"Someone’s Got to Look out for the People": Exploring Donald Trump and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Online Performance of Populism and Immigration Rhetoric

Taylor P. Koopman
Western Michigan University, taykoopman@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses

Part of the Social Influence and Political Communication Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses/5162
“SOMEONE’S GOT TO LOOK OUT FOR THE PEOPLE”: EXPLORING DONALD TRUMP AND ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ’S ONLINE PERFORMANCE OF POPULISM AND IMMIGRATION RHETORIC

by

Taylor P. Koopman

A thesis submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Communication
Western Michigan University
June 2020

Thesis Committee:
Anna Popkova, Ph.D., Chair
Charles Kurth, Ph.D.
Sue Ellen Christian, M.A
“SOMEONE’S GOT TO LOOK OUT FOR THE PEOPLE”: EXPLORING DONALD TRUMP AND ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ’S ONLINE PERFORMANCE OF POPULISM AND IMMIGRATION RHETORIC

Taylor P. Koopman, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 2020

This thesis examines the performance of populism by a right- and left-wing politician in the digital sphere during the peak of the immigration crisis in 2019 using the lens of Moffitt’s populism as performance theory (performer, stage, and audience) and Baldwin-Philippi’s four methods of ‘centering the people.’ My findings show that Trump and Ocasio-Cortez’s performances of populism condemn the degradation of the U.S. and portray themselves as immigration warriors. Trump uses exclusionary rhetoric to advocate putting “America First,” and Ocasio-Cortez expresses inclusionary rhetoric to develop an “America for All,” in a way that informs their performances of conservative and democratic-socialist populism to center ‘the people.’ Specifically, Trump and Ocasio-Cortez’s performance centers ‘the people’ by: speaking to them using retweets of their own messaging, utilizing data-driven facts, and using Spanish (in Ocasio-Cortez’s case); engaging them by visually showing engagement through photos and videos (only Ocasio-Cortez used this tactic); styling oneself on them through both moral outrage and compassion, and Ocasio-Cortez voicing support for an inclusive U.S., while Trump argued for a protected U.S.; and finally highlighting their voices through retweeting verified users to showcase support for not only themselves, but their policy positions as well. These findings demonstrate that populism is a form of strategic communication, a tool for populist politicians to use to not only traditionally unite ‘the people’ against an enemy, but also for a cause. These findings also expand on left-wing populism to show how formerly excluded out-group immigrants may be invited to become part of ‘the people’ through inclusionary rhetoric.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor Dr. Anna Popkova of the School of Communication at Western Michigan University. I would not have been able to do any of this without her, and her mentorship has been invaluable to me. Further, she is a true inspiration and always made feel supported and understood throughout the thesis process. I truly appreciate all the advice Dr. Popkova provided, and I know I would not be here without her.

I must also express my very profound gratitude to my partner, as well as my mother, for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of researching and writing this thesis. Without their support, I would not have been able to devote so much time to my studies, and I owe much to them. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. Thank you.

Taylor P. Koopman
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................... ii

LIST OF TABLES ....................................................................................................................... vi

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................... vii

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 1

II. LITERATURE REVIEW ........................................................................................................... 5

  Background on Immigration Case Study .............................................................................. 5

  Immigration in the U.S. ......................................................................................................... 5

  The History of Immigration in the U.S. (1790 – 2016) ...................................................... 6

  Immigration Under President Trump (2017 – Present) .................................................... 8

  The Immigration Debate in the U.S. .................................................................................... 11

  Pro- and Anti-Immigration Rhetoric .................................................................................... 14

  Theoretical Foundations ..................................................................................................... 16

    Populism as Political Style ............................................................................................... 16

    Performing Populism ....................................................................................................... 18

    Populism and Identity Politics .......................................................................................... 21

    Right- Versus Left-wing Populism .................................................................................... 22
Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER

Right-wing Populist Donald Trump ................................................................. 25

Left-wing Populist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez .............................................. 25

Research Questions ......................................................................................... 26

III. METHODOLOGY ...................................................................................... 27

IV. RESULTS ................................................................................................. 30

Trump and Ocasio-Cortez’s Performance of Populism on Twitter ............... 30

Condemning the Degradation of the U.S. ....................................................... 30

Acting as an Immigration Warrior ................................................................. 38

Putting “America First” .................................................................................. 43

Developing an “America for All” ................................................................. 46

V. DISCUSSION ........................................................................................... 50

Summary of Research Findings ................................................................. 50

Strengths and Limitations ............................................................................ 54

Future Research ......................................................................................... 55

REFERENCES ............................................................................................ 57

APPENDICES ............................................................................................... 75
Table of Contents—Continued

A. A Timeline of Trump’s Immigration Policies and Events.............................................. 75
B. U.S. Immigration Timeline................................................................................................. 82
C. Keywords Used in Data Collection...................................................................................... 87
D. Copyright Forms ............................................................................................................... 88
LIST OF TABLES

1. Ocasio-Cortez and Trump’s Total Tweets and Theme Occurrences ......................................... 31
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Populist Affordances Model and Digital Campaign Practices ........................................21
2. Ocasio-Cortez Condemning the Decline of the U.S ..........................................................32
3. Ocasio-Cortez Calling Trump Racist in Mind and Heart ..................................................32
4. Representative Brendan Boyle Implying Double Standard of Racism .................................32
5. Ocasio-Cortez Claiming to be on the Side of the People ....................................................34
6. Ocasio-Cortez Citing Expert on Concentration Camps ...................................................35
7. Trump Blaming Democrats for U.S. Immigration Problems .............................................37
8. Trump Denouncing the “Squad.” .........................................................................................37
9. The Federalist Article on Corporate Media Failure .............................................................38
10. Trump Blaming Obama for Family Separation ..................................................................40
11. Univision Nueva York Warning of ICE Raid ......................................................................41
12. Ocasio-Cortez Showcasing Engagement with Immigrants ...............................................42
13. Ocasio-Cortez Calling GOP Un-American .........................................................................43
14. Trump Implying Immigrants Bring Drugs to the U.S ........................................................44
15. Reporter Sharing News of Immigrant Father of School Shooter .......................................45
17. Ocasio-Cortez Offering Redemption to White Supremacist ..............................................48
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Since the early 2000s, the populist phenomenon has infiltrated various democracies around the world, reaching a global high point in 2010 (Kyle & Meyer, 2020) and remaining steadily prevalent in politics ever since. In 2019, nearly 20 populist leaders held executive office around the world (Kyle & Meyer, 2020). The election of U.S. President Donald Trump in 2016 reflected this global trend and represented a major shift in the way politicians in the U.S. present themselves and communicate with ‘the people.’ Politicians are increasingly compelled to ‘speak in a more popular idiom and to court popular support more assiduously’ (Blumberg & Kavanagh, 1999 p. 220). Trump and other populist politicians are finding electoral success in pitting ‘the people’ against ‘the elite.’ Even though populism has been called a threat to democracy (Mounk, 2018) and has long been thought of as a ‘dirty word’ or an insult to be thrown at politicians we don’t like (Moffitt, 2016 p. 11), the phenomenon continues to become ‘mainstream’ in the political landscape (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Meny & Surel, 2002).

During his presidential campaign, Trump used several populist tactics to unite his base, or ‘the people,’ to rise to power. These tactics ranged from his controversial slogan, ‘Make America Great Again,’ to attacking and delegitimizing the media as ‘fake news,’ and claims that he would ‘drain the swamp’ of Washington, D.C., among others (Goodheart, 2017; Naim, 2017; Winberg, 2017). In both Trump’s campaign and subsequent presidency, these types of populist tactics were of particular significance in relation to his stance on immigration and were reflected throughout his rhetoric and policies (see Appendix A for a timeline of Trump’s immigration policies and events). Trump was famously quoted by the Washington Post in 2018, deriding protections for immigrants and refugees, claiming they are “people from s--thole countries,” and
later said immigrants aren’t people, but “animals.” Soon after that, immigration and human rights issues began to emerge in the media as family separation policies led to reports of thousands of children being detained in inhumane conditions at the border.

In response to Trump’s election and exclusionary rhetoric and policies, the 2018 midterm elections brought a ‘blue wave’ of Democrats (Enten, 2018; Siddiqui, 2018; Yglesias, 2018) - particularly females and people of color (Cooney, 2018; Milligan, 2018; Zhou, 2018) - to positions of power throughout the nation. One emergent star of this blue wave was a 28-year-old from the Bronx, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. As reports of conditions at the border continued to come to light, Ocasio-Cortez became one of Trump’s biggest opponents. The congresswoman also used populist tactics in her campaign and became a defender for immigrants and those deemed as ‘the other.’ Even though Trump and Ocasio-Cortez’s rhetoric and policy positions are on opposite ends of the political spectrum, Ocasio-Cortez has consistently been compared to Trump by the media based on her use of social media (Nguyen, 2018; Tauberg, 2018) and has been named a populist by several journalists (Baker, 2019; Manchester, 2018; O’falt, 2018; Zito, 2019).

Politicians such as Trump and Ocasio-Cortez can use social media - particularly Twitter - as a means to gain unmediated access to voters, promote themselves and their policies, and communicate personally and directly with the electorate (Golbeck, Grimes, & Rogers, 2010; Jacobs & Spierings, 2016). Populist actors can build on these advantages through social media and create a feeling of ‘social presence’ (Kruikemeier, van Noort, Vliegenthart, & de Vreese, 2013), solidifying the connection between the populist and ‘the people’ or ‘like-minded others’ (Jacobs & Spierings, 2016). Many credit social media as the reason Trump won the presidency, and both Trump and Ocasio-Cortez’s tweets appear in the news regularly for their inflammatory
or controversial subject matter. With the growing interest in populism, media, and communication (Aalberg, Esser, Reinemann, Stromback, & de Vreese, 2017), and the rising importance of social media as a means of political communication, it is more important than ever to explore the relationship between populism and social media.

Few studies have focused on the performance of populism, and even fewer have studied the performance of populism on social media. Since most populists of note have been of the conservative right-wing (i.e. - Jair Bolsonaro, Donald Trump, Geert Wilders, etc.), most studies investigating populism focus on right-wing politicians and parties (Bos, van der Brug, & de Vreese, 2011; Esser, Stepinska, & Hopmann 2017; Stier, Posch, Bleier & Strohmaier 2017). However, as Ernst, Engesser, Buchel, Blassnig, & Esser (2017) found, populism is not only a right-wing phenomenon; in fact, populist communication is stronger for those politicians at the ‘extremes of the political spectrum.’ Therefore, this thesis aims to examine not only the performance of populism on social media, but populism as performed by a left-wing democratic-socialist and a right-wing conservative, addressing this significant gap in the literature and adding to our understanding of the concept of populism as a spectrum. There is much focus on right-wing populism in academia and the media (Groshek & Engelbert, 2013; Heiss & Matthes, 2017; Kramer, 2017; Oliver & Rahn, 2016; Stier, Posch, Bleier & Strohmaier, 2017). However, less is known about left-wing populism (March, 2017; Otjes & Louwerse, 2015; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014), how it is performed on social media, and how it may differ from a right-wing performance of populism. With the increase in populist politicians of varying parties around the globe, coupled with the solidifying prominence of the role social media plays in politics, it is important to understand not only right-wing, but also left-wing politicians’ use of populism and if or how it differs from their counterparts.
To understand the performance of populism on social media by both left- and right-wing politicians, this thesis will focus specifically on the rhetoric used by Ocasio-Cortez and Trump relating to immigration on Twitter during the height of the 2019 immigration crisis when reports of human rights violations began to surface in the media and dominated the political conversation in the U.S. Ocasio-Cortez represents the left-wing populist movement in the U.S. and is both an avid and engaging social media user, and is a significant advocate for immigration rights. In juxtaposition to Ocasio-Cortez, Donald Trump represents the “America first” right-wing populist movement and is thus vehemently anti-immigrant. He is also a highly frequent user of Twitter and is one of the top ten most followed users on the platform (Boyd, 2020). Populists may focus on several various anti-establishment or socioeconomic issues, such as corruption and economic inequality (e.g. – Occupy Wall Street in 2011) or healthcare reform, as well as moral and cultural issues like religious traditionalism or crime when communicating with ‘the people.’ However, as Kyle & Meyer (2020) found, cultural populism is the most dominant form of populism today due to the rise of anti-immigration and anti-minority movements among populist leaders and parties. By focusing on the highly relevant issue of immigration, this thesis aims to gain a deeper understanding of populism as performed by contrasting ideologies and how they embody the different U.S. American values of ‘the people’ at the core of the immigration debate. Therefore, in this study I conduct a comparative case study of both Ocasio-Cortez and Trump’s use of Twitter to understand how they use pro- or anti-immigrant rhetoric to perform left- and right-wing populism to their audience, or ‘the people.’ This study draws on Moffitt’s (2016) theory of populism as a political style and Baldwin-Philippi’s (2018) four methods of ‘centering the people’ while performing populism on social media.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Background on Immigration Case Study

Immigration in the U.S.

Immigration has become a key focal point of the U.S. political conversation and is often rife with controversy, but the U.S. has long been considered a nation of immigrants. As of 2019, the Migration Policy Institute found “the United States has, by far, the largest migrant population in the world – about four times that of … the two countries with the next largest amount of immigrants” (Bolter, 2019a). In fact, the U.S. hosts approximately 51 million immigrants (United Nations, 2019), making up nearly 14% of the nation’s population (Radford, 2019).

While a vast majority (77%) of immigrants are in the U.S. lawfully (Radford, 2019), there are up to 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. today (Bolter, 2019b). More than half of these immigrants are Mexican (Bolter, 2019b), but the undocumented population arriving from Mexico has declined by 1.3 million since 2010 (Warren, 2019). Perhaps consequently, the number of Mexicans apprehended at the 2,000-mile long southern border has also fallen (Passel & Cohn, 2019), with apprehensions of non-Mexicans far outnumbering the former for the past four years (Gramlich & Noe-Bustamante, 2019). As Mexican immigration dropped, the number of undocumented immigrants coming to the U.S. from other Central American and Asian countries have risen substantially (Passel & Cohn, 2019). Overall, the majority of immigrants crossing the border into the U.S. are from an amalgamation of all other countries, not from Mexico (Passel & Cohn, 2019).

Besides documented and undocumented immigrants, other migrant-types of import are refugees and asylum seekers hoping to find safety in the U.S. Though similar, the key difference
between refugees and asylum seekers is that the former nearly always apply for resettlement within the U.S. while outside of the country, and the latter apply after already arriving at a port of entry to the country. Since the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program was established in 1980, 3 million refugees – more than in any other country – have been successfully settled in the U.S. (Radford, 2019). In 2020, a maximum of 18,000 refugees will be allowed to enter the U.S. under the Trump administration’s new proposed refugee acceptance ceiling, down from the previous year’s historically low cap of 30,000 refugees (Schor, 2019). This would be the lowest number of refugees accepted and resettled since the refugee program began, and reflects the U.S.’s newly lost status as the world’s top country for refugee acceptance – the U.S. resettled more refugees each year than all other countries combined up until 2017 (Radford & Connor, 2019). Interestingly, even though refugee acceptance declined, asylum acceptance rates increased 46% from 26,509 in 2017 to 38,687 in 2018 (Mossaad, 2019). These statistics serve as a basis for understanding the state of immigration in the U.S. today, and demonstrate both the complexity and importance of analysing such an issue in this thesis.

The History of Immigration in the U.S. (1790 – 2016)

Though the current state of immigration is focused on immigrants entering the country across the southern border from Mexico and other Central American countries, the U.S. has historically been touted as a nation of immigrants from all over the globe – particularly since the country was founded by a wave of unrestricted European immigrants who came to this new land seeking freedom from religious persecution. However, in the U.S.’s early days the acceptance of immigrants was permitted by the whiteness of their skin. After the United States of America was founded in 1776, Congress passed The Naturalization Act of 1790, allowing any free white person of “good character,” who had been living in the country for two or more years to apply
for citizenship. Non-white persons were denied citizenship and subsequent basic constitutional protections. It wasn’t until the Civil Rights Act of 1866, and the later adopted Citizenship Clause in the 14th Amendment, that all people born or naturalized in the U.S. were declared citizens regardless of race. Nevertheless, the U.S.’s immigration laws continued to harbour explicit bias against certain nationalities. For example, Chinese workers were banned entirely from entering the country under the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and the Immigration Act of 1917 included a “barred zone” prohibiting immigration from particular nations in the Asia-Pacific area. Ewing (2012) notes that these “exclusionary immigration laws coincided with unprecedented levels of immigration to the United States,” as more than 30 million immigrants arrived in the U.S. between 1870 and 1930. This surge in immigration led to the birth of nativism in the U.S., and new anti-immigration parties, such as the “Know Nothing Party.”

Regardless of anti-immigrant positions and policies that occurred throughout the years, the U.S. continued to hold a reputation as a safe haven for immigrants and a land of opportunity (i.e. – “the American Dream”). This is perhaps most clearly reflected by the erection of the Statue of Liberty on Ellis Island in 1886, which welcomed immigrants with these famous words, “Give me your tired, your poor / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore / Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me / I lift my lamp beside the golden door” (Liberty Ellis Foundation). According to the Liberty Ellis Foundation, “between 1880 and 1930, over 27 million people entered the United States - about 12 million through Ellis Island.” However, like before, this influx of immigrants ultimately led to anti-immigration backlash. Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924, limiting the number of immigrants allowed into the country yearly through nationality quotas, favouring immigrants from Northern and Western European countries and putting other countries at a disadvantage, or
excluding them altogether (History.com, 2018). Consequently, the limits imposed increased the number of undocumented immigrants attempting to cross the border and thus, the U.S. Border Patrol was established that same year (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2018).

It was not until World War II that the tide began to turn in favour of immigrants. The damages caused by war led the United States to begin accepting and resettling refugees. In 1942, labor shortages led to the Bracero Program which gave temporary acceptance to Mexican agricultural workers, and in 1952 the McCarran-Walter Act finally ended the exclusion of Asian immigrants to the U.S. Additionally, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 ended the racially biased national origin quotas, which President Lyndon B. Johnson called “un-American,” and replaced it with a new system based on family reunification and skilled immigrants. Further still, President Ronald Reagan granted amnesty to more than 3 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. under the 1986 Simpson-Mazzoli Act, and finally in 2012 President Barack Obama signed the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Act which temporarily shielded some Dreamers – undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally by their parents as children – from deportation. However, the tide turned once more for hopeful migrants when President Trump was elected and his immigration policies began to take effect. See Appendix B for a more comprehensive description of the U.S.’s immigration history up until this point.

Immigration Under President Trump (2017 – Present)

Throughout his campaign, Donald Trump proposed several anti-immigration policies, such as building a border wall that Mexico must pay for, deporting all undocumented immigrants using a new deportation force, and banning Muslim immigrants from entering the U.S. (McCaskill, 2016). Once he became President, he immediately began putting his anti-immigrant
policies into effect, drawing parallels to the anti-immigration legislation of the past (Alvarez, 2017; Kramer, 2018). In the first few days as president, Trump signed three executive orders (Zoppo, Proenca Santos, & Hudgins, 2017); one to punish sanctuary cities and stop them from receiving federal money (which was later determined to be unconstitutional), another to begin “immediate construction” on a border wall, and the other to ban travel and immigration from six majority Muslim countries (Chad, Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia). This was the first of three attempts at what was deemed the “Muslim ban.” The ban was initially blocked by federal courts until a later iteration added North Korea and Venezuela to the list of banned countries, making it not exclusively a ban on Muslims, and was ultimately upheld by the Supreme Court in 2018 (Wolf, 2018). Also, under the newfound Trump administration, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) established the “controversial” Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement Office to highlight crimes committed by undocumented immigrants (Laughland & Siddiqui, 2017), even though undocumented immigrants are considerably less likely to commit crime than native-born citizens (Bersani, 2012; Butcher & Morrison Piehl, 2008; Light & Miller, 2018; Nowrasteh, 2018).

Later in the first year of the Trump presidency, the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans was rescinded, leaving millions of undocumented parents vulnerable to deportation, and the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was repealed as well. The repeal was blocked by the courts though, and DACA was later reinstated (Savage, 2019). The following year resulted in more anti-immigration laws out of the administration as “caravans” of thousands of migrants from Central America began making their way to the U.S. (Escalon, 2019; Lind, 2018). Trump sent National Guard troops to the southern border in an attempt to secure the border (Copp, 2018), and in April adopted a “zero tolerance” policy for all undocumented
immigrants entering the country aimed at deterring future immigrants from coming to the U.S. (Gonzales, 2018; Kopan, 2018). This controversial policy sparked a public outcry as reports emerged about family separations – and the government’s inability to track these families – happening at the border (Shoichet, 2019). In June, a “tent city” for detained children separated from their parents at the border became operational with several others following, and reports of sexual, physical and mental abuse arose in the media as time went on (Grabell, Sanders, & Pensel, 2018; Hals & Cooke, 2018; Silva, 2018; Smith & Bogado, 2018). An Arizona border detention center was even recently deemed unconstitutional by a federal court after finding it didn’t meet basic human needs “for sleeping in a bed with a blanket, a shower, food that meets acceptable dietary standards, potable water, and medical assessment performed by a medical professional” within 48 hours of arrival (National Immigration Law Center, 2020).

Though Trump briefly reversed the family separation policy in one month prior, in July a federal judge formally ordered the administration to stop separating most families at the border and to reunite parents and children who were already separated (Jarrett, 2018) – a difficult feat for officials as the parents were already deported. However, families were still being separated and nearly 15,000 children were being held at the border in nearly maximum capacity facilities (Burnett, 2018). Matters at the border continued to decline throughout the end of 2018 as Trump announced his intention to end birthright citizenship (Hirschfeld Davis, 2018), asylum-seekers attempting to cross the border were shot with tear gas and pepper balls by border officers (Smith, 2018), and two children died in separate incidents after they were taken into custody by the U.S. Border Patrol (Ansari, 2018; Hernandez, Flores, & Aleaziz, 2018). The government even shut down after border wall funding could not be agreed upon at Trump’s demand (Andrews & Peterson, 2018). The government didn’t reopen until February 15, 2019, after the border wall
received a portion of the funding requested and Trump declared a state of emergency to access the rest of the funding necessary (Baker, 2019) – a decision that would later be ruled a violation of federal law (Williams, 2019).

In 2019, more reports of immigrant deaths began to surface. Video evidence showed a 16-year-old boy from Guatemala collapsing to his death in a Border Patrol holding cell in May after Border Patrol agents and health care workers “missed increasingly obvious signs that his condition was perilous” (Moore, Schmidt, & Jameel, 2019). NBC News reported in June that “twenty-four immigrants have died in ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] custody…at least four others…died shortly after being released” (Rappleye & Riordan Seville, 2019). June also brought the story of a Salvadoran father and daughter drowning in the Rio Grande while attempting to cross the border to light (Gallon, Melgar, & Almasy, 2019), and in September another drowning occurred when a mother and her toddler attempted the same journey across the river (Dickerson & Addario, 2019). Conditions for migrants remained bleak throughout 2019, and continued on into 2020. In the most recent immigration development, the Supreme Court voted in favour of the Trump administration to make it more difficult for low-income immigrants to come and try to remain legally in the U.S. See Appendix B for a more detailed description of Trump’s immigration policies and major related events.

The Immigration Debate in the U.S.

The Trump administration’s exclusionary stance on immigration is distinctly similar to earlier times of isolationism and nationalism in the U.S.’s history. Historian Margaret MacMillan (2018) believes the current state of immigration is simply another turn in the country’s 200-year long history of “flip-flopping between isolationism and engagement,” and continued by making the analogy that Trump’s immigration policies are clearly isolationist, like a “fortress that has
pulled up its drawbridge.” Isolationism has roots in the U.S. going as far back as pre-independence colonial times, and is characterized by a reluctance to accept responsibility or involvement in the affairs of other nations and seeks to devote all efforts to the advancement of one’s own nation (Longley, 2019). The 20th century saw the end of isolationism as a consequence of World War I and the Great Depression (The Week, 2016), but after the attacks on September 11, 2001, Longley (2019) said “a spirit of nationalism unseen in America since World War II, [and] the ensuing War on Terror may have resulted in the return of American isolationism.” This ideology was furthered in mainstream politics when newly-elected Trump spouted his isolationist campaign slogan, “America First” (Hillyard, 2016) in a victory speech, and is now reflected throughout the Republican party’s stance on immigration (Republican National Committee, 2020), which reads:

Immigrants have undeniably made great contributions to our country, but any national immigration policy must put the interests of our existing citizens first. To start, our border must be absolutely secured and illegal immigration must be stopped. Then, and only then, can we begin reforming our system in a way that lets new immigrants experience the American Dream without causing economic hardships to American citizens.

It is important to note that Trump’s isolationist policies, coupled with his own admittance as a nationalist, have garnered Trump much criticism due to nationalism’s strong association with Nazis, the “alt-right,” and white supremacy (Forgey, 2018; Goldberg, 2019; Greve & Ho, 2019). Closely related to isolationism, nationalism is a political system primarily driven by cultural associations, such as language or race, that promotes the superior nation at the expense of inferior others (Sraders, 2018). Therefore, restricting legal immigration, reducing the number of asylum
seekers and refugees, and erecting a border wall are all ways Trump attempts to preserve a U.S. without perceived cultural detriments.

Contrary to the exclusionary ideologies of nationalism and isolationism, globalism represents the more inclusionary idea that events in one country cannot be separated from those in another (“Globalism,” n.d.). Trump explicitly denounced this ideology in 2019, saying globalism causes U.S. citizens to “ignore their own national interests” (Borger, 2019), and back in 2016 he asserted voters were making a choice “between [his] Americanism” and Hillary Clinton’s “corrupt globalism” during the presidential election (Trump, 2016). However, globalists maintain there are several benefits to integrating the U.S. with other nations, such as “a greater variety of less expensive goods, greater opportunities for travel and cultural exchange, a more cosmopolitan world” (Yates & Murphy, 2019). Perhaps most notably though is the globalist viewpoint that all people matter regardless of where they come from or where they live, and that universal freedom and human rights are achievable for all (Carpio, 2019). This sentiment can be seen in the Democratic party’s stance on immigration (Democratic National Committee, 2020), which reads:

Democrats know the importance of our country’s history as a nation of immigrants.

We honor our fundamental values by treating all people who come to the United States with dignity and respect, and we always seek to embrace — not to attack — immigrants.

Though the Democracy Fund Voter Study Group (2018) found immigration is “one of the most divisive major issues among American voters” today, this wasn’t always the case. Democratic and Republican voters were nearly in agreeance on immigration in 2005 (Thompson, 2018), but today the parties are fractured; 83% of Democrats think immigrants strengthen the country with their hard work and talents, with only 11% believing they burden the country, as
opposed to 38% of Republicans who say immigrants strengthen the country, while nearly half (49%) say they burden it (Jones, 2019). Reflecting these attitudes, “illegal immigration” was the nation’s number one issue for Republicans during the 2018 midterm elections, but was among the lowest issues for Democrats (Benen, 2018).

Pro- and Anti-Immigration Rhetoric

It is clear that the complex immigration debate in the U.S. continues to evolve with the changing times and increasing globalization. To fully understand the current situation on immigration, and the two viewpoints on the issue, it is important to examine the language used when expressing these views. Historically, anti-immigrant rhetoric frames immigration as “us vs. them,” using terms like “illegal immigrant,” or “alien” to push for border security and comprehensive immigration reform (Yu Hsi Lee, 2013), and evoke prejudice against immigrants due to their associations with perceived threat and danger to the U.S. American people (Pearson, 2010), whether this is via job loss, decreased government resources, increased crime or lower standards of living (Gonyea, 2018). The key argument is that by keeping the threat out, the U.S. will be safe (Kafura & Hammer, 2019). According to historian Tyler Anbinder (2019), the main anti-immigration arguments include:

[Immigrants] bring crime; they import poverty; they spread disease; they don’t assimilate; they corrupt our politics; they steal our jobs; they cause our taxes to increase; they’re a security risk; their religion is incompatible with American values; they can never be “true Americans.”

Further, immigrants’ legal or illegal status is often conflated as a cultural or economic menace to U.S. culture (Delgado, 2003), and depicts undocumented workers, particularly those from Mexico, in a demeaning manner (Ono & Sloop, 2001). When speaking of immigration, anti-
immigration proponents use terms associated with disease (i.e. – containment or contagion), war (invasion), animals (i.e. – swarm or stampede), and water (i.e. – surge or flood) to invoke anxiety toward migrants (Kazmi, 2018). Shattell & Villalba (2008) argue that much of anti-immigration rhetoric is “veiled racism,” which the Southern Poverty Law Center (2019) says has contributed to a record number of 1,020 active hate groups in the U.S. – a 30% increase over the past four years, “roughly coinciding with Trump’s campaign and presidency.” This is illustrated by Fritze’s (2019) reporting that Trump used contentious words like, "predator," "invasion," "alien," "killer," "criminal" and "animal" more than 500 times over the course of his presidency when referring to immigrants. Trump also frequently overgeneralizes entire groups of people by associating Mexican immigrants with crime and drugs, and even calling them “rapists,” as well as perpetuating the idea that immigrants and refugees pose a health risk, such as when he claimed all Haitians have AIDS (Anbinder, 2019). Some observers note that by using language like this, Trump is responsible for spreading “more hatred of immigrants than any American in history” (Anbinder, 2019).

While anti-immigration rhetoric focuses on “illegal immigration” and frames immigrants as inherently bad, pro-immigration activists have called for reframing the debate surrounding immigration in the U.S. In fact, they discourage the use of “illegal immigrant” altogether as they believe it dehumanizes and marginalizes immigrants; instead, they encourage the use of “undocumented immigrant” to refer to individuals in the U.S. without proper authorization (Hesson, 2012; Rubio, 2011). Though the term “illegal immigrant” is used most frequently in newspapers, several major news organizations have either reduced their use of the term or banned it outright due to pro-immigration activists’ efforts (Guskin, 2013). As Lakoff and Ferguson (2006) assert, framing immigration as a “civil rights problem” rather than an
“immigration problem” would allow for a focus on humanitarian crises, displacement, and the exploitation of undocumented immigrants who are denied basic human rights to emerge – thus, redefining what “the problem” is to situate immigration within the historical context of injustice (Cahill, 2009). In 2016, the Democratic Party platform followed this recommendation and adopted new language to their official position on immigration stating the need for “humane” immigration enforcement, with some Democrats even calling for the end of ICE (Khalid, 2019).

Additionally, Kazmi (2018) argues for reframing patriotism and national identity “in a way that celebrates … a long history of welcoming migrants, who have helped build the country and make it successful and prosperous.” In this sense, patriotism means taking pride in U.S. values that support an inclusive and open nation for all, invoking a sense of community and shared purpose by using language that emphasizes solidarity and belonging. Beyond the implementation of the term “undocumented immigrant,” pro-immigration rhetoric also portrays immigrants as vital assets making “massive contributions” to the U.S. and attempts to tell the migrant story to humanize and de-emphasize the differences between immigrants and natural-born U.S. citizens (Dalmia, 2019). Other activists and legislators attempt to reframe immigration by reviving the “American Dream” of a land of freedom and opportunity for all, asserting that immigrants improve U.S. communities (Tobocman & Austin, 2019), whether it is through labor or intellectual advancements (Mehta, 2019), by emphasizing the need for a secure but fair and compassionate system, and finally by highlighting the fact that a majority of U.S. Americans believe immigrants strengthen the nation (Jones, 2019).

Theoretical Foundations

Populism as Political Style

With the rise in the last two decades of populist leaders around the globe, and the U.S. American public growing more disillusioned with mainstream politics (Democracy Perception
Index, 2018), we are living in an era of contemporary populism. Mudde (2007) defines populism as ‘a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite,”’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people.’ On the other hand, Weyland (2001) states populism is ‘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.’ Other theorists believe populism is a discourse that pits ‘the people’ against ‘the elite’ (Hawkins, 2009), or a political logic (Laclau 2005). However, many scholars agree that the ‘thin-ness’ of the populist ideology allows it to be enriched with more substantive ideologies, such as nationalism or liberalism, resulting in right or left-wing populism (Canovan, 2002, p. 32; Kriesi, 2014, p.362; Mudde, 2004, p. 543; Reinemann, Aalberg, Esser, Stromback, & de Vreese, 2017, p. 13; Wirth et. al., 2016, p. 8).

While popular political theorists debate the concept of populism, Moffitt (2016) argues for a redefinition of contemporary populism as a political style, emphasizing the performative aspect of populism. With the rise of populism and increased mediatisation (Lilleker, 2008), Moffitt and Tormey consider political style ‘an important conceptual tool for exploring the contemporary political realm’ (2014, p.388). According to Moffitt, political style can be thought of as ‘the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power that comprise the political, stretching from the domain of government through to everyday life’ (2016, p. 28). Using this definition of political style, he then defines populism as a political style that ‘features an appeal to “the people” versus “the elite,” “bad manners,”’ and the performance of crisis, breakdown or threat’ (2016, 45). Some
noted stylistic features of populism include dramatization, polarization, and directness among others (e.g. Bos, van der Brug, & de Vreese, 2011, p. 187). In this sense, populism is something that you do, and is largely about how you do it.

Moffitt’s definition allows for the understanding that populism is versatile, appearing across various contexts, ideologies (left versus right) and levels of organization (‘grass-roots’ versus tight party lines). It conceptualizes populism as gradational, similar to Oliver and Rahn’s (2016) continuum of populism, meaning that ‘the degree of populism that a given political actor employs may vary across contexts and over time’ (Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013, p. 9). It also emphasizes the stylistic characteristics of populism, defying the common conception that populism is devoid of ‘substance’. Lastly, it brings the ‘inherent theatricality involved in populism’ (Moffitt, 2016, p. 5) to the forefront of the conversation.

Performing Populism

The idea that populism is theatrical lends itself to the dramaturgical perspective made popular by Goffman (1959), which compares people interacting in everyday social life to actors in a theatrical performance. In politics, particularly involving populism, we can therefore think of social interactions as a series of performances. These performances of populism, according to Moffitt (2016) include the performer, the stage, and the audience.

The performer refers to the leader of the populist movement. The leader is the one who performs populism and is ultimately highly visible as not only the focus of their followers, but of the opposition’s disdain as well. These performers are typically charismatic leaders who may use vitriolic and aggressive rhetoric against others and may believe in a ‘hostile media syndrome’ in that they are the constant target of negative news by the ‘elite media’ (Waisbord, 2013). The leader is tasked with being of ‘the people’ and speaking with the authenticity of ‘the people’s
voice,’ but also being above ‘the people,’ taking on a precarious balancing act of extraordinariness and ordinariness. Moffitt (2016) argues that populists perform this extraordinariness and ordinariness by exercising bad manners and presenting themselves as strong and healthy. The performance of bad manners ranges from framing yourself as ‘regular folk’, such as Sarah Palin calling herself a ‘mama grizzly’ (Miller, 2010) to political incorrectness and coarse language, such as Jair Bolsonaro stating ‘I would prefer my son to die in an accident than be gay’ (Hjelmgaard, 2018). Congruently, the performance of strength and health presents itself as being the one and only voice of the people, such as Silvio Berlusconi claiming, ‘I am the Jesus Christ of politics’ (in BBC News 2006), or denying weakness and ailments of the body, and in being sexually assertive.

The stage refers to the media or the crisis. A ‘communicative abundance’ (Keane, 2013) has led to the mediatisation of politics (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 114) which has allowed populists to capitalize on this phenomenon. Media coverage of populist leaders and movements can disseminate populist messaging to the public, but it can also publicly attack the messages or leaders and turn the public against them. Roberts (2006, pp. 135-136) noted that mass media has permitted populist leaders to directly reach ‘mass constituencies and demonstrate popular support without any sort of institutional intermediation.’ New media, like social media sites, allow populist actors to go around traditional media and address their audiences with immediacy and directness (Bennett & Manheim, 2006; Esser, Stepinska, & Hopmann, 2017; Vaccari & Valeriani, 2015). Politicians are able to use social media platforms such as Twitter to engage and interact with citizens in order to make them feel involved in the political process, as well as to blur the line between the elite and ‘the people’ (Sinha, 2017). Tweets are especially significant for populist politicians because exposure to tweets leads to stronger feelings of connectedness.
and social presence than exposure to traditional media such as TV or newspapers (Lee, 2013; Lee & Jang, 2013; Lee & Shin, 2014). The digitally connected now have streamlined accessibility to politics in their pocket, given the politicians (the performer) use of Twitter and other social networking sites (the stage) to connect with ‘the people’ (the audience). However, traditional and new media are not the only stage for populists to perform on, as the performance of populism sets the stage for crisis (Moffitt, 2016). Populists aren’t reacting to crises, but rather are creating the crises with their performance.

Finally, the audience refers to ‘the people.’ Right-wing populism tends to define ‘the people’ as the nation while excluding certain out-groups (Muller 2014), and left-wing populism tends to refer to ‘the people’ as a class (Abts & Rummens, 2007; Meny & Surel, 2000). Canovan (2005, p. 140) says ‘the people’ ‘cannot be restricted to a group with definite characteristics, boundaries, structure or permanence, although it is quite capable of carrying these senses,’ which means that anyone can ascribe to this identity. Generally speaking, ‘the people’ is meant to express the popular will of the public and represents those who are not part of ‘the elite.’ In her study on politicians’ use of digital platforms such as social media in political campaigns, Baldwin-Philippi (2018) states that to understand populism in today’s world we need to examine the technological performance of populism. She suggests that the technological performance consists of centering ‘the people’ through four different methods: speaking to the people, engaging with the people, styling oneself on the people, and highlighting voices of the people. Figure 1 illustrates how common digital campaigning practices fit into this framework, but how do these populist affordances differ during a routine political time with no campaigns? Though Baldwin-Philippi (2018) argues that technological performances of populism are not simply limited to the construction of populist identities online, a politician’s identity is increasingly
important in this thriving age of identity-based hyper-partisanship (Taylor, 2016) and identity politics.

*Figure 1. Populist affordances model and digital campaign practices. Baldwin-Philippi, New Media & Society (Volume 21, Issue 2) pp. 376-397, copyright © 2018 by (Baldwin-Philippi) Reprinted by Permission of SAGE Publications, Ltd.*

**Populism and Identity Politics**

Politicians across the ideological spectrum are engaging in ‘mass self-communication’ (Castells, 2009), using various platforms to engage in identity performance, or the presentation of self (Goffman, 1959), for their audiences. Social media users are able to curate these identities through status updates, photos, and videos, among others (Mendelson and Papacharissi, 2010). This new era of personalization in social media and politics has fostered the re-emergence of identity politics and has empowered various communities to amplify their voice and exercise political power. Given this personalization and rise of division in the U.S. (Pew Research Center, 2014) and identity politics around the globe (Hardy, 2016), it is important to understand how various forms of identity politics are an integral element of modern populism - regardless of where an individual or politician may be situated on the ideological spectrum. In fact, Muller (2016) believes that ‘populism is always a form of identity politics’ (p. 3).

Historically, identity politics emerged as a term for those of marginalized groups united by certain identities advancing their common interests through political action (Mohanty, 2011).
One may personally identify themselves according to a number of classifications - gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and social class, to name a few; thus, identity politics refers to the tendency of those of certain social groups or identities to vote and act politically in a way that benefits their social or demographic groups, and includes the ways in which one’s identity shapes their politics. As Hobsbawm (1996) notes, ethnicity has been central to U.S. identity politics throughout the years, particularly as immigration continues to grow as a major and divisive issue in U.S. politics. Today, identity politics carries a negative connotation and is often used as a derogatory term for feminism, anti-racism and anti-heterosexism (Fraser, 1998), or on the contrary as a term for white-nationalism or white supremacy (Greenhut, 2019; Malik, 2019; Thomas, 2019).

Trump’s presidency has been linked to white identity politics since the inception of his 2016 campaign, and Pettigrew (2017) argues that support for Trump’s populism is directly linked to perceptions of in-group disadvantages. Perceptions of this kind of deprivation for one’s group breed feelings of injustice and resentment toward out-groups (Cramer, 2016; Doosje, Loseman & van den Bos, 2013; Mols & Jetten, 2016), and in Trump’s case this includes immigrants who are perceived as a ‘threat’ to the alleged disadvantaged group. As Marchlew ska, Cichocka, Panayiotou, Castellanos & Batayneh (2017) found, perceptions of in-group disadvantage are positively related to populist views, and populist movements are often seen as a result of deprived in-groups ‘taking back control’ (Farage, 2016). While this does not necessarily mean that all populist movements derive from alleged in-group deprivations and could very well come from marginalized out-groups becoming empowered, it may reinforce ideas of prejudice or feelings of injustice.

Right- Versus Left-wing Populism
At the heart of populism is the divide between the ‘good’ (us) and the ‘evil’ (them). Depending on which end of the political spectrum they fall on, this can have vastly different meanings to populists and their audience - ‘the people.’ Right-wing populism tends to engage in and promote exclusionary rhetoric and viewpoints, or excluding populism (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007), denying outgroups the opportunity to be part of ‘the people.’ The ‘good’ native people are morally opposed to ‘evil’ refugee or immigrant out-groups, which pose a threat to them (Taggart, 2000). For instance, Mazzoleni (2018) found that refugees are seen as the cause of economic and cultural problems for the native people. Indeed, in Western Europe increasing numbers of immigrants significantly contributed to the success of populist parties (Knigge, 1998).

This exclusionary right-wing populism is an old and global phenomenon. Right-wing populist communication is often characterized as anti-immigrant, anti-establishment and anti-cultural elites. These xenophobic and exclusionary ideas, usually directed against ethnic or religious ‘others’ are the bedrock for right-wing populism (Betz, 2001), and oftentimes the exclusionary rhetoric of right-wing populist politicians takes the form of racist statements and slogans. While populist communication can be identified by elements of emotionalization (Betz, 1993; Canovan, 1999; Mazzoleni et al. 2003), dramatization (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Mudde, 2004; Taggart, 2000), absolutism (Bos & Brants, 2014; Engesser et al., 2017; Hawkins, 2009), or colloquialism (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Stewart et al., 2003; Taggart, 2000), it becomes right-wing populism when paired with anti-immigrant rhetoric that seeks to delegitimize and demonize the ‘others.’ Though right-wing populism is exclusionary, and at times racist, it can easily become socially acceptable due to reframing of the rhetoric as patriotic or preserving ‘our’ culture.
Whereas right-wing populism is highly exclusionary toward immigrants and foreigners, and views ‘the people’ in nativist and ethnic terms, left-wing populism views ‘the people’ as a social class or those of marginalized groups, and thus tends to be free of xenophobic and anti-immigration views. Instead, it is distinctly inclusionary of these perceived out-groups and promotes equality for women, immigrants, and members of the LGBTQ community (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014). Left-wing populism is similar to its right-wing counterpart in that it is anti-establishment and anti-elite; however, they key difference is that it is not exclusionary of out-groups. There is still much to learn about how left-wing populism is communicated and performed.

Emotion also plays a crucial role in populism. Salmela and von Scheve (2018) explain that “feelings of fear associated with insecurity, powerlessness, and declasssement, on the one hand, and anger, resentment, indignation, and hate, on the other hand” (p. 439) drive the rise and success of populist parties, whether left or right. With right-wing populism, fear and insecurity - coupled with repressed individual shame toward social identities - transform into anger, resentment and hatred toward out-groups (Salmela & von Scheve, 2018). Thus, right-wing populist rhetoric promotes this anger and resentment towards establishment politicians, refugees, welfare recipients, and other groups perceived as ethnically, culturally, politically or sexually different. While left-wing populism is still associated with fear, anger and resentment, these feelings may instead emerge from “the acknowledgement and social sharing of negative self-focused emotions [shame and humiliation], which allows and supports their transformation into anger and indignation at particular others but also into pride, joy, and hope similarly as in various civil rights movements” (Salmela & von Scheve, 2018, p. 449). In this sense, left-wing populists foster the sharing of emotions and ideas to create a collective identity as aggrieved citizens,
empowered by solidarity and collective political agency. In contrast to right-wing populist communication, left-wing rhetoric promotes anger and resentment towards those in power who are responsible for enforcing the status quo and perceived injustice and inequality.

Right-wing Populist Donald Trump.

Former businessman and reality TV personality Donald Trump stunned pollsters nationwide with an upset for the U.S. presidency in the 2016 election against Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. His reputation as an acclaimed billionaire and charismatic celebrity, coupled with his intensely active use of Twitter - where he has over 65 million followers - and controversial rhetoric and style of governing has put his presidency in an extraordinary spotlight. Trump has been called “the perfect populist” (Lind, 2016), a white nationalist (Goldberg, 2019), and a white supremacist (Thomas & Cruz, 2019). All of these reasons and more make Trump’s performance of populism the epitome of a case study concerning exclusionary rhetoric.

Left-wing Populist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Bartender turned U.S. House Representative, Ocasio-Cortez rose to stardom when she beat the incumbent for New York’s 14th Congressional District and at 28 years old became the youngest female Congresswoman in United States history. With multiple appearances on late night TV shows and an engaging presence on social media with over three million followers on her personal Twitter account, Ocasio-Cortez is a celebrity in her own right. She has been called the future of the Democratic party, even while some have drawn comparisons to Ocasio-Cortez and President Donald Trump’s political style (Baker, 2018; Last, 2019; Tauberg, 2018). Though they vary greatly in ideology, with Ocasio-Cortez being a democratic socialist and Trump a conservative republican, both politicians used similar populist tactics to get elected and maintain
popularity with their respective bases. This makes both Trump and Ocasio-Cortez ideal case studies for the performance of populism, as well as exclusionary and inclusionary rhetoric.

Research Questions

RQ1: How does Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez perform populism on Twitter as she engages with the issue of immigration?

RQ2: To what extent does Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's performance of populism rely on Baldwin-Philippi's four ways of "centering the people"?

RQ3: How does Donald Trump perform populism on Twitter as he engages with the issue of immigration?

RQ4: To what extent does Donald Trump's performance of populism rely on Baldwin-Philippi's four ways of "centering the people"?

RQ5: What are the similarities and differences in Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's and Donald Trump's performances of populism on Twitter in relation to immigration?

RQ6: What role does exclusionary and inclusionary rhetoric play in these performances of populism?
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study examines Ocasio-Cortez and Trump’s performance of right- and left-wing populism in relation to immigration, specifically exploring the role of exclusionary and inclusionary rhetoric on Twitter during the height of the humanitarian crisis at the southern border. I chose to examine Twitter due to its salience in both Ocasio-Cortez’s and Trump’s strategy of political communication, and the medium’s populist nature (Bimber, 1998; Engesser et al., 2017), as social media can be used as a stage for populist actors to achieve a direct and immediate connection to their audience (McAdam & Tarrow, 2010). For Trump and Ocasio-Cortez, Twitter provides easy access to disseminate their messaging to the platform’s 59.35 million active users in the U.S. (Clement, 2020), and their own respective 73.2 million and 6.4 million followers. In general, Ocasio-Cortez averages about 80 tweets per week, while Trump tweets so often – about 200 times per week – that many have dubbed him the “Tweeter in Chief” (Johnson, 2020, O’Donnell & Stelloh, 2017). In a deep dive on Trump’s Twitter habits, the New York Times (2019) found that over the course of his presidency, Trump has tweeted over 11,000 times and has attacked immigrants 570 times through Twitter. Ocasio-Cortez tweeted 1,086 times during the crisis, with more than a quarter of her tweets directly relating to immigration, while Trump tweeted 2,502 times with only 7% relating to immigration.

A comparative content analysis was conducted of all Ocasio-Cortez and Trump’s tweets posted from May through August 2019. This timeline was chosen because I wanted to explore how Ocasio-Cortez and Trump performed populism specifically during a time of extreme tension relating to immigration, as this was when reports of migrant deaths and family separations dominated both the media and the political conversation in the U.S. To collect the data for this study, I needed to use two different methods to compile the necessary tweets. For Ocasio-Cortez,
I used software Followers Analysis to download her most recent 3,200 tweets, as well as a comprehensive analysis of her Twitter use. From there, I reduced the data by removing all tweets from outside the crisis time period and searching for immigration-specific keywords (see Appendix C), eliminating any tweets that did not fit these criteria. Gathering Trump’s tweets was slightly more complex. I utilized the Trump Twitter Archive, a website that logs nearly all Trump’s tweets, to search for the same keywords during the same time period. I then exported those results for my full list of Trump’s tweets relating to immigration. In total, I analyzed 461 tweets – 284 from Ocasio-Cortez and 177 from Trump. In addition to the text of the tweets, I also examined accompanying visuals to the tweets, such as photos and videos, to get a holistic view of their online performance. Even though the use of photos and videos was more prevalent in Ocasio-Cortez’s tweets than it was Trump’s, I chose to include the supplementary visual messaging tactics as part of my analysis because of their potential to strategically portray both positive media coverage for their policies and positions, as well as their ability to spread their immigration messaging and communicate to their audiences. When visuals are applicable, it is important to combine the text of the tweet with the photo or video for a comprehensive understanding of Ocasio-Cortez and Trump’s online performance of populism.

After collecting and managing the data, a grounded theory approach was utilized (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze Ocasio-Cortez and Trump’s tweets using open coding to identify emerging themes. First, I oriented myself using the relevant literature on immigration rhetoric and Baldwin-Philippi’s (2018) four categories of ‘centering the people.’ Then I separately examined Ocasio-Cortez and Trump’s tweets, looking for as many categories as possible (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), which led me to 45 individual categories – 23 for Trump and 22 for Ocasio-Cortez. After reaching this level of categories, I developed a codebook for both sets of
data, listing all categories and recording how many times they occurred naturally in the data. From there, I began integrating the categories through axial coding, or making connections between separate categories to create a new theme that spans many categories. For example, previously identified categories such as “pro-immigration is bad for the U.S.,” “immigrants as a crisis for the U.S.,” and “protecting the U.S.” forged together to become one new theme – “Putting ‘America First.’” This process took me from 45 original categories down to four overarching themes. Once these final themes were identified, I began to explore how they connected with Baldwin-Philippi’s four ways of ‘centering the people’ – speaking to, engaging with, styling self on, and highlighting the voices of ‘the people’ – and Moffitt’s theory of the performance of populism, in this case using social media as the stage to reach the audience. Ultimately, these themes reflect how, and to what extent, Ocasio-Cortez and Trump differ in their performance of populism in relation to immigration on Twitter, and what role exclusionary and inclusionary rhetoric play in this performance.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Trump and Ocasio-Cortez’s Performance of Populism on Twitter

As indicated by both Trump and Ocasio-Cortez’s patterns of tweeting during the peak of the immigration crisis in the summer of 2019, their Twitter accounts served as a direct stage to communicate their individual exclusionary and inclusionary rhetoric and perform populism for their audiences. Ocasio-Cortez consistently posted daily, tweeting about immigration and the border crisis 284 times. Trump also tweeted multiple times daily. However, he tweeted only 177 times about immigration issues – significantly less than Ocasio-Cortez. Throughout the 461 tweets examined in this case study, four major themes were identified: condemning the degradation of the U.S., acting as an immigration warrior, developing an “America for All,” and putting “America First.” See Table 1 for a breakdown of how often each theme occurred during the study period.

Condemning the Degradation of the U.S.

The most frequent theme discovered in this case study was the condemnation of the perceived state of decline in the U.S. in relation to the issue of immigration. While Ocasio-Cortez and Trump both assert this sentiment, their motives in doing so are entirely oppositional. For Ocasio-Cortez, the presence of racism, white supremacy, and corruption within politics, as well as the direct manifestation of these issues with the inhumane treatment of immigrants at the border and across the country, are all negative factors accelerating the breakdown of the U.S. and its base values. Putting it bluntly, she said, “We’re melting away our Constitutional rights – all for the excuse of hating immigrants. We’re shredding what it means to be American.” This is perhaps best visually embodied in Ocasio-Cortez’s tweet of photos from her emotional visit to a
Table 1

*Ocasio-Cortez and Trump’s Total Tweets and Theme Occurrences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez</th>
<th>Donald Trump</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total tweets during study period</strong></td>
<td>1,086</td>
<td>2,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total tweets on immigration</strong></td>
<td>284</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of times each theme occurred:

- Condemning the degradation of the U.S.: 461 | 263
- Acting as an immigration warrior: 247 | 91
- Putting “America First”: -- | 215
- Developing an “America for All”: 130 | --

Ocasio-Cortez explicitly blames Trump’s rhetoric and policies, that she says are not about immigration but rather ethnicity and racism, for this degradation. When Trump claimed not to have a racist bone in his body, Ocasio-Cortez retorted that he had both a racist mind and heart, which causes him to “violate the rights of children” and order those perceived as ‘other’ to go back to where they came from (see Figure 3). In another instance, she calls out the danger in Trump’s use of words like “invasion” and “infestation” when talking about Latinx people, “this is the language of white supremacy & it goes all the way to the top. It’s not a matter of political stances. This is stoking hatred + endangering the country.” In fact, Ocasio-Cortez tweeted about or to Trump 47 times throughout the course of this study period.
Ocasio-Cortez would also often retweet verified accounts to call out Trump’s racism while simultaneously emphasizing her identity as a daughter of immigrants, as evidenced by her retweet of fellow U.S. Rep. Brendan Boyle’s tweet noting the double-standard of Trump telling women of color in Congress to go back to where they came from (see Figure 4). In other instances, Ocasio-Cortez used retweets to highlight the voices of ‘the people’ and show support for her own positions, such as when she highlighted the voice of fellow “Squad” member Rep. Ayanna Pressley’s tweet saying “These families need trauma support, case workers, clean water, adequate and nutritious food. Instead they have received a level of degradation we should be
ashamed is occurring on American soil.” Ocasio-Cortez uses retweets such as these to both expose racism in the U.S.’s institutions and leaders, as well as to attempt to humanize and un-
other immigrants by demonstrating the treatment they experience at the southern border.

Figure 4. U.S. Representative Brendan Boyle Implying Double Standard of Racism.

Ocasio-Cortez consistently expresses anger about the current state of the U.S. regarding immigration and politics in this way, particularly taking aim at the Republican party and their leadership. For example, in reference to a Mother Jones article on the issues at the border and the battle between Ocasio-Cortez and the Republicans, she called the right “bullies” who demonstrate “heartless cruelty towards other human beings escaping violence & despair” and an “indifference to everyday Americans.” Ocasio-Cortez’s rhetoric of blaming the right for the debasement of the U.S. and the country’s core values as a nation for all reaffirms our current understanding of left-wing populism that promotes anger and resentment toward those in power enforcing unjust policies. It also perpetuates the us vs. them dichotomy by pitting “everyday Americans” against the “evil” right. In this case, the fear and insecurity over the loss of “American” values transform into resentment and hatred not toward out-groups but toward the Republicans as an in-group. Further, Ocasio-Cortez styles herself as truly American and of ‘the people’ by openly claiming to have “chosen the side of the people” by fighting for the freedom
of all people (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Ocasio-Cortez Claiming to be on the Side of the People.

Ocasio-Cortez also often portrays righteousness in relation to immigration, exhibiting a sense of having the moral high ground in relation to the human rights violations occurring throughout the U.S. and at the border. This is evident through her many tweets drawing attention to the “horrifying” conditions immigrants experience at the border brought on by a “systemic cruelty [with] a dehumanizing culture that treats them like animals,” and allegations that detainees are deprived of “humane sleep conditions,” experience “severe overcrowding,” and that the administration are “caging children & families in conditions that have killed almost 30 people.” Perhaps most importantly, Ocasio-Cortez used photograph evidence and news articles to back up her claims of the inhumane conditions at the southern border, such as when she retweeted one journalist who said, “So what @AOC told us was true,” in reference to these conditions. In this sense, Ocasio-Cortez is bolstering tweets such as this to boost her own credibility and to tell ‘the people’ that she can be trusted to tell the truth. This tactic proved useful for Ocasio-Cortez when she controversially dubbed the detainment centers at the border concentration camps – using the term 38 times throughout the study period. When receiving criticism for her use of the word, Ocasio-Cortez countered with expert analysis (see Figure 6),
speaking to ‘the people’ by highlighting data from perceived credible sources and expert opinions to emphasize her points. This is a form of speaking to the people in the sense that she perceives her audience to be driven by facts and science, rather than ‘alternative facts.’ It is important to note that Trump also engaged in communication of this nature, but while Ocasio-Cortez used data and articles to expose inhumane conditions and human rights violations in the hopes of protecting immigrants, Trump focused on crimes committed by immigrants to unite his base against a villainous ‘other.’

Figure 6. Ocasio-Cortez Citing Expert on Concentration Camps

While Ocasio-Cortez deems the degradation of the U.S. to be the fault of the right and racist rhetoric and policies, Trump believes it to be the result of incompetent U.S. institutions and policies enacted by Democrats, resulting in an immigration crisis. Trump uses the term “border crisis” or “national security crisis” 30 times throughout the study period, perpetuating the notion that immigrants coming to the U.S. is a problem for the country. He demonstrates this crisis by claiming immigrants are attempting to flood the country and that there is no room for them in the U.S., such as when he said, “Courts & Dems in Congress, neither of which have a clue, are trying to FORCE migrants into our Country! OUR COUNTRY IS FULL, OUR DETENTION CENTERS, HOSPITALS & SCHOOLS ARE PACKED. Crazy!” Trump would also often
highlight the voices of other politicians representing his audience to reiterate “the worsening border crisis” and express the need for closed borders. Though Ocasio-Cortez also uses the term crisis, she refers to the humanitarian crisis at the border with the inhumane treatment and human rights violations immigrants experience at the hands of U.S. Americans; but in Trump’s case, the idea of the border crisis strictly refers to the number of immigrants attempting to come to the U.S., and the impact they will have on the country’s resources. Thus, both Trump and Ocasio-Cortez’s performances of populism support Moffitt’s (2016) theory that populists use new media both as a stage to reach their audience but also to set the stage for and create crises.

Like Ocasio-Cortez, Trump also perpetuated the us vs. them narrative central to populism by explicitly blaming the “radical” Democrats for today’s immigration crisis – 67 times, in fact. This fits the traditional form of populism in that the fear and insecurity associated with the changes “open borders” and immigrants would bring to the country transform into resentment and hatred toward immigrants and those perceived as fighting for the out-group and not U.S. citizens. Trump’s tweets maintain his belief that the border crisis was caused by the broken and incompetent immigration policies created by the Democratic party, rather than his own administration’s policies, and would transfer the blame entirely away from him and toward the Democrats. He calls U.S. immigration laws “totally flawed & broken,” referencing border loopholes, “old and worthless barriers,” and court rulings “against Border Security and in favor of crime, drugs and human trafficking.” Further, Trump continuously blamed Democrats for the “dysfunctional immigration process,” positioning them as the reason the U.S. is being “taken advantage of” by Mexico (see Figure 7) and the cause of the “mess” at the southern border by “refusing to work.” Additionally, just as Ocasio-Cortez focuses on Trump as the leader behind the crisis, Trump in turn concentrates on her role as a leader for the left in the immigration
debate, claiming that she and other “very unpopular & unrepresentative Congresswomen” spew “foul language & racist hatred,” and further asserting “they hate our own country” and “AOC Plus 3 are a Nightmare for America!” Trump specifically called out Ocasio-Cortez and the other members of the “Squad,” which consists of Reps. Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley, and Rashida Tlaib – all women of color, claiming they are the racist “troubleshooters” debasing the country (see Figure 8).

Figure 7. Trump Blaming Democrats for U.S. Immigration Problems.

Again, like Ocasio-Cortez, Trump frequently expressed anger throughout his tweets, but unlike Ocasio-Cortez he would aim this anger at the mainstream media as it pertained to immigration, and his lack of credit for building a border wall. Trump would call out “false reporting” on the border, using his catch phrase “Fake News,” demeaning and mocking the news organizations and journalists in the process. For instance, he called CNN “so dishonest” and

Figure 8. Trump Denouncing the “Squad.”
claimed, “The Fake News Media, in particular the Failing @nytimes, is writing phony and exaggerated accounts of the Border Detention Centers.” Trump also singled out CNN’s Don Lemon, calling him the “dumbest man on television,” adding that he is “too dumb” to realize “he is supposed to be neutral, unbiased & fair.” He would also use retweets here to emphasize his own dissatisfaction with the mainstream media, best exemplified by his sharing of a right-wing news article on corporate media failure (see Figure 9). Trump’s performance of disdain and anger for the media here aligns with what we know of populists in that he perpetuates his own belief of and existence in a “hostile media syndrome,” and circumvents the need to interact with the traditional media by taking to social media to get his messaging out to ‘the people.’

Figure 9. The Federalist Article on Corporate Media Failure.

Acting as an Immigration Warrior

Another recurring theme to emerge throughout Ocasio-Cortez and Trump’s tweets was that of the “immigration warrior.” Both populist politicians behaved as public leaders for their respective ideologies on the issue of immigration, obtaining widespread high visibility while performing to their collective millions of followers. In Trump’s case, acting as an immigration warrior manifested as presenting himself as the one true savior of a broken system and praising
his administration’s border policies as good for the overall well-being of the country and beneficial to its citizens. Trump continuously references a desperate need to fix the U.S.’s “broken” system with immigration reform, framing himself as the only one capable of doing so under his administration’s policies and through the construction of a southern border wall.

Trump would style himself as one of ‘the people’ of a country in need of safeguarding, meaning that he invoked the values of his conservative base by portraying immigrants as detrimental to the country and praising his policies because that is what ‘the people’ want and need, according to him. Trump would often tweet his solutions for the immigration crisis, ranging from imposing tariffs on Mexico to stating that Democrats could “fix everything so easily” by simply voting for his party’s proposed policies. In one tweet, Trump goes so far as to say that his “plan to create a fair, modern & LAWFUL system of immigration for the U.S” would be “the pride of our Nation and the envy of the modern world.”

When Trump and his administration came under fire for the humanitarian crisis of family separation at the border, he would often blame former President Barack Obama for that policy while stating that he was actually the one to end the problem (see Figure 10). By doing so, Trump depicts himself as superior. This framing of Trump and his policies as heroic for immigration could be seen throughout his own tweets, but also in those he retweeted as well, such as when he shared Sen. Jim Inhofe’s tweet stating, “Due to joint cooperation border crossings have [dropped] 43% over the past 2 months & we’re looking forward to seeing that continue thanks to @realdonaldtrump & our Mexican partners.” Trump used retweets such as this one to demonstrate his success on immigration and portray himself as the solution to the crisis at hand. In breaking with Baldwin-Philippi’s (2018) original findings, Trump did not highlight traditional voices of ‘the people’ in the sense that he retweeted unverified regular users.
Instead he retweeted verified users – typically journalists and other politicians, approximately 25% of the time. Similar to the use of retweets, Trump’s own tweets often pushed the narrative of his successes with immigration, and in one perhaps tone-deaf instance given the nature of the immigration crisis, he declared “Great things are happening at the border!” in response to another Senator’s video showing a tour of the border wall under construction.

Contrary to Trump, Ocasio-Cortez portrayed herself as an immigration warrior for immigrants themselves, but for the U.S.’s values and status as a nation of immigrants too. She does this by denouncing the border patrol and government officials enforcing “un-American” policies, deliberately calling attention to grievances immigrants experience at the hands of the U.S. government, and advocating for the protection of all regardless of race or nationality. To do so, Ocasio-Cortez styled herself on ‘the people’ under the values of her progressive audience, advocating for the humane treatment of immigrants and highlighting the benefits they bring to the U.S.’s economy and cultural fabric. Ocasio-Cortez frames immigrants as “inherently valuable” human beings doing the best they can for their families to escape dangerous situations and go after the American dream, often referencing to immigrants as “our neighbors” that need to be protected. Ocasio-Cortez rebuked the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agencies numerous times, calling them dangerous to the country, noting that even U.S. citizens are suffering at their hands, and using

Figure 10. Trump Blaming Obama for Family Separation
#AbolishICE to advocate for the dismantling of the organization. Similar to Trump’s use of retweets, Ocasio-Cortez would highlight the voices of ‘the people’ by retweeting Latin American news organizations or other politicians to empower immigrants with the knowledge of their rights, such as when she shared Univision Nueva York’s warning in Spanish that ICE was preparing to deport thousands of undocumented immigrants accompanied with a guide on what to do if you are stopped by authorities (see Figure 11).

![Figure 11. Univision Nueva York Warning of ICE Raid](image)

At other times, she would highlight the voices of ‘the people’ by sharing immigrant stories to demonstrate the destruction to the health and wellbeing of those affected by these organizations, giving a voice to the voiceless. For example, she retweeted a video showing an interaction she had with an immigrant woman captioned, “Yazmin Juárez, whose 19-month-old daughter died weeks after being released from ICE detainment in 2018, testified before Congress today, describing the mistreatment she faced while seeking asylum. Her testimony, at times, brought @AOC to tears.” Not only does this tweet amplify the voice of a grieving immigrant mother, but it acts doubly as an indicator that Ocasio-Cortez is human and affected by the pain and suffering of ‘the people.’ Ocasio-Cortez used visuals like these to further deepen these stories and to show engagement with ‘the people.’ As Baldwin-Philippi (2018) notes, engaging with ‘the people’ mainly consists of replying with constituents online to have direct one-on-one
conversations. Neither Trump nor Ocasio-Cortez opt to engage with ‘the people’ in this way in relation to immigration. Instead, Ocasio-Cortez conveys engagement with constituents and immigrants alike through photos and videos. In switching our thinking of ‘the people’ to include immigrants and refugees, Ocasio-Cortez consistently emphasizes how she listens to and fosters a connection with immigrants by posting photos of that engagement. In one instance she shared a photo (see Figure 12) taken from her visit to one of the “concentration camps,” as she calls it. Ocasio-Cortez also shared her personal accounts of these interactions, saying “I believe these women. I believe the canker sores that I saw in their mouths. I believed when they said they were sleeping on concrete floors,” all while decrying these women were suffering under the guise of protecting the country.

![Twitter post by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](image)

*Figure 12. Ocasio-Cortez Showcasing Engagement with Immigrants*

Ocasio-Cortez also engaged in targeted communication by speaking to ‘the people’ to communicate with immigrants the message that the U.S. welcomes everyone, like when she said, “Quiero decirle a los niños que no importa lo que diga el presidente, este país les pertenece,” (“I want to tell the children that no matter what the president says, this country belongs to them”). English was the main language that Ocasio-Cortez would use to communicate on Twitter, but her use of Spanish in relation to immigration issues was significant because it allows her to connect with a new kind of ‘the people’ – one that includes both U.S. American-born citizens and
immigrants or refugees, as well as to communicate with a marginalized community that doesn’t always feel represented and involved in politics. This is especially important for Ocasio-Cortez because ultimately, she believes the U.S. is a nation of immigrants. She goes so far as to say that it is un-American to turn away immigrants (see Figure 13). Also involved in Ocasio-Cortez’s method of centering ‘the people’ by acting as an immigration warrior is styling oneself on ‘the people’ by displaying of emotion and compassion for immigrants. By showing an emotional response to the situations of immigrants at the border, Ocasio-Cortez is styling herself as more than just a politician, but a fellow human being that is affected by another’s suffering. Ocasio-Cortez’s base consider the situation at the border major human rights violations, so this display of emotion furthers her status as a protector of the voiceless and less fortunate.

\[\text{Figure 13. Ocasio-Cortez Calling GOP Un-American}\]

Putting “America First”

Trump and Ocasio-Cortez exhibited similar performances of populism with variations regarding their position on immigration. However, the main difference existed in the rhetoric used by the left and right-wing politicians. Trump consistently expressed typical right-wing anti-immigration exclusive populist messaging resulting in the main theme of “Putting America First.” This is primarily characterized by Trump’s desire to act on the will of ‘the people’ by “taking care of American citizens first” and protect the U.S. from criminal immigrants, as being
pro-immigrant is anti-U.S. in his eyes. Trump portrays himself as acting for the good of the U.S. by styling himself as one of ‘the people’ of a country in need of safeguarding and reiterating the danger in having open borders, meaning that he invoked the values of his conservative base. This was displayed by his rhetoric portraying immigrants and refugees as a crisis for the U.S., as well as framing them as dangerous criminals, animals, and bad parents, all in the name of protecting U.S. Americans – because that is what ‘the people’ want and need, according to Trump. In one instance he said, “Republicans want what’s good for America – the exact opposite [of what Democrats want],” and in another he claims that “America has had enough!” Painting all immigrants as criminals and dangerous people that should not be allowed into the U.S. was a reoccurring theme throughout Trump’s tweets during this time (see Figure 14). In fact, out of his 177 immigration-related tweets, Trump made references to immigrants as dangerous criminals 49 times and the acceptance of immigrants as bad for the U.S. 46 times during this time period. He also continuously asserted the border wall’s necessity for the protection from criminal immigrants and praised the “Big WIN for Border Security and the Rule of Law!” when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a ruling, allowing for construction to proceed.

Figure 14. Trump Implying Immigrants Bring Drugs to the U.S.

Trump frequently praised the work of border patrol agents in apprehending immigrants, further emphasizing their positions as criminals, such as when he shared an official White House
tweet stating, “agents arrested a previously deported child rapist on Wednesday after he attempted to re-enter the United States illegally. He’d been deported twice before. THANK YOU to our amazing Border Patrol agents for making our country safer!” Additionally, Trump would retweet users to display support in “Putting America First,” and to tell ‘the people’ he agrees with something – showcasing his own support for opinions and statements from others. For instance, he retweeted Judicial Watch’s petition demanding a “secure border wall.” However, most of Trump’s retweets were used to perpetuate the notion that immigrants are criminals that are putting U.S. Americans at risk, such as when he retweeted one reporter’s tweet stating a school shooter’s father was a “criminal illegal alien from Mexico” (see Figure 15). Just as Ocasio-Cortez used her tweets to improve her credibility and trustworthiness, Trump used the same tactics. The difference between the two is that Trump utilized this tactic to push the narrative that immigrants are detrimental to the state of the U.S. and its citizens, often stating facts without sources, while Ocasio-Cortez would directly link to experts or data sources to back up her claims.

Figure 15. Reporter Sharing News of Immigrant Father of School Shooter.

Trump’s tweets were of the mindset that what was good for immigrants was bad for the U.S., and often claimed that Democrats cared more about immigrants and their welfare than for
U.S. citizens. He implied this notion again and again, such as when he suggested the Democrats would destroy the U.S. middle class by way of open borders, or when he simply said it’s “time to put Americans first” in relation to the Democrats’ failure to fix the immigration crisis in the past ten years. Trump would also share tweets from the official White House account to demonstrate the successes for U.S. Americans with the deportation of immigrants, such as when the account claimed “Americans are applying for the open jobs” after an ICE raid on a food plan in Mississippi. In addition, he styled himself as morally aligned with ‘the people,’ displaying outrage at Ocasio-Cortez’s use of the term “concentration camps” for the border detention centers, and when he retweeted U.S. Representative Doug Collins who blamed Democrats for misrepresenting conditions at the border as child abuse and torture (see Figure 16).

![Figure 16. U.S. Representative Doug Collins Blaming Democrats for Border Conditions.](image)

**Developing an “America for All”**

Contrary to the exclusionary rhetoric used in Trump’s performance of populism, Ocasio-Cortez expressed highly inclusive messaging in her immigration rhetoric used throughout her own performance of populism. Ocasio-Cortez portrayed an image of an inclusive U.S. with messages of unity, love and hope, and thus, providing the space for this traditional out-group to become part of ‘the people.’ Like Trump, Ocasio-Cortez invokes her own progressive base, styling herself as one of ‘the people’ of an America built by immigrants that remains open to all. She calls for a reset to the way we think and talk about immigrants in the U.S., saying it’s a “lie
that immigrants are ‘takers,’ or represent a weight on society. It’s wrong. Immigrants are *makers.* They create and offer opportunity. They aren’t a weight to carry; in fact, they are our nation’s shoulders.” She claims that “immigration policy isn’t about ‘containing a problem,’” and speaks of the opportunity and inherent value immigrants bring with them to the U.S., particularly as undocumented taxpayers. Another way Ocasio-Cortez portrays immigrants as valuable members of U.S. society is by retweeting a video that asks, “What defines an American?” by interviewing deported veterans who served in the U.S. military, but are not citizens. Ocasio-Cortez even used references to the Bible and Christianity to not only humanize immigrants that are typically thought of as ‘other,’ but also to style herself as one of ‘the people,’ since the majority of U.S. Americans identify as Christian. For example, she retweeted an article from The Atlantic with the caption, "We know exactly where Christ is, because he told us. He’s with the sick and the jailed and the hungry. He’s in those camps with those suffering children. And we need to be there, too." In another instance she quoted the Bible, saying, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me,” to draw the comparison between Christianity and Democratic Socialism’s views on what a fair and just society looks like.

Ocasio-Cortez’s rhetoric encourages the inclusion of immigrants into the U.S., but also promotes the unity of everyday U.S. Americans. This presents itself by inspiring the coming together of “neighbors,” but also by highlighting acts of solidarity. In response to ICE raids, Ocasio-Cortez advocated that “NOW is the time for us to come together,” and to open up your homes to “be a safe space or haven for others” to “plan, prepare, + protect our neighbors.” By using the term “neighbor” when referencing undocumented immigrants, Ocasio-Cortez intentionally frames them as functioning members of society, and part of the in-group (i.e. – the
“us” in “us vs. them”). However, the notion of coming together is not limited to just immigrants and everyday citizens in Ocasio-Cortez eyes. She also uses this narrative to speak to the ‘other,’ in this case those “infected with white supremacy,” telling them that now is the time to come back to the side of love (see Figure 17). Ocasio-Cortez implies the “corrupt elites” have infected “the other people” with white supremacy, and expresses hope and redemption for the ‘other,’ offering them a place in the ‘good people.’

Figure 17. Ocasio-Cortez Offering Redemption to White Supremacists.

Beyond these instances of coming together, Ocasio-Cortez also highlights acts of solidarity by other U.S. citizens to advocate for immigrant rights as human beings and part of ‘the people.’ For example, she shared several #JewsAgainstICE posts regarding their #NeverAgain protests, such as when she said, “Also deserving of our attention and support: 36 young Jewish activists were arrested today for nonviolent direct action against migrant conditions in Elizabeth, NJ.” She even promoted the financial support for the protestors with a direct link to a GoFundMe page set up to aid in their legal funds, and thanked them for their “courage, compassion, and selflessness in pursuit of justice.” In another instance, Ocasio-Cortez calls attention to the Wayfair protest when “workers couldn’t stomach they were making beds to cage children.” She said, “This is what solidarity looks like - a reminder that everyday people have real power, as long as we’re brave enough to use it.” By saying “we” in references to acts
of solidarity and holding the power, Ocasio-Cortez directly includes herself as one of ‘the people,’ styling herself as one of everyday citizens taking back the power. Additionally, Ocasio-Cortez engages with ‘the people’ in this way by sharing their stories and thanking them for their service to the U.S. and for their neighbors in these acts of solidarity and advocacy for immigrants in detention centers.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

Summary of Research Findings

The concept of populism as a performance on a political gradation is a relatively new idea, and gaps remain in how left-wing politicians differ from right-wing politicians in their ability to perform populism to engage with ‘the people.’ This thesis seeks to address that gap by examining a specific case study using Donald Trump and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Twitter account during the peak of the 2019 immigration crisis through the lens of Baldwin-Philippi’s (2018) four methods of centering ‘the people’: speaking to the people, engaging with the people, styling oneself on the people, and highlighting voices of the people. I found four major themes surrounding both Trump and Ocasio-Cortez’s performance on Twitter: condemning the degradation of the U.S., acting as an immigration warrior, putting “America first,” and developing an “America for all.”

Condemning the degradation of the U.S. was a natural occurrence throughout Ocasio-Cortez and Trump’s individual performances of populism, but it varied in its manifestation between the left and right-wing politicians. Ocasio-Cortez considered the issue at hand to be the result of racism and white supremacy, presenting in the form of the subsequent inhumane treatment of immigrants at the border and across the country. To Ocasio-Cortez, the U.S.’s values as a nation of immigrants that is open to all who come to fulfill their American dream was being diminished. Likewise, for Trump the degradation presented itself through an “immigration crisis” and the nation’s inability to preserve “American” culture and the safety of its citizens through incompetent policies by the Democrats. Additionally, both politicians acted as and portrayed themselves as an immigration warrior. Trump positioned himself as the one true savior
of a broken immigration system that could only be fixed through his administration’s excellent border policies that are good for the overall wellbeing of the country and beneficial to its citizens. Whereas Ocasio-Cortez showcased herself as a warrior for immigrants themselves, fighting for their rights and humane treatment, but also for the country’s values and status as a nation of immigrants. Another theme that pertained only to Trump’s performance was putting “America first,” which consisted of the belief he was acting on the will of ‘the people’ and protecting the U.S. from criminal immigrants. To Trump, being for immigrants and their rights mean being anti-American and taking away from U.S. citizens. The final theme, which presented itself only in Ocasio-Cortez’s performance was that of developing an “America for all.” She does this through her use of highly inclusive rhetoric expressing a need for unity and inviting immigrants to become part of ‘the people.

Throughout these four themes, both Ocasio-Cortez and Trump exhibited several behaviors to center ‘the people.’ While each of the four methods of centering ‘the people’ were present in these findings, it’s important to note that styling self on and speaking to ‘the people’ were the main methods used by Trump and Ocasio-Cortez as it pertained to immigration. Speaking to ‘the people’ consisted of retweeting to disseminate information and news to their followers, retweeting to highlight their own voices and rhetoric, and using data to emphasize their policies and arguments – Trump for protecting the country from illegal immigrants, and Ocasio-Cortez for promoting an “America for all.” For Ocasio-Cortez it also included incorporating Spanish to engage in targeted communication. Engaging with ‘the people’ included showing engagement with immigrants at the border through photos and videos, but only in Ocasio-Cortez’s case. The Congresswoman used these interactions to tell immigrant stories on her massive platform. Trump did not engage with ‘the people’ in relation to immigration. Styling
oneself on ‘the people’ consisted of displaying emotion and compassion for Ocasio-Cortez, and moral outrage for Trump. Styling self was perpetuated by Trump’s exclusionary rhetoric for an America for Americans, and Ocasio-Cortez’s inclusionary rhetoric for an inclusive U.S. Finally, highlighting the voices of the people included retweeting verified accounts on Twitter to showcase support for not only themselves, but their policy positions as well.

The above findings support what we know of right-wing exclusionary rhetoric in Trump but expand our understanding of left-wing inclusionary rhetoric and how it differs from its counterpart through Ocasio-Cortez’s performance of populism and centering ‘the people.’ Most of what we know of left-wing populism is thanks to studies on Latin American and European movements, which characterize this brand of populism as being inclusive to marginalized out-groups, such as immigrants. However, though Latin American and European left-wing populists speak of immigrants in inclusionary terms, they are still deemed “other.” In Ocasio-Cortez’s case, she consistently demonstrates inclusionary rhetoric toward immigrants because of the U.S.’s somewhat unique history and identity as a nation of immigrants, and specifically invites this out-group to become active participants of ‘the people’ due to their economic and cultural value.

In terms of immigration, both Ocasio-Cortez and Trump display basic tenets of populism as being anti-establishment (Canovan, 2005). However, in Trump’s case he is transferring blame of the broken immigration system on the Democrats. To him, the establishment is the Democrats and Congress who have failed to “fix the crisis,” and he presents himself as the savior of the system. On the other hand, Ocasio-Cortez views the establishment as the Trump administration and the Republicans in power, who are failing immigrants by caging them in inhumane conditions. However, even though Trump and Ocasio-Cortez are populist in the sense that they
call for a political change of structure between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite,’ this case study complicates our understanding of populism as being simply ‘anti-establishment.’ Although she is speaking ‘for the people’ in an attempt to unite the masses, her method of doing so involves the uplifting of an unlikely voice in the U.S. – that of immigrants coming to fulfil their American dream. While most populists tend to draw on purely human emotion to drive policy and unite ‘the people,’ Ocasio-Cortez often used data and hard evidence in addition to appeals to emotion to communicate her points. The perception is that she treats her audience as being driven by facts, but also as human beings affected by inhumane treatment and human rights violations. Ocasio-Cortez’s performance of populism can be simultaneously an appeal to emotion and an appeal to facts. On the other hand, Trump’s performance of populism attempts to unite the masses by uplifting the voices of the perceived marginalized group of U.S. Americans who need protecting from immigrants. Like Ocasio-Cortez, Trump uses statistics and hyperbole to communicate the necessity for his policies, such as the border wall. The perception here is that his audience is driven by fear.

Baldwin-Philippi (2018) points out that during the 2016 election campaign, President Trump ‘broke with traditional campaign practice, often retweeting and responding to little-known supporters who had few followers or were otherwise not known to the public’ (p. 6). Back then, this sometimes led to ethical political errors for Trump, such as retweeting known racists, bots, and anti-Semites (Abramson, 2017), as his retweets were often fear-based and exclusionary. Though as president, Trump did not retweet or respond to unverified users on Twitter when communicating about immigration, and neither did Ocasio-Cortez. However, both Trump and Ocasio-Cortez utilized retweets to show that they had support for their ideas and were credible on the issues of immigration.
This study’s findings align with the argument made by other scholars that populism, particularly the conservative kind, is often based on the rhetoric of exclusion. This means that not only are they voicing the narrative of ‘the people’ versus ‘the elite,’ but also of ‘us’ against some kind of ‘other,’ such as immigrants, people of certain cultures or faiths, etc. This type of populism attempts to unite ‘the people’ against a common enemy. We see this manifest in Trump’s performance of populism on Twitter, as he frames immigrants as a crisis and dangerous criminals. What we see with Ocasio-Cortez is that her rhetoric is not only highly inclusive, but it actually frequently focuses on highlighting the voices of marginalized communities within the U.S., such as immigrants and refugees. Ocasio-Cortez also frequently and explicitly urged her audience to act on behalf of immigrants experiencing inhumane treatment at the southern border, sharing acts of solidarity and fundraising pages too. This adds to our understanding of populism by demonstrating how politicians can use populist tactics to unite ‘the people’ not against an enemy, but rather for a cause. This case study suggests that a more pragmatic approach that views populism as strategic communication may be more productive than a normative approach, allowing us to understand populism as a tool that may be utilized by politicians of varying party affiliations to drive their political agendas through connection to their audience. Basically, populism is not one size fits all.

Strengths and Limitations

While this case study challenges our current ways of thinking about the performance of populism, in that it can be performed across the political spectrum with both exclusionary and inclusionary rhetoric, it is not without its limitations. As the only coder of Trump and Ocasio-Cortez’s tweets, the results are subjective and could benefit from more diverse perspectives. This is particularly true due to the subject of the case study. As a white, U.S. American-born citizen, there may certainly be aspects of the state of immigration that have not occurred to me as it has
not relevant to my personal life experience. Therefore, this study could benefit from the perspectives of Latinx researchers or immigrants.

Another challenge that presented itself throughout the study was the emotional and mental toll associated with examining Trump and Ocasio-Cortez’s tweets on the immigration crisis. This was particularly salient in the case of Ocasio-Cortez’s performance of populism as she made more direct references to the humanitarian issues and human rights violations occurring at the hands of the U.S. government, oftentimes sharing photo and video evidence to accompany her statements and testimony of others. These instances were especially heinous given the fact that most of these tweets were in reference to the suffering of children. By focusing on the issue of immigration and the crisis happening at the border, I unintentionally made myself susceptible to burnout when analyzing my findings.

Future Research

Though this study expands what we know of how left-wing politicians perform populism on social media by using inclusionary rhetoric, further research is necessary to fully understand left-wing populism given the single issue examined here. Future researchers should examine the performance of populism on social media in relation to other important issues, such as climate change or the economy. Researchers should also look to ‘the people’s’ reactions to this performance of populism using content analysis studies to examine replies to politicians’ tweets to understand the perceptions of the performance of populism on social media. This could be done by comparing replies and reactions to President Trump’s conservative use of populism and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s democratic-socialist use of populism (as they are frequently compared but on opposite ends of the ideological spectrum [Baker, 2019; Zito, 2019]), or broadening the analysis to other U.S. or non-U.S. populists. This study could further our
understanding of the disparities between left and right-wing populism and how it is perceived on social media, as well as explore the role that populism and social media have on politics in today’s increasingly digitized society. Another way to extend this study would be by performing comparative studies between politicians from different countries, to examine the differences and similarities between parties, cultures, and countries. Immigration is a hot-topic across the globe, and we could benefit by further research beyond a U.S. American-centric perspective. As populism is a global phenomenon, we need to understand if what we are seeing happen to politics in the U.S. with Trump and Ocasio-Cortez and social media is being reflected elsewhere around the world.
References


000-migrant-children-now-held-at-nearly-full-shelters?utm_source=twitter.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=politics&utm_term=nprnews&utm_content=2043


Hjelmgaard, K. (2018, October 29). Brazil’s new president Jair Bolsonaro has said many offensive things. *USA Today.*

https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/immigration-united-states-timeline


Jarrett, L. (2018, June 27). Federal judge orders reunification of parents and children, end to most family separations at border. *CNN.*


https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/04/trump-populism-lepen/523491/

https://www.nilc.org/2020/02/19/cbp-detention-facility-conditions-unconstitutional/


Trump, D. J. [@realDonaldTrump]. (2016, June 22). Hillary says things can't change. I say they have to change. It's a choice between Americanism and her corrupt globalism. #Imwithyou [Tweet].


https://www.cbp.gov/border-security/along-us-borders/history


APPENDICES

APENDIX A


2017

January 20
Donald J. Trump is inaugurated as the 45th president.

January 25 Setting ICE loose:
Trump signs Executive Order 13768 to punish sanctuary cities and sets up an office to track crimes by immigrants. (The order’s provisions regarding sanctuary cities are later declared unconstitutional.) Trump also signs Executive Order 13767 calling for the “immediate construction” of his long-promised border wall. (Building the wall requires congressional approval.)

January 27 Travel Ban 1.0:
Executive Order 13769 is almost immediately blocked by numerous federal judges.

February 13 RAISE Act is introduced in the Senate:
The bill seeks to limit the number of immigrants admitted to the US. (The bill, opposed by Democrats – who will control the House in 2019 – is unlikely to pass.)

February 20
The Department of Homeland Security establishes the Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement Office to highlight and assist victims of crimes committed by undocumented immigrants.

March 6 Travel Ban 2.0:
Executive Order 13780 is announced. The Supreme Court allows the order to go into effect temporarily.

June 15 Deferred Action for Parents of Americans is rescinded:
An Obama-era plan to shield millions of documented parents from deportation was stalled in the courts before implementation – and the Trump administration rescinded it. An estimated 3.6 million people would have been eligible, according to the Migration Policy Institute.

July – October
DHS starts a “pilot program” for the zero-tolerance policy in El Paso, Texas.

September 5
Attorney General Jeff Sessions announces the repeal of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, affecting nearly 690,000 people. The repeal is blocked by federal courts after 15 states and the District of Columbia file a lawsuit.

**September 12 Clearing the way for the wall:**
DHS announces it will waive “certain laws” to begin construction of the new wall near Calexico, California. The first section of fence was dedicated on Oct. 26, 2018.

**September 12 Travel Ban 3.0:**
Presidential Proclamation 9645 is announced, adding Venezuela and North Korea to the list of affected countries, making it not exclusively a ban on Muslims. The Supreme Court would uphold the ban on June 26, 2018.

**September 27**
The US announces it will accept only 45,000 refugees, down from 84,995 with regional caps of 19,000 for Africa, 17,500 for the Near East and South Asia (including most Middle Eastern countries), 5,000 for East Asia, 2,000 for Europe and Central Asia, and 1,500 for Latin America and the Caribbean.

**October 11**
The US ends temporary protected status for 450 Sudanese people

**October 31**
Sayfullo Saipov, an immigrant from Uzbekistan who entered the US under a special visa program, kills 8 and injures 11 on a Manhattan bike path in a terror attack.

**November 20**
Section 9(a) of Executive Order 13768 – withholding federal grants to sanctuary cities – is declared unconstitutional.

**December 15**
The US ends temporary protected status for 2,550 Nicaraguans.

**2017 ICE STATS**
143,470 administrative arrests. 142,356 detentions. 226,119 interior and border removals.
*ICE statistics based on fiscal year 2017, which includes the final four months of Obama’s administration.

**CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION**
250,838 apprehensions made at the southwest border.

**2018**
**January 8**
The US ends temporary protected status for 195,000 Salvadorans and 50,000 Haitians.

**January 9**
A US district court temporarily blocks the repeal of the DACA program, allowing nearly 690,000 undocumented immigrants to renew their work permits. Days later, the Justice Department appeals the ruling.

January 11
Trump in the Oval Office, according to the Washington Post: “Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here? Why do we need more Haitians? Take them out.”

February 13
The US District Court for the Eastern District of New York orders the federal government to accept DACA applications from people who had previously applied.

February 23
Trump’s statement (determined to be false) at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Oxon Hill, Maryland: “This guy came in through chain migration and a part of the lottery system. They say 22 people came in with him. In other words, an aunt, an uncle, a grandfather, a mother, a father, whoever came in. But a lot of people came in. That’s chain migration.”

February 26
The Supreme Court declines to hear the Trump administration’s request for a review of lower courts’ orders that DACA applications must be accepted.

Late March
A caravan of more than 1,000 people, mostly from Honduras, begins its journey to the US from Tapachula, Mexico.

April 2
The Justice Department announces quotas for immigration judges to complete cases faster. The Trump administration says it expects 700 cases completed with a 15% appeal rate each year.

April 2
Trump tweets: “As ridiculous as it sounds, the laws of our country do not easily allow us to send those crossing our Southern Border back where they came from. A whole big wasted procedure must take place. Mexico & Canada have tough immigration laws, whereas ours are an Obama joke. ACT CONGRESS.”

April 4
As the caravan continues toward the US, Trump signs a memo to deploy “anywhere from 2,000 to 4,000” National Guard troops to the US-Mexico border.

April 6 Making zero-tolerance official:
Attorney General Jeff Sessions directs federal prosecutors “to adopt immediately a zero-tolerance policy for all offenses” related to the misdemeanour of illegal entry to the US.

April 24
A US district court orders the Trump administration to continue accepting new DACA applications but gives the Department of Homeland Security 90 days to explain why the program is being cancelled.

**April 26**
DHS terminates temporary protected status for Nepal, affecting about 8,950 people.

**May 4**
DHS terminated temporary protected status for Honduras, affecting about 57,000 people. Honduras becomes the sixth country to lose the status since Trump took office.

**May 7**
Attorney General Jeff Sessions announces that the administration will prosecute parents who enter the US illegally with their children: “If you cross this border unlawfully… then we will prosecute you. If you smuggle an illegal alien across the border, then we’ll prosecute you…. If you’re smuggling a child, then we’re going to prosecute you, and that child will be separated from you, probably, as required by law.”

**May 8**
DHS proposes a new rule allowing authorities to investigate the legal status of anyone offering to sponsor an unaccompanied migrant child in US custody.

**May 16**
Trump during a roundtable discussion about California’s sanctuary law: “We have people coming into the country, or trying to come in – and we’re stopping a lot of them – but we’re taking people out of the country. You wouldn’t believe how bad these people are. These aren’t people. These are animals. And we’re taking them out of the country at a level and at a rate that’s never happened before. And because of the weak laws, they come in fast, we get them, we release them, we get them again, we bring them out. It’s crazy.

**May 26**
Trump tweets: “Put pressure on the Democrats to end the horrible law that separates children from there parents once they cross the Border into the U.S. Catch and Release, Lottery and Chain must all go with it and we MUST continue building the WALL! DEMOCRATS ARE PROTECTING MS-13 THUGS.”

**June 11**
Attorney General Jeff Sessions says domestic violence is not grounds for asylum: “Generally, claims by aliens pertaining to domestic violence or gang violence perpetrated by non-governmental actors will not qualify for asylum.”

**June 14 Tent city becomes operational:**
The Department of Health and Human Services says it received grant funds of $15 million for 30 days to detain children separated from parents at the border in a tent city near Tornillo, Texas.

**June 20 Family separation policy reversed:**
Trump signs an abruptly drafted executive order to keep detained immigrant families together.

**June 24**
Trump calls for anyone entering the US illegally to be deported without due process: “We cannot allow all of these people to invade our Country. When somebody comes in, we must immediately, with no Judges or Court Cases, bring them back from where they came…”

**June 26 Travel Ban 3.0 is upheld by the Supreme Court:**
Writing for the court’s 5-4 majority, Chief Justice John Roberts says Trump has authority under the Immigration and Nationality Act to “suspend entry of aliens into the United States.”

**July 26**
A federal judge orders the Trump administration to stop separating most families at the border and to reunite parents and children who were already separated.

**August 3**
A US district court orders the Trump administration to reinstate DACA and says the Department of Homeland Security failed to “give a rational explanation for its decision” to end it.

**August 24**
Trump Tweets: “Open borders equals crime, tremendous crime. The hardest kind of crime.”

**September 14**
The tent city in Tornillo, Texas, begins expanding to 3,800 beds after the Office of Refugee Resettlement announces up to $368 million in additional funded to expand capacity and keep the shelter running through 2018.

**September 24**
The US announces it will accept only 30,000 refugees in 2019.

**October 3**
A federal judge stops the Trump administration from ending temporary protected status for Sudan, Haiti, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.

**Mid-October**
The caravan of about 1,600 Hondurans heads toward the US.

**October 24**
Trump tweets: “We are a great Sovereign Nation. We have Strong Borders and will never accept people coming into our Country illegally!”

**October 30**
Trump says he intends to end birthright citizenship.

**November 25**
US border officials shoot tear gas and pepper balls at asylum-seekers at the Tijuana border crossing.

**December 11**
Trump tweets: “Despite the large Caravans that WERE forming and heading to our Country, people have not been able to get through our newly built Walls, makeshift Walls & Fences, or Border Patrol Officers & Military. They are now staying in Mexico or going back to their original countries…”

**December 11**
The Trump administration asks the Supreme Court to let the federal government bar asylum claims by people entering the country without authorization.

**December 12**
The Atlantic reports: “The Trump administration is resuming its efforts to deport certain protected Vietnamese immigrants who have lived in the United States for decades – many of them having fled the country during the Vietnam War.”

**December 13**
At this point, nearly 15,000 migrant children are held in government custody.

**December 13**
Customs and Border Protection acknowledges that a 7-year-old girl died Dec. 8 just hours after she was taken into custody by Border Patrol agents in New Mexico.

**December 19**
A federal court overturns the Trump administration’s limits on asylum claims for domestic and gang-related violence.

**December 11 The US Government Partially Shuts Down:**
The Senate unanimously passes a bill to fund the government, however because it lacks the $5.7 billion needed to fund a border wall, the bill is not taken up by the Republican-controlled House. Approximately 800,000 government employees are either working without pay or were placed on unpaid leave.

**December 24**
An 8-year-old boy being held by Border Protection dies on Christmas eve.

**2018 ICE STATS**
158,581 administrative arrests. 396,448 detentions. 256,085 interior and border removals.

**CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION**
415,868 apprehensions made at the southwest border (through November)

**2019**
**January 3**
Democrats take over the House of Representatives and immediately pass a bill to fund the government, which the Senate refuses to vote on.

**January 8**
In a television address, Trump is expected to make a case for a national security crisis at the southwest border and the necessity of building a wall to separate the US and Mexico.
White People of 'Good Character' Granted Citizenship

January 1776
Thomas Paine publishes a pamphlet, “Common Sense,” that argues for American independence. Most colonists consider themselves Britons, but Paine makes the case for a new American. “Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America. This new world hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every part of Europe,” he writes.

March 1790
Congress passes the first law about who should be granted U.S. citizenship. The Naturalization Act of 1790 allows any free white person of “good character,” who has been living in the United States for two years or longer to apply for citizenship. Without citizenship, nonwhite residents are denied basic constitutional protections, including the right to vote, own property, or testify in court.

August 1790
The first U.S. census takes place. The English are the largest ethnic group among the 3.9 million people counted, though nearly one in five Americans are of African heritage.

Irish Immigrant Wave

1815
Peace is re-established between the United States and Britain after the War of 1812. Immigration from Western Europe turns from a trickle into a gush, which causes a shift in the demographics of the United States. This first major wave of immigration lasts until the Civil War.

Between 1820 and 1860 the Irish—many of them Catholic—account for an estimated one-third of all immigrants to the United States. Some 5 million German immigrants also come to the U.S., many of them making their way to the Midwest to buy farms or settle in cities including Milwaukee, St. Louis and Cincinnati.

1819
Many of newcomers arrive sick or dying from their long journey across the Atlantic in cramped conditions. The immigrants overwhelm major port cities, including New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Charleston. In response, the United States passes the Steerage Act of 1819 requiring better conditions on ships arriving to the country. The Act also calls for ship captains to submit demographic information on passengers, creating the first federal records on the ethnic composition of immigrants to the United States.

1849
America’s first anti-immigrant political party, the Know-Nothing Party forms, as a backlash to the increasing number of German and Irish immigrants settling in the United States.

1875
Following the Civil War, some states passed their own immigration laws. In 1875 the Supreme Court declares that it’s the responsibility of the federal government to make and enforce immigration laws.

Chinese Exclusion Act
1880
As America begins a rapid period of industrialization and urbanization, a second immigration boom begins. Between 1880 and 1920, more than 20 million immigrants arrive. The majority are from Southern, Eastern and Central Europe, including 4 million Italians and 2 million Jews. Many of them settle in major U.S. cities and work in factories.

1882
The Chinese Exclusion Act passes, which bars Chinese immigrants from entering the U.S. Beginning in the 1850s, a steady flow of Chinese workers had immigrated to America.

They worked in the gold mines, and garment factories, built railroads, and took agricultural jobs. Anti-Chinese sentiment grew as Chinese laborers became successful in America. Although Chinese immigrants make up only 0.002 percent of the United States population, white workers blame them for low wages.

The 1882 Act is the first in American history to place broad restrictions on certain immigrant groups.

1891
The Immigration Act of 1891 further excludes who can enter the United States, barring the immigration of polygamists, people convicted of certain crimes, and the sick or diseased. The Act also created a federal office of immigration to coordinate immigration enforcement and a corps of immigration inspectors stationed at principle ports of entry.

Ellis Island Opens
January 1892
Ellis Island, the United States’ first immigration station, opens in New York Harbor. The first immigrant processed is Annie Moore, a teenager from County Cork in Ireland. More than 12 million immigrants would enter the United States through Ellis Island between 1892 and 1954.

1907
U.S. immigration peaks, with 1.3 million people entering the country through Ellis Island alone.

February 1907
Amid prejudices in California that an influx of Japanese workers would cost white workers farming jobs and depress wages, the United States and Japan sign the Gentlemen’s Agreement. Japan agrees to limit Japanese emigration to the United States to certain categories of business
and professional men. In return, President Theodore Roosevelt urges San Francisco to end the segregation of Japanese students from white students in San Francisco schools.

1910
An estimated three-quarters of New York City’s population consists of new immigrants and first-generation Americans.

New Restrictions at Start of WWI
1917
Xenophobia reaches new highs on the eve of American involvement in World War I. The Immigration Act of 1917 establishes a literacy requirement for immigrants entering the country and halts immigration from most Asian countries.

May 1924
The Immigration Act of 1924 limits the number of immigrants allowed into the United States yearly through nationality quotas. Under the new quota system, the United States issues immigration visas to 2 percent of the total number of people of each nationality in the United States at the 1890 census. The law favors immigration from Northern and Western European countries. Just three countries, Great Britain, Ireland and Germany account for 70 percent of all available visas. Immigration from Southern, Central and Eastern Europe was limited. The Act completely excludes immigrants from Asia, aside from the Philippines, then an American colony.

1924
In the wake of the numerical limits established by the 1924 law, illegal immigration to the United States increases. The U.S. Border Patrol is established to crack down on illegal immigrants crossing the Mexican and Canadian borders into the United States. Many of these early border crossers were Chinese and other Asian immigrants, who had been barred from entering legally.

Mexicans Fill Labor Shortages During WWII
1942
Labor shortages during World War II prompt the United States and Mexico to form the Bracero Program, which allows Mexican agricultural workers to enter the United States temporarily. The program lasts until 1964.

1948
The United States passes the nation’s first refugee and resettlement law to deal with the influx of Europeans seeking permanent residence in the United States after World War II.

1952
The McCarran-Walter Act formally ends the exclusion of Asian immigrants to the United States.

1956-1957
The United States admits roughly 38,000 immigrants from Hungary after a failed uprising against the Soviets. They were among the first Cold War refugees. The United States would admit over 3 million refugees during the Cold War.

1960-1962
Roughly 14,000 unaccompanied children flee Fidel Castro’s Cuba and come to the United States as part of a secret, anti-Communism program called Operation Peter Pan.

Quota System Ends
1965
The Immigration and Nationality Act overhauls the American immigration system. The Act ends the national origin quotas enacted in the 1920s which favored some racial and ethnic groups over others.

The quota system is replaced with a seven-category preference system emphasizing family reunification and skilled immigrants. Upon signing the new bill, President Lyndon B. Johnson, called the old immigration system “un-American,” and said the new bill would correct a “cruel and enduring wrong in the conduct of the American Nation.”

Over the next five years, immigration from war-torn regions of Asia, including Vietnam and Cambodia, would more than quadruple. Family reunification became a driving force in U.S. immigration.

April-October 1980
During the Mariel boatlift, roughly 125,000 Cuban refugees make a dangerous sea crossing in overcrowded boats to arrive on the Florida shore seeking political asylum.

Amnesty to Illegal Immigrants
1986
President Ronald Reagan signs into law the Simpson-Mazzoli Act, which grants amnesty to more than 3 million immigrants living illegally in the United States.

2001
U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) propose the first Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which would provide a pathway to legal status for Dreamers, undocumented immigrants brought to the United States illegally by their parents as children. The bill—and subsequent iterations of it—don’t pass.

2012
President Barack Obama signs Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) which temporarily shields some Dreamers from deportation, but doesn’t provide a path to citizenship.

2017
President Donald Trump issues two executive orders—both titled “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States”—aimed at curtailing travel and immigration from
six majority Muslim countries (Chad, Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia) as well as North Korea and Venezuela. Both of these travel bans are challenged in state and federal courts.

2018
In April 2018, the travel restrictions on Chad are lifted. In June 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court uphold a third version of the ban on the remaining seven countries.
APPENDIX C

Keywords Used in Data Collection

1. Immigration
2. Immigrant
3. Border
4. Border crisis
5. Mexico
6. Mexicans
7. Illegal alien
8. Refugee
9. Undocumented
10. Asylum
11. Illegal immigrant
12. ICE
13. DHS
14. CBP
15. Border patrol
16. Deportation
17. Deport
18. Migrant
19. Detainee
20. Detention center
21. Humanitarian crisis
22. Inhumane
23. Cages
24. Caging
25. Concentration camp
26. Human rights
27. Child separation
28. Family separation
August 7, 2019
Dear Dr. Jessica Baldwin-Philippi:

I would like to request your permission to include an excerpt from the following item in my dissertation:


Your populist affordances model and methods of ‘centering the people’ were the framework for my thesis. I would like to include a figure of the model because it will be very helpful for context on the technological performance of populism. The source will receive full credit in the manuscript.

By agreeing to the use of the item in my dissertation, you give ProQuest Information and Learning (PQIL) the right to supply copies of this material on demand as part of my doctoral dissertation. Please attach any other terms and conditions for the proposed use of this item.

If you no longer hold the copyright to this work, please indicate to whom I should direct my request.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. Sincerely,
Taylor P. Koopman
taylor.p.earl@wmich.edu

Copyright Permission Approval

Hi Taylor, Sure that's totally fine with me. I'd check with NM&S's guidelines about if you have to ask/cite them in any particular way, but it's fine on my end. Glad you found it so helpful, and excited to see your piece!

--jesse
This Agreement between Taylor Koopman ("You") and SAGE Publications ("SAGE Publications") consists of your license details and the terms and conditions provided by SAGE Publications and Copyright Clearance Center.

All payments must be made in full to CCC. For payment instructions, please see information listed at the bottom of this form.

License Number 4643920890084
License date Aug 07, 2019
Licensed Content Publisher SAGE Publications
Licensed Content Publication New Media & Society
Licensed Content Title The technological performance of populism
Licensed Content Author Jessica Baldwin-Philippi
Licensed Content Date Feb 1, 2019
Licensed Content Volume 21
Licensed Content Issue 2
Licensed Content Pages 22
Type of Use Journal
Requestor type Non-commercial
Format Electronic
Portion Figure/table
Number of figures/tables: 1
Will you be translating? No, only English
Circulation: 1
Title of new article: “Someone’s got to look out for the people,: How Donald Trump and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez perform exclusionary and inclusionary populism on Twitter (Working Title)
Lead author: Taylor Koopman
Title of targeted journal:
Publisher:
Expected publication date: April 2020
Order reference number: DOI: 10.1177/1461444818797591
Portions: Figure 1

Requestor Location:
KALAMAZOO, MI 49004
United States
Attn: Taylor Koopman

Publisher Tax ID: GB232600116
Billing Type: Invoice
Taylor Koopman
1508 E. Mosel Ave.

Billing Address:
KALAMAZOO, MI 49004
United States
Attn: Taylor Koopman

Total: 38.00 USD

Terms and Conditions

SAGE Terms and Conditions for Permissions Administered Through Rightslink - UK

You, the Requestor, are requesting to use the material specified in the permission request (the "Work"). Your agreement to the terms and conditions herein and completion of a permission request constitutes a Permission Request. You are in no way required to use
the Work; however, should you decide not to use the Work after you complete this request, you agree to cancel your order through this website. Under the above conditions, and the following terms and conditions, permission to use Work ("Permission") is granted solely to you:

1. SAGE reserves the right to revoke any Permission, at SAGE's sole discretion, within two (2) business days of the request.
2. The number of copies ("Copies") for print use is defined as the total number of copies made for distribution or for repurposing, and the number of copies ("Copies") for electronic use is defined as the total number of viewers of the Work, recipients of copies of the Work, and individuals or entities who may have access to the Work. The Copies must not exceed the Copies as stated in the Permission Request.
3. Requests to post a full article on a website, internet, intranet, or any publicly accessible site must be submitted to the Publisher at permissions@sagepub.co.uk.
4. Permission is granted only for the type of use specified in the Permission Request. If any information pertaining to your Permission Request changes, you must cancel this request and resubmit a new request with the correct and current permission request information. SAGE may exercise its right to revoke Permission, if SAGE finds, in SAGE's sole opinion, that the context in which you have used or repurposed the Work is considered libelous, in violation of any right of privacy, or otherwise unlawful; infringement or in violation of any copyright or other proprietary right of others; or can be construed to possibly cause harm or injury. You agree that use of Work will be professional, in the context of fact-based and generally acceptable professional practices.
5. Permission does not include the use within Custom Publishing Programs, and all use within such programs is explicitly prohibited.
6. Permission does not include use of the material within Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC's). For permission to include material in a MOOC, please contact SAGE directly at permissions@sagepub.co.uk.
7. If your Permission Request includes the right to translate the Work, you agree that the translation of the material shall be made faithfully and accurately, and that abbreviations and/or alterations in the text and/or title of the Work shall be made only with SAGE's prior the written consent. Requestor shall not own or acquire any copyright or other proprietary rights in the Work or any other material furnished by SAGE, including without limitation translations or transcriptions thereof, all of which rights shall be owned by and/or are hereby assigned to SAGE. Requestor shall indemnify SAGE against any and all claims, including without limitation attorneys' fees and legal costs, that concern or relate to (a) inaccurate translation or transcription of the Work, (b) infringement claims arising out of the inclusion of material not furnished by SAGE or (c) infringement or other claims asserted by anyone retained by Requestor to translate the Work. Requestor agrees that the name of the Author(s), Copyright Holder, and Publisher shall appear in due prominence on the title page of every copy of the translation and in all advertisements for the translation, and that the translation shall include: (1) the Work's original copyright notice and original American title, both in English, and
(2) notice in granted translated language in identifying the SAGE Publications as the original publisher and stating the translation is published by arrangement with SAGE. The rights licensed to Requestor are not transferrable. The translated article reprint must include the following disclaimer in English and in the language of the reprint: "While every effort has been made to ensure that the contents of this publication are factually correct, neither the authors nor the publisher accepts, and they hereby expressly exclude to the fullest extent permissible under applicable law, any and all liability arising from the contents published in this Article, including, without limitation, from any errors, omissions, inaccuracies in original or following translation, or for any consequences arising therefrom. Nothing in this notice shall exclude liability which may not be excluded by law. Approved product information should be reviewed before prescribing any subject medications."

8. Permission is granted for prospective use only, and does not apply to any use that has occurred prior to the date of the Permission Request.

9. Permission does not apply to any material (reprints, illustrations, figures, tables, etc.) not controlled by SAGE. Requests for permission to re-use third-party material should be submitted to the original copyright holder, as indicated in the credit line for the materials.

10. Full acknowledgment of your source must appear in every copy of your work as follows:

   o Author(s), Journal Title (Journal Volume Number and Issue Number)
   o pp. xx-xx, copyright © YEAR by (Copyright Holder)
   o Reprinted by Permission of SAGE Publications, Ltd.

11. Unless specified in the request or by prior arrangement with SAGE, payment is due from you within sixty (60) days after the completion of Permission.

12. It is assumed that the Requester is using the selection in question, and is subject to billing and collections procedures, unless otherwise noted.

13. Permission Requests for reuse of text excerpts shall not exceed 50% of the article's content.

14. No more than 20% of any one SAGE journal issue may be reused at one time.

15. All reasonable efforts must be made to contact the author(s) of the material to confirm that they agree with this re-use.

Other Terms and Conditions:
You will be invoiced within 48 hours of this transaction date. You may pay your invoice by credit card upon receipt of the invoice for this transaction. Please follow instructions provided at that time.

To pay for this transaction now; please remit a copy of this document along with your payment. Payment should be in the form of a check or money order referencing your account number and this invoice number RLNK503224245.

Make payments to "COPYRIGHT CLEARANCE CENTER" and send to:

Copyright Clearance Center
29118 Network Place
Chicago, IL 60673-1291

Please disregard electronic and mailed copies if you remit payment in advance

Questions? customercare@copyright.com or +1-855-239-3415 (toll free in the US) or +1-978-646-2777.