- "I've always said it. Biden and Bernie Sanders. Crazy Bernie. One of the greatest losers of all time."
- "The Biden plan. She's telling us how to run our country. And she doesn't love our country that I can tell you the Biden plan."
- "Sleepy Joe Biden is a diehard globalist who spent the last 47 years outsourcing your jobs, opening your borders and sacrificing American blood and treasure in endless foreign wars in countries that most of you have never even heard of before."
- "President Obama used to say that if you wanted something really screwed up, give it to Joe Biden to handle it, this is the guy we have running"
- "Biden's plan will destroy America. My plan will destroy the virus and make America greater than it's ever been."
- "If these corrupt forces succeed in electing Joe Biden, Washington will see to it than another outsider never becomes president again."
- "They target your steel mills, shut down your plants and sent millions of your jobs overseas, all while lining their pockets with special interest cash. And no one embodies this betrayal and treachery more than Joe Biden."
- "Biden cares more about refugees living thousands of miles away than he doesn't about Black Americans."
- Sleepy Joe Biden is bought and paid for by China."
- "The career politicians that offshore your industries and decimated your factories. They support Sleepy Joe, the open borders lobbyists that killed out fellow citizens with illegal drugs, gangs, and crimes."
- "The anti-American radicals defaming out noble history or heritage and heroes. They support sleepy Joe, Antifa and the riders and looters and Marxist and left-wing extremists. They all support Joe Biden."

Narrative paradigm is extremely relevant in this section of my thesis because as seen above, Trump has greatly exaggerated threads of truth about the Democratic Party, and Joe

Biden as well as completely fabricated details about his character and who the Democrats are as a whole. Trump's speech was inflammatory, often untrue, and wove detailed stories about his opposition that those who held his trust believed wholeheartedly. However, Trump's storytelling created a logic in itself—he spoke like the everyday American and appealed to a portion of the population who had felt unrepresented in politics for years. The coherence he created through his anecdotes established the foundation upon which his future narratives were intended to be built.

By using the everyday American's language, through ad hominem attacks and informal dialogue, Trump was able to construct narrative fidelity within his followers through speaking the words his audience thought. When his audience wondered if Joe Biden would be too old to serve as president, Trump vocalized this by naming him "Sleepy Joe." When his audiences viewed the Democratic party as being too liberal, Trump capitalized on his, repeatedly calling them "socialists." When his audiences feared how the immigrant population would shift daily life within the United States, Trump exploited this fear emphasizing how they would steal jobs, bring drugs, and cause harm to families and communities alike. This manner of storytelling was extremely damaging to the citizens of the United States, as it was inherently divisive—drawing sides between those who supported Trump and his communication about the Democratic Party and those who themselves identified as Democrats.

Furthermore, the communication theory of resilience is pertinent in this section as well, similar to the way that Trump cultivated unity within his followers through his negative descriptions of refugees, Trump achieved this through his negative description of the Democratic Party and Joe Biden. By continuously highlighting Biden's supposed inability to do his job, character flaws, and other shortcomings, Trump was frequently discrediting him while both implicitly and explicitly emphasizing to the American people that he was much more qualified to be their president. Trump continuously emphasized how the state of the nation would be in peril with the Democratic party in power, and frequently detailed the bleak future that would occur if this did happen—declaring to Americans that he was their only hope for salvation. By listing out how Biden would put Americans in jeopardy, whether it was their physical safety, job security, or economic stability, Trump created another fear within Americans—the threat of a whole new common enemy. The creation of yet another common enemy, Joe Biden and the Democratic Party, brought strong unity to those Americans who believed Trump's word and feared what Trump said Joe Biden would change about the nation. The creation of common enemies strengthens a group through victimization, and this powerful

unity contributed to the building of alt-resilience and Trump's pressure for Americans to vote for him.

Trump's use of intentional narratives through his frequent disparaging remarks about the Democratic Party and Joe Biden were very tactful in creating alt-resilience within his followers and changing the social world of the United States. The effective coherence of Trump's storytelling was largely affected by the credibility of the characters he spoke of. Almost always, his stories had to do with innocent and hardworking Americans being the victims of violence or corruption at the hands of immigrants from Central America. He frequently spoke of the high-quality Americans who would become victims to the "murderers" and "rapists" that had been allowed entry into the United States through our Southern Border. Because the characters, the victims, Trump spoke of were us Americans, people around the country found his storytelling convincing as the characters he painted in a very favorable light were them and their communities. This description of the American people in such a positive manner preyed upon individuals' egos and made Trump's narrative believable—for if Trump described the American people in such a positive manner, so accurately, he would not lie in his description of immigrants either.

Through speaking so negatively about his opposition, so openly, Trump set a standard that speaking with such hate was tolerated within the United States, drove people from differing political orientations apart, and changed the way that conversations about political issues around the country were held. His precedent promoted ill will, discouraged open conversations, and seemed to tell Americans that a fixed mindset was not only okay, but encouraged.

Beginning with crafting normalcy, rather than emphasizing that the issues the nation faced with completely manageable and nothing extreme, Trump instead emphasized how not normal the state of the nation was. He took frequent digs at the Democratic Party who had been in power for the eight years previous, made inflammatory comments about how horrible the state of the nation was, and centered his entire campaign around the phrase "Make America Great Again," inherently implying that the United States had been deteriorating and was no longer a great nation. Through speaking negatively about anyone who opposed him and dramatizing the issues the nation faced at the time, Trump created a narrative surrounding our nation—that the issues we are facing are not normal, are the fault of the Democratic Party, and can only be fixed by putting and keeping him in power.

 Through the discussion of Trump's storytelling and alt-resilience building during this campaign and presidency, it is evident that he employed two very persuasive manners of speech to create a loyal fan base and bolster his political power. Beginning with alt-resilience building,

Trump was able to cultivate a sense of "us" versus "them" within the American population, emphasizing our union and superiority to people from other cultures and nations. Through highlighting just how pressing the issues facing our nation were at the time, affirming positive American identity anchors, and surrounding himself with likeminded communication networks, Trump was able to not only gain significant political power but create an almost cult-like following of dedicated supporters. In addition, employing frequent storytelling was highly advantageous in Trump's political career as well. Because of human being's natural disposition towards storytelling, listening to frequent, descriptive. dramatic anecdotes stand out in people's minds and make listening to stories more persuasive than the average argument. Even when the logic behind the story was lacking, Trump's assertion, confidence, vivid detailing, and similarity to other stories reported by conservative news outlets were enough to convince millions of people that the stories of violence Trump wove about immigrants and refugees were representative of all people attempting to migrate into the United States.

Through utilizing the communicative processes of resilience building throughout his campaign and presidency, Donald Trump was able to cultivate a pervasive sense of alt-resilience within his conservative communities in the United States. All of these processes assisted him in effectively "othering" groups and individuals who opposed him, but more than anything building a strong and ever loyal base of supporters, many who took what he said as indisputable truth. This sense of alt-resilience is one of the greatest contributors to Trump's political success and allowed him to cultivate an entirely new set of precedents for the American people. By openly speaking with such animosity, ethnocentricity, and ignorance fueled by the communication theory of narrative paradigm, Trump created a sense of alt-resilience within the United States' population and altered the social norms of the country. Suddenly, open hate, ignorance, and limited conversation across party lines was the norm as molded by the nation's president, creating extreme division and tension in the social world of the United States, which will likely take years to correct.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Now, I will delve into the discussion portion of my project, aiming to analyze all the implications of Trump's language on American society and immigrants—past, present, and future. Through this portion I aim to revisit my guiding questions for my project while introducing clear cut answers that I found throughout the duration of my work, rooted in the literature I read on alt-resilience and narrative paradigm. Additionally, I will propose theoretical implications, practical implications, and future directions of research that stem from the effects of Trump's communicative and narrative patterns of his campaign and consequential presidency.

After analyzing the effects of Trump's communicative style on both American society and those seeking entrance into the United States, I have been met with a clear answer to my research questions. My guiding questions for this project were "How did Trump's usage of alt-resilience and storytelling help shape the social world in the United States from the years 2015-2020?" and "How did the communicative creation of a sense of "others" prove advantageous in Trump's political career?" which provided clear guidance for the duration of my project.

Through studying Trump's communication surrounding displaced people in depth, I noticed a variety of patterns. As discussed throughout my paper Trump exemplified the power of storytelling and narrative fidelity through his frequent usage of decontextualized anecdotes fraught with repetition of negative words and inflammatory details. His practice of using contrasting words and phrases close together helped exacerbate the differences between both Americans and those seeking entrance into our country and the differences between his supporters and opposition and proved a persuasive tactic in garnering political support. Additionally, he fostered a sense of alt-resilience, built through using ad hominem attacks against his opposition, emphasizing how poor the state of the nation was before him, incorporating only pieces of information that supported his opinions in his political messaging, and socially presenting himself as a so-called American panacea, especially in terms of immigration. Trump's dialogue was rich in unprecedented manners of communication and provided much guidance for the future study of political movements and discourse. His language emphasizes the need for a shift in public attention to the nature of political arguments and exemplifies just how persuasive leaders can be when their communication builds alt-resilience and utilizes persuasive tactics, such as storytelling and dramatization of details.

After working through literature on alt-resilience and narrative paradigm and then analyzing a variety of Trump's speeches and public addresses, I found that in shaping the social world between the years 2015-2020 Trump was heavily impactful. Through his communicative

patterns of "othering," tearing down those who opposed him, and encouraging a sense of victimization within the American people, Trump created a culture in which hate towards people different than oneself was acceptable and refusing to have open conversations with those of different political opinions was the norm. In addition, when looking at the question—how did the communicative creation of a sense of "others" prove advantageous in Trump's political career?—I was met with a clear answer as well. I found that through "othering" groups that opposed him, such as the Democrats, as well as "othering" those seeking entrance into the United States, Trump's storytelling emphasized fear—that American's safety and way of life was at stake with these groups of people. By utilizing fear, Trump was able to convey a sense of pressure within American citizens to support him as he posed to know all of the answers on how to defeat the Democrats, who supposedly threatened the safety of the nation, as well as emphasize the necessity of him as president as he promised he was the only one who could stop the immigrants that threatened their way of life. As Trump's communication tactics were clearly unprecedented by any American president, and overwhelmingly detrimental to both immigrants and cohesion within American society between the years of 2015 and 2020, there have been many implications for his communications.

Theoretical Implications

Both the theory of narrative paradigm and the communication theory of resilience were multi-dimensional theories that helped develop both my study and findings in a holistic way. Although I did not feel like there were any significant shortcomings within the theories that limited my study or my results, I do think that the theory of narrative paradigm did not fully encompass all the aspects of messages that can contribute to the persuasiveness of a story. As spoken about throughout my paper, Trump utilized several literary devices and literary tactics that went a bit beyond the scope of the theory, such as the use of repetition and inflammatory words. The theory more broadly addresses how humans interact with narrative, and story's inherent persuasiveness, rather than the aspects that build a strong narrative. The additional components he used within his stories to build a stronger argument was the only aspect of my study or finding that did not fully fit into the theory but aligned well with the theory's claim that stories are extremely persuasive to humans.

In addition, the theory of communicative resilience had a few clear shortcomings as well. Although Trump utilized the communicative resilience processes of affirming identity anchors, using communication networks, and legitimizing negative feelings to garner support from his followers—as spoken about in my literature review—Trump was constantly affirming Americans,

encouraging negative feelings about the state of the nation, and utilizing communication networks by surrounding himself with likeminded people. Although these three resilience processes fit extremely well into my findings, Trump did not use two of the processes outlined by Buzzanell in the communication theory of resilience. Trump did not craft a sense of normalcy or employ alternate logics, for both of these processes would have driven Americans together and illuminated shortcomings in his logic and consequential administration and immigration platform which he ran on. He largely built his platform off the idea that immigration is bad instead by justifying his own policy to fix it, which emphasized his lack of other concrete tactics to fuel his run for the presidency, although this tactic did end up proving rather unifying for his following. Furthermore, when considering both the theories I used to guide this study, I felt that they fit rather seamlessly together as both the theory of narrative paradigm and the theory of communicative resilience deal with issues of persuasion, community, and leadership. Both theories are related to topics I find fascinating and offer insight into how to be most persuasive, how to be an effective leader of yourself and groups of people, as well as both relate to the concept of community and groups. Because of their inherent relevance to interpersonal relationships and social organizing, the theory of narrative paradigm and the theory of communication resilience were able to offer much guidance and support to my study as well as help me formulate my findings in a thoughtful and clear manner.

Practical Implications

Next, I will be discussing practical implications of my findings, which answer the "so what?" of the work I have conducted over the past several months. Trump's narration, at large, but especially regarding displaced people, had tangible effects on culture, politics, and people on an individual level within the United States. As spoken about earlier, Trump altered American culture in a distinct way when he was president. Never before had an American president spoken so openly, so disparagingly, about another group of people—whether it be the Democratic Party or those seeking entrance into the United States.

This communicative style had a ripple effect on all those around him. Suddenly, it made it okay for both other conservative politicians, public figures, and individuals to speak derogatorily about groups they opposed with little pushback or consequence. We saw an increase of public slander towards immigrants, a rise of open racism, and even a clear increase in hate crimes during his presidency. This period of time within the United States' history was marked by a sense of fear and anxiety for many immigrants, for suddenly open racism was much more common throughout American society—lead by none other than the President of the

country, who only a few short years early with a minority who looked out for immigrants and displaced people. This distinctive shift in culture led by Donald Trump however did not end with just an increase of racism towards immigrants and refugees; another very negative effect Trump's presidency had on culture was promoting a lack of conversation and openness between people of differing political ideologies. One of the most beneficial things a society can do for internal strength and cohesion is to have open conversations, rooted in empathy and attempted understanding between people of different backgrounds and political parties. Whereas past presidents emphasized to the American people the deep-rooted similarities between all citizens, Trump emphasized these differences and promoted that his ideas and those who agreed with him, were the only ones that should be listened to. He emphasized this through immediately shutting down anyone who questioned him, name calling and discrediting the Democrats, and acting blatantly rude towards anyone who opposed him. This behavior was modeled time and time again and with millions of dedicated followers watching his every move, suddenly similar behavior and an unwillingness for open-mindedness, flexibility, or conversation became much more normalized.

In a political sense, Trump's communication and behavior had enormous effects as well. His frequent interrupting, name calling, and unprofessional, negative, petty remarks served as a model for not only his followers, but other Republican politicians. Trump has secured so much power, so quickly, throughout his run for president all the while practicing these unprincipled communication tactics that fellow Republicans began to wonder whether it was actually an avenue for success and not public embarrassment. Around the country "Trump wannabes" began emerging—politicians hungry for power who emulated Trump's narrative tactics and deeply conservative values. Suddenly, Republican politicians across Washington began speaking in a similar derogatory manner and practicing the same childish behavior that Trump displayed on close to a daily basis as president. Furthermore, Trump's deep conservatism and his consequential aid of those with similar values encouraged the Republican Party as a whole to only deepen their conservatism. People within his own party began to fear opposing him because of all of the power he had achieved politically and the support he maintained by appealing to citizens and politicians alike with deeply rooted victim complexes and an appreciation for the most traditional conservative values. This fear of opposing him, met with Trump's power-hungry nature, led to him appointing extremely conservative people to important positions, such as the two hundred conservative justices he appointed to the federal bench. These appointments, paired with the Republican Party's fear of opposing him, as well as a rise in "Trump wannabes,"

led to tightening constraints around a variety of issues that affected millions of Americans, especially regarding reproductive issues, immigration, and gender equality.

In terms of the people that Trump affected throughout his presidency both in an indirect, and direct manner, there are many. The biggest victims of Trump's narrative are immigrants as well as other displaced people looking for refuge in the United States. As discussed throughout my work, Trump was extremely disparaging towards them, inappropriately negative, and encouraged his followers to speak of and treat immigrants the same way. As a result, there was both a rise in cultural racism towards them as well as an increase in violence. Furthermore, women and homosexual individuals were victims of his disparaging language as well, which had similar effects of increase in maltreatment towards them and a reversion back to how these groups were treated fifty years ago. Really, any group that were not Caucasian men were victims of Trump's negative language and inappropriate comments. On a more indirect level, however, through Trump's language, which led to his consequential power and support from the Republican Party, a variety of extremely conservative acts were passed as a result. Arguably most notable was the overturning of Roe v. Wade which ensured safe abortions to millions of women nationwide. That effect has been felt deeply, especially in poor conservative states where women now are forced to bring a baby they can't care for into the world with no additional monetary support from the government or risk their physical safety by seeking unsafe abortions or risk being arrested.

Trump's language has had clear effects on millions of individuals around the United States for his efforts to achieve and maintain power have sacrificed the rights and safety of a variety of groups. Although in his current campaign Trump claims to care deeply for minorities and women, his past actions contradict those sentiments for both groups lost a lot while he was in office. What would another term for Trump mean for the American people?

Future Directions

Last, I will discuss future implications of this work which address the "so what?" of Trump's communicative pattern and posed questions that have arisen as a result of the way in which he narrated both the existence of immigrants and refugees between 2015 and 2020. I believe that the most pressing question that needs to be asked after reviewing the data and my consequential findings is *what does this mean for the upcoming election?* What would four more years of this divisive and harmful language do to the cohesion of American society and physical and emotional safety of immigrants? After only one term in office, the United States was severely altered under Donald Trump's leadership—not only in terms of policy but in culture as well, for it became more socially acceptable to speak in derogatory terms about people

different than yourself and approach conflicts from a position of hate rather than attempting to understand.

Furthermore, I think a concrete project that could help explore exactly the way Trump's narration was distributed to the American population during his last term, as well as predict the amount of harm his leadership would bring to the United States if elected again, would be to look at how conservative-leaning news outlets reported on his speeches regarding displaced people during his last term. By analyzing not only how Trump himself spoke on immigrants and refugees, but how the news outlets then covered his ideas and remarks, we would be able to shed light upon the sector of the population who has his full support and hopefully be able to understand this from a more intimate view. In addition to seeing the intake of media that intense Trump supporters consume and gaining a more comprehensive understand about what information they typically get from the media, doing this would help predict what another Trump presidency could do to his supporters in addition to the rest of the country by looking at the amount of viewership those previous articles got over the course of his presidency. The concept of victimhood would likely be very strong throughout the news coverage of Trump's speeches, and doing this research would provide an overarching clarification about the types of messages people were receiving on a daily basis that contributed to a large increase of feelings of victimization, which then contributed to the slight cultural shift within the United States.

Conclusion

Language, communication, and narrative are foundational in the shaping of culture. We socially construct who we are and what we value by the words we speak to ourselves and others. The words we speak are much more powerful than the vast majority of people comprehend, and when executed correctly language has the power to accomplish nearly any social goal—which is what makes it a catalyst for being incredibly good and what makes it incredibly dangerous. It is because of the inherent importance of communication that individuals around the world must be intentional about what narratives they intake and consequentially repeat, especially in the United States where the currents of political norm have drastically changed since 2015. The political rise to power of Donald Trump and other extremely conservative Republican politicians have rewritten precedents in addressing the nation, speaking on issues facing the United States, and arguably, most importantly, how groups of people different from Trump or the "typical American" are spoken about. Through Trump's frequent storytelling fraught with inflammatory details and his usage of communicative resilience when addressing the nation, he was not only able to shape dedicated communities of followers but create social acceptance of attitudes of nativism, racism, and hate towards different groups of people. The effects of Trump's public

communication have been lasting and have held tangible effects for groups of minorities across the United States—although the issue of immigration is complex and multifaceted, it should be addressed in a way that upholds the dignity and humanity of all people, not only American citizens. The inherent power of words should not be overlooked, for on both a personal and public level, communication holds real effects in the way we feel about ourselves and others. Although Trump displayed the negative power of language on a public scale, language can hold the power to bring about incredible unity, positive social change, and cohesion within a society.

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