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**Decoding democracy:
Ideographic analyses of 2024 Republican presidential nominees' rhetoric**

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Abstract

The following rhetorical analysis identifies the rhetoric that was used by 2024 Republican presidential candidates Nikki Haley and Donald Trump. Rhetoric can be thought of as the means and ways that we, as social beings, use language to create meaning and exchange symbols to better understand the world around us. This rhetorical analysis aims to identify the ways in which certain words are being used and the reasoning behind why they were used by the rhetor, or the speaker in a rhetorical situation. The ultimate focus of the following rhetorical criticism is to examine how ideographs, or words that encase political ideologies, are being used by both Haley and Trump. Each rhetorical artifact is a speech conducted by the candidate in different settings with different audiences, which can identify the distinct ways each candidate presents their arguments to their supporters. I will then be able to summarize how each candidate's use of ideographs helped them to justify their own beliefs and change how their audience perceived their opponents. I conclude that while Haley portrays herself as a visionary leader with motherly characteristics, Trump achieves rhetorical success by focusing on past grievances to appeal to the audience's emotions.

Introduction

To many American voters, specifically Democrats, the current election situation is dire. Even after Nikki Haley announced her presidential candidacy, it appeared as though Donald Trump would face minimal challenges in receiving the Republican nomination. To combat this, Nikki Haley assumed the role of the anti-Trump candidate. Since announcing her candidacy, Haley has consistently portrayed herself in opposition to the former president and his ideologies. The objective of the following rhetorical analysis is to discern how ideographs, or symbols representing political ideologies, have been used by both candidates during their respective 2024 Republican presidential nominee campaigns. The primary aim of my analyses is to investigate the rhetorical methods both Haley and Trump employed to gain political support from their respective audiences, as well as examining the effectiveness of both candidates' arguments in persuading their audience to vote for them.

To fully analyze each candidates' rhetoric, I will perform two separate rhetorical analyses on speeches they conducted while campaigning for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination. For Nikki Haley, I have selected the "Nikki Haley Remarks on South Carolina Primary Night" speech that I accessed through C-SPAN (Haley, 2024). This speech was conducted in front an audience of her supporters, and it took place after Haley finished second to former President Donald Trump at the South Carolina Republican primary on February 24, 2024. I chose this artifact as it demonstrates how Haley has been able to position herself as an alternative candidate for many Americans who may be concerned about a rematch between Joe Biden and Donald Trump. This speech also highlights Haley's resilience and her ability to continue her campaign in the face of defeat. For Donald Trump, I chose his 2024 Iowa caucus victory speech that I found on YouTube titled, "WATCH: Trump speaks after winning 2024 Iowa caucuses" (PBS

NewsHour, 2024). Like Haley, his speech was performed in front of an audience of his supporters. Unlike Haley, Trump focused solely on positioning himself as the only viable candidate in the 2024 election by invoking strong emotional reactions from his audience. He does so by employing a more aggressive and confrontational rhetorical style than that of Haley's to supplement the arguments that he presents. After completing rhetorical analyses for the two speeches, I will measure the effectiveness of each candidate's argument in its ability to persuade their audience to adopt their viewpoint and vote for them.

Methods

To analyze the speeches conducted by both Nikki Haley and Donald Trump, I will be using an ideographic approach. Ideographs are ordinary, abstract terms most often found in political discourse that represent an audience's collective commitment to an ill-defined goal. These terms are also considered symbolic building blocks that represent and reinforce political ideologies. Thus, ideographs are an essential tool for politicians when communicating with voters, as they are trying to shape the public's opinion about what should be important to society and what we, as an audience, should do in response. This occurs when a candidate presents a problem or issue to the audience to evoke a desired emotion, such as anger. By capitalizing on the audiences' emotional states, a politician can portray themselves and their values as a solution to the presented issue. Therefore, the emotionally charged audience will be influenced into voting for that candidate and their ideology, as it may be difficult for them to think objectively.

In completing my research using this methodology, I will first isolate an ideograph from the selected artifact. After isolating the ideograph, I will analyze how the meaning behind the word has changed over time, otherwise known as its diachronic structure. This is a necessary step, as the meaning that humans attach to a word is not static. There are many influences that

people interact with daily that inadvertently dictate how they identify and connect with the meaning attached to a word. After analyzing an ideograph's diachronic structure, the next step is to understand how the ideograph is being used at that specific point in time through synchronic analysis. This will provide insight to better understand the cultural context in which the artifact takes place and its role in shaping public opinion. After completing both forms of analyses, I will then be able to conclude how each candidate's use of ideographs may have helped them to justify their political beliefs and use of power in the minds of their target audience.

Historical Context

Donald Trump effectively reshaped the Republican party in his image during his presidency. Although every president has had an impact on their political parties, "Trump has influenced the party and its members on everything from policy to rhetorical style" (Greenwood, 2022). From his unabashed way of speaking and his tenacity to attack opponents, Trump transformed himself from a political outsider into the new face of what it means to be a conservative in America. Trump enacted a multitude of Republican legislation while in office, including tax-reform, limiting immigration, constructing a border wall, and appointing conservative judges across the country (Britannica, 2023).

Even when Democrats took control of the executive and legislative branches following the contentious 2020 election, America would still feel Trump's legacy bleed into the new term. This is especially apparent when considering the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the summer of 2022. Subsequently, the 2022 mid-term elections proved to be a potential comeback for the Republican party, as they expected a "red wave" to sweep the country that had become even more divided under Biden's presidency. Biden, who was still fighting against Trump's and other conservatives claims that the election was stolen, was facing overwhelming backlash from

Americans who were struggling with the rising costs of living and ongoing social injustices. Still, “the former president cast a very long shadow over this election,” and his dominance over the G.O.P. made mid-term voters feel as though the election was “as much about a defeated former president as it was about the current president and party in power” (Kapur, 2022).

A major pitfall of Republicans during the mid-term elections was that they were promoting highly polarized candidates in key swing states, where many of them were endorsed by Trump. Rather than attempting to reshape their party into an alternative for Democratic voters, the G.O.P. staunchly remained pro-Trump, likely also alienating Independent and moderate voters. The Republican party itself is beginning to fracture, as many align themselves alongside Trump and the G.O.P., while others are beginning to diverge and separate themselves from Trump-ism and return to their party’s roots. This all sets the scene for the 2024 Republican presidential nominee race in which, as of this writing, two candidates remain: Donald Trump and Nikki Haley.

Nikki Haley is not a political newcomer and has a reputation for displeasing conservative party members when she served two terms as South Carolina’s governor. Many of her critics believed that she had “strayed from her tea party roots” due to statements that she made regarding gas taxation and transgender rights to health care (John, 2024). Haley also has had a complicated relationship with the former president, as she first denounced his presidential bid in 2016, but silenced her critiques after he took office. She would later serve under Trump’s administration by acting as the United States ambassador to the United Nations. It is uncertain as to the reasoning behind Trump’s appointment of Haley, but some consider the criticism he had received when his early cabinet selections were revealed to be “a homogeneous bloc of older, white men” (Haberman, 2016).

During the time spent serving as ambassador to the U.N., Haley was faced with both controversy and backlash, especially as she had minimal experience handling foreign affairs at the international level. After concluding her ambassadorship in 2018, Haley was able to maintain a “delicate balance” with the Republican party, as her “vicious criticisms of Trump never came back to bite her, nor did her public silence in the face of his manifest abuses” (Alberta, n.d.). Haley would eventually tip that scale when announcing her presidential bid in 2023. She had stated that she would not enter the 2024 presidential race if Donald Trump had, but she would later be the first to challenge Trump (Astor, 2023). Nikki Haley was the only other Republican candidate seeking nomination, and whoever successfully sways the voters will become the Republican nominee facing off against President Joe Biden.

Social Context

Even after Nikki Haley announced her candidacy, Trump seemingly faces minimal challenges in receiving the Republican nomination. If Trump were to become the nominee, it would lead to another presidential election between Biden and Trump, which brings a sour taste to many Americans’ mouths. After the results of the 2020 election, in which Biden was announced the winner, Trump infamously and publicly rejected the results. One outcome of this public outcry from the former president occurred after his rally on the National Mall on January 6. Trump supporters would later storm the U.S. Capitol building, preventing Congress from completing the Electoral College count that would solidify Joe Biden as president-elect. While many may view this day as a stain on America’s democratic history, many Trump supporters believe that they were instead protecting the country’s freedom. From what Trump had told them, the election had been stolen and the electoral process was rigged, and someone had to do something about it.

Even though Trump has been impeached twice, indicted on multiple criminal charges, and directly involved in a variety of scandals, Republicans still really like the guy. Trump has effectively portrayed himself as a fighter for conservative Americans who will viciously attack anyone or anything that opposes him or his beliefs. He will do whatever necessary to “Make America Great Again.” His smear campaign against traditional news media sources for spreading “fake news” about him caused many Republicans to change their news sources to strictly conservative ones. Not only has this led to the rise of misinformation and conspiracy theories surrounding the Republican party, but it has changed how conservative Americans view the world around them.

Based on what they hear from Trump and the messages they receive from sources like Fox News and Newsmax, Trump supporters seemingly perceive the world differently than others. Trump’s rhetoric, for example, has changed how Americans think of undocumented immigrants. Although a person cannot humanely be considered illegal, Trump includes <illegal immigrant> in his rhetoric, which is a mainstream term that is now frequently being used in political discourse regarding immigration. His perpetual use of <illegal immigrant> can lead his audience to envision the negative connotations he has tied to the word as well, such as that they were criminals and posed a threat to our way of life. This statement is incredibly worrisome if you consider that it’s coming directly from the president of the United States, the most powerful person in the country. How could one make such controversial statements but still be voted into the presidency? Again, Trump has normalized this behavior, because he’s not afraid to be who he is and to say what he wants to say. It's one of the reasons why he has the support of so many people. As the Republican party has been redesigned through Trump’s vision, even moderate Republican voters “are likely to alter their preferences based on their understanding of what their

group believes and has normalized” (Kleinfeld, 2023). The Republican party believes in and has normalized Trump and his rhetoric.

Nikki Haley is assuming the role of the anti-Trump candidate as she has consistently portrayed herself in opposition to the former president since announcing her candidacy. Haley has been able to garner support from more moderate Republicans and Independent voters, but some of her beliefs and values do not align with Democratic voters. This is based on some of her previous statements that she had made claiming that America has “never been a racist country” and refused to say slavery caused the Civil War (Abdul-Hakim, 2024). If Haley is unable to effectively detract enough Republican voters from Trump, then we would have to undergo another presidential election between Biden and Trump. Democrats, then, would essentially be left to vote for Joe Biden. This comes in the wake of Biden’s inability to enact legislation that was promised on the campaign trail and his administration’s handlings of the wars in Ukraine and Palestine. It’s a grim portrait to paint of American politics, but much has changed since Trump entered office in 2016.

Literature Review

By analyzing speeches conducted by both Nikki Haley and Donald Trump during the 2024 Republican presidential primaries, I aim to identify the rhetorical choices they make and how these messages impacted their ability to earn their audience members’ support. In this section, I will present the relevant literature related to research on Republican rhetoric, female politicians’ rhetoric, and Donald Trump’s own rhetorical style to identify how both the South Carolina primary and Iowa caucus speeches converged and diverged from previously defined rhetorical strategies.

Republican Rhetoric

Research conducted by David Foster (2009) identified the ways in which Republican politicians have been able to successfully rely on their use of emotional appeals to create connections with and sway the opinions of their voters while campaigning for an election. Foster (2009) noted that while Democrats are more likely to appeal to their audience's logic, Republicans are aware that purposely evoking strong emotional responses within their audience provides more incentive for voters to support their arguments. By framing an issue in a way that resonates deeply with their target demographic, Republicans can become more successful than Democrats, who typically rely on rational arguments, in earning the support of voters on the campaign trail.

This is not to suggest, however, that Democrats do not try to appeal to the emotions of their audience. Findings from Neiman et al. (2016) show that although Republican and Democratic politicians differ in their rhetorical choices and use of vocabulary in reference to specific issues, they both use common tropes and framing methods to reflect broader ideological values. Both parties can invoke concepts like liberty, freedom, and justice within their speeches, but they will be used with different underlying connotations and policy implications. The study found that Republicans gear their language towards depicting the existence of an external or international threat, while Democrats use a more nurturing and caring approach when discussing the concerns of their voters (Neiman et al., 2016, p. 229).

Similarly to Foster's research, Colleen E. Kelley and Rod Troester (1991) identified how this rhetorical trend that exists in the Republican party today had emerged from the 1988 presidential election. George Bush's campaign was marred with "a degree of negativism and intensity" that appealed to the societal anxieties and prejudices that were present in Americans at that time (Kelley & Troester, 1991, p. 113). His divisive language and fearmongering

strengthened his reception by the American people, and he was seen as a strong leader who could address any potential dangers, even if his policy proposals themselves were not objectively effective. This is important, as elections should focus on both the candidate and the programs they are advocating for. However, in this circumstance, a decision could be made solely on one's judgement of a candidate's character rather than their perceived ability to lead the nation.

Female Politicians' Rhetoric

Research conducted by R. Darcy and Sarah S. Schramm (1977) found that while a politician's gender identity had little to no effect on an election's outcome, longstanding prejudices can lead voters to place gendered expectations on female political candidates. Such expectations included the assumption that a woman's place is either in a caregiving role, such as a teacher or nurse, or in the home (Darcy & Schramm, 1977, p. 3). If a woman were to run for a political position, she essentially disrupts these expectations as she assumes "an aggressive role" (Darcy & Schramm, 1977, p. 3). This can leave voters feeling uncomfortable with the candidate, which can ultimately make it more difficult for a female politician to gain their support if she is not being perceived as a traditional woman.

More recent studies from Tobias Rohrbach and his colleagues (2023) have affirmed that these gendered assumptions have remained true over time, even as new forms of media have begun to emerge. Their study examines how the rise of media coverage surrounding political candidates have allowed for female politicians to be publicly framed in relation to their appearance and their families (Rohrbach et al., 2023, p. 109). As societal values and norms are being both portrayed and perpetuated by the media, their coverage of certain issues or events relating to a specific candidate can shape an audience's perceptions of a candidate's capabilities and competence. This creates a space for female political candidates to face a "double loss,"

whereby receiving more non-political and detrimental media coverage can diminish their evaluations by voters and lowering votes at the ballot (Rohrbach et al., 2023, p. 109).

Our political system favors masculine traits, as it has been historically dominated exclusively by men. This has allowed female politicians to be discriminated against by the media based on the belief that they do not have the necessary traits needed to be a politician, such as being assertive and authoritative (Andrich et al., 2023, p. 475). However, research conducted by Andrich et al. (2023) shows that there is a growing shift in how the media portrays politicians, with more attention being placed on a candidate's political traits rather than gender-linked ones. This suggests that if the media were to incorporate "gender-equal news coverage," voters would be more positively influenced in how they evaluate female candidates and their political viability (Andrich et al., 2023, p. 491). It provides women the opportunity to break free from these gendered constraints to achieve gender equality in the political arena.

In the case of Hillary Clinton, she used her position as a prominent female politician to challenge these traditional notions of femininity and leadership. Mandy Manning (2006) details how Clinton disrupted gendered stereotypes to create new expectations for how she should act through a variety of rhetorical artifacts. Clinton's rhetorical style was seen as being "aggressive, authoritative, and ambitious," and she successfully demonstrated the idea "that women can speak passionately, and with logic" (Manning, 2006, p. 114, 116). This empowers women to exhibit more stereotypical masculine communication styles, ultimately shattering the previous expectations that were placed on female politicians.

As Clinton's perspective is based in a Democratic lens, it is necessary to also consider the rhetorical strategies employed by female Republican politicians. A case study of Carly Fiorina, a 2016 Republican presidential candidate, provides more insight into the construction and

maintenance of gender for conservative women. “Troubling Republicanism” (2017) presents a unique case: Republican women seeking political representation must “move beyond perceptions” of being a moderate candidate to being seen as the “front-runner” (p. 3). Fiorina sought to present her femininity as a “positive characteristic by connecting it to conservatism,” which would also clearly define her as a woman who is neither moderate nor liberal (“Troubling Republicanism”, 2017, p. 12). Rather than downplaying her gender, she details how her experiences as a woman have led her to align herself more closely to conservative values and beliefs.

Donald Trump’s Rhetoric

Denise Bostdorff (2017) identified the ways in which Donald Trump’s 2016 campaign rhetoric played an instrumental role in him receiving the presidential nomination. Bostdorff (2017) notes that Trump’s rhetorical success stemmed from his ability to magnify his audience’s discontent for the existing government into rage, which can put voters into a state-of-mind where they would be more willing to vote for a candidate with no political experience (p. 698). This gamble ultimately granted Trump the opportunity to shift traditional presidential norms and expectations while in office, as the United States had never had a president like him before and would not know what to expect.

Similarly, Casey Kelly (2020) examines how Trump instilled feelings of resentment (resentment) in his audience, which is a condition in which a person who is blinded by rage is unable to act upon or express these frustrations (p. 2). For example, Trump understands that conservative Republicans are becoming increasingly worried and anxious of being displaced as the country’s demographic majority (Kelly, 2020, p. 5). For everyday Americans, there is not much they can do on their own to combat the country’s shifting demographics. However, they

are reminded that they have some semblance of control when deciding who to vote for. If Trump can make his audience feel powerless, then the only way they would be able to exercise control over the situation is by voting for who will best protect them against these perceived threats.

Donald Trump's unique rhetorical style, which can be further characterized by its simplicity and directness, also allowed him to continue framing himself as a political outsider even after being elected president. Research from Thomas Gallagher (2019) saw that an important aspect to Trump's presidency was his ability to maintain connections with his voters to reaffirm that he has not become part of the Washington culture that he openly rejected while campaigning (p. 194). If his supporters were to perceive him as such, then he would be viewed as another politician rather than a disruptor of the status quo. It would then become more difficult for Trump to effectively use emotional appeals to anger his audience, as their rage could shift towards him and his shortcomings.

Another common trope used within Trump's rhetoric is his distinctive "narcissistic style," wherein he constructs messages for the purpose of his own self-promotion and self-protection (Berg, 2022, p. 92). William Berg (2022) notes that these messages are constructed in a matrix that includes the writer (Trump), an adversary to defeat (either identified or invented), and a reader to witness it (American people) (p. 109). Trump not only maintains his persona as a political outsider, but he makes sure that he is in control of what is being said about him, how that makes him look, and how those affecting him should be viewed by his supporters.

The gap that my study will fill is by examining how each of these forms of rhetoric emerged and intersected with one another in both Nikki Haley's and Donald Trump's 2024 Republican presidential nominee speeches. Previous literature lacks in identifying how these varying forms of rhetoric culminate together and the impact it has on electoral outcomes. This is

especially important, as personality-driven politics have led voters to align themselves with candidates who they perceive to share similar beliefs and values with. This can shift an audience's expectations of what a political campaign speech should entail. Rather than offering solutions for issues that are important to the American people, both Haley and Trump engage in rhetorical strategies that prioritize who can best capture voters' attention.

Analysis

Nikki Haley's 2024 South Carolina Primary Speech

The first ideographs Haley commonly employed throughout her speech were in relation to her gender identity, such as the words <female>, <woman>, and <women>. Haley began her speech with an allusion to the shared history and struggle that coincides with what it means to be a <woman>, targeting her female supporters' emotions. She shared how her mother "was a lawyer in India and was named one of the first <female> judges." However, "because of the time," she was never able to serve as a judge because she was a woman. Now, on February 24, 2024, she was able to cast her ballot and vote for her daughter to become the next president of the United States. This story exemplifies the ways in which being a <woman> has changed over time. In the past, <women> were expected to be docile, submissive, and soft-spoken due to the gender role stereotypes that dominated society at that time.

Now, <women> are known to be powerful and assertive, which Haley refers to when saying, "[if] you want to talk about a force, don't mess with the women in America." Haley herself is a force, which means that her compelling and influential presence during the election is something she should be admired and respected for by her audience. She has the potential to become the first <female> Republican presidential nominee. She has broken barriers before, and her prominence in the male-dominated Republican party adds to her credibility in shifting public

opinion regarding the inclusion of women in conservative politics. This is especially important, as a woman has yet to be elected as president due to pervasive gender biases that still influence voters' decision-making processes.

However, Haley does not stray far from traditional gender stereotypes when defining what being a <woman> should look like to her audience. To reiterate, the goal of her speech is to gain the support of Republican voters in the primaries. She must appeal to Republican values to successfully take advantage of her audiences' emotions for them to become more receptive to the arguments she presents. As Republicans subscribe to more conservative values, Haley must play upon these strongly held values to earn their vote. It must be noted that Haley's relationship with the audience, having previously served as governor for South Carolina, also contributed to the strength of her argument. "I have always seen our state as a family. Families are honest with each other. They tell hard truths. That is what I have done this entire campaign and that's what I will do now." This motherly tone and family metaphor that she employs can lead her audience to see Haley as a <woman> who is also capable of being protective, supportive, and disciplined.

She frames the superficial relationship that exists between herself and her followers as a deep connection, one that's typically found in family dynamics, that is built on trust, dedication, and devotion. She laments how, "[i]n the America I know and love, we believe in each other." She establishes herself as a candidate who is, "running to remind us what it means to be an American." By portraying herself as having genuine, loving concern for the American people, she is presenting her feminine characteristics in a positive light. This allows her to both Trump and Biden as being destructive and opportunistic, which are typically considered to be masculine characteristics. In this sense, she paints a picture for her audience that a man in power will lead the country to further destruction. Haley can then effectively argue how she is fundamentally

different from these male candidates because she is a woman, ultimately presenting herself as the only viable candidate to vote for.

The ideographs that Haley used in her speech highlight the overarching theme of her campaign, which is to <save> America by providing them their “right to a real <choice>.” Her use of <save> causes her audience to assume that something is falling apart and needs to be protected for it to survive. Her mention that “the world is on fire” and America will burn with it can instill feelings of fear and impending doom in her audience. <Choice> references the country’s democratic foundations and one’s inherent right to autonomous decision-making. Having a <choice> ensures that Americans can vote for the candidate who they believe can best represent them in the government. If there is no viable candidate to vote for, then Americans oftentimes vote for whoever aligns closest to their preferences. Haley criticizes the current presidential candidates for not providing a <choice> for many Americans, however, as she says it leaves her audience “obsessing over the past.” She perceives a presidential rematch between Trump and Biden to be a continuation of the status quo rather than addressing pressing issues that the country faces. Since these two figures elicit strong reactions from their respective reporters, it could further exacerbate the political polarization that is dividing Americans. Therefore, Haley is “running for president to <save> America” by providing her audience the <choice> to vote for a candidate that is neither Trump nor Biden.

She provides her audience with some semblance of autonomy and control in deciding the country’s future by being able to support and vote for her. Haley claims that, “America will come apart if we make the wrong <choices>.” She portrays both Biden and Trump as being the wrong <choice> based on their respective presidential shortcomings. Biden left behind four years of “failures,” she claims. Haley states that Biden is the one who put the country “at \$34 trillion in

debt and counting.” After promising to “Make America Great Again,” Haley remarks on how Trump has exhibited a divisive personality that “drives people away” and “calls his fellow Americans vermin.” Based on the narrative structure Haley used when recounting her opponents’ faults, there was a clear answer when she said to her audience, “[does] anyone seriously think Joe Biden or Donald Trump will unite our country?”

She also used <fight> and <fighting> in her speech when discussing her run for Republican presidential candidacy. When Haley told her audience, “[we] will keep fighting for America and we won’t rest until America wins,” it leads her audience to ask, who is the enemy that she is fighting against? A <fight> typically includes a struggle between opposing forces, commonly portrayed as those of good versus evil, with only one being able to emerge as victor after battle. It is here where she identifies the evil forces as her political opponents that “are demanding we fight each other.” She argues that her opponents are directing their political efforts towards gaining a competitive edge over the other, rather than focusing on who they should pay more attention to: the American people. She mentions how, “voters in our Republican primaries ... are saying they want an alternative.” She is listening to what the American people want, and she believes that she is the only person capable of <saving> the country. Since she has never served as president before, there are no arguments that can be made against her presidential capabilities. Based on the arguments she presented in her speech; Haley is the alternative and is the only right <choice> for president.

Donald Trump’s 2024 Iowa Caucus Speech

I will continue to use an ideographic approach when analyzing Donald Trump’s 2024 Iowa caucus speech. The first ideograph that Trump uses in his speech is <border>, which typically relates to an invisible line that identifies where one place ends and another begins.

However, the audience knows that Trump is implicitly referring to the boundary that exists between the United States and Mexico when saying, “[w]e’re going to seal up the <border>.” His audience likely understands that Trump is talking about the U.S.-Mexico <border> when he uses this word, though he never explicitly defines which border he is talking about. As the southern border’s security is of importance to conservatives, Trump’s mention of a <border> has them envisioning that specific one. He further depicts the <border> as a lawless place when he talks of how “millions and millions of people” are “coming from prisons and jails” to invade the country. Trump loosely defines these “people” as being exclusively drug dealers, rapists, and murderers.

Trump also uses the ideograph <terrorist> in reference to the immigrants who enter the country anywhere besides the U.S.-Mexico border. The word terrorist typically refers to one who uses intimidation tactics to pursue their individual or group’s political goals. In this way, any individual could be classified as a terrorist if they were to fit this definition. However, when Trump uses <terrorist>, he largely argues that they are someone of Middle Eastern-descent who subscribes to the Islamic faith in some way. His reference to his own “Trump Terror Ban,” which placed travel restrictions on predominantly Muslim countries, further reinforces his interpretation of who <terrorists> are and where they come from. In this way, being labeled a <terrorist> no longer ties someone to their own actions but to aspects of their identity.

By implementing <border> and <terrorist> within his speech, Trump can incite a feeling of fear and anger within his audience. If his audience believes that there are millions of <terrorists>, drug dealers, and criminals flooding the <border> and coming into the country, they’ll be more willing to support the candidate who he says, “had the safest <border> in the history of our country.” Trump anticipated that his audience felt resentment towards the current administration’s handling of the southern border, as he mentions how “they have hundreds and

hundreds of terrorists coming in, known terrorists, some of them really bad.” Trump is taking the opportunity he’s created to portray himself as the only candidate that his audience should vote for. Trump also actively reshapes the ways in which his supporters think about the current immigration situation that the country faces. He paints a picture for his audience of an “invasion” that poses a threat to everyday American life. This will ultimately make it more difficult for his audience to picture immigrants as human beings rather than potential <terrorists>, but this makes it easier for Trump to gain their support. His audience will be more willing to back Trump if they perceive him as the only person capable of keeping them safe in the face of this impending doom.

Trump provokes his audience further through his use of the ideograph <election>. The results of an election speak for the values and interests of the American people, as they have the democratic right to select who will act as a representative of their beliefs. As the results of the presidential election have both national and international implications, Americans are likely to assume that there are measures in place to ensure the security and integrity of presidential <election> results. Trump disrupts this perception by framing the 2020 <election> results as not being representative of the American people when claiming, “we got more votes than any sitting president in the history of our country, but they say we lost by a whisker.” He also mentions that polls conducted at the Iowa caucus indicated that 82% of voters believed that the 2020 <election> was not honest. By proclaiming the election to be “crooked,” Trump’s audience may lose trust in the electoral process entirely, furthering their already existent mistrust of the country’s political system. By stimulating his audience to feel as though their voices were not being heard in the 2020 <election>, his audience becomes more likely to accept his argument that the <election> process is “crooked.” This also has broader implications in how the results of

the upcoming <election> will be interpreted by Trump's audience. Since Trump never specifically defines what a "crooked" <election> entails, who is to say that the next election will be more trusted? Will the <election> be deemed "crooked" if Trump were to lose again or will it be seen as a verifiable process if he were to win?

His combined use of the ideographs <border>, <terrorist>, and <election> can lead his audience to become fearful, amplifying their perceived severity of the issues that he presents in his speech. These issues include the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Israel, which he claims, "should have never happened" and "would have never happened" if he was president. When stating, "we're going to get it solved very quickly," he feeds further into this sense of urgency. This can cause his audience to view these issues as requiring immediate action, and Trump has posited himself as the only person capable of handling these situations while keeping Americans safe. This subtly encourages supporters to overlook the details behind Trump's proposed policies in favor of voting for who they believe will protect them and keep them safe.

Conclusion

While Nikki Haley argues that America needs a president who can look to the future, Trump eagerly looks to the past. He has organized this speech in a way that when he would present an issue to his audience, he'd discuss its current state, reference what he had done to combat it, and then describe to his audience how these problems would not be as pressing if he was still in power. While Trump does not provide any proposed solutions for these issues, his audience clearly is receptive to his presented arguments and does not expect him to discuss any proposed solutions. This is likely because Trump has the trust of his supporters. They continue to regard Trump as a political outsider with a track record of proving people wrong, especially his political opponents and rivals. This is drastically different than Haley's argumentative approach,

as she prioritized positing herself as the morally and ethically right Republican candidate while presenting her solutions for the issues that American voters were concerned about. Trump, however, does not mention Nikki Haley's name or campaign once throughout his speech, and he instead focuses on controversial and polarizing issues that would help solidify his audience's loyalty to and support for him. Through his use of ideographs, Trump sidesteps Haley's arguments and defends his presidential credentials and capabilities.

To conclude, it may be easier for Trump to gain the support necessary to earn the Republican presidential nomination from his ability to appeal to his audience's emotions that in turn affects their ability to engage in rational decision-making. While Haley's speech was more structured and diplomatic, Trump's was emotionally charged and erratic. His conversational tone and use of simple terms helped him to build rapport with his audience on a deeper level than Haley could with hers, since Trump has been portrayed as a political outsider and Haley as a political insider. Trump further emphasizes these differences in his willingness to speak his mind, and he presents himself to his audience as a candidate who is not afraid to say what he's thinking out loud, no matter the consequences. By speaking to his audience's anxieties surrounding ongoing issues that the country faces, he can create a stronger emotional connection with his audience due to his perceived authenticity.

My research can contribute to existing rhetorical studies by examining the unique rhetorical methods that are being used by the 2024 Republican presidential candidates. I examined how emerging intraparty dynamics within the Republican party have left the remaining candidates, Nikki Haley and Donald Trump, to become representatives of the party's Pro-Trump and establishment beliefs, respectively. The juxtaposition of these Republican ideologies is marked by their competing visions for the country's future and their political party's future. It is

important to see the difference that exists between these two candidates who stem from the same party, as many could assume that they would share similar beliefs and values. The arguments they presented in their speech, however, proved otherwise. Although both relied on emotional appeals to strengthen their arguments, Trump's appeal to fear left his audience more susceptible and likely to accept his arguments without question. Further research will be required following the 2024 Republican nomination to identify how the candidate will be able to adapt their rhetorical style to better represent and garner the support of the Republican party and other American voters.

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