

Stereotypical Depictions of Latino Criminality: U.S. Latinos in the Media during the MAGA Campaign

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Depictions of U.S. Latinos in the media and politics are often rooted in narratives of illegality, criminality, and immigration. By reproducing stereotypes of violence, lawlessness, and foreign identity, Latinos in the U.S. often exist in the social imaginary of media and political elites as being legally and culturally incompatible with conventional understandings of U.S. citizenship. Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign was rooted in nativist politics that sought to criminalize legal and unauthorized immigrants by representing them as the largest threat to U.S. national security and the economy. This article employs a content analysis of all 74 speeches made during Trump's "Make America Great Again" presidential campaign to investigate how U.S. Latinos were depicted in the media during the 2016 election cycle. The proceeding section situates the empirical findings within a broader time-series textual analysis, tracking Latino depictions across the eighteen-month campaign. The findings corroborate Trump's anti-Latino and anti-immigrant positions, as well as a progression on Trump's discussions of Mexico and NAFTA. Furthermore, the analysis illuminates how Trump exports U.S. Latino stereotypes to villainize his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton. Taken together, this article demonstrates how Trump's rhetoric refurbished and aggrandized Latino and immigrant narratives and stereotypes for the consumption of a 2016 audience.

The 2016 U.S. Census Bureau reported that 57.5 million Latinos live in the United States, accounting for 17.8% of the entire population.¹ Geographically, most Latinos² live in nine states across the continental U.S., and remain disproportionately underrepresented in politics and media. For eighteen months, Donald Trump ran a staunch anti-immigration presidential campaign, positioning himself against Latinos. When he announced his candidacy for president in New York City on June 16, 2015, Trump depicted the U.S. as a “dumping ground” for Mexico—and many Latin American countries—to send over drugs, criminals, and rapists.³

How did a candidate who ran a visceral anti-immigration campaign, in the process positioning himself against the largest U.S. minority group, attain the coveted presidential seat? This question attempts to situate scholarly discussions in political science and media studies to ask: how does the media depict Latino identity in the United States as it pertains to traditional understandings of U.S. citizenship? Moreover, what rhetoric did Donald Trump employ to frame U.S. Latino identity during his 2016 “Make America Great Again” presidential campaign? I address these questions by drawing from empirical and qualitative methods, quantifying keywords of interest across Trump’s presidential campaign speeches and situate the findings within a broader textual analysis. I borrow from the extensive literature on political media, campaign strategies, citizenship, and Latino politics.

I argue that Donald Trump aggrandizes existing discourses of violence, criminality, and illegality of U.S. Latinos but renovates stereotypes for the consumption of a 2016 audience. Moreover, Trump refurbished existing anti-Latino discourses to represent Democratic presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton, as a criminal during the 2016 election cycle. I argue that although Donald Trump presents himself as a ‘political outsider’ he borrows from the existing nativist discourses employed by former Republican president, Ronald Reagan and similarly employs his celebrity as a marker to renovate his appearance as a ‘different kind’ of politician that will put “America, first” and “Make America Great Again.”⁴

Literature Review

Political Campaign Strategies

Nearly every well-organized presidential campaign outlines a specific set of heuristic principles that situate the candidate’s platform among an array of issues.⁵ This requires campaign strategists to contextualize the current economic, cultural, and political affairs of the nation and international community.⁶ Campaign speeches serve as interesting case studies in a rhetorical analysis because, unlike presidential debates, they occur within specific public spheres that allow politicians to influence communities and rally voters in specific unidirectional ways where few like-minded actors *perform* while the majority serve as spectators.⁷ Furthermore, campaign rallies provide

¹ “Facts for Features: Hispanic Heritage Month 2017,” *U.S. Census Bureau*, last modified January 19, 2018, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2017/hispanic-heritage.html>.

² This article refers to “Latinos” when describing Latina/os living in the United States. “Latinos” specifically encompass U.S. resident populations who would back in their countries primarily identify around their country of origin. “Hispanic” is used specifically when referencing governmental institutions and the media market, but “Latino” appears to be more encompassing of people with heritage or cultural roots in Latin America that includes Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries.

³ Donald J. Trump, “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio,” July 21, 2016, *The American Presidency Project*, ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1179>.

⁴ Ronald Reagan, “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Detroit,” July 17, 1980, *The American Presidency Project*, ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25970>.

⁵ Gary A. Mauser, *Political Marketing: An Approach to Campaign Strategy* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983), 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ William L. Benoit, Glenn I. Hansen, and Rebecca M. Verser. “A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Viewing U.S.

political elites with access to platforms that allow them to make assumptions, attack opponents, and make promises to voters in ways that are less restrained than in televised presidential debates.

Racial appeals theory posits that in multiracial countries seeking to attain racial equality, explicit mentions of race during political campaigns violate the norms of equality and threaten democratic values.⁸ As such, implicit racial appeals are most effective when voters do not notice the subtext in the rhetoric but appear at every stage of the campaign.⁹ Barry Goldwater (1964), Richard Nixon (1968), Ronald Reagan (1981), and George Bush (1988) are only some of the previous Republican Party presidential nominees to appeal to racial biases and nativist rhetoric during their campaigns.¹⁰ However, Donald Trump presents an interesting case that goes against conventional understandings of racial appeals theory because he publicly and explicitly positioned himself against Latinos, Muslims, millennials, college graduates, and women.¹¹

Unlike racial appeals, racist appeals divide voters along issues of race by embracing stereotypes, racial imagery, and racially-coded language, and has been historically employed by Anglo-American politicians to keep African-Americans out of government.¹² Similarly, racist appeals categorize Latinos along narratives of immigration, illegality, and criminality and stereotype them along popular depictions of sexual and physical violence.¹³ Although anti-Latino discourses have been employed by politicians in the past, Trump's "Make American Great Again" presidential campaign may have perhaps shown the most volatile anti-Latino rhetoric in recent decades. The media plays an important role in dispersing racist appeals by situating political rhetoric within specific frameworks that minimize racism and instead give them credibility by reframing it as a national issue.

Presidential campaigns that occur after a two-term president are particularly informative because they contextualize the socio-political climate as seen through the issues that receive the most media coverage. These issues are often the pivotal elements of the election that lead a candidate to the coveted presidential seat.¹⁴ For example, 61% of Americans were most concerned with gas prices during the 2000 presidential campaign.¹⁵ The economy—surpassing immigration and race—was the most important issue among voters in the 2008 elections.¹⁶

The 2016 elections were unlike any previous presidential election; for the first time, a female candidate won the Democratic National Convention nomination and the Republican nominee was a billionaire 'outsider' who ran on a campaign touting self-funding and autonomy from a broken

Presidential Debates," *Communication Monographs* 70, no. 4 (2003): 335-336.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹ Mauser, *Political Marketing: An Approach to Campaign Strategy*, 4-5.

¹⁰ Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 3-4.

¹¹ Byler, "Demographic Coalitions: How Trump Picked the Democratic Lock and Won the Presidency," 30-32.

¹² *Ibid.*, 18-21 and 95-97.

¹³ Otto Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 68-69; Raul Damacio Tovares, *Manufacturing the Gang: Mexican American Youth Gangs on Local Television News* (London: Greenwood Press, 2002).

¹⁴ Robert E. Denton Jr., *The 2000 Presidential Campaign: A Communication Perspective* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2002), 2.

¹⁵ "Rising Price of Gas Draws Most Public Interest in 2000," *Pew Research Center*, last modified December 25, 2000, <http://www.people-press.org/2000/12/25/rising-price-of-gas-draws-most-public-interest-in-2000/>.

¹⁶ Mark Hugo Lopez and Gretchen Livingston, "Hispanics and the New Administration: Immigration Slips as a Top Priority," *Pew Research Center*, last modified January 15, 2009, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/01/15/hispanics-and-the-new-administration/>; Mark Hugo Lopez and Paul Taylor, "Dissecting the 2008 Electorate: Most Diverse in U.S. History," *Pew Research Center*, last modified April 30, 2009, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/04/30/dissecting-the-2008-election-most-diverse-in-us-history/>.

government.¹⁷ Donald Trump's campaign illuminated the pivotal issues of the 2016 elections: Washington D.C. was a swamp that needed to be drained, and he was the man for the job.¹⁸ Moreover, the 2016 election cycle did situate former important issues—like the economy and terrorism—with newer ones, like healthcare.¹⁹ Latinos and immigration reform were also present across partisan campaigns, and 70% of registered voters said immigration was “very important” to them.²⁰ As such, this analysis attempts to better understand how Trump's representation of Latinos in the media compares to normative conceptions of citizenship that ultimately resulted in a successful run for the presidency.

Citizenship Theory — Legal Citizenship

Anthony D. Smith's seminal work on nationalism posits several fundamental components across nationalistic identities: autonomy, unity, identity, authenticity, a homeland, dignity, continuity, and destiny.²¹ However, unity and identity are two dimensions of nationalism that complicate how patriotism is dispersed throughout the state: in multiracial countries like the U.S., the state plays a crucial role in producing a cohesive narrative of national identity.²² Some U.S. historians identify the golden age of immigration to have taken place between 1840-1924, when cheap labor supported the development of infrastructure across the country.²³ During this golden age, Europeans accounted for over 80% of all immigrants in the U.S. However, this period also coincides with stringent anti-immigrant policies, like the 1882 Chinese Exclusionary Act (CEA) that barred Chinese nationals from naturalizing shortly after the completion of the transcontinental railroad.²⁴ The CEA was renewed every decade until the Magnuson Act (1943) repealed it, purporting ethnocentric views of national identity.

Citizenship theory posits specific social, cultural, and political markers that are rooted in constitutional rights and freedoms that support nation-state membership.²⁵ Although citizenship includes multiple categories of belonging, legal parameters of citizenship are enforced by the state while other forces, like the media, play a role in creating a national culture.²⁶

Political elites, specifically, inhibit the social, cultural, and political spheres that reinforce national identity, and have the influence necessary to transform those spaces. For example, an important shift in U.S. citizenship occurred in 1965, when President John F. Kennedy declared the U.S. to be “a nation of immigrants” and his administration advocated for the Immigration and Nationality Act that ended admission-based policies on race and ethnicity, thereby transforming the racial

¹⁷ Karrin Vasby Anderson, “Presidential Pioneer or Campaign Queen?: Hillary Clinton and the First-Time/Frontrunner Double Bind,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 20, no. 3 (2017): 525-527.

¹⁸ Gunn Enli, “Twitter as Arena for the Authentic Outsider: Exploring the Social Media Campaigns of Trump and Clinton in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election,” *European Journal of Communication* 32, no. 1 (2017): 56.

¹⁹ “Top Voting Issues in 2016 Election,” *Pew Research Center*, last modified July 7, 2016, <http://www.people-press.org/2016/07/07/4-top-voting-issues-in-2016-election/>.

²⁰ Pew Research Center, “Top Voting Issues in 2016 Election.”

²¹ Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 62-63.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Russell O. Wright, *Chronology of Immigration in the United States* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008), 8- 10.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 58-60.

²⁵ Roger Brubaker, “Immigration, Citizenship, and the Nation-State in France and Germany,” in *The Citizenship Debates*, ed. Gershon Shafir (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 131; Max Weber, “Citizenship in the Ancient and Medieval Cities,” in *The Citizenship Debates*, ed. Gershon Shafir (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 43-45; Kim Christian Schroder, “From Semiotic Resistance to Civil Agency: Viewing Citizenship through the Lens of Reception Research 1973-2010,” in *The Social Use of Media: Cultural and Social Scientific Perspectives on Audience Research*, ed. Helena Bilandzic, Geoffroy Patriarche and Paul J. Traudt (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 2012), 181-182.

²⁶ Bridget Byrne, *Making Citizens: Public Rituals and Personal Journeys to Citizenship* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 12-13.

composition of the U.S.²⁷

The Media as an Influencer of Nationalism

Nationhood is reproduced by the total sum of various actors at play; the state, globalizing and localizing pressures, civil society institutions, and grassroots organizations are only some of the actors involved in reproducing national identity.²⁸ However, the media plays an important role in reproducing nationalism by bolstering or challenging some of the other institutions at play. Privately owned television stations, for example, have the ability to influence electoral processes by promoting specific political agendas and increasing the coverage of candidates or decreasing it and slandering a candidate's platform.²⁹

Minorities are often underrepresented or erased in the media and across spaces that shape the politics and social order that reinforce their identities.³⁰ The public sphere became the unit of analysis through which individuals could influence their communities through performance, discourse, and law.³¹ However, the public sphere theory relies on the assumption that individuals perceive themselves as having the political efficacy and legitimacy to exist in that space.³² As such, *true citizenship* is described as, "...a series of [legal, cultural, economic, and political] processes that allow a class of people to shape the state's social and political reproduction."³³ This definition encompasses four important facets—legal, cultural, economic, and political—of national identity formation. However, the cultural component of citizenship has served as a primary point of contention, barring and discrediting U.S. Latinos from being *true* U.S. citizens. The segment of U.S. Latinos that successfully assimilated to conventional understandings of U.S. cultural citizenship have often done so because they had the financial resources, political clout, or phenotypical attributes to do so, as exemplarily seen through the integration of white Cubans nationals that was unlike most Afro-Cubans and other Latin American immigrants.³⁴

The Media as an Influencer of Cultural Nationalism

The media plays a fundamental role in fostering and dispersing cultural nationalism across the nation. Nationalist discourses in the U.S. often perpetuate a modern, rational, and individualistic culture, narratives at odds with media representations of Latino identities: Latinos are often depicted as being primitive, highly emotional, uneducated, and tribal.³⁵ In the media, U.S. Latinos were traditionally portrayed in the lowest enclaves of society: performing lower and working-class service jobs, as gardeners, house cleaners, and sex workers or unemployed free riders and criminals.³⁶ These seminal stereotypical depictions of Latinos in the U.S. have supported anti-immigration discourses that perpetuate ideas of Latinos as being inherently foreign from and incompatible with conventional U.S. cultural identity.

²⁷ John F. Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 64-68.

²⁸ Richard Beiner, *Theorizing Citizenship*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 3-6.

²⁹ Andrew Geddis, "The Press: The Media and the 'Rupert Murdoch Problem,'" in *The Funding of Political Parties: Where Now?* ed. Keith D. Ewing, Jacob Rowbottom, and Joo-Cheong Tham (New York: Routledge, 2012), 127-129.

³⁰ Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse*, 17-18.

³¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 45-48.

³² Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), 29-31.

³³ Hector Amaya, *Citizenship Excess: Latino/as, Media, and the Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 92-93.

³⁴ Lisandro Perez, "Racialization Among Cubans and Cuban Americans," in *How the United States Racializes Latinos: White Hegemony and its Consequences*, ed. Jose A. Cobas et. al. (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 134-138.

³⁵ Wesley P. Schultz and Lynnette Zelezny, "Reframing Environmental Messages to be Congruent with American Values," *Human Ecology Review* (2003): 126; Yolanda Quinones-Mayo and Patricia Dempsey, "Finding the Bicultural Balance: Immigrant Latino Mothers Raising 'American' Adolescents," *Child Welfare* 84, no. 5 (2005): 649-650.

³⁶ Charles Ramirez-Berg, *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion and Resistance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 66.

A wave of “new nativism” reemerged in the 1990s, when politicians employed an “illegal alien” stereotype that was intrinsically tied to Mexican immigration.³⁷ This discourse continues to be effective among anti-immigration pundits because immigrants’ rights are understood as existing outside of the framework of civil rights, which are viewed as only belonging to nationals.³⁸ These narratives shaped Mexican-American identity by associating foreigner and illegal statuses to the largest Latino population in the U.S. and re-emerged during Trump’s presidential campaign. The 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center galvanized anti-immigrant pundits by incorporating *national security* issues to their political agenda, which in the immediate aftermath largely targeted Muslims and Arabs, but ultimately transformed anti-immigrant rhetoric broadly.³⁹

The United States’ changing ethnic composition in the twenty-first century raises new concerns among nativists who fear the “demographic balkanization” of the country, because ethnic minorities tend to cluster in geographic proximities to each other.⁴⁰ Racial and ethnic-minority neighborhoods, in urban areas specifically, threaten voting behaviors in congressional districts. As such, the saturation of ethnic minorities in one locale threatens traditional conceptions of national identity. For example, Latina fertility has appeared in twenty-first century media as posing a threat to U.S. nationalism, as seen when a Mexican immigrant gave birth to the 300 millionth U.S. citizen on October 17, 2006.⁴¹ Moreover, U.S. ethnic demographics reported that since 2011, more minority babies were born than white babies.⁴²

There is a growing urgency to better understand why specific U.S. Latino depictions flourish in politics and media, and the underlying purposes they serve. “The immigrant” has historically served as a notion of the American imaginary but its identity has been recreated over time to serve various political agendas.⁴³ Throughout the MAGA campaign, the Latino immigrant archetype served as the scapegoat for nearly everything that was wrong with the U.S. Therefore, understanding U.S. Latino narratives is necessary to better understand how specific stereotypes were created and dispersed throughout U.S. media and politics.

U.S. Latino Narratives

Nativist politics reduce pluralist notions of race and culture to create “us [Americans]” and “them” dichotomies for understanding national identity.⁴⁴ Throughout U.S. history, the role of Latinos as members of society has been primarily reduced to three narratives that have permeated media, political, and social spheres of discourse. Latinos in the U.S. are largely understood through narratives of migration, illegality, and criminality. At the turn of the twenty-first century, seventy-five percent of immigrants primarily settled into seven states in the U.S.—with California housing nearly twenty-five percent of them.⁴⁵ This prompted a nativist response in 1994, when Proposition 187 sought to restrict undocumented immigrants from accessing public benefits that included public education and nonemergency healthcare in California.⁴⁶

³⁷ Nicholas De Genova, *Working the Boundaries: Race, Space and “Illegality” in Mexican Chicago* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 62.

³⁸ Sofya Aptekar, “Constructing the Boundaries of US Citizenship in the Era of Enforcement and Securitization,” in *Citizenship, Belonging, and Nation-States in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Nicole Stokes-DuPass and Ramona Fruja (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 2-3.

³⁹ De Genova, *Working the Boundaries*, 63.

⁴⁰ William H. Frey, *Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics are Remaking America* (Washington: The Brookings Institution Press, 2014), 49-51.

⁴¹ Leo R. Chavez, *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 73.

⁴² Frey, *Diversity Explosion*, 2-3.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 5-7.

⁴⁴ De Genova, *Working the Boundaries*, 63-66.

⁴⁵ Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising*, 65-66.

⁴⁶ Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising*, 66.

A scholar of public discourse found that in over 100 articles published by *The Los Angeles Times* during the 1994 midterm elections, the most prominent metaphors used in discussions of immigration depicted U.S. Latinos through discourses of “dangerous waters.”⁴⁷ By reporting on Latino migration in ‘floods’ and ‘tides,’ Californian imaginaries connotated topics of immigration with natural disasters that would destroy the state. The narrative of illegality that pertains to Latino immigrants in the U.S., but Mexican nationals specifically, conflates U.S. politics with specific legislation like the Bracero Program to situate Mexicans within “a specifically spatialized sociopolitical condition” of deportability.⁴⁸ The “open border” period of the Bracero Program ended with the national expulsion of 2.9 million undocumented Mexican and Latino migrant workers to Latin America.⁴⁹ Deportation as a legal production permeates social and political spheres and perpetuates depictions of U.S. Latino immigrants as being disposable commodities of cheap labor.⁵⁰

Political journalism worked in tandem with televised media to perpetuate narratives of criminality among Mexican-Americans in the mid-twentieth century. In the 1950s, the Bracero Program catalyzed internal migration for Mexican-Americans, moving them from rural areas to inner-cities as they could not compete with the cheaper labor supplied by Mexican nationals.⁵¹ At the same time, the Boggs Amendment (1951) and 1956 Narcotic Drug Control Act sought to criminalize drug possession and sales that disproportionality affected African-American and Latino communities who lacked sufficient access to educational resources and livable wages.⁵² Journalists then began to report on Mexican-American youth as “gang members,” and depicted them as drug traffickers or perpetrators of violence at disproportionately higher rates of front-page reporting in print media and televised news coverage than Anglo-Americans.⁵³

U.S. Latino Stereotypes

Social anthropologists have found that stereotypes are most effective in contexts that have two important components: ethnocentrism and prejudice.⁵⁴ Therefore, understanding how a presidential campaign running on “Make America Great Again” and “America, first” slogans serves as an exemplary case study for better understanding Latino stereotypes. Six popular tropes have existed in classic Hollywood cinema and shaped U.S. Latino identity across social and political spheres: the bandit, male buffoon, female clown, Latin lover, dark lady, and the harlot.⁵⁵ These are the predominant archetypes that have reproduced Latino imagery across U.S. media for over a century.⁵⁶ This article will largely focus on the bandit stereotype to situate existing U.S. Latino narratives within broader nativist discourses of immigration rooted in fear and dispersed throughout the MAGA campaign.

U.S. Mexican populations—young inner-city men specifically—have an extensive history of appearing in the media as perpetrators of violence in their communities.⁵⁷ Native Americans and Mexicans experienced high levels of conflict with Anglo-Americans in the nineteenth century when Anglo traders began using the Santa Fe Trail and other trade routes that had been used by the

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

⁴⁸ De Genova, *Working the Boundaries*, 213-215.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 224-225.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 215-216.

⁵¹ Tovaes, *Manufacturing the Gang*, 56-57.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 58-59.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

⁵⁴ Ramirez-Berg, *Latino Images in Film*, 14-15.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁵⁷ Rosa Linda Fregoso, “The Representation of Cultural Identity in *Zoot Suit* (1981)” *Theory and Society* 22 (1993): 659

indigenous communities.⁵⁸ As such, twentieth century U.S. cinema would feature Mexican bandit gangs (“*bandidos*”) in the American West as the villains vis-à-vis the Anglo-American cowboys. However, the Mexican bandits were often depicted as rebel soldiers from Mexico’s Revolutionary War of 1910-1920 as antagonists in the nineteenth century American West, thereby reproducing not only historical inaccuracies but also portrayed heroes of Mexican history as villains in U.S. media.⁵⁹

The bandit stereotype was transformed in the 1940s when the U.S. Latino was depicted in a flashy zoot suit (“*pachuquismo*”) and appeared in the media as an inner-city gang member. The zoot suit modernized the bandit for 1940s audience consumption and further criminalized and hypersexualized the Latino male. Moreover, U.S. Latino resistance to the World War 2 draft further portrayed them in the media as being unpatriotic, and eschewed them as nonmembers of the national community.⁶⁰ In the 1960s, some of the earliest television appearances featuring Mexican men often portrayed the actors in courtrooms, recycling violent stereotypes and criminalizing their identities.⁶¹ In the news, Mexican-American gangs saturated media broadcasts by refurbishing old Mexican stereotypes—that permeated across most U.S. Latin American communities—as barbaric criminals.⁶² Although stereotypes have the ability to pervade across U.S. Latino identities, it was Mexican-American “boy gangs” that depicted Mexicans as evil, violent, and barbaric.⁶³ The bandit stereotype among Mexican-Americans persisted into the late-twentieth and twenty-first centuries portraying the bandit as a greaser, gang member, criminal, drug dealer, and rapist.⁶⁴

How was Donald Trump able to position himself against U.S. Latinos to an audience large enough to support his accession to power in 2016? Furthermore, what rhetoric did he employ to position his constituents and himself against Latinos in an attempt to “Make America Great Again”? The proceeding sections discuss the methods employed to better understand Donald Trump’s discourse on U.S. Latinos and the empirical and qualitative findings gathered from the eighteen-month presidential campaign.

Methodology

I employ a mixed methods analysis to understand how Donald Trump’s rhetoric depicted Latinos in the media leading up to the 2016 presidential campaign. I collected all seventy-four of Trump’s presidential campaign speeches from *The American Presidency Project*, a non-partisan presidential speech archival database located at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I conducted a content analysis using Provalis QDA Miner, a software package that allows me to code, annotate, and retrieve text from the data. I coded all seventy-four speeches made between June 16, 2015 and November 9, 2016, as single cases in the dataset. I then coded keywords of interest along three primary categories: political, cultural, and national security.

The content analysis of the 74 speeches is preceded by a textual analysis where I employ five speeches from Donald Trump’s campaign rallies. The speeches were selected along considerations of political significance, geography, and time; by employing speeches throughout the campaign and across the continental U.S., this analysis might yield a broader picture of Trump’s portrayal of U.S. Latinos. The first speech, given on June 16, 2015, was when Donald Trump announced his candidacy in New York City.⁶⁵ The second speech—which was only the eighth given during his

⁵⁸ Tovaes, *Manufacturing the Gang*, 36-37.

⁵⁹ Ramirez-Berg, *Latino Images in Film*, 17-18.

⁶⁰ Luis Alvarez, “From Zoot Suits to Hip Hop: Towards a Relational Chicana/o Studies,” *Latino Studies* 5, no. 1 (2007): 54-55.

⁶¹ Clara E. Rodriguez, *Latin Looks* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 73-74.

⁶² Tovaes, *Manufacturing the Gang*, 32.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁶⁵ Donald J. Trump, “Remarks Announcing Candidacy for President in New York City,” June 16, 2015, *The American*

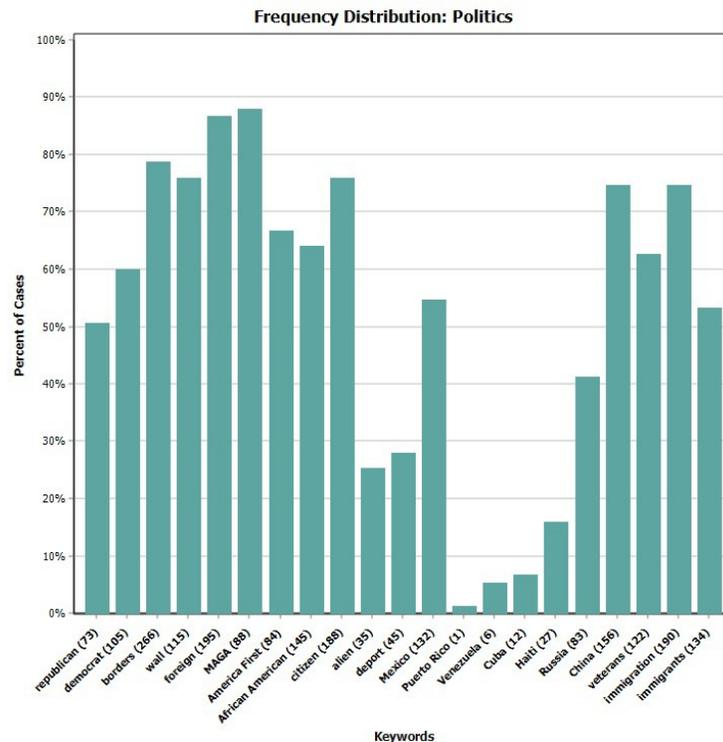
entire campaign—took place thirteen months later on July 21, 2016, when Trump accepted the presidential nomination at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio.⁶⁶ The third speech took place at the Phoenix Convention Center on August 31, 2016.⁶⁷ The fourth, was at the KI Convention Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin on October 17, 2016 and was the fifty-seventh of the seventy-four speeches.⁶⁸ The fifth speech in this analysis was the last speech given during Trump’s campaign the night before election day in Raleigh, North Carolina.⁶⁹

Analysis

Content Analysis: Findings

In Figure 1, there is significant variation in the distribution of political keywords: across the top ten most commonly referenced words during the campaign, six of them explicitly relate to immigration. *Borders, foreign, immigration, immigrant, Mexico, and wall* were some of the most frequently used terms in Trump’s presidential campaign. Among the three largest foreign actors in the campaign—*China, Mexico, and Russia*—the former two were situated against constituents as posing the largest threat to American jobs and the U.S. economy. Moreover, the frequency distribution of *foreign, borders, immigration, and immigrants* demonstrate that these issues were brought up across cases as a rate nearly as often as his *Make America Great Again* slogan. The frequency distribution in Figure 1 demonstrates that Trump’s campaign was largely rooted in appealing to constituents’ nationalistic anxieties, situating his campaign speeches within broader threats posed by foreign governments and immigration rather than partisan issues or U.S. veterans.

Figure 1: The Frequency Distribution of Political Keywords



Presidency Project, ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=110306>.

⁶⁶ Trump, “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio.”

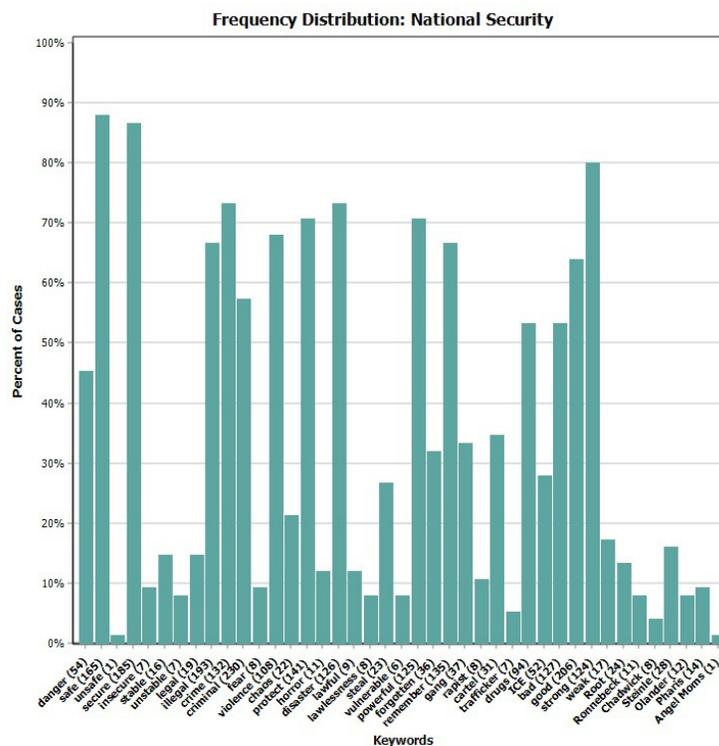
⁶⁷ Donald J. Trump, “Remarks on Immigration at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona,” August 31, 2016, *The American Presidency Project*, ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=119805>.

⁶⁸ Donald J. Trump, “Remarks at the KI Convention Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin,” October 17, 2016, *The American Presidency Project*, ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=119183>.

⁶⁹ Donald J. Trump, “Remarks at J.S. Dorton Arena in Raleigh, North Carolina,” November 7, 2016, *The American Presidency Project*, ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=122536>.

Figure 2 demonstrates the large fluctuation with which threat-related terms were discussed throughout Trump’s campaign. Although cultural buzzwords sought to measure how often Trump explicitly mentioned multiracial, cultural, and religious issues, the findings did not purport significant results.⁷⁰ On the other hand, national security keywords were highly popular throughout his campaign. National security was an instrumental component of his campaign, as seen by the frequent uses of *criminal*, *illegal*, *crime*, *violence*, *disaster*, *protect*, and *drugs*. In an attempt to account for threat-related terms, the analysis also measured for words like *good*, *strong*, and *safe*. Upon closer investigation in the textual analysis, variations of the popular “Make America” slogan, such as “Make America Safe Again” and “Make America Strong Again” contributed to the frequency of the MAGA slogan.⁷¹ Nonetheless, the frequency of keywords like *illegal*, *crime*, and *disaster* were telling in different ways: these words were found across approximately 70% of all of the cases in the analysis. Because terms like *illegal* are often broad and can be encompassing of an array of issues, the proceeding section of the content analysis includes proximity plots to demonstrate the conjunction of *illegal* with other buzzwords across the MAGA campaign.

Figure 2: The Frequency Distribution of National Security Keywords



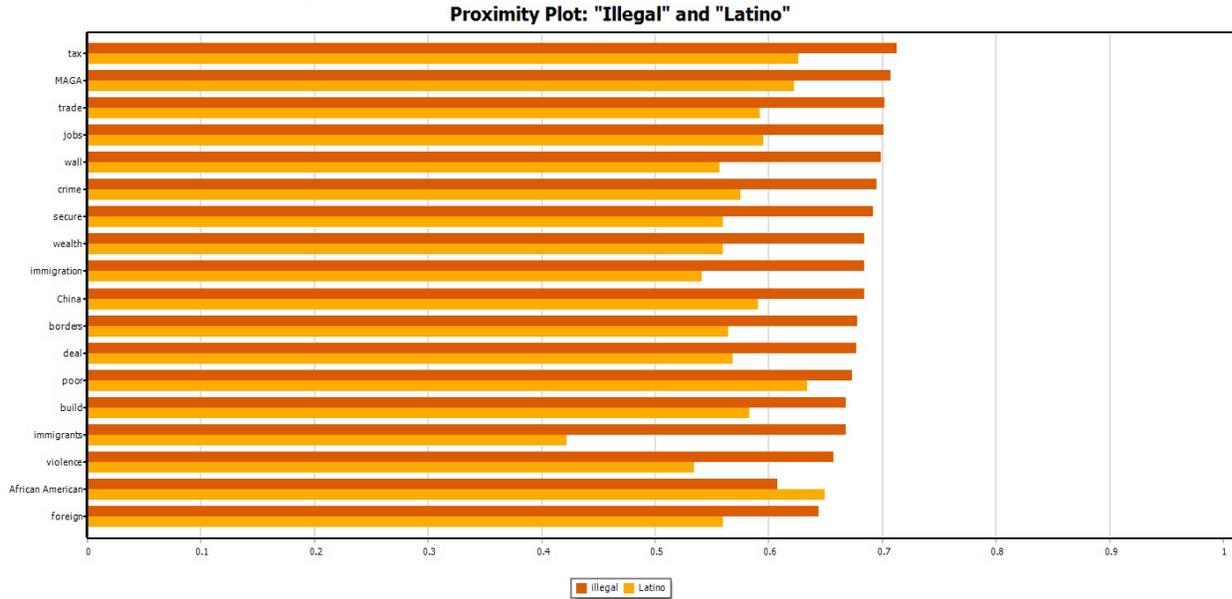
The chart in Figure 3 demonstrates how often *illegal* and *Latino* appear in proximity to one another. The QDA miner software measures proximity by grouping the closest keyword codes to each other. Across the three subsections of interest—politics, culture, and national security—the closest terms to *illegal* and *Latino* are listed below in descending order. It is worth noting that *illegal* and *Latino* overlap at high rates—corroborating the Latino narratives of illegality throughout Trump’s campaign. *Make America Great Again*, *jobs*, *wall*, *crime*, and *secure* are only some of the keywords that round out the ten most popular words used in closest proximity to both *illegal* and *Latino*. Given that Figure 2 demonstrates that *crime* appeared in over 70% of Donald Trump’s speeches, the proximity plot in Figure 3 demonstrates *illegal* appeared in nearly 70% of those instances and

⁷⁰ Figure A in the Appendix reports the frequency distribution for cultural keywords.

⁷¹ Trump, “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio;” Trump, “Remarks at the KI Convention Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin.”

Latino followed closely behind at nearly 60%. *Latino* also appeared in close proximity to words like *poor*, *jobs*, *violence*, *drugs*, and *immigration*. The rhetorical devices used in marrying these words and dispersing them to audiences over the course of a highly publicized eighteen-month presidential campaign reinforced preexisting stereotypes of Latino identity with associations to foreign incompatibility and illegality.

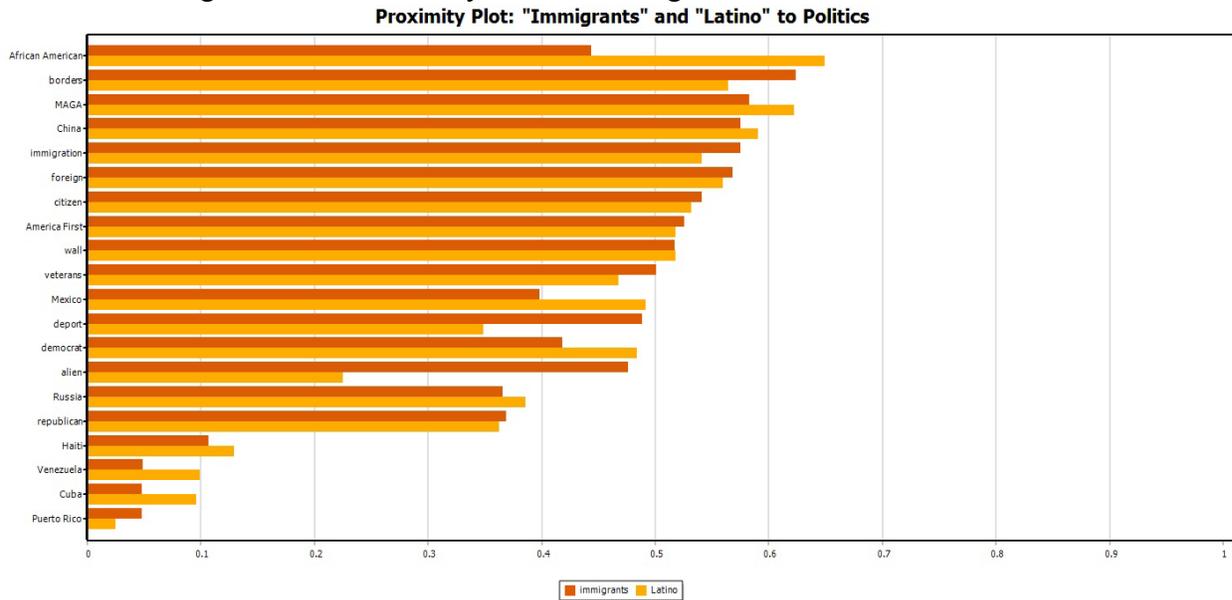
Figure 3: The Proximity Plot of “Illegal” and “Latino”



In Figure 4, *immigrants* and *Latino* also appear in comparable frequencies to each other and other political buzzwords used during the 2016 presidential campaign. The use of *immigrant* and *Latino* in proximity to remarks on *borders*, *Make America Great Again*, and *foreign* further corroborate existing narratives of U.S. Latino illegality. Although it may be unsurprising that over 60% of discussions on *borders* are related to *immigrants*, approximately 55% of the instances that included *Latino* also situated them vis-à-vis *borders*, which contributes to popular Latino narratives that they are foreign and culturally incompatible with national U.S. identities.

Figure 4 may best illustrate the rupture between perceived notions of U.S. citizenship and U.S. Latinos when demonstrating the nearly identical usage of *immigrant* and *Latino* to discussions surrounding the *wall*. Moreover, as compared to other Latin American countries of interest, *Latino* was closest in proximity to 50% of discussions on *Mexico* seldom used in comparison to discussions on *Puerto Rico*, *Venezuela*, or *Cuba*. While Mexico borders the U.S. and is therefore the primary actor involved in immigration reform, the preceding textual analysis suggests that Trump’s campaign speeches largely group Latinos as one monolithic, foreign U.S. population.

Figure 4: The Proximity Plot of “Immigrants” and “Latino” to Politics



Textual Analysis: Findings

The textual analysis of the five speeches of interest are: Trump’s announcement of running for president in New York City (June 16, 2015); accepting the Republican nomination in Cleveland, Ohio (July 21, 2016); his remarks on immigration at the Phoenix Convention Center (August 31, 2016); his speech at the KI Convention Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin (October 17, 2016); and his final speech before election day in Raleigh, North Carolina (November 7, 2016). The five speeches spread out across the year and a half that Donald Trump campaigned for president and represent diverse geographic locations. The five case studies in the textual analysis demonstrated significant consistencies along issues of national security; every speech either began or ended with warnings against the looming threats to the U.S., with specific references to Mexico, immigration, and the media.

Donald Trump positioned immigration as one of the largest threats to U.S national security throughout his presidential campaign. Trump refurbished existing narratives of immigrant criminality and illegality and began the first speech of his campaign by warning U.S. citizens of Mexico and other Latin American countries using the U.S. as “a dumping ground” for drugs, criminals, and rapists.⁷² According to Trump, Mexicans and other Latinos not only “steal” American jobs, but also “steal American lives.”⁷³ Sarah Root, Kate Steinle, and Grant Ronnebeck are three examples highlighted throughout Trump’s campaign that illustrated how “criminal aliens” entered the U.S. to kill Americans.⁷⁴ During his speech at the Phoenix Convention Center, Trump warned against “criminal aliens” and “criminal illegal immigrants” eleven times, and equated sanctuary cities to open borders that only served to protect immigrants.⁷⁵ During his campaign, he promised to stop federal funding to sanctuary cities, in the process depicting places like Los Angeles and San Francisco as open borders complicit in housing undocumented immigrants and criminals.

Trump’s attacks on immigration surpassed threats to enact stringent immigration reform policies and withhold federal funds from ‘un-American’ sanctuary cities; he memorialized victims killed by

⁷² Trump, “Remarks Announcing Candidacy for President in New York City.”

⁷³ Trump, “Remarks on Immigration at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona.”

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Trump. “Remarks on Immigration at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix. Arizona.”

undocumented immigrants by employing religious rhetoric associated with fallen soldiers and martyrs. For example, Trump asserted that “[Sarah Root was] one more child to sacrifice on the order and on the altar of open borders.”⁷⁶ Moreover, following his speech at the Phoenix Convention Center, Trump featured remarks from Angels Moms, a group of women whose children were killed by unauthorized immigrants.⁷⁷ He mobilized his supporters by claiming that, “the attacks on our police, and the terrorism in our cities,” was a rampant phenomenon, equating undocumented immigrants to domestic terrorists.⁷⁸

Throughout the MAGA campaign, Trump warned against the media as being the third agent that threatened U.S. national security. He cited a report from the Center for Public Integrity and claimed that “96% of so-called journalists and reporters” who donated to campaigns during the 2016 election cycle gave to the Clinton campaign and were reporting on the election in her favor.⁷⁹ Across case studies, he consistently attacked the media for being dishonest and refusing to report the “real number” for U.S. unemployment, election polls, and immigration. Trump claimed that the media did not report the facts on immigration and that, “our government has no idea. It could be 3 million. It could be 30 million. They have no idea what the number is.”⁸⁰ Moreover, he claimed that, “illegal immigrant families... are being released by the tens of thousands into our communities with no regard for the impact on public safety or resources.”⁸¹ By falsifying statistics on undocumented immigrants in the U.S., Trump appealed to nationalistic anxieties by employing existing narratives of immigrants entering the U.S. in “waves” and “tides,” who were “being released” like untamed animals.⁸²

According to Trump, immigration was not only a problem that affected the lives of “vulnerable Americans,” but also hurt the U.S. economy.⁸³ Trump asserted that illegal immigration cost the U.S. over \$113 billion dollars a year.⁸⁴ However, Trump’s sources came from lobbyists seeking to reduce legal and illegal immigration and combined federal numbers, which are estimated to be drastically lower—just \$29 billion—with local and state costs for education and healthcare of U.S.-born children with immigrant parents.⁸⁵ Therefore, Trump demarcated clear parameters between ‘good’ and ‘lesser citizens:’ the ‘better’ citizens follow legal immigration protocols, assimilate to Anglo-American culture, and reject their native cultural markers, while the ‘lesser citizens’ are U.S.-born children of undocumented immigrants.

Lastly, the case studies in the textual analysis found that Donald Trump criminalized Hillary Clinton with the same rhetoric he employed to depict U.S. Latinos and immigrants: Trump asserted that the “Clinton cartel” and “crooked media” threatened U.S. democracy by rigging the democratic primaries, the polls, and would ultimately destroy America’s independence.⁸⁶ Beyond the scope of these case studies, he incited his supporters to chant, “lock her up!” at a campaign rally and well

⁷⁶ Trump, “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio.”

⁷⁷ Trump, “Remarks on Immigration at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona.”

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*; Trump, “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio.”

⁷⁹ Trump, “Remarks at the KI Convention Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin.”

⁸⁰ Trump, “Remarks on Immigration at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona.”

⁸¹ Trump, “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio.”

⁸² Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising*, 68-69.

⁸³ Trump, “Remarks on Immigration at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona.”

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Miriam Valverde, “Donald Trump says Illegal Immigration Costs \$113 Billion a Year,” *Politifact*, September 1, 2016, <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2016/sep/01/donald-trump/donald-trump-says-illegal-immigration-costs-113-bi/>; Michelle Ye Hee Lee and Glenn Kessler, “Fact-checking Donald Trump’s Immigration Speech,” *The Washington Post*, September 1, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2016/09/01/fact-checking-donald-trumps-immigration-speech/?utm_term=.9beedf316f5d.

⁸⁶ Trump. “Remarks at the KI Convention Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin.”

into his presidency almost a year later.⁸⁷ He also attacked “crooked Hillary’s” stance on immigration reform, claiming that because she would not want to separate families with undocumented family members, she showed no regard for the “American families who have been permanently separated from their loved ones because of a preventable homicide, because of a preventable death, because of murder.”⁸⁸ Moreover, he would again reference the involuntary manslaughter by undocumented immigrants that claimed the lives of Sarah Root and Kate Steinle.⁸⁹ While pledging to dismantle executive orders that protected unauthorized immigrants and to increase funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Trump joked that maybe they would “deport her.”⁹⁰ Trump’s attempts to depict Hillary Clinton as a ‘criminal immigrant’ or cartel kingpin support specific discourses of Latino criminality and illegality that he used to incite fear among his constituents.

Conclusion

The content and textual analyses purport specific understandings of Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign discourses used to depict U.S. Latinos in the media. The criminalization of U.S. Latinos in the media and political spheres during Trump’s campaign demonstrate very specific nativist discourses. His campaign speeches invigorated existing bandit stereotypes of Latinos as threatening the U.S. economy, jobs, and lives. The content analysis found higher frequency distributions for anti-immigration rhetoric and the criminalization of formal immigration terminology. The textual analysis of Trump’s campaign speeches situated immigrants as a threat to stealing not only American jobs, but also American lives. In other words, Trump broadened the bandit stereotype and modernized the Latino threat narrative for twenty-first century audience consumption. The most novel findings across these analyses however, may be Trump’s use of anti-immigrant rhetoric to criminalize Hillary Clinton: by employing discourses that illegalized his opponent, Trump restructured himself to his constituents as embodying U.S. nationalism.

This article attempts to contribute to existing scholarly discussions on nativist politics, by looking at the specific “us and them” and “back to the good old days” discourses employed by the Trump campaign. I also seek to contribute to lively media studies discussions on U.S. Latino media, by understanding how Latino/a bodies are criminalized in the social and political imaginaries of the U.S. public. Future research should consider how the political party dynamics of Republicans and Democrats have changed: the new modalities of the Republican Party that endorse Donald Trump show a rupture in twenty-first century establishment Republican practices, which are likely to influence a shift in the Democratic Party’s political behaviors.

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⁸⁷ Donald J. Trump, “Remarks at Radisson Armory in Manchester, New Hampshire,” October 28, 2016, *The American Presidency Project*, ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=123519>; Brian Williams, “Trump Crowd Chants ‘Lock her up!’ 319 Days After the 2016 Election,” *MSNBC*, September 22, 2017, <https://www.msnbc.com/brian-williams/watch/trump-crowd-chants-lock-her-up-319-days-after-2016-election-1053209155852>.

⁸⁸ Trump, “Remarks on Immigration at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona.”

⁸⁹ Vivian Yee, “For Grieving Parents, Trump is ‘Speaking for the Dead’ on Immigration,” *The New York Times*, June 25, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/25/us/trump-undocumented-victims.html>.

⁹⁰ Trump, “Remarks on Immigration at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona.”

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Appendix

Figure A: The Frequency Distribution of Cultural Keywords

