

Populist Communication and the Form of Media: A Historical Discourse Analysis

By

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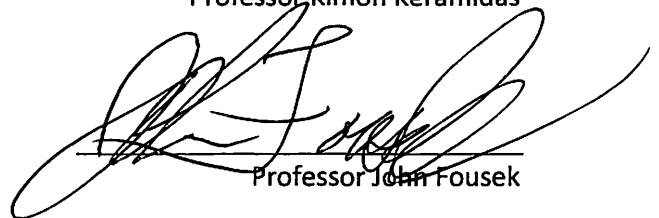
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ABSTRACT !

Despite the frequent use of populism an ideological term, populism is better understood as a communication tool, technique, style or emphasis used by a populist communicator to gain and maintain political power. How do populist communicators deploy populist communication tools over time? More specifically, how do the prevailing media technologies and practices—the “form of media”—in various time periods facilitate or encumber populist communication between speaker and audience? This paper seeks to answer these questions with a discourse analysis of four speeches given by four different populist communicators, each in a different time period and through a different form of media. A specific focus will be on how changes in media technologies affect the production, distribution and consumption of populist communication.

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INTRODUCTION !

Populism has become a troublesome buzzword in recent years. In the media, the term has primarily been used to describe surging right-wing xenophobic nationalist politicians, movements and parties in the United States, Europe and many other countries. This includes the 2016 Brexit vote; the 2016 US Presidential election victory of Donald Trump; the 2017 second place finish of Marie le Pen in the French presidential election; the inclusion of far-right parties in coalition governments in Austria, Italy, Poland, Finland and Hungary, and the electoral success of far-right parties in Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden. Yet left-wing parties and politicians have also been described as populist, such as Bernie Sanders in the US and the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn in the UK.

Populism has been used to describe parties, politicians and voters across the political spectrum, in multiple historical periods and in multiple geographical locations. It has also been described as a route to power, a brand of economic policy and a communication style. It has both boosters and detractors. But what exactly is populism, and what makes someone a populist?

This paper will posit that populism is best understood as a communication tool, technique, style or emphasis used by a communicator to gain and maintain political power. If populism is understood as such, then it is important to understand the nuances of populist communication tools, and how they can be deployed by communicators and interpreted by audiences through the media.

Media, as a vector for socialization and an essential middleman between populist communicators and their audiences, plays a crucial role in production and dissemination of

populist communication tools. However, media technologies have been constantly changing ! over time, with different forms of media arising, catching on among the masses, hybridizing elements of past media forms and eventually supplanting past media forms. Following McLuhan's maxim that "the medium is the message," this paper aims to examine how shifts in dominant media forms throughout history impacts the production, distribution and consumption of populist communication.¹

Research Question and Thesis

With a specific focus on the United States, this paper asks the following: How do populist communicators take advantage of different types of communication tools over time? More specifically, how do the prevailing media technologies and practices—the "form of media"—in each time period facilitate or encumber populist communication between speaker and audience?

To answer this question, this paper will complete a discourse analysis of four speeches given by four different populist communicators, each in a different time period and through a different form of media. A specific focus will be on how changes in media technologies affect the production, distribution and consumption of populist communication. In doing so, this paper hopes to better illuminate the nature of populist communication and its mediation across time. As populism is increasingly used as a common buzzword with more and more movements branded as or self-identifying as populist, it is important to understand what role different

¹ Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message." In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, (New York: Signet. 1964), 23-35, 63-67.

media forms and communicative styles play. Likewise, continued advancements in media ! technologies necessitate further research into their role in communication among political actors.

This paper anticipates that as time goes on, populist communicators will use more populist communication tools as a result of advancements in media technology, such as increasing ease of production and distribution and greater audience participation—essentially, they will become “more populist.” More specifically, this paper suspects that populist communicators will use more messages centering conflict at the expense of messages of advocacy, with increases in emotional and rhetorical appeals. Finally, this paper hypothesizes that over time, so-called “fake news” and “alternative facts” (referred to here as “evidentialities”) will become more apparent.

This paper is organized as follows. Chapter 1 encompasses a literature review on populism, and includes a historiography of the term and the three main schools of study on the concept of populism. Chapter 2 includes the research design for the discourse analysis and outlines cases. Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 cover the four case studies. Finally, the conclusion synthesizes the results of the discourse analysis with final thoughts on the topic.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW !

Section 1.2: Populism – A Historiography

Populism has been the subject of a lively historical debate for the past century. The first use of the word populism comes from the People's Party or Populist Party (hereafter referred to with an uppercase P), which gained prominence in the Southern, Midwestern and Plains regions of the United States in the later decades of the 19th century. Understanding the Populist movement is crucial for understanding populism generally. In short, the Populists were a diverse coalition of anti-monopolist reformist farmers groups (particularly the Farmers' Alliance, the Grangers and the Greenbackers) who united with labor unions, Christian groups, temperance advocates, Georgists and socialists in 1892 under the banner of the Populist Party.²

Running primarily on a platform of free silver and anti-monopolism, the Populists achieved resounding electoral success for a third party. They won over 40 seats in Congress and 11 governorships throughout the 1890s, while their nominee in 1892 for President, James B. Weaver, won 8.5 percent of the popular vote. While the party went into sharp decline after their candidate William Jennings Bryan (who was also nominated by the Democratic party with a different vice president) lost the 1896 Presidential election, the Populists nonetheless left a lasting impact on US politics. Many scholars writing in the decades after the Populist Party's downfall saw the movement as a positive development for US politics and for democracy generally. Luminaries such as Charles Beard, John Hicks and C. Vann Woodward all saw the

² Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* Second Edition (Cornell University Press, 2017), 28-35.

Populists as forerunners of the early 20th century Progressive movement, which would eventually pass legislation that met many of the Populist's political demands.³

It was renowned historian Richard Hofstadter who shifted the scholarly conversation on what constituted populism in a negative direction when he argued in *The Age of Reform* in 1955 that the Populists were backwards-looking yokels driven by paranoid conspiracy theories and anti-Semitism.⁴ Though he didn't mention the anticommunist demagoguery of the recently censured anti-communist Senator Joseph McCarthy (Hofstadter was a former Communist Party member), Hofstadter's idea of a conspiratorial "paranoid style" was clearly directed towards McCarthy, and the general term "populist" soon became a descriptor for right-wingers such as George Wallace, Barry Goldwater and members of the John Birch Society.⁵⁶ While scholars such as Woodward and Nugent quickly pushed back against Hofstadter's assessment of the historical Populist movement, this association of populism with conspiracy, demagoguery and racism soon transcended that of the Populist Party and entered into popular conception.⁷⁸ Despite this, members of the New Left, such as Goodwyn, would look back to the Populist Party as a model for building progressive multi-racial coalitions, further complicating the usage of the word as an ideological lodestar.⁹

³ John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt: History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party*, (Minneapolis: ! University of Minnesota Press, 1931); Charles Beard, *The American Party Battle* (New York: Macmillan, 1928); C. ! Vann Woodward. *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*, (New York: Macmillan, 1938). !

⁴ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955). !

⁵ Yokoyama, Ryo, "Populism" and "populism": Aporia of the Historiography of American Populism. *Nanzan Review (of American Studies* 39 (2017), 101-122. !

⁶ Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style of American Politics," *Harper's Magazine*, November 1964. !

⁷ C. Vann Woodward, "The Populist Heritage and the Intellectual," *The American Scholar* 29, no. 1 (Winter 1959-60), 55-72. !

⁸ W.T.K. Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists: Kansas Populism and Nativism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ! 1963). !

⁹ Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America*, (New York: Oxford University Press. ! 1976), 276-306. !

Since Hofstadter, the populist label has been used to describe a muddle of extremely varied groups, people, movements and ideologies (some willingly self-label as populists, while others are labeled populists by scholars, journalists or political opponents).¹⁰ Michael Kazin argues that the roots of populism predate the formation of the Populist Party, with figures like Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln each embodying characteristics or ideological persuasions that would come to be hallmarks of their People's Party progenies.¹¹ Clearly, populism means wildly different things to different people in different places across different periods in history, which makes its exact nature tough to pin down precisely. While the etymological root of the word suggests that it centers 'the people,' Canovan argued in 1981 that populism could not even be "reducible to a single core."¹²

Despite the general disagreement over the term, the new millennium has seen an explosion of research regarding populism. The three main schools of thought, the ideological (or ideational), political strategy and discursive schools, each disagree over the definition and

¹⁰ In addition to those already mentioned, those that have called themselves or been referred to populist include as wide a net as the 19th century Narodniki movement in Russia, the 19th and early 20th century German Volk movement, the Progressive Era US socialist and labor movements, Theodore Roosevelt, the Bolshevik Party in the USSR, the Italian Fascist Party, the German Nazi Party, Huey Long, Father Coughlin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his New Deal coalition, Barry Goldwater, Juan Peron, Getulio Vargas, the Poujadist movement in France, the Canadian Social Credit movement, the New Left, Richard Nixon, Spiro Agnew, the leaders of the 1979-80 Islamic revolution in Iran, Ronald Reagan, the US Christian fundamentalist movement, Bill Clinton, Ross Perot, Pat Buchanan, Tony Blair, Jean-Marie Le Pen, Silvio Berlusconi, Alberto Fujimori, Hugo Chavez, Nestor and Christina Fernandez de Kirchner, Vladimir Putin, Sarah Palin and the Tea Party, Barrack Obama, Occupy Wall Street, SYRIZA, Podemos, the Black Lives Matter movement, the UK Independence Party and the Brexit movement, Rafael Correa, Evo Morales, Narendra Modi, Emmanuel Macron, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, Rodrigo Duterte, the modern continental European far-right parties, Donald Trump, Bernie Sanders and many, many others.

¹¹ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*. Second Edition, (Cornell University Press, 2017).

¹² Margaret Canovan, *Populism*, (New York: Harcourt Brace. 1981), 298.

fundamental principles of populism.¹³ This paper takes the stance that the discursive school has the most consistent and clear definition of populism.

Section 1.2: Populism as Ideology

Section 1.2.1: The People and the Elite/the Other

Perhaps the most widely cited definition of populism comes from Cas Mudde, a member of the ideological school, who describes populism as “a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the [general will] of the people.”¹⁴ In this school’s formulation, the people are believed to be the only rightful source of political legitimacy and are denied (or believe that they are denied) their right as sovereign by an elite or establishment that is or has become corrupted.¹⁵ For the people, this group of elites are frequently constructed as (or connected to) an Other, who are noted by particular class, ethnic, cultural, religious or other signifiers. This opposition towards a central enemy allows the people to construct bonds amongst one another and consolidate their

¹³ Economic populism is sometimes referred to as a fourth school, but it has mostly gone out of vogue among populism scholars. Scholarship regarding the economic school has mostly focused on perceived tendencies that populist movements are marked by economic irresponsibility and high spending—essentially, anti-neoliberal Washington Consensus policies. The analytical usefulness of such a position is dubious, as many governments described as populist have pursued economically successful policies, and indeed even neoliberal policies in many cases. As such, it will not be touched on in this literature review. For further reading, see Kurt Weyland, “Populism: A Political-Strategic Approach,” In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, (Oxford University Press, October 2017); Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski. “Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda.” *Working Paper Series, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs*, Harvard University, No.13-0004, 2013;

¹⁴ Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist,” *Government and Opposition* 39 no. 4 (2004), 543.

¹⁵ Bart Bonikowski, “Ethno-Nationalist Populism and the Mobilization of Collective Resentment,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 68 no. S1 (2017).

political movement. Populists will often claim that they will speak what Ostiguy calls the “repressed truth,” which opposes the political and social norms supposedly established by elites, which is often referred to today as “political correctness.”¹⁶ This castigation of entrenched and supposed elite-produced political norms, and the political mobilization that follows, often figures as a “middle finger” protest vote when an individual supports a populist candidate against a candidate seen as a member of the elite.¹⁷

Mudde argues that the divide between the people and the elite is primarily moral as opposed to the role of class, ethnic, religious divides or a gap in actual political power between groups.¹⁸ Understanding the divide between a ‘pure people’ and a ‘corrupt elite’ in this way can be somewhat reductive. Class, ethnic and religious differences or actual inequality in political power between groups can clearly feed into a people’s perception that elites or Others are morally corrupt.

Section 1.2.2: A “Thin” Ideological Attachment

Mudde’s understanding of populism as “thin” should not be understated. He argues that populism requires contributions from other “thick” ideologies such as socialism, liberalism, fascism or other “thin” ideologies like nationalism to be politically successful.¹⁹ In this instance, political actors pair populism with existing political ideologies, making populism a vessel for

¹⁶ Pierre Ostiguy. “Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, ! October 2017). !

¹⁷ Ibid. !

¹⁸ Cas Mudde and Cristobel Rovira Kaltwasser. *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). !

¹⁹ Ibid. !

better framing of the contours of political conflict.²⁰ The biggest differences between the varied ideologically attached strains of populism are the varying definitions of who makes up the elite and who is included into the grouping of the pure people. Again, the exact definitions of each category vary greatly across time and place.

Indeed, ideological predilections of a particular movement are often central to today's conversation on populism. In recent years, the term populism has most frequently been used (although not exclusively) to describe the radical right-wing authoritarian populism that has achieved a high degree of political success in the US and Europe. This populism is typified by its affinity for ideological cleavages that incorporate combinations of exclusionary ethno-nationalism, nativism, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-feminism, homophobia, transphobia, welfare chauvinism. This form of populism also typically employs or seeks to employ governance styles that can be anti-pluralistic, majoritarian, authoritarian or fascist.²¹

For this current crop of US and European right-wing authoritarian populists, the 'pure people' are an exclusionary ethnically, culturally and religiously defined nation. This nation is intimately shaped by nationalism and historical cultural signifiers, a crucial dimension of which is that of the 'heartland,' which Taggart calls an "idealized conception of the community," that often looks backwards in time to a supposed glorious past.²² For those American and European right-wing authoritarian populists, this past is often idealized as the period prior to

²⁰ Rafal Pankowski, *The Populist Radical Right in Poland: The Patriots*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010). !

²¹ Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris. "Trump, Brexit and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash." *HKS Working Paper* no. 16-026, (2016). !

²² Paul Taggart. "Populism and Representative Politics in Contemporary Europe." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9, ! no. 3 (2004), 274. !

advancements in race and gender equality as well as the period encompassing the so-called ! golden age of Western colonialism and imperialism.

Accordingly, these right-wing authoritarian populists' version of the 'corrupt elite' encompasses a varied cabal of wealthy, vapid and corrupt bankers, monopolists, government bureaucrats, managerial professionals, Hollywood celebrities and mainstream media journalists living in urban centers like Washington DC, New York City, Brussels, Silicon Valley, London and Los Angeles.²³ For the right-wing populists, these elites have become captured, co-opted or corrupted into supporting the interests of various minority groups, which can include immigrants, refugees, blacks, Latinos, Muslims, Jews, women, gays, trans people and even Millennials.²⁴ Often times, right-wing populists will equate these minority groups with terrorism, drug use, criminality, laziness and other morally undesirable traits that have the potential to corrupt those that fit under the umbrella of the people or the nation.²⁵ These Others and the elites are often castigated by right-wing populists as "globalists," who supposedly desire the elimination of national sovereignty and its replacement with cosmopolitanism through the celebration of diversity, sexual tolerance, free trade and immigration.²⁶

By identifying cosmopolitan elites and Others with demographic changes, right-wing authoritarian populism involves a politics of resentment, or a focus on status threat, where the

²³ Bart Bonikowski and Yueran Zhang. "Populism as Dog-Whistle Politics: Anti-Elite Discourse and Sentiments ! toward Minorities," Working Paper, *Harvard University*, (June 2018). !

²⁴ Ibid. !

²⁵ John Postill, "Populism and Social Media: A Global Perspective." *Media, Culture and Society* 40, no. 5 (2018), 754-765. !

²⁶ James Ingram, "Populism and Cosmopolitanism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristóbal Rovira ! Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, (Oxford University Press, October 2017). !

people perceive Others to be recipients of more assistance from elites in government, which can range from tax benefits to affirmative action to lax treatment by law enforcement, among other factors.²⁷ Likewise, hostile coverage of right-wing authoritarian populists by mainstream media sources can also contribute to resentment by the people, who see any negative coverage of their movement as a plot to unfairly discredit them by elites. Some right-wing authoritarian populist formulations can drift towards embrace of conspiracies theories, such as the notion that wealthy Jews control global finance and media and use their power for malicious ends, or that Muslim and Latino immigrants and asylum seekers (or other non-white groups) are bent on instigating “white genocide,” which entails the destruction, assimilation or “great replacement” of the white race by way of high birthrates and miscegenation.²⁸

Contrast this with the also ascendant left-wing populism typified by self-described democratic socialists like Bernie Sanders in the US and Jeremy Corbyn in the UK. For them, the ‘pure people’ includes a diverse amalgamation of the masses that could be considered working class and middle class—the 99%, to use the phrase popularized by the Occupy Wall Street Movement. Correspondingly, the ‘corrupt elite’ is comprised of a wealthy and politically influential coterie of multi-millionaires and billionaires (the 1% or the 0.1%) and those who have been captured by their financial influence.²⁹ While some left-wing populists do engage voters with ethnic nationalism, most left-wing populists like Sanders and Corbyn tend to extoll civic nationalism, which Ignatieff defines as a nation comprised of all “who subscribe to a

²⁷Bart Bonikowski, “Ethno-Nationalist Populism and the Mobilization of Collective Resentment,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 68 no. S1 (2017). !

²⁸ Eirikur Bergmann, *Conspiracy & Populism: The Politics of Misinformation*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). !

²⁹ Jan Rehmann, “Bernie Sanders and the Hegemonic Crisis of Neoliberal Capitalism: What Next?” *Socialism and Democracy* 30, no. 1 (2016), 1-11. !

nation's political creed," rather than a nation that bases inclusion or exclusion on factors like ! race, religion or language.³⁰

Regardless of the frequent attachment of populism to left or right ideologies, populism can be affixed to any ideology that uses the dichotomy between the people and an elite/Other. Postill has argued for the existence of theocratic populism, which includes the Shia clerics of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and other groups like the Islamic State. These groups see God as sovereign—however, God operates through a people comprising the global *ummah* of believers, with blasphemers and non-believers making up their conception of the Other.³¹ Postill has also argued that centrists and neo-liberal technocrats like Emmanuel Macron are populist, and that they use "anti-populist" populism, framing the people as the citizenry, while framing both left and right-wing populists as Others that threaten liberal democracy and the sanctity of the free-market.³²

Despite the strong tendencies of populist ideologies to run along socio-cultural, religious or ethnic cleavages, there is an argument to be made that the political success of both right-wing and left-wing populism could be partially a result of economic hardship among the people. Geiselberger explores the possibility that populist political surges are a reaction to recessions or depressions like the 2008 crisis, wherein the people become galvanized against technocratic elites who supposedly mismanage, cause or manufacture such crises.³³ Muller has gone as far as suggesting that populism and technocracy are "mirror images of each other."³⁴ However,

³⁰ Michael Ignatieff, *Blood & Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism*, (London: BBC Books, 1993), 5-9. !

³¹ John Postill, "Populism and Social Media: A Global Perspective," *Media, Culture and Society* 40, no. 5 (2018), 754-765. !

³² Ibid. !

³³ Heinrich Geiselberger, ed. *The Great Regression*. (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2017). !

³⁴ Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 327. !

Inglehart and Norris have found that cultural values tend to be a higher predictor of support for populist parties than economic insecurity.³⁵

Whether cultural values or material relations are the primary driver of support for populism(s) is an unsettled debate, but in both cases, the ideological school understanding of populism sees ideological connectors like fascism, nationalism, liberalism, socialism and other political inclinations as a necessary component of populism itself. Contrast this with the views of Ernesto Laclau, a major figure of the discursive school and of post-Marxist discourse theory, who asks whether populism might be a “constant dimension of political action which necessarily arises (in different degrees) in all political discourses, subverting and complicating the operations of the so-called ‘more mature’ ideologies” such as socialism or fascism.³⁶ For Laclau, “all politics [are] populist, although some [are] more populist than others.”³⁷

Despite Laclau’s alternative approach, Mudde notes a number of strengths of the ideological approach.³⁸ The first is distinguishability, which Mudde explains as the ability of this school to establish a clear Sartorian either-or boundary between populism and its opposites, including elitism and pluralism.³⁹ The second is categorizability, which allows for a clear setting of typographical signifiers when combined with populism, such as people/elite, left-wing/centrist/right-wing/theological, socialist/nationalist, civic-nationalist/ethnic-nationalist, inclusionary/exclusionary, pluralist/anti-pluralist and, following the work of Canovan, agrarian

³⁵ Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris. “Trump, Brexit and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash.” *HKS Working Paper* no. 16-026, 2016. !

³⁶ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 18. !

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 154. !

³⁸ Cas Mudde, “Populism: An Ideational Approach,” In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, (Oxford University Press, October 2017). !

³⁹ Giovanni Sartori “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics,” *American Political Science Review* 64 no. 4 ! (1970), 1033–53. !

populisms including farmer/peasant/intellectuals and political populisms including populist dictatorship, populist democracy, reactionary populism, and politicians' populism.⁴⁰ Mudde's third argument for the strength of the ideological school is travelability, which relates to the ability of the school to transcend geographical and temporal boundaries, making it ideal for comparative and cross-regional studies, including Mudde and Kaltwasser's study of Europe and the Americas.⁴¹ The final strength Mudde notes is versatility, specifically in that the approach can look at both the supply side (voters) and demand side (leaders, parties) of populism.

Section 1.3: Populism as Political Strategy

While ideological attachments to populism are frequently used to characterize the political alignment of a given populist movement, populism is also often used by voters, politicians and other political actors as a strategy for mobilizing, gaining, exercising and sustaining political power. This is the primary understanding of populism by the political strategy school. Weyland, a major proponent of the school, defines populism as "a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers."⁴² From an analytical standpoint, the school is concerned primarily with comparing populist strategies on how leaders gain and maintain power (which Weyland considers

⁴⁰ Margaret Canovan, *Populism*, (New York: Harcourt Brace. 1981), 298. !

⁴¹ Cas Mudde and Cristobel Rovira Kaltwasser. *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for (Democracy? (Cambridge University Press, 2012). !*

⁴² Kurt Weyland, "Populism: A Political-Strategic Approach," In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristóbal ! Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, ! October 2017), 14 !

personalistic leadership, patrimonialism, caudillismo and direct relationships with voters) with ! that of other political strategies such as party politics and clientelism.⁴³

Section 1.2.1: The Charismatic Populist Leader

The political strategy school puts a great amount of emphasis on a charismatic leader, which is also referred to as a populist communicator or demagogue. Weyland argues that the shifting, disorganized and heterogenous character of the people necessitates a leader to articulate its goals and serve as the embodiment of the general will of the people.⁴⁴ For this school, there are two important aspects of a populist movement's political strategy: the actor seeking political power (which can include an individual, an informal group or a party) and how they mobilize their base of support.⁴⁵ Compared to other forms of political power-seeking such as clientelism or party politics, populism is useful as a political strategy because it allows for those who are situated outside of traditional elite political structures to build visibility and authenticity, especially in countries with government and media institutions that maintain low levels of public trust and can be easily framed as captured by a corrupt elite.⁴⁶

In building this popular consensus against an elite, populism is also useful for building coalitions across class, ethnic, racial or religious boundaries, as the idea of the people is often

⁴³ Kurt Weyland, "Populism: A Political-Strategic Approach," In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristóbal ! Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, ! October 2017). !

⁴⁴ Ibid. !

⁴⁵ Kurt Weyland, "Populism: A Political-Strategic Approach," In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristóbal ! Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, ! October 2017). !

⁴⁶ Lone Sorenson, "Populist Communication in the New Media Environment: A Cross-Regional Comparative ! Perspective," *Palgrave Communications* 4, (2018). !

malleable when crafted by a charismatic leader (though Conniff notes that this is more ! prevalent among populist leaders in Latin America).⁴⁷ This facet of the political strategy school has its limits—as Knight argues, is coalition building not endemic to politics itself?⁴⁸

The use of direct and intimate communication channels are hallmarks of populist communicators. They aim to use these direct or quasi-direct communication channels, such as rallies, speeches, social media posts, statues, monuments, architecture or art to form bonds with the people.⁴⁹ Likewise, the people, interested in exercising their sovereignty, seek to engage in direct democratic forms of voting, such as referenda and plebiscites (of which Brexit is perhaps the best case).⁵⁰ The current strand of radical right-wing authoritarian populism embodied by Donald Trump exemplifies this direct communication strategy, wherein his active posting on Twitter gives him the ability to have constant communication and dialogue with the people he claims to embody. However, his dialogue with supporters, like that of many populist leaders, frequently concerns his disdain for the norms of liberal democracy and his contempt of the mainstream media.

Section 1.2.2: Democracy or Mob Rule?

Direct forms of communication between the leader and the people can often spur populist movements to pursue more authoritarian modes of governance, as such an alignment

⁴⁷ Michael L. Conniff, ed, *Populism in Latin America*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999); Seymour ! Martin Lipset, *Political Man* (New York: Doubleday, 1960). !

⁴⁸ Alan Knight, "Populism and Neo-Populism in Latin America, Especially Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies* (30 (1998), 223-248. !

⁴⁹ Kurt Weyland, "Populism: A Political-Strategic Approach," In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristóbal ! Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, ! October 2017). !

⁵⁰ Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). !

favors a strong executive who can supposedly enact the popular will without having to traverse ! through the slow and often contentious process of lawmaking within representative liberal democracies. Müller has argued that populism “tends to pose a danger to democracy.”⁵¹ Mudde explains that while populists are not necessarily opposed to representative governance, they are rather in favor of a more specific representation that only includes what they perceive to be the pure people.⁵² However, as conceptions of the people can frequently be a majority group, populist preferences for direct democracy can often place itself in opposition to minority rights, although minorities can range from ethnic, racial or religious groups to a minority of wealthy oligarchs, depending on the ideological tendencies of the populist movement in question.⁵³

Despite this, penchants for anti-pluralism and authoritarianism does not hold true for all populist movements, as Muller suggests. To quote Green, “populism, at its root, is democratic in nature, even if many populist leaders (once they reach power) may not be democratically inclined.”⁵⁴ Tännsjö has argued that populism is essentially democracy in its purest form, in that it is wholly direct rather than representative.⁵⁵ This struggle between democratic forms—representative vs. direct, the supposedly uninformed masses vs. a supposedly enlightened elite—underlies the tensions within how the people, whoever that may be, are represented in politics. Populism, however, serves to simplify politics into Manichean dichotomies that can be

⁵¹ Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). !

⁵² Cas Mudde, “The Populist Zeitgeist”, *Government and Opposition*, 39 no. 4 (2004). !

⁵³ Cas Mudde and Cristobel Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism In Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for (Democracy?* (New York: Cambridge University Press. 2012). !

⁵⁴ John Green, “The Rebirth of Populism in Latin America,” *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, August 22, 2006. !

⁵⁵ Torbjörn Tännsjö, *Populist Democracy: A Defense*, (London, Routledge, 1992). !

manipulated by charismatic leaders for their political benefit, to the detriment of nuanced political discussion.⁵⁶

There is indeed no shortage of literature that decries the masses as a group prone to uninformed decision making and irrationality as a result of groupthink, herd mentality, or entrancement and manipulation by charismatic leaders. As Le Bon put it in his seminal 19th century work *The Crowd*: “isolated, [man] may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian...he allows himself to be impressed by words and images...and to be induced to commit acts contrary to his most obvious interests.”⁵⁷ Indeed, authoritarians and would-be authoritarians will often see populism as a useful road to achieving and exercising power within liberal democratic systems, as they can exploit groupthink mentality among the masses.

However, for Weyland and others in the political strategy school, populist leaders are only populist if they are receptive to the demands of the people, rather than using authoritarian modes that impose demands onto the people from above.⁵⁸ Ideally, the populist leader is focused on gaining and maintaining power (i.e. vote maximization) through articulation of the people’s views, rather than by promoting a particular ideology that they favor. This has obvious questionable implications for analysis—where does a leader’s adherence to a particular ideology, populist dichotomies or desire for power converge or diverge with that of the people? Indeed, the people do have a degree of agency, as their calls for certain political privileges can incite demand for a charismatic leader to take charge. Thus,

⁵⁶ Ernesto, Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 18. !

⁵⁷ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, Second edition, (Dunwoody, Georgia: Norman S. Berg, 1897), 12. !

⁵⁸ Kurt Weyland, "Populism: A Political-Strategic Approach," In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristóbal ! Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, ! October 2017). !

both the supply and demand of and for populist dichotomies can (and arguably will) manifest themselves within democratic societies.

A major criticism that the political strategy school levels at the ideological school is that while they center the people as the (or a) primary unit of analysis, they nonetheless ignore the role that the leader plays in articulating or embodying the goals of a populist movement. In this sense, the political strategy school for the most part favors operationalizing populism with both a bottom-up and a top-down approach, whereas they see the ideological school as understanding populist movements only from the bottom-up.⁵⁹ However, the political strategy school's approach is also problematic in that they often see the people as unable to exercise their political agency on their own, and require a leader to embody their spirit and act on their behalf. This is especially acute with the rise of social media, which in many ways helps solve the collective action problem.⁶⁰ Movements such as the Occupy Wall Street movement, the Black Lives Matter movement or the Arab Spring protests did not arise because they rallied around a charismatic leader, despite having some leaders and notable political actors to articulate their goals.⁶¹

Section 1.4: Populism as Discourse

Over the past two decades, the discursive school, which centers its focus on communication, has come to be the biggest competitor to the ideological school. While the

⁵⁹ Kurt Weyland, "Populism: A Political-Strategic Approach," In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, ! October 2017). !

⁶⁰ Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, (Harvard University Press, 1965). !

⁶¹ On the other hand, martyrs such as Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and Khaleed Saeed could each figure as a similar symbolic embodiment of the people in these instances, much like that of a charismatic leader. !

ideological and political strategy schools both acknowledge communication as important ! aspects for the crafting of people/elite dichotomies and the pursuit and sustainability of populist political power, the discursive school takes a more granular and transdisciplinary approach to populism studies.

For the discursive school, particularly scholars such as Laclau, Worsley and De Vreese et al, populism is essentially a communication tool—a technique, logic, style or emphasis—that is used to separate the people and the elite into two opposing groups.⁶² Many in the ideological school like Stavrakakis, Mudde and Kaltwasser oppose Laclau and other discursive adherents' view of populism on the grounds that it is too abstract—they see Laclau's contention that populism can be essentially any form of dichotomous politics as a roadblock for producing any meaningful insight.⁶³ However, there is significant overlap between the discursive and ideological schools. Mudde has subsequently updated his original definition to note that populism can also be categorized as a "communication style."⁶⁴ While there is no fully agreed upon classification of populist styles or a master list of populist communication tools within the discursive school, many styles and tools are instantly recognizable as being associated with the construction of the people or the elite or the framing of conflict between the two by populist communicators.

⁶² Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005); Peter Worsely, "The Concept of Populism." In ! *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, eds. Ionescu and Gellner, (New York: Macmillan. 1969), 245; Claes De Vreese, Frank Esser, Toril Aalberg, Carsten Reinemann, and James Stanyer. "Populism as an Expression of ! Political Communication Content and Style: A New Perspective." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 23, no. ! 4 (October 2018), 423–438. !

⁶³ Cas Mudde and Cristobel Rovira Kaltwasser. *Populism In Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for (Democracy?* (Cambridge University Press, 2012); Yannis Stavrakakis, "Antinomies of Formalism: Laclau's Theory of ! Populism and the Lessons from Religious Populism in Greece." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9 no. 3 (2004), 253-267. !

⁶⁴ Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, (New York: Cambridge University Press. 2007). !

Section 1.3.1: Communication Tools (

The use of direct communication channels to connect with the masses, along with plebiscites, referenda and direct voting, has already been discussed. However, that aspect of populist communication focuses more on the interplay of media or political structures to mediate messages rather than actual communicative tools, styles, emphases and techniques. Further exploration of mediation will be discussed later in this section.

Wirz sees populist communication techniques as the opposite of pluralist communication techniques, which seeks dialogue, compromise and diversity of viewpoints among the polity.⁶⁵ Wirz further breaks down populist communication into advocative messages and conflictive messages.⁶⁶ Advocative messages include: referring to the people as monolithic, stressing the people's virtues and achievements, demonstrating closeness to the people and demanding sovereignty for the people. Conflictive messages encompass: excluding Others/elites from the people, discrediting or blaming Others/elites, and denying sovereignty to Others/elites. It is not hard to find such use of populist communication tools. For example, Donald Trump's use of provocative, ad hominem-based "insult politics" against opponents he considers elites break political norms and is a central facet of his appeal to voters as an anti-elite candidate, despite his own personal wealth and political connections.⁶⁷

Another populist communicative tool is rhetoric that is jargon-free, to the point and easy for the masses to understand. For example, Donald Trump's use of simple, familiar

⁶⁵ Dominique Wirz, "Persuasion Through Emotion? An Experimental Test of the Emotion-Eliciting Nature of Populist ! Communication" *International Journal of Communication* 12, (2018), 1114–1138. !

⁶⁶ Ibid. !

⁶⁷ Oscar Winberg, "Insult Politics: Donald Trump, Right-Wing Populism, and Incendiary Language," *European (Journal of American Studies* 12, no. 2 (Summer 2017). !

language and short sentences was key in building his popularity and making him accessible to the masses as a political candidate⁶⁸ This language gels well with populist framing as either-or dichotomies and populist's preclusion to promote seemingly simple solutions to complex problems (like building a wall as a remedy to halt a perceived problem of immigration).

Wirz also describes an emotional component to populist communications, which he describes as a "reliance on gut feelings rather than on rational facts and deliberation."⁶⁹ This can include the questioning of the veracity of held truths (including the phenomenon of so-called "fake news"), doublespeak, and the prevalence of conspiracy theories, which all fall into the realm of what Hofstadter has described as the "paranoid style" of politics in the United States.⁷⁰

Communication techniques like advocative messages, conflictive messages, simple rhetoric and emotional appeals constitute the major ways that populist communicators reinforce and reshape ideas of who constitutes the people and who constitutes the elite.

Through comparative discourse analysis, the discursive school allows for a gauge of the "populist-ness" of a given political actor, rather than maintaining a focus on whether an actor is in fact populist or not populist. This analysis is typically done by measuring and comparing the rhetoric used in speeches, social media posts, manifestos and media appearances by populist

⁶⁸ Orly Kayam, "The Readability and Simplicity of Donald Trump's Language," *Political Studies Review* 16, no. 1 (February 2018), 73–88. !

⁶⁹ Dominique Wirz, "Persuasion Through Emotion? An Experimental Test of the Emotion-Eliciting Nature of Populist Communication" *International Journal of Communication* 12, (2018), 1114–1138. !

⁷⁰ Peter Van Aelst, Strömbäck, Jesper, Aalberg, Toril, Esser, Frank, de Vreese, Claes H., Matthes, Jörg, Hopmann, David, Salgado, Susana, Hubé, Nicolas, Stępińska, Agnieszka, Papathanassopoulos, Stylianos, Berganza, Rosa, Legnante, Guido, Reinemann, Carsten, Sheaffer, Tamir, Stanyer, James. "Political Communication in a High-Choice Media Environment: A challenge for Democracy?" *Annals of the International Communication Association* 41, no. 1 (2017), 3–27; Argyo Kefala, "Populism: Towards A Strategic Communication Framework," *Journal of Media Critiques* 4, no. 14 (2018); Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style of American Politics," *Harper's Magazine*, November 1964. !

groups or individuals.⁷¹ However, a major gap in the discursive school is that political communicators can change rhetorical strategies over time. This perhaps opens up the discursive school to the same criticisms that they level at the ideological and politically strategic schools—that their empirical basis of categorization is inconsistent. It will be this facet of discursive understanding of populism that this paper will attempt to remedy with a theoretical approach based around innovations in media technologies, evolving media logics, shifting arenas of discourse and battles for hegemony.

Section 1.3.2: Discourse and Hegemony

The idea of discourse is central to the discursive school. Scholars have varying but related understandings of discourse. Fairclough and Wodak see discourse as a language based communicative and interactive form of “social practice,” that both shapes and is shaped by discursive actors.⁷² Laclau and Mouffe expand on this, and define discourse as “the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice.”⁷³ For Laclau and Mouffe, this structured totality encompasses not just language based communication, but both linguistic and non-linguistic features, which can range from language to art to videos to any relational interaction between two or more parties. These conceptions of interaction describe social reality as

⁷¹ Kirk A. Hawkins, “Is Chávez Populist?: Measuring Populist Discourse in Comparative Perspective.” *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 8 (August 2009), 1040–67; Kirk Hawkins and Bruno Castanho Silva. “A Head-To-Head Comparison of Human-Based and Automated Text Analysis for Measuring Populism in 27 Countries,” manuscript, *Department of Political Science, Brigham Young University*, (Provo, UT, April 20, 2016); Linda Bos, Wouter van der Brug, and Claes de Vreese. “An Experimental Test of the Impact of Style and Rhetoric on the Perception of Right-Wing Populist and Mainstream Party Leaders.” *Acta Politica*. 48 no. 2 (2013), 192-208; Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 154.

⁷² Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak. “Critical Discourse Analysis.” In *Discourse as Social Interaction*, ed. T.A. Van Dijk, (London: SAGE, 1997), 258.

⁷³ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, (London: Verso, 1985), 105.

“fundamentally relational”—it is the relationship between actors that is the primary unit of analysis.⁷⁴ Essentially, discourse is the entire sphere of interpersonal, media or any communicative interaction, in which actors will absorb, articulate and shape their own held truths and, through further communicative interaction, the truths of others.⁷⁵

This body of held truths is amalgamated into an individual’s “worldview,” or what Hall calls “maps of meaning.”⁷⁶ An individual develops their worldview through a process of socialization, which Louw describes as the “acquisition of language as mediated by family, media and schooling.”⁷⁷ Over time, such communication (which again, according to Laclau and Mouffe, is not reducible to mere linguistic features) becomes imbued with specific signs and codes that signify their meaning to their users.

Integral to this discussion is that of hegemony and the public sphere. The Gramscian concept of hegemony explores how power relations are constructed and organized between parties, where one is consenting to (or coerced by) another.⁷⁸ With regards to discourse, hegemonic formation of meaning and social relations play out within what Habermas calls the “public sphere,” the arena in which public consensus is eventually formed through reasoned debate.⁷⁹ Bordieu’s field theory is useful for understanding the battle over meanings and truth within the public sphere. Per Hilgers and Mengez, a field is “a structure of relative positions

⁷⁴ Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez. *Bourdieu’s Theory of Social Fields Concepts and Applications*, (London: ! Routledge, 2015), 6. !

⁷⁵ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, (London: Verso, 1985), 13, 67-72. !

⁷⁶ Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding.” In *Culture, Media, Language*, eds., Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Love and Paul Willis, (London: Hutchinson, 1980). !

⁷⁷ P. Eric Louw, “The Media and the Political Process.” Second Edition, (London: SAGE, 2010), 129. !

⁷⁸ Peter Ives, *Language and Hegemony in Gramsci*, (London: Pluto Press, 2004). !

⁷⁹ Jurgen, Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois (Society*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989). !

within which the actors and groups think, act and take positions,” and whose positions “are ! defined by the volume and structure of their capital.”⁸⁰ These fields are comprised of various domains (politics, economics, culture, religion, science, art, literature, etc.) which actors with capital will seek to assert their normative views upon.⁸¹

While Bordieu’s fields are relative and frequently overlap, the field of power is unique in that it helps determine the capital (cultural, political, economic etc.) of actors within the system, and ultimately, the capital of hegemons who play a major role in determining consensuses and held truths in particular fields.⁸² Ultimately, a consensus will be reached by way of mass recognition by discursive actors of the capital held by hegemons in a specific field.⁸³ Populist communicators serve as potential hegemons who have the political, cultural or economic capital to shape discursive meanings, and if successful, create dominant norms of social practice. Populist communicators seek to oppose, and are opposed by, existing hegemons (who they refer to as ‘elites’) within these fields.

The construction of the people is central when studying the discursive aspects of populism, particularly the people’s differential antagonism towards an enemy and their desire for an equivalence among themselves. For Laclau, “all identity is constructed within this tension between the differential and the equivalential logics.”⁸⁴ Regarding differential, Laclau argues that discursive formation can’t be done without some exclusionary dimension—to be distinct, a

⁸⁰ Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez. *Bourdieu’s Theory of Social Fields Concepts and Applications*, (London: ! Routledge, 2015). !

⁸¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, (London: Routledge, 1984). !

⁸² Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mangez. *Bourdieu’s Theory of Social Fields Concepts and Applications*, (London: ! Routledge, 2015). !

⁸³ Ibid., 6. !

⁸⁴ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 70. !

thing must be defined in relation to something else.⁸⁵ For the people, this is the enemy (whether an elite, an Other or both).

Regarding the equivalential, Laclau holds that central to the construction of 'the people' is what he calls an "empty signifier," which essentially serves to articulate unfulfilled social demands or ideas through representative symbols or notions such as slogans ("build the wall," "Medicare for all") or even the image or persona of populist leader themselves.⁸⁶ Also notable is that both the people and the elite are defined from within (inside the confines of the people) and from without (by their enemy, the elite or the Other). For example, Hillary Clinton's remark that supporters of Donald Trump were a "basket of deplorables" helped define what constituted the people within the Trump movement, but from the outside. This is especially notable because Trump supporters did not deny Clinton's notion that they were deplorable, and instead embraced it as a positive signifier.⁸⁷ This instance highlights the fact that it is important to make a distinction between populism and populist communicators themselves (and for that matter, the populist communicators' audiences receiving and decoding their messages).

Taken together, these differential and equivalential dimensions each serve to construct and ultimately create consensus on the meaning of the people and the elite within (and from outside of) a given populist movement. The empty signifier of the people, Laclau argues, is

⁸⁵ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 106. !

⁸⁶ Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism—Fascism—Populism*, (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: ! Humanities Press, 1977), 143; Jon Simons, "Mediated Construction of the People: Laclau's Political Theory and ! Media Politics," In *Discourse Theory and Critical Media Politics*, eds. Lincoln Dahlberg and Sean Phelan, (New York: ! Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 207. !

⁸⁷ William Cummings, "'Deplorable' and Proud: Some Trump Supporters Embrace the Label," *USAToday*, September 12, 2016. !

temporal and particular to its context—for example, Franklin Roosevelt’s articulation of the purpose and need for the New Deal had a specific meaning within the context of the Great Depression.⁸⁸ Indeed, for the discursive school, a key to understanding populism is understanding why it is successful as a communicative form in a given socio-cultural-political milieu.⁸⁹ Maly puts a name to this sort of understanding of populism: a “mediatized chronotropic communicative and discursive relation.”⁹⁰ Essentially, populist communication and construction happens within context, but is specific to its own moment in time.

Section 1.3.3: Media Technology Innovation and Cultural Practice

Media plays a major role in discourse and hegemonic formations of meaning. Firstly, it is important to make a distinction between the media technologies themselves and the practices and people they shape and are shaped by. Gitelman’s definition of media is useful here. For her, media is comprised of “socially realized structures of communication, where structures include both technological forms and their associated protocols, and where communication is a cultural practice, a ritualized collocation of different people on the same mental map, sharing or engaged with popular ontologies of representation.”⁹¹ This encompassing definition captures the nuances of discussing both media as technology and media as institution and tool of social relations.

⁸⁸ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, (London: Verso, 1985), 11-12. !

⁸⁹ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 17. !

⁹⁰ Ico Maly, “Populism as a Mediatized Communicative Relation: The Birth of Algorithmic Populism.” *Tilburg Papers in Cultural Studies*, Paper 213, (October 2018). !

⁹¹ Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture*. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 7-8. !

Media, as an essential middleman for individuals and groups to communicate with one another, interplays significantly with the use and development of populist communication tools. Aalberg et al maintain that changing media technologies are crucial to understanding the success of populism.⁹² Sorenson notes that “different media technologies invite different styles,” since varying practices of production, distribution and consumption can create different relationships of mediation, where media and other institutions play a role in facilitating the communication, articulation and construction of “reality” to individuals.⁹³ Varying media technology systems can be viewed through lenses that are either symbolic—which encompasses audience/speaker relationships—or material, which encompasses the actual technological design of the media of the media itself.⁹⁴ Both symbolic and material relations in media are governed by media logics, which are the norms and practices that undergird a particular media’s operation.

Kramer argues that practitioners of media, such as journalists and media distributors, can end up serving populist communicative styles in a number of ways, sometimes without even consciously trying.⁹⁵ He gives six examples: The first is by reporting objectively on incidents that portray elites negatively, such as scandalous tabloid-style coverage or muckraking. The next is by allowing audience participation without responding to audience demands (comment sections on websites are a prime example). A third is by providing

⁹² Toril Aalberg, Frank Esser, Carsten Reinemann, Jesper Stromback and Claes De Vreese, eds. *Populist Political Communication in Europe*, (New York: Routledge. 2016). !

⁹³ Lone Sorensen, “Populism in Communications Perspective: Concepts, Issues, Evidence.” In *Handbook on Political Populism*, eds. Reinhard Heinisch, Christina Holtz-Bacha and Oscar Mazzoleni, (Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos, ! 2017), 140-141. !

⁹⁴ Ibid., 144-146. !

⁹⁵ Benjamin Kramer, “Populist and Non-Populist Media.” In *Political Populism: A Handbook*, eds. Reinhard Heinisch, ! Christina Holtz-Bacha and Oscar Mazzoleni, (Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos, 2017). !

platforms for populist communicators due to their news value, controversial statements or popularity, like non-stop cable news coverage of Donald Trump or the democratic socialist New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.⁹⁶ A fourth is accepting populist actors framing and slogans, such as the common refrain that left-wing political correctness is tearing apart college campuses, an extremely over-reported news item.⁹⁷ A fifth is that journalists can act or serve as a stand-in for populist leaders themselves—*Fox News* or *Breitbart* are prime examples.

Finally, journalists and media distributors can also play into populist communicative emphases by supporting exclusionary constructions of “Others” that are articulated by populist actors, such as outsized coverage of Islamic fundamentalist terrorist attacks, despite their rarity.⁹⁸ Here, there is significant overlap of populist communication tools with the employment of propaganda (or its propagandized popular moniker, “public relations”) in that they both aim influence and direct people towards particular policies, ideas or desires. Louw argues that propaganda has traditionally been seen as a tool employed mostly by elites as a way of maintaining legitimacy; however, populist communicators can also leverage propaganda just as effectively in many situations.⁹⁹ The steering of the masses by competing populist and elite propagandists towards opposing policies is emblematic of the discursive struggle over meaning among the masses. This struggle for hegemony is highlighted by Habermas, who argues that if

⁹⁶ Courtney Hagle, “Six Weeks of Fox’s Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Obsession: “Totalitarian,” “Ignorant,” “Scary,” and “Waging a “War on Cows.” *Media Matters for America*, April 12, 2019. !

⁹⁷ Zack Beauchamp, “The Myth of a Campus Free Speech Crisis,” *Vox*, August 31, 2018. !

⁹⁸ Charles Kurzman, “Muslim-American Involvement with Violent Extremism, 2016.” *Triangle Center on Terrorism (and Homeland Security)*. January 26, 2017. !

⁹⁹ P. Eric Louw, “The Media and the Political Process.” Second Edition, (London: SAGE, 2010), 195. !

the masses were to truly gain consciousness, they would create “steering problems” because ! the political system would not be able to handle their demands.¹⁰⁰

Despite claims that the members of the media itself can act populist, populist communicators typically tend to come from outside of the circles of mainstream media, particularly because members of the mainstream media are frequently categorized by populists as being a particular type of elite themselves. Regardless, changes in media technologies over time have had and will continue to have a significant impact on how populists decide to communicate with audiences. It is this facet that will be of interest for the much of the thesis.

¹⁰⁰ Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, (London: Heinemann, 1976).

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN !

Section 2.1: Terms and Definitions !

Section 2.1.1: Populism (

The literature suggests that due to the contradictory nature of understanding populism as an ideology or an attachment to a particular ideology, it is best to understand it as a combination of the definitions given by the discursive and political strategy schools. This paper will define populism as a communication tool, technique, style or emphasis used to differentiate between a 'pure people' and a 'corrupt elite.' This populist communication style is employed by a speaker (often referred to as a populist communicator, charismatic leader or demagogue) or group seeking to gain political power. This speaker or group uses the supposed corruption of the elites/Others as a locus for consolidating the people into a mass movement that can be mobilized for electoral support.

Section 2.1.2: Media

Communication between populist leaders and the people they intend to mobilize for political support is done through socialization, primarily within the context of media, which mediates communication. However, media technologies have been constantly changing over time, with different types of media arising, catching on among the masses, hybridizing elements of past media and eventually supplanting past media as dominant. Following McLuhan's maxim that "the medium is the message," this paper aims to examine how shifts in which media is

dominant at different moments in history impacts the production, distribution and !
consumption of populist communication.¹⁰¹

Section 2.2: Cases

Breaking up media technology innovations into specific time periods allows for a greater understanding of why populist communicators' messaging strategies resonate (or fail to resonate) with the people within a given time period. This paper will look at four separate time periods: the 1870s-1890s, the 1920s-1930s, the 1950s-1990s, and the 2000s-Present day. Each period witnessed the widespread adoption of new media technologies. All cases will be concerned only with media and political developments within the United States, which has tended to be at the forefront of media technology development over the past 200 years.

This paper will examine a piece of media (in each case, a speech) from each time period in order to gauge how these communicators produced and articulated their message, distributed it through relevant channels, and how audiences consumed it, perceived it and reacted to it.

Section 2.2.1: 1870s-1890s

This case will focus mostly on the visual nature of **print communication** and its appendages. This period witnessed a number of new communication innovations, including the proliferation of railroads (which decreased travel time and sped up mail delivery), the adoption

¹⁰¹ Marshall, McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message." In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, (New York: Signet. 1964), 23-35, 63-67.

of telegraphs and telephones for personal communication, increased literacy and education ! and perhaps most importantly, cheap nationally distributed newspapers and magazines that incorporated photography, cartoons and illustrations.

For this period, this paper will examine the preamble of the Omaha Platform (1,900 words), the main policy platform of the Populist Party. The preamble was originally written and delivered by former Minnesota Congressman Ignatius Donnelly on July 4, 1891 to the People's Party nominating convention St. Louis. While Donnelly's speech was immediately printed in many local Populist newspapers, the speech was re-printed a year later in the *National Economist*, the national newspaper of the Farmer's Alliance, on July 9, 1892, following the Omaha Populist party convention.¹⁰²

Section 2.2.2: 1920s-1930s

This period saw the rise of **radio** as an important media form. While cinema in its early forms also played a role in this period, this section will be focused more specifically on the auditory nature of radio communication during this period. For this period, this paper will examine a campaign speech given by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's at Madison Square Garden on October 31, 1936 (2,500 words).¹⁰³ The speech was broadcast nationally over the radio and was also reprinted in most major newspapers on November 1, 1936.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ignatius Donnelly, "Omaha Platform: Preamble." *National Economist*, 7:257-258. July 9, 1892. Accessed Preamble at <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5361/>

¹⁰³ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Address at Madison Square Garden, New York City. Transcript. American Presidency Project. UC Santa Barbara. October 31, 1936. Accessed at <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-madison-square-garden-new-york-city-1>

¹⁰⁴ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Madison Square Garden, speech file 1007A and 1007B. *Master Speech File, 1898-1945*. Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum.

Section 2.2.3: 1950s-1990s

This period encompasses the dominance of **television** as a media form. The marriage of video and audio and their role in image-making and spectacle will be highlighted. For this period, this paper will examine the television broadcast of Ronald Reagan's Republican Presidential nomination acceptance speech at the 1980 Republican National Convention (4,800 words).¹⁰⁵ The speech was broadcast on and covered on all the major television networks.¹⁰⁶

Section 2.2.4: 2000s-Present Day

This period saw the mass adoption of the **Internet**. More specifically, this section will look at the iteration of the Internet technologies and practices that are often referred to as Web 2.0. This period is marked by the mass adoption of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, the continuing proliferation of online news websites and the increasing availability of affordable video-equipped smartphones. This case will examine the mass hybridization of media and the increased role of audience participation on media platforms. For this period, this paper will examine future President Donald Trump's campaign speech on immigration in Phoenix, Arizona on August 31, 2016 (4,000 words).¹⁰⁷ The speech was

¹⁰⁵ Ronald Reagan, "Acceptance of the Republican Nomination for President." Transcript. *CNN*, July 17, 1980. ! Accessed at <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2004/reagan/stories/speech.archive/nomination.html> !

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Marshall, "The Ritual of Convention Coverage in 1980." In *Television Coverage of the 1980 Presidential Campaign*, ed. William C. Adams, (Ablex Publishing Corporation 1983), 77-82. !

¹⁰⁷ Donald Trump, *Rally in Phoenix, Arizona*. Transcript, *Politico*, August 31, 2016. Accessed at: ! <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/08/donald-trump-immigration-address-transcript-227614>

broadcast on most major news networks on television and over the Internet and was !
extensively shared and discussed on social media platforms.

Section 2.2.5: Rationale

These pieces were chosen because they succinctly describe many of the preferred policies of each populist communicator. It is also ideal that each figure's speech happens during or after an economic downturn—Donnelly following the Long Depression of the 1870s, FDR during the Great Depression, Reagan during 1980 recession and following the stagflation of the 1970s, and Trump after the Great Recession.

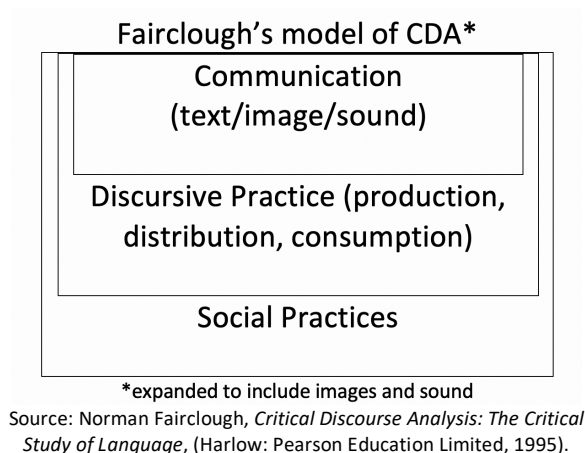
Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, each figure was able to harness varying aspects of new media technology innovations in his own way. The goal of this study is not to take a stance of technological determinism, where populist communication follows logically after any particular innovation in media technology. Rather, the goal is to gain insight into whether a particular media form (each within its own historical context) can be uniquely valuable for filtering populist communication, how these forms change over time and how they are informed by past media technologies and journalistic structures.

Section 2.3: Methodology

This paper will operationalize variables as follows. The independent variable is the media form used by each piece and its corresponding media logics. The dependent variables are how populist communicators use and shape messages, images and personas, how the

media tools broadcast the populist communicators messages, images and personas and how ! audiences interpret and shape those messages, images and personas.

Using aspects of the toolboxes developed by Fairclough, Jager and Schnieder, this paper will conduct a discourse analysis of each piece of media.¹⁰⁸ Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model on how production, distribution and consumption mediate the relationship between communication and mass social practices (hegemony) will be integral in forming conclusions.¹⁰⁹



The steps for the discourse analysis of each piece will be as follows:

- 1.) Explore the context of the piece, including the milieu and media technological background. Also focus on instances of intertextuality – the relationship of texts to other previous texts—in order to understand processes of retextualization and hybridization
- 2.) Examine the production, distribution and consumption processes

¹⁰⁸ Siegfried Jäger, *Critical Discourse Analysis. An Introduction*, Fourth edition, (Münster: UNRAST-Verlag, 2004); Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 1995); Florian Schneider, "How to Do a Discourse Analysis," *Politics East Asia*, May 13, 2013. !

¹⁰⁹ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 1995). !

3.) Measure specific attributes of populist communication in the piece.¹¹⁰ This includes

- Advocative Messages, including
 - reference to the people as monolithic
 - stress of the people's virtues and achievements
 - demonstration of closeness to/embodiment of the people
 - demands of sovereignty for the people
- Conflictive Messages, including
 - exclusion of Others/elites from the people
 - name calling, discrediting or blaming Others/elites for problems
 - denying sovereignty to Others/elites
- Emotional Messages, particularly cultural appeals, including
 - references to religion/God
 - references to American cultural history/civic religion !

4.) Note specific rhetorical features, including !

- use of stories/anecdotes/quotes
- modalities and prescriptions (idealized states of being, i.e. should/could)
- evidentialities (suggested factualities: "fake news" or "alternative facts")

The units being studied in this discourse analysis will be what Gee calls "macro-lines," which are "what counts as a sentence in speech."¹¹¹ For each macro line, this paper will

¹¹⁰ Dominique Wirz, "Persuasion Through Emotion? An Experimental Test of the Emotion-Eliciting Nature of ! Populist Communication," *International Journal of Communication* 12, (2018), 1114–1138. !

¹¹¹ James Paul Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*, Fourth Edition, (London: Routledge, ! 2014), 142. !

determine whether any of the points from steps 3 and 4 apply and note accordingly. Finally, this paper will consider general rhetoric and explore whether speakers use simple or complex language and sentence structures.

Section 2.4: Hypothesis

This paper anticipates that as time goes on, populist communicators will use more populist communication tools as a result of advancements in media technology, such as increasing ease of production and distribution and greater degrees of audience participation. Essentially, communicators will become markedly “more populist” over time. On the measurable data points, this paper firstly anticipates that advocative messages will decrease over time, while conflictive messages will increase over time. This paper also figures that emotional messages will decrease over time, particularly due to the decline of religion in much of the US. Finally, this paper hypothesizes that the measured rhetorical appeals will increase over time, owing to Fairclough notion that speech has become more informal and culturally democratized over time (which he calls “conversationalization”), leaving openings for more anecdotes, stories and other informal rhetorical tools.¹¹² Following the notion that language and sentence structure are becoming simpler, this paper also anticipates an increase in evidentialities, particularly with regards to the perceived uptick of so-called “fake news.”

Concerning the more abstract discursive practices set out in Fairclough’s CDA model, this paper hypothesizes firstly that populist communicators will find it easier to create personas

¹¹² Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 1995), 149.

and fashion personal images as media technologies advance. Second, populist communicators will find it easier to use the dominant form of media to create and distribute their messages over time. Finally, populist communicators will come to maintain more intimate relationships with their audience over time, who will become more and more involved in articulating populist communicator's personas and political goals. Taken together, production, distribution and consumption mechanisms will become more democratized amongst populist speakers and receptive audiences, to the detriment of more elite producers and distributors.

Section 2.5: Potential Criticism

There are two potential issues with this research methodology. The first is that the pieces of media being examined are not all of the same media, and are pieces from different times. However, the entire purpose of this study is to look at the impact of shifting forms of media on populist discursive tools *over time*. Chronotropic approaches to populist communication across media forms have heretofore been conspicuously absent from much of the populist literature. The second is that there are differences in length with each piece. Indeed, the biggest difference between speech lengths is 2,100 words (between Trump and Donnelly). To remedy this, results of each discourse analysis will be weighted for length (measured by number of populist communication instances divided by word count) and compared accordingly.

CASE STUDIES !

CHAPTER 3: 1870s-1890s - NEWSPAPERS AND THE PEOPLE'S PARTY PRESS

Section 3.1: Context

Section 3.1.1: Depression, Greenbacks and Silver (

As mentioned earlier, the People's Party or Populist Party achieved a high degree of success for a third party in the United States, and had much of their policy platform adopted in the decades following their dissolution.

The effects Long Depression of 1873-1896 (the first "Great Depression") did much to incite political rebellion among the farmers in the Great Plains, South and Midwest. After the loose monetary policy of the Civil War, the federal government contracted the money supply with the adoption of the gold standard in 1873. Combined with the collapse of agricultural prices in the 1880s, farmers were unable to obtain much needed credit for seeds, equipment and crop storage. The rapidly consolidating railroad monopolies, banking interests and powerful new industrial concerns in the Northeast became objects of the farmers' ire for those groups' support (or control) of the federal government's tight monetary policy.¹¹³

These farmers began to organize themselves into political groups like the Greenbackers, the Grangers and the Farmers' Alliance, eventually joining with a number of other labor and Christian groups in 1892 to become a national political party, the Populist Party. The Populists fashioned themselves as heirs to America's history of pious, hardworking, self-sufficient yeoman farmer "producers," and stood in opposition to the "idle, do-nothing class" of

¹¹³ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*. Second Edition, (Cornell University Press, 2017).

monopolists and partisan politicians who argued mostly over politically harmless issues like tariffs¹¹⁴ The Populist platform encompassed a slew of democratic reforms aimed at lessening financial burdens for the common man, including the government control of railroads, direct election of Senators, the creation of government owned warehouses for crop storage, a graduated income tax, an eight-hour work day, and the enactment of expansionary monetary policy (bimetallism or “Free Silver”) that would increase access to credit.¹¹⁵ The Populists were also unique in that their movement cut across regional, partisan, ethnic, religious and gender lines—and perhaps most intrepidly, included blacks within their coalition (at least in the beginning of the movement; Southern Populists broke the alliance with a white supremacist coup in North Carolina in 1898).¹¹⁶

Section 3.2: Production, Distribution and Consumption

Section 3.2.1: You Get a Newspaper, You Get a Newspaper....

From the 1870s onward, the newspaper became one of the primary political instruments of the insurgent farmers groups who later coalesced into the Populist movement in the 1890s—indeed, the movement and their press apparatuses were so intertwined that one might not be possible without the other.

¹¹⁴ Bruce Palmer, *Man Over Money: The Southern Populist Critique of American Capitalism*. (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, ! 1980), 80. !

¹¹⁵ Ignatius Donnelly, “Omaha Platform: Preamble.” *National Economist*, 7:257-258. July 9, 1892. Accessed at ! <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5361/>

¹¹⁶ Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press. 1976), 276-306.

Each influential Populist figure or group had their own personal newspaper outlets for ! expressing their political views to their readers. Charles Macune published the *National Economist*, the official paper of the Farmer's Alliance. The Alliance's founder Milton George had his own paper, the *Western Rural*. "Little" Annie Diggs' writing in the *Advocate*, another official Alliance journal, reached a massive readership of 80,000 people a week.¹¹⁷ The Grangers had their own paper, the influential *Grange Advance*. William Pepper, later a US Senator for Kansas, edited the *Kansas Farmer*. The influential *People's Party Paper* was headed up by future Senator Tom Watson, who ran as the Populists' vice-presidential candidate in 1896 election and the party's presidential candidate in 1904.¹¹⁸ In the 1890s Julius Wayland began publishing the *Coming Nation* and *Appeal to Reason*; the later would become the major socialist paper in the US at the turn of the century and a political engine for its editor, Socialist Party presidential candidate Eugene Debs.¹¹⁹

As the farmers movements grew, so did their newspapers. Kansas alone had 150 newspapers involved in some way or another with the Farmer's Alliance in the 1880s and 1890s, while Texas, Alabama and Georgia each had over 100.¹²⁰ Over a thousand Farmer's Alliance papers banded together at the 1891 meeting in Ocala, Florida to form the National Reform Press Association (NRPA) in order to spread the Populist message nationwide using its

¹¹⁷ Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America*. (Oxford: Oxford ! University Press, 1978), 117. !

¹¹⁸ Rebecca Edwards and Sarah DeFeo, "Journals and Newspapers in the Campaign." *The Presidential Campaign: (Cartoons and Commentary*, Vassar College, 2000. <http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/1896home.html> !

¹¹⁹ Robert Tuttle, "The Appeal to Reason and the Failure of the Socialist Party in 1912." *Mid-American Review of (Sociology* VIII, no. 1, (1983), 51-81. !

¹²⁰ Hiley H. Ward, *Mainstreams of American Media History: A Narrative and Intellectual History*, (Needham Heights, ! MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1997), 227; Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in (America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 206. !

newspapers.¹²¹ It did this by distributing “ready print” or “boilerplate” pre-printed pages to local publishers each week, a technique that was only invented during the Civil War.¹²² These ready print editions included party approved and edited stories pre-printed on one side of the paper, allowing the movement to educate, persuade and inform people in localities around the country with a consolidated and syndicated national message, which was articulated through photographs, illustrations, cartoons, statistics and in-depth political economic analysis.¹²³

The Populists also received assistance from outside the rural areas of the South, Midwest and Great Plains. The National Editorial Association was sympathetic to the Populist’s newspaper strategies, and at their founding in 1885 called the press “the protector of the people and the educator of the masses.”¹²⁴ Major publishers like E.W. Scripps, while not a Populist himself, was in the late 19th century quite sympathetic to the working man in his *Penny Press* (later the *Cleveland Press*).¹²⁵ Even William Randolph Hearst, the publisher of the influential *New York Journal* and the promoter of turn of the century “yellow journalism,” got his start in part by boosting the profile of the Populists with his paper’s endorsement of William Jennings Bryan in the 1896 election. On the day after Bryan’s loss, Hearst circulated a record 995,000 copies by sending out papers en masse to rural areas.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Hiley H. Ward, *Mainstreams of American Media History: A Narrative and Intellectual History*, (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1997), 227. !

¹²² Beth Garfrerick, *A History of Weekly Community Newspapers in the United States: 1900 to 1980*. Doctoral ! Dissertation, University of Alabama College of Communication and Information Sciences, (2009).

¹²³ Robert McMath, *American Populism: A Social History 1877-1898*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 150. !

¹²⁴ *New Orleans Times-Times Democrat*, February 21, 1885. !

¹²⁵ Hiley H. Ward, *Mainstreams of American Media History: A Narrative and Intellectual History*, (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1997), 239. !

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 292. !

Section 3.2.2: Faster, Cheaper and Now in Color!

The success of the upstart Populists in leveraging newspapers as a political vehicle to challenge the incumbent political parties was in large part due to numerous advancements in communication technology over the preceding decades. As the US industrialized after the Civil War, the country's rapidly growing urban areas and rural hinterlands would become more linked both culturally and economically. Railroads soon crisscrossed the country and made travel—and mail delivery—exponentially faster, in addition to standardizing time. There was also the rapid spread of telegraph lines throughout the country in the 1870s and the advent of widely available telephones by the mid-1880s. Taken together, these new transport technologies made the transmission of information across long distances quicker, easier and cheaper, and helped create a greater shared discourse among the national citizenry.¹²⁷ This created challenges for what ideas would dominate political, economic and social spaces.

The postbellum period also saw the newspaper industry undergo a similar revolution in communication, although its seeds had already been planted prior to the Civil War. Starting in the 1830s, many newspapers began to be sold at one cent a piece rather than the previously expensive six cent papers. This new “penny press” provided more accessible and available news to the wider populace. In the decades following the Civil War, Newspapers were increasingly freed from the partisanship of the Republican and Democratic parties as high-speed presses gave the opportunity for faster printing and greater circulation. This allowed independent entrepreneurs to step in and support parties and movements outside of the traditional party patronage systems. The ease with which one could start a newspaper business led to the

¹²⁷ James W. Carey, “Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph.” *Prospects* 8 (1983), 303–25.

startup of thousands of local and rural newspapers that could be run on the cheap.¹²⁸ In the 1890s, it only cost around \$100 (about \$2,400 today) to begin a small newspaper.¹²⁹

Production and distribution also became much easier. From 1800 to 1900, presses increased their output from 300 sheets per hour to 100,000 multi-page newspapers per hour.¹³⁰ The average circulation of a given daily paper in 1840 was 2,200 a day; by 1904 it had quadrupled.¹³¹ Indeed, the rapid proliferation of newspapers during this era was overwhelming: McKaul and Kerns called the 1890s a “crisis period” for journalism, in which there were an overwhelmingly high number of independent news organizations.¹³²

More technological advancements led to greater visual communication in the press. While reprinting pictures had long been a laborious process that required artists to engrave on plates, the invention of halftone printing allowed for easier reproduction of photographs that included the full range of shadows. When halftone printing began in New York in 1873, the press steadily adopted photographs as a major aspect of their newspapers, journals and magazines, although halftone reproductions did not become fully standard in all newspapers until around 1897.¹³³ The introduction of more portable cameras and the invention of flash powder cameras in 1887 also gave photographers essential new tools.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Robert McMath, *American Populism: A Social History 1877-1898*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 148-149. !

¹²⁹ Robert Worth Miller, *Populist Cartoons: An Illustrated History of the Third-Party Movement in the 1890s*, ! (Kirksville, Mo: Truman State University Press, 2011). !

¹³⁰ Peter Hutchinson, “A Publisher’s History of American Magazines: The Early Nineteenth Century.” *The (Magazinist*, 2008. !

¹³¹ Michael McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865–1928*, (New York: Oxford University ! Press, 1986). !

¹³² Arthur Kaul and Joseph McKerns, “The Dialectic Ecology of the Newspaper,” *Critical Studies in Mass (Communication 2* (1985), 222. !

¹³³ Joseph W. Campbell, *The Year That Defined American Journalism: 1897 and the Clash of Paradigms*, (New York: ! Routledge, 2006). !

¹³⁴ Kate Flint, “More Rapid Than the Lightning’s Flash”: Photography, Suddenness, and the Afterlife of Romantic ! Illumination,” *European Romantic Review* 24, no. 3 (2013), 369-383. !

During the late 19th century, there was also a vast increase in the circulation of magazines, including popular publications like *Puck*, *Judge*, *Life*, *Collier's*, *McClure's*, *Cosmopolitan* and the *Saturday Evening Post*.¹³⁵ Bankrolled mostly by advertisements rather than subscriptions, they were nationally distributed, and their longer length compared to newspapers gave publishers the opportunity to include photographs, full color illustrations and political cartoons.

Political cartoons were used extensively by both Populists and their opponents, especially as a means of educating readers on political matters, like the complex minutiae of monetary policy.¹³⁶ Most Populist cartoons appeared in local papers, and were spread through the same ready-print means as other news articles.¹³⁷ Daily political cartoons were made possible by advancements in photoengraving, which, by the 1880s, allowed for engravers to create reproductions of cartoons in hours rather than days.¹³⁸ Thanks to political cartoons in publications like *Puck* by the likes of Joseph Keppler, James Wales and the legendary Thomas Nast, the late 19th and early 20th century became known as the golden age of political cartoons.¹³⁹ Populist cartoonists like Watson Heston, Andrew Ullmark and Wilbur Steele drew their own ideologically driven cartoons for local newspapers to spread the Populist message.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Peter Hutchinson, "A Publisher's History of American Magazines: The Early Nineteenth Century," *The Magazinish*, 2008. !

¹³⁶ Miller. Robert Worth. *Populist Cartoons: An Illustrated History of the Third-Party Movement in the 1890s*. !
Kirksville, Mo: Truman State University Press, 2011. !

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, ix. !

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10-11. !

¹³⁹ Tom, Culbertson, "Illustrated Essay: The Golden Age of American Political Cartoons." *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 7, no. 3 (July 2008), 276-295. !

¹⁴⁰ Robert Worth Miller, *Populist Cartoons: An Illustrated History of the Third-Party Movement in the 1890s*, !
(Kirksville, Mo: Truman State University Press, 2011), 7-9. !

Section 3.2.3: Teachers and Preachers (

Another major driver of this increase in circulation was the demand for information by more new readers—as in, more people who learned how to read. While the accuracy of literacy rates before the 1870 census are spotty, Hutchinson estimates that in 1830, only around half the US population was literate (including blacks, who were 7% of the population and mostly illiterate).¹⁴¹ The postwar era marked a huge increase in literacy to the point that illiteracy became a better measure. From 1870 to 1900, illiteracy rates dropped from 20 percent to 10 percent (and from 80 percent to 40 percent among blacks).¹⁴² During the same period, public schooling became a mainstay of American life, with public school attendance rising from 57 percent to 72 percent of children.¹⁴³

With the rise of mass public schooling and other adult education movements, the embrace of learning had become an important facet of social and political life in the second half of the 19th century, and the Populists incorporated education heavily into their message. Populist leader Leonidas Polk (who also published the *Progressive Farmer*) maintained that the Farmer's Alliance was at its heart an educational institution, and argued that education in the country was controlled by a "textbook trust" that sought to promote the interests of industrial monopolists.¹⁴⁴ Seeking to communicate to the masses an alternative to industrial plutocracy

¹⁴¹ Peter Hutchinson, "A Publisher's History of American Magazines: The Early Nineteenth Century," *The Magazinish*, 2008. !

¹⁴² Michael Emery, Edwin Emery and Nancy L. Roberts. *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media*, (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2000), 156-157. !

¹⁴³ Tom Snyder, ed., "120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait" *National Center for Education Statistics*, 1993. !

¹⁴⁴ Robert McMath, *American Populism: A Social History 1877-1898*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 148; Smith, ! Robert W. "The People's Party Paper and Georgia's Tom Watson." *Journalism Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (March 1965), 110–11. !

and monopolism, the Populists made use of an army of lecturers that travelled the country, to speak at schoolhouses, churches and camp meetings in rural localities. These campaigns were centrally planned and paid for by the Populist party leadership, who tailored speakers and campaigns according to the character of particular states and regions.

In the midst of the religious fervor of the Third Great Awakening in the late 19th century, popular Christian preachers like Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey already frequently castigated the excesses of the Gilded Age monopolists and embraced altruistic and communitarian goals. Populist speakers would frequently incorporate religious rhetoric and biblical stories to draw converts to Populism away from the major political parties.¹⁴⁵ Kazin argues that the inclusion of religious undercurrents in Populist sermons was not necessarily a means for proselytizing particular new brands of Christianity, but rather a rhetorical tool for the Populists that spoke to the existing context of their listeners understanding of the world.¹⁴⁶

Section 3.3: Discourse Analysis

Ignatius Donnelly – 1892 People’s Party Omaha Platform

All of these aspects made up the media and communications landscape that the People’s Party operated within. But it was the message of the Populists that really galvanized political support. Ignatius Donnelly’s 1892 preamble to the Populist’s national political platform (the Omaha platform), as well as the platform itself, exemplified how the Populist could emphasize a “plain” people and whip up hatred towards elites. Donnelly, a man primarily

¹⁴⁵ Robert McMath, *American Populism: A Social History 1877-1898*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 153.

¹⁴⁶ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*. Second Edition, (Cornell University Press, 2017), 33.

known for his popular pseudoscientific writings about Atlantis and other esoteric topics, was at the time a state representative in Minnesota. He published his own newspapers, the *Anti-Monopolist* and *The Representative*, and previously served as a Congressional Representative in Minnesota and served as the state's Lieutenant governor; he would later become the Populist's Vice-Presidential candidate in 1900.

Speaking at the Populist convention in St. Louis in 1891, Donnelly delivered his preamble to the thunderous applause of the 10,000 or so people in attendance.¹⁴⁷ Along with the political demands of the Populists, the preamble was printed in Populist party newspapers around the country, while a revised version was printed in the *National Economist*, the Farmer's Alliance national paper, after the Omaha conference in 1892 (hence the name, the Omaha platform).¹⁴⁸

The piece itself is quite clear and to the point. The preamble constitutes about half of the entire piece, with the rest divided between the Populist Party's political platform as well as a list of sentiments agreed upon by the platform committee. As an explicit outline of Populist policies and demands, the Omaha platform contains numerous modalities (24). Owing to the movement's composition of "plain" people who are denied both political and economic voices in government, the piece contains numerous references to a monolithic people (20) along with numerous demands for popular sovereignty (12). Donnelly makes a one to one equation of the US federal government with the people, noting that the Republic "can only endure as a free

¹⁴⁷ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*. Second Edition, (Cornell University Press, 2017), ! 27. !

¹⁴⁸ Ignatius Donnelly, Omaha Platform: Preamble. *National Economist*. 7:257-258. July 9, 1892. Accessed Preamble ! at <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5361/> !

government while built upon the love of the whole people for each other and for the nation... !
one united brotherhood of free men.”

The platform also frequently attacks and blames elites for economic and political problems, with 10 instances, going so far as to say that “the fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few.” Other relatively high scores within the discourse analysis (weighted for the length of the piece) include references to American cultural history and America as a civic religion, with 5, and denials of sovereignty to elites and exclusion of elites from the people, with 5 and 4 respectively.

An Irish Catholic (a rarer breed amongst the mostly Protestant Populists) Donnelly would sometimes integrate religion as a rhetorical tool. For example, he remarked to a crowd that “Jesus was only possible in a barefoot world, and he was crucified by the few who wore shoes.”¹⁴⁹ However, there were only 2 explicit mentions of God or religion. The preamble is also light on stories, anecdotes, quotes and proverbs outside of the mention of the Constitution, with just one single, but memorable, quote that exemplifies the Populist’s producer-centric dogma—the self-sufficiency mantra that “if any will not work, neither shall he eat.”

Kazin described Donnelly’s preamble as “both radical and conservative,” in that the Populists “would expand the powers of the state only in order to restore the glories of an earlier day.” Indeed, the demands for progressive income taxes, secret ballot voting and referendum are radical ideas for expanding the political power of the people. At the same time, the piece does have a somewhat exclusionary notion of who is a part of the people—the party

¹⁴⁹ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*. Second Edition, (Cornell University Press, 2017), 27

line explicitly discriminates against the ownership of land by “aliens,” referring to immigrants working for low wages. Such mixes of radicalism and conservatism would later become hallmarks of future populist communicators seeking to build dominant political coalitions.

CHAPTER 4: 1920s-1930s: THE RADIO, NEW VOICES AND NEW AUDIENCES !

Section 4.1: Context !

Section 4.1.1: Fighting the Great Depression (

Further media innovations would play a major role in populist communication in the 1920s and 1930s. The invention and proliferation of the radio provides an interesting case study. A number of political figures were able to hone populist communication styles using radio technology to great effect, including President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Louisiana Governor/Senator Huey Long and Michigan based priest Father Charles Coughlin.

The use of populist discursive techniques by these three men must be understood in the context of the Great Depression. Like the Populists of the 1890s, each of these men considered themselves members of the political left, or at the very least, opposed to Wall Street and big business. In the midst of the high unemployment, agricultural hardship and numerous bank runs, the appeal of populist communication strategies was clear, as the country's financial and business elites proved easy targets for criticism, even more so than during the Gilded Age. Roosevelt, Long and Coughlin were able to use opposition to financial and business elites as a way to unify the people into huge political coalitions, coalitions that would frequently be framed as encompassing all Americans, the average or the common man. Roosevelt, through his fireside chat radio broadcasts, was particularly adept at creating a unified vision of the American people.

Section 4.2: Production, Distribution and Consumption !

Section 4.2.1: The State and the Market (

The radio served as an ideal distribution mechanism for populist discourse. While what became the modern radio was created by a number of inventors in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it only truly emerged as a mass form of media in the mid 1920s with the advent of cheap radio equipment offered by companies such as RCA, Crosley and Crystal and the proliferation of local channels in the mid 1920s.¹⁵⁰ In 1922, not even 1 percent of US households owned a radio, but ownership rose astronomically to a figure of 46 percent by 1930 and over 80 percent by 1940.¹⁵¹

The competitive costs of entry to radio for broadcasters marked a significant departure from the more accessible market entry for businesses starting local newspapers, not least because of the limited amount of radio frequency and channels available, both from a technological and regulatory standpoint. In 1928, there were only 677 radio stations, and that number decreased to 616 by 1936.¹⁵² Following its establishment by Congress in 1927, the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) was given an obligation to govern the airwaves and grant broadcast licenses to stations that served the “public interest, convenience or necessity,” although this mandate was quite flexibly applied.¹⁵³ The FRC’s existence was renewed by each year until the 1934 Communications Act removed Congress from the regulatory process and

¹⁵⁰ Douglass Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States 1920-1940*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 11. !

¹⁵¹ Christopher Sterling and John Michael Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*, (Third Edition. ! Lawerence Erlbaum Associates, 2001), 533. !

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 510. !

¹⁵³ Robert W. McChesney, *The Political Economy of Media: Enduring Issues, Emerging Dilemmas*, (New York: ! Monthly Review Press, 2008), 159. !

established the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the current executive branch body that oversees radio (and television) regulation.

The two major networks *NBC* and *CBS* soon came to dominate radio broadcasting, accounting together for about 70 percent of US broadcast wattage in 1931 when considering their affiliation with the majority of local broadcasters, along with control of virtually all nighttime broadcasts.¹⁵⁴ The rise of the powerful National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) trade group, which came to exert major control over the FCC governing board, combined with the decline of non-profit and public broadcasters, organized the industry along generally market-centric lines. Upon his rise to the Presidency, Roosevelt was reluctant to challenge the power of the major networks, preferring instead to stay in the good graces of the networks. This hands-off approach to regulation gave Roosevelt and other government figures in his administration access from the networks to speak on the radio whenever they needed.¹⁵⁵

Habermas argues that the radio audience constituted a “sham public” that was inauthentic, because rational debate and conversation among the masses could only be had within a public sphere that was free of the influence of both the state and the market.¹⁵⁶ Radio was indeed subject to both state and market. Militant labor groups were often blocked from the airwaves or from sponsoring programs by the government, especially after the passage of the 1939 National Association of Broadcasters code, while many news organizations refused to

¹⁵⁴ Robert W. McChesney, *The Political Economy of Media: Enduring Issues, Emerging Dilemmas*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008), 161, 183. !

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 206-207. !

¹⁵⁶ Jurgen Habermas *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 160. !

mention strikes in their news broadcast for fear of encouraging them.¹⁵⁷ Many rural constituencies, blacks and other marginalized groups were either ignored by most broadcasters on the grounds that they would not be fertile targets for advertisement or, if they were targeted, were treated with contempt—popular shows like *Amos’n’Andy* traded in stereotypes of blacks that were typical of the time.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, the audience understood completely as the people—and vice versa—could never be completely all encompassing, as there would always be some sort of exclusionary component to it that is nurtured by the forces of state or market. As such, there will always be a struggle amongst what Denning calls “competing populist rhetorics,” which constantly struggle to define inclusion in the people.¹⁵⁹ Roosevelt and his contemporaries would indeed compete with one another using populist rhetoric.

Roosevelt was not the first politician to use radio as a means to speak directly to voters. All three major candidates in the 1924 election used the radio, although each candidate used it sparingly. By the 1928 election, both parties were devoting around a fifth of their campaign budgets to radio.¹⁶⁰ That election’s winner, Herbert Hoover, would go on to use the radio for just under 80 broadcasts throughout his presidency.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Douglass Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States 1920-1940*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 236; Erik Barnouw, *The Golden Web: A History of Broadcasting in the United States, 1933 to 1953*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 137. !

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 239-255. !

¹⁵⁹ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*, (London: Verso, 1996), 126. !

¹⁶⁰ Douglass Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States 1920-1940*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 149. !

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 150. !

Section 4.2.2: Radio's New Intimate Publics (

While not the first, FDR was the first to truly leverage the communicative power of the medium, helped along by his smooth speaking voice. Roosevelt began broadcasting over the radio in 1928 as Governor of New York, and would articulate his policies to New Yorkers and ask for their assistance in pressuring Republican opposition legislators.¹⁶² He spoke slowly, clearly and directly to voters, using intimate language like “my friends,” “I” or “you.”¹⁶³ The intimacy and immediacy of Roosevelt’s radio broadcasts helped him overcome ongoing opposition to his administration from hostile newspapers.

Roosevelt’s frequent radio broadcasts, known as fireside chats, formed the basis of a new and more intimate relationship between state and citizen, leader and people. Loviglio argues that the fireside chats carved out a new intermediary space, which he calls the “intimate public.”¹⁶⁴ Fireside chats were at the same time both public and private—Roosevelt did not mean his fireside, but rather the firesides of his listeners. His audience of Americans, ostensibly ‘the people,’ let him, the personification of the state in human (or in this case, disembodied aural) form, enter into the living rooms of their private homes.

For Loviglio, this new space would serve as a “a tool for enlisting a mass audience of listeners for the important work of transforming itself into a highly self-conscious public, a rhetorical arsenal of mass mediated democracy.”¹⁶⁵ Indeed, Roosevelt was able to use this new medium as a way to mobilize this audience of the public, or the people, to join and embrace the

¹⁶² Douglass Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States 1920-1940*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 154. !

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 155. !

¹⁶⁴ Jason Loviglio, *Radio's Intimate Public: Network Broadcasting and Mass-Mediated Democracy*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xvi. !

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, xxvi. !

New Deal project. Not coincidentally, Roosevelt's first official fireside chat in 1933 was an ! educational talk on the inner workings of private banking, in laymen's terms, as well as the government's strategy for reform and regulation of the sector.¹⁶⁶ Through this address, FDR essentially deputized his listeners into becoming agents of the state by asking for their confidence and buy-in to the New Deal.¹⁶⁷

Such use of radio created a relationship between the state and citizen that went both ways.¹⁶⁸ In this sense, as Loviglio describes, "radio operated as a metaphor for the populist sentiment that members of the people were welcome anywhere in national life."¹⁶⁹ Yet Roosevelt was not the only one to succeed in using populist communication in this new intimate public space created by radio. Other challengers from the left would also attempt to occupy the same intimate public that Roosevelt had a major part in shaping.

Section 4.2.3: Demagogic Challengers

Huey Long and Father Coughlin, Roosevelt's challengers for the mantle of anti-elite reformer, were formidable opponents, and both were able to leverage populist communication techniques over the radio to present radical alternatives to the New Deal.

Huey Long, the powerful Louisiana Governor and Senator, employed a folksy quality in his radio broadcasts, and he used common idioms, jokes and colloquialisms that would be recognizable to middle class and poor Americans. Barnouw described Huey Long as "the hillbilly

¹⁶⁶ Franklin D. Roosevelt, First Fireside Chat, March 12th, 1933. !

¹⁶⁷ Jason Loviglio, *Radio's Intimate Public: Network Broadcasting and Mass-Mediated Democracy*, (Minneapolis: ! University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 11. !

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., xxvi. !

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., xxv. !

come to power” who used a “vernacular that carried no hint of condescension,” and was often content to play the clown or use caricature, evidenced by his nickname, “Kingfish,” a character on the popular radio show *Amos’n’Andy*.¹⁷⁰ Long’s radio broadcasts often started with requests to his listeners that they telephone their friends and family—a precursor to the mantra of today’s political YouTubers who constantly ask that their viewers to “like and subscribe” to their video content.¹⁷¹

An initial ally of Roosevelt, Long soon shifted to the belief that the New Deal did not go far enough in relieving the burden of the Depression on the poor. In a style that foreshadows the percentage based statistical messaging style of Bernie Sanders (but with much less regard than Sanders for actual statistical figures of the time), Long would extoll that 2 percent of the people owned 60 percent of the wealth, although his figures would frequently change.¹⁷² In 1934, Long used his radio platform to broadcast the idea for his “Share Our Wealth” plan. He called for caps on wealth over \$8 million, inheritance taxes of 100 percent on transfers of over \$1 million dollars, jobs guarantees, working hour reductions, federal assistance to farmers, public works, increased education funding and pensions for seniors, single guaranteed government giveaways of \$5,000 and government guaranteed income of \$2,000-\$2,500 a year to the poor and finally, aggressive taxes on the rich, framing it in simple, graduated terms that

¹⁷⁰ Erik Barnouw, *The Golden Web: A History of Broadcasting in the United States, 1933 to 1953*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 49. !

¹⁷¹ Douglass Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States 1920-1940*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 160. !

¹⁷² Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1982), 72. !

anyone could understand—those with \$4 million would pay a 4 percent tax, 5 percent for \$5 million, etc.¹⁷³

Like many of the Populists of the 1890s, Long used biblical terms to describe his plan, remarking that God had called us all to his feast, but that greedy bankers like Rockefeller and Morgan had eaten far more than their fill.¹⁷⁴ He also drew on Populist rhetoric that romanticized “producers,” and denied that his plans were socialist, citing their preservation of private property (in fact, his movement cannibalized support for communist and socialist parties during the Depression).¹⁷⁵ Despite its simplicity, the Share Our Wealth plan became immensely popular, and by the end of 1935 hundreds of “Share Our Wealth Clubs” had risen up nationwide.

Father Charles Coughlin, a Canadian born Catholic Priest living in Michigan, was another critic of unregulated market capitalism and the power of monopolists and wealthy bankers on Wall Street. Coughlin was a natural at attracting radio listeners with straight talking religious fervor and common language. Like Long, his folksiness shone through in his rhetoric—he used curse words like “damn” and frequently attacked enemies such as the Federal Reserve and Wall Street with creative nicknames and epithets like “cream-puffs” and “ventriloquists.”¹⁷⁶

Coughlin’s message played up America’s pious history and highlighted a religious opposition to concentration of wealth amongst the powerful. He framed economic matters in terms of social justice, an idea popularized by Pope Pius XI that espoused the duty of individuals

¹⁷³ Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression*, (New York: Alfred A ! Knopf, 1982), 72-73. !

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. !

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 239-240. !

¹⁷⁶ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*. Second Edition, (Cornell University Press, 2017), ! 115

to uphold the common good. This would come to be the moniker of Coughlin's National Union ! for Social Justice, which he maintained had 5 million members in 1935.¹⁷⁷ Coughlin frequently described the economics of the Depression in biblical terms, castigating the evil of the so-called "money changers," which included the Federal Reserve and Jewish bankers such as the Morgans and the Rothschilds.¹⁷⁸ Coughlin would also frequently draw on statements from members of the 1890 Populist movement, which included currents of religious and spiritual fervor and sometimes, the equation of Jews with corrupt international financiers.¹⁷⁹

While his criticism of bankers was less overtly anti-Semitic at first—as an Irish Catholic, he unsurprisingly deplored the financiers of England—as time went on he became more openly hostile towards Jews, going as far as reprinting conspiracy tracts like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in his newspapers.¹⁸⁰ By the late 1930s he expressed overt support for Catholic dictators like Franco and Salazar as well as praise of Hitler and Mussolini. At the same time, Coughlin was virulently anti-communist, as their secularism posed a threat to the religious zeal that he espoused. Like Long, Coughlin was an initial supporter of Roosevelt and his New Deal project, but he soon opposed the President, calling him "Franklin Doublecrossing Roosevelt" and "anti-God" for supposedly being in cahoots with an international conspiracy of Jewish bankers that were paradoxically "bent on communist revolution."¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Erik Barnouw, *The Golden Web: A History of Broadcasting in the United States, 1933 to 1953*, (New York: Oxford ! University Press, 1968), 48; Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*. Second Edition, (Cornell ! University Press, 2017), 118. !

¹⁷⁸ Kazin Ibid., 119 !

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 119-200. !

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 131. !

¹⁸¹ Barnouw, Ibid., 51; Kazin Ibid., 124. !

By 1934, Coughlin received more mail (the chief way of measuring radio audiences and public opinion) than even FDR, and was estimated to have over 30 million listeners for his Sunday afternoon sermons.¹⁸² This community of listeners proved incredibly resilient—when he was dropped by *CBS* in 1931, Coughlin seamlessly switched to other stations that picked up his programming due to the swelling number of money order donations sent in by his listeners.

The populist styles of plain speech used by Coughlin, Long and Roosevelt (who, despite speaking less plainly than Coughlin and Long, nonetheless did not appear condescending to his audiences) were deployed in such a way that they were able to cast themselves as the people's representatives. Mencken described the American people as constructing a shared identity through "Volkssprache," or average, plain, folk speech.¹⁸³ Becker explains this folk speech as appearing to the people themselves for the first time in media within the confines of radio, which served to standardize it as a sort of "General American" tongue.¹⁸⁴ He asserts that radio "provided listeners with a new way to understand themselves as part of a common listening audience."¹⁸⁵ This idea became even further solidified with town hall shows, call-in programs and man on the street shows that gave 'the people' a voice to share their concerns to a mass audience in a way that was previously not possible with print or even cinema.¹⁸⁶ Loviglio

¹⁸² Douglass Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States 1920-1940*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 159; Hiley H. Ward, *Mainstreams of American Media History: A Narrative and Intellectual History*, (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1997), 369. !

¹⁸³ Henry Louis Mencken, *The American language: An inquiry into the development of English in the United States*. Second edition, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1921). !

¹⁸⁴ Brian Becker, "Radio's Disappearing Act: The Creation of the Modern Folk," *Raritan: A Quarterly Review* 38, no. ! 2 (Fall 2018). !

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. !

¹⁸⁶ Jason Loviglio, *Radio's Intimate Public: Network Broadcasting and Mass-Mediated Democracy*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xxvi, 39. !

maintains that “the proliferation of ‘average’ voices on the air seemed to suggest that the ! people...were themselves embodiments of and continuous with [the] nation.”¹⁸⁷

Section 4.3: Discourse Analysis

Franklin D. Roosevelt – 1936 Madison Square Garden Speech

Long, Coughlin and their bases of political support gradually aligned in the mid-1930s, and together they seemed like a genuine threat to Roosevelt’s reelection. In a report for the Democratic Party, pollster Emil Hurja estimated in 1935 that a three way Long vs. Roosevelt vs. generic Republican election would result in Long capturing upwards of 6 million votes across multiple states, enough to potentially swing the election to the Republican candidate.¹⁸⁸

Indeed, the inability of the New Deal to turn the tide of the Depression around by 1935 opened up a clear window for someone like Long or Coughlin to step in and appeal to the discontent and disillusion of those still hurting financially. However, many Long and Coughlin supporters also supported Roosevelt, or at the very least tolerated him. The administration’s fear of Long and Coughlin’s movement would manifest itself in the passage of Roosevelt’s “Second” New Deal in 1935, which included new relief efforts including the Works Progress Administration, the National Labor Relations Act (which FDR in fact opposed) and the Social Security Act.¹⁸⁹ In addition to helping lessen the effects of the Depression on Americans, these policies would attempt to stave off the challenges from Long and Coughlin and would placate

¹⁸⁷ Jason Loviglio, *Radio’s Intimate Public: Network Broadcasting and Mass-Mediated Democracy*, (Minneapolis: ! University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xxv. !

¹⁸⁸ Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression*, (New York: Alfred A ! Knopf, 1982), 207-208. !

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 247. !

their supporters, who demanded more radical action to help those in need of assistance. The ! decentralized nature of many of the Second New Deal programs would also place precedence on working alongside local interests, a response to the more localized focus of Long and Coughlin's organizations.¹⁹⁰

Long was assassinated by the son of one of his myriad political enemies in September 1935, while Coughlin's more overt anti-Semitism in the late 1930s would in fact lessen his appeal among his constituency rather than act as a magnet for attracting followers.¹⁹¹ Still, Roosevelt's Madison Square Garden speech on the eve of the 1936 election required a reification of his administration's populist bonafides. He had already spent the year castigating the "economic royalists" and "princes of privilege" who wanted to see the New Deal fail.¹⁹² In his 1936 State of the Union, he disparaged the moneyed classes seeking the "restoration of their selfish power" and advocated for the "help of the needy, the protection of the weak, the liberation of the exploited and the genuine protection of the people's property."¹⁹³

In his Madison Square Garden speech, Roosevelt deployed numerous references to the people as a monolithic group, mentioning them 13 times. He made sure to discredit and blame elites for their mismanagement of the economy, with a count of 8 instances. This included his often-cited phrase: "[the forces of organized money] are unanimous in their hate for me—and I welcome their hatred." His attacks against elites depicts them clearly as deep and longstanding disturbances to the wellbeing of the people, painting "business and financial monopoly,

¹⁹⁰ Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression*, (New York: Alfred A ! Knopf, 1982), 248. !

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 269-272. !

¹⁹² Harvey Kaye, "The Year FDR Sought to Make America 'Fairly Radical,'" *BillMoyers.com*, June 20, 2016. !

¹⁹³ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "State of the Union Address." January 3, 1936. !

speculation, reckless banking, class antagonism, sectionalism [and] war profiteering” as “old enemies of peace.” Roosevelt also specifically attacks misleading employers who would exploit their workers, further highlighting the symbiotic relationship between labor and their agents in government as foils for the power of big business.

Much like the Populists before him, Roosevelt used the language of self-sufficient producers, noting of his administration’s jobs programs: “we prefer useful work to the pauperism of a dole.” He also makes a handful of religious references, keeping with the longstanding connection of Christian rhetoric in Presidential speeches.

Roosevelt’s speech is peppered with notions that the people have lost power, such as a call for a “crusade to restore America to its own people.” Other statements show that Roosevelt sees himself as an extension of the will of the people, particularly his statement that “no man can occupy the office of President without realizing that he is President of all the people.” In this instance, the idea of people is meant to be encompassing of all Americans.

Following this speech and its broadcast over the radio, Roosevelt would cruise to a historic reelection and would eventually be credited with “saving capitalism” from more radical challenges in the midst of the Depression.¹⁹⁴ Yet the spread of the radio had created a new avenue for all sorts of populist tools, including demagoguery, racism and anti-Semitism, promises, persuasion, reassurance, scapegoating and personal intimacy. Even outright lies and misinformation could be useful for achieving political goals—in the 1934 California Governor’s election, Upton Sinclair, the socialist candidate for the Democratic Party, was smeared by his

¹⁹⁴ Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks, *It Didn’t Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

opponents with faked newsreels and radio serials of hobos on their way to California to claim ! the crop vouchers and jobs promised by Sinclair.¹⁹⁵ Such a scheme foreshadows conspiracies that an immigrant caravan travelling through Mexico to the US border contains criminals and terrorists, invoked by the Trump administration and the right-wing press in the run up to the 2018 mid-term election.¹⁹⁶

Perhaps the most important new populist discursive tool was the fact that Roosevelt created a carefully manicured and mediated radio personae, which would become a blueprint for future Presidents and populist communicators seeking to build an image that could appeal to the people intimately in new ways. This will be expanded on in the next section on Ronald Reagan and television.

¹⁹⁵ Douglass Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States 1920-1940*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 161. !

¹⁹⁶ Christopher E. Wilson. "Five myths about the U.S.-Mexico border." *Washington Post*. May 4, 2018. !

CHAPTER 5: 1950s-1990s: TELEVISION AND IMAGE !

Section 5.1: Context !

Section 5.1.1: Video Kills the Radio Stars

Moving pictures, from the popularization of cinema in the early 1900s to the proliferation of the television in the 50s, 60s and 70s, were tools that were again used to define and redefine populist forms of communication and the relationships between audiences, the people, and speakers.

The marriage of video and audio was a huge technological jump for audiences. The rise of cinema in the first decades of the 20th century had already created a collective audience experience based around the consumption of images, and was further integrated with sound by the late 1920s. The use of newsreels in cinemas also helped solidify imagery as a major vector for disseminating and consuming information. However, the availability of televisions in the post-war period created an intimacy similar to the radio—having a television in one’s home became a necessity for intimate individual connection with the characters and settings of the news media. The rise of television was also incredibly rapid; there were just thousands of homes with television sets in 1947, but by the end of the 1960s, almost 9 out of 10 households owned a television.¹⁹⁷

Adorno and members of the Frankfurt School saw radio and cinema (and further technological developments in mass media like television) as encompassing a budding “culture industry,” in which media becomes subject to forms of consumerism and commodification.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Winthrop Jordan, *The Americans*, (Boston: McDougal Littell, 1996), 798. !

¹⁹⁸ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois (Society*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 161. !

While the radio and the newspaper industry had already become increasingly commoditized ! through advertising-based business models, television supercharged commodification by integrating images that were easier for viewers to passively consume. Scholars such as Guy Debord argued that commoditization of media like television both compressed discussion within the public sphere and replaced it with manufactured and simulated spectacle, nudging the people to become passive observers rather than active participants or critical listeners.¹⁹⁹ Such passive consumption could be artificially manipulated and guided through agenda setting and framing by media elites (the major networks and their journalists, newscasters etc.) and members of the intelligentsia.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, television as spectacle served to reduce political phenomena to easily digestible stereotypes, clichés and simplifications.²⁰¹ These clichés and simplifications could manifest themselves in ideas of the people in ways that further detached them from any sense of real place. Becker has argued that television detached the concept of the people, or “the folk” from their “supposed regional authenticity” and created a more abstract, imagined version of “us” versus “them.”²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Revised Edition, (Detroit: Black and Red Books, 1977). !

²⁰⁰ P. Eric Louw, “The Media and the Political Process.” Second Edition, (London: SAGE, 2010), 23-24; Dan Nimmo ! and James Combs, *Mediated Political Realities*, (New York: Longman, 1990), 18. !

²⁰¹ Louw Ibid., 25. !

²⁰² Brian Becker, “Radio's Disappearing Act: The Creation of the Modern Folk,” *Raritan: A Quarterly Review* 38, no. ! 2 (Fall 2018), 125-145. !

Section 5.2: Production, Distribution and Consumption !

Section 5.2.1: Gatekeeping and Neutrality

Both the production and distribution mechanisms of television as well as the aforementioned media elites came to shape the media in the era of television predominance in a number of unique ways. The most obvious facet of television was the high barriers of entry to those who sought to use it for communication—up until the 1980s, there were only three major television networks, *NBC*, *ABC* and *CBS*. Only in the late 80s and 90s did cable television expand the number of channels and major networks. The limited number of networks created a high degree of gatekeeping, creating select filters for news.²⁰³ This allowed the networks to play a major role in agenda setting and framing of news issues of the day.²⁰⁴ The limited amount of broadcast choice among viewers helped solidify a class of gatekeeping media elites, who had a high degree of control over who and what appeared on their networks, in addition to how it was covered.

Strikingly, the television era also coincides largely with a period of low degrees of political polarization and high degrees of bipartisanship in Congress.²⁰⁵ This is quite unique in the history of the US, which has typically seen high levels of polarization. This uniqueness could be a product of a few factors—Cold War unity against a common enemy in Soviet-led communism, general bipartisan support for the New Deal or fewer instances of labor disputes between businesses and workers, to name a few. Exclusion of minorities from the political

²⁰³ Ghulam Shabir, Ghulam Safdar and Muhammad Imran, Asad Mumtaz and Ashraf Ali Anjum. “Process of Gate Keeping in Media: From Old Trend to New.” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6 no. 1 (2015). !

²⁰⁴ Dietram Scheufé and David Tewksbury, “Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models.” *Journal of Communication* 57 (2007), 9–20. !

²⁰⁵ Michael Barber and Nolan McCarty. “Causes and Consequences of Polarization.” In *Solutions to Political Polarization in America*, ed. Nathaniel Persily, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 20. !

process could have also played a major part, as racial integration and polarization both picked up in the 1970s. However, lack of choices among television news could also have played a crucial role—essentially, the entirety of television viewers all watched one of the same three broadcasts each night. This technological reality was a major uniting factor among TV viewers and Americans generally.

Another aspect of the television era that distinguishes it from other periods of media dominance is that, for the majority of its heyday, journalists generally took a nonpartisan and objective or neutral stance towards news coverage. For the most part, journalists employed what Maras calls “view from nowhere.”²⁰⁶ Such a posture places a premium on reporting facts rather than values or support of particular ideological stances, which naturally skewed coverage towards a detached sort of professionalism.²⁰⁷ While objectivity has a long history in American journalism dating back hundreds of years, it became dominant in the early 1900s as print journalism became thoroughly professionalized at institutions such as the Columbia School of Journalism.²⁰⁸ Gans argues that despite the continued use of radio era techniques like letters to the editor and audience research studies, during the television era, journalists for the most part ignored audience opinion due to this increasing professionalization and focus on objectivity.²⁰⁹

Some of this neutral approach could be attributed to the “Fairness Doctrine,” an FCC policy that began in the 1940s that gave broadcasters a requirement to have their programming give the public a “reasonable opportunity to hear different opposing positions on the public

²⁰⁶ Steven Maras, *Objectivity in Journalism*. (Malden, MA: Polity Press. 2013), 77–81. !

²⁰⁷ Michael Schudson, “The objectivity norm in American journalism,” *Journalism* 2, no. 2 (2001), 149–170. !

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 149–170. !

²⁰⁹ Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2004 (1979)). !

issues of interest and importance in the community,” and an “affirmative obligation to insure ! fair presentation of all sides of any controversial issue.”²¹⁰ Regardless of a general standard of journalistic objectivity and fairness, however, there could always be instances of biases towards one ideological predilection or another that shone through in news programs. Indeed, there were numerous instances of journalists breaking the unwritten neutrality rules and embracing more normative stances (Edwin R. Murrow’s takedown of Senator Joseph McCarthy on his program *See It Now* stands as just one high profile example). Such divergences from neutrality and underlying normative approaches were often played up by conservatives like Senator Barry Goldwater who decried that there were in fact biases within what he termed the “liberal media.”²¹¹

Section 5.2.2: The Power of Celebrity

The 1980s marked a sea change in the television medium, as the 24/7 news channel CNN and the beginnings of cable television contributed to an increase in tabloidization, which Kalb defines as a “downgrading of hard news and upgrading of sex, scandal and infotainment.”²¹² With the conflicting continuation of journalistic objectivity on the one hand and news as spectacle on the other, the medium was at a major flashpoint where the pluralistic communicative form, which values dialogue, compromise and diversity of viewpoints, would

²¹⁰ Victor Pickard, “The Strange Life and Death of the Fairness Doctrine: Tracing the Decline of Positive Freedoms in ! American Policy Discourse,” *International Journal of Communication* 12 (2018), 3434–3453. !

²¹¹ Nicole Hemmer, “The Conservative War on Liberal Media has a Long History,” *The Atlantic*, January 17, 2014. !

²¹² Marvin Kalb, “Editorial: The Clock is Ticking.” *Intellectual Capital.Com* 2, no. 1 (1997). !

clash with a more freewheeling and subjective populist communicative form, which put precedence on either or dichotomies of people and elites/Others.

The tabloidization of television news had deep roots, particularly in how the medium prioritized image. Visual media had long been integral in creating celebrities, whose images increasingly were reproduced at massive scales.²¹³ Celebrity was (and is) an ideal way for a populist communicator to enter the political scene, as their recognition gives them credence as a “tele-populist,” or a politician who has “adapted to the needs of television mediatization.”²¹⁴

Such tele-populism in the midst of the ongoing tabloidization of news gave way for politics to become swiftly colonized by the realm of celebrity in the form of Ronald Reagan, a relatively minor Hollywood film actor. Reagan was able to use his experience in television and movies as a way to manufacture an image that was palpable to Americans who had become commoditized media consumers. Long before Reagan, television image had already come to play a large part of politics—famously, Richard Nixon, who appeared sweaty and refused to put on makeup for the 1960 Presidential debate, ended up “losing” to John F. Kennedy, who wore makeup and was considered by viewers to be more conventionally attractive.²¹⁵ Presidents and Presidential candidates had begun carefully crafting and manufacturing their images through television, including through speeches, interviews and political advertisements.

However, Reagan was perfectly attuned to the image-heavy television media form, and would prove to be a master in populist communication by harnessing the intertextuality of both

²¹³ P. Eric Louw, “The Media and the Political Process.” Second Edition, (London: SAGE, 2010), 110-11. !

²¹⁴ Pierre-Andre Tanguieff, “Political Science Confronts Populism: From a Conceptual Mirage to a Real Program,” *Telos*, (1995), 125. !

²¹⁵ David Greenberg, “Torchlight Parades for the Television Age: The Presidential Debates as Political Ritual.” ! *Daedalus* 138, no. 2, (Spring, 2009), 6-19. !

religious currents in US politics as well as American civic religion itself.²¹⁶ This image-crafting and rhetorical skill was augmented by his thespian abilities, which gave Reagan an ability to connect with his audience, ostensibly the entirety of the American people, in novel ways.

Section 5.2.3: The Right Actor for the Job

Reagan's rise to the presidency was preceded by a right-wing religious and cultural lurch in the United States. The victories of the Civil Rights movements, the rise of black nationalism, increases in urban poverty and drug use, and the sexual and cultural upheavals of 1960s hippie-dom (each of which made more visible by television) primed many working- and middle-class whites for a backlash and call for a return to more "traditional" values.²¹⁷ These groups, made quite comfortable thanks in part to labor power, suburbanization and continued US manufacturing dominance internationally, saw their comfort "under siege from both liberal authorities above," particularly those in the federal government and the media agitating for continued racial integration and equality, and "angry minorities below."²¹⁸

Such a connection between an elite and a racial Other was the beginning of a new conservatism that would use populist communication as a way of gaining political strength. Segregationists like Alabama governor George Wallace were able to capture the support large segments of the South by using both overt racism as well as racially coded language and dog-whistles that played up notions that the white working classes (essentially a stand in for past

²¹⁶ Michael Rogin. *Ronald Reagan: The Movie and Other Episodes in Political Demonology*. (Oakland: University of California Press, 1988). !

²¹⁷ Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*. (New York: Simon & Schuster. ! 2008). !

²¹⁸ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*. Second Edition, (Cornell University Press, 2017), ! 223. !

populist ideas of “producers”) made up a “silent majority” whose voices were not heard by ! liberal technocrats in Washington.²¹⁹ Richard Nixon harnessed Wallace’s dog whistling rhetorical style with the so-called “Southern strategy” on his way to large electoral victories in 1968 and 1972. The late 1970s also saw a return of religious fundamentalism, particularly in the South, with evangelist figures such as Pat Robertson, Jerry Fallwell, Paul Weyrich and Phyllis Schlafly arguing against shifting sexual and gender norms and culture war topics such as abortion and homosexuality.²²⁰

Reagan was an ideal standard bearer for this new form of right-wing populist communication, and employed it during his election to and tenure as governor of California. Yet Reagan’s rhetorical style, very much a product of his acting career, gave him an appeal that captured the attention and support of working class (soon to be former) Democrats that were staunch New Dealers. Reagan integrated many of the rhetorical tools and talking points of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who Reagan admired as a young actor, in order to bring working class whites into his coalition, despite the fact that Reagan’s policies were clearly anti-union—one of his first acts as President was a mass firing of striking air-traffic controllers.²²¹

²¹⁹ Samuel Webb and Margaret E Armbruster, eds. *Alabama Governors: A Political History of the State*. Tuscaloosa: ! University of Alabama Press. 2014, 255 !

²²⁰ Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*. (New York: Simon & Schuster. ! 2008). !

²²¹ Gary C. Woodward, “Reagan as Roosevelt: The Elasticity of Pseudo-Populist Appeals,” *Communication Studies* (34, no. 1 (1983), 44-58. !

Section 5.3: Discourse Analysis !

Ronald Reagan – 1980 Republican Presidential Nomination Speech (

Reagan's acceptance speech for the 1980 Republican Presidential nomination at the Republican National Committee in Detroit was for the most part an outline of his preferred policies—lower taxes, a federal hiring freeze, greater involvement abroad, and so on. Yet his rhetorical style is what defines this speech, and his future speeches, more than anything. His calm delivery, smooth voice and even a subtle wink in the middle of his speech during an applause break clearly demonstrate that his nickname, the “Great Communicator,” was an accurate assessment of his speaking skills. His comfort in front of the camera starring in movies like “Knut Rockne, All-American,” along with a sort of cowboy-like image (he owned a ranch in California) gave him an air of an everyman that the people could easily identify with. His experience hosting television shows like *General Electric Theater* also gave him integral practice interacting on camera with audiences directly.²²²

His speech itself shows a focus more on playing up notions of the people rather than castigating elites. Reagan scores quite high on references to the people as monolithic (19) as well as mentions of the virtuousness of the people (10). His messaging is mostly positive, and seeks to remedy the problems of average Americans and unite them through shared values. He notes that “for those who've abandoned hope, we'll restore hope and we'll welcome them into a great national crusade to make America great again.” This focus on making America great again, a slogan deployed with explicit nativism by Donald Trump 36 years later, centers a glorious

²²² Rick Perlstein. *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan*. (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2014).

past, perhaps invoking among the audience the traditionalism, religious piety, conservatism ! and producer-ism of an idealized pre-civil rights rural America. No doubt Reagan was playing with many of the same themes, albeit not as explicitly or extreme as Trump would. Along with playing up notions of the people and America's idealized past, Reagan also spoke in language that the people were intimately familiar with. He invoked American civic religion and US cultural history extensively, with 13 mentions. Reagan also quoted a large portion of FDR's speech after he captured the 1932 Democratic nomination for President, again using unifying rhetoric for cross-party appeal.

Despite his general focus on advocative messages centering the people, Reagan did deploy (12) attacks on elites, albeit not the traditional boogymen of wealthy financial elites (who happened to be a major part of the Republican coalition). Indeed, Reagan's most lasting impact on populist communication was perhaps his solidification of a new type of elite for the people to detest—government bureaucrats and entrenched (abstract) “special interests.” In the speech he says that “we are going to put an end to the money merry-go-round where our money becomes Washington's money, to be spent by states and cities exactly the way the Federal bureaucrats tell us it has to be spent.” By demonizing the bureaucrats in Washington as freewheeling spenders, he points to traditional notions of self-sufficient producers' detestation of those supposedly getting fat off of lazy excess. And by painting these groups as privileged minorities (and, as a dog-whistle, implied to be actual minorities), Reagan was able to advance support for small government conservatism through a populist emphasis. Reagan's notion that “the Federal Government has grown so big and powerful that it is beyond the control of any

President” frames the debate as though the people are at a significant disadvantage in contrast ! to this newly articulated group of bureaucratic elites who are in league with a racial Other.²²³

Despite his seeming sincerity throughout the speech, Reagan also makes the false claims that “every major tax cut in this century has strengthened the economy, generated renewed productivity and ended up yielding new revenues for the Government by creating new investment, new jobs and more commerce among our people.” This supply-side, trickle-down economics, while a prevailing economic view of the time, has since been thoroughly debunked on numerous occasions.²²⁴ Such false claims would prove to be a challenge for objective journalists in their coverage of Reagan, whose policies could sometimes be contradictory to his rhetoric.

Despite a surprisingly few references to religion or God (4), Reagan ended his speech with a call for silent prayer. This lack of complete embrace of the religious currents in the Republican party gave room for a more expansive and inclusive notion of the people as simply those who believed in God rather than a specific branch of evangelical fundamentalist Christianity.

The convention was covered with much fanfare and intrigue in on television—all the major television networks, *ABC*, *CBS*, and *NBC* broadcast both Reagan’s speech and included analysis by their respective television anchors and correspondents.²²⁵ Reagan’s speeches in the White House would later become hallmarks of his presidency, and his embrace of the people

²²³ Terri Bimes and Quinn Mulroy, “The Rise and Decline of Presidential Populism,” *Studies in American Political Development* 18 (Fall 2004), 158. !

²²⁴ William Gale and Peter Orszag, “Bush’s Tax Plan Slashes Growth,” *The Brookings Institution*, 2003; Paul ! Krugman, *The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. !

²²⁵ Thomas Marshall, “The Ritual of Convention Coverage in 1980.” In *Television Coverage of the 1980 Presidential Campaign*, ed. William C. Adams, (Ablex Publishing Corporation 1983), 77-82. !

from a more conservative perspective would set a blueprint for later populist communicators that sought to borrow elements of his style. More than anything however, Reagan's television presence set him apart from his predecessors. While he could successfully build intimate relationships with his audience in ways that others could not, he also had the added benefit of already being a part of the media structure in some sense, and therefore having easy access to and mastery of communicative tools. While figures like Franklin Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy were apt users of media, Reagan was truly the first president that rose to the position through his experience as a celebrity. He would not be the last.

CHAPTER 6: 2000s-PRESENT: THE INTERNET AND THE EROSION OF GATEKEEPING !

Section 6.1: Context

Section 6.1.1: The Erosion of Objectivity in the Pre-Internet Era

Perhaps the biggest shift in media prior to the mass adoption of the Internet was the repeal of the Fairness Doctrine, partially as a result of proliferating numbers of television channels, which opened up the floodgates for ideologically charged media content, particularly on the right.²²⁶ Some of the first signs that the repeal of the Fairness Doctrine had created a new media atmosphere was the rapid rise of right-wing talk radio, including pundits like Rush Limbaugh, Michael Savage and Glenn Beck, who filled the gaps of AM airwaves as music programming shifted towards the proliferating number of FM channels.²²⁷ Perhaps the biggest change in the media landscape was the rise of *Fox News* to become the country's most popular cable news channel. Completely unconcerned with upholding the prevailing norms of "objective journalism," *Fox News's* advertised itself with the tongue-in-cheek mantra that its media coverage was "fair and balanced."

Much of *Fox News's* popularity stemmed from its role as the only high-profile conservative TV news channel, which gave it the ability to set itself up as a foil for the big networks, which it accused of perpetuating the news media's "liberal bias." By castigating opposing network news as the home of snobby urban media elites, *Fox News* was able to employ a particular brand of populist marketing style, in which it claimed that it spoke to people that made up the "real America," a designation that skewed white, elderly and more

²²⁶ Victor Pickard, "The Strange Life and Death of the Fairness Doctrine: Tracing the Decline of Positive Freedoms in ! American Policy Discourse," *International Journal of Communication* 12 (2018), 3434–3453. !

²²⁷ Steve Rendall, "Rough Road to Liberal Talk Success." *Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting*, January 1, 2007. !

rural. The *Fox News* challenge towards traditional “liberal media” gatekeeping in media by harkening on conservative bromides has resulted in a resounding political success. Ideologically aligned cable channels like *Fox News* have been found to be a major driver of political polarization, with *Fox News*’ stoking of polarization playing a substantial role in the electoral success of the Republican party.²²⁸

Further tabloidization of media alongside (and partially driven in some instances) *Fox News* would continue as well. This is particularly evident in the constant, round the clock attention given to incidents concerning celebrity, such as the Clinton-Lewinsky affair and reality television, as well as spectacle events like the death of Princess Diana, the Oklahoma City Bombing and the 9/11 attacks. This embrace of tabloidization, spectacle and reality television, combined with the more ideologically driven character of media during the 1990s and early 2000s, further eroded the professionalization of journalism and set the table for the media landscape of the Internet age to develop into an ideal ecosystem for populist communicators.

Section 6.2: Production, Distribution and Consumption

Section 6.2.1: The Internet and the Audience

Much has been said regarding the transformative change brought by the adoption of the Internet, but much of the change was in fact spurred by the onset of Web 2.0. Tim O’Reilly describes Web 2.0 as a number of new technologies, protocols and practices that upended earlier packaged software models with a greater focus on scalable services, lightweight user

²²⁸ Gregory J. Martin and Ali Yurukoglu, “Bias in Cable News: Persuasion and Polarization.” *American Economic Review* 107, no. 9 (2017), 2565-99; Dellavigna Stefano and Ethan Kaplan, “The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 122, no. 3 (2007), 1187-1234.

interfaces and network effects which integrate user contributions, collective intelligence and ! data gathering.²²⁹ Many of the new developments of Web 2.0 came to the fore following the 2000 dot com crash and picked up steam in the mid-2000s.²³⁰

The midst of the Web 2.0 shift also saw the rise of digital-only news publications, the migration of legacy news channels and newspapers towards predominantly online news delivery and the proliferation of popular independent blogs, which together marked a massive shift towards a new way of producing, distributing and consuming information and news. The networking infrastructure of Web 2.0 also gave way to both social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Reddit and the mass adoption of relatively cheap video-equipped smartphones. These developments contributed to a greater degree of engagement by audiences, particularly in the distribution of news and information—every person with basic digital literacy was now able to create text, picture or video content to share to millions of others instantaneously. Even further, social media gave a platform to the average person to communicate extensively through comment sections, blogs, forums, GIFs, memes, emojis and other interactive forms, all fostering the creation of a new public sphere where dissemination of information and socialization is done more horizontally rather than vertically. Jay Rosen argued that within this new public sphere, the audience has moved into a position of greater power, where they are no longer passive viewers but are instead now active participants.²³¹

²²⁹ Tim O'Reilly, "What Is Web 2.0? Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software," In ! *The Social Media Reader* ed. Michael Mandiberg, (New York: New York University Press, 2012). !

²³⁰ John A. Nicholas, "Sharing and Web 2.0: The Emergence of a Keyword," *New Media & Society* 15, no. 2 (March ! 2013), 167–82. !

²³¹ Jay Rosen, "The People Formerly Known as the Audience." In *The Social Media Reader* ed. Michael Mandiberg, ! (New York: New York University Press, 2012). !

The combination of various interactive forms should not be overlooked as a central ! facet of Internet communication. For Chadwick, this mishmash of video, audio, and text into a highly nimble communicative form exemplifies what he calls a hybridized media system, where new media and old media forms are each engaged in a constant synthesizing process of adapting to new production, distribution and consumption systems.²³² While Chadwick argues that all media have in some sense always been hybrid, the new media landscape is marked by constant reconfiguration of old media logics to adapt to the bounds and breadth of new media, while at the same time the new media integrates and reshapes past media logics.²³³ Entertainment has bled into news, music into videos, movies into television and vice versa. Americans watch television on their laptop, read the newspaper on their tablet, surf the web on video game consoles, listen to podcasts on mobile phones, listen to music through the television, create memes using old pictures and meta jokes on social media platforms—all media production, distribution and consumption are now increasingly executed through hybridized media logics and practices.

Social media and networked Internet apparatuses have come to colonize much of the realm of information and entertainment (which, following tabloidization, is now a hybridized form of “infotainment”). Indeed, social media has already begun to supplant (or absorb hybridized versions of) cable and network news. While only 1 in 5 say they regularly received all their news from social media in 2018, 68 percent of Americans said that they got their news at

²³² Andrew Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*, Second Edition, (New York: Oxford University ! Press, 2017), 4. !

²³³ Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, (Cambridge: MIT Press. 1999), ! 15. !

least partially from social media, while 43 percent of Americans said that they used Facebook ! specifically as a source of news, according to the Pew Research Center.²³⁴ However, social media was not seen as very trustworthy by Americans, with 57 percent of them saying that most news on social media was inaccurate.²³⁵ This perception of inaccuracy is likely rooted in the fact that mainstream journalists and media industry gatekeepers, whose focus on objectivity and neutrality predisposes them to report news and information in a more factual manner, are no longer the sole arbiters of truth in the public sphere. There are no longer single authoritative sources of public information, like a Walter Cronkite or Edwin R. Murrow, that almost every American consumes daily on a single news channel. This segmentation opens up avenues for neglect for established facts in favor of different constructions and interpretations of events, which can sometimes be wildly untrue. While they have long histories in US media, such “fake news” and “alternative facts” have become mainstays within the present Internet media atmosphere, and have helped develop completely isolated and separate media ecosystems that are effectively ideological echo chambers.

This creation of isolated media ecosystems spans the ideological spectrum, but the isolation is much more prevalent on the right. Before the Internet, radical-right wing ideas were for the most part marginalized in mainstream political discourse due to the gatekeeping of traditional media elites (although *Fox News* has played no small role in shifting the gravity of US news and political discourse ever-rightward). However, the rise of social media and has opened up new spaces for far-right websites like Breitbart, the Daily Caller, and thousands of other far-

²³⁴ Katerina Eva Matsa and Elisa Shearer. “News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2018,” *Pew Research Center*, September 10, 2018. !

²³⁵ Ibid. !

right Internet sites, which now have ideal apparatuses to help shape and reinforce the ! worldviews of their readers by bypassing traditional gatekeepers.²³⁶ Even more extremist websites and forums such as Stormfront, 4Chan, 8Chan, Gab and various subreddits like r/The_Donald provide new platforms for the communication and spread of far-right discourse and narratives.²³⁷ This has major implications on communication: those on the far-right wing of the political spectrum have been found to be more likely to fall for political disinformation, misinformation and so-called “fake news.”²³⁸

Section 6.2.2: All About Algorithms

Maly argues that the infrastructure underlying Web 2.0 is a contributor to “algorithmic populism,” in which digital distribution methods have helped shape discourse in a way that is (at least at present) beneficial to populist forms of communication.²³⁹ The rise of commercial social media apparatuses like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter have created a drastically different news ecosystem from that of traditional media distribution apparatuses; these social media sites have been designed to algorithmically suggest content that would appeal to a user based on their past interactions online. For many social media users, this has the effect of even

²³⁶ Gregory Eady, Jonathan Nagler, Andy Guess, Jan Zilinsky, and Joshua A. Tucker. “How Many People Live in Political Bubbles on Social Media? Evidence from Linked Survey and Twitter Data,” *SAGE Open*, January 2019.

²³⁷ Jacob Davey and Julia Ebner. “The Fringe Insurgency: Connectivity, Convergence and Mainstreaming of the Extreme Right.” *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, 2017; Angela Nagle, *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4Chan to Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right*, (London: Zero Books, 2017).

²³⁸ Ben Tarnoff, “How Social Media Saved Socialism,” *The Guardian*, July 12, 2017; Vidya Narayanan, Vlad Barash, John Kelly, Bence Kollanyi, Lisa-Maria Neudert, and Philip N. Howard. “Polarization, Partisanship and Junk News Consumption over Social Media in the US.” Oxford, UK: Project on Computational Propaganda. *Data Memo* 1 (2018).

²³⁹ Ico Maly, “Populism as a Mediatized Communicative Relation: The Birth of Algorithmic Populism.” *Tilburg Papers in Cultural Studies*, Paper 213 (October 2018).

further insulating users within echo chambers of like-minded content. Schmidta et al have found that people are already predisposed to seek out sources and information that they agree with, so social media only further increases their encapsulation in their own bubbles of similar content.²⁴⁰

This dual ideological and algorithmic echo chamber is reinforced by the fact that both content creators and social media platforms like Facebook or YouTube are for the most part funded by advertisements, the price of which is based off of clicks or views of a given page or story. Users can be exploited both by content creators seeking to keep them clicking by feeding users a steady diet of likeminded political stories, as well as by the social media platforms that seek to bundle viewers and readers into specific demographic groups that can be better targeted by advertisers.²⁴¹

Taken together, the market centric character of Internet media, through algorithmic content distribution and consumption mechanisms, creates an atmosphere that is beneficial to populist communicators seeking to both better reach audiences (the people) and impose their own normative views on discourse in ways that they were unable to in the past, where more mainstream or 'elite' media gatekeepers held the keys to access to the public sphere.

²⁴⁰ Ana Lucia Schmidta, Fabiana Zollo, Michela Del Vicario, Alessandro Bessi, Antonio Scala, Guido Caldarelli, H. ! Eugene Stanley and Walter Quattrociocchi, "Anatomy of News Consumption on Facebook.," *PNAS*, January 31, ! 2017. !

²⁴¹ Paul Covington, Jay Adams and Emre Sargin, "Deep Neural Networks for YouTube Recommendations," *Proceedings of the 10th ACM Conference on Recommender Systems*, ACM, Boston, MA. 2016. !

Section 6.2.3: The Internet and The Donald (

Much has been said of so far in this paper about President Donald Trump. Perhaps no figure better embodies the numerous hybridized intersections of new media technologies and practices in the Internet age than Trump, who has ably navigated the new media landscape using unique populist communication styles. Trump has long been an avatar of wealth and self-promotion through his real estate business and other business ventures, but the cultural reach he has amassed as a result of his wealth has truly encompassed all kinds of media forms. In addition to his constant use of Twitter, he's graced the cover of countless magazines and newspapers, hosted reality television shows, owned a (semi) professional football team, acted in dozens of commercials, hosted beauty pageants, appeared on radio shows, created board games, (ghost) written dozens of books, participated in pay-per-view pro wrestling matches, appeared as himself in dozens of movies and television sitcoms, appeared in video games, has received a Comedy Central Roast and has been shouted out in literally hundreds of rap songs.²⁴²

How did this wealthy businessman and New York City tabloid fixture become the self-proclaimed champion of the (white) working class, especially after the 2008 Great Recession? Despite the fact that he is a wealthy billionaire and is certainly a member of the global financial elite himself, it is not hard to comprehend how Trump harnessed populist communication tools so effectively in his rise to the Presidency.

²⁴² Michael Kranish and Marc Fisher. *Trump Revealed: An American Journey of Ambition, Ego, Money, and Power*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016); David Cay Johnston, *The Making of Donald Trump*. (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017); Wikipedia. "Donald Trump in Music." Accessed April 15, 2019. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Trump_in_music

With regards to his financial elite-ness, Trump has always presented his wealth in such a ! gaudy manner that it seems oddly authentic to his supporters. From his gold-plated penthouse, pervasive use of his last name for branding (Trump Tower, Trump Steaks, Trump Water, Trump Airlines etc.), copious nepotism, constant consumption of unhealthy amounts of fast food and no nonsense, in-your-face television persona on his reality show *The Apprentice*, Trump's tastes are so ostentatious that they seem like how average person winning the lottery would act.²⁴³ In 2009, comedian John Mulaney called Trump "what a hobo imagines a rich man to be."²⁴⁴

Related to this is Trump's widespread name recognition (and popular social media account), developed over 4 decades, which gave him the ability to reach the masses more easily than perhaps any other outsider candidate. With his massive media platform, Trump was able to shape media coverage in ways that sidestepped the framing narratives of media elites. Trump's frequent outrageous, simple, and often seemingly daft statements, insults and gaffes served as a natural magnet for the tabloidized and spectacle-driven coverage that has marked media since the 1990s.

Bartlett has remarked that social media is ideal for populist communication tactics, in that "the short acerbic nature of populist messages works well...humor, outspokenness, pithy put-downs and catchy slogans: these are the DNA of cyber culture."²⁴⁵ Trump's frequent outbursts were tailor made for endless sharing and discussion within the media. While plenty of media consumers were no doubt horrified by Trump's mudslinging and political norm-

²⁴³ David Cay Johnston, *The Making of Donald Trump*. (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017). !

²⁴⁴ John Mulaney, *Comedy Central Presents*, Season 13, Episode 23, April 3 2009. !

²⁴⁵ Jamie Bartlett, "Populism, Social Media and Democratic Strain," In *Democracy in Britain: Essays in Honour of (James Cornford*. eds. Guy Lodge and Glenn Gottfried, (London: Institute for Public Policy Research, 2014), 94. !

shattering, he was too interesting not to tune in and talk about. He commanded so many ! eyeballs that the media—across all platforms, especially the Internet and cable news—couldn't afford not to cover. This constant coverage of Trump's campaign (as both novelty, threat and general interest) gave him the ability to break through traditional media gatekeeping by sheer force of promotion and marketing.

Indeed, a populist communicator who employs seemingly outrageous comments that discredit elites and go against the grain of elite political consensus or so-called political correctness gives them a high degree of exposure, which in turn allows them to better set media agendas and frame (or re-frame) political debate.²⁴⁶ Mazzoleni speaks of "media populism," where a market centric media focuses attention on those who use populist communication, because the masses (media's audience and consumer base) are receptive to it.²⁴⁷ Tabloid media, of which Trump has long been a subject, gives ample coverage to those who use populist communication, ultimately producing a "public legitimization."²⁴⁸

Trump's use of mainstream media elites as an essential elite/Other in his own populist dichotomy should not be understated. Throughout his career, Trump has seemed to resent the highbrow media world that saw him as a cartoonish, self-promoting tabloid side-show. Indeed, it seems that President Obama and *Saturday Night Live* actor Seth Meyers' skewering of Trump

²⁴⁶ David Karpf, "Digital Politics after Trump," *Annals of the International Communication Association* 41, no. 2 (2017), 198–207; Gianpietro Mazzoleni, "Populism and the Media." In *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, eds. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 49–64.

²⁴⁷ Gianpietro Mazzoleni, "Populism and the Media." In *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, eds. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 8

²⁴⁸ Gianpietro Mazzoleni, "The Media and the Growth of Neo-Populism in Contemporary Democracies," In *The Media and Neo-Populism: A Contemporary Comparative Analysis*, eds. Gianpietro Mazzoleni, Julianne Stewart and Bruce Horsfield, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publisher, 2003), 236; The Economist. "What do old tabloid covers reveal about the rise of Donald Trump?" *The Economist*. January 11, 2019.

during the 2011 White House Correspondents Dinner, the most elite of elite media affairs, was a major motivating factor for his eventual Presidential run.²⁴⁹

Trump benefitted from a readymade constituency who, partially as a result of *Fox News's* years of ragging on mainstream media, was already predisposed to support Trump's demonization of the media as the "enemy of the American people."²⁵⁰ This steerage of media consumers within the conservative bubble towards Trump was also advanced by the algorithms of Facebook, YouTube and other social media sites, as well as by actors who were able to game the algorithms with floods of fake or misleading content.²⁵¹

Section 6.3: Discourse Analysis

Donald Trump – 2016 Presidential Campaign Speech in Phoenix Arizona

Donald Trump's 2016 Presidential campaign speech on immigration in Phoenix, Arizona is instructive in its use of populist communication tools within the context of the segmented, hybridized and tabloidized news media that has come to typify the Internet age.

In his speech, Trump frequently attempted to describe the "American people" as a monolithic bloc, with 19 instances during his speech. However, Trump often conflated the American people with "working people," which, based on the context of his past speeches and

²⁴⁹ "President Obama Roasts Donald Trump At White House Correspondents' Dinner!" YouTube video. 5:33. "SuchIsLifeVideos." April 30, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8TwRmX6zs4>; "Seth Meyers Slams Donald Trump At White House Correspondents' Dinner!" YouTube video. 3:27. "SuchIsLifeVideos." May 1, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mv4MzaGk2VI>

²⁵⁰ Amanda Erickson, "Trump Called the News Media an 'Enemy of The American People.' Here's a History of the ! Term," Washington Post, February 18, 2017. !

²⁵¹ Phillip Howard, Bharath Ganesh and Dimitra Liotsiou. "The IRA, Social Media and Political Polarization in ! the United States, 2012-2018," *Computational Propaganda Research Project*, University of Oxford, 2018; Christopher C. Yang, Xuning Tang and Bhavani M. Thuraisingham. "An Analysis of User Influence Ranking ! Algorithms on Dark Web Forums." *ISI-KDD 10* (2010). !

general audience, is intended to mean his base of predominantly rural, downwardly mobile, older white men who had been primed by years of *Fox News* and Internet propaganda. Trump's framing of the mainstream media as nefarious and morally corrupt elites served as red meat this base who see mainstream media elites as predominantly urban intellectual snobs and arbiters of political correctness who are enemies in the decades long right-left culture war, which has long overshadowed economic and class considerations in US politics.

This links with how Trump used underlying racialized and exclusionary forms of nationalism within the conservative movement as a way to connect the elite media and Reagan-style "special interests" in Washington to racial Others, represented primarily by Hispanic and Muslim immigrants and asylum seekers. In his speech he specifically takes aim at "out of touch media elites," claiming that immigration "facts aren't known because the media won't report on them, the politicians won't talk about them, and the special interests spend a lot of money trying to cover them up." By connecting elites to a racialized Other, in this case immigrants, Trump could easily define a corrupt enemy that the people can unite against in moral solidarity. Trump's messaging was predominantly conflictive, and he frequently ascribed blame for perceived immigration issues to elites or Others, with 19 instances. He frequently made explicit distinctions between these elites or Others and the people, with 11 instances. His speech also contained 13 instances where he denied sovereignty to these elites or Others, often literally, with most instances being calls for deportation.

Trump's speech built on and went beyond much of the racist dog-whistling of the ! Southern Strategy that Nixon and Reagan pioneered in the preceding decades.²⁵² Departing from norms of public discourse established during and after the Civil Rights movement, Trump said much of the quiet part loud—he called for explicit separation of racial minorities, often using the term immigrants, from that of the (American) people, which were clearly meant to mean white people. With a focus on the cultural and racial differences of immigrants, particularly Hispanic and Muslim immigrants, Trump claimed that “not everyone who seeks to join our country will be able to successfully assimilate.” He equated undocumented immigrants with “violent crimes” and “total chaos and lawlessness.” This equation of undocumented immigrants with criminals, which, considering the majority of undocumented immigrants are of Hispanic origin, carries an inherently racialized message of exclusion.

Trump also used 12 anecdotes based around victims of crimes committed by undocumented immigrants, which included a number of the victim's mothers—so-called “angel moms”—coming to speak on stage with him. By highlighting their stories, Trump was able to overstate the criminality of immigrants, who are in fact less likely to commit crimes than native born Americans.²⁵³ Additionally, Trump played up notions of the absolute sovereignty of the people, saying that “it is our right as a sovereign nation to choose immigrants that we think are the likeliest to thrive and flourish here,” a quote that no doubt could be seen in a racially exclusionary light.

²⁵² Bart Bonikowski and Yueran Zhang. “Populism as Dog-Whistle Politics: Anti-Elite Discourse and Sentiments ! toward Minorities,” Working Paper, *Harvard University*, (June 2018). !

²⁵³ Daniel Martinez, Walter Ewing and Ruben Rumbaut. “The Criminalization of Immigration in the United States.” *American Immigration Council*. 2015. !

It should also be noted how this speech was covered in media. Cable news shows, whether ideologically friendly to Trump like *Fox News* or hostile like CNN, provided round the clock coverage of Trump rallies on both television and their social media accounts, and this was no exception. Trump himself tweeted extensively before and after his speech to promote it directly to his followers. Short clips of his speech on his Twitter feed received tens of thousands of comments, likes and retweets, while Trump also gave personalized replies to some low-follower accounts that tweeted at him, making it seem that he had intimate interaction with followers on a personal level.²⁵⁴

Clips and transcriptions of his speech were shared countless times on other social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube by personalities that ranged from official media channels to scornful media elites to startled minorities to fanatical Trump supporters.²⁵⁵ Photos of Trump and angel moms during the speech were turned into memes and cartoons by zealous Trump supporters and shared to social media feeds and subreddits.²⁵⁶ The constant interaction with and viral spread of the content by audiences was emblematic of the new dimensions of the media.

Trump's delivery and style should also be noted. As in many of his speeches, he seemed to speak completely off the cuff, leaning on prepared remarks strictly for statistical references

²⁵⁴ Donald Trump. Twitter Posts. August 28, 2016—September 4, 2016. Accessed at <https://twitter.com/search?q=from%3ArealDonaldTrump%20since%3A2016-08-28%20until%3A2016-09-04&src=typd&lang=en>

²⁵⁵ "Donald Trump Delivers Immigration Speech in Arizona." *ABC News Facebook Page*. Facebook, August 30, 2016; "Trump: 'Mexico will pay for the wall.'" *CNN Facebook Page*. Facebook, August 30, 2016; "Donald Trump Outlines ! 10 Point Plan For Immigration Reform." *NBC News YouTube Page*. YouTube, September 1, 2016. !

²⁵⁶ u/mike205992. "Corrupt NBC Nightly News CAUGHT quoting Trump Arizona immigration speech out of ! context." Post on *r/The_Donald*. Reddit Inc. September 1, 2016. https://www.reddit.com/r/The_Donald/comments/50qzdm/corrupt_nbc_nightly_news_caught_quoting_trump/; "Angel Mom." *Conservativememes.com*, Accessed May 1, 2019. <https://conservativememes.com/t/angel-mom> !

or prepared anecdotes. Trump's tendency to go off script (or speak without a script at all) gives ! him an air of authenticity among his supporters, who feel that they could have a simple conversation with him. Trump is an ideal communicator for the increasing conversationalization of the media, which has become commonplace with the mass use of short form social media platforms like Twitter and less grammar-intensive Internet speech. Trump has even referred to himself as the "Ernest Hemingway of 140 characters."²⁵⁷

Trump scored the highest out of any of the speeches analyzed on the number of evidentialities (suggested facts). This paper found 12 blatantly untrue statements, statistics or misleading information in Trump's speech, including claims that refugees coming into the country were not filing documentation (untrue), claiming that the Obama administration's DACA executive order counted as amnesty (it was not) and that Hilary Clinton proposed mass amnesty for undocumented immigrants (she did not). He also erroneously claimed that the country was in the midst of a "jobs crisis and a border crisis," despite the fact that unemployment was at a historical low, undocumented immigration was rapidly declining from its 2005 high point and border apprehensions of undocumented immigrants was also historically low.²⁵⁸

Like many of his other wildly inaccurate or outrageous statements, his unverified claims would in many instances be reported objectively as news or covered from the angle of a political horse-race. For example, *CBS* ran the headline "Donald Trump Doubles Down in

²⁵⁷ Eliza Collins. "Trump: 'I'm the Ernest Hemingway of 140 characters.'" *Politico*. November 20, 2015. !

²⁵⁸ Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. "Civilian Unemployment Rate." 1948-2019. !

<https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/UNRATE>; Jynnah Radford and Abby Budiman. "Facts on U.S. Immigrants, 2016." ! *Pew Research Center*, September 14, 2018; U.S. Customs and Border Protection. "U.S. Border Patrol Monthly ! Apprehensions (FY 2000 - FY 2018)." 2019. <https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2019-Mar/bp-total-monthly-apps-sector-area-fy2018.pdf> !

Immigration Speech: “Mexico Will Pay for the Wall,” only refuting Trump’s false or racist ! immigration claims with quotes from his opponents, primarily Clinton.²⁵⁹ *NBC News* published Trump’s immigration claims, like his declaration of heaps of cases that “illegal immigrants brutally attacked US citizens but were never punished or deported,” without providing any statistics challenging the claim itself.²⁶⁰ The *New York Times* covered the speech in horse-race politics fashion, noting how Trump’s amicable earlier meeting with the Mexican President could confuse supporters who were gung-ho about his strict and exclusionary immigration policies.²⁶¹ In advance of the speech, *CNN* said that Trump’s immigration policies have “received scrutiny” rather than expound on the scrutiny or the structural reasons for it from particular parties.²⁶²

Some outlets like the *Washington Post* and *NPR* fact-checked Trump’s speech for accuracy and refuted a number of his claims.²⁶³ However, these fact checks by mainstream ‘elite’ media news sources (and their spread over social media) would do little to influence Trump supporters, who had become inhabitants of a separate media ecosystem that had unwavering support for Trump and any of his claim. Indeed, the conservative media ecosystem was incredibly supportive of Trump’s speech—Trump even thanked *Fox and Friends* for a favorable review of his speech.²⁶⁴ The extensive fact-checking from mainstream media sources

²⁵⁹ Emily, Schultheis, “Donald Trump Doubles Down in Immigration Speech: “Mexico Will Pay for the Wall,” *CBS (News)*, September 1, 2016. !

²⁶⁰ Ali Vitali and Alex Johnson, “Trump Sticks to Hard Immigration Line After ‘Thoughtful’ Meeting With Peña Nieto,” *NBC News*, August 31, 2016. !

²⁶¹ Joshua Partlow, Sean Sullivan and Jose A. DelReal. “After subdued trip to Mexico, Trump talks tough on ! immigration in Phoenix,” *New York Times*, August 31, 2016. !

²⁶² Eric Bradner, “Trump to give immigration speech amid major questions,” *CNN*, August 28, 2016. !

²⁶³ Michelle Ye Hee Le and Glenn Kessler, “Fact-checking Donald Trump’s immigration speech,” *Washington Post*, September 1, 2016; Domenico Montanaro, Danielle Kurtzleben, Scott Horsley, Sarah McCammon, Richard ! Gonzales, “Fact Check: Donald Trump’s Speech on Immigration,” *NPR*, August 31, 2016. !

²⁶⁴ Trump, Donald J. Twitter Post. September 1, 2016 at 6:40 AM. !
<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/771296597963661312>

would only serve to reinforce the narrative among Trump and his supporters that the mainstream media was biased against him (and by extension, them).

Trump's speech was quite light on references to American civic religion or religion itself, which seems odd, considering he often gestures towards patriotic and spiritual embrace of both categories. However, Trump's relationship to both of these categories is quite fickle—his gestures to civic religion are often more symbolic (such as literally hugging the flag) or devices for whipping up support from the Republican base of religious conservatives that was cemented during the Reagan revolution.

One last important point of Trump's populist communication style within the speech was his claim his wealth and lack of political experience gave him the ability to sidestep issues of political corruption and lobbying. As he notes in his speech: "because I am not a politician, I am not beholden to any special interest." Indeed, Trump is not the first person of wealth to attack finance, as FDR pioneered the practice in the 1930s. As a policy speech, Trump outlined quite a few idealized policies, which ended up netting him 18 modalities. Taken together, Trump scored exceedingly high on most categories of populist communication.

CONCLUSION !

This paper found that among the cases, the “populist-ness” of populist communicators (measured by measuring the weighted totals of populist communication tools for each speaker) decreased after Donnelly’s exceedingly high score, but showed a marked uptick with Trump. This isn’t a full proof designation that all populist communicators have gotten more “populist” in their communication over time. Indeed, others speakers mentioned in the paper who have extensively used populist communication styles such as Huey Long, Father Coughlin, George Wallace, Ross Perot and Bernie Sanders are worth looking into for future discourse analysis studies. More extensive study of multiple media/speeches/posts by the speakers studied in the paper could also be another useful avenue for gauging how populists shift their use of populist communication tools over time, especially on a more individual level.

Overall, this paper’s hypothesis that advocative messages would decrease over time held true, save a slight uptick with Trump. This makes sense, considering that following the advent of the radio, the audience at large of particular speakers and the group designated as the people gradually become interchangeable in many instances. This paper’s hypothesis that conflictive messages would increase over time was only partially true, as conflictive messages declined with Roosevelt and Reagan and showed a substantial increase with Trump. This shows that Trump represents a major break in US politics, particularly because he is willing to castigate elites and Others in ways that others in the past have refused to do in such an overt way. This could also be because Trump’s perceived enemies—media and cultural elites, government bureaucrats, financial elites (in some cases) and of course, numerous racial and religious minorities—encompass a far larger group than the elites designated by Roosevelt and

Reagan. Regarding name calling, discrediting and blaming elites or Others for problems, Trump ! in particular scored the second highest of the speakers in weighted total (.0048) and the highest by raw total (19 instances), which showcases his penchant for more direct attacks against elites.

This paper's hypothesis that emotional messages would decrease over time was off base; emotional messages remained low and generally static, and constituted the category with the fewest number of instances. Both Roosevelt and Trump had scores that were quite low, perhaps owing to their less enthusiastic embrace of religion than Reagan and Donnelly. Indeed, the through line of religion, while a major aspect of US popular discourse, seems to be more often than not employed sparingly, with underlying religiosity mostly implied by speakers' own personae.

This paper's hypothesis that rhetorical appeals would increase was only true for Trump, as both Roosevelt and Reagan yielded far lower rhetorical scores than Donnelly. This is explained with Trump's anecdote heavy speech—he mentioned a number of so-called “angel moms” (mothers whose children had been killed by undocumented immigrants), padding out his stats in this category. While all four of the speeches were in some sense policy outlines, Donnelly and Trump more explicitly designate their ideal policies, which had the effect of increasing their number of modalities as well as inflating their overall numbers of instances of populist communication tool use.

Still, Donnelly was by far the most populist overall in his communication, evidenced by his very high weighted score, particularly with regards to advocative and rhetorical communication tools. Trump held the highest raw score in every messaging category except for emotional. The fact that these two speakers held high raw and weighted score is perhaps a

result of their constituencies, which skewed primarily rural. Additionally, both Donnelly and Trump included language that singled out immigrants or “aliens” as separate groups from the people.

The jump in populist-ness from Roosevelt and Reagan to Trump with the onset of Internet media is notable. The para-social relationship that Trump’s followers feel with him when they retweet or interact with a Trump authored tweet or Trump-centered video on social media is quite more intimate than the relationship that past audiences had with Roosevelt or Reagan on the radio or on television, respectively. This heightened degree of intimacy among Trump’s followers suggests that the Internet medium is more ideal for a populist communicator like Trump than any other medium was for other populist communicators. The extremely low degree of gatekeeping and direct form of communication also heighten the degree to which the Internet serves as an ideal vessel for populist communication techniques.

Ultimately, the connection between populist communication and media form over time deserves further study. As the Internet continues to mature as a communication form, such study becomes even more necessary as new media technologies provide outlets for greater (or lesser) embrace of populist communication styles.

APPENDICES

Figure 1: Discourse Analysis Dataset

Speaker	Donnelly		FDR		Reagan		Trump		Total
# of Words	1900	Weighted score as % of total word count	2,500	Weighted score as % of total word count	4,800	Weighted score as % of total word count	4,000	Weighted score as % of total word count	Total instances of populist tool category
<i>reference to the people as monolithic</i>	20	0.0105	13	0.0052	19	0.0040	19	0.0048	71
<i>stress of the people's virtues and achievements</i>	2	0.0011	3	0.0012	10	0.0021	3	0.0008	18
<i>demonstration of closeness to/embodiment of the people/"only I can fix our problem"</i>	2	0.0011	6	0.0024	6	0.0013	7	0.0018	21
<i>demands of sovereignty for the people</i>	12	0.0063	4	0.0016	2	0.0004	8	0.0020	26
Total Advocative	36	0.0189	26	0.0104	37	0.0077	37	0.0093	136
<i>exclusion of Others/elites from the people</i>	4	0.0021	4	0.0016	2	0.0004	11	0.0028	21
<i>name calling, discrediting or blaming Others/elites for problems</i>	10	0.0053	8	0.0032	12	0.0025	19	0.0048	49
<i>denying sovereignty to Others/elites</i>	5	0.0026	8	0.0032	3	0.0006	13	0.0033	29
Total Conflictive	19	0.0100	20	0.0080	17	0.0035	43	0.0108	99
<i>References to religion/God</i>	2	0.0011	2	0.0008	4	0.0008	1	0.0003	9
<i>references to American cultural history/civic religion</i>	5	0.0026	2	0.0008	13	0.0027	0	0.0000	20
Total Emotional	7	0.0037	4	0.0016	17	0.0035	1	0.0003	29
<i>use of stories/ anecdotes/ quotes/proverbs</i>	1	0.0005	5	0.0020	8	0.0017	12	0.0030	26
<i>modalities (idealized states of being, i.e. should/could)</i>	24	0.0126	9	0.0036	12	0.0025	18	0.0045	63
<i>evidentialities (suggested factualities, conspiracy)</i>	1	0.0005	0	0.0000	2	0.0004	12	0.0030	15
Total Rhetorical	26	0.0137	14	0.0056	22	0.0046	42	0.0105	104
Total instances of populist communication tools	150		114		164		204		368
Weighted Total (populist communication tools/wordcount)	0.079		0.046		0.034		0.051		

Figure 2: "Populist-ness" of Speakers Over Time

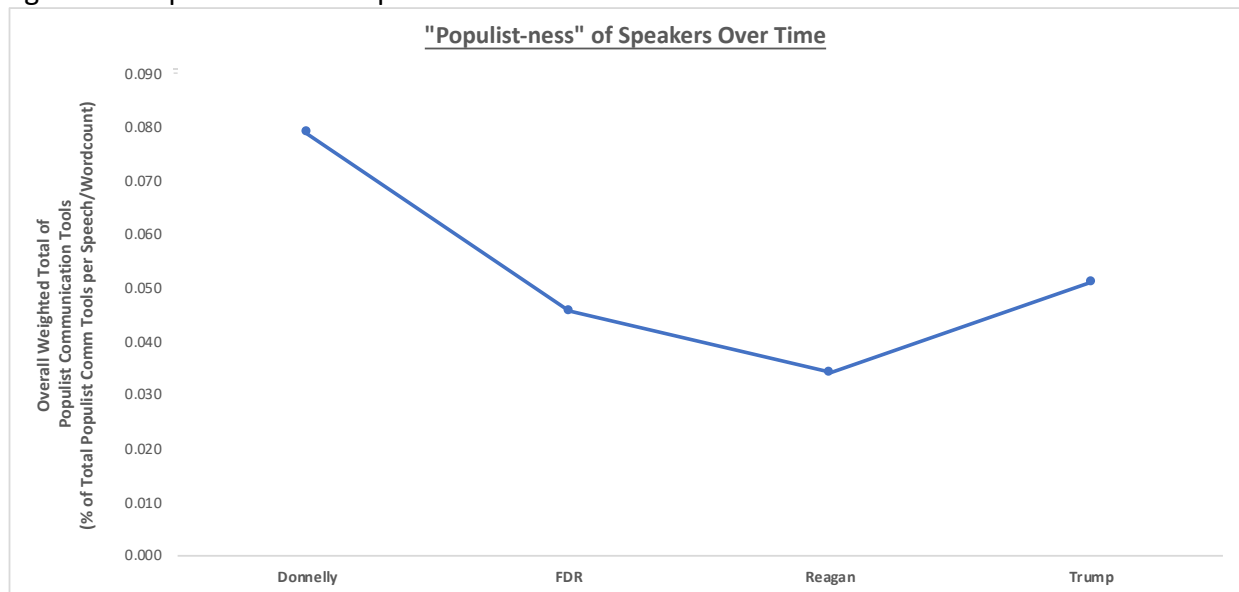


Figure 3: Populist Communication Tools Over Time (Raw)

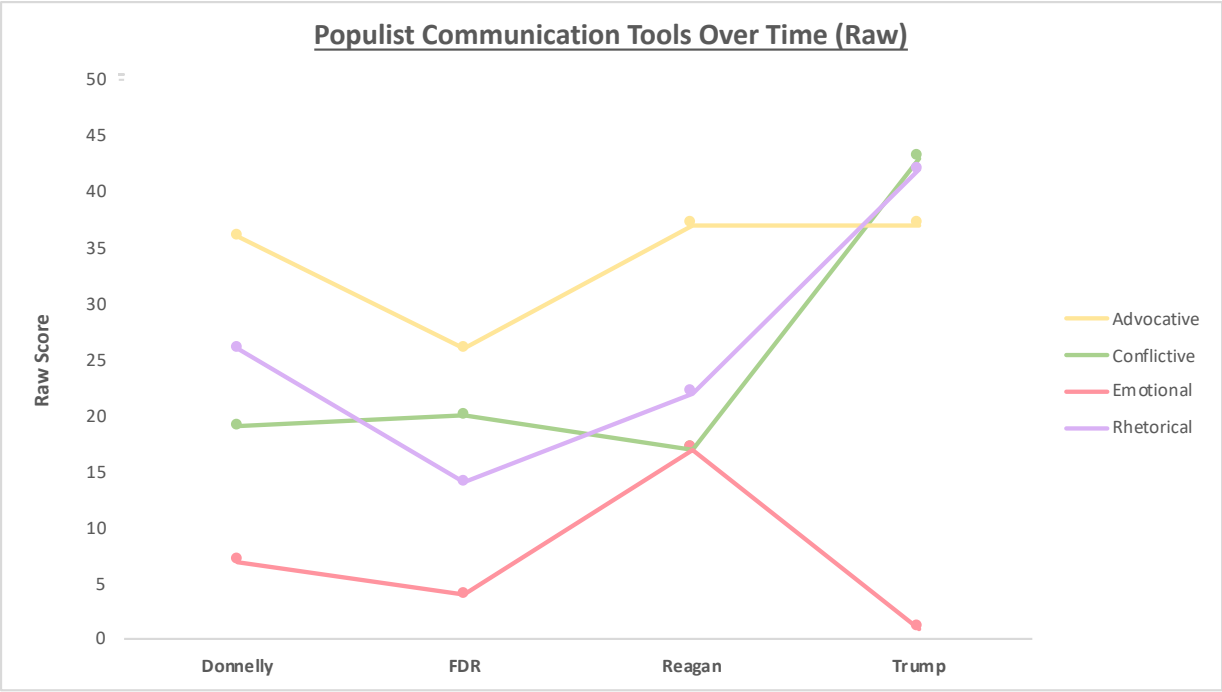
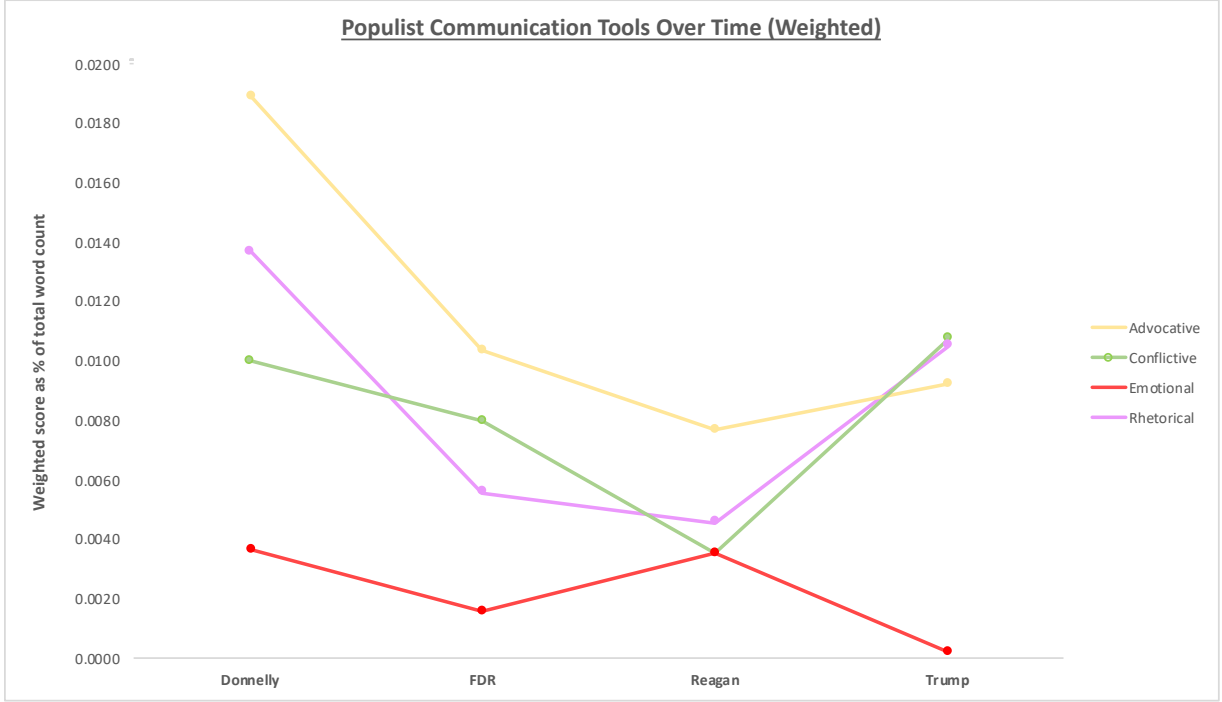


Figure 4: Populist Communication Tools Over Time (Weighted)



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