

Yessica Pineda

Dr. Catherine May

PSC 393

March 2, 2020

Trump's Portrayals of Latin American Immigrants in the 2016 Presidential Election

Introduction:

In the United States' Presidential Election of 2016, Republican candidate, Donald Trump, unexpectedly was elected as the forty-fifth president of the United States. Being no more than a businessman and television personality before the election, Trump's campaign revolved around the negative rhetoric against immigrants from all over the world. More specifically, Trump's campaign focused on Latin American immigrants in the United States and building a wall along the Southern border in hopes of decreasing mass incoming migration from South America. Through his use of language throughout his presidential campaign, Trump portrayed Latin American immigrants as a plague that the United States had to immediately eradicate. Furthermore, when analyzing Trump's rhetoric in the 2016 Presidential Election through discourse analysis, it can be inferred that Trump's negative rhetoric of Latin American immigrants was a tactic used to mobilize public sentiment through symbols and metaphors.

Historical Background on Latin American Immigration in the United States:

The history of Latin American immigration in the United States has been long and extensive due to the proximity between both nations (the U.S and South America). Since its founding

in the 1880s, the United States followed an Open Door Policy which consisted of a system with no federal regulation on immigration and border control. According to Drew Heckman's, 'Open Borders: A progressive Immigration Guide Star', "In the United States, there was effectively unrestricted immigration until 1885"(Heckman). Through this statement, it can be inferred that this period most closely resembled that of an Open Border approach since there was no sort of regulation on immigration through the state or government. There were often some small restrictions made by the individual's state in regards to enforced residence laws that restricted immigrants from living or migrating to certain parts of the nation. However, aside from these restrictions, millions of Latin American immigrants were able to migrate back and forth from both countries at their liking.

However, this notion was changed due to the implementation of the Bracero Program in August of 1942. According to Sergio Chávez's, "The Sonoran Desert's Domestic Bracero Program: Institutional Actors and Creation of Labour Migration Streams", The Bracero "program was vital to the development of large-scale agriculture in the American southwest because migrants provided cheap labor" (Chávez). As stated through Chavez's work, the Bracero Program in the United States consisted of a system in which the United States along with the Mexican government, collaborated in contracting low-wage Mexican workers to address their labor shortages after the war. According to Chávez, "During the bracero program's twenty-two-year existence, some 4.6 million labor contracts were distributed to men, often reducing growers' labor costs by 50 percent" (Chávez). This created a great shift in Latin American immigration in the United States as individuals were no longer migrating because of the desire to move to a new

place but rather, to work. This furthermore creates the contemporary notion that Mexican immigrants migrate due to economic stability.

Although Latin American immigration in the United States has always been seen as a beneficial factor through its cheap labor and increase in the economy, this ideology is challenged through Trump's rhetoric in the 2016 Presidential Election as he creates a shift on this particular view of the typical hardworking Latin American immigrants in the United States.

Literature Review:

The topic of Trump's articulation on Latin American immigrants throughout the 2016 Presidential Election has been written on plenty. However, it has not been widely analyzed through political discourse analysis.

One of the most influential writers to discourse analysis in politics is, Murray Edelman. Through Murray Edelman's, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, Edelman creates a new take on the use of language in politics through his creation of "condensation symbols" and "hortatory language style". According to Edelman, "Politics is for most of us a passing parade of abstract symbols...its processes become easy objects upon which to displace private emotions, especially strong anxieties and hopes" (Edelman, 5). This statement furthermore infers that Edelman believes the language in politics to be, a set of remote symbols meant to stimulate emotions and hopes within a community. To further continue this rhetoric, Edelman introduces the idea of "condensation and referential symbols". According to Edelman, "Referential symbols are economical ways of referring to the objective elements in objects or situations: the elements identifies in the same way by different people" (Edelman, 6). Furthermore, Edelman contrasts his idea of the "referential symbol" as he defines the "condensation symbol" to "evoke the emotions as-

sociated with the situation. They condense into one symbolic event, sign, or act patriotic pride, anxieties, remembrances of the past glories or humiliations, promises of future greatness” (Edelman, 6). For my particular research, I will be focusing on Edelman’s creation of the “condensation symbol” as Trump uses this exact tactic in his speeches to play upon the American’s view on Latin American immigrants. Through this condensation symbol, Trump is seen to embody aspects such as patriotic pride, remembrances of past glories, and promises of future greatness through his campaign slogan, ‘Make America Great Again’. Furthermore, Trump places anxieties on Americans by posing Latin American immigrants as a threat to American Nationalism.

Another aspect posed through Edelman’s, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, is Edelman’s introduction of a set of distinct language styles: hortatory, legal, and administrative, to prove that language is essentially a set of remote symbols. However, for this analysis, I will be focusing mainly on Edelman’s perception of the hortatory style. Hortatory language is very popularized within the large audience masses such as elections and debates to persuade and coerce a certain group of people which is what makes it perfect for the analysis of Trump’s rhetoric in the 2016 Presidential Election. According to Edelman, “The hortatory style consists formally of premises, interfaces, and conclusions...The conclusions, being promises or threats amount to appeals of public support” (Edelman, 134). This statement furthermore implies that a hortatory language style is a form of rhetoric used by an individual in which they pose a threat and ask for public support to overcome that threat. This is also a great connection to Trump’s rhetoric towards Latin American immigrants in the United States as he is seen to use this tactic as a form to generate more voters. Furthermore, by posing Latin American immigrants as a great threat to American

society through aspects such as crime increase and abuse of the economy, Trump generates support by proposing to build a wall to keep those criminals out. Therefore, by voting for Trump, Americans invest hope in being safe from said threat. Another influential figure in the study of discourse analysis is George Lakoff.

In George Lakoff's, *Moral Politics*, Lakoff pursues to articulate the cognitive linguistics framework through his theory of metaphor. According to Lakoff, "One of the most fundamental results in cognitive science...most of our thought is unconscious...In recent years my work has centered on two components of conceptual systems: conceptual metaphors and categories" (Lakoff, 4). Through this statement, it can be inferred that Lakoff's theory of metaphor revolves around the fact that individuals tend to think in metaphor form unconsciously. This analysis is essential to my overall study as it analyzes the use of metaphor often used by political figures such as Trump. According to USA TODAY's, John Fritze, "The exclusive USA TODAY analysis showed that together, Trump has used the words 'predator,' 'invasion', 'alien', 'killer', 'criminal' and 'animal' at his rallies while discussing immigration more than 500 times" (Fritze). When analyzing Trump's rhetoric, it can be concluded that his use of metaphor through negative connotations such as 'predator' and 'alien' teaches the viewer to personally connect those concepts to create a negative image when it comes to immigrants. Furthermore, through Erika Sabrina Quinones, "(UN) Welcome To America: A Critical Disclosure Analysis of Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric In Trump's Speeches and Conservative Mainstream Media" Lakoff's idea of metaphor is furthermore emphasized.

Through Erika Sabrina Quinones, "(UN) Welcome To America: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Anti-Immigrant rhetoric In Trump's Speeches and Conservative Mainstream Media",

Quinones “ makes the empirical assertion that the U.S President Donald Trump and conservative news media outlets contribute to a national narrative of xenophobia that frames immigrants, particularly those of color, as a parasitic and dangerous to the American way of life” (Quinones, iii). In doing so, Quinones analyzes and poses the idea of the negative representation of ‘them’ and the positive representation of ‘us’ along with metaphorical constructions that dehumanize Latin American immigrants as seen above.

Furthermore, the idea of the ‘them’ and ‘us’ creates a major separation between immigrants in the United States’ citizens since it creates the idea of the ‘other’ furthermore posing immigrants as an unknown threat to society. This is best portrayed through Trump’s campaign speeches as he uses terms such as ‘we’ and ‘them’ which furthers separation and dehumanizes Latin American immigrants in the United States.

Methodology:

For my methodology, I will be drawing from a series of transcripts of Trump’s campaign speeches ranging from June 2015 to August 2016. The series of speeches will include, Donald Trump’s 2016 RNC Draft speech, Donald Trump's campaign speech in Wisconsin, Donald Trump’s campaign speech in Charlotte, and Donald Trump’s Presidential Announcement Speech. I chose this series of speeches since they have a great range. I include Trump’s very first Presidential Announcement speech along with the progress of his campaign and his nomination to become the Republican candidate. Furthermore, I chose to include Trump’s Presidential Announcement speech since I wanted to analyze the first ideas of his campaign and view whether they would change to adapt to his audience in order to generate more attention or votes. Furthermore, his rhetoric is seen to be quite successful as he becomes the nominee for the Republican

Presidential Candidate. In continuance to the series, I chose Trump's campaign speeches in both Wisconsin and Charlotte is that both states are well known to be very conservative. By doing this, I sought to discover whether Trump increased his negative portrayal of immigrants due to the states consisting of a larger conservative audience. I will examine the following linguistic strategies on Trump's rhetoric on Latin American immigration in the United States throughout the time frame of June 2015 to August 2016:

- Murray Edelman's "Hortatory Language" and "Condensation Symbols".
- George Lakoff's "Theory of Metaphor".
- Erika Sabrina Quinones' idea of "the negative representation of 'them' and the positive representation of 'us'".

Furthermore, I chose these specific speeches because each one of them further emphasizes Trump's use of discourse analysis in the negative portrayal of Latin American immigrants in the United States as a political tactic to attract more supporters/followers.

Data:

Donald Trump's 2016 RNC Draft Speech Transcript

By POLITICO STAFF 07/21/2016 06:21 PM EDT

- "Together, we will lead our party back to the White House, and we will lead our country back to safety, prosperity, and peace. We will be a country of generosity and warmth. But we will also be a country of law and order" (Donald Trump).

The rhetoric posed here could best be analyzed through Edelman's "Hortatory Language" as Trump promises a hopeful future for the United States. However, by using the repetitive lan-

guage of 'we' he asks for public support in reaching the goals of a peaceful nation, free of immigrants.

- "The number of new illegal immigrant families who have crossed the border so far this year already exceeds the entire total from 2015. They are being released by the tens of thousands into our communities with no regard for the impact on public safety or resources" (Donald Trump).

Although the rhetoric posed here is quite similar to the one stated above, it draws upon Quinones' idea of "the negative representation of 'them' and the positive representation of 'us'". This is best seen through Trump's use of 'they' to categorize Latin American immigrants versus the use of 'our communities' which in continuance is used to categorize Americans. By playing with this rhetoric, Trump creates the idea of an all-exclusive United States that views outsiders as a threat.

- "On Monday, we heard from three parents whose children were killed by illegal immigrants Mary Ann Mendoza, Sabine Durden, and Jamiel Shaw. They are just three brave representatives of many thousands. Of all my travels in this country, nothing has affected me more deeply than the time I have spent with the mothers and fathers who have lost their children to violence spilling across our border" (Donald Trump).

The rhetoric imposed through this quote can best be identified through Edelman's "Condensation symbol". As mentioned in the Literature Review, to Edelman, politics is a series of remote symbols meant to stimulate the audience. In this case, Trump uses the condensation symbols of associating the words "killing" and "illegal immigrants" together. Furthermore, this raises hate against illegal immigrants as the viewer watching Trump's campaign now has a negative

view towards the immigrant as his cues have led his audience to associate the idea of killing with an illegal immigrant.

- “To all Americans tonight, in all our cities and towns, I make this promise: We Will Make America Strong Again.

We, Will, Make America Proud Again.

We, Will, Make America Safe Again.

And We Will Make America Great Again” (Donald Trump).

The rhetoric posed through this quote can best be analyzed under Edelman’s “Condensation Symbol” as it proposes a fight to regain past glories and promises of future greatness through Trump’s campaign slogan of ‘Make America Great Again’. Furthermore, by portraying immigration as the cause of the greatness seen in the past, it creates more negative attitudes towards immigrants. His slogan further proposes a turn back to a better past in an era of mass deportation, less racial diversity, and safer neighborhoods. An America without immigrants.

Donald Trump’s Campaign Speech in Wisconsin

By POLITICO STAFF 08/17/2016 12:16 AM EDT

- “These are tough times. But I know we can make American Greater Than Ever Before.

To do this, we are going to need a fighter in the White House.

I will be your fighter.

I will fight to ensure that every American is treated equally, protected equally, and honored equally” (Donald Trump).

This rhetoric could best be explained through Lakoff’s “Theory of Metaphor” which poses the idea that individuals tend to think in the form of metaphor. This idea applies to Trump’s

use of metaphor as a 'fighter' and the act of regaining American power as a 'fight' it creates the idea of Latin immigrants as an enemy or an 'opponent', further making them a threat to the United States.

Donald Trump's Campaign Speech in Charlotte

08/19/2016 at 8:55 AM EDT

- "Another major issue in this campaign has been the border. Our open border has allowed drugs and crime and gangs to pour into our communities. So much needless suffering, so much preventable death. I've spent time with the families of wonderful Americans whose loved ones were killed by the open borders and Sanctuary Cities that Hillary Clinton supports" (Donald Trump).

The rhetoric posed through this statement is best analyzed through Edelman's "Hortatory Language Style" which poses the use of a threat to persuade or influence an individual through emotions felt by the symbol imposed. In this case, Trump uses harsh symbols such as, 'crime', 'gangs' 'suffering' 'death' 'killed'. By using all of these negative and harsh words, Trump creates a negative resonance upon the individual leads to the association of those terms with Latin American immigrants.

Donald Trump's Presidential Campaign Announcement

06/16/2015

"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 bring-

ing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people”

The ideology that best describes this statement is Quinones' idea of “the negative representation of ‘them’ and the positive representation of ‘us’”. In this case, Trump associates the good with the word ‘you’ and the words of drugs, crime, and rapists with ‘they’. Furthermore, this creates a disconnect since the individual is now taught that the American way is good, and the foreign is bad as they symbolize evil and crime.

Limitations:

One of the major limitations faced through this analysis was the fact that I was restricted only to the 2016 Presidential Election. Although this period in time did offer a great abundance of information and coverage, after seeing Trump's proposed policies on immigration in 2016 versus how they played out throughout his entire administration would have been an interesting pursuit. An event I would have loved to have been able to focus on was the 2018 Immigrant Caravan from Honduras. The Caravan from Honduras was made up of a large group of Hondurans who sought relief from their government. A lot of people perceived them as animals and intruders, including Trump.

Another limitation I had to my analysis was my inability to analyze a greater amount of speeches and or material due to the small restriction in time. With there being a mass amount of material, I was not able to fully cover the argument as a whole.

Conclusion:

According to René Flores', "Can Elites Shape Public Attitudes Toward Immigrants?: Evidence from the 2016 US Presidential Election", Flores describes American politics as, “Scholars

have argued that politicians' use of symbolic language blaming vulnerable groups, such as racial minorities, immigrants, and poor families, for society's problems may not only encourage popular support for exclusionary policies but also influence public views of these groups themselves" (Flores). This ideology that political figures use discourse tactics to influence and ultimately control public ideology and belief is furthermore embodied through Trump's negative rhetoric on Latin American immigrants throughout the 2016 Presidential Election.

When applying Murray Edelman's "Hortatory Language" and "Condensation Symbols", George Lakoff's "Theory of Metaphor" and Erika Sabrina Quinones' idea of "the negative representation of 'them' and the positive representation of 'us'" to all four of Trump's campaign speeches, it can be inferred that Trump does indeed use discourse tactics to persuade and control his audience's ideology and perspective. This can be seen through the outcome of the data as every single one of the excerpts of Trump's Presidential Campaign speeches had at least one embodiment of the discourse analyses stated above.

Furthermore, this analysis is essentially important to modern-day politics as it speaks on not only the values behind the individual who is in office currently but rather how easily the American society is persuaded to think a certain way based upon a combination of symbols and metaphors. This issue is also very essential to the modern-day as many individuals are seen to suffer from the separation of families through mass deportations and an increase in border security implemented through the Trump Administration. According to the Community of Psychology "With 340,056 people being deported from the country in 2017 (US Department of Homeland Security, 2017). Most people who are deported have lived in the country for over a decade and many are parents or caregivers of US citizens" (Community of Psychology). As it can be seen in

through this statement, there has been a major increase in mass deportations under the Trump Administration which furthermore affects a large number of immigrant families since they are being separated and children are seen to fend for themselves as their parent is taken back to their native country.

Furthermore, after analyzing Trump's negative rhetoric towards Latin American immigrants in the United States and coming to the conclusion of it being a tactic to gain more attention and followers through characterizing immigrants as 'rapists' or 'criminals', it is overall very upsetting. The United States was created on a nation of immigrants and the pursuit of the American Dream, however, those values are seen to evaporate to thin air as corrupt individuals such as Trump infiltrate the political arena.

Works Cited

- Blake, Aaron. "Donald Trump's Best Speech of the 2016 Campaign, Annotated." The Washington Post, WP Company, 19 Aug. 2016, www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/08/19/donald-trumps-best-speech-of-the-2016-campaign-annotated/.
- Chávez, Sergio. "The Sonoran Desert's Domestic Bracero Programme: Institutional Actors and the Creation of Labour Migration Streams." *International Migration*, vol. 50, no. 2, Apr. 2012, pp. 20–40. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2435.2009.00544.x.
- Edelman, Murray J. *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. University of Illinois Press, 1985.
- Flores, René D. "Can Elites Shape Public Attitudes Toward Immigrants?: Evidence from the 2016 US Presidential Election." *Social Forces*, vol. 96, no. 4, June 2018, pp. 1649–1690. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1093/sf/soy001.
- Fritze, John. "Trump Used Words like 'Invasion' and 'Killer' to Discuss Immigrants at Rallies 500 Times: USA TODAY Analysis." *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 21 Aug. 2019, www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2019/08/08/trump-immigrants-rhetoric-criticized-el-paso-dayton-shootings/1936742001/.
- Gass, Nick, et al. "Full Text: Donald Trump 2016 RNC Draft Speech Transcript." *POLITICO*, 21 July 2016, www.politico.com/story/2016/07/full-transcript-donald-trump-nomination-acceptance-speech-at-rnc-225974.
- Heckman, Drew. "Open Borders: A Progressive Immigration Guide Star." *Harvard Journal of*

Hispanic Policy, Jan. 2019, pp. 65–80. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=136573049&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Lakoff, George. *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know That Liberals Dont*. University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Quinones, Erika Sabrina. (UN)WELCOME TO AMERICA: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE

ANALYSIS OF ... June 2018, scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1710&context=etd.

Staff, TIME. "Donald Trump's Presidential Announcement Speech." *Time*, Time, 16 June 2015, time.com/3923128/donald-trump-announcement-speech/.