

Dartmouth College

Dartmouth Digital Commons

Dartmouth College Master's Theses

Theses and Dissertations

Spring 6-11-2023

Democracy in 2022: Trump's Rhetoric, Truth Social and Election Integrity Platforms

Daniel Brooks

Dartmouth College, daniel.a.brooks.gr@dartmouth.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/masters_theses



Part of the [American Politics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Brooks, Daniel, "Democracy in 2022: Trump's Rhetoric, Truth Social and Election Integrity Platforms" (2023). *Dartmouth College Master's Theses*. 89.

https://digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/masters_theses/89

This Thesis (Master's) is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Dartmouth Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dartmouth College Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Dartmouth Digital Commons. For more information, please contact dartmouthdigitalcommons@groups.dartmouth.edu.

Democracy in 2022: Trump's Rhetoric, Truth Social and Election Integrity Platforms

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

by Daniel Brooks

Guarini School of Graduate and Advanced Studies

Dartmouth College

Hanover, New Hampshire

May 2023

Donald E. Pease
Program Chair

Thesis Advisors:

Dr. Joe Bafumi

Dr. Nancy Fraser

Dr. Jaimalene Hough

F. Jon Kull, Ph.D. Dean of the Guarini School of Graduate and Advanced Studies

Abstract

This thesis focuses on how Populism and Democracy remain constantly opposing forces in 21st century United States domestic politics. A focal point of populist sentiment, rhetoric and narrative dissemination is the Trumpian MAGA wing of the American right. This thesis seeks to address scholarly analysis of Donald Trump's populist MAGA movement in the context of the 2022 Midterm election, highlight populist narratives of the movement through Truth Social posts and the negative effects upon voters in states with rhetorical focus from MAGA election integrity narratives. This thesis was done through a 3 month phenomenological study with the object of research being the phenomena of Trumpian narratives collected and observed on the former president's social media platform, Truth Social. In Chapter 1, populist sentiments and traits are explored through scholarly literature and commentary. Chapter 2 proceeds to explore populism in action by reviewing and describing the former president's new social media. Chapter 3 takes narratives driven by Trump on Truth Social, such as election integrity narratives in 5 key battle ground states, to explore the threat of populist rhetoric to democracy. All of this is done with the underlying danger and threat of populist language and rhetoric to bring harm to institutions in the United States. The conclusion being that MAGA conservative rhetoric may propel political and social disruption within the United States through lenses of fear among and toward the Trumpian base. This turbulence is expected to have damaging effects on voters access to and trust of the electoral system of the United States.

Acknowledgements

Without the support of many loved ones, friends, mentors and professors, this thesis would not have been possible. I want to thank the thesis committee, Dr. Joe Bafumi,

Dr. Nancy Fraser and Dr. Jaimalene Hough, dear friends and family members for their efforts to support me in this research which *required significant emotional and mental support* at times. Thank you for always being there for me.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Abstract | ii. |
| Acknowledgements | iii. |
| Table of Contents | iv. |
| Chapter 1 | 1-41 |
| Chapter 2 | 42-62 |
| Chapter 3 | 63-82 |
| References/Bibliography | 82-100 |

Chapter 1:

Trumpian Populism

Election Integrity in the United States

Following Donald Trump's 2016 victory, inquiries emerged surrounding the integrity of the election garnering many questions surrounding foreign influence in the election. This inquiry had a primary focus on the Trump campaign's potential collusion with the Russian government to sway the election toward Donald Trump. Borne out of this claim was a 3-year-long investigation headed by special counsel Robert Mueller and concluded in a nationally broadcasted congressional hearing on the findings¹.

Before the claims of collusion in the 2016 general election, election rigging was an accusation within the Democratic party with preferential treatment proven to have been given to a particular candidate. This dispute was between Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton. In the DNC and John Podesta email leaks, there was evidence that the Democratic party officials favored Clinton to the point of using Sanders Jewish non-secular background against him in primaries in the south and in some cases would give the Clinton campaign primary debate questions². The email leak led to revelations of wrongdoing and resulted in foundational changes in inter party election procedure for Democrats including the elimination of super delegates.

Historically, election integrity challenges have yielded positive outcomes in policy and procedure. The 2016 Democratic primary is an important example. Bernie Sanders, the populist, had the leverage to alter the rules of the party moving forward. While it is not the case for the 2016 Democratic primary, leverage can be fabricated. This thesis and chapter will attempt to demonstrate the nature of

¹ Britannica: *Russia Investigation of Donald Trump*

² Guardian News and Media: *DNC head leaked debate question to Clinton*

synthetic populist election narratives and the damage a lie can have on broader policy affecting voters across the United States and how it can fundamentally alter the course of our democracy and constitution. This will be done through the review of film media covering current assumptions of the results of the 2020 election, scholars' comments on populism including general definitions within economic and societal outlooks.

The heightening severity of these election challenges shifted in the 2020 election. The rhetoric surrounding the right in the United States has brought election challenges to a level of crisis. The belief of wrongdoing is founded on an assumption that a force greater than the most powerful economy, military and country, the United States government and its population, is conspiring to undermine the short and long term stability of the nation. All the swirling narratives of a "stolen election" and "a deep state" subverting the will of the people can be found in the Trumpian trope of the Big Lie and the new documentary by Dinesh D'Souza entitled *2000 Mules*. This chapter will briefly describe the conspiracy theory of the Big Lie and D'Souza's documentary but these inextricably linked topics will be addressed further in the next chapter when covering Donald Trump's Truth Social narrative dissemination.

The documentary has drawn the attention of the right-wing MAGA base, making it relevant and of importance for this thesis to describe *2000 Mules* but also the current state of election denial. With that, there must be a review of the most recent presidential election and claims made by the President through his Big Lie. In 2020, claims of ballot harvesting, ballot trafficking, foreign influence, vote total

changes and mail-in voter fraud were prevalent before the general election. As November neared, Trump made a concerted effort to instill the belief in his base that if he did not come out victorious, the election was stolen. This claim was similar to his strategy in 2016 espousing “If I lose the election, you know it was rigged!”³. The narrative of a stolen election in 2020 gained traction as results came in over the span of a week. In contentious states like Arizona, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Georgia, Trump protesters came out to vote totaling centers and roared with chants like “Stop the Count!” in Michigan while chanting “Keep counting!” in states like Arizona⁴. Protests continued as Joe Biden was announced to be the President-Elect of the 2020 general election. The challenge and protests went through the court system and were struck down on the basis of lack of evidence⁵. The claims revolved around private companies, such as Dominion, colluding with foreign governments to usher in a new era in a “Great Reset” with the defeat of Donald J. Trump⁶. The result of this narrative of election theft was the January 6th insurrection. Much like in November, Trump supporters and fans went to the Capitol building to “Stop the Steal” at Trump’s “Save America” rally. Protesters marched down to the federal legislature and began to infiltrate, invade and disrupt a constitutionally mandated proceeding. Two years later the claim and narrative of election theft remain a constant on the right-wing. Their efforts did not change the outcome, but their perseverance may prove to be powerful in the 2022 and 2024 election cycles.

³ Today-NBC: *Trump election rigged claim*

⁴ Guardian Wires: *Youtube - Stop the Count*

⁵ Reuters Staff: *Courts have dismissed multiple lawsuits*

⁶ Swenson - *The AP: 2020 Election Claims*

With Trump's endorsements of 'election integrity' GOP primary candidates, the former president seeks to install those who adhere to the election fraud narrative. This narrative is driven by Donald Trump, supporters and MAGA media pundits. In May of 2022, a documentary was published by Dinesh D'Souza entitled *2000 Mules*. This documentary claims that the 2020 election involved "mules" that trafficked ballots from non-profits to mail-in drop-off boxes thereby illegally rigging the election. This documentary has been advertised and applauded by Donald Trump himself on his new social media company Truth Social⁷. The film has been played in local theaters domestically and streamed digitally across the globe. Much like the "Stop the Steal" movement, this piece of cinematography plays into broader narratives of the United States elections being perpetually rigged if Democrats can pass their recently proposed bill "Freedom to Vote Act". *2000 Mules* exemplifies the emotional otherization of the Trump movement. This otherization translates to a sense of being oppressed by a structure of power that seeks to destroy and replace the white-working class of the United States and the western world.

An Overview of Contemporary and Trumpian Populism

Trumpian narratives and rhetoric are driven by various factors. The movement is classified by many scholars as populist. Populism is a term which must be defined through scholarly literature and Donald Trump's relation to the movement. There are many definitions and interpretations of populism. A general definition of populism comes from an entry in Britannica.com by Andre Munro: "Populism..." is "... a political program or movement that champions or claims to

⁷ Truth Social: *Trump account - May*

champion the common person...” and “... combines elements of the left and right opposing large business and financial interests...”⁸. With Trump mentioned in Munro’s entry, through the 2016 and 2020 election cycles, the author points out that Donald Trump focused on rising inequality, a system of globalization that domestically favors the top 1 percent, rising crime, the censorship of conservative voices on social media, and the threat of a communist takeover. While many of these are economic interests, Trump utilized in-group identity to gain support as a champion of the “common person”. The entry from Munro goes on to claim populism “can designate democratic or authoritarian movements”. In this definition, populism is characterized as grassroots and something that comes from the masses. Scholars draw on and explore how Trump’s movement functions on the basis of public sentiment and emotion while lacking policy platforms and, in that, how his narratives do the same.

A scholar who lays out a great foundation for understanding populism, its causes and roots is Jan Werner Mueller in his 2016 book “What is Populism”. Mueller’s book and description of the MAGA Trumpian populist movement is a timely analysis of a movement that has persisted for 6 years with no sign of slowing down. He is praised by other scholars for his helpful definition and description of the scope and shape of populism throughout his piece. In chapter 1, the author discusses how to and how to not analyze or define populism. In that, Mueller believes broad stroke terms such as “fear” “anger” and “resentment” from socioeconomic populations does not paint the whole picture of populism and a

⁸ Munro-Britannica: *Populism Definitional Entry*

movement's origins. With that, he asserts that characteristics of the populist leader do not always need to lean toward "authoritarianism" or "low agreeableness".

Mueller moves into analysis of policies from South American populist movements, such as Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro, as points of reference for failed policy yet determines that policy as a rubric is not a complete way to define populism (12). In his own definition of populism Mueller asserts that:

"Populism, I suggest, is a particular moralistic imagination of politics, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified ... people against elites who are deemed corrupt or some other way morally inferior" (19).

The author goes on to further clarify that populism is not only "anti-elitist" but also "always an anti-pluralist: populists claim that they, and only they, represent the people" (19). Mueller continues to suggest that populism, as a movement, segments portions of society in favor of labeling "only some of the people" as "really the people" (21). He goes further pointing to remarks from then presidential candidate Donald Trump in a campaign rally in May of 2015. Trump remarked that "the only important thing is the unification of the people-because the other people don't mean anything" (22). He continues on providing insight into the current iteration of Trumpian MAGA populism saying, "Populists pit the pure, innocent... against a corrupt elite... and, in right-wing populism, also against the very bottom of society" (23). This theme of division is a hallmark of Trump's rhetoric with his continuous claims that the "elites", "political establishment" and "swamp" are seeking to subvert "the people". Mueller says that right-wing populism segments

“the people” against the elite and “marginal groups” as “distinct from the people”. Populists, to Mueller, are interested in “a fictional entity outside existing democratic procedures, a homogeneous and morally unified body whose alleged will can be played off against actual election results in democracies” (27). With this, Mueller determines that the “fictitious entity” of elites can be discarded by populists as long as these figureheads are in power and those who represent “the people” (30). The MAGA coalition and narrative of a “deep state swamp”, a fictitious entity, is a key component to the political movement's success in recruiting downtrodden Americans to its movement.

Mueller continues to discuss elements of populist leadership looking at attributes of the individuals themselves. He directly addresses leaders like Hugo Chavez and Donald Trump through a lens of a socioeconomic background of being an “average man”. In the case of Trump, he is not an average man, rather, he comes from wealth. Mueller turns to narratives espoused by populists themselves and how their focus on symbolic rhetoric is the key to gaining support. In this messaging campaign, leaders of populist movements attempt to “remove the middleman”... “to rely as little as possible on complex party organizations as intermediaries between citizens and politicians” (34-35). Populism is then a closed-circuit of choice creating “an internal democracy” of political parties “prone to authoritarianism” (36). The author points out changes in the definition of “the people” can occur with ease “if the central symbolic statement” of populists “is virtually empty” (38). He goes on to address the MAGA narrative messaging of “Make America Great Again” (38). The hollow nature of Donald Trump’s “fictitious entity”, which rages against elites and

segments of the populace that are not of the people, allows members of the movement to imprint their own beliefs on the movement's broader empty narrative.

In chapter 2, Mueller focuses on actions taken while populists hold office. He asserts that populism is inherently built on protest of the elites and cannot maintain that status while in power (40-41). To continue their narrative, populists seek to blame the elites for impending or subverting their own agendas while also continuing to "behave like victims..." (41). In this, leaders will "polarize and prepare the people" for a "conjured" apocalyptic confrontation" focusing on to "frame a situation as a crisis, calling it an existential threat" (41-42).

Mueller then breaks down 3 techniques populist leaders use to govern. First, he touches on the pattern of "colonizing or occupying the state" (44). He points to historical international examples of populist leaders taking control of the judiciary, media or secret services. To Mueller's point, in Trump's first term, the former president appointed 226 judges⁹ subsequently changing large swaths of the judicial system. Second, populists treat elections as transactional to gain "favors from the elites for mass political support" (45). In relation to the MAGA populist administration, Trump engaged in this behavior on a regular basis installing private elites in government offices around the country and in the White House. For example, Rex Tillerson, former Secretary of State, was an oil tycoon from Exxon Mobil. Third, populist leaders engage in "discriminatory legalism" only allowing "some of the people" to "enjoy the full protection of the laws" (46). To that end, Trump campaigned on religious discriminatory policies calling for the ban of

⁹ Gramlich: *Trump judge appointments*

Muslim immigrants even going as far to suggest a registry for Muslims within the United States. All of this “colonization”, “mass-clientelism” and “discriminatory legalism” is allowed through their moral standing as leaders. Within this framework, populist leaders tend to be “harsh with non-governmental organizations that criticize them” (48). Mueller asserts that “populism in power brings about, reinforces or offers another variety of exclusion and usurpation of the state that it most opposes in the reigning establishment seeks to replace” (48).

Mueller then discusses the reality of the actions of a populist in power in a democracy asking “why do they not dispense of election altogether?” (48). Mueller answers with the personal cost of abolishing democracy and implementing authoritarianism on the international stage creating a global image of “illiberal democracy”. The author continues on this logical thread to discuss the breaks in liberalism and democracy since the fall of the Soviet Union and the introduction of Western Hegemony. From this discussion of political theory and the differences of populism and democracy, Mueller asserts that “populism is inherently hostile to the mechanisms and, ultimately, the values commonly associated with constitutionalism...” (60). He then sets the stage for three “unfortunate characteristics” of the “debate about liberal constitutionalism and populism”.

First, he believes the conversation has been conflated with “the merits of majoritarianism”. Second, the difference between “popular constitutionalism” and “populist constitutionalism”. Finally, populism is “an imprecise placeholder for ‘civic participation’”(61). Mueller asserts that the “populist ideal became reality in the form of strengthening the executive while diminishing the power of the judiciary

and/or staffing judicial offices with partisan actors” (66). He points to the formations of “new constitutions” under populist regimes aiding “the replacement of office holders while making “elections less free and fair” and a media apparatus that has “become more easily controlled by executives” (66). From this, Mueller claims that “populist constitutions are designed to limit the power of nonpopulists” (67). Mueller elaborates on the ownership of the term “we the people” and its effect on “people power” in democracy. He determines that “whether a particular claim is democratic or populist is not always clear cut” (74). Therefore, the term “we the people”, its use and meaning, will not always be obvious in a representative democracy (74).

In chapter 3, Mueller tackles “How to Deal with Populists”. While this thesis does not seek to address remedies to populism and Trumpian populism, the goals of Mueller's third chapter will be briefly addressed to paint a holistic picture of his logic and arguments. The author outlines what he seeks to address in Chapter 3 as “pointing to the ways in which populism rides on... broken promises of democracy”, showing “how populism seems to solve a problem which liberal democracy has no real answer”, and the history of “circumstances in the United States and Europe...” that “...have facilitated an upsurge of populism...” (75).

In Mueller’s conclusion, he outlines “Seven Theses on Populism” which he has arrived at. First, he asserts that populism is not “the authentic part of modern democratic politics” and in movements of the people “there is always a possibility for an actor to speak in the name of the ‘real people’” (101). The focus for Mueller in his first thesis of populism is the insistence of the movement’s leader “that only they

themselves are legitimate representatives” (101). Second, “populists are anti pluralist” and “not everyone who criticizes the elites are populist”. He also asserts that populists lay claim to the idea of “the people” and outsiders to this entity are “illegitimate” (101). Third, populists use “symbolic representation of the people” to shield themselves from “empirical refutation” (101-102). Fourth, populists engage in narratives that suit their own image of “the people”. Fifth, populists “will engage in” occupying the state, mass clientelism and corruption” with the intention of “suppression of anything like a critical civil society” while restructuring the fabric of law in favor of partisanship (102). Sixth, populists are a “danger to democracy” (102). Seventh, populism is not a solution to a representation problem inherent in liberal democracy though it can give a voice to marginalized segments of the country while pressuring change for better representation (103).

Mueller’s book provides insight into the strategies of the Trumpian MAGA movement. Trump as a figure focuses his time on creating an image of impropriety, a true American with upstanding Christian values at his core and a successful businessman who can solve the socioeconomic conditions which portions of his base suffer. The Trumpian populist movement segments and marginalizes certain groups of the public as un-American and unpatriotic with attacks on woke culture and the Black Lives Matter movement engaging in counter narratives/movements like All Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter and anti-political correctness. With election denial, narratives of ballot trafficking and fundamental rejection of the 2020 election results, the group has created an, as Mueller would describe, “apocalyptic” crisis looming over “the people”. Election integrity tropes and candidates of the

movement also attack institutions which act as “middle men” to representatives and citizens. With heightened intensity surrounding the 2022 midterm election, the Trump coalition has rooted itself in anti-institutionalist agendas which undermine basic election systems which will be further discussed in Chapter 2. The “fictitious entity” of elites, which Mueller discusses, Donald Trump regularly creates and shapes include marginalized groups such as migrants and minorities. Through this book, an operational definition of populism can be established.

Scholars beyond Mueller have found the term populism to be flexible enough to include the Trump movement as populist¹⁰. As Mueller discusses, a populist movement revolves around a figurehead who creates an image of moral righteousness and working for the average man. Author Robert Rowland takes this idea a step further in his book. In that, a typical populist movement functions on emotional appeal, a pathos argument to the people. Donald Trump has employed this emotional appeal to a specific audience. That emotion is generated through the otherization of different identity groups. Rowland in his book “The Rhetoric of Donald Trump”, highlights 3 major components of Trump’s success. The foundation of these points is in the former president’s ability to be a “conductor of public feelings”¹¹. These components are wielded as and are tools of influence to drive first, a shared identity of plight, second, the narrative of the heroism of Trump, and third, is the juxtaposition of “the dangerous Others” and perceived American identity. In agreement with Mueller’s assertion that populism functions on a ‘fictitious entity’ which segments “the people”, Rowland suggests it is the otherization of various

¹⁰ Singh: *I, the people – a Deflationary Interpretation of Populism*

¹¹ Rowland: *The Rhetoric of Donald Trump* - 2

groups such as immigrants, Democrats, elites and minorities as an emphasis of Trump's populist rhetorical strategy. From Rowland's perspective, the emotional appeal of a leader who understands the mood of the public is akin to Mueller's idea that the key to a populist's success is the hollow and symbolic representation of "the people" which appeals to certain segments of the country, primarily the MAGA base.

"The Rhetoric of Donald Trump" and "What is Populism?" discuss many facets and elements of Trump's populist narrative strategies. Rowland's relation to other scholars first comes in Chapter 1 when discussing variations of populism while Mueller's connection is prevalent throughout his book. Thomas Ferguson is a scholar who attempts to tackle this topic with a different approach. In his article, "The Roots of Right-Wing Populism", Ferguson attempts to combine approaches of sociology and economy to conduct a "multi-level" analysis of Trump's campaign victories. Ferguson engages in differentiating right-wing and left-wing populism, similar to Rowland. He uses Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren as examples of left-wing populism. Both Ferguson and Rowland agree that the use of identity politics is prevalent in Trump's strategy. Rowland would label it as othering whereas Ferguson calls it scapegoating with the creation of social division. Mueller touches on this topic through his discussion of "marginalized groups" which are excluded from the inclusion in identity of "the people". Ferguson calls on Hannah Ardent to describe a "mechanism for translating such discontents into right-wing populism" in her quote of there being an "alliance between the mob and capital"¹². They assert the rich use discontent with the people to shift the public focus and

¹² Ferguson: *The Roots of Right Wing Populism* - 103

policy from economic reform through the use of social scapegoats. Ferguson asserts that Trump scapegoated immigration, foreign countries, and the Washington establishment. Ferguson goes through the campaign victories of Trump using ANES data to explore indicators and factors of Trump's victory. He then explores which factors, economic or social, "made the difference" in congressional districts to draw out Trump voters.

Similarly to Ferguson, Mueller and Rowland, Robert Singh explains the that a populist 'us versus them' mentality is predicated on the ability to reach "upwards" to a corrupt political establishment "but also down upon an out group" to express discontent¹³. In *I, the people': a deflationary interpretation of populism*, Singh explores the designation of the Trump movement as populist. Singh contends that populism, by definition, is elastic enough to include Trump's movement yet rejects populism as a frame of analysis of Trump's victory. He introduces his rejection in three parts. The first is that Trump "reveals more about populism than populism does about Trump" (21). Second, populism does not provide the critical conditions for analysis of elections or power (22). Third, Trump is not as large of a threat to the constitution as perceived (22). To this point, Mueller would strongly disagree. Mueller suggests populism and constitutional democracy are antithetical. Through the "colonization" of institutions, Trump sought to reshape agencies and the judiciary, a hallmark of populist regimes.

This right-wing populism looks "upwards but also down upon an out group" (24). The view suggests an othering and 'us versus them' mentality which exists in

¹³ Singh: *I, the people – a Deflationary Interpretation of Populism*

the MAGA coalition. He then continues in explaining how Trump departs from traditional populism in 5 ways. First, he points to the abnormal success of Trump's campaign. Second, is the contradiction between being a wealthy outsider and successfully running against the establishment. Third, Trump comprehended the frustration and outrage of the white working class. Fourth, Trump's ability to use social media to reach a larger audience. Finally, Trump's hollow, unshackled malleability in beliefs and platform. Singh points to campaign donor demographics to reveal the contents of the populist movement: "95 percent of Trump's donors were white, 64 percent were white men and 27 percent of Trump's money came from millionaires" (28).

In *Donald Trump and American Populism: The populist precedent*, Richard Conely similarly explores the term populism. In accordance with Singh's assessment that populism is elastic as a term, Conley asserts the theoretical framework of populism is "comprehensive but too vague" (59). He explores the leadership style of Trump compared to past presidents such as Nixon who invoked populist sentiments of "the silent majority". Conely explores anti-elitism, the separation of the Washington establishment, and the rhetoric which spurs this political style forward. Much like Rowland and Ferguson, Conley describes two brands of populism that are being labeled one and the same: Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump populisms. The focus of each of these brands of populism is the focus of the victimization of the common man by the elites. In Bernie's version, it is corporate elites and oligarchies. In Trump's version, it is the Washington liberal political establishment. In speeches given on the campaign trail, the people are swooned by demagoguery. This is meant

to incite “envy and resentment”. Conely includes a figure which explores commonalities in historically populist movements and presidents. This includes a focus on anti-elitism, ordinary people, majoritarianism, issue simplification, and nostalgia for the past. In this, he explores the delivery methods for these commonalities in sentiments of anti-incumbency, grassroots movements, direct democracy, conspiracy theory, nativism, and religiosity. Conley’s description of populism coincides with previously discussed scholars such as Rowland who describes a populist leader with an emotional awareness of the public.

In *Emotions and Political Narratives*, Amy Skonieczny focuses on the scholarly distinctions and designations of populism. Skonieczny similarly explores the emotional nature of populism in relation to the Trump movement. The average American feels left out of gains made in globalization which is explained by the emotional resonance felt by the common man. In agreement with the chorus of scholars, Skonieczny asserts Trump and Sanders both used an ‘us versus them’ mentality to juxtapose the elite with the people. Inevitably this rhetoric targeted the policy of free trade, particularly the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Violet Cheung-Blunden expands the theoretical basis of ‘us versus them’, which scholars like Ferguson, Mueller, Rowland and Conely discussed, in her article *Situation insecurity versus entrenched ideologies as the source of right wing voter’s anti-immigrant sentiment on both sides of the Atlantic*. Blunden contends conservative voters xenophobic reaction to immigration is entrenched in beliefs of “authoritarianism, nationalism and neoliberalism”. In the piece, she touches on a key

component of identity that motivates othering sentiments within conservative groups: nationalism¹⁴.

When dissecting the narrative elements of a populist movement, social or economic, Katja Freinstein and Frank Gadinger in their piece *Populist stories of honest men and proud mother: A visual narrative analysis* addresses the topic head on. Freinstein and Gadinger discuss political storytelling in the context of figures like Donald Trump and in the wake of the Brexit movement. They break down narrative creation as “subjective and linked to practical judgements of selective interpretation, personal experiences and sequencing of events” (221). The authors then assert that narratives are constructed through their relation to “power and authority” (221). They refer to the othering and dehumanization of migrants and minorities through political narrative creation. Narratives play into emotion and focus on “affective triggers insofar as emotions and narrative are deeply intertwined” (224). This strengthens Rowland’s point of the “emotional appeal” of the Trumpian populist movement. The narrative of the right-wing populist movement is that of otherization with xenophobic and racist tendencies to tap into fear and insecurity of certain segments of the American population. This messaging creates cultural divides with internal societal consequences of violence.

The established definition of the MAGA movement as populist is well founded in the litany of scholars discussed previously, yet Frederick Lynch in his essay *“How Did this Man Get Elected?” Perspectives on American Politics, Populism and Donald Trump*, explores other academic opinions related to the rise of Trumpian

¹⁴ Cheng-Blunden: *Situational Insecurity Versus Entrenched Ideologies*

populism through an analysis of 3 pieces: *Us versus Them: The Failure of Globalism* by Ian Bremmer, *Suicide of the West: How Rebirth of Tribalism, Populism, Nationalism and Identity Politics Is Destroying American Democracy* by Jonah Goldberg, and *The Great Revolt: Inside the Populist Coalition Reshaping American Politics* by Salena Zito and Bradd Todd. While this piece is a review of other sources, it is important to assess the commentary of broader academia to gauge populist research. In his review of these pieces, Lynch finds the “cultural” and “economic” populisms take various forms between and within both the Democratic and Republican Party. He finds variations in the explanation of the rise of modern populism. In his piece, he details that: Bremmer identifies the surge of populism to global economic conditions exacerbating inequality, Goldberg stresses political differences on left leaning identity in gender and right leaning identity of nativism, and Zito’s study categorizing Trump’s base of support. Lynch, after his analysis, inserts his own dialogue. He believes “The future of populism and American politics... are nervously navigating economic and cultural populist tides.” (294). He distinguishes between economic and cultural populism. Lynch asserts “economic populism” is refocusing on “all working Americans” while cultural populism is a danger operating in divisive identity politics (294). With a focus on political victories, he ends with the claim that “The key to the White House and Congressional control may currently reside in the Midwestern battleground states” but focuses on the cultural underpinnings and influence of California. The cultural element of populism which Lynch discusses has been discussed by Mueller and others. In that, Lynch recognizes there is a divide not only in brands of populism and between parties but within each

party, like Ferguson, Rowland and Conely, but places an emphasis on identity politics, nationalism and nativism and rising inequality induced by globalization.

Another article which addresses the nature of Trumpian populism is entitled *#Nationalism: the ethno-nationalist populism of Donald Trump's Twitter communication* by Robert Schertzer and Eric Woods. The piece immediately recognizes core tenets of populism in the context of the MAGA movement through Trump's use of language. In that, Schertzer and Woods discuss Trump's "moral binary between an 'in-group' and an 'out-group'" (1155). The authors describe the former president's movement with the same distinction of a "silent majority" and the "forgotten men and women" being in-group. The connection between prior literature comes in their recognition of othering of "immoral outsiders" that threaten the in-group at large(1155). Schertzer and Woods seek to answer the question "How was it that a billionaire New Yorker garnered such widespread support from white Americans, particularly working class, rural, white Americans?"(1155). In agreement with Rowland and Fergusons findings, the scholars assert that a key to Trump's victory was in "ethnic myths and symbols of American identity" while also pointing to political polarization, "economic conditions", anti-government sentiments, "political structures" like the electoral college, and Hillary Clinton's unfavourability (1155). Schertzer and Woods go on to categorically define "ethnic community" in 5 points: people, homeland, history, religion and ethos (1158). They discuss the components of an ethnic community and describe how aspects were weaponized by Trump to appeal to religious and nativist communities. The concept of in-group versus out-of-group is a concept of othering,

scapegoating and exclusion from the broader community. The MAGA movement has been guided by narratives of 'us versus them' and Schertzer and Woods add to the resounding scholarly belief in their analysis.

In Kurt Weyland's piece entitled "Why US Democracy Trumps Populism: Comparative Lessons Reconsidered", the topic of US constitutional democracy's resilience to a populist movement, also addressed by Singh, is discussed. The focus of this piece is a response to a refutation of an original study calling for the "inclusion of cultural and structural" analysis alongside the study's institutionalist framework. The author retorts against two scholars Matias Lopez and Juan Luna. Weyland begins this defense by defining populism as:

"a political strategy through which personalistic, typically charismatic leaders seek and exercise power through unmediated, quasi-direct appeals and connections to an amorphous, heterogeneous, largely unorganized mass of followers" (478).

Weyland's study focuses on the rise of populism under two conditions. First, institutions must have a "weakness". Second, there must be a crisis of sorts or a period of economic abundance from "hydrocarbons" (478). Through a study of "30 cases of populist executives", Weyland found that the threat of populism to democracy was "way less dangerous for democracy than many feared." (478). Their proof lies in the results of the 2020 election with the defeat of Donald Trump claiming that the institutions were resilient through a "rigid constitution" and "checks and balances" (478). Though Weyland concedes democracy in the United States faces problems like "industrial decline", "deepening urban-rural division",

“racial tensions”, the “power of money”, and “challenges to expertise and rationality”, the author makes the claim that “party polarization...limited the danger arising from Trump...” (479). Later in the piece, Weyland contends the United States has been through economic and social shifts in the past which have not threatened the Constitution. In this case, he argues robust institutions repelled Trump’s populist wave pointing to Republican officials like Mike Pence and Brad Raffensperger upholding their institutional duties and obligations prescribed by the Constitution (482). Scholars previously mentioned such as Mueller may agree with the institutionalist perspective Weyland takes but recognize these attacks on democracy are persistent and do not occur rapidly. The destruction of democratic institutions would mean, as Mueller asserted, the loss of standing on the global stage with a new label of an “Illiberal Democracy”. The recognition of deep-rooted problems involving race and economy also addresses the notion of “aggrieved whiteness”, covered later in this chapter, and broad attitudes among the public allow for populist leaders to gain traction. With that, “fictitious entities” emerge as do Ferguson’s scapegoating and Rowland’s pattern of otherizing. Weyland accounts for the destruction of democracy but not the erosion and degradation of institutions.

The erosion of institutions is analyzed by Weyland and Singh while the threat of manipulation of governmental structures is presented by Mueller. In *Trump, Authoritarian Populism, and COVID-19 from a US Perspective*, Douglas Kellner adds to this discussion by examining the rise of authoritarianism after Trump’s 2016 presidential victory. Kellner contextualizes authoritarian populism in the scope of the 2020 election cycle. He asserts the former president’s behavior toward the

COVID pandemic was to “placate his base” with the guise “that he had it under control” (29). Kellner describes a president who consistently lied to appease his base. In his definition of populism, Kellner defines authoritarian populism as “the masses submitting to a leader’s authority, suggesting continuity between the fascism and mass movements of the 1930s with today’s global profusion of authoritarian leaders” (31). While he defines populism in the context of fascism, Kellner elaborates on populist traits that other scholars have noted such as “authoritarian populist leaders present themselves as *saviors of the people*”, “seeks a monopoly on political truth and action”, “attacks the media, judiciary and political organs and representative”, attacking “institutions that” do not “follow his way or oppose him” (32). He asserts that this brand of populism brings about violence from angry masses who take their grievances out on “minority groups whom they blame their own, or social, problems” on (33). Kellner aligns with the broad consensus of scholars described in this chapter. Populism is a dangerous tool which has adverse effects on institutions, social dynamics, and health. Kellner’s points hit on Rowland’s heroism trope, Mueller’s trend of populists weakening institutions and Conley’s otherization of migrants and minorities.

In addition to Kellner’s discussion of discourse, Andrew M. Fischer, in his piece *“The Dark Sides of Social Policy: From Neoliberalism to Resurgent Right-wing Populism*, discusses the success of the rise of right-wing populism in Brazil, the US, the UK, India, Turkey and various other nations. Fischer looks at the changes in social policy in regard to this wave of authoritarian populism. He argues that the current neoliberalist order is driving degrees of “stratification and segregation”

regardless of social safety nets put in place by domestic or international institutions (379). Fischer analyzes the factors at play which cause marginalization and therefore social radicalization, including segregation. The adoption of neoliberal stratification and exclusion by right-wing populists is a product of a desire to “preserve the existing hierarchical social order and to discipline those who find themselves subordinate within this order.” (392). Fischer touches on the populist themes of othering while not only acknowledging but analyzing the current global economic structure and detailing the social impact of its tendencies. The populist ideal of ‘us versus them’ is a driving component to not only Fischer’s analysis but to the scholarly consensus of what is causing a surge in movements of this nature.

In *Trump, Populism and American Foreign Policy*, Thorsten Wojczewski, like Fischer, examines the tropes of populism internationally. He uses literature to reference a familiar broad definition of populism as a “thin ideology which frames politics as a battle between the ‘pure’ people and the ‘corrupt’ elites” (293). Wojczewski indicates that various definitions of populism and their uses in scholarly literature may conflate Trump’s populism with “economic nationalism”. His study goes beyond “Othering” to analyze “practices that make the illusion of an objective reality possible”. With a focus on the “...appeal of Trumpian discourse lies...”, Wojczewski examines “...the construction of such a fantasy narrative that channels emotions of hope and fear...captured by Trump’s campaign slogan ‘Make America Great Again!’” (293). He breaks down “core categories” of discursive populism into 3 sections. The first is “a discourse” that “can represent people-as-underdogs” that were marginalized by the elite class in turn uniting “the people”.

The second is on right-wing populism's focus on "foreign others" and a "grouping together" with the establishment forming an "enemy of the people". The third and final category claims "the transnational other" is also labeled as an enemy of the people and used as a scapegoat (296). Wojczewski continues to touch on facets of populism which other authors have as well. In this, he describes the conditions necessary for the rise of Trumpian populism and points to an inequality created by globalization entrenching insecurities, the emergence of "illiberal capitalism through China" and the 2008 presidential victory of Barack Obama (300). His assertion of economic conditions creating insecurity and therefore political instability is agreed upon by scholars like Weyland, Conely and many others. Wojczewski's point on the rise of China is new to the discussion but makes sense in the context of his argument. With the ability to blame a "transnational other", a populist leader has the ability to shift domestic scrutiny overseas. China has become the target, whether deserved or not, of populism. His point on the election of Barack Obama also touches on the emergence of identity politics associated with race and the contemporary rise of populism.

Within the international analysis of populism, Mariam Fatima, in her article *Security threat: a reality or right-wing political discourse phenomenon*, offers commentary on the rise of anti-migrant rhetoric in Europe with mass migration to Europe in the wake of the Syrian civil war. Like Fischer, Fatima addresses division in social practices driven by nationalist responses in a post-September 11 world. She describes right wing populism as "criticism against political institutions combined with ethno-nationalism". Fatima details the stringent, vague, obscure language

emerging from right-wing populist leaders to obfuscate “legal human rights obligations”. Populist leaders then use the anti-immigrant sentiment to rally support for campaigns much like Donald Trump with the southern border and Muslim migrants. Fatima partially agrees with the analysis of othering as a key component to populist platforms but pushes back that real national security threats may exist from migration from unstable regions. As Mueller points out, populist leaders do not care if the messaging changes. They adhere to underlying tropes of otherization and ‘us versus them’ with in-groups and out-groups. The rhetoric from right-wing populism regarding migrants will remain the same yet migrant out-groups will change. This could transform from religious groups, migrants from geo-political or geo-economic adversaries or economic migrants.

Commentary regarding rising right-wing populism and negative sentiments toward migrants and minorities is further explored in Frank Mols and Jolanda Jetten’s piece *Explaining the Appeal of Populist Right-Wing Parties in Times of Economic Prosperity*. The authors assert that negative sentiments are driven by scarcity which “causes people to ‘lash out’ at minorities” causing “negative social comparisons” to arise (278). Mols and Jetten point to various explanations made from academia including “scapegoating, anomie, relative deprivation, party-positioning, ethnic competition, xenophobia, and modernisation losers” are “almost all based on grievance theory” (278). With a framework of “realistic threat narratives” and “symbolic threat narratives”, they predicted during economic hardship symbolic threat narratives would be more effective in mobilizing support (279). To test this, Mols and Jetten set up studies where participants would be given

sets of real speeches regarding immigration and fictitious news articles about the economy in the contexts of economic prosperity and decline. Narratives within these documents were changed in order to test the effectiveness of either symbolic threat narratives or realistic threat narratives. While the results showed participants were more amicable toward migrants “when expecting” broad economic “affluence” (289), the researchers conducted a second study to attempt to determine how populists figureheads “secure electoral support when the economy is not a cause for concern” (289). Mols and Jetten found that right-wing populist politicians work to “shape voters’ understanding of social reality” on the basis of “intragroup dimensions” inherent in xenophobia. This creates a dynamic of ‘us versus them’ which the populist exploits to gain support through “victimization narratives” (290). Mols and Jetten, through their research, confirm scholarly analysis of right-wing populist movements as in-group versus out-group focused with allegiance to perceived “moral leader” guiding the movement.

While many scholars agree about the dangers of populism, the extent of that threat varies but the definition of the MAGA movement as populist, at times, is up for debate. Robin Tolmach Lakoff in his piece “The hollow man - Donald Trump, populism, and post-truth politics”, contests some of the fundamentals of populism established by Mueller, Rowland, Singh and other authors. In a fiery article, Lakoff agrees that a populist is “someone whose political sympathies lie with the non-elite and marginalized” (588). Yet, they continue in their claim that Trump is not a populist on the basis of his socioeconomic background as a billionaire. The issue for Lakoff is that the former president is an elite himself who does not take on the elitist

establishment. When looking back to Mueller's description of a populist leader, Trump's background does not determine if his movement or he personally is a populist. Rather, his ability to weave narratives of anti-establishment rhetoric, focus on hollow symbology of the "people", create dynamics of 'us versus them', and found an image of moral forthrightness are the key factors to determine if the MAGA movement is populist or not. Of many scholarly opinions on Trumpian populism, Lakoff finds himself in the minority.

In *A New Authoritarianism* by Salvatore Babones, the focus is not on the negative effects of the Trumpian populist movement rather he suggests Trump is a hero in the age of liberal expertocracy. As Rowland and others assert on the broader populist movement, there is a component of Trump's emotional strategy at play in this book. Babones ignites emotional rhetoric calling Trump the unexpected "hero" of a system of liberal hierarchy which seeks to brainwash the youth. He continues claiming Trump "is not the leader of a white supremacist revolution". Babones asserts that populism is not the solution yet it is a "powerful force for breaking the tyranny of the expert class". The narrative of the swamp and the deep state is at play with Babones' claims of "unelected institutions" gaining power in secret. In chapters 1, 2, and 3, he details a transformation of liberalism, the shift in focus of "negative freedoms" to "positive rights", dependency on marginalized minorities, the illiberal world order of the late 20th century, a rules-based world order which opposes democracy and applauds free trade, "globalization of expertise" and global governance being of the private expert class.

In chapters 4 and 5, Babones shifts his tone to discuss the populist movement of Trump. He contends that populism is the opposite of authoritarianism asserting that the commonality between populism and authoritarianism is the “‘know-nothing’ strategies that disdain sophisticated arguments and appeal instead to voter’s more visceral instincts”. Babones compares Trump’s brand of populism to other authoritarian leaders, Stalin, Hitler, Xi Jinping, and claims that Trump “defers to no authority other than Donald Trump” asserting that “you cannot be authoritarian when the only authority you recognize is yourself”. This statement is flawed. When, historically or contemporarily, has it been viewed that a leader is not dictatorial when they only go by the whim of their personal agenda, emotions, or interests. The authority former President Trump should answer to is the supreme law of the land, the Constitution. Mueller would contend that this behavior is a characteristic of a populist leader: a total disregard for certain institutions while pushing forward the narrative they desire to retain power. As Singh and Weyland contend, the constitution has proven resilient against Trump’s attacks on or undermining of democratic institutions.

All of these authors, with the exception of Babones and Lakoff, set a framework of otherization, in-group identity, which claims ownership of a broader national American identity while scapegoating minority groups including immigrants and people of color. These narratives have emboldened destructive and violent acts like the January 6th insurrection. While Singh and Weyland would argue the strength of the institutions will persist, Mueller may argue that the threat is the slow degradation of institutions in favor of a populist movement. The narrative of

election integrity of the MAGA movement taps into emotional appeals of fear and anger that are motivated by racism, nationalism, othering, twisted moral values and a public who is angry that they have not reaped the benefits of globalization like the business and political establishment.

For the purposes of this chapter, it must be considered how Trump approaches narrative creation and in the framework of intersectionality. First, it must be explained how intersectionality is being defined. Intersectionality is used to analyze the intersection of discrimination perpetrated by existing structures of power, or as Mueller might define, “fictitious entities”. The framework of intersectionality is used to decipher a “spaghetti of complex social identities within overlooked structures of oppression”. Intersectionality is a “work-in-progress” that has expanded the perception of oppression¹⁵. The next set of authors will set the stage for its use.

In Paul Bleakly’s piece, *Days of alt-rage: using the Weathermen movement to deconstruct the radicalisation of the alt-right*, he addresses the notion of intersectionality in modern politics. He homes in on a group called the Weathermen, primarily composed of white Americans who advocate justice for black Americans. Bleakly addresses Crenshaw’s framework in her belief “that identity... is not the sole determining factor when it comes to their personal political philosophy” (108). Bleakly’s focus on racial identity within segments of the population birthed a sentiment of “aggrieved whiteness” (112). He moves into the variations of identity groups juxtaposing the Weathermen with right-wing movements like the Tea Party.

¹⁵ YouTube: *Crenshaw Intersectionality Ted Talk*

In this, Bleakly discusses the movement's focus on "charismatic political figures expressing anti-establishment sentiments" (112). He continues to elaborate on the leadership structure of the Weathermen in comparison to the alt-right. He also discusses where these groups exist and operate pointing to the digital space. With no mention of populism in the piece, Bleakly touches on descriptions of populism previously mentioned by scholars like Mueller. The anti-establishment, anti-elitist mentality combined with the cult of personality for a morally upright leader addresses the foundation of a populist movement. Mueller's "fictitious entity" is fulfilled through the sentiment of oppression creating this "aggrieved whiteness" that Bleakly discusses. The phenomena of "aggrieved whiteness" indicates there is a reason for disgruntled citizens whether it be cultural differences discussed by Lynch or economic variables discussed by Skonieczny, Rowland, Ferguson and Conley. With the hollow messaging of Trumpian populism, the movement can adapt and change who its "aggrieved whiteness" is toward whether it is bureaucratic, social or political institutions.

If the Trump movement vaguely uses intersectionality's structure of oppression component as a tool to frame their societal positions, the discussion must be directed toward how this framework is changing within other social groups. Scholars address intersectionality further like Sirma Bilge, in her piece *Intersectionality Undone: Saving Intersectionality from Feminist Intersectionality Studies*. She contends that the feminist debates on intersectionality have constrained intersectionality to "an academic exercise" and in turn lost its ability to be an agent for political change (405). Bilge examines "the whitening of intersectionality" and its

exclusion of important groups involved in its inception, focusing on feminist and European adoption. She concludes her argument asserting reframing intersectionality will pervert the origins of the framework and exclude: “feminists of color confronting racism within feminism” (420). The internal disputes over expansion of or shift in the applicability of intersectionality speak to the rapid changes going on in its very definition. “The whitening” of intersectionality speaks to Bleakly’s “aggrieved whiteness” of alt-right groups and acts as an example of the flexibility of larger or smaller groups to exclude or include various portions of “the people” as described by Mueller. Supporters of the populist MAGA movement behave in the same way.

Trump has had the ability to reframe and weaponize this ideology in his populist movement. An intersectional framework can be used to address systems of inequality, whether that inequality is real or artificial. Kimberle Crenshaw's origination of this term comes from Critical Race Theory, which sought to discover racial oppression in law against various groups of the public.¹⁶ The Trumpian movement has adopted this idea in all but name, seeking to thwart oppression of their in-group, and oftentimes holding disdain for the concept as it is deemed “woke”.

In this chapter and from the scholarly literature, it is believed the Trumpian populist movement has fabricated structures of power, weaponized the fear from emotional narratives of the perceived discrimination and made a narrative bonding agent for his collective base. For a narrative to be effective, it must be inclusive or

¹⁶ YouTube: *Crenshaw Intersectionality Ted Talk*

relatable to broader segments of the population¹⁷. In this, there must be an emotional resonance that truly moves individuals to create a collective. Trump's narrative threats ranged from immigration to the political establishment. Most citizens of the United States may emotionally connect with the problem of a rich class reaping a vast majority of economic benefits and a political establishment that ignores average citizens' economic concerns. Trump can bring such a vast problem into focus for a white-working class that feels left behind.

A prominent feature of this right-wing brand of populism is the narrative weaving of intersectional concerns and problems into a grander narrative of immigration and a fear of minorities. Immigration for the Trump movement is painted as villainous and bent on changing the United States. As scholarly literature has shown, this is fundamentally an action of othering to migrants, legal or illegal, and is motivated by nationalism. Many times, illegal immigration is paired with drug *mules* and human traffickers. This creates an overarching negative and criminal connotation for the term immigration which paints a human pattern of development over thousands of years as a threat to the United States. This black-market criminal activity is labeled as a fundamental and existential crisis in the United States. Immigration, not the criminal activity itself, is the crisis for the Trump movement. This broad association negatively drives the sentiment of 'us versus them' forward. Those who wish to increase immigration, or reform it in favor of inviting immigrants, are accused of being anti-democratic and traitors to the United States. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who is a member of the MAGA caucus, in her 2022 spring

¹⁷ Freistein

trial, which sought to prove her connection to or support for the January 6th insurrection, claimed that Nancy Pelosi was an un-democratic traitor to the United States for her stance on the southern border¹⁸. The core tenant of the claim functions around Democrats importing illegal migrants to shift elections. The illegal migrants come to sanctuary states where they have a pathway to citizenship, gain the ability to vote, and will then be beholden to the Democrats who gave them the opportunity to come to this nation. Inevitably, this belief asserts that immigration will water down the white voting base. Pundits, such as Tucker Carlson, have pushed this idea to the point that it has motivated violence claiming that illegal immigration numbers are undercounted or artificial as they remain unchanged since 2005¹⁹. This is a part of the perceived larger plot from un-democratic politicians who seek to stay in power by any means necessary, even if it means they change the social identity of the nation.

This narrative has spurred on the thought process that migrants, people of color, the others, “them”, are going to replace “Americans”. In the Trump movement, a subtle and yet outright trope of us versus them is in whiteness. This term is qualified not only by white but by being conservative. Not only is it the immigrants or the swamp that wants to take away their way of life but it is the liberals who want to destroy their identity. The idea of the “other” replacing this movement’s identity is where the notion of ‘The Great Replacement Theory’ has come from and made recent news as the motivating factor of a mass shooting. This horrific event occurred on May 14th, 2022 and the murderer functioned on the same premise of “the

¹⁸ YouTube: *Greene Answers Questions in reelection challenge hearing*

¹⁹ Fox News: *Tucker Carlson Great Replacement Monologue*

others” replacing white citizens. The “others” in this instance were elderly and African Americans. This destructive and malignant theory has motivated other right-wing movements. The members of the alt-right Charlottesville protest chanted “Jews will not replace us”²⁰ and the El Paso shooter sought to kill as many Hispanic and Latin American grocery store shoppers as possible²¹. The ‘Great Replacement Theory’ has roots in anti-Semitism yet is being applied to the broader “them” and “them” is people of color in these cases. Recent events suggest the connection between the Trumpian alt-right and ‘The Great Replacement Theory’²² as a driving factor of violence. In that theory are narratives of election fraud and theft claims and the “others” who seek to take over the country and replace white Americans as the dominant demographic in the United States.

As previously displayed, the shift in election challenges and questions can be found in narrative creation. Whether in the unfair treatment of a primary candidate or the collusion of a campaign with an adversarial foreign government, election integrity has been a pressing issue in the United States that garners attention from the people. The current election integrity narrative is one of crises from the contemporary populist Trump movement. The fringe segment, such as Q-anon, of this narrative movement, claims there was collusion with the Chinese government to overtake the United States by force under Joe Biden’s presidency²³.

The campaign and post-election rhetoric of theft has stayed consistent even with the mainstream parts of the Trump movement. The emergence of D’Souza’s

²⁰ Sarna: *A Long, ugly history of “jews will not replace us”*

²¹ Cedar: *The AP – El Paso shooting suspect said he targeted Mexicans*

²² Farviar: *Great Replacement Theory*

²³ Swenson: *Video Makes false claims about 2020 election*

documentary functions on the demand for “answers” in the 2020 election. D’Souza’s documentary can be categorized in 3 parts. The first is in his introduction of the problem with a panel of conservative guests. The second part is the presentation of the election fraud fact finders. The third is the combination of these two segments with the first panel’s reaction to the fraudulent *evidence*²⁴.

In his introduction to the documentary, he claims the January 6th insurrection “wasn’t an insurrection rather it was a *primal scream*, they wanted their elected leaders to adjudicate claims of election fraud”. D’Souza uses a populist appeal to incite an already emotional base. He speaks to the people’s grief of the loss of their heroic leader and their “primal scream” of anger and dismay in questioning the results of the 2020 election. He spoke to the feeling of being robbed that Trump’s base empathizes with. All of this was effectively accomplished in the first 5 minutes of the film.

From here, the focus of the documentary shifts to censorship and the claim of the Big Lie asking if “it is a lie at all?”. He points to the frustration of his 2021 podcast which hosts figures of the conservative movement such as Dennis Prager, Larry Elder, Eric Metaxas, Sebastian Gorka, and Charlie Kirk. This segment is important for dissection as it displays the current stance of popular conservative pundits on election theft in the 2020 campaign. These pundits are influential in the conservative political space and have been featured in mainstream media outlets like Fox News²⁵. In the past, these hosts have parroted narratives akin to “The Great

²⁴ D’souza: *2000 Mules Documentary*

²⁵ Fox News: *Tucker Carlson Great Replacement Monologue*

Replacement Theory' and espouse similar sentiments related to immigrants and mules in this documentary.

The segment begins with the D'souza asking the guests "Do we feel confident and comfortable that we know the truth about what really happened in the 2020 election?". All guests of these prominent conservative figures, with the exception of Dennis Prager who claims to be agnostic to the question of election fraud, embrace the claim and narrative of election theft. Metaxas asserts "most Americans know that we don't know what happened and are not okay with it"²⁶. Kirk says there are "crumbs" with "evidence here and there" but the "picture is incomplete". This chapter will not address the Q-anon tropes from Kirk's answer, but it is important to recognize the culture and nature of "bread crumbs"²⁷ in the Q-anon wing of the fringe movement. Elder says there were "shenanigans" that must be answered from the 2020 election. This segment sets up a paradigm of irregularities. In this conversation, the guests bring up down-ballot voting as a sign of where state legislatures were Republican juxtaposed with a Democrat elected president. The result of this conversation can be found in the answer "not all attempts at cheating succeed". The panel aids D'souza and the narrative of the Big Lie which pivots on unanswered irregularities in the 2020 election²⁸.

The documentary moves on to discuss the founder of True the Vote Catherine Engelbrecht. It proceeds to make contact with her and discover a "secret" project she has been working on with expert data analysts. This project sought to uncover

²⁶ D'souza: *2000 Mules Documentary* (8:46)

²⁷ 8kun: *Qresearch Message board*

²⁸ D'souza: *2000 Mules Documentary* (8:24 - 14:06)

“how you would cheat if you were to cheat”. The investigation conducted by True the Vote of the 2020 election involved 10 trillion data points and 4 million minutes of surveillance footage from contentious or close counties in the 2020 election. Through the process of “geo-fencing” polling locations and tracking personal cell phone data, investigators were able to reason that 2000 mules trafficked an average of 5 ballots in Georgia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Arizona. In this segment, they show surveillance footage from these locations and proceed to project a different outcome from the 2020 election if mule-based fraud was not committed. The result, unsurprisingly, is a Donald Trump victory. Even then, the margin of victory is expanded as they shift the criteria for being a mule. The supposed fact finders changed the requirement from 10 trips to a polling location or mail-in drop box down to 5 trips. They also adjusted the number of votes trafficked from 5 to 3 per mule. The results shift further in Trump’s favor²⁹.

The documentary shifts into its final phases. After the findings are presented to D’Souza, he brings True the Vote representatives to the panel to discuss and present the damning evidence to the pundits. From the evidence that is presented to the panel, they ask what can be done. The panel of pundits proceeded to ponder about action which can be taken to rectify this subversion of the election. The documentary ends with the accusation that a politically organized crime ring exists, and the public is more aware now than ever of its existence. With that, he claims it will never be forgotten³⁰.

²⁹ D’souza: *2000 Mules Documentary* (14:07- 51:22)

³⁰ D’souza: *2000 Mules Documentary* (52:30- 1:26:10)

The documentary 2000 Mules is a culmination of various political assertions and lies perpetrated by Donald Trump. Throughout the early 2022 primary season, Trump has re-emerged as a fringe social media figure pushing election fraud and integrity narratives on his social media platform Truth Social. Not only has Trump promoted the fringe documentary himself but has actively re-posted 2000 Mules promotions from Dinesh D'Souza and other users. Currently, the focus of Trump's social media posts is and has been on the 2022 Pennsylvania primary which is a centerpiece of the 2000 Mules documentary. Beyond the support of a particular candidate, Trump has consistently and constantly attacked election procedures in Pennsylvania even calling for the exclusive use of paper ballots. His endorsements of election integrity candidates who call for "same-day voting", a "banning drop boxes", "banning mail-in and absentee ballots" and at times calling for the decertification of the 2020 election results. The former president has made a concerted effort for this not only in Pennsylvania but in Michigan, Wisconsin, Arizona and Georgia. Trump's presence on Truth Social acts as a medium to emotionally resonate, puts his finger on the pulse of sentiment, and ultimately guides conservative narratives. The narratives may shift through time. The target "them" and "other" will change as the goalposts of election fraud evidence shift. This evolution of narratives may continue to inspire violence and pressure change in election integrity platforms.

Trumpian Narratives

Throughout this chapter, the discussion of the Trumpian right has been positioned on the basis of othering. The heightening of election narratives generated by the Trumpian conservative right poses a danger to minority and migrant safety

in the United States. Danger to safety, while typically thought of as physical, can be described as insecurity, as scholars have previously displayed. In this insecurity exists access to basic public goods and the ability to exercise an individual's rights. The narrative influence of the right-wing has created the potential of insecurity for minority citizens and their ability to access polls during elections. The election integrity policy platform *will* make it more difficult for the average American to vote. This can be seen through stricter requirements for voters to *prove* they are citizens and making it to a polling place within the timeframe of polling hours. The interwoven nature of populist narratives and the ramifications of election procedures does not bode well for the future of access to the voting booth in states like Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. In Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, the state mail-in voting and drop boxes, respectively, have been deemed unconstitutional by the state supreme court³¹. In each of these instances, voters are placed in a position of undue burden. If election laws are shifting due to narratives, it is unfathomable to think how, if these tropes increase in extreme language, it will affect minority voters of any demographic. The danger of the storyline of otherization and 'us versus them' is displayed in the tragic and disgusting Buffalo shooting. The crisis at hand for Trumpian conservatives is a loss of identity whether that identity is associating white or conservative with American. The repercussions, if it continues to escalate, could result in violence as displayed on January 6th and the horrific targeting of minorities in unsuspecting towns and municipalities. A nightmare scenario would be the decertification of election results in any given state which could create a

³¹ Trump Account: *July 9th*

domino effect of secession in states where the Big Lie is popular. In this, the United States would enter an “antebellum” civil war like period. If this movement is willing to target the seat of the people in the Capitol building, they are also willing to obstruct regular citizens' abilities to cast their ballots. The ironic part is it is all being done under the guise of protection, preservation, and justice yet seeks to weaponize sentiment to subvert segments of the nation which is built on immigrants and minorities.

The next chapter will focus on the mode of communication for these narratives of election theft, election integrity, and the populist ‘us versus them’, particularly on Trump’s Truth Social. This piece will continue exploring the ramifications from this narrative communication where Trump has focused his attention in election law and pressure toward election Republican officials in states like Georgia, Arizona, Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. Later this piece will also engage in general forecasts of scenarios, such as a constitutional convention, if these election laws, policies and measures are effective in putting more Republicans, especially MAGA Republicans, in office.

Chapter 2:

Populism: Truth Social and MAGA narratives

Over the last 2 decades or longer, right wing and MAGA conservatism have introduced a genre of populism that has grown from an overabundance of toxic political rhetoric from both factions of the American political spectrum. The radioactive nature of political discourse created the environment and conditions for party and platform mutation. From President Bill Clinton's impeachment to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's multi-year investigation of emails and review of her course of actions taken during the Benghazi attack to the current and very public campaign to discover *any* wrongdoing of President Joe Biden, the desperate chase for a narrative dichotomy of hero and villain, us versus them, becomes clear. Populist themes and rhetorical strategies established in chapter 1, from scholars such as Conley and Mueller, like fictitious entities and emotional resonance become evident. A timeline and pattern of narrative evolution of endless investigations that provide no new evidence or conclusion with unabashed political motive and aim allows for noxious rhetoric to taint trust, discredit rivals and hollow out institutions. Within these themes, a populist weaves fear and distrust of current political rivals with long standing, reliable institutions. Among this haze of truth and doubt, populist leadership, like Donald J. Trump, arrives to provide answers, solutions and moral integrity which the current system and its leaders cannot or will not give "the people".

This image of a moral, patriotic outsider cultivates unquestioned, widespread support. Within that new base of support, trust and "truth" are re-founded. As a moral leader, the populist will slowly redefine agreed upon terms of morality and understanding of good and evil. Blind trust enables a flexibility of these

definitions granting opportunity for populist grifters, like Trump, to add, subtract or change in-group and out-of-group definitional understandings. The shift in terms may sway opinions on international relations, domestic economic affairs, or social policy regarding human rights. In this new perception of the world, domestic political opposition becomes an existential threat to the stability and prosperity of the nation. In the President Clinton era, the existential threat to the country was a moral less, lustful leader. In the Obama, Trump and Biden eras, there has been the looming threat of malicious socialism, disguising itself as American, determined to indoctrinate “the people” with Marxism.

This narrative ecosystem of demonization, misinformation through opaque or distorted transparency, and otherization thrives on fear and insecurity. Emotional responses, like fight or flight, take hold in the base and generate isolating ideals and beliefs of bigotry, xenophobia and racism further deepening tension in a divided country. As a narrative ecosystem, the MAGA movement is liquid and flexible, opening or closing its beliefs, as positive or negative sentiments of the direction of the country, or their own interests, shift. With already existing narrative influence in media, government, and entertainment, the MAGA movement birthed its own platform, Truth Social.

In late April of 2022, the new MAGA narrative platform launched to the broader public. The social media site is a Trump owned platform which prides itself on “truth” and “fact” with similar phrasing and generic naming conventions for user interactions. The narrative strategy obscure definitional blurring and redefining of simple colloquialisms on social media such as “like”, “share”, “subscribe” or as large

as bedrock understandings of sentiments of "the people" threatens the core tenants of democracy such as a free, fair, transparent and open society. A political faction bent on misguided, conspiratorial moral victory is dangerous to the stability of any nation.

In this chapter, the dialogue, description and distinction of populism will continue while homing in on the primary platform of the MAGA conservative populist narrative dissemination, Truth Social. This qualitative study, which was conducted with archival and observational elements, is done with a focus on recurring tropes, theme throughlines, and messaging campaigns from the populist movement's leader himself, Donald J. Trump. Observation was done to determine the intensity and level of division which the former president's social media truly sows and how this can, is and will affect Americans rights to vote. This was done by observing the former president's Truth Social account feed of posts over 3 months beginning on May 1st until July 31st of 2022. Tropes of theft and fraud of the 2020 election, a deep state, witch hunt and us versus them are all prevalent through the 3-month period. This chapter will first address themes shared across all three months then will explore diverging narratives of Trump between all three months.

With a resurgent return, Donald Trump splashed back into social media with a roar espousing many familiar narratives. He immediately engaged in tropes of election theft and fraud of the 2020 election, a deep state, witch hunt and us versus them. The former president persisted in his focus on these narratives throughout the duration of the observation.

Throughout the months of May, June and July, Trump's narratives evolved and increased in intensity. Though Trump's return to social media occurred on April 28th, the former president's narrative weaving and dissemination did not truly happen until May 1st with a post declaring "Democrats are the Party of Disinformation..."³². He used old rhetorical pillars of "corrupt Democrats", "rampant crime", "open borders", "witch hunts" against the former president, "wokeism", the Clintons, Obamas and Bidens "swamp"ish dealings and a "siege on the 2nd amendment" to reintroduce himself to his supporters. At every chance, the former president would engage in negative commentary on the state of the economy, such as inflation, foreign policy of the current administration and painting a picture of a "declining nation" falling into the conditions of a "Third World" country³³. This theme of a failing state was clear in his "Save America" rally tour of 2022, which also was the name of his January 6th event.

Trump's newer narrative thread of "Rigged and Stolen" elections were then spliced into the straw man political, media, and social establishment structures of power which he has built over the last 6 years. Trump's attacks on Joe Biden were consistent throughout the 3 months whereas other targets of narratives phased in and out of his focus. As the Clinton-Durham trial took place, Trump repeatedly hammered home corruption and wrongdoing from his former political rival. His narratives would continue attacking "Radical Liberal prosecutors" and other "leftist" adversaries. The focus was on those who did not agree with or denied his election fraud claims. This attack extended to the GOP establishment as well.

³² Trump Account: *May 1st*

³³ Trump Account: *May 1st*

Trump engaged in increasingly hostile rhetoric toward Democrats and Republicans throughout the summer. Attacks against establishment Republicans like Liz Cheney and Mitch McConnell were consistent with attacks against the “Radical Left”³⁴. Trump skewered Republicans over bi-partisan gun control on numerous occasions even after a summer of violent mass shootings such as Uvalde and the Buffalo shooting. Instead of giving support to existing Republican incumbents, Trump dubbed those with ‘election integrity’ policy platforms as his candidates for the 2022 midterm. Those who did not recognize Trump’s election narrative were branded as enemies.

‘Election Integrity’ as a policy platform relies on the idea that the United States election system is fragile, vulnerable and susceptible to widespread fraud³⁵. Their evidence for this policy platform lies in the “irregular” results of the 2020 election. These policies advocate for “same-day voting”, “paper-ballots only”, and “banning drop boxes, absentee and mail-in ballots”³⁶. During the counting of Pennsylvania GOP primary race, the former president made a tireless effort to attack the slow pace of counting, comparing the US election system to France’s same-day, paper ballot system. Throughout this period, Trump called the United States a “Third World” nation with “Third World elections”³⁷.

Trump endorsed the election denying candidates from key battleground states like Wisconsin, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Michigan. Most of these primary hopefuls advocate for ‘election integrity’ platforms while also declaring fraud in the

³⁴ Trump account: *May 8th*

³⁵ Trump account: *June 2nd*

³⁶ Trump account: *June 29th*

³⁷Trump Account: *May 23rd*

2020 presidential election. Many of these key GOP candidates running for governor and secretary of state advocate the decertification of the 2020 election results including Kari Lake of Arizona, Tudor Dixon of Michigan and Tim Michels of Wisconsin.

The former president often promoted his fringe narratives through supporter generated content. This content from Trump could look like election denying memes, comments and posts including the documentary “2000 Mules” by Dinesh D’Souza, which was released in May of 2022. As previously described, the documentary claims that a ring of Democratic, white-collar criminals used migrant and minority labor to traffic ballots to mail-in drop boxes in key counties in Arizona, Wisconsin, Michigan, Georgia and Pennsylvania. This documentary is a long-form conspiracy theory on widespread and blatant fraud yet provides virtually no or flimsy evidence to justify their claims. Evidence provided ranges from “trillions of cell phone data points”³⁸, thousands of hours of surveillance footage from contentious counties, like Maricopa County, Arizona, and anecdotal evidence from witnesses or individuals who claim to be accomplices³⁹.

In the months of June and July, Trump continued to cling to the documentary as hard evidence of a “Rigged and Stolen” election at times using the film as refutation of the Jan. 6th Congressional Select Committee hearings. His counter messaging toward the committee ranged from defending himself to portraying the testimony and evidence of the hearing as “phony” and “fraudulent”. Throughout this time, Trump attempted to frame the hearings as a continued witch hunt from the

³⁸ D’Souza: *2000 Mules*

³⁹ D’Souza: *2000 Mules*

“Russia, Russia, Russia HOAX”⁴⁰ while discrediting events that occurred on that fateful day. With narratives of an “unselect committee”⁴¹ attempting to hide the truth of a sham election, subvert Democracy and destroy the populist Trumpian MAGA movement at large, the ex-president foments distrust among his supporters toward an institution which represents the very will of the people.

Over the last 3 months, Trump embarked on a discreditation campaign. In that, Trump attempted to deny ideas and claims about his actions on January 6th. He denied the claim that he attempted to allow guns into his “Save America rally”, the accusation that he choked a Secret Service member and attempted to grab the steering wheel from them, the idea that he sat idly by while his supporters stormed the Capitol building, the claim that he withheld armed support to defend the Capitol and the assertion that Trump was not a proponent of hanging Mike Pence. While denying the litany of allegations that have emerged from the January 6th committee, Trump has on numerous occasions attempted to label his phone call with Georgia Secretary of State as “a perfect phone call”⁴². This “perfect phone call” is under investigation from the Prosecutor of Fulton County which drew rhetorical attacks as well.

The counter narrative Trump attempts to push involves name calling and bullying toward members of the institutions and elected bodies like the select committee. Through his messaging, Trump has called the congressional members of

⁴⁰ Trump account: May 2nd

⁴¹ Trump account: June 9th

⁴² Trump account: May 11th

the committee “political thugs and hacks” and “evil”⁴³. Though he targeted specific members like Adam Schiff, the focus of his vitriol was toward Rep. Liz Cheney, the Vice Chair of the committee. Trump attempted to discredit Cheney as a “corrupt” establishment Republican who sides with the Democrats, stoking the populist ‘us versus them’ mentality of his movement.

As options run thin for Donald Trump with the January 6th committee and investigations of his businesses and behavior before the capitol insurrection, the former president responded with extremely divisive narratives. Trump worked to prove he was innocent of any crime in the court of public opinion on numerous occasions especially involving the Jan. 6th riot and the Georgia phone call. While he clung to rhetoric of a corrupt structure of power to oppress the American people, Trump attempted to change the frame of debate of his wrongdoings toward the alleged “widespread fraud” of the 2020 election⁴⁴. With that, Trump expanded his narrative influence through his continued endorsements of ‘election integrity’ candidates while also making a move to capture more power through the installment of MAGA loyalists across the nation. Policies of election integrity threaten the very foundation of voter participation which have been built over generations with the call for “same-day” voting and a departure from modern polling machines with “paper-ballots only”⁴⁵. The GOP ‘election integrity’ candidates of the 2022 midterm threaten to uproot common practices of democracy through

⁴³ Trump account: *June 19th*

⁴⁴ Trump account: *June 13th*

⁴⁵ Trump Account: *May 18th*

their denial of the 2020 election results, desire to change election processes and promise to decertify the election in various swing states.

Over the last 3 months, Trump has advocated for regressive election policy candidates while further dividing the nation on the truth. Narratives of “deep state”, “swamp” corruption, demonization of any opponent of his narrative of a “Rigged and Stolen” election and the rigging of the 2022 election. The former president and his Trumpian populist MAGA movement, in its current form, threaten the very nature of democracy. Chapter 3 will discuss existing or proposed election integrity policies in states like Arizona, Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Georgia which are facing threats to their democratic process due to the populist MAGA movement.

Midterm Narratives

While classic tropes of populism are shared across the MAGA conservative narrative universe, the Trumpian narrative theme typically remains fluid against liberal or minority targets who face an onslaught of rhetorical attacks. The overarching populist tropes remain, adding or subtracting throughout different political races to appeal to various marginalized voters. This section will attempt to break down each month and some of the rhetorical differences in intensity and target.

May

Over the month of May, Donald Trump's Truth Social account pushed narratives of election fraud, election integrity and a structure of power which seeks to oppress the average American. Trump called on old narratives and political enemies while weaving in the notion of "Rigged and Stolen" elections. In early May, Trump focused on the Russia collusion investigation, the Fake News media and the Clinton-Durham trial. Trump began the month attacking Democrats labeling them the "Party of Disinformation"⁴⁶.

Through this, Trump ignited his traditional themes of witch hunt but in light of investigations regarding the 2020 election particularly the Fulton County investigation of Donald Trump's phone call to Georgia's Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger. While entwining old pillars of targeted attacks in minorities, immigrants surging through the southern border, corruption in the radical Democratic party and draining the swamp, the former president promoted the documentary "2000 Mules" by Dinesh D'Souza. In "2000 Mules", D'Souza with True the Vote, portrays the 2020 election as stolen by minority and immigrant "mules" who trafficked ballots from non-profits to mail-in drop boxes which was all paid for by the Democratic party⁴⁷.

Throughout May, Trump promoted "2000 Mules" over 20 times on his account page himself or through re-postings from supporters. The documentary was just a tool to promote the narrative of "election integrity" that is borne out of the trope of a "Rigged and Stolen" 2020 election. May marked the month of

⁴⁶ Trump account: *May 1st, 3rd, 20th*

⁴⁷ Trump account: *May 14th*

endorsements and revenge against those who stood in the way of Trump's reelection and January 6th plot. Beyond the attacks against Joe Biden which came in reposts of memes or comments on the economy, Donald Trump targeted fellow Republicans promoting those who would follow along with the narrative of 'election integrity'. This can be seen in 3 endorsements in the GOP primary in Georgia, Burt Jones, David Perdue and Josh Gordon⁴⁸. Trump sought to install MAGA Republican loyalists across the country.

In broad attacks against "republican leadership", Trump demonized Republicans like Liz Cheney and Brian Kemp, two staunch conservatives⁴⁹. The main line of attacks gravitate around the idea of a "stolen election" and those who do not align lock-step with MAGA values. These candidates find themselves on the other side of his endorsement and support. With Trump's primary endorsement victories increasingly showing a track record of victory in the Republican party's primaries, the narrative of 'election integrity' is proving to be a winning partisan message.

Another major target of Trump's messaging was the Pennsylvania GOP primary. Trump was particularly concerned with the length of time it was taking for the election to be fully counted. Trump took the opportunity to support Dr. Oz's candidacy while advocating for "same-day voting" and only "paper ballots"⁵⁰. Over the course of the lengthy count and recount, Trump compared the state election to France's same-day, paper ballot election system⁵¹. He has been very transparent in his desire to eliminate early voting, mail-in voting, including absentee ballots, and

⁴⁸ Trump account: *May 23rd*

⁴⁹ Trump account: *May 28th*

⁵⁰ Trump account: *May 21st*

⁵¹ Trump account: *May 23rd*

having paper only ballots. With such a regressive approach to elections, Trump is advocating for policy change that would disenfranchise large swaths of voters. For instance, absentee ballots are meant for people who cannot participate *in person* on election day, such as college students or active military members, but provides the opportunity for these voters' voices to be heard. Trump has an election agenda of disenfranchisement and is vocal of this agenda.

June

The month of June was defined by election narratives and attacks against Jan. 6th. Among 'election integrity' narratives, the former president continued to support candidates who were lock step with the idea of a "Rigged and Stolen" election. Key narrative phrases from this month include "Rigged and Stolen", "political thugs", "Unselect committee" and "election integrity"⁵². He continued to recruit candidates who exuded the TV business man/woman personality. Blake Masters is a photogenic, charismatic key player who Trump continuously supports. All of these candidates whom Trump supports are in key states which decided the fate of the 2020 election: Arizona, Wisconsin, Georgia, Michigan and Pennsylvania. Trump continues to endorse mainstream Republican candidates like Kevin McCarthy and Chuck Grasley yet attacks Republican leadership like Brian Kemp, Bill Barr and Liz Cheney⁵³. These attacks come from Kemp's and Cheney's unwillingness to support lies and election fraud narratives.

In early June, Trump increased the amount of posts he averaged, as the Jan. 6th committee began, unleashing memes and claims of widespread fraud in the

⁵² Trump account: *June 2nd*

⁵³ Trump account: *June 4th*

2020 election. With references to 2000 Mules as evidence, Trump brought the documentary forward as a counter narrative against witnesses of the Jan. 6th committee. The attacks toward the congressional committee included calling them “political thugs” and “hacks”⁵⁴. In these attacks, Trump adheres to the idea that there has been a constant “witch hunt” against him bringing up both of his impeachment trials, the Mueller investigation and the “RUSSIA RUSSIA RUSSIA COLLUSION HOAX”⁵⁵. He juxtaposes these past investigations with the current Jan. 6th committee hearings claiming it is another witch hunt. The narrative campaign to discredit evidence or witnesses was in full force. Trump posted many comments, live reacting, as the hearings unfolded.

Trump continued to address his “perfect phone call”⁵⁶ with then Secretary of State, Brad Raffensperger. In his live counter messaging, Trump denies various claims from witnesses about his actions on Jan. 6th such as his desire to: allow guns into the rally and grab the steering wheel in his Secret Service SUV. These counter narratives go further demanding for “equal time” to show evidence of election fraud and claiming that the committee is one sided against him.

Among the narratives of election fraud and theft were Trump’s hallmark rhetorical lines on border security, gun control, energy independence, and rampant crime in “Democratic cities”⁵⁷. He launched attacks on the establishment, political or news media regularly, which at this point is anyone who does not fully commit to his

⁵⁴ Trump account: *June 10th*

⁵⁵ Trump account: *June 13th*

⁵⁶ Trump account: *June 19th*

⁵⁷ Trump account: *June 5th*

rhetoric of a “Rigged and Stolen” election⁵⁸. Trump’s willingness to gain loyalty on this point is very apparent. He attacked, longtime ally, Fox news for not covering 2000 Mules early into the month of June and kept these attacks going in the end of June in his Newsmax interview. He confronted the interviewer about their coverage of ‘election fraud’ claiming “You must be scared of getting sued or something...”⁵⁹. Trump continued to pressure long-time allies and current opposition leadership in favor of his 2020 election narrative. The former president continues to install GOP candidates who align with ‘election integrity policy’ in contentious states.

From May to June, Trump had ramped up rhetoric against his political enemies, adversaries and allies. While it is a cornerstone of the former president’s rhetoric tool kit to attack the establishment at large, Trump launched attacks against Liz Cheney, a mainstream conservative, and Brian Kemp, a Trumpian populist conservative. The former president’s disdain for the lack of support from fellow Republicans bleed into Trump narrative creation attacking those who do not believe the 2020 election was “stolen”. He continued to weave old narratives with new narratives. Election integrity is woven together with border security in endorsements in key states like Arizona. Old rhetorical fear mongering of immigrants and BLM appeared this month during his “Save America” rallies like in Illinois. Trump engaged in the tropes referring to members of Congress as “political thugs”⁶⁰ of the swamp who continuously investigate him to destroy the economy, take away guns and silence conservative voices. The conspiratorial plot is

⁵⁸ Trump account: *June 7th*

⁵⁹ Trump account: *June 29th*

⁶⁰ Trump account: *July 8th*

accomplished by using vulnerable populations like migrants, who seek to bring crime and rape, and minorities, who operate in lawless radical leftist cities like Philadelphia, through the trafficking and stuffing of ballots in drop boxes. The underlying swampish structure of power which seeks to oppress is ever present in Trump's vitriol in June. If May was Trump's reintroduction to social media and June his rhetoric in stride, the month of July can be seen following this increasingly hostile and divisive rhetorical trend.

July

Over the month of July, Trump lobbed attacks against the January 6th Congressional Committee. The former president engaged in rhetoric which further labeled the committee as fraudulent, a hoax and a "witch hunt"⁶¹. Trump has tied the past investigation of Russia-collusion and his impeachment together with the ongoing congressional committee hearings as an ongoing attack against himself and therefore his supporters. The constant discrediting of witnesses and members of the "unselect committee"⁶² was a major theme on his account late in the summer.

Early in July, Trump seemed to espouse concern for the committee investigations. He seemed anxious and claimed the committee may "recommend charges against a President of the United States"⁶³ as if he is preparing his supporters for impending indictments. The deep state is closing in on Trump so he cannot "Save America" from the tyranny of the "Radical Left" swamp seeking to transform the identity and nature of the United States.

⁶¹ Trump account: July 8th

⁶² Trump account: *July 4th*

⁶³ Trump account: *July 4th*

The former president, on the face of it, wants to make the committee seem purely political and non-empirical in nature. Trump sought to obfuscate the reality of the events of the capitol riot by continuously posting or reposting messages and memes about a “peaceful and patriotic” event. In this rebranding of the insurrection, Trump blames Pelosi and the “D.C. Mayor” for refusing his recommendation of 10,000 plus troops being stationed in Washington on January 6th⁶⁴. He would shift the focus toward a lack of “due process, cross examination” and opposing evidence all while he attacks the media, Trump aide and witness Cassidy Hutchinson and the establishment “swamp”. The continued demand for conspiratorial evidence of election fraud in the 2020 to be presented undermines the intention of the committee, which is to investigate the events of January 6th, not election fraud claims.

Through his demonization of the Jan. 6th committee, Trump revives old tropes of the swamp constantly investigating him. Not only does he do this with attacks against Democratic members of the committee but also with Republican leadership such as Liz Cheney. The rhetoric against Cheney heightened on numerous occasions with posts of articles and original commentary calling the Wyoming representative “corrupt” while he demonized the whole committee as “political thugs and hacks”⁶⁵ regularly. Trump criticized inaction from Republican congressional leadership and members to stop the Jan. 6th committee hearings, truly only praising Kevin McCarthy’s willingness to “investigate” the committee itself.

⁶⁴ Trump account: *July 14th*

⁶⁵ Trump account: *July 8th*

The onslaught of narrative tropes against the committee is intertwined with the “Rigged and Stolen” election theme. Throughout his, at times live, counter messaging, Trump focuses on calling forth witnesses of “widespread fraud” and to bring forward evidence of “ballot stuffing” and “irregularities”. Trump’s counter narratives focus on “why” the insurrection happened. In that, Trump focuses on framing his actions as blameless. From his “perfect phone call” to Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to committee witness claims that he choked a Secret Service member and grabbed the steering wheel, like in May and June, Trump continually sought to paint a new picture of the tragic and dangerous events which took place.

The former president continued the attacks against the establishment with his agenda of ‘election integrity’ through endorsements focusing on battleground states like Wisconsin, Michigan and Arizona. This manifested through pressuring figures like the Speaker of the House of Wisconsin Robin Vos to act after the Supreme Court of Wisconsin ruled drop boxes were illegal. Trump engaged Vos as a friendly ally but slowly descended into aggressive pressure continuously calling for action in the form of legislation or decertification of the election⁶⁶. A number of posts throughout the month of July were related to this ruling. In these posts, Trump would suggest this determined the 2020 election and would reverse the results by “hundreds of thousands of votes”⁶⁷. In Wisconsin, Trump also supports an ‘election integrity candidate’, Tim Michels, running for governor who vows to decertify the results of the 2020 election. Throughout the month, Trump referred to this ruling

⁶⁶ Trump account: *July 9th*

⁶⁷ Trump account: *July*

many times using it as evidence of fraud as the drop box policy was not approved through the state legislature⁶⁸.

In Trump's Arizona endorsements, he focused on Blake Masters, Kari Lake, David Farnsworth, and Mark Finchem. The platforms of these candidates are of "strong borders", "lower taxes", "rule of law", "election integrity" and 2020 election being "Rigged and Stolen"⁶⁹. Trump is endorsing GOP primary hopefuls with his 'election integrity agenda' in positions of power which could change the outcome of the 2024 election. In Arizona alone, Trump is endorsing 'election integrity' candidates for governor, secretary of state, the U.S. senate and a state GOP candidate who seeks to depose the current Speaker of the House of Arizona, Rusty Bowers.

Trump's endorsement of Michigan's GOP gubernatorial candidate, Tudor Dixon, focuses on these same lines of 'election integrity'. In this endorsement, Trump does not detail the policy agenda rather focuses on the "Radical Left" establishment of Michigan driven by Governor Gretchen Whitmer. This systematic targeting of key battleground states could lead to short term and long-term leverage over upcoming elections. Looming large is the threat of these candidates refusing to certify the results of future elections in their states.

The 'election integrity' agenda of Trump would most likely bring about disenfranchisement and lower voter turnout. The agenda focuses on "same-day voting", "paper ballots only" and "banning drop boxes" without the reprieve of a federal election holiday to allow voters to participate in mass. The former President seemingly yearns to make it more difficult for the average American to participate in

⁶⁸ Trump account: *July 8th*

⁶⁹ Trump account: *July 19th*

elections while installing officials who will do what Mike Pence, Bill Barr and the 166th United States Congress would not: overturn election results.

Donald Trump is systematically changing the face of the Republican Party through his 'election integrity' candidate endorsements with his July success rate remaining extremely high. These dynamic swings within the Republican Party could have real general election ramifications moving forward. Officials who refuse to recognize the will of the people for the benefit of the individual, and not constitutional mandated proceedings, undermine core tenets of democracy.

Narratives of a structure of power seeking to destroy and alter American identity remains a key factor. The MAGA populist 'us versus them' mentality addresses an elite political class seeking to undercut the average American. Along the timeline of his endorsements, candidates join the MAGA infantry and espouse and adopt the platforms of anti-immigration in "strong borders", a liberal-leftist-tyrannical government in radical deregulation and tax cuts, anti-minority sentiments through attacks on "woke culture" and "wokeism" and anti-democratic policies in 'election integrity' policies which seek to alter and adjust the nature of elections in the United States.

All these themes create a sense of division which seems insurmountable without some radical reform. In these 3 months, Trump stoked division with his anti-institution rhetoric while rallying his base to advocate for election policies changes that would potentially throw obstacles in the way of the even MAGA constituents. For instance, the policy of no mail in ballots would remove exemptions for those who physically cannot vote on election day. This would include a large

portion of the MAGA conservative base who are above 65 or older. While Trumpian election policy potentially disenfranchises MAGA adherents, it can be said the populist election narratives from Trump's Truth Social account promote anti-democratic values. Chapter 3 will address how these policy narratives would change election law in 5 states: Michigan, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Arizona and Wisconsin.

Chapter 3: Election Integrity Narratives on the Ground

Election Integrity Narratives

Throughout this thesis, there has been a focus on traits of populism and where these can be found in rhetorical echo chambers. Truth Social has been identified as a primary source of MAGA populist disinformation campaigns with former president Donald J. Trump reigning over the direction of messaging. Six years ago, narrative influence of the Republican party was driven by Fox News and its hosts Chris Wallace, Bill O'Reilly, Shepard Smith and Meghan Kelly. In 2016, Meghan Kelly would not have been considered moderate yet, in 2022, she held a talk show on NBC. Chris Wallace was a strong conservative voice presiding over Fox as a journalist by profession. Now, he works for CNN as a pundit⁷⁰. Shepard Smith was a moderate on Fox News and departed from the network to join a news media competitor⁷¹. Today, Fox News is the footstool of MAGA conservatism. Fox is in the business of broadcasting radicals, like Tucker Carlson, Jesse Watters, Greg Gutfeld, Dan Bongino, Brian Kilmeade, Mark Levin, Laura Ingraham and Sean Hannity, to appease the populist base.

Through the endorsing of candidates who align with election tropes, Trump, as a populist leader, can exercise clear influence over Republican policy platforms. His primary endorsement victories provide a real, tangible pathway to accomplish long-term institutional degradation for short-term political gain.

In Chapter 3, five crucial states will be examined, which are emphasized by Trumpian populist narratives in *2000 Mules* and on Truth Social, to find the potential effect of MAGA messaging campaigns against existing voter registration

⁷⁰ The New York Times: *Grynbaum*

⁷¹ The Hollywood Reporter: *Kilkenny*

and election laws. This chapter will take Trump's 'election integrity' policy proposals, same day voting, no drop boxes and no mail-in voting, and compare them to existing voter conditions in rhetorical targets such as Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Arizona and Wisconsin. Existing populist themes established by scholars like Mueller and Conely in tandem with data on Trumpian narratives from Truth Social, which was gathered on various 'election integrity' candidates that Trump promoted, will aid discussion of democratic conditions. In this, damage to participation at-large will be assessed, regardless of the demographic group or its political leanings. This analysis will then continue to estimate populist risk within the backdrop of the 2022 midterm, 2024 presidential cycle and Republican proposed constitutional convention on the 250th birthday of the United States. In this chapter, states will be discussed in order of what this thesis believes are the least threatened to most threatened and will begin first with the great, mid-western state of Michigan.

Michigan

The people and state of Michigan desire, need and want radical change. This is clear through the rhetorical appeal of populist movements locally, Trumpian narratives fill the gap. For example, in 2016, Bernie Sanders defeated Hillary Clinton in the Michigan democratic primary while running on socialist and progressive ideals. Sanders preached higher minimum wages and organized labor action while denouncing free trade deals that would siphon even more manufacturing out of the region. In 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2022, Donald Trump and the MAGA movement proclaimed similar themes with focuses on workers, bringing back manufacturing

and railing against free trade deals like NAFTA and the TPP. Trumpian politics spoke to the fear and anxiety the people of Michigan feel on a regular basis.

In what seemed like hopes of positive transformation, the people of Michigan chose Trump to provide a new perspective. After victory in 2016, the MAGA movement suffered a devastating blow in the 2018 “blue wave” which elected Democrats across the country from governorships to US House control⁷². In response and with such a desperate desire for a revitalization of the state economy from marginalized denizens of Michigan seemingly necessitated an emotional response of fear due to insecurity. This led to radical fringe militias who sought to capture and kidnap those misrepresenting the people of Michigan, primarily then Governor Gretchen Whitmer⁷³. Following these events, President Joe Biden’s victory in 2020 heightened these fears and intensified conspiracy theories surrounding the results of the election. As mentioned in Chapter 1, chants of “stop the steal” blared out in vote totaling centers across Michigan with emphasis on Detroit, a liberal city center. Sentiments of a stolen or lost election did not dissipate rather they collected, congealed and morphed into the ‘election integrity’ platform of the 2022 midterm. In his general election endorsement, Trump touted her as someone focused on manufacturing, pro-gun, “pro-freedom”, anti-radical left, and pro-election integrity.

Messaging campaigns for the 2022 midterm focused less on manufacturing jobs and rather on inflation harming those workers. In doing so, the movement and Trump worked at finding candidates during the GOP primary who would relate ‘election integrity’ narratives to “the people”. Enter, stage right, MAGA populists and

⁷² Politico: *2018 Midterm Election Results*

⁷³ The New York Times: *Bogel-Burroughs*

Truth Social narratives. Previously mentioned GOP primary winners, including candidates like Tudor Dixon, Mark Finchem and Tim Walberg, became the MAGA champions of same day voting, paper ballots only, no mail-in voting and ballot drop box bans.

If election integrity policy prevailed in Michigan, the platform would change participation among various demographics across the state. This process and logic of generally estimating if a policy will be an impediment or disenfranchising to voters in mass will be used in the other 4 states but will be applied differently based on each state's election law. This process seeks to understand how the MAGA election policy platform would harm voters. With that, first, we must look at how many citizens can and are able to participate. Registered voters in Michigan total 8,242,610 people⁷⁴. From here, we must look at *where* Michiganders vote. The most populous counties of Michigan are Wayne, Oakland, Kent, and Macomb counties. While Macomb county favored Trump by 40,000 votes, in Wayne (872,000 total votes), Oakland (770,000 total votes) and Ken (361,000 total votes), Joe Biden was favored by 464,000 votes in the top 3 populous counties. Then, we must know *how* these voters chose to exercise their right to cast their ballot. Analysis provided during the 2020 election process by Bridge Michigan, a “nonpartisan, nonprofit news source”, indicates that early voting and mail in voting is where this lead was built for the current president⁷⁵. The article goes on to claim large numbers of these early/mail-in votes were cast by “Older democrats”. The election integrity platform of 2022 would see new obstacles for these voters who previously exercised their

⁷⁴ Michigan Voter Count: *Voter registration statistics*

⁷⁵ Wilkinson: *Bridge Michigan*

right to vote by mail or in the weeks leading up to the election. According to the state of Michigan, a week before the 2022 midterm election, 2 million people voted early⁷⁶. With the assumption that demand to vote remains, new restrictions barring methods of casting a ballot would inundate precincts creating long lines and unneeded stress on election locations. Under the Michigan “Election Officials Manual”, there is to be no more than “2,999 active registered voters” per precinct⁷⁷. The expansion of the capacity to serve voters would be necessary to suffice his demand. Inevitably an increase in government spending would be needed with the hiring of more poll workers and expanding locations where more voters can be served. When simply viewing the volume of votes, the number of registered voters, and precinct requirements, MAGA populist election integrity policy may *negatively* affect participation and therefore harm Michigan’s overall democratic processes.

⁷⁶ State of Michigan: *Election Day Absentee Ballots*

⁷⁷ Michigan Election Officials Manual: *Chapter 14 E V Polling Places*

Georgia

Georgia Republican election narratives focus on “wokeisms”, which seek to change or soften the identity of Georgians, while attacking commentary regarding entrenched, institutional or historic racism. The old strategy of the MAGA movement was to focus on the culture war. Today, it is a mutant of culture war and 2020 election conspiracy theories. Georgia based MAGA narratives focus on rampant crime in democratic metropolitan areas like Fulton county. In comparison to Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, there is less of a rhetorical focus on manufacturing and instead on the right to vote and participate. Grassroots movements cultivated by the leadership of Raphael Warnock and Stacey Abrams have driven participation up and forward. Abrams has dedicated significant time to registering voters since her gubernatorial run in 2018 against then secretary of state Brian Kemp⁷⁸.

Voter turnout and participation are the reasons why Georgia’s democracy is not at the level of risk to participation and democratic proceedings which its counterparts on this list face. With high voter turnout in Fulton County, election integrity narratives seek to decrease turnout in these voter hotspots. Georgia has been at the center of attacks since the 2020 election. As Joe Biden was declared winner of the contentious race, the Georgian state government began receiving federal pressure from President Trump who asked for over 10,000 more votes. Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and Governor Brian Kemp have received

⁷⁸ Clausen: *How Stacey Abrams helped get out the Black vote in Georgia*

continuous death threats and primary challenges from the MAGA wing⁷⁹. Though Joe Biden carried the state, hyper-partisan MAGA loyalists were elected to the House, such as Marjorie Taylor Greene, who have pushed and work to push narratives of a “Rigged Election” in 2020. The narrative tone has remained consistent in Georgia, creating and sustaining pockets of radical support from groups like Q-Anon. Georgians have experienced a similar level of disruption that fellow states around the nation faced during their election counting and constitutionally mandated proceedings. MAGA conservatives came out to Fulton County polling locations to “stop the count” yet only found disappointment as vote totals continued to be unfavorable for the former president.

In 2022, Trump, through endorsements, has primaried popular, incumbent GOP candidates like Brian Kemp while pushing TV-personalities, like Herschel Walker, in federal elections. On top of existing gerrymandered and anti-participatory policy, Trumpian candidates align with election integrity policy. Early voting in the 2022 midterm indicates record turnout. The state website indicates total voter turnout on November 3rd, five days before the election, at 2.26 million voters with 2.05 million of these ballots being early and 204,000 being absentee. In 2020, turnout at this same time was 2.47 million and in 2018 was 1.67 million⁸⁰. The demand to vote has been offset by increased access to the polls and expanded voter capacity to cast a ballot, much like in Michigan. Election integrity policy would result in a logistical nightmare for localities and the state.

⁷⁹ Fennessy: *GPB News*

⁸⁰ State of Georgia: *Georgia Early Gubernatorial Vote Passes All Time Record*

Georgia has been at the heart of contentious elections for 3 significant and pivotal cycles with pivotal gubernatorial and senate races garnering national attention. In 2018, 2020 and 2022, policymakers purged voter rolls, made voting more difficult⁸¹ and gerrymandered districts sought to retain Republican power in the state. These hurdles stand in the way of participation in a state which decided its choice for president of the United States by 10,000 votes. With margins so close, any policy that would reduce participation should be viewed as inherently an undemocratic policy. Rising registered voters may signal a strong, dedicated and participatory populace but is marked by structural and institutional policy that seeks to curb this enthusiasm. A government that makes access to voting more laborious with frivolous policies, like no food delivery in an election line, are tell-tale signs of a government representing certain segments of the population and not “the people”.

⁸¹ Lawyers Committee: *Georgia fact sheet on Voter purges*

Pennsylvania

Economic circumstances may have created a sense of insecurity among its population. In 2016, “Make America Great Again” connected with the people of Pennsylvania. Obama voters turned to Trump voters. The hope and change of 2008 which won the hearts and minds of Pennsylvania turned sour. Trade deals, racial division, and economic injustice are all built into the profoundly motivating narrative of MAGA populism. Racial tension, sparked from the very public and brutal murder of George Floyd, drove activism in the Black Lives Matters protests of 2020. These racial tensions were transplanted as narratives to frame the United States as failing to counter-message peaceful demonstrations. Subsequent rioting and looting then drove the narrative of crime in radical liberal cities, like Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. This narrative, which was also used in Michigan and Wisconsin, was transformed with election losses in 2020.

In 2022, the contemporary MAGA narrative uses election fraud narratives to propel a fearful base into support. With inflation threatening job security, the ability to put food on the table and various other rising expenses, this midterm was a perfect narrative storm for the MAGA conservative movement. Dr. Oz, a TV-celebrity personality, comes from another state to provide *real* solutions for the average Pennsylvanian. Oz is running against a democratic incumbent, who has suffered from a stroke and, within the MAGA narrative universe, has allowed the democrats to destroy the state. Under John Fetterman’s watch, the democratic challenger, the fictitious entity was able to undermine the will of the people of Pennsylvania in 2020.

Within the fluidity of populist narratives influencing voters and the “people” established in chapter 1, narrative liquidity is evident in the 2022 Pennsylvanian Midterm election. The former president endorsed candidate Dr. Oz with significant support in primary campaign messaging. The tone of rhetoric shifted due to a lack of voters' responses to the Trumpian primary narratives. The general election polling reflects this trend and resulted in Dr. Oz's campaign moving away from election fraud narratives and focusing on the economic conditions of 2022. The focus rather in this case is narrative influence and strength of narrative which can be an indicator of the success of a platform defined by public response, such as an election.

In Pennsylvania, the “Big Lie” has not gained as much traction as Trump foresaw. Dr. Oz's pivot is evidence of this trend. With a Republican state legislature, election integrity policy threatens a growing base of over 9.09 million registered voters. In 2020, the liberty bell state rang loud with 76.5% of its registered voters casting their ballots. 2.64 million ballots were cast by mail and absentee ballots while 4.22 million were cast in person⁸². Donald Trump's hyper fixation on the speed of the count was broadcast on Truth Social over the 2022 midterm primary and general election. To speed up the pace of the count of results, election integrity policy would suggest restricting early voting and banning mail-in voting.

Much like in Michigan and Georgia, MAGA conservative election policy would either decrease turnout or congest precincts with millions of voters who want to have their voices heard. Pennsylvania would face the same structural problems to their election proceedings causing higher government spending for elections to

⁸² Pennsylvania Department of State: *2020 Election Data*

account for this inflow of voters. Regardless of the cost of these measures, the policies advocate for the banning and restricting of methods of casting a ballot will result in disenfranchised and marginalized voters therefore decreasing participation. The polling responses to election narratives aid in assessing the health of democratic processes in the state. While Pennsylvanians face significant pressure economically, socially and from outsider candidates like Dr. Oz voters are not ignorant to the bold faced election lies.

Arizona

This south-western state embodies a battle of contending factions rivaling one another for the future direction of the United States. This battle is defined by populist candidates with MAGA election integrity promissory de-certifiers such as gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake, challenges to incumbent republicans like Speaker of the House, Rusty Bowers, and US Senate candidate, Blake Masters. Arizona candidates have received significant attention from the former president throughout this election cycle. Much like Georgia, Arizona was consequential to Trump's defeat in 2020 by a margin of 11,000 votes. In 2020, like in all contentious states across the country, voters came out to express discontent with the results of the election in Maricopa county calling for poll workers to “stop the steal!”.

In 2016, the MAGA movement held a strong base in the state. In the wake of 2020, existing themes of xenophobia toward Mexican migrants propelled election conspiracy candidates into the spotlight of the 2022 midterm. Candidates were able to weave Truth Social narratives of “2000 Mules” and Trump’s age-old narrative of corruption tainting the public goods, such as elections, to run on “free and fair”

elections where “every legal ballot is counted”. Election integrity policies proposed by Trumpian candidates seek to provide solutions to a fabricated problem while transforming regular democratic practices.

With promises to decertify the 2020 election results, MAGA candidates dedicate themselves to protecting the people of the state through election integrity policy, stronger borders, and safer streets. In Arizona election law, same-day voting and banning mail-in ballots, policies advocated by MAGA candidates, would reverse new measures allowing “walk-in mail-in ballots”, a policy most likely intended to placate concerns of election fraud, theft and interference. Of the 4.28 million registered voters in the state of Arizona, 3.4 million, or 79 percent of registered voters, cast their ballots in 2020. Using the same rationale of analysis for previously discussed states, election integrity policy effects can be discerned using mail-in totals and counties participating in absentee ballots at a higher comparative rate. Mail-in ballot participation totaled 2.98 million while the counties of Maricopa and Pima took 50 percent of total mail in votes at 2.344 million votes. With increasing participation, millions of voters would flood the polls creating long lines and possibly slower counting for a state already struggling to manage and tabulate votes. The problems of election integrity policy are recurring not only in cost but in the pattern of mass disenfranchisement. With these policies, elections would become chaotic but it seems this is the goal of the leadership of the MAGA conservative movement and its Truth Social narratives of a “rigged and stolen” election.

Wisconsin

Finally, the fifth state perceived to be under threat is another great lakes mid-western state who suffered from lost manufacturing and quality jobs. Of all of these states, Wisconsin faces the most serious threat. Since 1976, Wisconsin's presidential election results indicate the state has leaned Democratic. Only 3 times has the state diverged from this track record: twice in the 1980s in favor of Ronald Reagan and in 2016 in favor of Donald John Trump. These results have typically been within the margin of error or have met recount parameters since the 2000 election. This trend has continued since 2016 when the first MAGA populist wave "broke the blue wall" which former president Barack Obama built.

With this in mind, the great lake state could be considered a swing state. Though the state typically favors Democrats, this is decided in extremely close elections. With leftist populist progressives like Mandela Barnes challenging Republican incumbents like Ron Johnson, it appears the state is seeking solutions and representation that has their best interest at mind. Democratic Governor Tony Evers also faces MAGA populist pressure from election denier and promissory "de certifier", Tim Michels. Trumpian populists in Wisconsin devote their time to pressuring incumbent officials like Speaker of the House Robin Vos to remove all mail-in drop boxes after the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling regarding drop boxes. The ruling held that drop boxes were unlawful as their use in the election was not approved by the state legislature. After the ruling, Michels and Trump raised the temperature of rhetoric on election integrity while doubling and tripling down on 2020 election decertification promises. Of the 3.68 million registered voters, in the

most recent presidential election, 3.2 million, or 86.9% of registered voters participated. Determining the number of mail-in ballots appears difficult as voter data from the 2020 election from Wisconsin's government site does not disclose absentee totals. To estimate mail-in ballot participation, this thesis will use the percentage of registered voters of 86.9% and compare them to mail-in voter participation of 46 percent⁸³ nationally in 2020. Again, the theme of mass disenfranchisement of segments of the population who use mail-in ballots would be felt in the polls. Whether it is an increase or decrease in voter participation, voters will encounter new obstacles with election integrity policy.

Populism

All these states show symptoms of a deteriorating public view of democracy. Some states show resilience to rhetorical attacks, like Michigan and Pennsylvania, while others seem to be a voter roll purge away from MAGA populist victory in future elections, like in Georgia, Arizona and Wisconsin. Trump has been on a proverbial narrative revenge tour through his primary endorsements. The former president engages in his reprisal of any opponents to his narrative agenda while updating and weaving confusing language into the public conversation. MAGA narratives engage in the constant revisiting of an arguably traumatic time in US history, in the dark period of the COVID pandemic, ripping open wounds and sentiments of anger, outrage and violence with disparate associations.

With meaning erased or lost in translation, values begin to change. Understandings of the same narrative trope shift, localize and adapt. Commonalities

⁸³ Panetta: *Republicans' next big play...*

become disparate. The narrative of suffering of a Michigander is not the same plight as a Georgian which is not the same as Wisconsinite. Democratic practices become an afterthought while waging war against evil and tyranny. It's us versus them. It's fight or flight. Objectivity falls by the wayside. Events like Charlottesville, the Buffalo shooting, and Jan. 6th are all examples of how this plight materialized differently. In Charlottesville, white men feared Jews replacing them. In Buffalo, a white man was fearful of caucasians being replaced by minorities and on Jan. 6th, white protestors were terrified of Joe Biden replacing Donald Trump. In all of these cases, fear is a driving factor. Objectively, these replacements aren't happening. For seemingly the first time, radicals are becoming aware of demographic shifts and fear "extinction". In response, these people act out in violent and socially terroristic ways.

The MAGA movement is a modern example of reckless speech and the extent to which that speech can influence or harm public knowledge, facts and trust. All of these narratives listed above exemplify fear and insecurity. Together, they read as a head spinning and misguided view of current events. Doom is everywhere when living in the narrative bubble. Whether it is the insecurity of economic conditions in Michigan, Wisconsin or Pennsylvania, or social division, racism and xenophobia, in Arizona and Georgia, the looming structure of power remains. Narratives diverge in a subjective way yet unify under the MAGA narrative at-large.

If a populist movement's leadership weaponizes fear, much like Trumpian populism, its figurehead can be declared self-interested with a political aim. The aim of the MAGA movement has been displayed multiple times over. It is the desire to retain power. From the claim of 2020 election fraud to the Jan. 6th coup attempt,

self-preservation of the movement and its leadership is in mind. Narrative liquidity, as well as the subjectivity and applicability of tropes provide the circumstances to convince voters that his word is his bond therefore he cannot tell a lie. The leader of the movement becomes a *near* infallible figurehead. The moral role Trump fills for the populist movement provides him leeway in scope of narrative. For example, Trump moved in and out of attacks on the Jan. 6th committee, focusing on Liz Cheney and Adam Schiff, while attacking Brad Raffenseper and Nancy Pelosi for the events of the insurrection. With the targeting of the Jan. 6th committee throughout the summer, Trump was able to weave narratives of a rigged and stolen election along with the congressional committee. The fluid nature of Trump's narrative construction allows for the twisting of democratic ideals of participation, free and fair elections, rule of law, transparency, human rights, and accountability.

Blind trust toward populist leadership from "the people" of the MAGA faithful fan base opens the door for serious institutional dangers to democracy from false election narratives. With the 250th birthday of the United States due in 4 years, whispers of a constitutional convention are floating about on the MAGA right. For the first time since the birth of the United States, a constitutional convention may be called changing the rules of the road, redefining rights, shifting definitions and altering the democracy built on years of strife, suffering, and sacrifice. What does this group want to accomplish? What do they want to change? Is it addition or subtractions? Are they going to change existing rights? This is a grave threat to democracy.

Conclusion

In chapter 1, it was established that the Trumpian populist movement fulfills all of the characteristics of Mueller and Conley's rubrics of populism through its use of fictitious entities, otherization and segmentation of the population, creating us versus them mentalities and TV-celebrity personality. It garners a level of familiarity outside of the political arena which gives "the people" a measure of trust in an uncertain climate. This thesis has demonstrated Trump's control over narratives in the MAGA-universe. With narrative success measured in 2022 GOP midterm primary victories, Trump has proven to be a dominant voice in conservative thought and the direction of the party. His ability to control narratives over the summer was based on *his unimpeded* access to influence narratives on his *new* platform, Truth Social. After a year in hiatus from Facebook and Twitter, Trump worked to reintroduce narratives with rhetorical twists. Narratives were built around political enemies participating in evil and foreign conspiracies to subvert the American people. Tapping into these fears creates a limitlessly increasing scale of fear-based reactionary sentiments. Fearful sentiments form the conditions for violent events like Jan. 6th and the Buffalo shooting. Populist narratives of Truth Social perpetuate this politically anxious violence. As presented in Chapter 3, MAGA election integrity narratives would see a massive stunt in voter participation. The degeneration of the definition of "the people" capstones the litany of factors applying the most intense pressure to vulnerable local democracies in the United States.

All of the coalescing factors of populism, declining economic conditions, and racially tribalistic 'us versus them' manifest the populist constitutional crisis now

looming in 2026. The set of agreed upon rules, rights, restrictions and institutions face populist degradation. Remember, populist movements seek to hollow institutions in favor of their own interests versus public sector longevity.

In the United States' democratic system, the constitution is the pinnacle of institutions. It is where every legal dispute is settled and the authority from which every governmental action springs. The constitution acts as a bulwark against the tyranny of the majority and minority yet it appears the narrative exploitation of the MAGA movement may have found a weakness in the armor through rigging state elections with gerrymandered distracting maps which artificially replicate and create a super majority of state Republican legislatures who will call *a constitutional convention*⁸⁴.

Still, calling a constitutional convention would require coordinated action and making changes to the constitution within the convention would demand consistent super majority agreements. Panetta points out that Republicans control the majority of state legislatures in the United States. Loyal Republican support and inter party political cohesion, across the country for Trump, in many of these Republican legislatures, allows for a tangible pathway to reshape and reform the constitution. Mass rejection of these alterations would and should be expected. Public acceptance or backlash to the convention would be defined by future election cycles and global affairs. With a Democratic presidential victory, Republicans may seek to subvert the will of the people in elections and executive authority through a constitutional convention in favor of their populist leader. If Trump wins, populist

⁸⁴ Panetta: *Republican's next big play*..

tendencies would indicate actions toward institutional deterioration and supplantation. When a MAGA populist is given an opportunity to retain or gain power against an institution, they will take it. Hunger for power can be measured by the fluidity of narratives when new information is provided to the populist leadership and their movement. In this case, a higher malleability of a brand of populist narratives indicates the extreme extent leadership is willing to compromise ideals for popularity. In the case of Trumpian populism, this would be true. As of 2022, there have been covert conferences among Republican peers to introduce the idea, procedure and requirements for a constitutional convention. This is possible but how likely is difficult to determine. The fact remains that populism inherently is a threat to democratic practices and the foundational documents of the United States. While it remains a threat, this thesis, much like Weyland, believes the institutions of the United States can withstand populist temper tantrums, fits of rage or murderous sprees. With a robust system of representation and divisions of power throughout federal and state government, the United States has checks and balances to counteract the rapid advances of populist threats while rebuilding other institutions.

Ordered, Footnoted Sources:

1. *Should Nixon have demanded a recount?* - *daily.jstor.org*. (n.d.).
<https://daily.jstor.org/should-nixon-have-demanded-a-recount/>
2. *Bush v Gore*. . (n.d.). <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2000/00-949>
3. Encyclopedia Britannica, inc. (n.d.). *Russia investigation of Donald Trump*.
Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Donald-Trump/Russia-investigation>
4. Guardian News and Media. (2016, October 31). *DNC head leaked debate question to Clinton, Podesta emails suggests*. The Guardian.
5. TODAY-NBC. (2020, September 13). *At rally, Trump says 2020 election will be 'rigged' if he loses | Sunday Today*. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9i80SrDc74>
6. Guardian Wires. (2020, November 5). *'stop the vote' and 'count the votes', say protesting Trump supporters*. YouTube.
7. Reuters Staff. (2021, February 15). *Fact check: Courts have dismissed multiple lawsuits of alleged electoral fraud presented by Trump campaign*. Reuters.
Retrieved <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-courts-election/fact-check-courts-have-dismissed-multiple-lawsuits-of-alleged-electoral-fraud-presented-by-trump-campaign-idUSKBN2AF1G1>
8. Swenson, A. (2020, December 25). *Lengthy video makes false claims about 2020 election*. AP NEWS.
9. Truthsocial.com. (n.d.). <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump> - May

10. Munro, A. (n.d.). *Populism*. Encyclopedia Britannica.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/populism>
11. Gramlich, J. (2022, January 28). *How trump compares with other recent presidents in appointing Federal Judges*. Pew Research Center.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/13/how-trump-compares-with-other-recent-presidents-in-appointing-federal-judges/>
12. Singh, Robert. "‘I, the People’: a Deflationary Interpretation of Populism, Trump and the United States Constitution." *Economy and society* 46.1 (2017): 20–42. Web.
13. Rowland, Robert C. *The Rhetoric of Donald Trump: Nationalist Populism and American Democracy*. La Vergne: University Press of Kansas, 2021. Print.
14. Ferguson, Thomas et al. "The Roots of Right-Wing Populism: Donald Trump in 2016." *International journal of political economy* 49.2 (2020): 102–123. Web.
15. Singh, Robert. "‘I, the People’: a Deflationary Interpretation of Populism, Trump and the United States Constitution." *Economy and society* 46.1 (2017): 20–42. Web.
16. Cheung-Blunden, Violet. "Situational Insecurity Versus Entrenched Ideologies as the Source of Right-wing Voters’ Anti-migrant Sentiment on Both Sides of the Atlantic." *Journal of applied social psychology* 50.6 (2020): 337–350. Web.
17. *The urgency of Intersectionality | Kimberlé Crenshaw - YouTube*.
(n.d.)<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o>

18. *The urgency of Intersectionality* | Kimberlé Crenshaw - YouTube.
(n.d.)<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o>
19. Freistein, Katja, and Frank Gadinger. "Populist Stories of Honest Men and Proud Mothers: A Visual Narrative Analysis." *Review of international studies* 46.2 (2020): 217–236. Web.
20. YouTube. (2022, April 22). *Marjorie Taylor Greene answers questions in reelection challenge hearing*. YouTube.
21. Tucker Carlson, Fox News:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gogCccQsum4>
22. *The long, ugly antisemitic history of "jews will not replace us"*. The Long, Ugly Antisemitic History of "Jews Will Not Replace Us" | November | 2021 | The Jewish Experience | Brandeis University. (n.d.).
<https://www.brandeis.edu/jewish-experience/jewish-america/2021/november/replacement-antisemitism-sarna.html>
23. Cedar Attanasio, J. B. (2019, August 10). *Police: El Paso shooting suspect said he targeted Mexicans*. AP NEWS.
24. Farivar, M. (2022). *What is the great replacement theory?*. Washington: Federal Information & News Dispatch, LLC.
25. Swenson, A. (2020, December 25). *Lengthy video makes false claims about 2020 election*. AP NEWS.
26. D'souza, Dinesh. <https://2000mules.com>. May 2022.
27. Tucker Carlson, Fox News:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gogCccQsum4>

28. *Qresearch*. Welcome to /qresearch/. (n.d.).
<https://8kun.top/qresearch/welcome.html>
29. D'souza, Dinesh. <https://2000mules.com>. May 2022.
33. - 38. Truthsocial.com. (n.d.). <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump>
36. D'souza, Dinesh. <https://2000mules.com>. May 2022.
41. - 70. Truthsocial.com. (n.d.). <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump>
71. Grynbaum, M. (2022, March 27). *Chris Wallace says life at Fox News became 'unsustainable'*. The New York Times.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/27/business/media/chris-wallace-cnn-fox-news.html>.
72. Kilkenny, K. (2021, January 20). *Shepard Smith opens up about leaving Fox News after 23 years: "I stuck with it for as long as I could"*. The Hollywood Reporter.
<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-news/shepard-smith-opens-up-about-leaving-fox-news-after-23-years-i-stuck-with-it-for-as-long-as-i-could-4118614/>
73. *Election results 2018: Live midterm map by State & Analysis*. POLITICO. (1970, November 7). <https://www.politico.com/election-results/2018/>
74. Bogel-burroughs, N., Dewan, S., & Gray, K. (2020, October 8). *F.B.I. says Michigan anti-government group plotted to kidnap gov. Gretchen Whitmer*. The New York Times. Retrieved February 9, 2023, from
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/08/us/gretchen-whitmer-michigan-militia.html>

75. *Michigan Voter Count* . Voter registration statistics. (n.d.).

<https://mVIC.sos.state.mi.us/VoterCount/Index>

76. Wilkinson, M. (n.d.). *Who is voting absentee so far in Michigan? older Democrats, records show*. Bridge Michigan. [https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-](https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-government/who-voting-absentee-so-far-michigan-older-democrats-records-show)

[government/who-voting-absentee-so-far-michigan-older-democrats-records-show](https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-government/who-voting-absentee-so-far-michigan-older-democrats-records-show)

77. *One week before Election Day, nearly 2 million michiganders have requested absentee ballots*. SOM - State of Michigan. (n.d.).

<https://www.michigan.gov/sos/resources/news/2022/11/01/one-week-before-election-day-nearly-2-million-michiganders-have-requested-absentee-ballots>

78. State of Michigan. *Chapter 14 E V polling places - michigan.gov*. (n.d.).

[https://www.michigan.gov/sos/-](https://www.michigan.gov/sos/)

[/media/Project/Websites/sos/01mcalpine/XIV Establishing Voting Precincts and Polling Places.pdf?rev=844dd1cb3c1d489bb7dd143cb56404d5&hash=95B86B8A17BC43FDD74B6B3D027B9DB8](https://www.michigan.gov/sos/-/media/Project/Websites/sos/01mcalpine/XIV_Establishing_Voting_Precincts_and_Polling_Places.pdf?rev=844dd1cb3c1d489bb7dd143cb56404d5&hash=95B86B8A17BC43FDD74B6B3D027B9DB8)

79. Somvichian-Clausen, A. (2020, November 10). *How Stacey Abrams helped get out the black vote in Georgia*. The Hill. [https://thehill.com/changing-](https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/diversity-inclusion/525387-how-stacey-abrams-helped-get-out-the-black-vote/)

[america/respect/diversity-inclusion/525387-how-stacey-abrams-helped-get-out-the-black-vote/](https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/diversity-inclusion/525387-how-stacey-abrams-helped-get-out-the-black-vote/)

80. Fennessy, S. (n.d.). *Georgia today: Behind relentless death threats against*

Raffenspergers, Georgia election officials. Georgia Public Broadcasting. Retrieved

<https://www.gpb.org/news/2021/06/18/georgia-today-behind-relentless-death-threats-against-raffenspergers-georgia>

81. State of Georgia. *Georgia voters post all time record for gubernatorial early voting.*
Georgia Voters Post All Time Record for Gubernatorial Early Voting | Georgia Secretary of State. (n.d.).

82. *Georgia fact sheet: Voter purges and precinct consolidations impact black voters.*
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. (n.d.).from
<https://www.lawyerscommittee.org/georgia-profile/>

83. *PA Election stats.* Pennsylvania Department of State. (n.d.).
<https://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/BEST/Pages/BEST-Election-Stats.aspx>

84. Panetta, G. (n.d.). *Republicans' next big play is to 'scare the hell out of Washington' by rewriting the Constitution. and they're willing to play the long game to win.*
Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/constitutional-convention-conservatives-republicans-constitution-supreme-court-2022-7>

Chapter 1 - Bibliography

- Babones, Salvatore. *The New Authoritarianism : Trump, Populism, and the Tyranny of Experts*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2018. Print.
- Banks, Antoine J, and Heather M Hicks. "Fear and Implicit Racism: Whites' Support for Voter ID Laws." *Political psychology* 37.5 (2016): 641–658. Web.
- Bilge, Sirma. "INTERSECTIONALITY UNDONE: Saving Intersectionality from Feminist Intersectionality Studies." *Du Bois review* 10.2 (2013): 405–424. Web.
- Bleakley, Paul. "Days of Alt-Rage: Using the Weatherman Movement to Deconstruct the Radicalisation of the Alt-Right." *Contemporary politics* 26.1 (2020): 106–123. Web.
- Bush v Gore*. . (n.d.). <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2000/00-949>
- Buchana, M. J., Wolgin, P. E., & Flores, C. (2021, October 28). *The Trump administration's family separation policy is over*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/trump-administrations-family-separation-policy/>
- Carbado, Devon W et al. "INTERSECTIONALITY: Mapping the Movements of a Theory." *Du Bois review* 10.2 (2013): 303–312. Web.
- Bergstrom, Carl T., and Joseph B Bak-Coleman. "Gerrymandering in Social Networks." *Nature (London)* 573.7772 (2019): 40–41. Web.
- Cedar Attanasio, J. B. (2019, August 10). *Police: El Paso shooting suspect said he targeted Mexicans*. AP NEWS. <https://apnews.com/article/shootings-el->

pasos-texas-mass-shooting-us-news-ap-top-news-immigration-456c0154218a4d378e2fb36cd40b709d

Cheung-Blunden, Violet. "Situational Insecurity Versus Entrenched Ideologies as the Source of Right-wing Voters' Anti-migrant Sentiment on Both Sides of the Atlantic." *Journal of applied social psychology* 50.6 (2020): 337–350. Web.

Conley, Richard S. *Donald Trump and American Populism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. Print.

Corasaniti, N. (2022, January 28). *Pennsylvania Court says State's mail voting law is unconstitutional*. The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/28/us/politics/pennsylvania-mail-voting-law-unconstitutional.html>

Dawsey, Josh, Felicia Sonmez, and Laura Hughes. "At Ohio Rally, Trump Escalates Attacks on Liberal Cities." *The Washington post* 2019: n. pag. Print.

D'souza, Dinesh. (2022). *2000 Mules*. Dinesh.

<https://dinesh.locals.com/post/2083099/2000-mules>

Encyclopedia Britannica, inc. (n.d.). *Russia investigation of Donald Trump*.

Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Donald-Trump/Russia-investigation>

Farivar, M. (2022). *What is the great replacement theory?*. Washington:

Federal Information & News Dispatch, LLC.

Fatima, Mariam et al. "Security Threat: a Reality or Right-Wing Political Discourse Phenomenon." *Asia Europe journal* 18.4 (2019): 445–461. Web.

Finlayson, Alan. "Neoliberalism, the Alt-Right and the Intellectual Dark Web." *Theory, culture & society* 38.6 (2021): 167–190. Web.

Ferguson, Thomas et al. "The Roots of Right-Wing Populism: Donald Trump in 2016." *International journal of political economy* 49.2 (2020): 102–123. Web.

Freistein, Katja, and Frank Gadinger. "Populist Stories of Honest Men and Proud Mothers: A Visual Narrative Analysis." *Review of international studies* 46.2 (2020): 217–236. Web.

Fischer, Anew Martín. "The Dark Sides of Social Policy: From Neoliberalism to Resurgent Right-Wing Populism." *Development and change* 51.2 (2020): 371–397. Web.

FoxNewsChannel. (2021, February 24). *Tucker: Democrats are importing migrants to expand voting base*. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gogCccQsum4>

Georgia's Anti-Voter Law (SB 202). ACLU of Georgia. (2022, March 14).

<https://acluga.org/georgias-anti-voter-law/>

Guardian News and Media. (2016, July 24). *Leaked DNC emails reveal details of anti-sanders sentiment*. The Guardian.

Guardian News and Media. (2016, October 31). *DNC head leaked debate question to Clinton, Podesta emails suggests*. The Guardian.

Guardian Wires. (2020, November 5). *'stop the vote' and 'count the votes', say protesting Trump supporters*. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pq1vWMCIF-M>

Gramlich, J. (2022, January 28). *How trump compares with other recent presidents in appointing Federal Judges*. Pew Research Center.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/13/how-trump-compares-with-other-recent-presidents-in-appointing-federal-judges/>

Kellner, Douglas. "Trump, Authoritarian Populism, and COVID-19 from a US Perspective." *Cultural politics (Biggleswade, England)* 17.1 (2021): 28–36.

Web.

Lakoff, Robin Tolmach. "The Hollow Man: Donald Trump, Populism, and Post-Truth Politics." *Journal of language and politics* 16.4 (2017): 595–606. Web.

Lynch, Frederick R. "How Did This Man Get Elected? Perspectives on American Politics, Populism and Donald Trump." *Society (New Brunswick)*

56.3 (2019): 290–294. Web.

Mols, Frank, and Jolanda Jetten. "Explaining the Appeal of Populist Right-Wing Parties in Times of Economic Prosperity." *Political psychology* 37.2

(2016): 275–292. Web.

Moss, Jordan T, and Peter J O'Connor. "Political Correctness and the Alt-Right: The Development of Extreme Political Attitudes." *PloS one* 15.10 (2020): e0239259–e0239259. Web.

Munro, A. (n.d.). *Populism*. Encyclopedia Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/populism>

Müller, J.-W. (2016). *What is populism?* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Pruitt, S. (2016, April 26). *8 most contentious US presidential elections*. History.com. <https://www.history.com/news/most-contentious-u-s-presidential-elections>

Reuters Staff. (2021, February 15). *Fact check: Courts have dismissed multiple lawsuits of alleged electoral fraud presented by Trump campaign*. Reuters. Retrieved <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-courts-election/fact-check-courts-have-dismissed-multiple-lawsuits-of-alleged-electoral-fraud-presented-by-trump-campaign-idUSKBN2AF1G1>

Rowland, Robert C. *The Rhetoric of Donald Trump: Nationalist Populism and American Democracy*. La Vergne: University Press of Kansas, 2021. Print.

Schertzer, Robert, and Eric Woods. "Nationalism: The Ethno-Nationalist Populism of Donald Trump's Twitter Communication." *Ethnic and racial studies* 44.7 (2021): 1154–1173. Web.

Should Nixon have demanded a recount? - daily.jstor.org. (n.d.). <https://daily.jstor.org/should-nixon-have-demanded-a-recount/>

Singh, Robert. "'I, the People': a Deflationary Interpretation of Populism, Trump and the United States Constitution." *Economy and society* 46.1 (2017): 20–42. Web.

Skonieczny, Amy. "Emotions and Political Narratives: Populism, Trump and Trade." *Politics and governance* 6.4 (2018): 62–72. Web.

Swenson, A. (2020, December 25). *Lengthy video makes false claims about 2020 election*. AP NEWS.

Tucker Carlson, Fox News:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gogCccQsum4>

The long, ugly antisemitic history of "jews will not replace us". The Long, Ugly Antisemitic History of "Jews Will Not Replace Us" | November | 2021 | The Jewish Experience | Brandeis University. (n.d.).

<https://www.brandeis.edu/jewish-experience/jewish-america/2021/november/replacement-antisemitism-sarna.html>

The urgency of Intersectionality | Kimberlé Crenshaw - YouTube.

(n.d.)<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o>

Truthsocial.com. (n.d.). <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump>

Wojczewski, Thorsten. "Trump, Populism, and American Foreign Policy."

Foreign policy analysis 16.3 (2020): 292–311. Web.

Weyland, Kurt. "Why US Democracy Trumps Populism: Comparative Lessons Reconsidered." *PS, political science & politics* 55.3 (2022): 478–483. Web.

YouTube. (2022, April 22). *Marjorie Taylor Greene answers questions in reelection challenge hearing.* YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtKegwii-W8>

TODAY-NBC. (2020, September 13). *At rally, Trump says 2020 election will be 'rigged' if he loses | Sunday Today.* YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9i80SrDc74>

Walby, Sylvia, Jo Armstrong, and Sofia Strid. "Intersectionality: Multiple Inequalities in Social Theory." *Sociology* 46.2 (2012): 224–240. Web.

Chapter 3 - Bibliography

2022 manufacturing week. LEO. (n.d.), from

<https://www.michigan.gov/leo/news/2022/10/06/2022-manufacturing-week>

Arizona Clean Elections Commission - azcleelections.gov. (n.d.). *Vote by mail*.

Citizens Clean Elections Commission., from

<https://www.azcleelections.gov/how-to-vote/early-voting/vote-by-mail>

Arizona election laws & publications. Arizona Election Laws & Publications |

Arizona Secretary of State. (n.d.). [https://azsos.gov/elections/about-](https://azsos.gov/elections/about-elections/arizona-election-laws-publications)

[elections/arizona-election-laws-publications](https://azsos.gov/elections/about-elections/arizona-election-laws-publications)

Atske, S. (2020, December 5). *3. the voting experience in 2020*. Pew Research

Center - U.S. Politics & Policy. from

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/11/20/the-voting-experience-in-2020>

Center, L. D. P. (n.d.). *2022 act 88*. The official website for the Pennsylvania

General Assembly.

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/li/uconsCheck.cfm?yr=2022&sessI>
[nd=0&act=88](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/li/uconsCheck.cfm?yr=2022&sessI)

Chapter 14 E V Polling Places - Michigan. (n.d.). https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/sos/01mcalpine/XIV_Establishing_Voting_Precincts_and_Polling_Places.pdf?rev=844dd1cb3c1d489bb7dd143cb56404d5

Council of Europe. (2020, August 28). *12 principles of Good Democratic Governance: Conference on 28 October.* 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance: conference on 28 October. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/12-principles-of-good-democratic-governance-conference-on-28-october>

Denzin, N. (n.d.). *Wisconsin's 2022 voter registrations up from 2018, absentee ballots down from 2020.* PBS Wisconsin. <https://pbswisconsin.org/news-item/wisconsins-2022-voter-registrations-up-from-2018-absentee-ballots-down-from-2020/>

Election bills. Wisconsin State Senate. (n.d.). <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/republicans/election-bills>

Election results. Wisconsin Elections Commission. (2022, July 6). <https://elections.wi.gov/elections/election-results>

Georgia fact sheet: Voter purges and precinct consolidations impact black voters.

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. (n.d.).from <https://www.lawyerscommittee.org/georgia-profile/>

Georgia runoff election 2022. Georgia.gov. (n.d.). <https://georgia.gov/election-2022>

Georgia voters post all time record for gubernatorial early voting. Georgia Voters Post All Time Record for Gubernatorial Early Voting | Georgia Secretary of State. (n.d.). <https://sos.ga.gov/news/georgia-voters-post-all-time-record-gubernatorial-early-voting>

Grynbaum, M. (2022, March 27). *Chris Wallace says life at Fox News became 'unsustainable'.* The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/27/business/media/chris-wallace-cnn-fox-news.html>

Hess, C. (2022, November 1). *Wisconsin is voting. here's what to know about voting and ballot access in 2022.* Journal Sentinel. <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/elections/2022/10/27/wisconsin-elections-what-to-know-about-voting-ballot-access-in-2022/69593997007/>

Johnson, C. N. (2022, October 22). *Early voters in Georgia face obstacles under State's new Election Law.* The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/22/georgia-early-voting-obstacles-new-election-law>

Kilkenny, K. (2021, January 20). *Shepard Smith opens up about leaving Fox News after 23 years: "I stuck with it for as long as I could".* The Hollywood Reporter. <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-news/shepard-smith-opens-up-about-leaving-fox-news-after-23-years-i-stuck-with-it-for-as-long-as-i-could-4118614/>

Michigan Election Law Blog. Providing Legal Updates in Campaign Finance Law. (n.d.). <https://www.michiganelectionlaw.com/>

Michigan legislature. (n.d.).

<https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-chap168.pdf>

Michigan rankings and facts | US news best states. (n.d.).

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/michigan>

Michigan Voter Count. Voter registration statistics. (n.d.).

<https://mvic.sos.state.mi.us/VoterCount/Index>

The New York Times. (2020, November 3). *Arizona election results*. The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/11/03/us/elections/results-arizona.html>

The New York Times. (2020, November 3). *Presidential election results: Biden wins*. The New York Times.

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/11/03/us/elections/results-president.html?action=click&pgtype=Article&state=default&module=style-elections-2020@ion=TOP_BANNER&context=election_recirc

November 1, 2020 voter registration statistics. Wisconsin Elections Commission. (2022, May 20).

<https://elections.wi.gov/resources/statistics/november-1-2020-voter-registration-statistics>

One week before Election Day, nearly 2 million michiganders have requested absentee ballots. SOM - State of Michigan. (n.d.).

<https://www.michigan.gov/sos/resources/news/2022/11/01/one-week-before-election-day-nearly-2-million-michiganders-have-requested-absentee-ballots>

PA Election stats. Pennsylvania Department of State. (n.d.).

<https://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/BEST/Pages/BEST-Election-Stats.asp>

[x](#)

Panetta, G. (n.d.). *Republicans' next big play is to 'scare the hell out of Washington' by rewriting the Constitution. and they're willing to play the long game to win.* Business Insider.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/constitutional-convention-conservatives-republicans-constitution-supreme-court-2022-7>

Election results 2018: Live midterm map by State & Analysis. POLITICO. (1970, November 7). <https://www.politico.com/election-results/2018/>

Presidential election in Wisconsin, 2020. Ballotpedia. (n.d.).

https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential_election_in_Wisconsin,_2020

Study shows Michigan's economy still struggles to compete with other states.

Bridge Michigan. (n.d.). <https://www.bridgemi.com/business-watch/study-shows-michigans-economy-still-struggles-compete-other-states>

Subject 183-1-12 preparation for and conduct of primaries and elections. GA.

(n.d.). <https://rules.sos.state.ga.us/gac/183-1-12>

United Nations. (n.d.). *Democracy.* United Nations.

<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/democracy>

Wilkinson, M. (n.d.). *Who is voting absentee so far in Michigan? older*

Democrats, records show. Bridge

Michigan. <https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-government/who-voting-absentee-so-far-michigan-older-democrats-records-show>

Wisconsin presidential election voting history - 270towin. 270toWin.com. (n.d.).

<http://www.270towin.com/states/Wisconsin>

Wisconsin: Election tools, deadlines, dates, rules, and links. Vote.org. (n.d.).

Retrieved from <https://www.vote.org/state/wisconsin/>

Council of Europe. (2020, August 28). *12 principles of Good Democratic*

Governance: Conference on 28 October - portal - publi.coe.int. Portal.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/12-principles-of-good-democratic-governance-conference-on-28-october>