
The Normalization of Extremist Narratives in Donald Trump's Campaign Discourse.

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Based on a corpus of public speeches by Donald Trump ranging from the announcement of his candidacy in 2016 to the present time, this paper analyses the linguistic strategies applied by Trump to mainstream a narrative of White supremacy that is both fuelled by and contributing to extremist narratives of American identity. I will focus in particular on strategies of normalization, such as demonization, racialization, and dehumanization, stigmatization and victimization, as well as othering and exclusion aimed as "present[img] 'uncivil' ideas related to unacceptable norms of social conduct – such as e.g. racism, discrimination etc. – as legitimate and acceptable." As I will further show, these strategies "were used against the background of discursively constructed complex imaginaries of whiteness where the exclusion of un-American others in Trump's campaign discourse was closely linked with an articulation of America as an expressly "white" nation (Krzyzanowski 2020, 444).

The paper adopts an interdisciplinary framework bringing together a range of approaches (presidential studies, social semiotics, communication studies, American studies), yet is most strongly informed, both conceptually and methodologically, by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and its interest in the construction of identities and the establishment of political power relationships (see Fairclough 1992, van Dijk 2008 and Wodak 2015). The study combines CDA with Corpus Linguistics (CL) and is both corpus-based and corpus-driven, linking quantitative and qualitative forms of computer-assisted analysis (e.g., frequencies, collocates, n-grams) with the close reading of selected campaign speeches (see Baker et al. 2008). The main corpus (830K words) used for this analysis is composed of 141 campaign speeches covering the 2016 and 2020 general election campaigns (74 for 2016, 67 for 2020). It is hoped that such a combined CDA-CL approach will add a methodological option to the study of extremist discourses.

References: • Baker, P., C. et al. 2008. "A Useful Methodological Synergy? Combining Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics to Examine Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press." *Discourse and Society* 19(3): 273–306. • Fairclough, N. 1992. *Language and Power*. London: Longman. • Krzyzanowski, M. 2020. "Normalization and/as Discursive Construction of Norms and 'New' Normality: Discursive Shifts of Populism and Neoliberalism." *Social Semiotics* 30(4), 431-448. • van Dijk, T. 2008. *Discourse and Power*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. • Wodak, R. 2015. *The Politics of Fear. What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*. London: Sage.