

COMPLICIT: THE ROLE OF TRUMP'S RACIALIZED
IMMIGRATION ADVERTISEMENTS ON CONSTRUCTING
THE AMERICAN POLITICAL AGENDA.

by

TALIA BERNIKER

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Journalism and Communication
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

June 2018

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Talia Berniker for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of Journalism and Communication to be taken June 2018

Title: Complicit: The Role of Trump's Racialized Immigration Advertisements on
Constructing the American Political Agenda.

Approved: _____

Dr. Christopher Chávez

This thesis examines the utility of political advertisements in constructing the American political agenda and perpetuating racialized stereotypes. Specifically, this investigation explores how immigration is defined in advertising through a textual analysis of the spots pertaining to immigration released by the Trump campaign from 2016-2018. The textual analysis consists of a semiotic and rhetorical analysis, along with an examination of how the media placement of these spots provides a commentary on American nationalism.

The observation from this thesis is that through advertisements regarding immigration policy, Trump's campaign framed immigrants as economic burdens, freeloaders and criminals who are outside the boundaries of Americanness. Furthermore, this thesis highlights the power of media framing and racial-priming to tap into American xenophobia and elicit responses from voters through implicit and explicit racialized campaign messages.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has truly been a process of collaboration, with the list of those who have supported me along the way being far too many to name here. Thank you to my primary advisor, Dr. Chris Chávez, for your guidance, insights, and willingness to answer my many questions throughout this project. Thank you to Dr. Rebecca Lindner, for stepping in as my Clark Honors College Representative. Thank you to Professor Dan Tichenor, for your insights on both this project and the Wayne Morse Scholars program. I am so thankful to have had all of your expertise and guidance during this project.

To my parents, Susan & David, whose love and support mean the world – thank you for being present. To my mom, Susan, thank you for exemplifying positivity and selflessness and for raising me with a sense of social justice. To my dad, David, for encouraging me to think about design and creativity as tools that can positively impact society. Thank you to my peers and friends in the Clark Honors College Class of 2018— your support, humor and brilliance is unrivaled. Finally, thank you to my roommates and friends for your encouragement, words of affirmation and willingness to partake in YouTube karaoke with me as a “thesis break.”

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Introduction

The political environment of the United States is currently characterized as extremely bipartisan— especially in the aftermath of the election of Donald Trump. The nation's political agenda is framed through discourses on socio-political issues related to gun-violence, immigration and collusion. While policy-workers stay up-to-date on the happenings of local politics, discussions on the hill, and international affairs, many Americans understand politics through the media they consume. Through a reliance on Twitter, and social media, Americans encounter media that reinforces the political ideas and biases they hold. Political advertisements, aired on television, serve a unique capacity in operating as explicit examples of the mission of a Politician or political organization. As a student majoring in advertising and media studies, and minoring in political science and multimedia design, I am specifically interested in analyzing the messages and semiotics in political advertisements. Through classes I have taken such as Race, Politics and The Law through the Political Science Department, as well as Gender, Media and Diversity through the school of Journalism and Communication, I have become perceptive to the role of the mass media in perpetuating racialized stereotypes. Moreover, I have come to understand how these stereotypes uphold white hegemonic norms in American society and politics.

The advertisements created by Governor Pete Wilson in support of California's Proposition 187 campaign highlight how political messages can utilize implicit racialized cues to influence voters. After studying the role of Proposition 187, in exploiting the utility of advertisements to make politicized statements, I began to notice parallels between the techniques utilized in the Prop 187 campaign and in the spots

released by Donald Trump during and after the 2016 election. The purpose of this study is not to compare Prop 187 and the Trump campaign, but to analyze how it has become normative for ads to utilize racial messages to provide a commentary on American nationalism. Specifically, I analyze how Trump's television spots defined immigration in the mass media and came to influence the American political agenda by prying on xenophobia within the United States.

The first chapter of this thesis consists of a thorough literature review— which examines the power of advertisements and introduces concepts such as framing, racial priming and the construction of “the other” in western society. In Chapter Two, I outline my research questions and describe the methods of conducting a contextual analysis. In Chapter Three, I provide in-depth contextual analyses of five spots from the Trump campaign on immigration. Each analysis includes a semiotic and rhetorical examination— in addition to an analysis of the media placement of the spot. Finally, in Chapter Four, I discuss my findings through Tali Mendelberg's theoretical framework for analyzing racialized campaign messages and discuss the utility of advertisements in constructing the American political agenda on immigration. Through this analysis, I argue that Trump's political advertisements frame illegal immigrants as threats to social security, jobs and safety— which positions immigrants outside the boundaries of Americanness.

Chapter 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

On the surface, advertisements solely operate to sell goods, or ideas, to a targeted audience. In reality, advertisements have the power to threaten, or perpetuate, hegemonic norms through the hundreds of billions of dollars that fund ads annually.¹ In westernized societies, ads are constant and unavoidable.² The prevalence of ads in the United States works to “manufacture individual identities” and to impose a system of values and preferences for consumers which in turn creates a classist society.³ Furthermore, ads in the United States develop a sense of what it means to be American through representation of gender, race and class.

Though a political lens, political advertisements have the power to influence the public’s understanding of a candidate, or ballot measure, and thus directly impact the political agenda of the United States. For years, television spots have served as the most valuable form of political advertising. An article from NPR in 2016 stated that, in the 2016 election, political television spending would top \$4.4 billion dollars.⁴ This is largely because national televised ads have the ability to reach over 87% of people over the age of 18.⁵ Data from Nielsen’s *Total Audience Report* provides key research points for the article, primarily that national television ads reach millennial audiences— even despite the rise of “time-shifted” broadcasts.⁶ Though television ads remain an

¹ Brandon Katz. "Digital Ad Spending Will Surpass TV Spending For The First Time In U.S. History." *Forbes*. September 14, 2016. Accessed May 19, 2018.

² Randall Rothenberg. "How Powerful Is Advertising?" *The Atlantic*. June 1997. Accessed May 15, 2018.

³ Jess Benhabib and Alberto Bisin. “Social Construction of Preferences: Advertising*.” *Handbook of Social Economics*, June 2010.

⁴ Danielle Kurtzleben. “2016 Campaigns Will Spend \$4.4 Billion On TV Ads, But Why?” *Political News from NPR*, NPR, 19 Aug. 2015

⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁶ "THE TOTAL AUDIENCE REPORT: Q1 2015." *Nielsens*. June 23, 2015. Accessed May 17, 2018.

important part of the media buy for political campaigns, digital spending has become increasingly important. According to market research firm Borrell and Associates, digital spending in 2016 was positioned to top \$1 billion and had experienced a growth of 576% from 2012.⁷ As a result of the 2010 landmark supreme court case, *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, the Supreme Court determined that the free speech clause of the First Amendment prohibited the government from restricting independent expenditures for communications by non-profit and for-profit corporations.⁸ This measure has led to increases in political campaign spending, which, in turn, has provided a larger platform for advertisements to perpetuate racial stereotypes.

Although political advertisements, and commercial advertisements, both sell goods to the public— they represent different spheres within the realm of strategic communications. Commercial advertising is perceived as “pervasive and inescapable” in American culture.⁹ Most Americans take commercial ads for granted and are often unaware of the formal guidelines of producing these spots— thus commercial advertising is seen as “fair and legitimate marketing.”¹⁰ On the contrary, political advertisements have far fewer rules that advertisers need to adhere to when creating content.¹¹ Unlike commercial ads, political ads do not subscribe to a “code of advertising ethics” administered by the Advertising Division of the Better Business Bureau. This code includes provisions for dealing with, “complaints of false or

⁷ Ibid.,

⁸ "Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission." SCOTUSblog. March 24, 2017. Accessed May 21, 2018.

⁹ Iyengar, Shanto, and Markus Prior. "Political Advertising: What Effect on Commercial Advertisers?*" Department of Communication, Stanford University, June 1999.

¹⁰ Ibid.,

¹¹ Ibid.,

misleading claims.”¹² Because political advertisements are not subject to these guidelines, the norm is to run negative ads which are not always truthful. Additionally, the press “attempts to provide some sporadic checks on political advertisers by running ‘ad-watch’ reports, but these reports by their very nature tend to fuel public cynicism.”¹³ Furthermore, political ads differ from commercial ads because political ads represent the trajectory of the American political agenda. However, both types of advertising determine who falls within boundaries of Americanness through representation of gender, race and class in these spots.

Racial priming is the idea that media and campaign content can increase the importance of racial attitudes in American political evaluations.¹⁴ Racial priming is most successful when utilized as an implicit racial cue. In a spot focused on African Americans, an explicit message would be categorized as “racial nouns or adjectives [that] endorse white prerogatives, to express anti-black sentiment, to represent racial stereotypes, or to portray a threat from African Americans.”¹⁵ Implicit messages have a similar content but would use a more subtle and indirect communication style by omitting racial nouns and adjectives such as “blacks” or “racial.”¹⁶ The racial message thus appears peripheral and less objectionable. “The message works implicitly either because it uses negative images of the target group that appear coincidental to the main message, which is delivered without racial words; or because it uses words that have

¹² Ibid.,

¹³ Ibid.,

¹⁴ Michael Tester. "Racial Priming with Implicit and Explicit Messages." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, May 2017.

¹⁵ Tali Mendelberg. "Racial Priming Revived." *Perspectives on Politics* 6, no. 01 (2008). Accessed May 19, 2018.

¹⁶ Ibid.,

racial associations but are not racial nouns or adjectives and therefore do not appear to focus on race.”¹⁷ Racialized cues are utilized in political advertisements because there is no ethical code that political advertisements need to adhere to and because racial messages are successful in impacting voter habits.¹⁸

Political advertisements have the power to perpetuate and develop racial stereotypes through the rhetoric, images and media planning utilized to produce creative campaigns. Tali Mendelberg (2001)¹⁹, a political scientist at Princeton University, has outlined a theoretical approach for understanding the impact of racialized campaign messages:²⁰

1. White Americans are torn between the “norm of equality” and the resentment toward minorities for their perceived failure to abide by the American creed of individualism and hard work.
2. Racial priming works because certain cues make racial schemas more accessible in memory so that they are automatically employed during subsequent political decision making.
3. Becoming aware of the racial content of a message would lead most people to reject it because they would not want to violate the norm of equality.
4. Racial appeals are effective only if they are not recognized as such by the audience.

¹⁷ Tali Mendelberg. 2001. *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

¹⁸ Charlton D McIlwain, and Stephen M. Caliendo. *Race Appeal: How Candidates Invoke Race in U.S. Political Campaigns*. Temple University Press, 2011.

¹⁹ Mendelberg. *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality*.

²⁰ Nicholas Valentino., et al. “Cues That Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns.” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 96, no. 01, 2002, pp. 75–90.

Mendelberg's approach to analyzing the impact of racialized campaign messages can be explicitly seen through the campaign in favor of Proposition 187 in California. The Proposition was known as the "Save Our State Initiative," a ballot measure that would approve the creation of a state-run citizenship screening system which would prohibit undocumented immigrants from using non-emergency health care, public education and other services in California. In 1994, Proposition 187 was passed by 59% of California voters.²¹ The Proposition passed due to a large media campaign pioneered by Governor Pete Wilson in support of the inherently racist ballot measure. Wilson didn't draft the ballot measure— but he became the foremost champion and central character of the initiative. With his reelection for Governor looking doomed in the polls, "Wilson seized on the provocative initiative and, through a racist campaign, tapped the latent bigotry of Californians to rescue his flailing candidacy, a Pyrrhic victory that has badly damaged Republicans by alienating Latinos in the state and nationwide ever since."²² The televised advertising spot funded by the Wilson campaign, "has gained near-mythic status, a foreboding spot with grainy footage of immigrants dashing through traffic into the U.S. At a border checkpoint [there is] an ominous voiceover — "They keep coming" — [which] presents [the ad] as incontrovertible proof of Wilson's insensitivity and prejudice."²³ The campaign serves as a unique case study for analyzing the role of advertising on creating the nation's political agenda. The television spot utilized negative advertising techniques, as well as

²¹ Phillip Martin. "Proposition 187 in California." *The International Migration Review* 29, no. 1 (1995):

²² Mark Z. Barabak. "On Politics Pete Wilson Looks Back on Proposition 187 and Says, Heck Yeah, He'd Support It All over Again." *Los Angeles Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, 23 Mar. 2017

²³ *Ibid.*,

racial priming, to pry on the xenophobia that occupies conversations related to American nationalism.

The use of implicit messaging surrounding immigration in 1994 is paralleled through the 2016 election cycle— where racist stereotypes were invoked in the narrative of the mass media. In an age where the obscene amount of campaign spending continues to increase, and when political advertising is seeping into popular culture (and American households through digital and experiential tactics) it seems important to revisit how stereotypes, specifically racialized stereotypes, are constructed through advertisements. Furthermore, it is essential to underscore how these stereotypes relate to not only the nation’s political agenda, but to the ethnic identities of minorities in America— a country founded by immigrants.

Framing Immigration in America

Throughout American history, immigration has been a polarizing socio-political subject. While the 2016 Presidential election highlighted the xenophobic tensions and tendencies held by much of the silent majority, controversy surrounding immigration is not a new issue in the United States. In a modern political context, immigration is often addressed solely as an economic issue. Politicians will argue that undocumented immigrants residing in the United States hold jobs that should be given to American born workers and exploit public programs. In *The Politics of Immigration: Introduction to a Special Issue on US Immigration* Jonathon Moses underscores that, “Even the most skeptical economists realize that the economic costs of immigration— if they do, in

fact, exist— are remarkably small and vary by level of aggregation.”²⁴ Furthermore, Moses estimates that the costs associated with undocumented immigrants is probably even smaller, “as these workers pay local and payroll taxes, but shy away from using many of the public services that these taxes support (indeed, their demographic profile makes them less likely to rely on public support, as they tend to be young male workers, without children and family). Even if we accept a small economic cost to immigration, there is no reason to dwell on these as the political, moral and social gains from immigration are almost overwhelming positive.”²⁵ Through this essay, Moses (2009) alludes to a conflict in American society which pits economic incentives against a morality-based clause.

Analyzing the frames that the media utilizes to address controversial issues, such as immigration, is essential for understanding the politics of immigration. “While the media should ideally report events as they actually occur and provide a balanced account of all the issues, like all representations of events, the media provides a particular framing of reality and thus a partial or biased account.”²⁶ In addition to utilizing a frame that focuses on economics, frames centered on border-related violence and crime are also popular in the United States. For example, “By choosing a quote that links illegal immigration to drug cartels, violence, and crime, the media frames immigration as a threat to the safety and security of the American public.”²⁷ Studies

²⁴ Jonathon W Moses. "The Politics of Immigration: Introduction to a Special Issue on US Immigration." *European Journal of American Studies* 4, no. 3 (2009). Accessed May 18, 2018.

²⁵ Ibid.,

²⁶ Stephanie Fryberg, Nicole M. Stephens, Rebecca Covarrubias, Hazel Rose Markus, Erin D. Carter, Giselle A. Laiduc, and Ana J. Salido. "How the Media Frames the Immigration Debate: The Critical Role of Location and Politics." *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 12, no. 1 (July 13, 2011): 96-112. Accessed May 5, 2018.

²⁷ Ibid.,

such as Gudykunst (1995) and Sherif (1966) corroborate that these frames often, “Reinforce and perpetuate negative stereotypes of Mexicans or other Latinas/Latinos as dangerous criminals who are a threat to American values. If immigrants are represented as a threat, then Americans are more likely to endorse negative attitudes toward members of this group.”²⁸ The frame of illegal immigrants, and immigrants in general, as being dangerous or prone to criminal activity impacts attitudes towards immigrants, and immigration policy, in the United States. Again, these frames operate to position the interests of immigrants in contrast with the interests of the American public.

The positioning of immigrants as “the other” in media, and culture, is a western invention.²⁹ This concept relates to Edward Said’s research on cultural representations. Said explores how the term “Orientalism” patronizes representations of the “The East.” The western construction of other societies being inherently lesser, and underdeveloped, represents the American tradition of framing other nations as inferior. In *Edward Said’s Orientalism and the Study of the Self and the Other in Orwell’s Burmese Days*, S.R. Moosavinia writes that, “Western metaphysics is based on binary oppositions, a hierarchy in which one is privileged and the other is unprivileged. Binarism ranges from general binaries such as light/dark, white/black to some more complicated and culturally weighted as man/woman, the colonizer/ the colonized and in the case under consideration the self/other.”³⁰ This passage underscores how western thought is rooted in binary oppositions; thus, “the other” represents immigrants as being outside the

²⁸ Ibid.,

²⁹ Moosavinia, S. R., N. Niazi, and Ahmad Ghaforian. "Edward Said’s Orientalism and the Study of the Self and the Other in Orwell’s Burmese Days." *Studies In Literature And Language*, 2011th ser., 2, no. 1, 103-13.

³⁰ Ibid.,

boundaries of Americanness. The positioning of immigrants as “the other” in American society is more frequent for immigrants who are not white, or white passing. Although Irishmen, Jews and other groups of primarily white individuals have been discriminated against throughout American history, modern rhetoric surrounding immigration creates a binary that positions immigrants of color in opposition of American normalcy.

The dualistic representation of socio-political issues in American society is normative. The mass-media thrives on the ability to frame political issues as a “horse-race” where there is a distinctive winner or loser— whether that be the election of a candidate or the passing of a legislative measure. In broadly defined terms, “The framing of politics as a strategic game is characterized by a focus on questions related to who is winning and losing, the performances of politicians and parties, and on campaign strategies and tactics. This framing is often contrasted with a focus on political substance and issues.”³¹ The political “game-frame” has become popular because it is constantly utilized by the mass media in an attempt to create a 24-hour news cycle that captivates the interests of television audiences. Studies (such as Patterson, 1993) demonstrate that the news media frames political news as a strategic game, rather than an educational and informational program, because this style of news coverage has been successful for ratings. Additionally, studies have shown that this framing of politics increases political distrust and cynicism (Capella and Jamieson, 1997) which further creates a bipartisan understanding of politics.³² Framing Theory

³¹ Aalberg, Toril, Jesper Strömbäck, and Claes H. De Vreese. "The Framing of Politics as Strategy and Game: A Review of Concepts, Operationalizations and Key Findings." *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism* 13, no. 2 (2011): 162-78. doi:10.1177/1464884911427799., 163

³² Ibid.,

was first introduced by sociologist Erving Goffman who described a frame as “a cognitive structure that helps individuals to make sense of their surroundings”³³ These understandings enable individuals to organize their experiences and also influence their behavior. Specifically, “media frames” consist of “the words, images, phrases, and presentation styles that a speaker (e.g., a politician, a media outlet) uses when relaying information about an issue or event to an audience... The chosen frame reveals what the speaker sees relevant to the topic at hand.”³⁴ Thus, “media frames” prime the attitudes of voters and perpetuate the dualistic representation of socio-political issues in American society.

Keeping in mind the political “game-frame” that characterizes American politics, it seems important to reassess how advertisements perpetuate a dualistic political landscape. That is to say that political advertisements, funded by Political Action Committees, use intentional frames and schemas to appeal to specific audiences. Political advertising is particularly effective at perpetuating stereotypes because political advertisers do not need to adhere to the code of ethics and regulations that restrict commercial ads. Additionally, due to the success of racial priming in political decision making— ads that perpetuate racialized stereotypes are successful in resonating with voters.³⁵ As noted previously, in our modern media landscape advertising can take a variety of forms. However, television advertisements continue to play an important role in expressing the ideologies of a candidate and reaching voters in

³³ Chris Haynes, Jennifer Lee Merolla, and S. Karthick Ramakrishnan. *Framing Immigrants: News Coverage, Public Opinion, and Policy*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2016. P. 17

³⁴ *Ibid.*,

³⁵ Nicholas A Valentino., et al. “Cues That Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns.”

swing states. In the 2008 Presidential election, broadcast media expenditures and broadcast media costs were the single largest expenditure category of the \$1.3 billion campaign expenditures that year.³⁶ And yet expenditures related to direct targeting efforts were less than 10% of these broadcast media expenditures.³⁷ The ability to target voters is multifaceted—largely due to the fact that voters are targeted as part of a generalized audience. “As a result, evaluating campaign strategies requires data with information about voting choices and viewing habits as well as detailed information about the individual (predictors of voting behavior).”³⁸ A study from Lovett and Peress (2014), exemplifies that for an advertising strategy to be successful it’s important for the advertisement to have a specific goal—whether that goal is to persuade an audience to vote a specific way or whether it is to mobilize an audience to vote in general.

There have been numerous studies conducted that have provided insights into how advertising strategies operate, Hillygus and Shields (2008) studied direct mail targeting strategies in presidential elections and found that candidates use wedge issues to persuade weak partisans of the opposing party. Spiliotes and Vavreck (2002) studied the content of television advertisements and found that Democratic and Republican candidates emphasize different issues. Johnston, Hagen and Jamieson (2004) and Shaw (2006) detailed the geographic concentration of campaign resources in presidential elections and found that in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, both parties concentrated their campaign visits and television ads on the same set of swing states.

³⁶ Mitchell J Lovett, "Optimal Targeting of Television Advertisements: A Model and Application to Political Campaigns." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, February 8, 2014. doi:10.2139/ssrn.2171418., 2

³⁷ *Ibid.*,

³⁸ *Ibid.*,

Fletcher and Slutsky (2011) developed a model of targeting political advertisements across multiple districts. They argued that the parties will target the media markets that contain the most persuadable voters and used the WAP data to provide evidence that parties do in fact use this strategy. Imai and Strauss (2011) developed an approach for targeting GOTV to households. Ridout et al. (2012) argued that Democratic and Republican presidential candidates target different genres with their television advertisements.³⁹ The accumulation of this data emphasizes the strategic nature of political advertisements and how they are intentionally placed in markets that will persuade voters to vote a certain way. This understanding is essential for analyzing political advertisements pertaining to immigration because PACs and organizations will geographically target voters based on factors such as race and class.

It is also essential to recognize that explicitly targeting an audience based on race is only illegal when it discriminates in regard to housing or employment. Through a political lens, if a PAC is working to persuade a specific demographic, they would likely take into consideration the ethnic identity of a given population. In an article from The Atlantic titled, *When Algorithms Don't Account for Civil Rights*, Gillian White emphasizes how, in a general advertising context, targeting a public based on race can have problematic socio-political consequences. For example, the Facebook advertising platform offers an option for advertisers to target users based on their assigned “ethnic affinity” (renamed “multicultural affinity”). Aaron Rieke, a principal at the technology consulting firm Upturn says, “It is pretty common practice for marketers to use information such as geography and census data to piece together information about

³⁹ Ibid.,

racial groups— which means that platforms can enable discrimination even if they don't give advertisers the sort of explicit 'ethnic affinity' option that Facebook once did.”⁴⁰ It is important to recognize that the media placement of an advertisement is just as important as the strategy behind the campaign. Political messages are only effective if a single idea, is being shared with a specific community, in order to elicit a response that will resonate with the intended audience. Naturally this system is problematic, as stereotypes related to various social groups become either explicitly or implicitly reinforced through political messages that can accurately reach targets. The success of targeted digital messaging can be seen in the unfolding case surrounding Facebook and data consulting firm Cambridge Analytica. In May 2018, whistleblower Christopher Wylie told congress that the firm “sought to suppress Black voters and other liberal-associated demographic groups” through “voter disengagement methods.”⁴¹ The impact of micro-targeting and data mining, in our increasingly tech-reliant world, illustrates how advertisers can impact the nation's political agenda and infringe on democratic values.

In *Latino Spin: Public Image and the Whitewashing of Race*, Arlene Dávila describes how minorities in the United States have become important targets for commercial and political advertising. Dávila writes,

At precisely a time when the state has withdrawn most directly from providing its citizens the basics for social welfare, security, and mobility, groups are

⁴⁰ Gillian B White. "When Algorithms Don't Account for Civil Rights." The Atlantic. March 07, 2017. Accessed February 20, 2018.

⁴¹ Janet Burns. "Whistleblower: Bannon Sought To Suppress Black Voters With Cambridge Analytica." Forbes. May 19, 2018. Accessed May 21, 2018.

increasingly being measured and valued in regard to their marketability, that is, for their value as consumers, and for their ability to become a targetable ‘niche’ constituency for marketers, politicians and privatization pundits. This discourse of equality in the market, however, is obviously racialized; for it is ultimately about sustaining unequal economic privilege while promoting whiteness and normativity, especially among those groups such as Latinos, who are considered its greatest threat.⁴²

This passage underscores how the targeting of Latinos, through media campaigns, works to reinforce an institutionalized socio-economic hierarchy. Thus, in advertising, Latinos are either positioned as “the other” or as a population capable of adapting to white norms.

Background on Media & Cultural Studies

In (i) *From Culture to Hegemony*; (ii) *Subculture: The Unnatural Break*, Dick Hebdige underscores how hegemonic norms are developed. Hebdige begins by highlighting Stewart Hall’s definition of hegemony, “The term hegemony refers to a situation in which a provisional alliance of certain social groups can exert ‘top social authority’ over other subordinate groups, not simply by coercion or by the direct imposition of ruling ideas but by, ‘winning and shaping consent’ so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural” (Hall, 1977).⁴³ This definition is important to understand because Hebdige explains that societal norms are

⁴² Leo R Chavez. *The Latino Threat. Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013, 4.

⁴³ Ibid., 129

constructed through narratives that legitimize unnatural power dynamics. These dynamics are reinforced through the representation of race, gender and class in the mass media. Furthermore, Hebdige explains that, “Two basic strategies have been evolved for dealing with this threat. First, the Other can be trivialized, naturalized, domesticated. Here, the difference is simply denied. Alternatively, the Other can be transformed into meaningless exotica...”⁴⁴ Here, Hebdige demonstrates how differences in various cultures and traditions are either domesticated to fit the norm of American society or presented as meaningless exotica. American culture either appropriates traditions from other cultures or ignores it. When these different traditions and experiences become associated with the “other” and presented as meaningless in American society, a landscape is created where racialized stereotypes can emerge. Thus, American cultural norms provide a setting where racialized stereotypes are perpetrated through the mass media.

As I have outlined, the mass media is foundational in both directing the political agenda of the United States and determining who and what is considered American. Advertisers and campaign managers have the ability to make broad statements about American nationalism through representation in the media. Advertising holds social power in society because visual and rhetorical codes in advertising perpetuate or disrupt stereotypes applied to varying social groups. “Marketing, like all modes of communication relies on visual codes. Marketers and the media in general must resort to assumptions, mass-circulated clichés, or what Sender refers to as ‘typification’ nodding to film theorist Richard Dyer’s work, to get their message across to a broad

⁴⁴ Ibid., 133

audience.”⁴⁵ This passage alludes to Katherine Sender’s work in “typification” which explains how the media can efficiently leverage and rearrange cultural symbols to typify a specific demographic. Typification can also position segments of the population as being capable of participating in consumer culture. Advertisements for tangible consumer goods, in the American marketplace, might feature diverse characters living opulent lifestyles to demonstrate that by purchasing a product one can live the American dream. The ability of ads to determine what is normal, and acceptable, in society is exacerbated in political advertisements. This form of political media explicitly determines which individuals and experiences are considered American.

Political Advertisements such as Ronald Reagan’s “Morning in America” emphasize what it means to be an American citizen. The spot showcases primarily white individuals participating in stereotypical American activities— such as a father and son carrying a ladder through their front yard, a man getting in his car to go to work, a man operating a tractor, a heterosexual couple getting married and varying adult men hoisting up American flags in their yards.⁴⁶ The advertisement perpetuates the idea that the experience of being American involves home ownership on a shady suburban street and being part of a family where the father is the self-made breadwinner— who has time to play with his children on the weekends. This advertisement furthers a hegemonic norm in society where white, upper middle-class citizens, are seen as the epitome of being American. Thus, when issues like immigration are framed in a manner

⁴⁵ Mary Gray. "Katherine Sender, Business Not Politics: The Making of the Gay Market." *International Journal of Communication* 1 (2007): 111-15. Accessed May 14, 2018.

⁴⁶ "Ronald Reagan It's Morning In America 1984." YouTube. June 10, 2012. Accessed May 02, 2018.

that positions immigrants as criminals and free loaders— then these stereotypes become applied to those who do not fit the norm of whiteness in American society.

In *Edsall and Edsall (1991)* the authors argue that Ronald Reagan nurtured linkages among “special interests,” “big government,” and “particular minority groups” during the 1980s. The authors claim the result of these links was that, “Americans perceived unpopular groups such as trade unionists, blacks, Hispanics, feminists and homosexuals, to be united in making unreasonable demands for rights and resources they did not deserve. These requests for ‘special preferences’ were repeatedly juxtaposed against the interests of “ordinary” Americans.”⁴⁷ This racialized attitude set a precedent for the use of implicit racial messaging in political measures such as the campaign in favor of proposition 187.

The impact of racialized political advertisements, impacts both political policy and an understanding of ethnicity within the United States. This is seen through the campaign aiding the passing of Proposition 187 in California in 1994. In his book *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, George Lipsitz argues that, “proponents of Prop 187 relied on the campaign to solidify a counter subversive coalition held together by images that inverted actual power relations— presenting whites, the wealthy, and males as ‘victims’ of the unfair advantages purportedly secured by racial minorities the poor and women.”⁴⁸ Lipsitz highlights how television and newspaper advertisements circulated propaganda as “supporters of Prop 187 relied on racist and sexist stereotypes, [such as] the ‘menace’ posed by Mexican women coming to California to have babies at

⁴⁷ Ibid., 203

⁴⁸ George Lipsitz. *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics*. Temple University Press, 2006. p. 50

the taxpayers' expense.”⁴⁹ Moreover, Lipsitz writes that, “By feminizing and infantilizing the enemy, by connecting the social transgression of nonwhite immigrants coming to California with the fear of unrestrained ‘Latin’ sexuality and procreation, the advocates of Proposition 187 ‘played the race card, evoking powerful stereotypes that are especially well suited for concealing the real social relations between undocumented immigrants and California’s white voters.”⁵⁰

In *The Latino/a Condition: A Critical Reader*, Richard Delgado examines how racial overtones can be characterized in a political campaign to pass an initiative and how, in contemporary society, crime is closely associated with race. Politicians have successfully used this fear of crime to defeat opponents who were seen as too lenient on nonwhite criminals.⁵¹ Ruben J. Garcia’s *Critical theory and Proposition 187: The Racial Politics of Immigration Law*, emphasizes how the mass media impacts voters’ understanding of issues related to immigration. In response to the television spots created by Governor Pete Wilson, Garcia writes, “These advertisements play into the fears of crime that many Americans feel in today’s society. The undocumented are cast as a threat to not only the economy security of California, but also to the personal safety of Californians. Since the undocumented are primarily seen as Latinos, such political advertisements only further legitimate the notion that crime is a nonwhite phenomenon. The Wilson advertisement furthers the misconception that those who do not obey immigration laws are more likely to commit other crimes once in the United States.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid.,

⁵⁰ Ibid.,

⁵¹ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic. *The Latino/a Condition: a Critical Reader*. New York University Press, 2011.

⁵² Ruben J. Garcia, *Critical Race Theory and Proposition 187: The Racial Politics of Immigration Law*, 17 Chicano-Latino L. Rev. 118, 154 (1995) p. 135

An “advocacy advertising” approach has enabled the spread of implicitly racialized messages in the United States. Advocacy advertising can be described as, “a part of corporate image or institutional advertising concerned with the propagation of ideas and elucidation of controversial social issues of public importance in a manner that supports the position and interests of the sponsor while expressly denying the accuracy of facts and downgrading the sponsor’s opponents.”⁵³ Sethi emphasizes that to have influence, information providers must be perceived by voters as credible.⁵⁴ Thus, when campaigns that contain misleading messages target audiences that likely already agree with the messaging, the advertisements become messengers of political fact— rather than mechanisms for spreading propaganda. This understanding of political advertising works as a dichotomous variable— as liberal and conservative leaning ads operate in separate echo chambers.

The effectivity of this system can be impacted by the style of advocacy advertisement utilized. Whether these advertisements are negative or positive also impacts their effectivity. In 1987, Johnson and Copeland identified 10 types of negative advertising optics that they categorized as either “political” or “personal.” Political topics concerned political record, issue stands, and voting record. Personal topics concerned personal life, current or past marriage, criminal activities, family members, religion, medical history and sex life.⁵⁵ In Roddy and Garramone (1988), the authors

⁵³ Sethi, S. Prakash. *Advocacy Advertising and Large Corporations: Social Conflict, Big Business Image, the News Media, and Public Policy*. Lexington Press, 1977.

⁵⁴ Amy J Hillman, and Michael A. Hitt. “Corporate Political Strategy Formulation: A Model of Approach, Participation, and Strategy Decisions.” *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1999, pp. 825–842. *JSTOR*, JSTOR,

⁵⁵ Brian L. Roddy; Gina M. Garramone, *Appeals and Strategies of Negative Political Advertising*, 32 J. Broad. & Elec. Media 415, 428 (1988), 417

elaborated on this phenomenon and determined that it may be wiser for a candidate to address an opponent's weakness on issues rather than to attack the opponent's character.⁵⁶ Through these two studies it becomes apparent that negative ads that emphasize topics such as criminal activity, and religion, are more effective than positive advertisements highlighting a candidate's contribution to society. Additionally, it becomes evident that when a candidate attacks another candidate's weakness on issues, the audience perceives the candidate making the attacks to be stronger— rather than if a candidate attacked the opponent's character or qualifications. Because issues like crime and religion are racialized in US media, this study corroborates the effectivity of campaign strategies that utilize racially coded messages.

Through the lens of both the 2016 election, and through the Prop 187 campaign, it is evident that negative advertising strategies, which attack the opponent's implied weakness on issues, proved effective. Historically, positive ads have built more favorable impressions than negative spots for political candidates (Kahn and Geer 1994).⁵⁷ In 1979, the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee sponsored a study focusing on political advertising on television. The study concluded that negative political advertising was a “high-risk” approach because “it must walk the fine line between making its point and turning off the voter” (National Republican Congressional Committee, 1979). Indeed, political advertising researchers have identified three possible damaging effects as the result of using negative political advertising: the

⁵⁶ Ibid., 425

⁵⁷ Kim Fridkin Kahn, and John G. Geer. “Creating Impressions: An Experimental Investigation of Political Advertising on Television.” *Political Behavior*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1994, pp. 93–116.

boomerang, the victim syndrome, and the double impairment effect.⁵⁸ While historically negative advertising has been found less effective than positive advertising, in some studies, the rise of negative advertising, as a cornerstone of political media, has been exacerbated through digital media and precise media placements.

The effectivity of negative advertisements is underscored in Breglio (1993) where Vincent Breglio explains how in our modern political climate, it has become essential that a campaign not only present all of the reasons why people ought to vote for you, but you also have an obligation to present the reasons why they should not vote for the opponent.⁵⁹

Hence the negative campaign, or the attack strategy becomes an essential part of any campaign operation. A 1988 Hart poll shows that 39% of those who voted for Bush/Quayle and 34% of those who voted for Dukakis/Bentsen actually voted for them because they thought that political team was a “good choice” (Hart, 1988). In other words, the majority of people voted for a given presidential ticket because they did not want the opposition ticket in power— they voted against rather than for a given ticket.”⁶⁰

This research demonstrates the importance of using negative advertising in a politicized campaign. In both the Proposition 187 campaign, as well is in the past presidential election, negative advertising techniques were used to construct a “fear of the other”

⁵⁸ Karen S Johnson-Carted, and Gary Copeland. *Negative Political Advertising: Coming of Age* . Routledge, 1991. p. 9

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 26.

which led voters to support campaigns that featured traditionally American values. Thus, (as outlined in Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder (1982) political ads are also important because they may recast the relevance of pre-existing information. That is, ads can emphasize certain traits or issues to “prime” the attitudes of voters.⁶¹

The ability of political advertisements to “prime” the attitudes of voters is reinforced by Mendelberg’s theoretical approach for understanding the impact of racialized campaign messages. As Tali Mendelberg outlines, “White Americans are torn between the ‘norm of equality’ and the resentment toward minorities for their perceived failure to abide by the American creed of individualism and hard work.”⁶² Proposition 187 helped to develop a standard, which pits minorities against the white norm by representing all minority groups as free loaders and criminals. Mendelberg’s second point reiterates this message as she notes that, “Becoming aware of the racial content of a message would lead most people to reject it because they would not want to violate the norm of equality.”⁶³ Thus, implicit messages are utilized to perpetuate racist ideologies without disrupting the fragility of white voters. Through the lens of Proposition 187, Mendelberg’s theoretical approach is corroborated.

This same approach is intensified in modern political advertisements, specifically related to immigration, which invoke implicit racialized messages that prime racial cues. These cues are later employed when primarily white individuals are making political decisions and voting. Mendelberg’s principles can also be applied to

⁶¹ Kim Fridkin Kahn, and John G. Geer. “Creating Impressions: An Experimental Investigation of Political Advertising on Television.”

⁶² Nicholas Valentino., et al. “Cues That Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns.”

⁶³ Ibid.,

the 2016 election cycle where immigration served as a key topic in debates surrounding the election. A unique element of the election of President Donald Trump was the Trump campaign's utilization of political advertisements during the campaign cycle and after his inauguration. By analyzing four advertisements on immigration, released during the campaign cycle, and the advertisement released after nearly two years into Trump's presidency, I will underscore how immigration is defined in advertising from the Trump Administration from 2016-2018. In addition to utilizing Mendelberg's theoretical outline, I will conduct a rhetorical and semiotic analysis of the video spots. Finally, I will analyze the media placement of the ads including where they were aired and on what media platforms. Through this contextual analysis I will unpack how immigration is defined through Trump's political advertisements.

Chapter 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Questions

1. How is immigration defined through rhetorical and semiotic cues in Trump's political advertisements from 2016-2018?
2. How does the media placement of Trump's political advertisements serve as a commentary on American nationalism?

I have decided to focus on the Trump Campaign from 2016 – 2018 because this period represents an unprecedented change in the American political media landscape. The rise of digital and social media was integral to the strategic communications efforts in the 2016 election and has provided a media landscape where television ads are still utilized but not as essential. The rise of Twitter, and data mining, is representative of new standards in political campaigning. A study by Rob Faris and Hal Roberts at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University underscores how social media influenced the 2016 presidential election. The findings titled, *Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation Online Media and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election* demonstrates how “the majority of mainstream media coverage was negative for both candidates, but largely followed Donald Trump’s agenda. When reporting on Hillary Clinton, coverage primarily focused on the various scandals related to the Clinton Foundation and emails. When focused on Trump, major substantive issues, primarily immigration, were prominent. Indeed, immigration emerged as a central issue in the campaign and served as a defining issue for the Trump campaign.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, the

⁶⁴ Rob Faris, Hal Roberts, Bruce Etling, Nikki Bourassa, Ethan Zuckerman, and Yochai Benkler. "Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation: Online Media and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election." *Berkman Klein Center: For Internet & Society At Harvard University*, August 16, 2017.

data “supports lines of research on polarization in American politics that focus on the asymmetric patterns between the left and the right, rather than studies that see polarization as a general historical phenomenon, driven by technology or other mechanisms that apply across the partisan divide.”⁶⁵ This study reiterates the importance of immigration and mass media in Trump’s election. Additionally, it outlines how Trump utilized negative advertising techniques, to frame immigration through a racialized lens. As seen below, it is apparent that Trump’s coverage was centered around core issues, specifically immigration, while Clinton had to battle personal attacks.⁶⁶

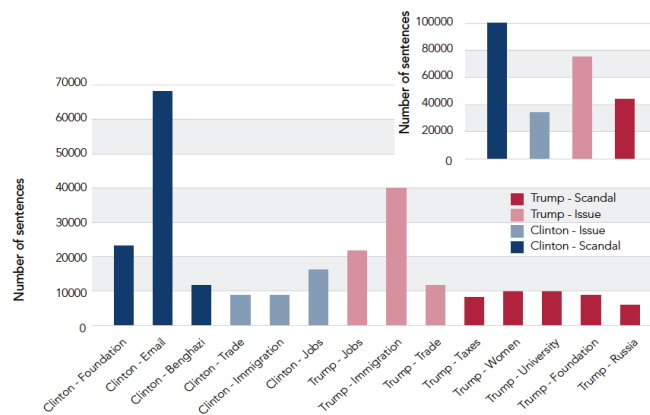


Figure 1. Personal v. Political Attacks in 2016 Presidential Election

Furthermore, the graph below details the number of sentences that Trump and Clinton utilized to discuss immigration (and other issues) in the media and on the open web. Trump dominated the conversation in nearly category— specifically framing

⁶⁵ Ibid.,

⁶⁶ Ibid.,

immigration and a distrust of Muslims as a foundational part of his campaign's messaging.⁶⁷

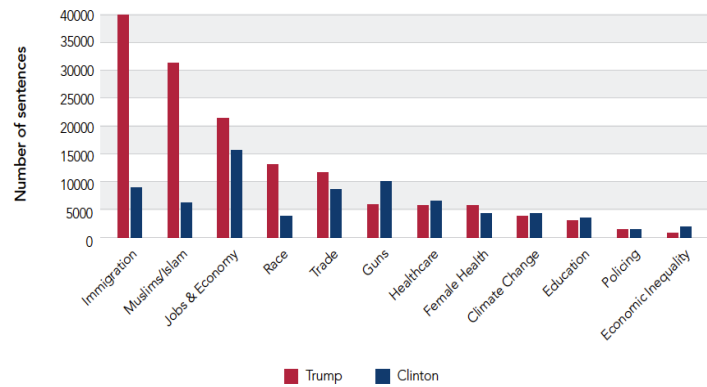


Figure 2. Number of Sentences Focused on Immigration in 2016 Election

Thus, Trump's ability to dictate which issues were most important in the 2016 election, through social media, resulted in his television spots serving as concrete stances on controversial issues and a clear indicator of his political platform.

For each of the five textual analyses I will conduct, I will provide a short introduction to the spot, including when the spot was released, and which period of the election cycle the spot was released during. Next, I will conduct a rhetorical analysis of the spot. I will include the copy of the advertisement and then dissect the cues and messages within the copy. After, I will conduct a semiotic analysis by describing frame-by-frame, the use of images to construct a narrative on immigration. Finally, I will analyze the media placement of the spots. Thus, by critically examining where these messages were placed in the American media market, I can uncover how these messages either reinforced or disrupted a political echo chamber. I will also use

⁶⁷ Ibid.,

Mendelberg's theoretical approach for understanding racialized campaign messages to assess whether the Trump advertisements used racialized messages to define immigration. I have selected five spots that are collectively representative of Trump's advertisements pertaining to immigration. Each spot was released at a distinctive point during the election cycle and together these spots create a wholistic compilation of the televised messaging released by the Trump campaign on immigration. Additionally, by positioning these campaigns in chronological order, it becomes evident which themes in the campaigns were deemed successful and were thus built upon throughout the election.

Chapter 3: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Great Again

On January 4th 2016, then Republican hopeful Donald Trump released his first televised political advertisement pertaining to immigration. At this point, Trump was hardly viewed as a plausible candidate by political the left as well as his affiliated party. Candidates such as Rick Perry, Bobby Jindal, Mike Huckabee, Carly Fiorina and Ted Cruz had already released at least one televised spot, pertaining to immigration. The spot released by Trump was titled “Great Again” and featured an element of propaganda as “Make America Great Again” was the tagline Trump adopted for his White House bid. As Trump’s first television spot regarding immigration, it was imperative that the strategy of the ad distinguished Trump from the other Republican candidates and energized the party’s base by making bold statements on nationalism and patriotism.

The ad features an announcer who recites the following copy:

The politicians can pretend it's something else, but Donald Trump calls it radical Islamic terrorism. That's why he's calling for a temporary shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until we can figure out what's going on. He'll quickly cut the head off ISIS and take their oil. And he'll stop illegal immigration by building a wall in our southern border that Mexico will pay for. Trump: We will make America great again. ⁶⁸

⁶⁸ "Donald Trump: Great Again." The New Republic: 2016 Campaign Ad Archive. 2018.

Through the first sentence, the announcer underscores that Donald Trump is a unique candidate because he is not a traditional politician— or a politician whatsoever. The very framing of Donald Trump as something other than a politician, a self-made American businessman, both increases his favorability among those who are anti-establishment and perpetuates a sentiment of distrust towards those with public policy backgrounds. Additionally, in the first sentence, Trump literally states that, “Radical Islamic terrorism” is a direct threat to the safety of the United States. This absolutist standpoint reinforces the idea that all Muslims are extremists and potentially terrorists. The denotation of “Radical Islamic Terrorism” explicitly frames Muslims as terrorists, while the connotation of the phrasing evokes a sense of fear and emotion for Americans who are still mourning in the aftermath of 9/11.

In the next sentence, Trump first proposes his solution to ban Muslims from entering the United States. The copy notes that Trump would temporarily ban Muslims until “we can figure out what's going on.” Trump blatantly exposes that he has no understanding of the complicated international politics of the Middle East, but he confidently asserts that he would be capable of figuring out a solution and identifying the problem. Next, Trump notes that he will “cut the head off of ISIS and take their oil.” Whether or not Trump is figuratively or literally discussing beheading ISIS is not important— as he is clearly vilifying the Muslim population and reiterating that he will use force and violence to protect “American” values. Furthermore, the promise to take oil from the unnamed Middle Eastern region in the spot seems like a problematic statement— as it was a quest for oil that initially led to American occupation in the

Middle East.⁶⁹ Yet, this desire to maintain a reliance on oil is representative of a longing for an earlier time in American history when oil represented a booming auto-manufacturing business and a stable, industrial economy.⁷⁰ Thus, Trump's fixation on oil is framed as both a subject of international diplomacy and as a nostalgic longing for a more traditional America.

Next, the copy addresses immigration from Central and South America. Trump immediately utilizes the term "illegal immigration" when introducing these populations—dismissing any possibility of Latino immigrants entering the country legally in his political discourse. Next, Trump introduces a key aspect of his platform, that he will build a wall on the southern border that Mexico will pay for. There is no further elaboration of what this wall might cost, or how Trump will persuade Mexico to pay for a wall that doesn't heighten any specific Mexican interests. The mentioning of the now infamous "wall" in this spot positions the wall as an important part of Trump's immigration plan. Finally, the end of the spot reiterates that through this plan Trump will "Make America Great Again." The concept of MAGA is important to disseminate—as the messaging calls for a return to an earlier time in American history when the United States was considered the most powerful nation in the world. Additionally, this messaging echoes the campaign messages utilized by President Reagan who centered his campaign strategy on a longing for the past rather than an ascent into the future.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Toby Craig Jones. "America, Oil, and War in the Middle East." *The Journal of American History* 99, no. 1 (June 2012): 208-18. Oxford Journals.

⁷⁰ Lindsay Renick Mayer. "Big Oil, Big Influence." PBS. August 1, 2008. Accessed May 2, 2018.

⁷¹ Michael Beschloss. "The Ad That Helped Reagan Sell Good Times to an Uncertain Nation." *The New York Times*. May 7, 2016. Accessed April 16, 2018.

In regard to the semiotics and visuals in the spot, the ad primarily features video— rather than stills or text. The spot begins with footage of Trump addressing a crowd at a rally for his campaign. Trump wears a blue suit with a red tie and stands in front of a podium with a MAGA poster on the front. Immediately this footage frames Trump as a respectable politician and figure who should be considered a serious candidate. Next, unflattering stills of President Obama and Hillary Clinton flash on screen. The photos are edited so that both appear darker than they are. This technique could be utilized in part to make Obama’s skin color appear darker, but more likely the editing was used to create a tone that is dark and untrustworthy. Next, the head shots of two presumably middle eastern individuals appear on screen. Neither are smiling and their images are shown in black and white. The woman in the spot wears a hijab— immediately correlating this traditional headwear with criminal behavior in the eye of the media consumer. In the background, there are lights from ambulances, or police cars, invoking a sense of havoc. The overlay text shows a quote from Trump saying, “It’s Radical Islamic Terrorism.” This text correlates the images of the Muslim’s mugshots with radical Islamic terrorism. Next, we are shown images of individuals waiting in an airport, where a text overlay reads “Temporary Ban on Muslims Entering US.” This same copy occupies the screen as an image featuring three men, two of which have their faces covered by masks, floats across the screen. The photo shows these men holding a flag with Arabic graffiti— immediately associating this demographic with the semiotics utilized to identify gang members. Next, the images show an explosion happening on a ship and then an overhead shot of bombs going off. After, there is a sequence of images beginning with a group of immigrants gathered around a reservoir

and ending with a video of a group of people running over a hill towards what appears to be a borderline. There are about 25 of these people running across the border which implies that there is a large frequency of individuals crossing the border at an alarming rate. The ad then shows Trump speaking at one of his rallies. This footage is in color and is clearly high energy. Everybody in the crowd is adorned in red, white and blue—emphasizing sentiments of patriotism.

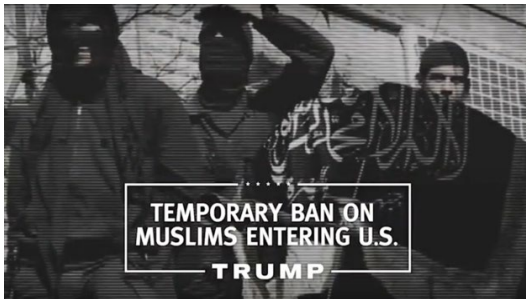


Figure 3 (top left): Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama

Figure 4 (top right): Signified Terrorism

Figure 5 (bottom left): Signified Gang Members

This advertisement, in regard to the media buy, exceeded \$1.25 million dollars and was paid for by a political action committee. There is an estimated \$750,000 media purchase in Iowa and \$500,000 in New Hampshire.⁷² The targeting of this

⁷² Daniel Arkin. "Donald Trump Releases First Television Ad of 2016 Primary Season." NBCNews.com. January 04, 2016. Accessed May 16, 2018.

advertisement is interesting as both Iowa and New Hampshire have traditionally been swing states. Iowa voted Republican in the 2016 election— yet the state had previously gone blue in 2012 and 2008.⁷³ New Hampshire could also be considered a swing state— having voted red in the 2000 election but having supported democratic candidates in the past four presidential elections.⁷⁴ The placement of these spots is interesting as the Iowa spots likely influenced the political outcome in the state. However, since New Hampshire has primarily voted blue, it is interesting that only \$250,000 less than was spent on the Iowa advertisements was spent on this state. It is also important to recognize that neither of these states are along the border. Thus, the individuals residing in these areas have likely never visited a border point. This means that the rhetoric and images utilized in this ad reinforces the idea that illegal immigrants are constantly passing the United States border and are an eminent threat to American prosperity.

Through a rhetorical, semiotic, and media analysis of this spot the power of advertisements, in furthering racialized stereotypes, is underscored. By utilizing language that criminalizes Muslims and Latinos, Trump develops the concept that those who are not white, and domestically born, are inherently an enemy of the United States. The idea of building the wall arises as a solution for terror but also as a solution for maintaining a white-centric status quo. The images utilized in this spot reinforce this idea as immigrants are categorized as Arabic speaking gang members and individuals running across the border at an alarming rate. These images are juxtaposed with the

⁷³"Iowa Voting History." 270 To Win. Accessed May 10, 2018.

⁷⁴ "New Hampshire Voting History." 270 To Win. Accessed May 5, 2018.

images of explosions and military engagement representing the United States. This juxtaposition and categorization reinforces the definition of immigration as a dichotomist variable which either represents the interest of illegal immigrants or that of the United States. This messaging set the tone for the immigration spots that Trump would release throughout the next two years— especially as his campaign gained more credibility and eventually clutched the Republican nomination for President of the United States.

Clear Difference

Trump’s second advertisement released during the campaign cycle is titled “Clear Difference” and served as a summation for Trump’s immigration stance— specifically invoking the themes of crime and economics as factors influenced by immigration policy. The ad was released on January 22, 2016 and helped to categorize Trump as a viable option for the Republican ticket— as this ad challenged the immigration policies promoted by Ted Cruz. This spot was released shortly after “Great Again,” in the buildup to the primaries and thus continued to make provocative claims that would excite the Republican base. The copy for the advertisement reads:

Announcer: Sounded like you wanted the bill to pass. Cruz: Of course I wanted the bill to pass, my amendment to pass. What my amendment did is take citizenship off the table. But it doesn't mean that I supported the other aspects of the bill. I want immigration reform to pass, that allows immigrants to come in out of the shadows. Announcer: That amendment would have allowed undocumented immigrants to remain in the U.S. permanently and attain legal status, so how do you square the circle? Cruz: Actually Brad, it wouldn't have.

Trump: People want to take back their country, they want to do it in a humane way. We don't have a country right now. We have people pouring in, they're pouring in. And they're doing tremendous damage. If you look at the crime, if you look at the economy. We want borders. To have a country, you have to have borders. We don't have borders right now.⁷⁵

By quoting Cruz at the beginning of this spot, Trump immediately categorizes immigration reform as anti-American. Thus, Cruz's right-leaning, but still somewhat moderate, policy on immigration becomes immediately classified as not conservative enough. The clip utilized at the beginning of the ad shows Cruz debating with a Fox News Reporter. The very structure of this argument indicates that Cruz is arguing against a major media conglomerate that is framed as the representative of the Conservative political voice. When asked follow up questions, in this particular interview, Cruz stutters and has a difficult time communicating confidently and clearly. Utilizing this clip not only informs the media consumer of Cruz's policies but it also frames Cruz as frazzled candidate unqualified to be President.

In Trump's voice-over he explains that people want to take back their country in a "humane way." The idea of increased border patrol and an increase in ICE agents is thus categorized as a "humane" way of addressing immigration issues. Later Trump says that people are pouring in and then reiterates "they're pouring in." The lack of specifics, or numbers, perpetuates the idea that there is a nonstop flood of illegal immigrants over the southern U.S. border. Furthermore, referring to these undocumented immigrants as "they" further creates a divide between us and them

⁷⁵ "Donald Trump: Clear Difference." The New Republic. January 22, 2016. Accessed February 16, 2018.

extending xenophobic sentiments. Next, Trump explicitly associates undocumented immigrants with “tremendous damage” stating that this population is causing damage in regard to crime and the economy. Note how there are no specific instances of crime mentioned, nor any examples of how this population would harm the economy. However, by understanding the impact of racialized campaign messages, the very utilization of this rhetoric further positions these claims as being truths in the eye of the consumer. Trump suggests that the solution to crime, and economic-turmoil, is the development of “borders.” This fuels the idea that America needs to “build a wall” and underscores that immigration is the issue responsible for increases in crime and an unstable economy.

Unlike the “Great Again” ad this spot is 60 seconds long— which provides a platform for nearly double the amount of visual images. The first 40 seconds include a compilation of clips featuring Republican Ted Cruz.⁷⁶ These clips include overlay text reading “pro-Immigration,” “what is he [Ted] talking about?” and “Pro Amnesty.” After the final clip of Cruz, the screen shows a grey background with the text “Yeah, Right Ted” printed across. This casual language helps to categorize Trump as a confident and relatable candidate. As the Trump voiceover begins, the viewer is shown Trump confidently addressing the interviewer while text enters the screen that reads, “Trump will end illegal immigration.” This absolutist statement reaffirms that immigration is the most pressing issue in the American political agenda. Next, the overlaying text reads “Trump will secure our borders.” Again, this phrasing emphasizes that immigrants are

⁷⁶ "Donald Trump: 'Clear Difference' | Campaign 2016." The Washington Post. January 21, 2016. Accessed May 4, 2018.

to blame for any uncertainty or danger in the United States. Overall, this advertisement is effective as it explicitly compares Trump and Cruz's immigration policies and implicitly positions Trump as a powerful but relatable candidate while Cruz seems to have wavering political views and unpolished public speaking skills.



Figure 6 (top left): Ted Cruz on Fox News

Figure 7 (top right): Copy Invalidates Cruz

Figure 8 (bottom left): Trump Will End Illegal Immigration

This spot was paid for by Trump's primary PAC, Donald J. Trump for President. While some politicians create clever names for their PACS, distancing themselves from their donors, Trump clearly implies that he is paying for his own campaign funding. This spot was aired in Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina. Again, these are all swing states where it was important for Trump to frame himself as a viable candidate for the Republican ticket. The use of television advertisements as a traditional media source underscores these advertisements as being cornerstone messages of Trump's campaign.

Illegal Immigration

Trump's third television spot during the campaign is titled "Illegal Immigration" and utilizes a narrative format to invoke an emotional response from the viewer. The ad was released on February 12, 2016 and does not specifically challenge any of Trump's opponents. Instead, this spot focuses on Trump's "love for America" and dedication to "ending" illegal immigration.⁷⁷ This spot was released nearly a month after Trump's last televised immigration spot. The strategy in this ad continues to energize the Republican base by positioning Trump as a viable alternative to republican frontrunners and explicitly addressing criticism that Trump is racist. The copy for the spot reads:

Announcer: Jas Shaw was a seventeen-year-old football star who was gunned down just outside his home. His killer? An illegal immigrant gang member who just got out of prison. Jas's dad Jamiel is supporting Donald Trump for president because he knows he will end illegal immigration. Shaw: Trump is the only one saying, "You're going to be dealt with, we're going to enforce that. We're going to enforce that." That's a beautiful thing. I believe Donald Trump wants to make us great again and he loves America.⁷⁸

This spot begins with an emotional appeal outlining the tragic death of a high school football star who was "gunned down" outside of his home. The very structure of this story, featuring a protagonist who plays football (an inherently American sport) positions illegal immigrants as outside the boundaries of Americanness. By stating that the illegal immigrant who shot Jas was recently released from prison, the stereotype of

⁷⁷ "Donald Trump: Illegal Immigration." The New Republic. February 12, 2016. Accessed April 26, 2018.

⁷⁸ Ibid.,

all illegal immigrants as criminals is reinforced. Instead of structuring the conversation around gun reform, or prison reform, the ad emphasizes that crime would decrease if illegal immigration ended. Jas's dad Jamiel makes an emotional appeal for Trump's case underscoring that law enforcement is necessary for keeping the American youth safe from dangerous intruders. The pathos in this spot is extremely successful, as Jamiel explains that for voting for Trump will help protect the lives of innocent children. At the end of the spot, Jamiel states his belief that Trump "wants to make America great again and that he loves America." This phrasing further positions Trump as a patriot rather than a politician.

The semiotic signals in this spot are particularly interesting. The spot begins with a photo of Donald Trump clad in red and white and blue before switching to a black and white photo of an African American teenage boy. We quickly learn that this teen is the late football star Jas Shaw who was gunned down outside his home. The phrase "gunned down" appears on the screen in red— perhaps representing blood or rage. A picture of Jas's killer is then displayed next to his photograph. The mugshot shows a young man, presumably of Latino descent, with text that floats across the screen reading "Illegal Immigrant Gang Member. Got Out of Prison."⁷⁹ This text reinforces the idea that Latino illegal immigrants are often gang members. Next, the viewer is shown a photograph of Jas, and his Father Jamiel, when Jas was a child— emphasizing the close-knit bond the two had. After, a video flashes on the screen showing a dark figure locked in what appears to be a prison cell. Text is displayed on

⁷⁹ Jenna Johnson. "Donald Trump's Latest Ad Features Father of Teen Killed by an Illegal Immigrant." The Washington Post. February 13, 2016. Accessed May 12, 2018.

the screen stating that, “Trump will end illegal immigration.” Again, these images reinforce the idea that illegal immigrants are criminals who need to be incarcerated. These signifiers also indicate that perhaps incarceration is a solution to addressing any sort of danger in the United States— thus fueling the prison industrial complex.

The next sequence of images shows Trump at one of his rallies standing next to Jamiel— who looks at the future-President with admiration. It is worth noting that in the background of the rally there is a large majority of Caucasian supporters, with a couple members of Asian descent in the audience. After this clip, we are shown footage of Jamiel in a one-on-one interview before once again being shown footage of Trump energetically addressing his supporters at a rally. The racialized images utilized in this spot are worth directing. Throughout his campaign Trump was accused of mobilizing the ideals of white supremacists and supporting causes that implicitly and explicitly discriminated against people of color.⁸⁰ Through this spot, Trump showcases that he has the vote of an African American father who has faced an unthinkable tragedy. Furthermore, this spot categorizes Black men as being within the range of Americanness while Latinos are placed under the umbrella of being criminal and outside the manufactured “border” of Americanness.



⁸⁰ Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "The First White President." *The Atlantic*. September 14, 2017. Accessed May 2, 2018.



Figure 9 (top left): Jas Shaw “Gunned Down”



Figure 10 (top right): Gang Member “Got Out of Prison”

Figure 11 (bottom left): Incarceration

Figure 12 (bottom right): Jamiel Shaw and Donald Trump

This spot was aired in South Carolina and Nevada as part of the buildup to Super Tuesday, March 1st 2016.⁸¹ The placement of these spots in a swing state, and a swing state that traditionally leans red, works effectively. The media placement in Nevada promotes Trump’s bid for the Republican ticket— but also positions him as a viable candidate that Democrats should consider a threat. The ads in South Carolina emphasize Trump’s serious quest for the Republican nomination in a state that regularly votes red. The placement of these ads is also interesting because Trump subliminally addresses concerns of his ideologies being racist through this spot particularly. The census for 2016 documents that 27.5% of the population of South Carolina is African American while only 5.5% of the population is of Hispanic or Latino decent.⁸² Thus, Trump released this spot in South Carolina to appeal to African American citizens who are the dominant minority group in the state. This statistic is almost completely reversed

⁸¹ Donald Trump: Illegal Immigration." The New Republic. February 12, 2016. Accessed April 26, 2018.

⁸² "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: South Carolina." United States Census Bureau. Accessed May 11, 2018.

in Nevada, where African American citizens account for 9.6% of the population and Latino citizens account for 28.5% of the population of the state.⁸³ Perhaps Trump launched this campaign in Nevada to highlight his unwavering stance on immigration politics— this could be part of the fuel for Nevada eventually voting for Clinton over Trump in the November election. In an article titled, “Here’s What Happened with the Latino Vote” Roberto Suro reports that, “In Colorado and Nevada, Latino voters surely helped keep the states blue, and under different scenarios those states could have served as the much-advertised Latino firewall.”⁸⁴ This “firewall” helps to demonstrate how airing insensitive racialized messages could detrimentally impact a candidate.

Finally, this spot is interesting because it essentially pits two minority groups against each other. Trump originally launched his presidential campaign by describing illegal immigrants as violent criminals and rapists.⁸⁵ Although this characterization was denounced by other Republicans and immigration activists as inaccurate and racist, Trump continues to implicitly (and explicitly) fuel these categorizations through his advertising.⁸⁶ Additionally, it is important to note that Jamiel met Trump when Trump was being accused of being a racist.⁸⁷ Thus, the inclusion of an African American supporter in this spot works as a means for Trump to dispel the label of racist by highlighting one of his Black supporters.

⁸³ "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Nevada." United States Census Bureau. Accessed May 11, 2018.

⁸⁴ Roberto Suro. "Here's What Happened with the Latino Vote." The New York Times. November 10, 2016. Accessed March 22, 2018.

⁸⁵ Michelle Ye Hee Lee. "Analysis | Donald Trump's False Comments Connecting Mexican Immigrants and Crime." The Washington Post. July 08, 2015. Accessed May 16, 2018.

⁸⁶ Jenna Johnson. "Donald Trump's Latest Ad Features Father of Teen Killed by an Illegal Immigrant." The Washington Post. February 13, 2016. Accessed May 12, 2018.

⁸⁷ Ibid.,

Two Americas - Immigration

Donald Trump's fifth advertisement regarding immigration is part of his "Two Americas" series. These spots were created to highlight the differences between Hillary Clinton's proposed policies and Donald Trump's. The "Two Americas- Immigration" spot was released on August 19, 2016 and thus served as a catalyst for the fall campaign season. Rhetorically, the spot features a narrator who gives an overview of what the socio-political landscape of America would look like if Clinton were to reside in the White House. This spot was the first advertisement pertaining to immigration released as part of Trump's national campaign. In national spots the communications strategy usually shifts to appeal towards the center— opposed to the primaries where the advertising strategy is to energize the base and distinguish a candidate. Instead of shifting his messages towards the center, Trump continues to utilize racialized messages to position immigration as a national security issue. This framing becomes representative of the Republican party's stance on immigration. The copy of the spot reads:

Narrator: In Hilary Clinton's America, the system stays rigged against Americans. Syrian refugees flood in. Illegal immigrants convicted of committing crimes get to stay, collecting Social Security benefits, skipping the line. Our border open. It's more of the same, but worse. Donald Trump's America is secure. Terrorists and dangerous criminals kept out. The border secure. Our families safe. Change that makes America safe again.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ "Donald Trump: Two Americas: Immigration." The New Republic. August 19, 2016. Accessed March 12, 2018.

The opening sentence in this spot acknowledges the existence of an institutionalized “system” that aids some Americans and discriminates against others. However, this messaging positions all Americans in opposition to this “system” without extrapolating the varying factors such as gender, race and class which position Americans in varying socio-economic positions. Additionally, this phrasing might allude to the “system” being representative of government which Trump has framed himself as the antithesis of.

In the next sentence, the copy concludes that Syrian refugees are flooding into the country. This blatant exaggeration not only emphasizes xenophobic tensions in the United States, by positioning immigrants as inherently other, but it also perpetuates a very limited understanding of one of the most significant mass atrocities occurring in the world. This framing of the Syrian conflict as a burden on the United States, rather than as a humanitarian issue, further emphasizes how the mass media can provide a disservice to the public by specifically framing global and domestic issues. Next, the copy in the text indicates that Clinton is in favor of letting “Illegal immigrants convicted of committing crimes” stay in the United States where they can “collect social security benefits [and] skip the line.” This phrasing further indicates that illegal immigrants are likely to commit crimes and thus are a danger to society— reinforcing negative stereotypes about American immigrants. Additionally, this phrasing glamorizes the experiences of immigrants who are framed as easily attaining jobs and benefits. Furthermore, this phrasing shows little understanding of how Social Security benefits actually work. However, since Social Security is complicated, and the system is structurally troubled, it makes sense that Americans would willingly push the blame

onto immigrants.⁸⁹ The spot also emphasizes that perhaps illegal immigrants are “skipping the line” and taking resources that they have not properly earned. This language creates a divide between hard-working Americans and immigrants who threaten a creed of Americanism.

Next, the ad notes that Hillary wants to keep our “border open” which would be “more of the same, but worse.” This understanding reinforces the concept that keeping the border open is detrimental for the United States. Furthermore, the singularity of keeping our “border open” alludes to solely closing one border on the United States perimeter— which we can infer is the US/Mexican border rather than the US/Canadian border. This singularity reinforces the idea that restricting immigration from Central and South America is essential while restricting immigration from Canada, or even Syria, is less important. Additionally, this rhetoric frames the border as being completely open already and fails to acknowledge the varying checkpoints and security measures that already exist.⁹⁰

Next, the text highlights that in the future there will be “more of the same, but worse.” This phrasing speaks to American discontent with government and public policy. Additionally, this diction alludes to the idea that Trump differs from Clinton because of his background in business rather than public service. The text then reiterates that in Donald Trump’s America “terrorists and dangerous criminals are kept out.” This phrasing reiterates the idea that immigrants are a threat and direct danger to not only

⁸⁹ Allan Sloan. "2030? Social Security's Financial Troubles Are Here and Now." The Washington Post. June 29, 2016. Accessed May 10, 2018.

⁹⁰ Rosalina Nieves. "The Places Where Thousands Cross the US-Mexico Border on Foot Each Day." CNN. May 31, 2017. Accessed May 10, 2018.

American citizens but to all of American life. By implying that securing the border will keep families safe and “make America safe again,” Trump implies that immigrants crossing the border are seeking to harm American citizens and their families.

Furthermore, the phrasing utilizes the same slogan format of “Make America Great Again” which keeps the ad on target with the strategy and messaging of the entire campaign.

Again, the semiotics in this spot prove to be just as important as the copy. The spot opens with a still image of Clinton looking visibly tired and stern. Next, we are shown an image of Americans waiting in line (presumably to vote) while text flashes on the screen reading “system rigged.” In this line of people waiting to vote, there are most clearly Caucasian individuals with two people of color near the back of the line. This imagery could emphasize the importance of the white vote in shaping the American political agenda. After, there is an overhead video shot of a ton of people living in what appears to be a refugee camp. Many women in this footage wear traditional or cultural head wraps, likely the hijab, which further paints this population as being outside the norm of Americanness.

The next sequence shows a variety of footage representing individuals crossing the border. The first video shows two Caucasian policemen addressing a group of non-white males who seem to have attempted to cross the border. We can infer that this is the border from the United States to Mexico because the climate is reflective of the desert. Additionally, the way that the policemen are standing over the immigrants reinforces hegemonic power structures that place white, militaristic, power as the norm. The following image shows a white policeman handcuffing a skinny, topless man and

escorting him towards an official van. The text over this slide reads “criminals **stay**” reiterating that if Clinton was president criminals (read: illegal immigrants) would be allowed to make a life for themselves in the U.S. while Trump would deport them. Next, there is a quick series of images all intended to represent illegal immigrants crossing the Mexican border. The first video shows a man in handcuffs being escorted through a prison, the second shows a group of three men walking down a city street. In the next sequence, as the text reads “border open” we are shown a group of Latino men walking casually across what appears to be a border check point and then a group of at least 50 individuals riding on top of a train over the border. Again, these images focus on the idea that there is a large quantity of individuals seeking illegal entry to the United States. In a similar format to previous ads, the viewer is shown an unflattering black and white photo of Clinton before the screen immediately lightens up as the rhetoric begins addressing Trump in a favorable manner. The first scene shows a helicopter patrolling over the border, followed by border patrol vans speeding through the desert sand. The next quick cuts show a policeman escorting a man with his hands raised over his head and then an image of a man, presumably a border officer, standing heroically over the border. These elements reinforce the idea that Trump will rely on military tactics to keep Americans safe. Additionally, these images position militarization as inherently patriotic which is a belief likely to be upheld by Trump supporters.

In the final ten-seconds of the ad, we are shown an African American family consisting of a father, mother and daughter standing under an American flag hanging off of their front porch. This image underscores that African American citizens support Trump and are thus within the boundaries of Americanness. Yet Americans of other

ethnicities are not represented in these advertisements. The following images show white families embracing and smiling— to reaffirm that Trump has not forgotten about Caucasian citizens. Before the audience is shown a final image of Trump, clad in a MAGA hat, we are shown a large naval ship sailing into the sunset. As noted previously, these images reinforce the idea that Trump will uphold a status quo of protecting white interests, specifically through military force, by keeping heterosexual American couples, and their children, “safe” from Syrian and Central American immigrants.

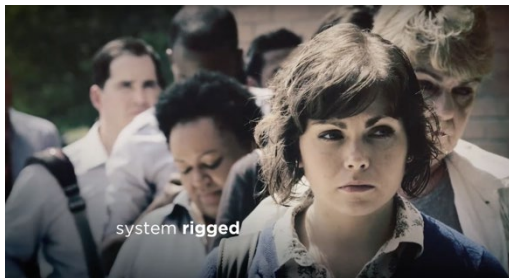


Figure 13 (top left): System Positions Minorities against White Americans

Figure 14 (top right): Immigrants Positioned as Criminals

Figure 15 (bottom left): Trump Will Keep Terrorists Out

Figure 16 (bottom right): Trump Will Keep Border Secure

This spot was released in Florida, North Carolina, Ohio and Pennsylvania. None of these states are situated among the southern US border, thus representations of the

frequency that immigrants are crossing the border could likely be taken as a literal representation. Additionally, at this point in the election, Trump has clutched the Republican nomination and is beginning to specifically target swing states where he can potentially beat Clinton. The rhetorical and semiotic analyses of this spot emphasize how immigrants are framed as dangerous criminals who act in opposition of what it means to be American. Thus, the only solution to addressing these criminal actions is through an increase in militarization. This understanding further leads to a polarization in American politics. Trump utilizes this spot to frame the Republican party as a faction that relies on militarization to uphold American ideals.

Complicit

Complicit was released in January 2018, nearly two years into the Trump presidency, and continues the issue-based propaganda format utilized in the Trump immigration spots from the election. The ad explicitly claims that Democrats have been “complicit” in murders committed by undocumented immigrants.⁹¹ The ad is 30 seconds long and was released online and shared through the Trump Administration’s email list serve and social media platforms. The copy utilized in the spot is as follows:

“The only thing that I f*****g regret is that I f*****g just killed two.” Narrator:
“That is illegal immigrant Luis Bracamontes charged with murdering two police officers.” Luis: “I wish I f*****g killed more of those motherf*****s” Narrator:
“Pure Evil. President Trump is right. Build the wall. Deport criminals. Stop illegal immigration now. Democrats who stand in our way will be complicit in

⁹¹ Stewart, Emily. "Trump Campaign Ad Says Democrats Are 'complicit' in Murders Committed by Undocumented Immigrants." Vox. January 21, 2018. Accessed May 12, 2018.

every murder committed by illegal immigrants. President Trump will fix our border and keep our families safe. I'm Donald Trump and I approve this message.”

The diction and tone utilized in this spot demonstrate how immigration is defined through Trump's political advertisements. The opening of the spot begins with a voiceover quote from Bracamontes who shows no remorse in killing two members of the U.S. police force. Bracamontes' use of expletives further positions him as a barbarian who could never assimilate into American culture— even if he had not committed a heinous crime. Like the previous spots, this rhetoric perpetuates the idea that illegal immigrants are dangerous and violent by nature. The narrator in the spot underscores these sentiments by noting that Bracamontes is “pure evil” which implicitly spreads the idea that all illegal immigrants have a distorted ethical compass. After reiterating how President Trump will stop illegal immigration through the construction of the infamous wall, the copy restates that deportation is the solution to addressing illegal immigration. Next the spot targets the entire democratic party, explicitly stating that if Democrats do not support the construction of the wall, or increased deportation policies, they will have been complicit in future murders committed by illegal immigrants. Again, this ad perpetuates the idea that illegal immigrants are dangerous and a threat to American values.

The visual cues in this spot are equally as important as the rhetoric utilized. The spot opens showing Bracamontes in court smiling while awaiting his sentence. When his name is announced, the screen shifts to show his original mugshot. In the mugshot Bracamontes scowls and sports a short black haircut and a wispy mustache. In the

opening footage, of Bracamontes in court, he has visibly aged and has a much thicker mustache and a long goatee style beard, his head is completely shaved— giving him a severe and generally unapproachable look. Next, footage shows a group of men, who we can infer are illegal immigrants, running through desert sand and sprinting in the direction of the American border. After, the images of the two slain policemen, in uniform posing in front of an American flag, are shown with a quote under from Bracamontes reading “I will break out soon and I will kill more.” The juxtaposition of these patriotic men, with the words of Bracamontes, positions illegal immigrants as individuals whose interests are in contrast with American patriotism.

The second half of the ad begins with an image of Trump addressing a crowd of his loyal supporters. This video is followed with footage of male workers building a large concrete wall. It is hard to tell whether the wall is being constructed on the U.S. border, or whether this is footage of the construction of a high-rise building. Either way, the viewer would understand that this footage is supposedly representative of the “wall” which is the public cornerstone of Trump’s immigration policy. Moreover, because this spot was released two years into the Trump presidency, this footage is supposed to construct the idea that the wall is being built in full swing. The next video clip is one Trump has used before, showing a Border Patrol Officer arresting a shirtless man who is supposedly an illegal immigrant. Text reading “deport criminals” on this screen further strengthens the connotation between immigrants and criminals. Next there is another sequence of videos featuring supposed illegal immigrants running across the border or walking through U.S. cities. When the narrator describes Democrats as being “complicit” in murders, the visuals show unflattering images of Democratic politicians,

such as Nancy Pelosi, addressing their supporters. The filters placed on these images make the content, and mood, darker which makes these politicians appear elitist and out of touch. These politicians are contrasted with Trump who continues to frame himself as a businessman first and a politician second— albeit he is the President of the United States.

The final clips in the spot are representative of how Trump wants to frame his progress on immigration. There are multiple views of the wall being constructed along the border. This is followed by a family walking up to the podium to address Trump supporters with the text saying “keep our families safe.” The woman walking to the stage to greet Trump is Caucasian— furthering the idea that Trump primarily wants to keep the interests of white people safe. The final image in the spot shows Trump looking at the camera giving two thumbs up with a serious expression on his face. The images in this spot frame Trump’s position on immigration, as an issue primarily related to dangerous, illegal immigrants. In this spot Trump doesn’t reference DACA or any other aspect of immigration. The frame of immigrants as being inherently dangerous both builds support for the wall and perpetuates racialized stereotypes.

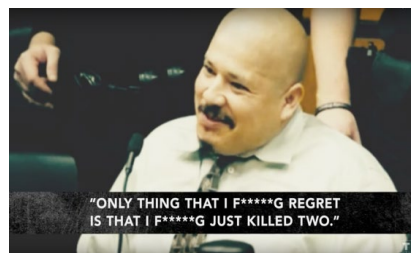


Figure 17 (top left): Bracamontes Swearing in Court

Figure 18 (top right): Slain American Policemen

Figure 19 (bottom left): Wall Progress

Figure 20 (bottom right): Trump Will Keep Families Safe

Unlike the ads released during the election cycle, this spot was solely released online. The ad was released on YouTube, the world's most popular streaming site and currently has 39,489 views.⁹² This does not include the views that his ad would have received if it was utilized as a pre-roll ad for a video on Youtube's platform or if people watched it on other accounts, or through news sites it was posted on such as Vox.⁹³ The release of this spot through digital media, rather than television, is indicative of the shift towards digital advertising rather than television spots. As we consider how the mass media, specifically though television, has further polarized the two main American political parties, by serving as an echo chamber of political thought, it is important to understand how this phenomenon will be exacerbated through digital media. Through social media it is easier to share articles and videos to one's followers— and sites like Facebook tailor news to show stories and ideas one will likely agree with. Additionally, this shift in digital media is representative of a changing understanding of American nationalism, since the framing of what it means to be American differs through the propaganda released by different political platforms. Additionally, this latest Trump spot can reach any faction of the United States because it is not specifically targeted

⁹² "COMPLICIT." YouTube. January 22, 2018. Accessed April 16, 2018.

⁹³ Emily Stewart. "Trump Campaign Ad Says Democrats Are "complicit" in Murders Committed by Undocumented Immigrants." Vox. January 21, 2018. Accessed May 12, 2018.

based on a geographic location— but rather by understanding a user’s data analytics. The role of data mining will greatly impact how individuals understand the political agenda of the United States. Thus, it is more important than ever for candidates to use media, including ads, to clearly represent and explain their political platforms.

Chapter 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Mendelberg's Theoretical Framework

The five political spots analyzed previously solely account for President Trump's televised spots pertaining to immigration. The racialized campaign messages in these spots were particularly interesting because immigration is an issue that exposes sentiments of xenophobia and racism within the United States. It seems important to analyze how Mendelberg's approach for understanding racialized campaign messages might work to expose the xenophobic undertones in the immigration spots from the Trump campaign. Mendelberg's first point is that: White Americans are torn between the "norm of equality" and the resentment toward minorities for their perceived failure to abide by the American creed of individualism and hard work.⁹⁴ That is to say that white Americans generally believe Americans of color receive "handouts" or government assistance that they should not be taking advantage of. Of course, this bias fails to account for the systematic and institutional oppression people of color face in the United States. The concept of the "self-made man" is a myth in American society that attributes success to those who "pulled themselves up by their bootstraps." This narrative perpetuates the idea that most Americans attained success from handwork—which is not necessarily true.⁹⁵ Additionally, these nationalistic messages categorize cultures who do not value individualism and capitalism as cornerstones of society as being the antithesis of American. This ideology is seen through Trump's ads as

⁹⁴ Nicholas Valentino., et al. "Cues That Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns."

⁹⁵ Bob McKinnon. "Breaking The Myth Of Being Self-Made." Fast Company. May 02, 2016. Accessed May 01, 2018.

immigrants in these spots are accused of “skipping the line” and relying on criminal activity rather than “hard work” to get ahead in America.

Mendelberg’s second point is that, “Racial priming works because certain cues make racial schemas more accessible in memory so that they are automatically employed during subsequent political decision making.”⁹⁶ This means that racialized messages stick with media consumers and influence their later decisions. A racial schema is a specific understanding of race that is employed when triggered by certain cues.⁹⁷ Thus, if an individual is at a voting booth they aren’t likely to think about the racialized decisions that lay before them— but they will subliminally make racist decisions based on how the media primed them to think previously. This notion is seen through the immigration spots analyzed above, as different stereotypes are associated with varying ethnic groups. For instance, Muslims are categorized as being dangerous terrorists and Latinos are framed as being criminals and economic burdens. These categorizations become embedded in the understanding of both immigration politics and ethnic identity within the United States.

Mendelberg’s next point is that, “Becoming aware of the racial content of a message would lead most people to reject it because they would not want to violate the norm of equality.”⁹⁸ In this point, Mendelberg recognizes that individuals do not want to be seen as explicitly racist— even if they hold racist beliefs. These implicit and subliminal messages are spread through images, language, and even media placements

⁹⁶ Ibid.,

⁹⁷ Wendy D. Roth, *Race Migrations: Latinos and the Cultural Transformation of Race*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012. 15

⁹⁸ Ibid.,

to perpetuate racist socio-political ideologies in mass media and advertisements.

Additionally, this point reiterates the importance, and effectivity, of using racialized messages that are not explicitly racist to protect the norm of equality. Thus, instead of saying, “Mexican immigrants are dangerous and violent,” Trump was able to tell stories about immigrants who had murdered American-born citizens as a way to both invoke fear in the American public and subconsciously frame immigrants as having violent and harmful motives. Again, the mass media can justify racism by implicitly sharing racialized messages.

Finally, Mendelberg’s fourth point is that: Racial appeals are effective only if they are not recognized as such by the audience.⁹⁹ This point recognizes the power that mass media, and propaganda, has in setting a socio-political agenda and determining what can be considered normative in society. Racism is in part perpetuated in the United States because racism is seen as a normal element of society— rather than as an institutional and societal construction. In Trump’s ads regarding immigration, the rhetoric calling for a “Muslim ban” or “building that wall” utilize a frame that places American interests in contrast with immigration. These racially focused appeals are disguised as issues related to national security, safety and even economics. Again, the use of racialized campaign messages in political advertisements not only sets the American political agenda— but operates as a commentary on American nationalism. By utilizing racial appeals that are not recognized by the audience, these advertisements reassert the idea that America belongs to white citizens.

⁹⁹ Ibid.,

Findings

The 2016 election exposed the extent to which American politics have become polarized and divided. When analyzing how this divide occurred, or whether the horseshoe theory could explain the election, it is clear that mass media played an influential role in electing Donald Trump. Additionally, the emphasis placed on fake news during the election cycle, and even now in President Trump's rhetoric, underscores the importance of the media. When Mark Zuckerberg testified before the Senate he personally took responsibility for the spread of fake news through Facebook.

¹⁰⁰ Although the tangible impact of "Fake News" has been disputed, it is true that social media platforms serve as an echo chamber for reinforcing the ideologies that an individual may hold. Thus, as news and political media becomes further digitized, it is imperative to detect the implicit messages that may be shared through these spots.

In part, Trump's ads were successful because they tackled policy issues rather than personal attacks. Of Clinton's negative ads about 90% went after Trump's personality— rather than his policies. By contrast, Trump attacked both Clinton's policies and her personality. ¹⁰¹ An article from Vox outlines how this strategy benefitted Trump. Jeff Stein writes, "The Clinton campaign overwhelmingly chose to focus on Trump's personality and fitness for office (in a sense, doubling down on the news media's focus), leaving very little room for discussion in advertising of the reasons why Clinton herself was the better choice." ¹⁰² Thus, Clinton's advertisements

¹⁰⁰ Danielle Kurtzleben, "Did Fake News On Facebook Help Elect Trump? Here's What We Know." NPR. April 11, 2018. Accessed May 16, 2018.

¹⁰¹ Jeff Stein, "Study: Hillary Clinton's TV Ads Were Almost Entirely Policy-free." Vox. March 08, 2017. Accessed May 6, 2018.

¹⁰² Ibid.,

served more as an echo-chamber of the agenda of the mass media and failed to demonstrate how her credentials would enable her to be a successful President. On the contrary, Trump “provided explicit policy-based contrasts, highlighting his strengths and Clinton’s weaknesses, a strategy that research suggests voters find helpful in decision-making.”¹⁰³ By focusing on policy measures and providing solutions like building the wall and implementing the Muslim ban, Trump’s political advertisements were extremely effective. Additionally, by clearly focusing on policy-based solutions, the audience was less likely to question how representation operates in these advertisements.

Trump’s advertisements on immigration position deporting immigrants as a patriotic act. More specifically, these ads primarily define immigration as the act of individuals illegally crossing the Mexican-United States border. These ads fail to recognize that individuals can enter the United States legally and utilize racialized messages to stereotype non-white immigrants as being outside the boundaries of Americanness. This construction is developed through the characterization of immigrants as constraints on the economy, abusers of the welfare system, and threats to safety and security within the United States. These stereotypes are reflected through the rhetoric and images that constitute Trump’s ads regarding immigration. Moreover, the overarching strategy connecting these spots seems to be the idea that Trump is the only candidate, and now politician, capable of ending illegal immigration. In Trump’s advertisements on immigration, racialization and citizenship are expressed synonymously. Thus, when Trump characterizes immigrants as being dangerous, job-

¹⁰³ Ibid.,

stealing, undeserving individuals— these stereotypes implicitly become applied to American minorities as well.

When Trump claims that he will “Make America Great Again,” especially within the context of immigration, this messaging calls for the protection of White norms in American society. Congressional Black Caucus Chairman Rep. Cedric Richmond, D-Louisiana, has stated that, “The president’s slogan ‘Make America Great Again’ is really code for Make America White Again.”¹⁰⁴ Whether or not the slogan is explicitly racist, it is clear through the contextual analyses that the rhetoric of the Trump campaign perpetuates implicitly racialized messages. The construction of racialized messages in the media demonstrates the need for critical race media literacy in the United States. Critical race theory examines the intersections between race, class and gender. The framework challenges the dominant white-centric narrative in American society and challenges users to critically “read” the racism, sexism and classism that exists in the media.¹⁰⁵ Critical race media theory is a necessary cornerstone for uncovering how implicit racialized messages are perpetuated in the mass media. Furthermore, because political advertisements do not adhere to a code of ethics or adhere to content limitations, it is essential to critically analyze how critical race theory intersects with political media. Again, in contrast to commercial advertisements, political advertisements in the United States help to develop the political agenda of the nation. Thus, every element of a campaign (including copy, slogans, semiotics and

¹⁰⁴ Chandelis R Duster. "Is It Finally Time to Call Trump Racist?" NBC News. January 12, 2018. Accessed May 21, 2018.

¹⁰⁵ Tara J Yosso. “Critical Race Media Literacy: Challenging Deficit Discourse about Chicanas/os.”. 2010. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 30:1, 52-62.

media targeting) holds a capacity to develop the nation's political agenda through messages that implicitly or explicitly focus on race.

Through the textual analysis of Trump's political advertisements on immigration, it is apparent that throughout the campaign cycle Trump relied on varying semiotics to construct immigrants as being outside the boundaries of Americanness. For instance, these spots all position illegal immigrants as criminals. This signifier is expressed through the copy, which explicitly calls illegal immigrants dangerous, and the images, which show mugshots of Latino immigrants. These signifiers implicitly signify that Latino immigrants are dangerous and pose a threat to American society. This relationship, between the signifier and the signified, is seen within the other themes of these spots— such as welfare where immigrants “skip the line” and abuse social services. While these general themes are represented as signifiers of illegal immigrants, the underlying signified meanings point to a racialized discourse about non-white American citizens and thus American nationalism.

To a similar effect, many of the explicit rhetorical cues contain varying denotations and connotations. For example, in “Great Again” the copy states that Trump will “cut the head off ISIS.” Though the denotation signifies that Trump will decapitate ISIS leaders, the connotation is that Trump will use force to end the reign of the Islamic State. Additionally, in each of these ads Trump positions himself as the only candidate who can end illegal immigration— which is positioned as a key issue in the election. Spots such as “Great Again” and “Complicit” reiterate that Trump will “stop illegal immigration.” The denotation of this phrasing implies that Trump will absolutely end unauthorized immigration into the United States. The connotation of this phrasing

asserts that Trump is an unwavering candidate, and President, who is committed to using militarization to protect American values. By identifying the semiotics in these spots, it becomes apparent that immigration is defined in advertising through both explicit and implicit messages.

While Trump's advertisements on immigration frame immigration as a racialized issue relating to security, unemployment, and economics, liberal politicians and policy experts have also perpetuated these stereotypes. In 2006 liberal columnist Paul Krugman wrote that, "immigration reduces the wages of domestic workers who compete with immigrants" and that "the fiscal burden of low-wage immigrants is also pretty clear." His conclusion, "We'll need to reduce the inflow of low-skill immigrants."¹⁰⁶ Krugman has noted that "immigration is an intensely painful topic... because it places basic principles in conflict"¹⁰⁷ This understanding is representative of a trend in liberal politics, where liberals embraces Latino voters, and immigrants specifically, but also fail to enact policies that would benefit these groups. Instead, liberals often look to court minorities for their vote in an attempt to include them in a norm of whiteness and thus Americanness.

¹⁰⁶ Peter Beinart. "How the Democrats Lost Their Way on Immigration." The Atlantic. July 10, 2017. Accessed May 21, 2018.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.,

Conclusion

While the conversation surrounding immigration remains “an intensely painful topic,” as Krugman coined it, the representation of immigration in the media holds immense power in shaping the nation’s political agenda and developing societal norms. Trump’s political advertisements regarding immigration, released during and after the election, define immigration as an economic, security and safety related issue. This positioning and strategy creates a divide between “hard-working” Americans and “the other” which typifies all immigrants as illegal immigrants who threaten a creed of Americanism. The mass media can normalize these characterizations which leads to the intensification of these stereotypes. In May 2019, while discussing California’s new “sanctuary law” President Trump said,

We have people coming into the country or trying to come in — and we’re stopping a lot of them — but we’re taking people out of the country. You wouldn’t believe how bad these people are. These aren’t people. These are animals.¹⁰⁸

By explicitly stating that immigrants are less than people, and instead are animals, Trump crosses into a dangerous realm of dehumanizing individuals and perpetuating harmful stereotypes. This language builds upon the themes of the political advertisements released during the election cycle and underscores the power of the media in defining what it means to be American.

¹⁰⁸ Juan Escalante. "It's Not Just Rhetoric: Trump's Policies Treat Immigrants like Me as 'animals'." Vox. May 18, 2018. Accessed May 21, 2018.

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