

THE RHETORIC OF AUTHORITARIANISM IN THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL
CAMPAIGN OF DONALD TRUMP

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	1
II. THE AUTHORITARIAN RHETORICAL STYLE.....	24
III. THE RHETORIC OF AUTHORITARIAN SPECTACLE.....	48
IV. THE ETHOS OF AUTHORITARIANISM.....	68
V. CONCLUSION.....	91
LITERATURE CITED.....	96

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

With the recent trend towards nationalism in elections around the world and with the election of Donald Trump as president, authoritarianism has been back in the news. When Trump first entered the presidential race on June 16, 2015, few critics gave him much of a chance. He was too brash, too unpredictable, and too liberal to gain any real traction in a race that was filled with conservative Republican top brass and young stars. How could Trump make it out of a field of sixteen respected conservative candidates? How would he survive a pool that included a member of the Bush dynasty, a dynamic Marco Rubio, a shrewd Ted Cruz, and a relatively moderate Chris Christie? All were candidates with respect from the traditional Republican establishment and all had the ability to fundraise successfully while at the same time winning important endorsements from Republican members of Congress. Surely, most pundits seem to agree, Trump would linger for a few months, generate the publicity he desired, and then bow out respectfully after a state primary or two, simply generating the publicity many thought he craved. These predictions could not have been more wrong, and 2016 in America became not only the year of Donald Trump, but also of authoritarianism, populism, and nationalism in American politics.

Trump began his presidential candidacy campaign with the promise to “make America great again.” He was careful to set the tone and agenda from day one, stating in his first speech on June 16th, “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re sending lots of problems. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re bringing rapists” (Quealy). The vitriol continued throughout the rest of his

campaign. A few weeks later, on July 8th, Trump promised to build a wall on the US border and argued that the Mexican government should pay \$100,000 for every illegal immigrant apprehended. The next week, Trump widened his scope even further and insulted John McCain and other former POWs, stating, “I like people who weren’t captured” (Quealy). August of 2015 brought the first Republican debate, where, in a tiff with Fox News debate moderator Megyn Kelly, Trump remarked Kelly had “blood coming out of her wherever” (Quealy). A few weeks later, during another debate, Trump attacked Republican presidential candidate Carly Fiorina, saying, “Look at that face! Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president?” (Quealy). Instead of retreating from these bombastic remarks, Trump often doubled down on many of his comments over the course of his campaign. In doing so, three central themes began to emerge in his campaign: illegal immigration, national defense, and trade policies. Of course, Trump’s litany of offensive and insensitive remarks is lengthy and grew at a feverish rate throughout the campaign. Various newspapers and media outlets took to cataloguing such remarks. For example, a list maintained by *The New York Times*, as of August 2016, compiled 258 people attacked by Trump (Quealy). Yet, throughout the first year of Trump’s campaign and in spite of the growing list of insults, it seemed the more insulting and offensive Trump was, the more successful he became during the primary season, which begs the perplexing question: how could a presidential candidate say so many deplorable and objectively xenophobic and rancorous comments and yet appeal to so many people? How did Donald Trump, the reality television star and former ringmaster of the Miss Universe pageant, defy his critics, shock the world, and become the Republican nominee for president of the United States?

At the same time that Trump began his campaign, I returned from a three year teaching stint in Portugal. After spending only a few weeks in the U.S. during those three weeks, and having spent years living in a peaceful and largely forgotten country that few Americans can find on a map, my encounter with the polarization and the divisiveness in the U.S. took me by surprise and felt more pronounced than it had previously. This feeling was perhaps intensified by the fact that my return to the U.S. took me from my home state of Michigan across the country to Texas, where the feelings of polarization seemed to be more palpable and pronounced, perhaps because so many social issues lay at the forefront of the Texan conservative majority.

Meanwhile, while Trump continued campaigning his way across America, I adjusted to life in Texas and began my graduate degree in Rhetoric and Composition. During my first year of graduate school, I had the good fortune of developing an interest in rhetorical history and theory during an election season, where each day's news provided plenty of fodder for study and actuality to the theory I was encountering within the classroom. By the end of my first year of graduate school, I felt certain I wanted to research political rhetoric, but I wanted to study it in a way that might help me understand the political phenomenon both in my new home in Texas, as well as the markedly different America that I had returned to, but that had, since my return, felt so foreign to me.

In their struggle to understand the Trump phenomenon, pundits and political scientists alike have proposed numerous theories. There have been socioeconomic explanations and interpretations linking Trump's rise to sensationalism in the media. There have been political science explanations that suggest the rise was due to the decline

of cohesive political parties and the ever-increasing polarization of American politics. Others see the phenomenon through a more global lens, seeing the rise of Trump as a part of a recent global trend towards populism and nationalism. There were other more basic explanations as well: people were angry and tired of political correctness, and perhaps the Republican party had been too soft, not conservative enough. In Trump, some suggested, politically marginalized, blue collar, rust-belt Americans found a candidate with whom they could project their concerns and fears, including those of mass immigration, of national security, and of a global economy that had stripped many Americans in small towns of their livelihood and way of life. Although many of these explanations are reasonable and legitimate, what they each lack is an academic framework from which to construct a theory that might fully explain Trump's rise and how each of these explanations might be part of a deeper, more complex conceptualization.

Since Trump announced his candidacy in June of 2015, there have been countless articles published in major news publications and periodicals that have sought to understand the rise of Trump by looking at the phenomenon through the eyes of what they call authoritarianism. Tuning into cable news or reading through news stories will no doubt result in someone describing Trump as an "authoritarian figure." Yet, while there has been no shortage of discussion about authoritarianism, as the word operates in the pedestrian sense of the word, it is important to note that this commonly used word itself can often elude definition and is often pejoratively laden with explicitly conservative connotations. To be clear: this thesis uses the word *authoritarianism* in the academic sense and as a subject and field of study well-established in psychology, sociology, and political science. However, one tangential question that this paper might help to shed

light on, is “how does the more pejoratively used term “authoritarian” compare with its use in academic study?”

In May of 2016, I read an article written by Amanda Taub entitled “The Rise of American Authoritarianism” that was published on the website *VOX*. The article explored the findings of Matthew MacWilliams, a PhD student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst who studies authoritarianism as understood in the field of political science and psychology. McWilliams examined a survey data taken during the Republican primary, which included a measurement of authoritarianism that has long been used in the field of psychology. McWilliams found that there was a strong correlation between those with authoritarian attitudes, as revealed in the measurement and survey, and Trump supporters. In fact, the results of the data showed that scoring high in authoritarianism was the strongest existing indicator in predicting support for Trump (MacWilliams). Furthermore, the article contained abbreviated findings from research and scholarship that would eventually become the framework for this thesis. This included an overview of studies of authoritarianism in both the fields of psychology and political science, as well as the different measurements that are often used to assess authoritarianism in individuals.

Yet, while the article explored the characteristics of those who exhibit authoritarian tendencies, as well as the ways in which authoritarians often respond in situations where they feel threat, what was critically absent from the discussion of authoritarianism within the article was *how* Trump was so successfully communicating with this audience in order to appeal to their authoritarian propensities. In other words, how is Trump using *rhetoric* in order to identify with his authoritarian audience, and how

and why are his supporters responding to Trump as an authoritarian leader? And, how might studies in authoritarianism help us better understand the nature of Trump's campaign rhetoric? As I progressed through my graduate program and began to notice the already strong bond between the fields of psychology, political science, and rhetoric, I realized that rhetoric was uniquely positioned to answer these questions and to provide a more thorough understanding of the way in which Trump not only epitomizes the authoritarian, strong-man leader, but also the way in which he uses rhetoric to appeal so successfully to authoritarians.

In the following literature review, I will first provide an overview of research centered on authoritarianism as understood in the fields of political science and psychology. Studies of authoritarianism in psychology help to shed light on authoritarian passions and social attitudes, while studies in the field of political science and political psychology help to explain the effects of authoritarianism as it pertains to societal groups and political movements. Secondly, after laying a framework of authoritarianism as studied and defined in psychology and political science, I will then discuss the ways in which studies in both classical and contemporary rhetorical theory are uniquely positioned to help to explain authoritarianism. Finally, I will show how studies of authoritarianism in political science and psychology might help inform a new conceptualization of authoritarian rhetoric.

While contemporary rhetoric is now positioned in a broader and seemingly borderless interdisciplinary context, classical rhetoric, from Ancient Greece to the Enlightenment, has long been concerned with the intersection of rhetoric, politics, and civil society. Sharon Crowley has discussed and somewhat resurrected this connection in

her work *Toward a Civil Discourse*. The once prominent place of rhetoric in civic society is sadly now largely lost. While the purpose of this paper is to introduce studies of authoritarianism to the field of rhetoric and to argue it as a topic worthy of more discussion and research, I also hope to demonstrate that the importance of rhetoric in civic society and argue for a renewed focus on rhetoric in its most historical domain.

Noted contemporary rhetorician Kenneth Burke's theories on identification prove helpful in providing a framework for a kind of authoritarian rhetoric, with Burke's theory of identification and consubstantiality being especially useful when thinking of authoritarianism as being inherently group-centered, or, as Karen Stenner states, the balance between, "group authority and uniformity" and "individual autonomy and diversity" (2). Finally, I will also draw heavily on classical rhetorical theory, especially that of Aristotle, whose ideas on rhetorical style, rhetorical spectacle, and ethos provide a solid framework from which to discuss an authoritarian modes of parallel concepts and the way they might be manifest in the Trump campaign. Together, in this review, I hope to construct a strong interdisciplinary study that introduces authoritarianism to the field of rhetoric as an important and timely topic that is worthy of attention and deeper study.

Literature Review

The study of authoritarianism in the fields of political science and psychology is expansive, dating to 1930's Germany where researchers sought to understand the particulars that lead to the rise of anti-Semitism and fascism. From its beginnings, scholars studying authoritarianism have been more interested in understanding the individual psychological profile of individuals who, in uncertain or threatening circumstances, look to powerful, strong-man, authoritarian figures. In the 1950 landmark

study that culminated in the book *The Authoritarian Personality*, Adorno, et al., developed and conducted a study using Freudian psychodynamics that attempted to explain the psychology behind ethnocentrism and the sudden rise of anti-Semitism (Feldman 41). To this end, researchers identified nine characteristics of authoritarianism. Moreover, included in the study was the F-scale, with the “F” appropriately representing fascism. While the study was largely conducted to understand a specific social phenomenon, namely the rise of anti-Semitism in the 1930’s, it became a seminal work in understanding ethnocentrism and authoritarianism in both psychology and political science.

Although *The Authoritarian Personality* and its accompanying research and survey proved influential in putting theory and explication to events that transpired in Europe during the 1930’s and 1940’s, scholars in the fields of psychology and sociology quickly seized upon specific aspects of the theory and the F-scale in seeking to understand a broad range of historical and sociological issues. Yet, several problems surfaced as result of using the F-scale so widely. Political psychologist John Duckitt argues that at the center of these problems was the fact that within this “classical approach” only authoritarian traits were provided and *authoritarianism* itself was never clearly defined (“Authoritarianism and Group Identification” 64). The result of this deficiency was that the F-scale became an unreliable method of testing authoritarianism in other contexts. This inadequacy is reflected in later reviews of *The Authoritarian Personality* that disparaged both the conceptualization used by Adorno, et al., as well as the empirical research conducted. Stanley Feldman argues that although subsequent research findings on authoritarianism multiplied, such studies were rarely drawn

unequivocally from an actual “theory” of authoritarianism (42). In light of these challenges and shortcomings, and the lack of any survey to replace the F-scale, the 1970’s saw a decline in the study of authoritarianism across all academic disciplines.

In 1988, Bob Altemeyer responded to the lack of a reliable measure of authoritarian tendencies and published his RWA scale (Right-Wing Authoritarianism). The RWA scale was created out of the need to put a more definitive sociological dimension to authoritarianism, which was lacking in the highly politically-driven F-scale. Altemeyer’s intent was to create a scale based on social learning theory with clusters of questions that connected directly to the nine traits listed in the work of Adorno, et al. The result was a conceptualization that understands authoritarianism as a social attitude (Feldman 42). Altemeyer divides the original nine traits from the F-scale into three broad categories of social attitudes: submission, aggression, and conventionalism (Altemeyer 3). While the RWA scale initially seemed promising and succeeded in being more reliable and less one-dimensional than the F-scale, its use ultimately waned because its questions were centered on overly simplistic positions on social issues and not on the personality of the voters themselves. For example, questions included inquiries based on social conservatism such as, “Gays and lesbians are just as healthy and moral as anybody else” and “There is absolutely nothing wrong with nudist camps” (Altemeyer 5). The result, as Feldman and others have pointed out, is that the RWA scale often conflates social conservative positions with authoritarianism” (43). Feldman goes on to sum up his skepticism by pointing out three major problems in Altemeyer’s RWA scale: “the relationship of authoritarianism to prejudice and intolerance, the correlation between authoritarianism and conservatism, and the similarity between measures of

authoritarianism and the variables we want to explain” (44). In short, the RWA scale proved largely unreliable because it often conflates socially and morally conservative positions with authoritarianism, leading to criticism for harboring a clear ideological bias.

As a result of the shortcomings of both the F-scale and the RWA scale, psychologists Stanley Feldman and Karen Stenner devised a measurement of authoritarianism that attempted to divorce authoritarianism from both political positions and social issues. The result was a four-question survey centered on questions pertaining to parental expectations. Stenner and Feldman’s survey is simple, and, unlike Altemeyer’s RWA and the F-scale, it eliminates political questions and questions on social issues entirely. Instead, the survey measures authoritarian tendencies by inviting people to answer questions pertaining to child-rearing preferences. The items on the scale explore people’s preference for children who are obedient, well-behaved, and who exhibit respect for elders and good manners. The four questions included in the survey are as follows:

- 1) Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have:
independence or respect for elders?
- 2) Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have:
obedience or self-reliance?
- 3) Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have: to be
considerate or to be well-behaved?
- 4) Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have: curiosity
or good manners?

(Stenner and Feldman 751)

The purpose in including questions related to parental expectations was to identify those who are predisposed for and exhibit authoritarian tendencies, and to ensure the measure was not conflating traditional moral and social conservatism with actual authoritarian tendencies and cognitive behavior. The result is a measure that analogizes hierarchical thinking at home with hierarchical thinking in society.

Since 1997, scholars have used this simple four-question scale to explore a wide-range of topics, including voting choices. The results point to the scale being both reliable and strong predictor of intolerance, hawkishness, and other aggressive attitudes (Stenner, Heatherington and Weiler, Duckitt). With social issues pertaining to conformity, authority, and order being at the center of much of the polarization in America today, Feldman's four-question scale proves useful in understanding how authoritarianism contributes to these divides, as well as how authoritarianism, as understood in a hierarchal way using this scale, might inform fields outside of political science and psychology.

Defining Authoritarianism

Since the publication of the F-scale in 1950, authoritarianism has proven difficult to define, with psychology and political science differing in the ways in which they most often describe it. Furthermore, scholars in the field of psychology have been unsure if authoritarianism is a personality trait, an attitude, or an ideology. Originally, drawing on its Freudian theoretical origins, psychologist Adorno, et al., put forth a fairly uncomplicated notion of authoritarianism as a personality type or syndrome, namely one that resulted from the "repression of hostility toward parental authority and its

displacement on societal out-groups” (Stenner 2). In contrast, and in conjunction with the publication of his RWA scale, Bob Altemeyer classified it as a social attitude. Yet, Karen Stenner argues that the problem with both Adorno’s and Altemeyer’s conceptions is that the measurements used, the F-Scale and the RWA, were both volatile and the resulting theory “largely tautological” (3). The resulting solution, and the measurement that has since become increasingly standard, is the “authoritarian predisposition.” Importantly, the notion of predisposition is a significant paradigm shift from the earlier work of Adorno, et al. and Altemeyer because authoritarians themselves may harbor latent authoritarian attitudes until an existential threat, what Stenner calls the “normative threat”, arises that threatens established norms and order, at which time their authoritarian tendencies become “activated” and result in an authoritarian response.

Most recently, in her book *The Authoritarian Dynamic*, Psychologist Karen Stenner, who along with Stanley Feldman created the four-question measurement of authoritarianism, defines authoritarianism as “an individual predisposition concerned with the appropriate balance between group authority and uniformity, on the one hand, and individual autonomy and diversity, on the other” (14). Stenner also argues that authoritarianism tends “to produce a characteristic array of stances...which have the effect of glorifying, encouraging, and rewarding uniformity and of disparaging, suppressing, and punishing difference” (16). Perhaps the most important shift between Adorno and Altemeyer’s more traditional conception is that Stenner and Feldman see authoritarianism as a “predisposition” rather than a “disposition.” The effect is the possibility that authoritarians are not necessarily inherently intolerant or straightforward disciplinarians. Instead, authoritarians often express such emotions only when the

“normative order” is threatened (Stenner 2). Consequently, many people who possess authoritarian tendencies may not exhibit this predisposition until a substantial threat to the “normative order” arises. Importantly, and perhaps most applicable for this paper, when authoritarian tendencies have been “activated,” they seek out authoritarian leaders who embody a kind of authoritarian persona and who promise to maintain order and to institute policies that preserve social norms. In short, both Stenner and Feldman see authoritarianism as rooted in notions of prejudice and intolerance that manifest themselves in response to perceived threats to social cohesion and conformity.

Making this perhaps even more clear and applicable to Trump’s rise, however, is political psychologist John Duckitt, who understands authoritarianism to be inherently centered on group identification, or “the individual or group’s conception of the relationship that should exist, that is, appropriate or normative relationship between the group and its individual members” (“Authoritarianism and Group” 141). However, when this balance is upset, Duckitt writes that authoritarians in the dominant group will often turn to, “excluding and discriminating against ‘them’: racial and ethnic minorities, political dissidents, and moral deviants.” (142) Others, such as Stanley Feldman and Karen Stenner, agree that out-group aggression is a typical authoritarian response to a situation in which they feel the normative has been threatened (742). Duckitt’s conceptualization of authoritarianism being inherently group-centered is critical in thinking about Trump’s authoritarian supporters, especially in thinking of the ubiquitous “us vs. them” campaign language, as well as the often bombastic and rowdy Trump campaign rallies.

While those in psychology are more likely to understand authoritarianism as either personality type or predisposition, those in the academic field of political science are more likely to define authoritarianism based on existential factors and are usually more concerned with the effects of authoritarianism, such as a desire for order and social uniformity (Heatherington and Weiler 36). For example, in a 2014 article entitled “Authoritarianism and American Political Behavior from 1952 to 2008,” political scientists Cizmar, et al. define authoritarianism simply as “a set of personality traits associated with aversion to difference and conformity to authority” (71). Furthermore, political scientists Marc Heatherington and Jonathan Weiler posit that those who score high in authoritarianism have the following: “(1) a greater need for order, and conversely less tolerance for confusion or ambiguity, and (2) a propensity to rely on established authorities to provide that order” (34). In addition, Heatherington and Weiler posit that authoritarians tend to see the world in a more dichotomous way, not simply on social and moral issues but in other spheres as well. For example, authoritarians tend to favor the use of military force rather than diplomacy, and are often more willing to cast aside civil liberties in favor of national security, often doing so for “straightforward” and “commonsensical” reasons (28). Moreover, authoritarians tend to see the world in black and white terms, often with little room ambiguity or nuance. Heatherington and Weiler posit that those scoring low in authoritarianism are more likely to “favor the abstract, seeing the world in more complex terms” and that “solutions to problems that might be obvious to one side might seem overly simplistic to the less authoritarian” (32). In short, Heatherington and Weiler, both leading scholars in the study of authoritarianism as understood in political science, define authoritarianism as being fundamentally motivated

by a “desire for order and a support for authorities seen as best able to secure that order against a variety of threats to social cohesion” (41).

In summation, while providing a simple definition of authoritarianism can be difficult, it is possible to understand how a conceptualization of authoritarianism might combine both the aspects of predisposition, activation, and threat as understood in psychology, as well as conceptualizations that place group at the center, groups that are most concerned, for example, with the “appropriate balance between group authority and uniformity, on the one hand, and individual autonomy and diversity, on the other” (Stenner 14). These ideas also run parallel with those in political science, which understands authoritarianism as a concern for social norms, order and conformity. In other words, authoritarians are predisposed to value submission to authority, and conventionalism, and to be suspicious and often aggressive toward change, outsiders or difference (Altemeyer). Furthermore, authoritarians value simplistic and non-ambiguous situations and dichotomous arguments, often leaving little room for nuance or difference, both on issues and in their own groupings. Authoritarian researchers have identified three principle traits of authoritarianism—submission to authorities, conventionalism, and aggression toward out-groups (Duckitt et al.; Funke; Stenner; Feldman). In short, authoritarianism is largely defined as a disposition toward conformity and uniformity and, as is perhaps most important to this paper, a desire to maintain both through the support of strong leaders.

Authoritarianism in Rhetorical Study

While scholars in the fields of psychology, political psychology, and political science have worked to understand the social and psychological nature of

authoritarianism, scholars in the field of Rhetoric and Composition have remained silent on the issue. Moreover, the topic also remains untouched in the even more specific academic field of rhetoric. And while there has been extensive discussion of the mainstream and pedestrian idea of authoritarianism in Trump's campaign in numerous news periodicals and other media, what these many of these articles do not address and what we do not know is the way in which Trump uses rhetoric in order to appeal to the authoritarians. Meaning, what are the rhetorical moves at play that have allowed Trump to enjoy such success? What can Trump's campaign tell us concerning the nature of authoritarian rhetoric? What does the existing field of study of authoritarianism, both contemporary and historical, offer in helping us understand Trump's authoritarian rhetoric and the authoritarians who have supported Trump and contributed to his success?

While the connections between the field of rhetoric and the study of authoritarianism are tenuous, the rhetorical concept of identification, as outlined by Kenneth Burke, provides a parallel concept and a valuable framework from which to understand how authoritarianism might inform rhetorical study and research. Burke, who is perhaps best known for his theory of rhetorical identification and consubstantiality, defines his theory as:

Here are the ambiguities of substance. In being identified with B, a is "substantially one" with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another. (21)

Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would no need to the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man's very essence. (23)

Burke's theory of rhetorical identification and consubstantiality provides a solid theoretical foundation from which to discuss the intersection between rhetoric and studies in authoritarianism. Throughout this paper, I use Burke's theory of identification and consubstantiality in conjunction with that of John Duckitt, whose group-centered conceptualization of authoritarianism offers a helpful interdisciplinary link in thinking about what might constitute "authoritarian rhetoric." In an election cycle that has played so heavily to "identity politics," which is often determined by authoritarian tendencies, Burke's conceptualization of identification allows for an understanding of authoritarianism as a predisposed response to normative threats. For example, political science scholars Heatherington and Weiler, among others, argue that authoritarians seek out authoritarian figures during normative threats or when feeling that order might be threatened (37). If authoritarians seek out those who most align with their tendencies and are concerned primarily with the "appropriate or normative relationship between the group and its individual members" (Duckitt 63), then Burke's conceptualization becomes essential to establishing a framework and interdisciplinary link to group-centered authoritarianism that might help to shed light on a rhetorical notion of rhetoric and the ways in which one might manufacture situations to foster in-group identity and

identification with the authoritarian leader, eliciting typical authoritarian responses to perceived threat.

Burke's ideas of identification and consubstantiality might seem an overused or even overly simplistic concept to base a framework of authoritarian rhetoric upon. And while it might seem to be a tired link from which to link rhetoric to what other disciplines have to say about authoritarianism, Burke's understanding of identification and consubstantiality as being at the center of rhetoric is helpful when thinking of authoritarianism as a predisposition that values order, group authority, and uniformity rather than individual autonomy. Stanley Feldman often explores similar and parallel concepts rhetorical identification within authoritarianism. For example, concerning the convergence of authoritarianism, social conformity, and the normative threat, Feldman states,

It is easy to see that there should be a close relationship between the social conformity-autonomy dimension and prejudice and intolerance. People who value autonomy over social conformity should reject societal constraints on behavior, including restrictions on freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and civil liberties in general. They should be unconcerned with defending common social norms and not be troubled by deviation from those norms. Valuing autonomy thus reduces the impulse to restrict civil liberties and the motivation to react negatively toward groups that do not fit nearly into social conventions. The reverse should be true of people who value social conformity over autonomy. Any group—whether

it be a “social” or “political” group—that deviates from a narrow view of conventionality is capable of eliciting hostility. (50)

Perhaps most helpful here is Feldman’s discussion of the authoritarian tendency to value social conformity and the way in which groups that might deviate from this order are capable of “eliciting hostility” from authoritarians (50). Combining the work of Feldman and others who have explored the convergence of conformity, intolerance, and authoritarianism with that of Burke should provide a strong framework from which to construct a new conceptualization of what might constitute authoritarian rhetoric.

In short, in using Burke’s theory of identification and consubstantiality to understand how authoritarianism informs rhetoric, I hope to demonstrate that the authoritarian’s desire for “order” and a kind of “group authority” might become what Burke calls the “consubstantial” substance that gives rise to identification and the resulting rhetoric that attempts to preserve order when faced with a normative and perceived threats.

In addition to drawing extensively upon Kenneth Burke, I will also cite classical rhetorical theory in discussing the nature of Trump’s rhetoric and how it might constitute a kind of authoritarian rhetoric. Primarily, I will draw on Aristotle, whose theories on rhetorical style, emotion, spectacle, and speaker and group-centered ethos provide a helpful rhetorical framework in examining the authoritarian nature of Trump’s rhetoric. An added benefit in drawing upon classical rhetorical theory is that it helps us to understand Trump’s rhetorical style and strategies in relation to history and perhaps goes a long way to showing that a civic and democratic rhetoric has a rich history in

confronting the intolerant and dangerous effects of authoritarianism, nationalism, and demagoguery.

Research Questions

My research question, drawing from the respective strengths of the study of authoritarianism and rhetoric, are as follows:

- How does Trump use authoritarian rhetoric in order to appeal to the electorate, and what are the qualities of his appeals?
- How might theories of authoritarianism, especially as established in political science and psychology, help us understand Trump's rhetoric?
- What constitutes the "authoritarian rhetorical spectacle" and how does Trump construct and use these situations to his advantage?
- How Trump's authoritarian ethos affect his perception from the electorate and how and why does it further the success of his rhetorical appeals?

To answer these questions, I plan to conduct rhetorical analyses of Trump's campaign speeches, the atmosphere and qualities of the campaign rallies themselves, and other sources that constitute Trump's campaign rhetoric, including interviews, debates, and social media posts.

Research Design

First, I want to understand the authoritarianism itself as discussed in the fields of psychology and political science for its potential use to rhetoric. Secondly, I want to draw upon rhetorical theory and scholarship to better understand the rhetorical particulars of

Trump's rhetoric. Third, I want to conduct extensive primary research by examining the campaign rhetoric of Trump, noting the ways in which his rhetorical moves appeal to authoritarians. To this end, I will examine Trump's campaign speeches, but also the dynamics of the campaign rallies themselves, noting in detail the ways in which these rallies are constructed to specifically appeal to authoritarians. Finally, my hope is to build a strong interdisciplinary study, one that draws from political science, psychology, and rhetoric, all while introducing authoritarianism to the field of rhetoric as a topic that is worthy of greater attention and deeper study. Considering the many links that already exist within the fields of psychology and rhetoric, achieving this research goal should be rather straightforward and, at the same time, promising insofar as it might demonstrate the possibilities for building rhetorical scholarship in related fields.

Chapters

I propose three main chapters to include in my thesis. In the first chapter, entitled "The Authoritarian Rhetorical Style," I will examine how Trump's style of speaking and communication appeals to authoritarians. This includes an examination of Trump's speeches, interviews, and debate performances. An obvious example of this might be Trump's diction and sentence structure within his speeches, which is often reflected in short, laconic and repeated phrases that are built on dichotomous arguments. Trump's penchant for constructing strict dichotomies, often at the expense of fallacies that border on self parody, is another rhetorical tactic that Trump often employs. Finally, in this chapter I will also recount an experience I had attending a Trump campaign rally in September of 2016 in Austin, Texas. I will discuss the atmosphere of the rally itself, Trump's speech at the rally, and the production-like aspects of the rally itself. In short,

for this chapter I hope to perform analysis of Trump's campaign rhetoric and seek to understand the way in which Trump is constructing his rhetoric to appeal to authoritarians.

In the second chapter entitled "The Authoritarian Rhetorical Spectacle," I will examine the particulars of Trump's campaign rallies themselves, noting both their uniqueness and general effectiveness. The notion of rhetorical spectacle is one with a rich history in classical rhetoric, especially that of ancient Rome, yet a surprising lack of attention has been paid to it in contemporary research. Feldman argues that those who are predisposed to authoritarian tendencies often do not realize it, and often these tendencies lay latent until confronted with a "normative threat" (50). In short, this chapter will put forth a new conceptualization of what particulars might constitute the ideal authoritarian rhetorical spectacle. Perhaps most importantly, I will examine the ways in which Trump attempted to manufacture threat and foster in-group identity at his rallies, or spectacles, in order to appeal to and stir up authoritarian passions and to position himself as a leader who is capable of enacting the kind of social order and punitive justice that authoritarians value when faced with threat.

My final chapter entitled "The Authoritarian Rhetorical Ethos" will be focused on the way in which Trump constructs his authoritarian persona. While Adorno et al, Altemeyer, Stenner, Feldman, and others have focused much of their study on the dynamics of authoritarians themselves, less attention has been paid to the "strong man" personalities that authoritarians often turn to in moments when social order and the normative is threatened. Psychology has offered some study into what constitutes such figures, but the questions as to how these characters construct their personas to *appeal* to

or *persuade* authoritarians is largely unanswered. Trump's campaign rallies themselves offer an interesting rhetorical space from which to study this facet of authoritarianism. The rallies often are constructed around portraying Trump as either a successful businessman or as a kind, paternalistic father figure, both roles and identities that appeal to authoritarians. In this chapter, I will draw on Aristotle's notion of ethos, primarily his three elements of speaker-based ethos. Then, I will attempt to show how Trump's own authoritarian ethos fits into this mold of an effective rhetor. In short, Trump embodies the archetypal style of authoritarian image and leadership: simple, brazen, and punitive. Conversely, authoritarians are prone to respond to such figures when feeling threatened or compromised.

Throughout all of these chapters, I hope to show how authoritarianism, as understood in the fields of psychology and political science, can inform an understanding of rhetoric, and, at the same time, explore and conceptualize how rhetoric might inform the study of authoritarianism. At the center of much of the effectiveness of authoritarianism, both from authoritarian leaders and from authoritarian voters, is the communicative features of their interactions. How are authoritarian leaders appealing to their audiences, and how are these audiences responding both to each other and to the leaders themselves? A new conceptualization and understanding of authoritarian rhetoric is at the center of these questions and will help us not only understand the mystery of Trump's sudden rise, but also the authoritarian strand that runs thick through much of American politics, its history, and its ever-widening polarization.

II. THE AUTHORITARIAN RHETORICAL STYLE

More than any other of his eccentric traits, perhaps none other elicited more attention throughout the 2016 presidential campaign than Trump's unique manner of speaking. During the campaign, his style of speaking was incessantly satirized, lampooned, and derided. The repetitive style that seemed to almost border on self-parody, accentuated by his squinting, his distinct hand movements, and his peculiar habit of constantly touching his index finger to his thumb when making a point both provided constant fodder for late night television hosts and impersonators. More serious political pundits discussed with bewilderment how such a base and seemingly simplistic style could prove to be so effective on the campaign trail and in presidential debates. Trump's rhetorical tactics, it seemed, were largely unprecedented in contemporary American political discourse. More common circulating theories as to the reason for his success with this style argued that Trump was tapping into the grievances of the populace, oftentimes playing to their insecurities and implicit biases through a punitive and almost instinctual form of rhetoric. Others argued that Trump's base of support, blue collar Americans from the rural communities, found Trump's simple and yet commanding style comforting and reassuring. However, what these and other explanations do little to explain is the broad appeal of Trump, one that exceeded expectations in appealing to minorities and one that had appeal across multiple demographics, both trends which culminated in Trump's success on election night, where Trump's victory included traditionally democratic states such as Michigan and Wisconsin.

To be sure, Trump's style was characterized by a distinct rhythm, cadence, hyperbole, and repetition. In an interview on NBC's *Morning Joe*, Trump responded to a

question about what the U.S response to ISIS should be. Trump responded with the following (repeated phrases in bold for emphasis):

Well here's what I would do. And **I've been saying this** for a long time, **I've been saying it** to you. I would have, and now they're just starting, if you remember when I said **attack the oil**, because that's their primary **source of wealth**. **Attack the oil**. People smiled and they laughed and they thought it was a joke, and they thought it was funny. Now as of two days ago they're **attacking the oil**. Uh—I would absolutely I would obliterate their **source of wealth**. (“Trump: We Must Watch and Study Mosques”, Liberman)

This response is given in quintessential Trump style: repetitive, simplistic, with the weightiest words at the end of the sentence. Yet, with this chapter, I hope to shed light on why this sort of response and style was so effective in galvanizing authoritarian support during the 2016 presidential campaign.

To this end, I will first establish a framework for the authoritarian rhetorical style. Beginning with studies in authoritarianism before progressing to rhetorical theory, I will draw primarily on Kenneth Burke’s theory of identification and consubstantiality. In examining studies in authoritarianism, I will turn to Stanley Feldman and Karen Stenner’s theory of “threat” and “activation,” as well as John Duckitt’s group-centered conceptualization of authoritarianism. Finally, after laying this framework, I will examine the particulars of Trump’s rhetoric that might encompass an authoritarian rhetorical style.

Group Authoritarianism and Threat

Duckitt defines authoritarianism as “the individual or group’s conception of the relationship that should exist, that is, appropriate or normative relationship between the

group and its individual members” (“Authoritarianism and Group” 63). Consequently, the threat is more often directed towards the status of a societal group, oftentimes in the form of threats to its integrity, cohesion, or identity. Instead of personal threats to well being, it is the status of the group that most often activates authoritarian tendencies. Duckitt notes that this view of authoritarianism is largely determined by “the intensity of his or her identification with that group” (73).

Stanley Feldman and Karen Stenner’s conceptualization of authoritarianism places threat as the most important factor in the activation of authoritarian predispositions. The connection between threat and authoritarianism has long been discussed, since at least 1941, when Erich Fromm argued in *Escape from Freedom* that insecurity and fear was an important factor in formation of authoritarianism. Yet, understanding authoritarianism with threat as the central factor is opposed to other explanations of authoritarianism that understand it through the lens of social learning and development, such as that of Altemeyer. Feldman and Stenner’s empirical study, discussed in their article “Perceived Threat and Authoritarianism,” places threat at the center of the “activation” of the authoritarian predisposition. Feldman and Stenner note that “threat appears to affect authoritarians by increasing the connection between their predispositions, and their political and social attitudes” (764). Moreover, Feldman and Stenner also state that the hypothesis throughout most of the literature relating to authoritarianism is that anxiety produces “higher levels of authoritarianism” (744).

Central to this conceptualization of authoritarianism is the notion of “activation.” When someone who possesses authoritarian tendencies feels threatened, certain tendencies are manifested that might not, under normal circumstances, surface. Feldman

and Stenner point out that political threats are “especially salient” and that the more ideological distance between those who have authoritarian predispositions and the two political parties or presidential candidates, the more “prejudiced, intolerant, and punitive” they become, and if those with authoritarian tendencies deem a political candidate as lacking “positive qualities,” the effect of these authoritarian predispositions is exacerbated” (765). In addition to political threats, others have pointed to economic threats as capable of activating authoritarian predispositions, yet the results of Feldman and Stenner’s empirical study found that this connection is more linked to the state of the national economy rather than one’s personal financial situation (766). In short, the results of the study found that authoritarianism is most often activated by threats to political and social order, with the state of the national economy also playing a minor role.

Feldman and Stenner’s conceptualization of political and social threat being central in activating authoritarian predispositions is important because it deviates from other studies that instead focus on the relationship of threats to *personal* well-being and authoritarianism. Rather than understanding authoritarianism as isolated in the individual, John Duckitt’s parallel conceptualization of authoritarianism is centered on explaining it through *group* identification (“Authoritarianism and Group” 63).

Understanding authoritarianism, then, as a group-centered phenomenon with its basis in identification instead of one that centers on the isolated individual perhaps helps to shed light on the 2016 presidential campaign, one in which “identity politics” was often cited by critics and pundits as being a critical determinant. Using Feldman and Stenner’s conceptualization of authoritarianism as being a phenomenon that is activated by threat, and combining it with that of Duckitt’s conceptualization of authoritarianism as

being group-centered, results in understanding authoritarianism as a complex social concept, one that has at its nucleus the notion of identification.

The Authoritarian Style and Rhetorical Theory

Yet, writing from my own field of rhetoric and composition, rhetorical scholars have said little as to what might constitute an authoritarian rhetorical style or the how authoritarian leaders use identification to appeal to various social groups. Meaning, what are *methods* in which authoritarian figures, those whom groups turn to when faced with threat, speak to these groups? If authoritarianism can be explained by threat, and if we, as rhetoricians, understand rhetoric as a mode of altering or constituting reality, then what are ways in which authoritarian rhetors, such as Trump, might accomplish this rhetorically? More specifically, what are the rhetorical and stylistic moves at play in Trump's speeches, tweets, and interviews that often provoke authoritarians to act out and exhibit intolerance towards out-groups, or to simply identify with Trump and in turn cast their vote on his behalf? What is it about the *structure* of Trump's language that appeals to authoritarians? In short, what kind of rhetorical style might authoritarians find most persuasive, one that might appeal to them by activating a sense of threat and causing those with authoritarian predispositions to not only increase the level of identification with other members of the group, as well as the speaker, but also to exhibit intolerance and prejudice while uniting amongst themselves in the name of social order, conventionalism, and unity?

Kenneth Burke's Theory of Identification and Consubstantiality

Because authoritarians are fundamentally concerned with maintaining order and as Feldman and Stenner state, "with the appropriate balance between group authority and

uniformity, on the one hand, and individual autonomy and diversity on the other,” Kenneth Burke’s conceptualization of rhetoric helps us to understand and conceive an understanding of an authoritarian rhetorical style such as that of Trump and, more broadly speaking, an authoritarian conceptualization of rhetoric itself. Burke’s theory largely centers on two forms of identification: one in which the speaker identifies with the audience, and one in which those in the audience identify with each other.

Burke’s concept of identification and consubstantiality is outlined in his book *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Burke does not seek to rewrite traditional methods of rhetorical analysis but instead hopes to add to the philosophy of rhetoric by establishing the underlying element in all of rhetoric and persuasion: identification. Burke first establishes the need for rhetoricians to establish unity. Concerning unity, the need for rhetoric, and division, he states the following:

Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need to the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man’s verse essence. (24)

Burke proposes here that interactions in the contemporary world are more complicated than can be acknowledged by perceiving persuasion as a straightforward and deliberate appeal to a specific audience. This complicated and divisive atmosphere is due to the fact that humans are born as biologically separate, a division of which they are aware, and yet they

seek to establish unity with others with whom they identify, including public figures and politicians. Consequently, humans are separate and yet joined at the same time through this sense of consubstantiality, or mediatory ground. Burkes elaborates upon this as he continues:

“Here are the ambiguities of substance, In being identified with B, A is “substantially one” with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another” (Burke 21)

Therefore, humans can be united through the consubstantial, or the mediatory ground, yet remain “unique,” maintaining a sense of individuality. Yet, while Burke’s conceptualization of rhetoric is rooted in identification, as a precursor to persuasion, he is careful to note that identification and consubstantiality are not always positive ideas. He cites Nazi Germany and unjust war as examples of this. However, his central focus is on exploring the way that these ideas of identification and consubstantiality can be used as a “partisan weapon.” This weaponization of rhetoric is inevitable, Burke argues, because rhetoric “deals with the possibilities of classification in its partisan aspects; it considers the ways in which individuals are at odds with one another, or become identified with groups more or less at odds with one another” (23).

The question might then become, “what is the consubstantial and uniting factor around which Trump voters identified and coalesced?” Instead of outlining various political positions and issues, it is perhaps useful to understand authoritarian tendencies, or

“predispositions” that eventually, when under threat, manifest themselves. Stenner and Feldman argue that particulars that might unite authoritarians include order and group authority, as well as safety and security (743). To put it simply, in the case of Trump’s campaign, the consubstantial becomes these authoritarian desires, and the way Trump speaks to these tendencies is often through a rhetorical style that proliferates identification with him, the speaker, as well as one that fosters intense identification amongst the audience and results in the formation of a dominant, in-group.

The rhetorical strategies used by Trump to these ends are closely aligned with identification and, as I intend to show, are also strategies and devices that directly appeal to authoritarians. In addition to his contribution to the field of rhetoric in the form of the theory of identification, Burke was also interested in the ways which speakers manufacture this sort of identification and mediatory ground amongst their audiences, both with each other and towards the speaker. Burke interprets rhetorical identification as using rhetoric to negotiate identity within groups, an idea that is demonstrated by Burke’s analysis of Nazi rhetoric in his essay “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s Battle.” Understanding authoritarianism as a phenomenon explained by social grouping, then, becomes the interdisciplinary link from which to construct an understanding of the ways in which Burke’s notions of rhetorical identification inform an understanding of what constitutes an authoritarian rhetorical style.

To be clear, this chapter seeks to understand the rhetorical tactics employed by Trump not in the sense of *what* it is that Trump is saying, but rather *how* he is saying it and why these tactics are so effective in persuading authoritarians. Each of the rhetorical moves discussed in this chapter are well-established rhetorical concepts and techniques, all of

them tracing their roots back to classical rhetorical theory. Yet, just as Burke was also intensely interested in understanding the function of artistic expression and its connection to rhetoric, as demonstrated through the pentad, I hope to shed light on the way Trump uses his rhetorical style to appeal to authoritarians through identification. In short, I hope to demonstrate, through example of Trump's campaign rhetoric, the ways in which an authoritarian leader might use language to appeal to the authoritarian electorate.

Using his theory of identification, and coupling it with his interest in rhetorical style, Burke analyzes the success of rhetorical expression in Nazi Germany in an article entitled "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle." Burke explores the ways in which Hitler and the Nazi propaganda machine used repetition so effectively in 1930's Germany, a time, it should be noted, that the academic study of authoritarianism arose to explain.

What are we to learn from Hitler's book? For one thing, I believe that he has shown, to a very disturbing degree, the power of endless repetition. Every circular advertising a Nazi meeting had, at the bottom, two slogans: "Jews not admitted" and "War victims free." And the substance of Nazi propaganda was built about these two "complementary" themes. (217)

While drawing direct comparisons between Hitler's use of rhetoric and Trump's use of rhetoric might be filled with false equivalencies, it should be noted that both understand and effectively use repetition with great effect, including building a campaign and following around a few central "complementary" themes. For example, attending a Trump rally would surely have resulted in hearing about a few major themes that might be considered "complementary" in nature: illegal immigration, jobs, and law order. Yet,

repetition and the centering of them on interlocking themes, while perhaps the most overt example, is not the only tactic that might be deemed a device of authoritarian rhetoric. Other examples include Trump's use of the simple, declarative sentence, as well as the use of oppositional, dichotomous rhetoric.

Trump's Authoritarian Rhetoric: Repetition

Anyone attending a Trump campaign rally during the 2016 Presidential campaign would have heard a fair share of repetitious rhetoric. To be sure, all political campaigns use positive slogans to further their campaigns, but Trump's use of slogans was unique in that it not only relied on generally positive and general phrases, such as those from past presidential candidates. For example, Obama's "Yes We Can," Mitt Romney's 2012 "Believe in America" Hillary Clinton's "Stronger Together," or perhaps more famously Lyndon B. Johnson's "All the Way with LBJ," or Dwight Eisenhower's "I like Ike." Yet, with perhaps the exception of "Make America Great Again," Trump opted instead for repeated slogans that were vitriolic. These slogans became rhetorical touchstones of Trump's campaign. Well-known examples of this include the phrases "Lock Her Up!" and "Who's going to pay for this wall? Mexico!"

Yet, Trump's use of repetition is not limited to simple campaign slogans. His speeches, debates, and interviews all also contain examples of highly repetitious rhetoric. Trump's repetitive style has often been criticized as ineffective, ignorant, and unsophisticated. Yet, taken as a whole, Trump's repetitive style is effective in that it appeals directly to authoritarians and provides simplistic and clear positions, often in a dichotomous style and in the form of audience response. Hetherington and Weiler posit that those scoring high on the authoritarianism scale have a "(1) a greater need for order,

and conversely less tolerance for confusion or ambiguity, and (2) a propensity to rely on established authorities to provide that order” (34). It is in this lack of tolerance aversion of ambiguity that makes Trump’s repetitive rhetorical style so effective in reaching the authoritarian voter.

Mark Liberman, a linguist and professor at the University of Pennsylvania, has maintained a blog entitled “Language Log” in which he catalogues his linguistic and rhetorical analyses of Trump campaign speeches and rhetoric. Liberman often notes the repetitive nature and distinct cadence of Trump’s speeches, noting that this kind level of repetition is unique and “strikingly different from politicians of this era” (Liberman). He also includes the following excerpt from a Trump interview, which shows the level of repetition and cadence of Trump’s repetitious rhetoric. The following is an excerpt from a 2015 interview on MSNBC’s *Morning Joe* (repeated phrases in bold for emphasis):

Well if I were president, we probably wouldn't be in the problems we have right now,
because it's incredible, we have an attack, and then all of a sudden **we bomb all these sites**. Why didn't **we bomb the sites** before? **We should have bombed the sites** a long time ago, Mika, These are training camps and training areas largely, and **we didn't take them out** —why is it that **we take them out now**, after there's this vicious and violent attack? Uh the other thing I'd be explaining the problem to people. We have a president that **doesn't even use the term** and **won't use the term radical Islamic terrorism**. He **doesn't want to use the term** Hillary Clinton the- **didn't want to use the term** the other day in the debate —which was

a ridiculous and terrible debate frankly, a joke—but she **didn't want to use the term**, she refused to use—all three of them **refused to use the term radical Islamic terrorism**. They- **they just can't say it. They absolutely can't say it.**

(“Trump: We Must Watch and Study Mosques,” Liberman)

Calculated or not, Trump’s use of repetition here is prolific. In the same interview, he continues by saying the following about his history working alongside women (repeated phrases in bold for emphasis):

Because I'm very much into the whole thing of helping people and helping women.

Women's health uh issues are such a big thing to me and so important and you know **I have many women that work for me** I was one of the first persons—uh—people in the construction industry in New York to put women in charge of projects, I mean I have it even today, and **I have many women at high positions.**

I you know **I've gotten a lot of credit for that**, I mean **I have so many women working for me** and **so many women in high positions working for me** and **I've gotten great credit for it.** (“Trump: We Must Watch and Study Mosques”, Liberman)

To be sure, Trump’s penchant for using repetition surely helps to drive home important points, but it also provides something authoritarians with something they desperately desire: clarity and predictability. There is a sense of security, ease of comprehension, and even perhaps a sense of fulfilled expectation in Trump’s prolific use of repetition. In many ways, after just a few weeks on the campaign trail, Trump’s supporters know what

Trump is going to say before he says it. Trump's repetitious structure is one way of persuading authoritarians and of making his ideas, labels, and attitudes stick.

Trump's Authoritarian Rhetoric: Labeling

Trump also accrued a sort of 'Trumpian' lexicon over the course of the presidential campaign, building a list of words and phrases that entered into the consciousness of the American public. Obvious examples of this include words like "Win", "Loser," "Great", "Sad", "Weak", as well as more specific labels Trump created for political opponents, such as "Little Marco," "Lying Ted," "Goofy Elizabeth Warren," and perhaps most famously, "Crooked Hillary." The truth behind these labels eventually became unimportant. Because of Trump's repetition and tireless restatement of the insults, they self-manifestly became campaign *issues* that people needed to address and positions which people needed to side.

Another way in which Trump used repetitious rhetoric effectively throughout his campaign was through audience response. Indeed, Trump's entire campaign in many ways developed a kind of close-knit community of supporters, one in which they not only shared common goals and ideologies, but also their own inclusive language and jargon. In a recent article published in the *Harvard Political Review*, Stefan Petrovic explores this aspect of Trump's campaign, arguing that the inclusive and intimate nature in which Trump addresses his supporters is akin to what linguists call "private speech." This is contrasted to "public speech," which is the prevailing, dominant discourse that can be found in most American political rhetoric. Petrovic argues that Hillary Clinton primarily used "public speech" as "a public platform to address public issues through public speech discourse," while Trump, on the other hand, used "a public platform to incite personal

and collective anxieties and nationalism through private speech discourse.” The notion of private vs. public discourse is important here because of the way in which Trump uses an inclusive responsive form of repetition at his rallies and how this sense of group unity appeals to authoritarians who feel that they are faced with what Stenner calls a “normative threat.” Taken from the perspective of identification, using inclusive repetition allows Trump’s supporters an immediate and repetitive form of identification amongst members of their own group, along with that of the authoritarian leader, Trump himself.

In other words, Trump’s repetitious rhetoric, and the oft created inclusivity of it, provides an insular sense of “community” and group uniformity valued by authoritarians. When Trump asks the audience, “We’re going to build a wall, and who’s going to pay for it?” and the crowd responds in unison “Mexico,” Trump is providing a space in which the in-group is able to identify with each other and Trump himself, the strongman figure whom those with authoritarian tendencies are turning to in order to respond to “normative threats.”

Taken together, Trump’s various forms of repetition serve to not only rhetorically bludgeon thoughts, policies, and ideas into the minds of his audience, but also to serve a secondary purpose as well: to allow his audience a kind of rhetorical space upon which to unify and identify, in a Burkean sense, both with each other and with Trump himself. In his essay “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s Battle,” Burke explains how repetition not only served to further the ideas of Hitler, but also to provide this opportunity amongst the audience as well. Burke states the following about the purpose of repetition used at Nazi rallies:

He [Hitler] describes the power of spectacle; insists that mass meetings are the fundamental way of giving the individual the sense of being protectively surrounded by a movement, the sense of “community.”

Surely, Trump also understands the importance of *spectacle* (an idea that will be explored in a later chapter), and a crucial aspect of his rallies was the manufactured sense of community among Trump supporters. In *Toward a Civil Discourse*, Sharon Crowley discusses this connection between what she calls “belief” and groups: “In the face of unbelief or countering behavior believers must articulate their beliefs in both senses: they must defend the common belief system from disarticulation, and they must remind one another of their commonalities” (73). If we take Crowley’s discussion here of “beliefs” as authoritarian tendencies, then it is clear how Trump’s rallies used repetition to such great effect. Trump’s rallies were opportunities for his supporters, those scoring high in authoritarianism, to “remind” each other of their authoritarian “commonalities,” or what Burke calls the “consubstantial.”

Trump’s Authoritarian Rhetoric: The Power of the Declarative Sentence

At the beginning of Trump’s campaign, as political commentators scrambled to explain the rise of Trump and the mystery of his appeal, most commentators seemed to focus on his demeanor and his talent for attracting media attention. And while many of these early explanations of Trump’s rise were certainly compelling, they often overlooked what was most interesting and unusual about Trump, when comparing him with the other political candidates at the time: the structure and patterns of his language.

Modern day politicians are masters at linguistic evasion. If a politician wants to, for example, omit the actor of some iniquitous event, they often rely on the passive voice.

For example, in September of 2016, Hillary Clinton was criticized on social media for using the passive voice to describe the police shooting of an unarmed African-American man: “another unarmed Black man was shot in a police incident,” she tweeted (@HillaryClinton). In this specific case, Clinton’s use of passive voice helped to deaden the full effect of what she was saying and also conveniently allowed the omission of an actor in the sentence. By saying that the man was shot “in a police incident” she carefully avoided explicitly stating that the man was in fact shot by the police themselves. To be sure, all politicians do this sort of rhetorical evasion all of the time, often using phrases such as “mistakes were made” to circumnavigate questions pertaining to some egregious or unjust action.

Another way to evade clarity is to load statements with strands of qualifying phrases and subordinate clauses. “Over the course of the past several years,” “In effect,” “Basically,” “Approximately,” “What we’re trying to do,” “Some people say,” are all examples of this. Yet, when one relies too heavily on this sort of structure, politicians lose the critical elements of effective oratory and rhetoric: concrete nouns and verbs. Instead, their language becomes flooded with abstractions and the safeguarding of each sentence with qualifying phrases. As a result, their language might perhaps come across as cowardly or even duplicitous. Watching Trump’s performance at the debate provides sound examples of the opposite of this sort of style. While other politicians speak in complex and long sentences, with careful deliberation and the hedging of statements with strings of qualifying phrases, Trump speaks in grammatically simple and unambiguous sentences, often ensuring, importantly, that the most important words are left for the end of the sentence.

Trump's rhetoric is diametrically opposed to the aforementioned common brand of political linguistic posturing and hedging. Instead of these sorts of tactics, Trump speaks in short declarative sentences that contain concrete nouns and strong verbs. Additionally, Trump tends to place the most important words in a sentence at the end of the sentence. For example, Trump's news conference, following his signing of a pledge to support the Republican nominee on September 3, 2015 contains many good examples of this sort of language structure. Towards the beginning of the news conference, Trump states: "I don't need money. I don't want money. And this is going to be a campaign, I think, like no other. I'm not controlled by lobbyists. I'm not controlled by anybody" ("CNN Transcripts: GOP Loyalty Pledge; Trump Speaks to Press after Priebus Meeting"). Here, Trump provides five simple sentences, most without qualifying phrases, all while using strong and active verbs. Moreover, each sentence ends with the most important word at the end of the sentence. Trump also uses repetition in this excerpt, sandwiching the third sentence between a pair of sentences that use anaphoric structure.

Another example of this form of Trump's rhetoric can be found in examining Trump's campaign rally speech given on August 22, 2015, at the University of Alabama football stadium. After an elaborate warm-up, including a flyover of Trump's own Boeing 757, Trump stated in his speech: "We need to have our borders." "We need to make great deals." "We're going to build a wall" ("CNN Transcripts: Donald Trump's Speech in Mobile, Alabama"). Again, here Trump uses short, laconic declarative sentences and is careful to use inclusive pronouns, establishing a kind of consubstantiality and unity with the audience. And again, he ends each sentence with the most important, concrete, and emotive words: "borders," "deals," and "wall." Similarly,

at a 2015 event in Raleigh, North Carolina, a 12-year-old girl asked Trump: “I’m scared. What are you going to do to protect this country?” To this question, Trump replied: “You know what, darling? You’re not going to be scared anymore. They’re going to be scared. You’re not going to be scared anymore” (Ball). Trump’s repetition of the word “scared” does little here to answer the girl’s question. Instead, it perhaps has the opposite effect, one of hammering the notion that the audience *should* in fact be scared in their present situation, and that he is the answer to these insecurities. Yet, on a stylistic level, it is again the simplistic sentences, four simple sentences to be exact, with the placing of the word “scared” towards the end of the final three sentences.

Analyzing Trump’s campaign rhetoric results in remarkably similar patterns, especially in his answers to impromptu questions from either the media or the audience. Another example that contains this inclusivity, declarative structure, and the inclusion of the key words at the end of sentences includes the following: “We have politicians that don’t have a clue. They’re all talk, no action. What’s happening to this country is disgraceful. We’re running on fumes.” Trump’s penchant for using this kind of tight, declarative, and repetitious sentence structure, sometimes almost bordering on a kind of free verse “spoken word” poetry, became a touchstone of his campaign. From speeches, to debates, tweets, and interviews, examining Trump’s campaign rhetoric will result in the same kinds of sentences and much the same patterns that Trump used so effectively. Surely, this is not the rhetorical style of today’s politician, but why does this kind of simplistic structure and rhetoric directly appeal to authoritarians?

In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke states that a rhetorician can only persuade insofar as they can, “talk his [the audience’s] language by speech, gesture,

tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his” (28). In much the same way that repetition appeals to authoritarians because of its simplicity and redundancy, Trump’s use of the simple, declarative sentence is attractive to authoritarians because it provides order, structure, clarity, and authority, all wrapped in a tight and predictable rhetorical form.

Trump’s Authoritarian Rhetoric: Dichotomies and the False Dilemma

Thus far, I have discussed Trump’s use of both repetition and the short declarative sentence. Yet, perhaps the rhetorical or logical premise that both of these devices, among others, is built upon is a strict dichotomous “either/or” situationism. Rhetors have been using this rhetorical tactic since at least the time of Aristotle. In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle states the following concerning the effectiveness and use of antitheses:

One topos of demonstrative [enthymemes] is that from opposites; for one should look to see if the opposite is true of the opposite, [thus] refuting the argument if it is not, confirming it if it is, for example [saying] that to be temperate is a good thing, for to lack self-control is harmful.” (Kennedy 191)

Sharon Crowley discusses Aristotle’s term enthymeme, stating that the term covers “standard sets of ideological connections” and that the Greek root of the term is—*thumos*—or *viscera*, and that enthymemes are often used to “trigger emotional responses that can set off a chain of ideologic that can in turn arouse additional emotional response. The resulting affect may seem to underwrite the empirical truth of whatever conclusion is drawn” (88). Moreover, the use of this enthymeme is effective because rhetors do not

normally provide an argumentative premise or conclusion of an enthymematic argument (Crowley 88). To be sure, Trump relies on almost exclusively on this sort of oppositional, illogical argumentation that Aristotle and Crowley speak of here. It is important to note, however, the reason why this kind of binary structure might appeal so strongly to authoritarians. Political scientists Marc Hetherington and Jon Weiler argue that one of the central characteristics of authoritarians is a disdain for any sort of confusion or ambiguity. For example, they state the following:

Thinking about authoritarianism in terms of order rather than authority itself also helps explain why those scoring high are more inclined to simplify the world into black and white categories while those scoring lower in authoritarianism feel more comfortable with shades of gray. Black and white categories provide order. So, too, does a propensity to submit to authorities, but only to those who promise a black and white understanding of the world. (28)

In a sense, Trump feeds this authoritarian desire for dichotomy through the use of oppositions, providing a rhetorical reflection of this black and white understanding of the world, while at the same time promising to be the authority that will reinstate this simplistic worldview. Yet, what makes this strategy so effective, especially in appealing to authoritarians in group contexts, such as Trump's rallies? Kenneth Burke discusses the effectiveness of oppositional rhetoric and its relation to identification and consubstantiality in *A Rhetoric of Motives*:

At least, we know that many purely formal patterns can readily awaken an attitude of collaborative expectancy in us. For instance, imagine a passage built about a set of oppositions (“we do this, but they on the other hand do that; we stay here, but they go there, we look up, but they look down, etc.). once you grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the subject matter. Formally, you will find yourself swinging along with the succession of antitheses, even though you may not agree with proposition that is being present in this form. (58)

While it is clear that the overuse of oppositional rhetoric is oftentimes built on illogical or even completely omitted premises, Trump’s rhetoric is teeming with these kinds of rhetorical, “swinging” structures. They are effective insofar that, as Aristotle argues, they appeal to emotion, and as Burke states, they bring about an attitude of “collaborative expectancy” from the audience, an important aspect when thinking of identity politics and the preservation of the in-group. Concerning this desire for unity, Burke states in “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s Battle” that the “yearning for unity is so great that people are always willing to meet you halfway if you will give it to them by fiat, by flat statement, regardless of the facts” (205). Finally, and perhaps most clearly, its inherent simplicity appeals to authoritarians because of their tendency to see the world in black and white categories. In other words, Trump constructs, on a rhetorical level, the very sort of reductionist worldviews and attitudes that appeal directly to authoritarians, and no matter how illogical Trump’s statements and arguments might seem, the simplistic and emotive nature of this device makes it work.

From the very beginning of the campaign, Trump constructed an inclusive and communal form of this kind of oppositional thinking by encouraging his supporters to think of people in terms of “winners” and “losers,” and throughout his campaign, Trump returned to this trope, often using it on Twitter to lash out at and label detractors and members of the media, and perhaps most effectively, oftentimes by personifying America as a country that has been “losing” on the global stage when it should be “winning.” Yet, while Trump’s campaign did divide both the world, in terms of countries themselves, and individuals, into a strict binary of “losers” and “winners,” Trump also relied on this fallacy to construct other elements of his rhetoric as well, including more boilerplate policy positions, such as trade policy, immigration, and defense.

While Trump used oppositional rhetoric when discussing many different policy positions, one specific example is his campaign rhetoric on immigration. Throughout Trump’s campaign, he made a routine of pitting himself and his supporters, using “you” and “we” to remonstrate against outsiders and illegal immigrants. This “Us vs. Them” rhetoric is simply one way in which Trump successfully boiled down a complex issue into a strict dichotomy, one in which he stretched the limits of polarization through emotive rhetoric.

Trump’s Rhetorical Style and Authoritarianism

Surely, Trump promises, and has thus far provided, such a black and white understanding of the world. Through repetition and his sentence structure, Trump provides language that is reflective of this authoritarian tendency. In a sense, Trump is constructing, on a linguistic level, the very sort of worldview and attitudes that appeals directly to authoritarians.

Does Trump know and realize what he is doing? Are the aforementioned rhetorical tactics premeditated? In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle states that the reason that uneducated rhetors are often more persuasive before a crowd than the educated is because the educated reason with “axioms and universals,” while the uneducated do so “on the basis of what [particulars] they know and instances near their experience” (Kennedy 187). In other words, it seems at times that Trump’s rhetoric is almost instinctual, without any calculation whatsoever. Yet, the question as to whether or not Trump is purposely using these rhetorical moves, or if they are surfacing unconsciously or more instinctually is not as important as understanding *how* and *why* what he has said, the rhetorical style he has and is using, appeals so strongly to authoritarians. Beginning to understand this, as well as its implications, might also shed light on the reason why Trump, when answering a question, often answers with an example of personal experience rather than one that shows a thorough understanding of the topic or issue at hand.

To conclude, it is also helpful to consider Kenneth Burke’s thoughts on the effectiveness of the kind of simplistic, reductionist rhetoric. He states in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, “And often we must think of rhetoric not in terms of some one particular address, but as a general body of identifications that owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement than to exceptional rhetorical skill” (26). Perhaps it was in this “daily reinforcement” of these simple, yet highly effective rhetorical strategies that authoritarians found solace. In a changing, shifting world, Trump not only personified the qualities of an authoritarian leader, but he also repeatedly appealed to authoritarian predispositions, such as order, security, and the dominance of

the in-group, not only through *what* he was saying, but also in the form and structure of *how* he was saying it.

III. THE RHETORIC OF AUTHORITARIAN SPECTACLE

In the preceding chapter, I put forth a conceptualization of a kind of authoritarian rhetorical style. Drawing on examples and strategies used by Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign, I analyzed them through the lens of rhetorical theory, as well as the literature on authoritarianism established in the field of political psychology. In doing so, I put forth a conceptualization of authoritarian rhetoric that was comprised of three rhetorical strategies: repetition, the declarative sentence, and the structuring of dichotomies and false dilemmas, all of which were rhetorical moves used extensively by Trump and his campaign throughout the 2016 campaign.

In this chapter, I will show that Trump's authoritarian rhetoric is not restricted simply to his language, but can also be found in examining other more spatial and performative contexts of the 2016 campaign as well, specifically the Trump campaign rallies themselves. Trump's campaign rallies were unprecedented *spectacles* on the American political scene. In examining Trump's rallies as rhetorical, spectacle-like spaces, I plan on first establishing the notion of rhetorical spectacle as understood in rhetorical theory. I will then discuss and apply Kenneth Burke's theory of identification and consubstantiality, as well the group-centered conceptualization of authoritarianism as understood in the field of political psychology to Trump's campaign rallies, or *spectacles*. Finally, after establishing this strong interdisciplinary framework, I will examine the ways in which Trump's rallies function as rhetorical spectacles that are designed to appeal to quintessential authoritarian passions, to foster in-group identity, and to create environments for authoritarians to enact prejudice and punitiveness, specifically through two primary tactics: the expulsion of dissent and the use of salient victim status.

The impression one gets of the atmosphere at a Donald Trump rally is one that is compounded by patriotic sentiment, festivity-like elation, of chanting and American flags and and loud music (e.g. Queen's "We are the Champions") and crushing crowds and, often, vitriolic outbursts from members of the audience, from both supporters and protestors. Certainly, a common motif that surfaced throughout Trump's campaign stops was the dramatic ejection of the protestor, often given in theatric fashion by Trump himself, usually accompanied by overly-demonstrative facial contortions and a quick, authoritative gesture of his thumb, not unlike an excessively empowered umpire ejecting a high school coach from the field of play. As the world watched these rallies, with all of their theatrical and dramatic quality, unfold on a daily basis, it became clear that Trump's campaign rallies marked a profound shift in American politics. Consequently, Trump's rallies also became an important way of understanding not only Trump's political movement, but also the ways in which they function as calculated spectacles of authoritarian rhetoric designed to delight the crowd.

Trump himself is, of course, the centerpiece of these spectacles. He stands wearing his signature red (or often white) baseball cap, itself certainly an attempt at symbolic identification with his audience. He stumps by shouting and ranting and squinting, each of these actions executed with an air of blustery bravado, often accentuating statements by touching his index finger to his thumb and thrusting it into the air with great animation. Throughout the show, his audience seems to be on the edge of their seat, riveted completely and consuming every sharp turn and bend (and there are many) in Trump's performance. They seem inexorably and restively bent on seeing just how far out on the thin ice of political correctness Trump will dare go. But for those who

had read Trump's bestselling book *The Art of the Deal*, experiencing a Trump rally and scene like this seemed like Trump's salesmanship strategy on a trumped-up scale. In his best-selling book from 1987, Trump states the following:

The final key to the way I promote is bravado. I play to people's fantasies. People may not always think big themselves, but they can still get very excited by those who do. That's why a little hyperbole never hurts. People want to believe that something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular. I call it truthful hyperbole. It's an innocent form of exaggeration—and a very effective form of promotion. (58)

Reading this shortly after Trump's victory, this quotation seems as if it could be torn from the campaign playbook. Perhaps most interesting here is Trump's ideas of show and the "spectacular" which is evidenced by his elaboration on bravado and exaggeration and its focus on a form of rhetorical identification ("people may not always think big themselves...") as well as its emphasis on the way bravado and exaggeration might be manufactured within a group setting. Further, Trump entered the campaign with rich and varied experience in producing spectacles, complete with tenures as ringmaster at both with World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) and the Miss Universe pageant.

Bearing the atmospheric qualities of a Trump rally in mind and coupling it with Trump's own strategy for promotions and dramatic display, it seems safe to say that there is something about Trump's campaign rallies that brings the notion of rhetorical *spectacle* to mind. The word *spectacle* itself comes from the Latin word *spectaculum*, and is defined in most dictionaries as a "visually striking performance or display." Spectacles differ from more traditional political rallies in a number of ways, and perhaps this is because the very

nature of spectacle is epideictic in nature. It is designed to disrupt the mundane, to defy expectations, and to bring about a sense of wonderment and awe from its audience. As is evidenced by the near constant coverage of Trump's rallies on cable news networks throughout the 2016 campaign, there was something highly entertaining about Trump's rallies. They were unpredictable, rowdy, and designed to enthrall their audiences. Or, in the words of Trump, they were rallies that created a space for forgotten people to get excited by someone "thinking big" and speaking in "truthful hyperbole." Fundamentally, Trump's rhetorical spectacles used rhetorical tactics that were centered on the speaker collaborating with the audience, usually through the form of eliciting participation, intolerance, and hostility.

What is it about spectacle that makes it different than a conventional meeting or any other more normative form of political rally? Since the time of Ancient Rome, spectacle has communicated with its audience through copious hyperbole (an idea that Trump enacts and embodies), a sense of magnitude, and a kind of group-centered participatory frenzy. Jonathan Balzotti notes that spectacle has the ability to "activate a group's collective memory, and embrace viewer, subject, and the objects represented in a coherent and collective identity" (8). Furthermore, Thomas Farrell argues that the rhetorical spectacle ought to be thought of as "a weak hybrid form of drama, a theatrical concoction that relies upon external factors (shock, sensation, and the passionate release) as a substitute for intrinsic aesthetic integrity" (168). In other words, spectacle does little more in its ends to persuade than to arouse and excite the audience, leading them perhaps into a state described by Guy Deborde in *The Society of Spectacle* as a sort of thoughtless state akin to "zombification."

Although there has been no shortage of published narratives that have revealed the experience of attending Trump's rallies, a fundamental gap in our understanding of Trump's success is an examination of these rallies and how they might contribute to a better understanding of Trump's rise through the lenses of authoritarianism and rhetoric. In short, how did these campaign rallies operate as rhetorical spaces and/or spectacles upon which Trump manufactured and constructed a sort of authoritarian situation through spectacle-like qualities and rhetorical staging that resulted in an effective authoritarian performance? This chapter examines two of Trump's dominant methods of rhetorical staging that are unique to his presidential campaign: the expulsion of dissent and the use of salient victim status. In doing so, I hope to show how the components of these rallies work to produce spectacle and how the strategies employed by Trump appeal to his audience and foster in-group identity as well as the elicitation of authoritarian aggression.

The questions that this chapter seeks to answer, then, are how, during the 2016 presidential campaign, were Trump presidential campaign rallies staged as rhetorical spectacles and a space in which authoritarian sensibilities and "community values" were put on display? How might an understanding of rhetorical ideas such as identification and consubstantiality and the authoritarian situation, as well studies of authoritarianism as understood in the fields of psychology and political science, inform a conceptualization of what might constitute an authoritarian spectacle? In short, how did Trump arouse authoritarian passions at these rallies through rhetorical staging in order to foster group identity and, at times, elicit hostility and intolerance from his audience?

The Dynamics of Rhetorical Spectacle: Group Identification and Community

In Aristotle's first book of *On Rhetoric*, he discusses epideictic rhetoric, one of the three branches of rhetoric. Epideictic rhetoric is often ceremonial, and is, as Sharon Crowley propounds, often designed to put "community values on display" (73). To Aristotle, the central factor that set the epideictic apart from the deliberative or forensic branches of rhetoric was that it contained a rich visual component. Since antiquity, Greek and Roman rhetoricians understood and used the power of epideictic rhetoric. From the construction of buildings and monuments that were built for a specific and often spatial rhetorical purpose, such as Diocletian's Column and the Triumphal Arch, to the blood-thirsty, mob-like scene at the Coliseum, to the carefully manufactured and ritualistic scene of a returning victorious Roman general entering the city, ancient rhetors employed rhetorical staging and spectacle for both political and ceremonial occasions (Feldherr 14). Most importantly, perhaps, is the focus that the epideictic and spectacle place upon community building. Rhetorical spectacles were designed to form and foster community, often enabling the creation or sustainment of a political identity.

To be sure, rhetoric that relies on the visual and on spectacle has a rich and varied history in classical and ancient rhetoric. And yet, many of the same sort of stock tricks used by Greek and Roman rhetors were also wielded, whether wittingly or unwittingly, in Trump's own spectacle-like political rallies, providing his authoritarian supporters the opportunity to put their own community "values on display" and to, as Balzotti notes concerning rhetorical spectacle, "activate their collective memory" and embrace the components of the rally into a "coherent, collective identity" (8).

The notion of rhetorical spectacle is not limited to ancient rhetoric and rhetorical theory. In his essay “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s Battle,” Kenneth Burke describes the power of spectacle in 1930’s Nazi Germany and the role it played in bringing Hitler to power. Burke insists that mass meetings are the “fundamental way of giving the individual the sense of being protectively surrounded by a movement, the sense of community” (217). Watching news reel footage or documentaries exploring the rise of Third Reich are sure to include images of the sort of spectacle that Hitler envisioned, replete with ornate banners, emotional speeches, and an impressive, albeit foreboding, visual and spatial quality.

Burke’s examination of how such spectacles provide the individual a sense of “protection” and “community” is important when considering the strong correlation between those scoring high on the scale of authoritarianism and support for Trump. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke writes of the importance and relationship between identification and consubstantiality. In these sorts of mass meetings and spectacles, such as the one explicated in Burke’s analysis of Hitler, these rallies become spaces when the audience is able to maintain a sense of individuality while being “consubstantial” with other like-minded people. An authoritarian conceptualization of Trump’s campaign success, then, might lead us to consider the ways in which Trump’s rallies operated in a similar fashion, as places where Trump’s supporters are able to find other like-minded people with corresponding responses to authoritarian rhetoric.

The relationship between the individual and group and the inevitable division that exists between groups is a well-established idea within rhetorical theory. Burke’s theory of identification and consubstantiality asserts that humans are born “biologically

separate” and that they seek out others with whom they identify. This sort of identification can occur in a number of ways, but Burke’s argument is primarily focused on the relationship between the speaker and the audience. If the speaker is able to identify with their audience, they are more likely to establish a bond, which might result in more effective persuasion. What is less common within discussion of Burke’s idea, however, is the relationship between members of the audience. Meaning, not only is the identification and resulting “consubstantiality” important to think of when examining rhetoric in terms of audience and speaker, but it is also vital to study the relationship of the audience members themselves and the ways that they identify with each other and form groups of likeminded individuals, or as Burke states, “In being identified with B, A is “substantially one” with a person other than himself.” Yet, Burke is careful to note that at the same time, the individual remains, “unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another” (21). Burke’s focus on the relationship between identification and persuasion and its relation to the collective group is important when thinking of Trump’s rallies as rhetorical spectacles, spaces where “community values” are put on display, often, in this case, in the form of authoritarian values.

Group Authoritarianism and the Activation of Threat

What then are the determinants of such rhetorical spectacles? What authoritarian values, both explicit and latent are targeted and why are group settings, such as political rallies, rife with opportunity to communicate to and stir up authoritarian passions? Authoritarian researchers have identified three principle traits of authoritarianism— submission to authorities, conventionalism, and aggression toward out-groups (Duckitt,

Funke). Furthermore, researchers also understand authoritarianism to be inherently centered on group identification, or “the individual or group’s conception of the relationship that should exist, that is, appropriate or normative relationship between the group and its individual members” (Duckitt 63). Others, such as Stanley Feldman and Karen Stenner, agree that out-group aggression is a typical authoritarian response to a situation in which they feel the normative has been threatened, often bringing about latent authoritarian passions and typical responses.

The ways in which these rallies might bring about an authoritarian-like response from an audience are rooted in ideas of political psychology. Many researchers have posited that those with authoritarian sensibilities are more likely to favor policies and actions that are prejudicial, intolerant, and punitive in response to both physical and moral threats (Hetherington and Weiler, Feldman, Feldman and Stenner, Stenner). Both Stanley Feldman and Karen Stenner’s conceptualization of authoritarianism places political and social threats as the central determinants in the activation of authoritarian predispositions, predispositions which can rest latent in individuals until they are faced with a perceived or “normative” threat (Stenner and Feldman 742).

Reflecting on Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign, the notion of Trump’s rallies being rhetorically staged in order to activate authoritarian predispositions and result in compounded support for Trump seems to make sense. And, if we are to understand authoritarian predispositions as being capable of being “activated,” as Stenner and Feldman argue extensively, then understanding the particulars of these confrontational interactions might shed light on the use and effect of authoritarianism within Trump’s campaign and resulting election.

Central to Stenner's notion of authoritarianism is threat, which is often "called normative threat" because it threatens the social structures and paradigms held by authoritarians. Concerning the way in which the "normative threat" becomes the critical stimulus for the activation of authoritarian predispositions, Stenner writes the following:

The impact of authoritarianism on intolerance of difference is conditional upon levels of collective (particularly "normative") threat, such that this relatively stable and enduring predisposition yields more or less intolerant attitudes and behavior depending upon (the experience or perception of) threatening or reassuring conditions. (143)

Stenner's conceptualization of authoritarianism recognizes the importance of being able to create such *situations* that might provoke these authoritarian sensibilities and force individuals to perceive threat to what is considered "normative." Concerning these kinds of opportunities, Stenner is straightforward: "If authoritarianism is a functional predisposition it should be "activated" as and when it needs to serve its function." (143). In applying this hypothesis to Trump's rallies, the question might then become "what are the ways in which rhetorical spaces might be manipulated to bring about the activation of authoritarian passions?"

Because authoritarians are primarily concerned with group uniformity and a sense of oneness, any direct threat to this balance might certainly be considered serious, especially those threats of political or social quality, especially those that challenge the normative. Moreover, Stenner notes that what is most effective in activating latent authoritarian tendencies is the "feeling that leaders are unworthy of trust and respect, and/or that beliefs are not shared across the community" (143). Conversely, those

predisposed to authoritarianism are reassured by confidence in political leadership and strong consensus in public opinion. Understanding this might perhaps shed light on the effectiveness of one Trump's unofficial campaign slogans, "Lock her up!" By encouraging his audience to consider Clinton as a leader who is unworthy of trust and respect, Trump is perhaps successful in rousing authoritarian passions, one in which the potential leader herself is not worthy of credence and respect, both values important to authoritarians when considering leaders who embody the kind of unambiguous, strong-man qualities authoritarians value.

Understanding authoritarianism as a group phenomenon and one that can be activated through threat, however, should require those in the field of rhetoric to study Trump rallies as rhetorical spaces in which authoritarians come together to not only unite around a quintessentially authoritarian leader, but also to seek out likeminded members of their own group. This group-centered conceptualization of authoritarianism requires scholars of rhetoric to understand the ways in which rhetoric and specifically methods of rhetorical staging and spectacle might appeal to authoritarian passions.

Fostering Group Uniformity: The Expulsion of Dissent

Throughout the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump often seemed to flirt with ideas of violence at his rallies, telling one crowd, "Maybe he [the protestor] should have been roughed up." and, "I'd like to punch him [the protestor] in the face" (BBC). He also promised to pay the legal fees of any supporter who might "knock the crap out anybody" who was thinking of throwing a tomato at a rally (BBC). Finally, he spoke nostalgically of the days when protestors would be "carried out on a stretcher." Trump's rallies were not the first to expel protestors. All political rallies must deal with dissent in one way or

another. Rather, they were unique due to the frequency of these incidents of expulsion and the manner in which they were orchestrated: usually by Trump himself and with great dramatic flair and bravado. As a result, Trump's rallies became opportunities for Trump to not only put his authority on display but to also *enact* his authority before the audience and his supporters, lending him greater credibility and respect from the audience. David Proctor argues that the essence of "the dynamic of spectacle" transpires when "rhetors in a community transform some event into enactment of their social order" (118). For Trump, his campaign rallies became spaces and opportunities to not only to *stage* his authority, but also to *enact* it and to appeal to fundamental authoritarian sensibilities, such as submission to authorities, conventionalism, and aggression toward out-groups.

Trump routinely expelled protestors from his rallies, often drawing the process out in dramatic fashion the decision as to whether or not to expel protestors, all to the absolute delight and hysteria of his audience. Thinking of Trump's rallies as rhetorical spectacles and spaces where authoritarian values are "put on display" lends the question as to the nature of these confrontational interactions, both between Trump and the excluded, and between the audience members themselves. Further, what about these interactions with protestors excited the crowd and resulted in inciting authoritarian support for Trump and, at the same time, intolerance and hostility towards the excluded?

If authoritarianism is group-centered, then any deviation from the dominant group is likely to elicit hostility toward those who exhibit difference. Duckitt calls this group-centered conceptualization of authoritarianism as the "appropriate balance between group authority and uniformity and individual autonomy and diversity" ("Authoritarianism and

Group” 63). However, when this balance is compromised, it can have volatile consequences. Stenner notes that when authoritarians are in situations in which they feel as if there is a threat to group uniformity and this delicate balance that Duckitt speaks of, they often turn to “excluding and discriminating against ‘them’: racial and ethnic minorities, political dissidents, and moral deviants” (142). Through rhetorical staging, Trump’s rallies allowed for a form of this intolerance and exclusion, one that was both manufactured and sanctioned, to take place. The result was not only Trump staging his authority, but also enacting it and, consequently, the rousing of authoritarian passions and the fostering of a stronger sense of identification amongst those in attendance.

Trump’s campaign rallies were often criticized by fellow candidates for allowing a culture of violence and hostility. For example, at a campaign rally on March 18, 2016, Trump expelled several protestors. In order to locate the protestors, Trump looked out into the crowd and asked “friend or foe?” before giving his characteristic thumbs down motion to law enforcement, who then escorted the protestors from the rally. Meanwhile, Trump spoke directly to his supporters, encouraging them in displays of hostility, saying things like, “This is so cool. Don’t we love it?” and “If you fight back, they’ll say that you’re the villain” (Parker). Furthermore, following the exchange, Trump compared his response to protestors at rallies to those of Bernie Sanders, who, at a campaign stop in Seattle in August of 2015, allowed two protestors who had taken to the stage to take over his microphone. After mocking Sanders’s response to the event by mimicking Sanders and shuffling slowly off the stage, Trump stated, “My speaker will never be taken over, folks. It’s you. It’s you that is speaking” (BBC).

What then is the nature of what triggers these confrontational situations? Stenner notes that when those with authoritarian predispositions feel as if there is a threat to what is normative, specifically disaffection with leaders or divided public opinion, the “classic” authoritarian defensive arsenal manifests itself in “racial, political, and moral intolerance, and its corollary: punitiveness” (143). Thinking of Trump’s rallies as rhetorical spectacles that allow Trump and his audience to put their “values on display” is critical in understanding how the expulsion of dissent operates at Trump rallies and why it was so effective in intensifying support. In a highly polarized election, where the “us vs. them” dynamic ran thick, these rallies were, in many ways, safe spaces for Trump supporters to identify with likeminded individuals. In other words, it is important to understand this oft-mentioned “us vs. them” dynamic not simply as a politically partisan dichotomy, but also one that is deeply rooted in authoritarian passions. It was in these displays of protest that the like-minded Trump supporters faced resistance, where it was no longer simply “us” but “us vs. them.” And while these rallies were not the only spaces in which Trump’s followers faced resistance culturally, Trump’s rallies became rhetorical spaces in which his supporters were able to define themselves a group and unite in opposition to those in the out-group.

Another example can be found at a campaign rally in Austin, Texas, on August 23, 2016. During the rally, Trump interrupted his speech several times in order to respond to protestors. Again, instead of simply handling the situation in the same way as other candidates, Trump instead endeavored to draw attention *to* the protestors instead of drawing attention away from them. Towards the end of his speech, Trump stopped and engaged in what seemed to be a staring contest with the protestors, squinting into the

crowd before turning around and pacing the stage, seemingly trying to provoke his audience members into a hostile response. The scene continued for a full minute, which was largely filled by protestors giving Trump the thumbs-down sign, attempting to prod Trump to render the decision that would result in the protestors' expulsion ("Donald Trump Campaigns in Austin Texas"). Finally, with dramatic flair and much to the delight of the crowd, Trump proceeded with his signal—a quick motion of his thumb—before spending another minute simply pacing the stage and squinting into the crowd. In all, Trump was silent on stage for two and a half minutes. The crowd, however, was anything but silent, and Trump's own silence became, in a sense, the offering up of a rhetorical space to the audience themselves, as well as the sanctioning of intolerance and punitive justice.

In both of these examples, Trump uses the protestors at his rally as an available means of persuasion, one that appeals directly to authoritarian passions and sensibilities. At the confrontation at the rally in Austin, the protestors themselves were not loud enough to be heard on the video. Still, Trump paused and squinted and strutted for a full two and a half silent minutes, allowing his audience a space and opportunity to respond and act out in ways that are inherently authoritarian. Some supporters can be seen shouting and jeering at the protestors, others can be seen displaying obscene gestures, and still others mimic the ancient audience at the Roman Coliseum, showing their eagerness for expulsion by giving the thumbs-down sign to Trump. Trump himself savors the moment and draws out his decision with spectacle-like flair and drama, courting his audience's emotions. The scene, in many ways, is suggestive of the 19th century painting *Pollice Verso* by Jean-Léon Gérôme, who depicts the scene of another rhetorical

spectacle: the games at the Roman Coliseum. In the painting, the Roman emperor is in his private box while the raucous audience gives a thumbs-down motion, urging the emperor to allow the victorious gladiator depicted in the foreground to kill his opponent who lays helplessly wounded at his feet.

In short, Trump's routine expulsion of dissent at his rallies becomes the enactment of authority and of the punitive action that those with authoritarian sensibilities desire when faced with a "normative threat" and the activation of their authoritarian predispositions. When Trump uses "truthful hyperbole" to describe what he thinks "ought to be done" to protestors, he is describing the authoritarian response to a situation in which the normative has been threatened and authoritarian predispositions have been activated. Stenner notes that authoritarian predispositions are labeled "authoritarian" for the simple reason that they encourage the "suppression of difference" and strive toward the "achievement of uniformity" (16). Trump's rallies embody this idea in a spatial and physical way. They are spaces for individual autonomy to be yielded to the authority of the dominant group, and any dissent or perceived loss of these conditions, or perceived threat, be it manufactured or actual, results in the elicitation of measures to enhance sameness and not only exclude and expel dissent, but do so in a way that is intolerant, punitive, and, at times, violent.

Salient Victim Status: Manufacturing Threat and the Activation of Prejudice

Existential and physical threats are especially effective in stirring up authoritarian passions and sensibilities. A 2011 study conducted by Marc Hetherington and Elizabeth Suhay found that attitudes towards the War on Terror were structured by authoritarianism. Using two large opinion surveys, with the four-item authoritarianism

index as their measure, the study found that “the opinions of those scoring low in authoritarianism resembled those high in authoritarianism when those low in authoritarianism perceived significant threat from terrorism” (546). While it is perhaps no surprise that those who score high in authoritarianism are likely to support military intervention, warrantless wire-tapping, media censorship, national ID cards, and strength over diplomacy, as the study found, the interaction between those scoring low in authoritarianism in their reaction to threat surely poses a threat to democracy and stability. Further, we should expect that once these authoritarian sensibilities are “activated” by threat, individuals will act out in ways that are in accordance with authoritarianism, such as submission to in-group authority and hostility toward out-groups. If then, as the research suggests, both high and low authoritarians are susceptible to, triggered by, and respond to a variety of physical and existential threats, then the ways in which Trump stages physical and existential threats at his rallies becomes a critical way of understanding the success of his rallies in appealing to authoritarians.

At a campaign rally in August of 2016 in Austin, Texas, Trump brought on stage five women. Each was a mother whose son had been murdered by an illegal immigrant. During the rally, Trump invited the women on stage about half-way through his speech as he began his usual and, at that point in the campaign, predictable talking points about immigration policy. Each woman spoke for few moments, providing a short narrative about how her son was killed by illegal immigrants. One woman went into particular detail, outlining how her son was tragically and brutally shot in the back of the head, his body later lit on fire. Another woman brought an urn on stage that was filled with her son’s ashes, held it up to the crowd, and stated, “This is what I have of my family—his

ashes...and the only one who will protect you, your family, and future generations is our next President, Donald J. Trump.” The crowd then shouted “Build that wall! Build that wall!” (“Donald Trump Campaigns in Austin Texas”).

Similarly, at another rally on March 13, 2016, in Boca Raton, Florida, a woman took the stage and told the crowd the brutal way in which her son was murdered, before concluding by revealing he had been killed by an illegal immigrant. At the aforementioned Trump rally in Austin, Texas, each of the four women who spoke used the word “slaughter” in describing the way that their son had been killed, and each finished their statements by stating that America needed a “law and order president,” and that the “only one who could stop the slaughter” was Trump (“CNN Transcripts: Donald Trump’s Speech in Boca Raton”) While politicians and rhetors have been appealing to fear and using props since antiquity, what sets Trump’s rallies apart is the way in which Trump uses them. Instead of simply using props and the manipulation of affect to gain support or votes, Trump’s uses them extensively to appeal specifically to authoritarian anxieties and to activate their prejudices, resulting in direct hostility and intolerance.

Yet, Trump’s strategies for manufacturing threat at his rallies is not limited to the use of perpetuating fear of immigrants through the use of salient victim status and mothers warning audiences about the impending slaughter by immigrants. Trump’s rallies frequently used both concrete and more abstract methods of invoking threat and marshalling authoritarian support and response. Trump’s rallies, more than any other candidate’s, put military and law enforcement at center stage. Trump’s oft-repeated lines, “I am going to be the law and order president,” and “Is there anywhere safer to be than at a Trump rally?,” augmented by the frequent use of law enforcement, border patrol, and

military personnel as props, were all rhetorical moves and tactics designed to manufacture fear concerning the status of social order as well as of physical and existential threats, such as illegal immigration.

In another example from a rally on February 16, 2016, in North Augusta, South Carolina, Trump called two supporters on stage who had tackled a protestor. After the incident, Trump called out into the crowd, asking “who’s the person who took action? I love these guys. I love these people.” Upon taking the stage, the supporter revealed that he was both an Iraqi War veteran, as well as a police deputy, resulting in loud applause from the audience (“Trump Holds Campaign Rally in North Augusta, S.C”). This sort of sanctioning and even rewarding of hostility that resulted from out-group aggression became typical of Trump’s campaign and of the community-building rhetorical spectacles that were his rallies.

Trump’s use of these kinds of props at his rallies is akin to the “bloody shirt,” a rhetorical move that runs back to the times of ancient Rome. Sharon Crowley notes that the waving of a “bloody shirt,” whether literally or figuratively, has been a stock trick of rhetors since at least the time of Cicero (80). In Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, Mark Antony’s famous line “I come not to praise Caesar” includes the waving of Caesar’s bloody toga, a symbolic act meant to rouse the crowd in opposition of Caesar’s assassins. Yet, these methods of rhetorical staging and props were common throughout Trump’s presidential campaign, leading to the question, “how and why did these aforementioned examples and resulting strategies and rhetorical moves appeal so widely to his supporters, specifically those with authoritarian sensibilities?”

In Book I of *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle discusses the utility of emotion in rhetoric, specifically the emotion of anger:

The result is that whenever it is better [for the speaker's case] that they [i.e. the audience] experience fear, he should make them realize that they are liable to suffering; for [he can say that] others even greater [than they] have suffered, and he should show that there are others like them suffering [now] (or who have suffered) and at the hands of those from whom they did not expect it and suffering things [they did not expect] and at a time when they were not thinking of [the possibility]. (Kennedy 141)

What is perhaps central to Aristotle's discussion of fear in the excerpt is the notion of *expectation* and the use of examples to show how the audience might similarly suffer, a strategy similar to Trump's characteristic use of the mothers of murdered children to convince the audience. People are used as testimonial props who suggest that the audience might also be liable to expect suffering, and the only one who is able to stop the "slaughter" is Trump himself. Understanding Aristotle's use of emotion in rhetoric through the lens of authoritarian theories of "threat" and "activation" helps to shed light on how Trump's rallies use props and staging as effective methods of eliciting hostile reactions from authoritarian supporters.

In short, Trump's rhetorical spectacles included the use of props, the expulsion of dissent, and the veneration of authoritative entities in order to appeal to and exploit fundamental authoritarian anxieties, which often resulted in outbursts of intolerance and prejudice from the audience. In the group-centered conceptualization of authoritarianism, threats to norms of social identity and order result in a higher desire for group unity.

Fears lead not only to more intense solidarity among the audience themselves, but also increased support for Trump himself, who embodies the strong-man authoritarian figure and who enacts authoritarian sensibilities, such as intolerance to difference, conventionalism, and aggression toward out-groups. In essence, he becomes both through self-declaration and through enactment, the “law and order” authoritarian leader.

Taken together, Trump’s use of the expulsion of dissent as well as the showcasing of victims and authoritative figures functions as a mechanism to arouse authoritarian passions. In doing so, Trump’s rallies became a form of authoritarian rhetorical spectacles, epideictic and rhetorical spaces in which Trump and his supporters put their values on display, are given a voice, and form a cogent and collective identity, one where the audience is able to identify with each other. Perhaps more importantly, however, is the resulting identification of the group with Trump himself, the quintessential authoritarian figure.

IV. THE ETHOS OF AUTHORITARIANISM

In the preceding chapters, I have argued that Trump was rhetorically successful at appealing to authoritarians throughout his campaign in two ways: through his rhetorical style and through the staging of spectacle at his campaign rallies. In examining Trump's rhetorical style, I posited that Trump appeals to authoritarians through the use of a rhetorical style that is reflective of authoritarian values—simplistic, repetitious, declarative, and dichotomous. For example, Trump's use of short declarative sentences, repetitive slogans and labels, as well as his penchant for the constant structuring of strict dichotomies all appeal to authoritarian sensibilities. In the second chapter, in examining Trump's rallies, I put forward a conceptualization of Trump's presidential campaign events as rhetorical spectacles that create space for and indulge authoritarian intolerance, specifically through participatory elements such as the expulsion of dissent and the use of salient victim status. Trump uses both of these tactics in order to manufacture and elicit authoritarian responses from the audience. Taken together, I hope to have shown what encompasses an authoritarian political rhetoric, one that appeals directly to authoritarian sensibilities through rhetorical strategies that promote group identification and the structuring and bonding of the in-group. In thinking of these elements of a Trump rally, it is clear that both Trump's rhetorical style and his rallies are unique to contemporary American politics. It has been my intention to shed light on this phenomenon by examining these two particulars of Trump's rhetoric through the lens of authoritarianism.

In this final chapter, however, I focus on Trump himself, examining his projected ethos and what makes him a quintessential authoritarian leader. Studies in authoritarianism confirm that when those with authoritarian sensibilities feel “threat” to

what is normative, they not only exhibit intolerance and hostility, as was illustrated in chapter two, but they also turn to strong authoritarian leaders who promise to enact the kind of policies that are aligned with fundamental authoritarian predispositions (Stenner 142, Hetherington and Weiler 539). When thinking of authoritarianism, perhaps the first thing that comes to mind is the strong-man leader himself, the one to whom people turn to in order to see an enactment of their authoritarian worldview, which has been explicit or latent and has recently been activated by a threat to order, the in-group, or a perhaps a more existential and physical threat. In the case of the 2016 presidential campaign, it is perhaps safe to say that many authoritarians felt all three of these as “threats.”

It is no secret that the 2016 presidential campaign was particularly ugly and prolific in its amount of personal attacks. It is true that all political candidates attack and are attacked based on both their public image and personal character. Yet, in the 2016 campaign, Trump launched a near-constant barrage of these sorts of attacks on opponents, leading to a long record of controversial and often chauvinistic comments. For example, Trump argued that John McCain, a former POW, was not a hero, and that Ted Cruz’s father was involved in the assassination of John F. Kennedy. He also attacked presidential candidate Carly Fiorina’s physical appearance. Of course, these examples are but a small sampling of the ad hominem volleys launched by Trump throughout the campaign. Yet despite these vicious attacks, as well as despite Trump’s own tarnished image, of which numerous indicting facts came to light throughout the campaign, he escaped largely unscathed. In many cases, the revelations had an opposite, seemingly paradoxical effect: instead of destabilizing Trump’s support, they seemed to strengthen it. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to understand what is involved in an authoritarian

understanding of ethos and how it can reconcile these inconsistencies and to shed light on the rhetorical strategies related to ethos employed by Trump to earn support during the 2016 presidential campaign.

Central to this chapter is exploring the elements of Trump's persona that made him an attractive authoritarian candidate. In classical rhetorical theory, establishing ethos, whether individually or collectively, is critically important in both the winning and marshalling of the support of the audience and electorate. Considering the research that shows Trump's success with authoritarians during the 2016 presidential campaign, the question might become, "how and how effectively does Trump earn his credibility and in what ways does he project an authoritarian ethos?" Or, perhaps more specifically, in thinking specifically of the 2016 presidential campaign, "what kind of image or ethos did Trump project during the 2016 campaign, and how did it help arouse authoritarian passions?"

Individual and Group Conceptualizations of Ethos

Since antiquity, *ethos* has been a central element of rhetorical discussion, criticism, and scholarship. Perhaps the more familiar translations of *ethos* reside in ideas such as "moral character," "ethics," "credence," or "virtue." All of these attributes are said to be desirable and advantageous for the speaker. For this understanding, critics often point to Aristotle's first book of *Rhetoric*, in which he states, "Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others" (Kennedy 38). Yet, it is fair to say that Trump's own ethos was objectively and diametrically opposed to traditional and classic rhetorical ideals of virtue-laden ethos.

Rather than projecting himself as a character possessing integrity, fair-mindedness, and a civically-focused attitude, Trump flaunted these traditional values and, to great success, opted instead to be seen as a political maverick, one who throughout the campaign exhibited manipulative behavior, prejudice, as well as an ignorance of basic domestic and foreign policy positions. Much of traditional rhetorical analysis understands ethos in a strict and typically Aristotelian sense, meaning ethos is thought of as credence or the moral authority of the speaker. To be sure, Aristotle does place an emphasis on this and posits that the effectiveness of the speaker is increased when they possess admirable qualities. In his *Rhetoric*, in the fifth chapter of book 1, he enumerates qualities that audiences hold in high esteem, such as “good birth,” “good fortune,” and “health, beauty, good friends, good children, fame, honor, and money” (Smith 6). However, it is worth noting that Aristotle’s understanding of ethos is not strictly centered on the isolated speaker. Rather, Craig Smith argues that although Aristotle does often say things such as “persuasion is achieved by the speaker’s personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible,” he also adds to his definition of ethos by stating that effective speakers must “understand human character and goodness in their various forms” (Kennedy 38). Thus, Smith writes, “it is not enough for a speaker to be good, a speaker must understand virtue; the virtue of the culture is one of the fonts of *ethos*” (7). Similarly, Calvin Shragg argues that Aristotle’s notion of *ethos* was about “building the credibility of a speaker before an audience, not about the speaker’s inherent worth” (5). In other words, Aristotle’s notion of ethos may not be as much about the speaker’s intrinsic credibility as much as it about manufacturing the credibility of the speaker in a kind of reciprocal relationship with a specific audience.

In addition to the individual-focused conceptualization of *ethos*, a second concept includes collective ethos, which is related to the concepts of habit, custom, and character or the locale for discursive understanding (Reynolds, 1993). Instead of focusing on the isolated and inherent character of the speaker, the collective concept of *ethos* positions the speaker as a member of a community, one that has its own habits, customs, and character. Michael Hyde argues in his edited collection *The Ethos of Rhetoric* that a more accurate discussion of ethos predates the traditional concepts of ethos as simply “credence” or “moral authority.” Instead of simply referring to “the credence of the speaker,” *ethos* is instead the way in which discourse is implemented in order to construct and “transform space and time into ‘dwelling places,’ where people can deliberate about and know together some matter of interest” (xii). Further, Hyde argues that these dwelling places “define the grounds, the abodes or habitats, where a person’s ethics and moral character take form and develop” (xiii). Understanding ethos as ‘dwelling place,’ a term that can be traced back to Martin Heidegger whose conceptualization of ethos was centered on audience and community, should require us to study the ‘dwelling places’ of Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign and the values of his electorate, or community, in order to understand the ways in which Trump successfully projected himself and appealed to these authoritarian societal premises and domains. In this case, it requires us to examine what might constitute the ‘dwelling place’ of the Trump-supporting electorate.

Instead of analyzing Trump’s ethos through either the speaker-focused ethos or collective ethos, this chapter approaches Trump’s image and persona through a more multi-faceted understanding of ethos. Smith asserts that ethos can be divided into three

divisions: “The first, ethos in the speaker, includes three components: practical wisdom, virtue, and goodwill; the second dwells in the character of the audience; and the third dwells in the speaker’s style” (3).

And while we have already examined Trump’s rhetorical style in a previous chapter, this chapter couples the first two of these three components in examining and understanding Trump’s ethos. In short, it attempts to put forward a reflexive relationship between the three components of individual ethos, namely wisdom, virtue, and goodwill, as well as a fundamental understanding of authoritarian “dwelling places” in order to understand the circuitous relationship between Trump’s ethos and his supporters’ ethos.

Because academic studies of authoritarianism have largely been restricted to psychology and political science, scholars in the field of rhetoric have been silent not only on what encompasses authoritarian rhetoric, but also on any explanations of the connections or implications between *ethos* and authoritarianism. On the one hand, understanding ethos as being centered on the speaker merits an in-depth investigation into what supporters value in leaders and what qualities embody a model authoritarian leader. At the same time, however, before seeking to understand the kind of authoritarian leader that supporters might gravitate towards, it is equally important to consider authoritarian sensibilities and fundamental worldview, what more contemporary rhetoricians understand ethos to be as ‘dwelling place.’ Or, in other words, we must seek to understand the nature of the *doxa* of authoritarianism.

Rhetorician Sharon Crowley defines *doxa* as the “current and local beliefs that circulate communally” and the “assertions about the way things are—what exists, what human nature is, how the world operates” (67). Crowley’s conceptualization of *doxa*

highlights the importance that belief plays in community, the way they operate in constructing virtue, and the ways in which we might think about ethos as a “dwelling place.” Examining Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign through a lens of both authoritarianism and a dualistic lens of ethos enables us to understand not only the projection of Trump himself, but an understanding of authoritarian “belief” and “dwelling places” within Trump’s electorate and the way in which Trump appeals to these attitudes.

Authoritarian “Dwelling Places”

What then consists of these “dwelling places” among Trump supporters? Before understanding the nature of Trump’s authoritarian ethos, we must first examine the audience’s “dwelling place” because, as Smith argues, “determining the audience’s beliefs is the key to successful adaption in terms of building credibility. In this way, ethos dwells not only in the speaker, as Plato and Isocrates would have us believe, but also in the audience” (6). Smith goes on to say on this reciprocal relationship that, taking courage as an example, the speaker should,

“Understand one’s audience’s notion of courage might be another audience’s notion of rashness. Effective speakers must either adapt to the audience’s conception of courage or persuade the audience to move along the virtue’s continuum until its notion of courage aligns with that of the speaker (7).

Understanding ethos as dwelling both in the audience and the speaker might, then, shed light on Trump’s success with authoritarians and the manner in which he adapted to quintessential authoritarian attitudes and resulting policy positions, many of which he was openly against prior to running for the president.

I posit that the “dwelling place” of authoritarianism, then, centers on three fundamental features: submission to authorities, conventionalism, and aggression toward out-groups (Duckitt, Heatherington and Weiler, Funke). Further, understanding authoritarianism as a group-centered phenomenon that is, as Duckitt argues, “the individual or group’s conception of the relationship that should exist, that is, appropriate or normative relationship between the group and its individual members” is useful in thinking about an authoritarian ethos, one that is socially constructed and consisting of “dwelling places.” Authoritarians are known to value social order above all else and often exhibit hostility and prejudice towards those who deviate from this established order (Stenner and Feldman, Duckitt, Altemeyer).

Furthermore, authoritarianism might also be considered group-centered (Duckitt 63). And while research suggests a strong correlation between those scoring high on authoritarianism and support for Trump, it is also important to consider the nature of authoritarianism not as one of overt exhibition of authoritarian attributes, but rather one that is more nuanced. Karen Stenner’s understanding of authoritarianism as being centered on “threat” is important to bear in mind when thinking of the way in which authoritarian responses are triggered. According to Stenner, a subset of individuals possesses latent authoritarian tendencies which are “activated” by the perception of physical threat or threat to what they deem to be normative, what Stenner calls the “normative threat.” As a result, both more explicit authoritarians and those who have latent predispositions support leaders who promise protection from these threats (Stenner, Altemeyer).

A threat-centered conceptualization of authoritarianism was central to the study and poll conducted by Matthew MacWilliams, whose findings were published in *Politico* magazine, as well numerous online outlets, such as VOX, in early 2016, which found that the “sole statistically significant variable” that predicted support for Trump was a correlation between high scores on measures of authoritarianism and support for Trump.

Before moving to the components of Trump’s *ethos*, it is important to note that the foci for the structure of the following analysis is the principle of rhetorical ethos as a reciprocal relationship between the group “dwelling places” of the audience and the speaker, as well as an understanding of authoritarian dwelling places as understood in light of studies in authoritarianism. In short, it is important to consider the relationship between *individual* ethos and *collective* ethos. To this end, this chapter examines three aspects of Trump’s persona that, although are often described as individual *ethos*, are inextricably linked through a reciprocal relationship to the collective *ethos* because they are rhetorical responses to the dwelling places within his supporters, specifically those with authoritarian sensibilities. I borrow from Aristotle’s three components of ethos—wisdom, goodwill, and virtue—and attempt to show their relationship to studies in authoritarianism.

Trump’s “Wisdom” Ethos: Magnate, Deal-Maker, Gilder

In Aristotle’s discussion of the three components individual of ethos, he argues that wisdom, or *phronesis*, is an attribute for a speaker to possess in order to persuade effectively. Of course, Aristotle’s intention or meaning in using this word has been much debated, including interpretations that translate it to “good sense, practical wisdom, sagacity, expertise, and intelligence” (Smith 10). Many convincing interpretations take

Aristotle's discussion of wisdom to mean, as Smith notes, the "capacity for applying a rational principle to *practical* situations that call for choice about action." (11). This "practical wisdom" is also discussed extensively in both Aristotle's *Ethics*.

For Trump's supporters, Trump's perceived business acumen, bolstered by the popularity of the reality television show *The Apprentice*, as well as Trump's various and recognizable brands, including dabbles in everything from real estate to airline companies to fashion and beauty pageants, provided a sense of perceived intelligence, one of a self-made mogul who was the personification of the American Dream. Or, as so many supporters argued throughout the campaign, Trump might perhaps finally be a candidate who, as a successful businessman, "gets things done." Reading or watching interviews with Trump supporters often resulted in the voter stating that they planned on voting for "Mr. Trump" because of his business experience and prowess as a "deal-maker." Notably absent from many justifications as to why voters were supporting Trump were discussions of rational arguments. Often, these voters cited Trump's character, or ethos, as their rationale. Further, Trump often referred to his book *The Art of the Deal* as a way of persuading voters to elect him so that he could bring the same deal-making mastery to Congress, foreign policy, and trade. As Trump's son Eric Trump argued in an interview, people ought to vote for Trump because "Everything he touches turns to gold" (Kaplan).

It is safe to say that Trump's business background and perceived expertise was successful in persuading voters, but Trump not only talked extensively of his wealth while on the campaign trail, he also went to great lengths to demonstrate it, often making a spectacle of holding rallies close to his Trump-branded Boeing 757. Trump's plane, which is said to have gold-plated seat belts, bathroom fittings, cream-colored leather

seats, and an entertainment center with over 1,000 DVD titles branded with Trump's name, was an oft-used symbolic prop throughout the campaign. Moreover, the gold and marble Trump Tower in Manhattan, which attracted intense media coverage throughout the campaign, also functioned as a kind of physical manifestation of Trump's ethos as a business success and wealthy. For example, on a *60 Minutes* interview filmed at Trump Tower in November of 2016, Trump sat on a gilded Louis XV chair while being interviewed, surrounded by his family who also sat on gold chairs in a room with fresco-style ceilings, gold chandeliers, and gold molding. In short, Trump not only bragged throughout the campaign about his wealth, he also worked to project an ethos of opulence and extravagance.

Trump certainly worked to project an image of a wealthy, savvy, deal-making businessman, but why might this ethos appeal so successfully to authoritarian passions? The conceptualization of authoritarianism that we have seen thus far has been one that is centered on social conformity and that is precipitated by the activation of threat, or what Stenner refers to as the "normative threat," usually either to this order or from existential physical threats (see Heatherington and Weiler, Duckitt, Feldman, Stenner). The idea that authoritarianism can be latent in individuals is well established in studies of authoritarianism (Duckett 65 Feldman and Stenner 742). Moreover, Heatherington and Weiler note that authoritarians have a "(1) greater need for order, and conversely, less tolerance for confusion or ambiguity, and (2) a propensity to rely on established authorities to provide that order" (34). In short, authoritarians value order above all else and turn to figures who promise to enact the kind of order, cohesion, and protection against physical threats.

Moreover, authoritarian scholars have noted that authoritarians have a suspicion of the arts but admire vocations that are more reflective of order and authority and that are less ambiguous in nature (Zafirovski 144). Trump's public persona as the quintessential self-made businessman functioned as an attractive idea of a classic all-American magnate to many supporters who value conventionalism, are more likely to see things in "black and white" terms, and who have an aversion to the arts. Further, since antiquity, the aesthetic of gold has been symbolic of absolute power, although, perhaps more recently gold has become overly-simplistic, distasteful, and cliché. Instead of being emblematic of grandeur, it has more often been used by despotic political figures who, as unstable leaders, often attempted to increase their authority through aesthetic propaganda. For example, Saddam Hussein famously built dozens of palaces of marble and gold. An article published in *The Atlantic* in March of 2016 compared the aesthetics of gold and the architectural proclivities of Donald Trump to that of Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi (Chrisman-Campbell).

To return to thinking of ethos as a circuitous relationship between the individual and the collective, Trump's ethos as that of intelligent and powerful businessman, associated with opulence and wealth, was helpful in gaining authoritarian support. For example, below are a sampling of comments from interviews with Trump supporters who were asked to state why they planned on voting for Trump. For anyone who watched interviews such as these throughout the campaign, these responses might be rather typical:

"I think he's really someone who understands economics and international finance on a global level in many ways beyond just theory but real first-hand experience "

- Issac Eves, Florida, March 2016

"He's the epitome of a business success... he's got contacts in all these countries."

John Hikel, New Hampshire, January 2016

"I like that he's over the top. My president needs bravado... somebody who is big and loud, strong and powerful." - Victoria Wilen, Orlando, Florida, November

2015

("Election 2016: Trump Voters On Why They Backed Him")

In other words, Trump's reputation as a businessman, coupled with his ostentatious show of wealth, offered a simplistic and tangible representation to his supporters as a leader who was authoritative, powerful, and action-oriented, attributes that are attractive to authoritarians when seeking a leader to support that will bring about the change they desire.

Trump's Goodwill Ethos: Family Man, Father Figure, and Faithful Philanthropic

Thus far, we have examined one of Aristotle's three components of individual ethos—wisdom, or perceived intelligence. The second component that Aristotle discusses is goodwill towards the audience (*eunoia*), which Aristotle also often compares to that of "friendliness." Throughout the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump appealed to this component of ethos primarily through two methods: ensuring the public's perception of

him included one of him as a benevolent family man, and, secondly, by building and maintaining intimate bonds with his audience through the use of emotive language and repetitive and participatory rhetorical tactics.

In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle discusses the importance of *eunoia*, or goodwill, as a component of speaker-centered ethos. Brewer posits that *eunoia* involves a “reciprocated goodwill between two persons, each of who is aware of the other’s goodwill” (723). Writing a few centuries later, Cicero adds the following concerning the relationship between goodwill and ethos:

Now people’s minds are won over by a person’s prestige, his accomplishments, and the reputation he has acquired by his way of life... The effect of such things is enhanced by a gentle tone of voice on the part of the speaker, an expression on his face intimating restraint, and kindness in the use of his words, and if you press some point rather vigorously, by seeming to act against your inclination, because you are forced to do so. Indications of flexibility...are also quite useful, as well as signs of generosity, mildness, dutifulness, gratitude, and of not being desirous or greedy. Actually, all qualities typical of people who are decent and unassuming, not severe, not obstinate, not litigious, not harsh, really win goodwill, and alienate those who do not possess them. (182)

While Aristotle might perhaps differ from Cicero in whether or not ethos involves the previous reputation of the speaker, both understood the power of acts of goodwill from the speaker and the importance of establishing a close bond with the audience. In Trump’s campaign, he accomplished this bond through a close, *paternalistic* relationship with his audience.

Throughout the campaign, Trump often used repetitive emotive expressions at his rallies, working to form a relationship with his audience. While all politicians work to establish a sense of common ground with the audience, Trump's strategy was distinctive because of the intimacy of many of the expressions that he repeated at his rally. Trump's penchant for beginning sentences with "I love" was well established by the end of the campaign, and Trump frequently used "love" to describe his feelings for a variety of things throughout the campaign, including "the poorly educated," immigrants, "the Mexicans," Hispanics, the police, NASCAR, Israel, protestors, the United Nations, John Deere, China, among many other people, places, and objects. Perhaps most consistently, however, is Trump's repeated use of "I love you" directed towards crowds at his rallies. This repetitive emotive phrase repeated by Trump was often accentuated by Trump playing the role of the "enforcer" at his rallies, through his ordering of the expulsion of protestors and dissent, often given in dramatic and punitive fashion.

What might it be about Trump's emotive language that contributes to a character that might appeal to the authoritarian electorate? It is worth noting that although there are several measures of authoritarianism, including the original F-scale and Altemeyer's RWA scale, the scale that was used to correlate support for Trump and authoritarians was Karen Stenner and Stanley Feldman's scale, which uses questions pertaining to parenting, such as questions about respect for elder, obedience, and good manners in order to pinpoint authoritarian-like features that might be transferable to politics. Likewise, a question on Altemeyer's RWA scale is, "Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn." Further, because those with authoritarian dispositions value conventionalism and social order, a morally traditional and

paternalistic world that is marked by conventionalism and order and enacted by a strong figure, such as Trump, might be more appealing to authoritarians.

Further, if we are to think of authoritarianism as a group-centered phenomenon, then ensuring in-group status is paramount for the authoritarian leader. As has been established, those who hold authoritarian sensibilities turn to strong leaders when they are faced with a normative threat. The spectacle of the expulsion of dissent at Trump's rally is a rhetorical tactic that was discussed in a previous chapter, yet it is also important to think of the ways in which Trump's emotive language and paternalistic posturing might help form a close bond with his audience and create an almost family-like atmosphere at his rallies, where the dominant in-group not only is able to identify with each other, but also has the opportunity to exhibit intolerance and prejudice towards those who deviate from the group, conventionalism, and normative social order. In short, Trump's often used emotive language and the inclusion of his family members as surrogates in order to project an *ethos* of "goodwill" through establishing a close paternalistic bond with his audience, as well as shaping and maintaining a sense of community of authoritarians, as well as the in-group at his rallies.

Trump's Virtue Ethos: The Outsider and the Flouting of Political Correctness

Finally, not only did Trump use his reputation as businessman, his wealth, and abundant use of emotive and paternalistic language and rhetorical posturing towards his audience, but Trump also used his perceived position as an outsider to conventional politics in order to appeal to authoritarians. Craig Smith argues that "speakers who choose a style appropriate to their moral state create a sense of character. Therefore, word selection is another way in which moral character is conveyed through choice" (9). For

Trump, this style was often in the form of intentionally insensitive and inflammatory remarks and statements. Yet, as evidenced by Trump's victory, many Americans found Trump's incendiary style attractive. For example, many supporters argued that Trump's inexperience in politics is what they found most appealing in supporting him, leading many supporters to say things like the following:

"Donald Trump is very real and very sincere. We're tired of being cheated. The more they try to attack him, the more we love him." - Sandra Stone, Florida, March 2016

"He's outspoken. Other candidates wouldn't tell you how it is, but he does." - Betty Tully, August 2015

"He doesn't hold back. You get what he really believes in, even if everything that he says isn't what is the right thing exactly." - Nicholas Poucher, Florida, December 2015

("Election 2016: Trump Voters On Why They Backed Him ")

Yet, discussing Trump's posturing as an outsider candidate is not complete without discussing Trump's flouting of political correctness. For example, the 2016 presidential campaign also saw the unlikely rise of Senator Bernie Sanders, who also campaigned on a platform as a Washington outsider. Trump's campaign was different in that he only ran as an outsider but also because one of the central factors in Trump's perceived status as a political outsider was his outspoken and vitriolic disdain for political correctness. Over

the course of the campaign, countless supporters cited Trump's flouting of political correctness, an idea they often saw as aligned with the political and cultural left as well as elites, to be a central factor in their support for Trump. Trump, in turn, worked hard to project his image as one who was diametrically opposed to political correctness. In Trump's debut on the debate stage in 2015, his opening statement included the assertion that he thought that political correctness was a "big problem" in the country. Trump repeated this phrase often and stated routinely in interviews that political correctness was a "big problem" for the country. After the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015, Trump proclaimed that "being political correct kills people" (Markovitis). To be sure, Trump attempted to present himself as the candidate who was a political maverick and one who spoke without filter and with complete authenticity. After eight years of a rhetorically-gifted President Obama in the White House, who was often derided by his critics for being too aloof and professorial in his language, Trump's brazenness seemed a breath of fresh air to many Americans. For example, an exit poll taken during the South Carolina primary found that 78% of voters cited "tells it like it is" as a top quality they were looking for in a candidate in the 2016 primaries (Markovits).

Moreover, Trump not only talked about the "problem" of political correctness, he also worked to defy it regularly and dramatically. This often led to tweets, statements, and speeches that left many gasping, while his supporters often reveled, garnering Trump intense media coverage that lasted until the next, more sensational, tweet or statement. For example, after Trump re-tweeted a picture of the Star of David atop a pile of trash, Trump's then campaign manager Corey Lewandowski dismissed the scrutiny, saying that political correctness in America had "run amok" (Diamond). In a similar response,

Trump's responded to questions concerning his temperament, following questions from Megyn Kelly about his remarks calling some women "dogs" and "fat pigs," by saying, "I think the big problem this country has is being politically correct" (Chavez). Likewise, after Trump faced intense backlash for arguing that District Judge Gonzalo Curiel's Mexican heritage would prevent him from being objective and impartial in hearing civil fraud cases, Trump responded, "We have to stop being politically correct in this country." Finally, perhaps most often, Trump often criticized the Obama administration for verbiage concerning the War on Terror. In July of 2016, Trump tweeted, "With Hillary and Obama, the terrorist attacks will only get worse. Politically correct fools, won't even call it what is is – RADICAL ISLAM!" (@realDonaldTrump). Throughout the rest of the campaign, Trump would repeat this critique often in his rallies and speeches, playing to fears of physical and existential threats, a particularly effective threat for the quintessential authoritarian fears of his audiences, from ISIS, and the terror attacks in both Paris and Brussels, often saying things like, "We have a president that doesn't even use the term and won't use the term radical Islamic terrorism." To be sure, Trump's campaign reveled in the image and language of the outsider. Yet, an important question to consider might be "why and how might Trump's posturing as the politically incorrect outsider candidate have been so successful in coalescing authoritarian support?"

In thinking of Aristotle's three components of individual and speaker-based ethos, virtue, or *arête*, is most often thought of in rhetorical theory as "moral habits" or "excellence." In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle states that virtue in ethos is "a capacity (*dynamis*) of providing and preserving good things, and a capacity of conferring many great benefits

(*euergetikê*)” (Kennedy 80). Aristotle also elaborates on the connection between ethos, virtue, and the conferring of benefits when he says the following:

If excellence (*dynamis*) is the capacity of conferring benefits, then the greatest virtues must be those which are the most useful to others, and, for this reason, justice and courage are the most honored; for the latter is useful to others in war, and the former both in war and in peace. (Kennedy 79)

It is Aristotle’s focus on both justice and courage that is perhaps most useful in thinking about Trump’s enactment of this virtue component of ethos. Trump’s bravado and brazenness in defying political correctness allows authoritarian supporters to see him as a virtuous character, one who is in pursuit of justice on their behalf and who will not tolerate any ambiguity in his fight for the American people.

Furthermore, Trump’s perceived status as a political outsider, and one who consequently ran an outsider campaign, might be interpreted as possessing this kind of virtuosity-centered courage, the kind that Aristotle argues is central in individual ethos. Aristotle argues that “deliberate choices” are important in building ethos, specifically virtue ethos. Concerning this point, Craig Smith argues that “character is based on what deliberate choices have been made, that is the “end” achieved by the choice illustrates good or bad character” (8). This “deliberate choice” with intent is illustrated by the fact that Trump often said throughout the campaign that he did not “have to run,” but was rather running because of his deep care for his country and his concern over the direction that the country was heading. Trump’s attempt to demonstrate selfless virtue was bolstered by his projected image of wealth and business success, leading many to perhaps think of Trump’s run for president as a selfless act that was done out of not only concern

for the country, but also for the benefit of the American people, specifically the voices of those who had been “forgotten” by those in Washington.

Finally, Aristotle’s inclusion of justice as an integral part of virtue might help to explain Trump’s success in appealing to authoritarians. Distributive justice has long been associated with the Democratic Party while retributive justice has often been more aligned with the Republican Party. And, those scoring high in measures of authoritarianism are said to value punitive responses to physical and moral threats (Hetherington and Suhay; Feldman; Feldman and Stenner; Stenner). Trump’s penchant and glee for defying political correctness, often in ways that were punitive and intolerant, might have often been viewed as an enactment of justice and punitiveness, with Trump often speaking strongly on sensitive topics such as immigration, threats from ISIS, as well as Trump’s structuring of America as getting a raw deal on trade deals with Mexico and other countries, NATO, and the U.S stationing of troops in South Korea.

Taken together, Trump’s positioning as outsider, as well as his posturing as a self-declared politically incorrect candidate, appealed to supporters with authoritarian sensibilities in that they saw Trump’s action as unambiguous, courageous, and just. Mark Hetherington and Jonathon Weiler argue that those scoring high on the authoritarianism scale have a “(1) a greater need for order, and conversely less tolerance for confusion or ambiguity, and (2) a propensity to rely on established authorities to provide that order” (34). In examining Trump’s virtue ethos, it is clear that Trump fulfilled both of these particulars. On one hand, he provided a sense of order and provided crystal-clear unambiguous positions and sound bites that were easily understood and translatable into worldviews that were strictly black and white. On the other hand, Trump positioned

himself as the strong and virtuous character who was able to provide this sense of order.

Taken together, Trump's supposed virtue ethos was an integral part of Trump's authoritarian ethos, as well as his success in appealing to authoritarians.

V. CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have attempted to put forth a conceptualization of rhetorical features and events that might constitute a kind of authoritarian rhetoric. In examining Trump's rhetorical style, the rhetoric of spectacle, and ethos of authoritarianism, I have drawn on both classic and contemporary rhetorical theory, as well as studies in authoritarianism in order to develop framework for the qualities of authoritarian rhetoric as seen in the 2016 presidential campaign of Donald Trump. In short, I have argued that the primary rhetorical methods employed by Trump in order to appeal to authoritarians are his rhetorical style, the rhetoric of the authoritarian spectacle, as well as Trump's authoritarian ethos. My hope in developing this interdisciplinary framework is to present authoritarianism, specifically as it played out in society and politics, as an area of study that merits more attention from those in the field of rhetoric. To conclude, I would like to offer two additional propositions. First, scholars in my own field of rhetoric and composition should consider *authoritarianism* as a topic that merits greater attention and deeper study, especially when considering the current political, social, and cultural landscape in democracies around the world. Relatedly, I would further argue that rhetorical scholars might examine once again neighboring fields, such as psychology, political psychology, and political science, in order to more holistically address topics in contemporary rhetoric. Secondly, the current trend toward populism and nationalism should require scholars of rhetoric to begin again to think of rhetoric not only in other areas of study, such as authoritarianism, but should also inspire a renewed focus and intentional study on the often neglected original habitat of rhetoric: the sphere of civic discourse.

A Democratic Conceptualization of Rhetoric and Civic Engagement

Understanding that stable democracies draw strength from an educated, enlightened, and liberally-minded populace should motivate those who study rhetoric to contribute to not only examining rhetorical situations such as the 2016 election, but also seek to firstly draw from and understand these issues from a more interdisciplinary approach, but also to translate these findings for both their students as well as the general public. Political theorist Chantal Mouffe, who studies democracy, populism, and social movements, argues that a well-functioning democracy “calls for a vibrant clash of democratic political positions,” and that if this element of debate is missing, there is “danger that this democratic confrontation will be replaced by a confrontation among other forms of collective identification” (204). Similarly, in *Toward a Civic Discourse*, Sharon Crowley notes that rhetoric is useful to civic society because “those who practice it...can find ways to alleviate disagreement; those who study it...try to understand why disagreement occurs so they may help rhetors [those who practice rather than study rhetoric] figure out how to alleviate it” (24). In short, the inability to disagree and deliberate results in intense tribalism and the formation of insular communities, a point that is perhaps proven by the role that authoritarianism and group identification played in Trump’s rise to the presidency in the 2016 election.

I hope that this paper might help yield more academic attention, both academically and pedagogically, to the work that rhetoric does in the civic sphere. It is becoming, it seems, increasingly difficult to study rhetoric in the academy and be exposed to or focus one’s study on civic rhetoric—the work rhetoric does in politics and in civic society. While rhetoric has found its way into seemingly countless other fields of

study and research, rhetoric in its most historical and perhaps natural form—the civic domain—remains largely forgotten, perhaps deemed archaic, out of vogue, or left for those in the fields of political science and communications to examine and explain. It is not, however, an either/or on this point. Simply stated, we need *more* rhetoric, not less of it, and we need a renewed focus and appreciation of rhetoric and civic engagement. What if, for example, more students in composition classrooms explored the nature of civic rhetoric? This is not to say that other domains of rhetorical study are not worthy of attention or yielding important research, yet it is the democratic, liberal, and deliberative rhetoric in the civic sphere that makes the study and research of all other rhetorics possible.

In addition to the need for a renaissance of civic rhetoric in the academy, rhetoricians might also pay attention to rhetoric and civic society for, appropriately, the sake of the stability of civic society itself. Ours is a time of intense political and cultural polarization, when finding the ability to agree or even to deliberate is seemingly impossible, where there is no intelligent “clash” of ideas but rather a narrowing of thought and the formation of insular communities. Those who study and understand the power of rhetoric have a responsibility to society to provide an alternative to the disparaging, intolerant, authoritarian rhetoric that seems to have crept in to western democracies. In response to this brand of inflammatory and authoritarian rhetoric, the democratic, deliberative, and liberal rhetoric of civic engagement stands, as it has for thousands of years, as a ready response.

Speaking to this point, Sharon Crowley argues that the “cultural invisibility of rhetoric, conceived as an art of invention, bears a dialectical relation to Americans’

current unwillingness to disagree” (26). Crowley is correct here, and it bears worth mentioning that America’s current trend towards polarization and this “unwillingness to disagree” can be seen in its inability and resistance to deliberate intelligently and with even a remote pretense of deference or civility. Of course, as has been shown throughout this thesis, rhetoric can certainly be used for more acrimonious ends. It can mislead. It can distract. And, as has been shown, it can stir up prejudices of an angry and intolerant mob. However, Aristotle argues that all things that might be considered useful or good can be used for potential harm: “for by using these justly one would do the greatest good and unjustly, the greatest harm” (Kennedy 35). There has always been and there always will be an ethical and moral risk inherent in the use of rhetoric. Yet, perhaps the salient point is this: rhetorical capital ought to be distributed liberally and not consolidated in a kind of authoritarian hegemony. Empowering both students and the populace with rhetorical capital might perhaps go a long way to combating the effects of polarization and the effects of authoritarianism in society. In many ways, the antidote to authoritarian rhetoric is—*rhetoric*.

Rhetoric and Interdisciplinary Study

I hope to have demonstrated the need for rhetorical scholars to study and seek to understand how both classical and contemporary rhetorical theory might help to inform studies in authoritarianism, a field of study that is already well-established in the fields of psychology, political psychology, sociology, and political science. And, conversely, I have shown how studies in these fields might help rhetoricians understand and conceptualize an understanding of authoritarian rhetoric. While rhetoric has long been thought of as overtly interdisciplinary in nature, a surprising lack of attention has been

shown to rhetoric and its connection to authoritarianism, a field of study that has existed for some time in other disciplines.

Conclusion

These resulting two propositions: proliferating more interdisciplinary study and focus in rhetoric and revitalizing a renaissance of rhetoric in civic discourse might also have the added benefit of bringing greater attention to the ability of *rhetoric* in the civic domain to be more than a pejorative word associated with deceit and emptiness.

Moreover, it might also serve as the answer to the phenomenon of authoritarian rhetoric that has seemingly, but perhaps temporarily, taken over the American political scene. In a very real way, the answer to this trend toward nationalism and its resulting authoritarian rhetoric in politics and society is—rhetoric.

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