

BY TWEET AND BY SPEECH:
AN EXAMINATION OF VALUES IN DONALD TRUMP'S METAPHOR

HONORS THESIS

Presented to the Honors College of
Texas State University
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for Graduation in the Honors College

by

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San Marcos, Texas
December 2017

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Amelie Benedikt. Without her invaluable guidance and support, this thesis would be only an idea. Each time she would offer me her most humble edits and suggestions, she pushed me to reconsider my position and defend my thoughts. Dr. Benedikt has been a constant in my academic career at Texas State, and I truly appreciate all she has done for me.

Secondly, I would like to thank my fellow tutors at the Texas State Writing Center: Rachel Elliot, A.R. Rogers, MariElena Herrera, Ellie Connell, and so many others. Each of you has been a tremendous support system for me while working on this thesis. Your suggestions, advice, criticisms, and witticisms were more helpful than you will ever know.

Lastly, I would like to thank those who are closest to me. Thank you to my father, Michael, for pushing me to put forth the effort. Thank you to my mother, Patti, for teaching me to stand on my own. And, thank you to my partner, Kayla, for giving me scathing, constructive criticisms while I floundered. You have always believed in me and inspired me to do my best. Words cannot describe how thankful I am to have you in my life.

ABSTRACT

This Honor's thesis examines Donald Trump's use of metaphor and explores how he expresses his values through those metaphors. By examining examples of Trump's political remarks, I reveal the central metaphor by which Trump operates and consider how American citizens may reestablish their political power by understanding Trump's metaphors. The time period studied includes the start of Trump's 2016 Presidential campaign up until the present. First, I discuss the central metaphor Trump uses in his remarks. Then, I classify Trump's public speeches and tweets into separate categories, which include the ways in which his speech has affected public reaction. In these categories, I apply George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's philosophy of language to Trump's remarks, and I reveal the values expressed in Trump's metaphors. After this, and I develop an appeal and course of action that American citizens who are opposed to Trump's presidency must make in order to expose Trump's non-egalitarian values. My findings will illuminate the power that metaphors have in contemporary American society and the impact they have made subsequent to the 2016 Presidential Election.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	vi
CHAPTERS	
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Background.....	5
III. Trump’s Central Metaphor.....	8
IV. Examination of Trump’s Use of Metaphor By Tweet.....	12
V. Examination of Trump’s Use of Metaphor By Speech.....	18
VI. Conclusion.....	25
LITERATURE CITED	27

I. Introduction

On November 8, 2016, many American citizens were stunned when Donald Trump was named the 47th president of the United States of America. Many could not understand how a man who was critical of egalitarian values could be elected as the representative and decision-maker for our Nation. American citizens are accustomed to the prepared statements and remarks made by traditional, bureaucratic politicians, and Trump is everything but traditional and bureaucratic. One would think this would inhibit his chances of election, but, in fact, this was a large factor in his appeal. In an online journal named, *The Conversation*, PhD candidate Andrew Hines explores how Trump's incoherent use of language led to American trust. He quotes Georgetown University linguist Jennifer Sclafani who states that "[Trump's] rhetoric may come off as incoherent and unintelligible when we compare it with the organized structure of other candidates' answers. On the other hand, his conversational style can also help construct an identity for him as authentic, relatable and trustworthy, which are qualities that voters look for in a presidential candidate."¹ The American people want a candidate who shares the same values and fears as the public, not some figurehead who is working to defend his or her own special interests.

Interestingly, Trump has been known to liken himself to the 7th President of the United States, Andrew Jackson, because he views himself as a man of the people. He has frequently called out and spoken against traditional politicians for equivocating and hiding the truth from the American people, something that he has vowed to put an end to

¹ Andrew Hines, "Donald Trump's chaotic use of metaphor is a crucial part of his appeal," *The Conversation*, August 2, 2016, <https://theconversation.com/donald-trumps-chaotic-use-of-metaphor-is-a-crucial-part-of-his-appeal-61383>.

during his presidency. Indeed, regarding the previously restricted JFK files, for example, Trump tweeted, “JFK Files are being carefully released. In the end there will be great transparency. It is my hope to get just about everything to the public!”² The transparency that Trump promises is the key to his appeal because it invites average citizens into sectors of the government that have previously been restricted for unknown reasons of national security. Related to this, Trump’s use of social media, specifically Twitter, allows him to interact with Americans at a faster rate, and it enables him to deliver unfiltered thoughts to whoever chooses to follow his account – a whopping 42 million and counting. Compared to past presidents, Trump considers major news outlets to be one of his largest opponents, as he believes that most of the news they release is “fake news.” To further his truth-telling abilities, Trump once tweeted “The FAKE & FRAUDULENT NEWS MEDIA is working hard to convince Republicans that I should not use social media – but remember, I won the 2016 election with interviews, speeches and social media. I had to beat #FakeNews, and did. We will continue to WIN!”³ By accusing news outlets of spreading falsities, Trump attempts to convince the public that the truest, most reliable information they can be given must come from the direct source.

If we assume that Trump’s personal interviews, speeches, and tweets are expressions of his values, it is important to understand and learn what he tells the American public in these sources. This assumption is based on Trump’s claim that his direct interactions with the public are the only true representations of his speech and values. Thus, it is necessary to understand the statements that Trump makes to all who

² Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, October 27, 2017, 4:38 A.M., <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump>.

³ Ibid., July 1, 2017, 3:02 P.M.

will listen. To accomplish this, I will examine the language Trump uses to determine if there is a possible correlation between his metaphors and the domestic and foreign policies that followed his election.

As a source of inspiration for my examination of Trump's metaphors, Friedrich Nietzsche writes, "What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to people."⁴

Furthermore, he writes, "We still do not know where the urge for truth comes from; for as yet we have heard only of the obligation imposed by society that it should exist: to be truthful means using the customary metaphors – in moral terms, the obligation to lie according to fixed convention, to lie herd-like in a style obligatory for all."⁵

Drawing on this Nietzschean insight, we see that using customary, or common, metaphors is what we mean by making truthful statements, or in moral terms, metaphors are false statements that reach many.

When using "poetically and rhetorically" enhanced metaphors, is Trump lying, then? Or is he masterfully lacing his language with metaphor, enabling him to reach a wider audience than the traditional, less poetic politician? I opt to support this judgment. In fact, cognitive linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson would agree that metaphor is behind all ideas that we communicate with one another. So, if metaphors

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, "On truth and lie in an extra-moral sense" in *The Viking Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 46-47.

⁵ Ibid.

ground all communications, how do Trump's communications differ from traditional politicians? I have found, and will show here, that instead of calling on jargon and factoids that tend to cloud the average American's understanding of the political process, Trump communicates with us with powerful metaphor devoid of technical vocabulary. Again, this is a reason for Trump's success. He is a successful orator because he is able to use metaphors that average Americans comprehend.

To further explain the role of metaphor in communication, Lakoff and Johnson write, "At best, metaphor is treated as if it were always the result of some operation performed upon the literal meaning of the utterance.... [however,] conventional metaphors are pervasive in our ordinary everyday way of thinking, speaking, and acting."⁶ Regarding Trump, Lakoff and Johnson's philosophy of language would not label him either a liar or a truth-teller. Rather, it allows us to understand how Trump's choice of metaphors successfully subverts traditional political language and opens the door for other non-traditional politicians to share their views with average citizens. For these reasons, this paper will use George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's philosophy of language to examine some of the metaphor used by Donald Trump and will illustrate the implicit values present in the statements, which will lead to a deeper understanding of how Trump's language affects public reaction.

⁶ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, "Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language" in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 286.

II. Background

Before we may examine the metaphors in Trump's speeches and tweets, I will continue my description of Lakoff and Johnson's philosophy of language. In "Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language," Lakoff and Johnson challenge the difference between literal and metaphorical meaning.

For the authors, metaphorical language is the origin of literal language. In fact, they believe that we cannot begin to know literal meaning without metaphorical meaning. Since metaphor functions as a history of culturally based ideas, metaphor informs literal language. To better understand this, Lakoff and Johnson, for example, offer the phrase "stop wasting my time" and unpack the literal meaning of the phrase in order to reveal its metaphorical origin.⁷ With this phrase, we may isolate the words "wasting time." From these words, Lakoff and Johnson argue that the meaning underneath these words is that "time is a valuable commodity."⁸ To further this, we may make a culturally based comparison and declare that a valuable commodity is money. Therefore, the origin of the literal phrase, "stop wasting my time" is the metaphor "time is money."⁹ Using this theory, Lakoff and Johnson believe that multiple literal phrases may stem from the metaphor "time is money." From this metaphor, additional phrases emerge about time, all based on the time/money comparison, such as the phrases "spending one's time," "sharing one's time," and "saving one's time." With this example, the reader is able to comprehend how metaphor is pervasive in even the most common-place thoughts, speech, and even actions.

⁷ Ibid., 290.

⁸ Ibid., 291.

⁹ Ibid.

In my study of “Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language,” I learned that George Lakoff regularly updates a personal blog, mostly dedicated to examining the language used in current political remarks and promoting his scholarly work. In particular, Lakoff’s “The President is the Nation: The Central Metaphor Trump Lives By” is useful for understanding how Trump’s metaphor does more than simply communicate literal statements. Lakoff writes, “When John Lengacher and I closely analyzed language coming out of the White House, it became clear that Trump has internalized and has been living by a central metaphor: THE PRESIDENT IS THE NATION.”¹⁰ For example, shortly before his inauguration, Trump tweeted, “Hopefully all supporters, and those who want to MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN, will go to D.C. on January 20th. It will be a great show.”¹¹ This statement demonstrates how Trump merges both those who voted for him and those who want to “Make America Great Again” into a singular unit. That is, these supporters are one in the same. By making this distinction in his tweet, Trump insinuates that those who voted for him want the nation to be great, and those who did not vote for him do not want the nation to be great. From here, it follows that if one supports Trump, one supports the nation, i.e. himself.

Lakoff believes that this central metaphor prompts White House staff and administration to act as if Trump’s wants and concerns are the wants and concerns of the nation. Again, this notion can perpetuate the idea that any thought or action opposed to Trump is a thought or action opposed to the nation. The problem with this conception is

¹⁰ George Lakoff, “The President is the Nation: The Central Metaphor Trump Lives By,” *George Lakoff* (blog), August 1, 2017, <https://georgelakoff.com/2017/08/01/the-president-is-the-nation-the-central-metaphor-trump-lives-by/>.

¹¹ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, January 6, 2017, 4:05 A.M., <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump>.

that this line of thinking does not follow democratic thinking at all. If anything, it is highly similar to absolutism.

In his blog, Lakoff also notes that, in a New York Time's opinion editorial, Roger Cohen points out that Trump's conception of the presidency is strikingly comparable to Louis XIV of France's statement, "L'État, c'est moi": "I am the State." Cohen writes, "Absolutism is Trump's thing. He installed his family in senior White House posts where influence and business intersect. His aides are terrified. His press secretary hides 'among the bushes.' The family knows everything; nobody else knows anything."¹² In addition to Cohen's emphatic language, here, we may notice Cohen considers President Trump dangerous because we cannot be sure that President Trump will abide by Constitutional law; rather, he makes his own rules. This thinking, according to Cohen, may very well lead to what Richard Nixon once said in an interview with David Frost: "Well, when the president does it, that means that it is not illegal."¹³

After citing the comparison to Louis XIV, Lakoff goes on to explain that progressive votes must work to counter the central metaphor and its effect. Lakoff believes that it is up to the citizens to understand Trump's central metaphor by insisting that "the job of those in the administration is to serve the nation first in all cases, rather than serving the president."¹⁴

¹² Roger Cohen, "L'État, C'est Trump!" *The New York Times*, May 19, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/19/opinion/donald-trump-investigation-roger-cohen.html>

¹³ Richard Nixon, interviewed by David Frost, *60 Minutes*, CBS, May 19, 1977.

¹⁴ George Lakoff, "The President is the Nation: The Central Metaphor Trump Lives By," *George Lakoff* (blog), August 1, 2017, <https://georgelakoff.com/2017/08/01/the-president-is-the-nation-the-central-metaphor-trump-lives-by/>.

III. Trump's Central Metaphor

As I mentioned in the introduction, and briefly in the background, Trump's appeal is that he is able to communicate with average citizens by using unfiltered and regularly updated tweets. He is able to send out information to the public without having to go through the process of forming a press release or assembling an official written statement. Because of this, I believe that the images and metaphors he uses are able to influence the American people more quickly, and upon close inspection, most of his tweets do not seem to address domestic and foreign policy. Instead, his tweets are similar to what some would interpret to be his stream of consciousness, or his creative process. Again, this is part of his appeal, but it is something that must be regarded with caution.

As stated, when George Lakoff analyzed Trump's language, he concluded that the central metaphor is "the president is the nation." Indeed, after examining his tweets on my own, I have come to the same conclusion. Since Trump often tweets about himself and what he thinks is important, it is easy to see this central metaphor expressed in his high regard for himself. To begin, Lakoff's assumption that "the American people swear allegiance, that is, support to their nation. Under the metaphor, the phrase 'the American people' comes to mean the supporters of the President."¹⁵ To demonstrate this theory, I have collected some examples of the central metaphor in Trump's tweets.

At the start of his presidency, in fact the day before his Inauguration, Trump tweeted, "Getting ready to leave for Washington, D.C. The Journey begins and I will be working and fighting very hard to make it a great journey for the American people. I have

¹⁵ Ibid.

no doubt that we will, together, MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!”¹⁶ Similar to what I examined at the end of the previous section, in this tweet, Trump seems to operate according to the metaphor that “the president is America’s savior,” but he is also acting in accordance with the central metaphor “the president is the nation.” While examining the language Trump uses in this tweet, closer inspection is needed for the phrases “I will be working and fighting very hard” and “we will, together, MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN.” He is simultaneously acting as a deliverance from the past political bureaucracy and inviting his supporters to join him on his presidential journey.

While past presidents have vowed to fight for the rights of citizens, they have not made it seem as if the journey has been forged by their own hands. Instead, the journey of past presidents has been dependent upon the federal government and the support of the American people. This is not the case for Trump. If anything, Trump has suggested that his journey is their journey in order to make his supporters feel that any success he has is their success. Instead of doing the will of the American people who elected him, Trump makes it clear that their will is in his hands and is incredibly achievable.

Further along in his inauguration, Trump maintained that he was just like an average American citizen. After the Emmy’s aired on T.V., like any average American, Trump took to Twitter to discuss the success of the award’s show. He tweeted, “I was saddened to see how bad the ratings were on the Emmy’s last night – the worst ever. Smartest people of them all are the ‘DEPLORABLES’.”¹⁷ His reference to the “deplorables” was a nod to how Hillary Clinton previously called his supporters a “basket

¹⁶ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, January 19, 2017, 5:02 A.M., <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump>.

¹⁷ Ibid., September 19, 2017, 7:41 P.M.

of deplorables.”¹⁸ When Clinton used this metaphor, she did not include Trump in the accusation; however, in his tweet, Trump rebranded “the deplorables” and added himself into the characterization. This, of course, is another way that Trump has managed to embody the central metaphor. If the nation is, indeed, made up of citizens, in this moment, Trump has reduced his status to that of a common American citizen. I will again say that part of Trump’s appeal comes from his ability to make it seem as if he is one of the people, and this is an interesting example of how he is able to use this appeal to his advantage. When he refers to himself as a deplorable, he gains more trust from his supporters and further establishes himself as the nation, instead of as the representative of the nation.

In addition, I have found Trump’s tweet regarding the Las Vegas Shooting to be indicative of the central metaphor. After the shooting, Trump tweeted, “On behalf of a GRATEFUL NATION, THANK YOU to all of the First Responders (HEROES) who saved countless lives in Las Vegas on Sunday night.”¹⁹ In this tweet, not only does Trump express his gratitude for a group of people that, in fact, are heroes, but he also assumes the role of the entire nation. The key phrase in this tweet is “on behalf of a grateful nation.” Trump does not simply express his own gratitude by simply saying “Thank you to all of the first responders...” Instead, he speaks for the entire nation. What I find most troubling about this situation is not that Trump is offering thanks on behalf of the nation, rather I wonder if Trump will continue to speak on behalf of the nation and

¹⁸ Carmen Gallo, “The Metaphors that Played a Role in Trump’s Victory,” *Forbes*, November 9, 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carminegallo/2016/11/09/the-metaphors-that-played-a-role-in-trumps-victory/#5b9225814769>

¹⁹ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, October 4, 2017, 6:08 P.M., <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump>.

not on behalf of himself. Of course, I understand that Trump, as president, is a representative of the American people, but I am curious as to how his embodiment of the central metaphor will affect our country in the future. For example, his feud with Kim Jung-Un is not wanted by the people. If he truly wished to represent the American people, he would not risk our nation's safety by taunting a volatile nation. Since he abides by the central metaphor, though, he acts and speaks without regard to his sworn duty to represent the American people.

Finally, I have found Trump's tweets on the NFL anthem protests to effectively portray his embodiment of the central metaphor. Once kneeling during the anthem became more frequent in the NFL, Trump made sure to vocalize his thought on the matter: "If a player wants the privilege of making millions of dollars in the NFL, or other leagues, he or she should not be allowed to disrespect our Great American Flag (or Country) and should stand for the National Anthem. If not, YOU'RE FIRED. Find something else to do!"²⁰ By analyzing the language he uses in this tweet, I am reminded of the fact that, first and foremost, Trump is a businessman. The phrase "you're fired" does not adhere to traditional political statements regarding protests.²¹ On the contrary, it is reminiscent of Trump's professional background as an employer. The problem, though, is that the country is not a business.

To better understand how these statements are related to the central metaphor, we may examine another one of Trump's NFL tweets. He writes, "The NFL has decided that it will not force players to stand for the playing of our National Anthem. Total disrespect

²⁰ Ibid., September 23, 2017, 11:18 A.M.

²¹ In comparison, Ronald Regan successfully fired Air Traffic Controller who were on strike on August 5, 1968. The ban on the fired employees was not lifted until Bill Clinton's presidency in 1993.

for our great country!”²² From these two statements together, I understand that Trump’s use of the word “country” is a stand-in for himself. To better explain, I believe that the first tweet established the rule that Trump wanted to be maintained, and the subsequent tweet identified the disobeyed rule to be an act against his proclamation. If we are to believe that Trump lives by “the president is the nation” metaphor, it is logical to suppose that the “total disrespect for our great country” is simply a total disrespect for Trump’s statement, not a symbol of disrespect towards the nation. To be quite frank, it is somewhat disconcerting to learn that Trump threatened to rid athletes of their livelihood because they were practicing their constitutional rights.

IV. Examination of Trump’s Use of Metaphor By Tweet

As I explained previously, Trump uses his public speeches, remarks, and tweets as a means to release information to the public regarding foreign and domestic policy. Compared to his public speeches and remarks, Trump’s tweets seldom contain information involving foreign and domestic policy, and when he does, he will usually post a link to a video that will display a speech he has given. That being said, I have found some interesting examples of tweets concerning domestic and foreign policy that are written metaphorically and contain Trump’s implicit values.

To start, since the beginning of his campaign, Trump has promised to build a wall along the United States' southern border, the purpose of which is to keep out Mexican immigrants. Regarding the wall, Trump recently tweeted, “THE WALL, which is already under construction in the form of new renovation of old and existing fences

²² Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, October 18, 2017, 4:06 A.M. <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump>.

and walls, will continue to be built.”²³ Contrary to this statement, it is evident that the wall is not under construction, and there is no available timeline for its construction. Although the American people are to believe that Trump wishes to build a literal wall, we may apply Lakoff and Johnson’s philosophy of language to understand the implicit values in Trump’s unconscious metaphorical statement.

Figuratively speaking, the wall that Trump has so continuously promoted may be a metaphor for immigration and foreign policy in general. Using Lakoff and Johnson’s philosophy of language, we may isolate the phrases “under construction,” “new renovation,” and “continue to be built.” Beneath these statements is the literal meaning that “foreign policy can be built.” To further this, we may infer that the metaphorical meaning of Trump’s literal phrase is that “foreign policy is a structure.” When considered, the implicit values in Trump’s tweet concerning the wall is highly similar to the values of gated communities. It is common knowledge that the people who live in gated communities have the privilege of controlling who is allowed inside their neighborhood at all times. They may discriminate and incriminate for the sake of the safety of the neighborhood. With this line of thinking, the same can be said for Trump’s wall. His tweet reinforces the values of picking and choosing who we let into our country, based on superficial credentials. Today, most Americans agree that it is unfair to discriminate against others based on their upbringing and the opportunities they were afforded, and the same thought should apply to immigrants. Thus, using the wall metaphor to restrict immigrants’ opportunities in America supports inequality.

²³ Ibid., September 14, 2017, 3:20 A.M.

Secondly, Trump's tweets on the Muslim travel ban reveal some non-egalitarian values as well. At the beginning of his presidency, Trump unveiled his plans for a travel ban on specific Muslim-majority countries, including Iran, Sudan, and Syria. He first tweeted, "Everybody is arguing whether or not it is a BAN. Call it what you want, it is about keeping bad people (with bad intentions) out of country!"²⁴ Similar to the wall, Trump's travel ban contains implicit values of picking and choosing who we let into the country. To begin our examination of the statement, we may isolate the phrases "bad people" and "bad intentions." Although these literal statements may not appear to contain metaphorical meaning, they certainly do. Here, I must draw attention to Trump's repetition of the word "bad." Now, "bad" does not usually convey metaphorical meaning, but the connotation of "bad" is highly charged. In fact, given that Trump is speaking of banning Muslim countries, we use our common knowledge of Muslims to form assumptions of how they may be "bad people" with "bad intentions."

I am unsure if many Americans feel that most Muslims are bad; however, I know that we are deeply familiar with the actions of Muslim extremists in our country. By indirectly referring to 9/11 and other Muslim-extremist-related terroristic attacks, Trump is calling upon these memories to support his thought that Muslims are "bad people" with "bad intentions."

Not only is Trump's statement a hasty generalization, but its metaphorical meaning encourages negative stereotypes. The American people must know that not all Muslims are bad; however, Trump's tweets further perpetuates the stereotype and encourages his followers to believe the same. Because of this, the deep hatred that Trump

²⁴ Ibid., February 1, 2017, 4:50 A.M.

supporters feel for Muslims may very well be perpetuated by Trump's remarks on Muslims.

Lastly, Trump will mix the metaphors he uses to communicate a more complex meaning to his followers. After his meeting with Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jabar al-Sabah of Kuwait, Trump tweeted a statement from his press conference: "Together, we will show the world that the forces of destruction and extremism are NO MATCH for the BLESSINGS of PROSPERITY and PEACE!"²⁵ What I find most interesting are the two capitalized phrases "no match" and "blessings of prosperity and peace." When we contemplate the meaning of these phrases, we conclude that the literal meanings of the phrases are that "extremist countries are no match for the United States" and "destruction will be overcome by prosperity and peace." Regarding the literal statements' metaphorical origins, however, are the contrasting metaphors "the country is strong" and "peace is strong."

I believe that these metaphors contrast each other because they each promote different ideals. The first metaphor suggests that the forces of destruction and extremism will be overpowered by the United States because they are not as powerfully equipped as America. In other words, America has the fire power to defeat forces of destruction and extremism. On the other hand, the second statement puts forth the idea that nonviolent actions may be taken to overcome forces of destruction and extremism. This mixed metaphor makes it difficult for Trump's supporters to understand his values. Are we to overcome violence with greater violent power or do we overcome it with peace? With a closer inspection, the answer to this question is in the form of a metaphor. Perhaps, the

²⁵ Ibid., September 7, 2017, 12:48 P.M.

blessings of prosperity and peace are a euphemism for America's military prowess. If this is the case, Trump's supporters are being told that it is acceptable to act violently and overcome others in the name of peace and prosperity.

Regarding domestic policy, Trump has been seen to focus some of his attention to the domestic controversy of Confederate statues and memorials. Of this, Trump tweeted, "Sad to see the history and culture of our great country being ripped apart with the removal of our beautiful statues and monuments. You can't change history, but you can learn from it."²⁶ The removal of Confederate statues and monuments is highly controversial because some Southerners view their removal as an erasure of Southern culture and values. Trump continues to tweet, "Robert E Lee, Stonewall Jackson – who's next, Washington, Jefferson? So foolish! Also the beauty that is being taken out of our cities, towns and parks will be greatly missed and never able to be comparably replaced!"²⁷ For this statement, I will first draw attention to the phrases "ripped apart" and "the beauty that is being taken out." Beneath the first literal phrase, "ripped apart" is the idea that something is "ripping apart Southern values and cultures." Moreover, the metaphorical meaning of the statement is that "liberals are anti-Southerners." Trump has consistently made it known that he considers liberals to be both haters and losers, so it follows that liberals will be the types of people who want to rid the United States of traditionally more conservative Southerners. With this implicit value in mind, Trump encourages his followers to believe that liberals are enemies who should not be treated equally because they do not care about the values of Southerners.

²⁶ Ibid., August 17, 2017, 6:07 A.M.

²⁷ Ibid., August 17, 2017, 6:21 A.M.

In addition, the phrase “the beauty that is being taken out” contains the literal meanings that “confederate statues are beautiful” and “confederate statues are in danger of being obliterated.” Again, the metaphorical meanings of this statements suggest that “southern values are beautiful” and “southern values are endangered.” When Trump makes these statements, he endorses the idea that liberals hate Southerners and want to do away with their culture. This is not the case. Liberals neither hate nor want to get rid of Southern culture. Rather they want to take down statues that glorify the ideals of slavery and racism. Because Trump does not make the motion to condemn the glorification of the ideals of slavery and racism, his followers believe that they do not have to condemn past actions as well and are under threat from hateful liberals. The implicit value in this statement is that Southerners must do whatever it takes to save their culture from liberals.

To end the examination of Trump’s tweets concerning foreign and domestic policy, we may refer to Trump’s tweets on transgender soldiers in the military. Although his remarks have been countered by a federal judge as unconstitutional, they are important in understanding what Trump constitutes as a threat to national security.²⁸ In his tweets, Trump writes, “After consultation with my Generals and military experts, please be advised that the United States Government will not accept or allow Transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military.”²⁹ This proclamation is followed by his reasoning for suspending Transgender servicemen and women in the military: “Our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming

²⁸ David Crary and Jessica Gresko, “Court Blocks President Trump from Banning Transgender Military Service,” *Time*, October 30, 2017, <http://time.com/5002664/donald-trump-transgender-ban-blocked/>

²⁹ Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, July 26, 2017, 6:04 A.M., <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump>.

victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail. Thank you”³⁰ In the latter statement we may isolate the phrases “cannot be burdened” and “disruption that the transgender in the military would entail.” The deeper meanings of these literal statements are that “transgendered people are a burden to the military” and “transgendered people will negatively affect military actions.”

Given that transgender rights are a controversial topic in today’s political climate, it is reasonable to believe that, culturally speaking, perspectives on transgendered people are mostly negative. With this taken into account, the metaphorical origins of the statements are “transgendered people are threatening” and “transgendered people are harmful.” When considering the implicit values in these underlying metaphors, we are able to understand that Trump views transgendered people as a threat and harm to national security because of the medical cost and disruption they may cause in the military. Although Trump provides no evidence to support these claims, his implied values encourage his followers to treat transgendered people as an inconvenience and a threat to the well-being of society.

V. Examination of Trump’s Use of Metaphor By Speech

Unlike his tweets, Trump’s prepared speeches and remarks contain numerous examples of metaphors concerning foreign and domestic policies. While I believe his prepared speeches to be just as effective as his tweets, I must admit that his speeches do not instantaneously reach the same number of followers or supporters as his tweets do.

³⁰ Ibid., July 26, 2017, 6:08 A.M.

Because of this, I have chosen to focus my examination on passages drawn from the most influential and publicized of his speeches, thus far, concerning foreign and domestic policies: his victory speech, inaugural address, first address to congress, and remarks to law enforcement officials regarding MS-13.

In his victory speech on election night, Trump stated, “Now it’s time for America to bind the wounds of division; have to get together. To all Republicans and Democrats and Independents across this nation, I say it is time for us to come together as one united people.”³¹ In this statement, we may pay close attention to when Trump calls for America to “bind the wounds of division.” Now, Trump uses this phrase as a literal statement, but it has metaphorical meaning as well. When we search for the metaphorical root to this phrase, we conclude that the metaphorical origin of this phrase is “division is pain.” By relating division and bi-partisanship to wounds, Trump’s implied value of the statement is that bi-partisanship is harming the country. At first glance, we may think that Trump is attempting to unite the two parties for the sake of the parties; however, he is implicitly saying that the parties must come together under his presidential rule. Trump’s victory speech appears to be promising as an attempt to unify the American public, but his actions that follow speak otherwise. To this day, he continues to point out how his supporters are better than the people who voted against him, and he does not speak kindly about those who oppose him. Because of this, Trump’s implicit values in his speech encourage his supporters to act in the same manner: never forget who won and who lost.

³¹ Donald Trump, “Transcript: Donald Trump’s Victory Speech,” *The New York Times*, November 9, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/us/politics/trump-speech-transcript.html>.

The American people are unable to come together as one because he so frequently labels either side as “winners” and “haters.”

Furthermore, in his victory speech Trump declares, “We must reclaim our country’s destiny and dream big and bold and daring. We have to do that. We’re going to dream of things for our country and beautiful things and successful things once again.”³² In order to understand what Trump is saying, one must look past Trump’s ambiguous use of the word “things” and try to interpret the literal meaning of his statement. Regarding domestic policy, we may examine the phrase “we must reclaim our country’s destiny.” The deeper meaning of this literal statement is “America’s destiny has been stolen.” From here, we may identify the metaphorical origin of the statement as “America has been robbed.” With this metaphorical base are the numerous assumptions that Trump has made throughout his entire campaign: America is not strong, America is not proud, and America is not great. Only countries that can protect their destinies are countries that are strong, proud, and great. Keeping this in mind, Trump’s implicit values are that America has been lacking proper guidance, and he will help put America on the right track. Trump’s values do not promote America as a powerful country, and the reactions of his supporters support this remark. They believe that America is severely lacking something, but they are unaware of what has been taken away from them.

Additionally, Trump’s Inaugural Address contains several metaphors that greatly influence the American public. Firstly, at the beginning of his Address, Trump states, “we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the

³² Ibid.

American People.”³³ When we examine the phrase “transferring power,” we may understand that the literal meaning is “power is highly sought,” and when we reveal the metaphor at the root of this literal phrase, we discover that “power is tangible.” Indeed, power must be tangible if it is transferable and able to be “given back” to the American people. When attempting to discover the hidden values in this metaphor, we may refer to Trump’s campaign statement, “Make America Strong Again.” By transferring and giving back power to the people, Trump would be fulfilling his promise of making America strong again. On a more meaningful level, though, Trump’s statement refers to his promise to ethically reform the government and “drain the swamp” in Washington, D.C. Trump is able to give power to the people by getting rid of the traditional, bureaucratic politicians in D.C., i.e. “the swamp.” The people who supported Trump do not trust politicians and his statement supports his stated goal of empowering the people. By hearing Trump disempowering and devaluing politicians, his supporters feel as if they finally have a say in American democracy.

Towards the end of his Address, Trump also refers to his views on foreign policy. He says, “We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength.”³⁴ In these literal statements, Trump personifies other countries, highlighting his views and values concerning foreign countries. From the words “ravages,” “stealing,” and “destroying,” Trump is comparing other nations to thieves and thugs. On a literal level, Trump is saying that “other nations are criminal,” and the

³³ Donald Trump, “The Inaugural Address,” (speech, Presidential Inauguration, Washington, D.C., January 20, 2017).

³⁴ Ibid.

metaphorical root of this literal meaning is “foreigners are untrustworthy.” From this, Trump’s implicit value in this statement is that his supporters have every right to be wary towards foreigners because the supporters do not know if they can be trusted.

Similar to Trump’s remarks in his Victory Speech and Inaugural Address, Trump’s first Address to Congress contains a mixture of statements regarding domestic and foreign policy. To start, Trump begins his speech with a powerful metaphor. He states, “Each American generation passes the torch of truth, liberty and justice in an unbroken chain all the way down to the present. That torch is now in your hands. And we will use it to light up the world.”³⁵ In this remark, Trump’s use of metaphor builds a deeper meaning with the phrases “torch of truth, liberty and justice” and “light up the world.”³⁶ In these metaphors, Trump asserts that “greatness is a tool for illumination.” If this is the case, it will follow that the metaphorical origin of the phrase is “greatness is wisdom” and “greatness is power.” I consider these two metaphors follow because I believe wisdom and power to go hand-in-hand. The implicit values of Trump’s statements are that America will achieve indisputable power and wisdom when it has achieved greatness. The only problem with this value statement is that Trump does not offer a path for his supporters to take in order to achieve greatness. Rather, he implies that it is something America passively receives from previous generations.

Towards the end of his address, Trump takes another opportunity to speak about the effect that uncontrolled immigration has had on the American public. He proclaims, “We’ve defended the borders of other nations while leaving our own borders wide open

³⁵ Donald Trump, “Remarks by President Trump in Joint Address to Congress,” (speech, Congressional Address, Washington, D.C., February 28, 2017).

³⁶ Ibid.

for anyone to cross and for drugs to pour in at a now unprecedented rate.”³⁷ From his statement, we may consider the meaning of the phrase “leaving our borders wide open for anyone to cross.” Here, Trump’s literal meaning of the phrase is that, prior to his election, “the border was an open door.” Bearing this in mind, I have come to the conclusion that the metaphorical origin of the phrase is “the border was defenseless.” What may follow from this metaphor is the belief that our national security is in jeopardy, and Americans are under constant threat from border countries, such as Mexico. The metaphor of “open door,” coupled with the reference to drug trafficking, conveys an image of an unprotected home, door wide open, in a bad neighborhood. From this metaphor, Trump’s supporters may respond with negativity towards any immigrants they may encounter from border towns. Indeed, if American borders have been unprotected for so long, it is reasonable to believe that the government has not been properly vetting the immigrants who have already come into our country.

Finally, Trump’s remarks to law enforcement officials on the gang MS-13 further detail his thoughts on Mexican immigration and national security. In his address concerning the violent murders of 17 girls in Long Island, Trump remarked, “[MS-13] butcher[s] those little girls. They kidnap, they extort, they rape and they rob. They prey on children. They shouldn’t be here. They stomp on their victims. They beat them with clubs. They slash them with machetes, and they stab them with knives... They’re animals.”³⁸ I will draw attention to Trump’s final sentence, “they’re animals.” By providing evidence of the atrocities MS-13 has committed, Trump is able to draw the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Donald Trump, “Remarks by President Trump to Law Enforcement Officials on MS-13,” (speech, Law Enforcement Address, Ronkonkoma, New York, July 28, 2017).

comparison of MS-13 gang members to animals. To do this, we must understand the literal meaning of the final sentence to metaphorically mean “illegal immigrants are animals.” In his remarks, as examined earlier in this paper, Trump has drawn attention to the possibility that the illegal immigrants in America are mostly bad, or evil. By listing all the inhumane actions of MS-13, he makes them seem less than human. The value expressed in his statement—this time not concealed—is that illegal immigrants, like MS-13 gang members, are less than human, and they should be treated as such.

To further his views and values, Trump, once again, speaks of the great importance a border wall will have for our nation. He says, “We need a wall. We also need it, though, for the drugs, because the drugs aren’t going through walls very easily – especially the walls that I build. I’m a very good builder... We’ll build a good wall.”³⁹ Compared to Trump’s previous statements regarding a wall, in this statement he says, “I am a very good builder.” It is my belief that this literal statement may have a metaphorical interpretation as well. At this point, since Trump has previously used the wall as a symbol of protection, the literal meaning of Trump’s comparison to a builder is “I am a very good protector.” If this is the case, then the metaphorical origin of Trump’s statement is “the president is America’s savior,” and the implicit value in his statement is that those who support him will be saved from the drug crimes that occurred on the U.S.-Mexico border prior to his election. Furthermore, his supporters will be well protected from foreign invaders during his presidency because his experience as a real estate builder has made him equally able to “build” national protection.

³⁹ Ibid.

VI. Conclusion

Given my foregoing examination of Trump's use of metaphor, and in particular Lakoff's central metaphor, I agree with Lakoff that the values expressed by President Trump must be challenged by the American public. When we look back at the examination of metaphor in Trump's speeches and tweets regarding domestic and foreign policy, it is evident that the implicit values in his metaphors are anti-egalitarian. They do not promote the values of equality that have shaped our nation as "the land of the free." Instead of promoting unity, equality, and opportunity, President Trump's metaphorical images of "protector," "savior," and "employer" encourage prejudice, judgement, violence, separateness and untrustworthiness. President Trump's use of social media has led to an ever-increasing dependency on Trump's values. With these concepts follows the ideal of absolutism, which is contrary to the American democracy that he has sworn to serve and protect.

Now that we are aware of the impact that metaphor makes on public reception, we must inform more Americans to become aware of President Trump's anti-egalitarian metaphors, especially his central metaphor that equates the President with the Nation he is meant to serve. As Lakoff writes, "we need to shift the frame to undermine the metaphor. We and the media have messages to be communicated. Each message must point out to the White House staff and members of the administration that they serve the nation, not the president, in a myriad of ways."⁴⁰ Donald Trump may be the President of the United States, but he is not representing the needs of all American citizens. His

⁴⁰ George Lakoff, "The President is the Nation: The Central Metaphor Trump Lives By," *George Lakoff* (blog), August 1, 2017, <https://georgelakoff.com/2017/08/01/the-president-is-the-nation-the-central-metaphor-trump-lives-by/>.

language is dangerous because it devalues the needs of those who oppose him. As President, Trump must be ready and willing to support all American citizens. As this study of his metaphors has shown, President Trump is not meeting those requirements.

When developing a course of action to help make others aware of these findings, it is important that we contact our state and national representatives so that they may hear our voices. We must teach younger generations that the President's duty is to represent all people, regardless of vote, and we must not settle for partial representation or misrepresentation. More than this, though, we must teach others about the power that language has in politics and how metaphor, especially, is a universal tool for communicating with all types of people. It is imperative that we learn what may be hidden beneath the metaphors that we encounter and use. What values are we ourselves trying to convey, and what values are being communicated to us? If we can do all of this, we may subvert non-egalitarian values found in the metaphors President Trump uses in his speeches and tweets and may instead promote equality.

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