

TRUMPING CANADA?
CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN CANADIAN CONSERVATIVE CAMPAIGN
RHETORIC

by

Daryn Tyndale, BA (Hons), McGill University, 2019

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Abstract

The Conservative Party of Canada has been widely noted for its meticulous branding and tight message control. In contrast, US president Donald Trump, representing the traditionally conservative Republican Party, demonstrates a remarkable lack of message discipline: his infamous unscripted candor often descends into vulgarity. Yet, despite his lack of message discipline, Trump was successfully elected president, suggesting that his distinctive rhetorical style may have contributed to his electoral appeal.

This major research paper explores whether Donald Trump's surprising victory may have inspired Canadian Conservatives to alter their own rhetorical strategies in the hopes of achieving similar success. I conducted a qualitative rhetorical analysis on six campaign speeches delivered by Conservative Party leaders in Canada's two most recent federal elections (Andrew Scheer in 2019 and Stephen Harper in 2015). The results suggest that the Conservatives' campaign speech rhetoric does not appear to be converging with Donald Trump's. However, further investigation into other sites of discourse, such as leaders' debates, press conferences, or party documents, may reveal otherwise—particularly when it comes to broader ideological orientation and the treatment of minority groups.

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Introduction

When Donald Trump declared his candidacy for President of the United States in 2015, he did so in language that was shockingly foreign to typical presidential politics. With a campaign kick-off speech calling Mexican migrants “rapists” and “criminals” (Trump, 2015a), Donald Trump introduced himself as a conservative political leader who would become infamous for an unscripted candor that often descends into vulgarity. Yet, despite this lack of message discipline, Trump was successfully elected president, suggesting that his distinctive communication style may have contributed to his electoral appeal, and might inspire others to adopt similar rhetoric.

“Could Donald Trump happen in Canada?” asked headlines in two of Canada’s largest publications—Maclean’s and the Globe and Mail—in August 2016 (Gillis, 2016; Keller, 2016). If a “Canadian Trump” were to emerge, one might expect to see them come from the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), the closest Canadian analogue to the American Republicans. The Conservative Party is Canada’s newest and most right-wing mainstream political party, formed less than twenty years ago as the result of a merger between the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservatives (Behiels, 2010). Stephen Harper, the first leader and only Prime Minister produced by the new Conservatives, has been widely noted for his meticulous attention to branding and tight message control—perhaps a reasonable impulse, considering he was crafting the voice and vision of a brand new party (Behiels, 2010; Flanagan, 2009; Marland, 2014). But when Harper stepped down as head of the party and the election of a new leader began in 2017, Canadians observers were once again reminded of their southern neighbour. “Is this Canada’s Donald Trump?” the BBC asked of Kevin O’Leary, the wealthy businessman running to replace Harper who, like Trump, also had a history as an outspoken

reality TV star (Hussain, 2017). “Meet two aspiring Canadian Trumps” read another headline, also mentioning Kellie Leich, whose platform for the Conservative leadership included a promise to instate a “Canadian values test” for newcomers settling in Canada—in addition to the standard citizenship test (Berube, 2017). Despite the alarmist headlines, neither of these contenders went on to win the Conservative leadership. Nonetheless, another question remains: has Donald Trump’s surprising victory inspired Canadian politicians to alter their own rhetorical strategies in the hopes of achieving similar success? This MRP investigates this question by comparing the campaign rhetoric of Donald Trump and Canadian Conservative Party leaders.

Literature Review

Conservative Political Discourse in Canada

This review begins with a summary of existing analyses of Canadian conservative political discourse, its traditional characteristics, and how it has evolved over time. Saurette and Gunster (2013) provide an overview of the general trends in Canadian conservative ideology from the 1990s to the mid-2000s and outline a distinct discursive strategy developed by the Conservative Party. Responding to the so-called “backlash populism” that other observers had claimed was increasingly characterizing American and Canadian conservatism, Saurette and Gunster (2013) argue that this label “does not tell the full story about the strategies the contemporary conservative movement is using to persuade Canadians” (2013, p. 240). Instead, they introduce the term “cappuccino conservatism” (a play on the “latte liberal” elites often attacked by the aforementioned backlash populists) to describe an ideological and discursive strategy that is “much frothier and sweeter than its dark, acidic, and over-roasted American cousin” (Saurette & Gunster, 2013, p. 242). Specifically, cappuccino conservatism envisions

a market-oriented society of disciplined, individual choice-makers, and employs a positive, affirmative, patriotic tone (Saurette & Gunster, 2013).

In a comparative study of conservative leaders in Canada and Australia, Sawyer and Laycock (2009) characterize the Conservative Party's discourse as "market populism," which, like Saurette and Gunster's "cappuccino conservatism," places high value in the concept of "choice," and views market activity as "the purest form of democratic choice" (Sawyer & Laycock, 2009, p. 135). Market populism's other central tenets involve contempt for the welfare state, which is seen as a project of elite special-interests that undemocratically reduces market choice, and the view that "intermediary institutions such as courts and tribunals are strongholds of non-elected elites," capable of unduly overturning public opinion (Sawyer & Laycock, 2009, p. 135).

Directly responding to Sawyer and Laycock, Snow and Moffitt (2012) contend that the brand of populism practiced by Stephen Harper is more accurately labelled "mainstream populism," a term which captures the sociocultural dimension of Conservative Party policy and discourse, in addition to the primarily economic stances implied by the term "market populism." As opposed to an elite economic class, for example, Snow and Moffitt (2012) note that mainstream populism aims its grievances at a more generalized "other"—in the Canadian case, immigrant communities. Furthermore, the authors highlight the "mainstreaming" of traditional populist discourse as "a 'softening' of that discourse in order to make it more palatable for a wider audience" (Snow & Moffitt, 2012, p. 274). This echoes Saurette and Gunster's (2013) analysis that the CPC has attempted to define a "frothier and sweeter" articulation of conservatism, with the ultimate goal of securing a broader base of support.

Focusing on a specific policy area, Carlaw (2015, 2018) attempts to explain a seemingly paradoxical shift in the Conservative Party's political strategy. Drawing on political theorist Stuart Hall, Carlaw identifies the CPC's attempt to court the "ethnic vote," while simultaneously doubling down on discriminatory immigration legislation and law-and-order policies, as an example of how winning electoral coalitions can be fabricated "through the use of populist discourses that bind seemingly contradictory constituencies together" (2018, p. 791). To this end, the Conservative Party "refined their discourse to a significant degree," by, for example, inviting immigrant voters "to see themselves as 'legitimate' and 'hard working' immigrants and citizens, and to accept the scapegoating and marginalization of others" (Carlaw, 2018, p. 792).

Firťová's 2019 content analysis of the Conservatives' immigration-related discourse during their time in government (2006–2015) reveals that the party's framing of immigration had "evolved gradually," from more utilitarian, policy efficiency, and economic frames in Conservatives' early governing period (2006–2008), to casting doubt on Canada's multiculturalism policy as "a source of tension and inner conflict threatening social cohesion" by the end of their final mandate (2019, n.p.). The overall ideological shift implied by these developments suggests that the Conservative Party is increasingly relying on populist appeals, while the *incremental* nature of the discursive change identified by Firťová supports the more tempered "mainstream populism" or "cappuccino conservative" strategies proposed by Snow and Moffitt (2012) and Saurette and Gunster (2013).

In a critical discourse analysis of press coverage, party documents, and leaders' statements from the 2006 federal election, Richardson et al. (2013) demonstrate how the Conservative Party successfully adopted a "choice" frame around the issue of early childcare.

Through the rhetorical practices of “nominalization, recontextualization, conversationalization and use of irrealis statements,” the Conservatives not only framed their own childcare policy proposal through a choice lens, but also succeeded in making the “choice” frame for childcare policy discussions in the 2006 elections the dominant one overall (2013, p. 163).

Finally, Chater (2018) examined the Canadian government’s rhetorical framing of climate change in the Canadian North from 2006–2016 (i.e., Harper’s tenure in its entirety, plus a few months of Liberal rule). Chater’s findings demonstrate that, although the Conservative government never denied the scientific consensus on climate change (a typical characteristic of conservative movements elsewhere), the CPC’s discourse on the issue saw a gradual de-emphasizing and eventual total lack of acknowledgement of how climate change affects human populations in Canada’s northern regions, focusing instead on environmental heritage and the economic opportunities of melting permafrost. By decentering the communities that live in the Canadian North, Chater (2018) argues that the government removed a sense of urgency from its rhetoric on climate change, thereby reducing the pressure to take any action on the issue. This text contributes to a broader understanding of the Conservative Party’s evolving discursive strategies over time, demonstrating how the CPC’s discourse often differs from traditional portraits of conservative or right-populist rhetoric, while still representing similar ideological themes in more tempered language and argumentation.

Donald Trump’s Rhetorical Style

In contrast to the “friendlier,” “mainstreaming,” or “cappuccino conservatism” of Canadian conservatives, US President Donald Trump has often been noted for his brash, explicit rhetoric. Theye and Melling (2018) dub this rhetorical style “straight-talk,” consisting of parataxis (short, disjunct sentences with minimal use of transitioning words or clauses), “and

a wide variety of small-scale transgressions, such as exaggerations, bumptious language, inaccuracies, and digressions” (2018, p. 323). Combined with his adamant opposition to political correctness, Theye and Melling argue that Trump’s straight-talk discourse conveys authenticity, giving the impression that his words “have not been screened by any focus groups or consultants” (2018, p. 326), making his audience “wonder whether he forgot that the cameras were rolling” when he delivers his outrageous remarks (2018, p. 331). Jamieson and Taussig (2017) similarly describe Trump’s rhetorical style as “spontaneous and unpredictable” (2017, p. 621), a strategy that benefitted Trump by attracting increased media attention while appealing to voters seeking a candidate who “tells it like it is” (Gamio & Clement, 2016, as cited in Jamieson & Taussig, 2017, p. 622).

Other thematic and semantic differences exist between Donald Trump’s discursive practices and the rhetorical strategies outlined in studies of Canadian conservative discourse. In terms of emotional appeals, sentiment analyses conducted by Savoy (2018) and Liu and Lei (2018) both reveal that Trump used more negative emotion words than his opponent, Hillary Clinton, during the 2016 campaign. These findings are also supported by Abbas’ 2019 study examining how Donald Trump used hyperbolic statements to reinforce “us” versus “them” frames, attribute blame (usually to perceived adversaries, such as Hillary Clinton or China), and appeal to negative emotions like anger and fear. Lamont et al. (2017) demonstrates how these negative emotional appeals are often tied to populist claims that champion the white working class and decry the sources (as alleged by Trump) of their perceived hardships: globalization, the political establishment, undocumented immigrants, refugees, and Muslims.

Several scholars have also noted the formal linguistic elements that make Trump’s speaking style so distinctive. Montgomery (2017) identifies Trump’s use of “lexical repetition”

(2017, p. 627), “conversational direct address” (2017, p. 629), and “vernacular folksiness” (2017, p. 630) as core features of “a discourse of ‘authenticity’ rather than ‘truth’” which “provided a crucial cornerstone of Trump’s appeal to his electoral base” (2017, p. 619). This echoes Theye and Melling’s (2018) conclusion that Trump uses rhetoric to convey authenticity. Savoy (2018) also found that in campaign debates and speeches, Trump used fewer words per sentence and fewer words over six letters, on average, than both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Wang and Liu (2018) similarly tested the lexical diversity and grade-school reading level of Donald Trump’s debate statements and campaign speeches versus those of Clinton and Obama, finding that in debates, Trump had the lowest readability level (fifth-grade) and vocabulary richness, but the highest levels in both metrics in his campaign speeches. In comparison with his Republican primary competitors, Ahmadian et al. (2017) also found that Trump’s campaign speeches scored lowest on their “formality” index, using more non-standard and low-complexity words than his opponents’ statements.

Ahmadian et al. (2017) also measured Republican primary candidates on a “grandiosity” scale, examining the candidates’ use of first-person pronouns and whether their rhetoric involved acts of “boasting,” defined as “talking with excessive pride and self-satisfaction about one’s achievement, possessions or abilities” (2017, p. 51). Trump’s speeches scored the highest on both metrics, and “significantly higher than the mean of the other eight Republican candidates” (Ahmadian et al., 2017, p. 51). Montgomery (2017) similarly found evidence that Trump uses “1st person singular, positive self-assertions” with unusual frequency, suggesting that his rhetoric can at times “sound like extreme braggadocio” (2017, p. 625).

In sum, the discourses of both Donald Trump and the Conservative Party of Canada have been the subject of much critical study. However, little (if any) existing scholarship offers

thorough comparison between the two. The following sections will introduce the research questions and methodology that guide the rest of this MRP and attempt to address gaps in the existing literature.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the common discursive features of the Conservative Party of Canada’s campaign rhetoric?

The texts examined in the above review paint a broad picture of overall trends in the Conservative Party’s discourse, often with a focus on its increasingly populist ideology. However, very little of the body of literature on Canadian Conservative discourse focuses directly on campaign-period rhetoric, or on specific linguistic strategies. Answering this question will add to the existing literature on the Conservative Party’s evolving rhetorical style, particularly considering that even the most recent literature does not yet address the party’s current leader, Andrew Scheer, who will resign when the new leader is elected on August 21, 2020.

RQ2: Has the Conservative Party adopted any elements of a “Trumpian” style of discourse?

Given his unexpected victory in 2016, it may be that other politicians hope to reproduce Donald Trump’s electoral success by adopting the distinctive rhetorical style that contributed to his unique appeal. While scholars have examined the rhetorical dimension of the rise of right-wing populism globally (Schoor, 2017; Wodak et al., 2013), few studies have addressed how Trump’s particular version of that rhetoric may have influenced other politicians. This question attempts to address this research gap.

Methodology

Data Collection

This study analyzes speeches given by Conservative Party leaders at campaign events, an under-researched area of the existing scholarship on Canadian political discourse. Six speeches were selected: three given by Andrew Scheer in 2019, and three by Stephen Harper in 2015. Earlier conceptions of this project envisioned a larger sample of speeches dating back from the CPC's first federal election campaign in 2004, which would have allowed for a more fulsome analysis of how the party's discourse has changed over time. Somewhat surprisingly, however, it seems that transcripts of Canadian party leaders' campaign speeches are not widely accessible to the public. In fact, I was not able to find a single full transcript of any campaign-period speech given by either leader. Instead, the texts were gathered by transcribing YouTube videos of campaign events from various user channels, including CPAC (Cable Public Affairs Channel), Global News, and local broadcasters. Due to this accessibility limitation, the analysis was restricted to the two most recent federal elections in 2015 and 2019, for which YouTube coverage from credible sources was most available. Fortunately, these are the two Canadian election years immediately preceding and following Donald Trump's election in the United States, allowing for some investigation into how Trump's political rise may have affected Conservative rhetoric.

Using YouTube's automatically generated closed captioning system, I first collected a transcript of each campaign speech. Then, I manually reviewed the transcript alongside the video to confirm its accuracy. The auto-generated transcripts did not include any punctuation, so all punctuation of the speeches was added by me, based on reasonable assumptions and

interpretation of the speaker's tone and delivery. While this does introduce some potential error, I do not feel it materially altered the meaning of the texts for the purposes of this study.

Rhetorical Analysis

Once the texts were collected and transcribed, I conducted a qualitative rhetorical analysis, guided by a codebook created to capture how particular linguistic and rhetorical techniques are used in Conservative campaign speeches. I developed the codebook based on existing studies of the typical rhetorical styles of both the Conservative Party and Donald Trump. Drawing on these bodies of literature, I compiled a list of some of the linguistic and rhetorical features most commonly identified as key markers of their respective communication styles. For example, Abbas (2019) and Jamieson (2017) both found that Donald Trump is especially prone to speaking in hyperbolic statements, so a "Hyperbole" category was included in the codebook. The full codebook can be found on the next page (Table 1), and more detailed descriptions of each category and how passages were coded are given in the following section. Each category of the codebook was assigned a colour, and I highlighted passages of the speeches accordingly. By comparing the colour-coded speeches, I was able to identify patterns in how particular rhetorical strategies function in context across the different texts and make connections between them. The next section outlines the results of this analysis.

Table 1

		Category	Definition + Instructions	Example	Code Source
Linguistic and Syntactic Structures		Digressions	Self-interruptions and interjections for brief asides on unrelated topics.	"We can't let China take advantage of us anymore. We have the piggy bank. We have the advantage! By the way, don't worry. They like to talk about temperament. That is a word they got from Madison avenue. How can we attack Trump? I have a great temperament." (Trump, 2016d)	Abbas, 2019; Liu & Lei, 2018; Theye & Melling, 2018
		Repetition	Words or phrases repeated in close succession, or repeated phrases used as an organizing structure.	"Hey, hey—33,000 e-mails are gone. OK? 33,000 e-mails are gone. They're gone. How do you get rid of 33,000 e-mails? Who sends 33,000 e-mails? I mean, 33—do you know how many that is? I think that's like 24 hours a day reading them or sending them, but it wouldn't matter. For years, 33,000 e-mails are missing. And she's so guilty. She's so guilty." (Trump, Q) "It's a choice between risk and stability. Between half-baked ideas and a proven track record. Between an economic plan and a leap in the dark." (Harper, quoted in Chakde TV, 2015)	Abbas, 2019; Liu & Lei, 2018; Theye & Melling, 2018
		Parataxis	Short, disjunct sentences with minimal use of transitioning words or clauses.	"Beyond the two million, and there are vast numbers of additional criminal illegal immigrants who have fled, but their days have run out in this country. The crime will stop. They're going to be gone. It will be over. They're going out. They're going out fast." (Trump, 2016c)	Montgomery, 2017; Savoy, 2018; Theye & Melling, 2018
Sentence-level Features		Hyperbole	Exaggerated language. Typically comes in one of three forms: 1) Number, amount, quantity, 2) Time, 3) Adjectives and adverbs of size, degree, intensity. Note the subject matter being exaggerated.	"Nobody respects women more than Donald Trump. That I can tell you." (Trump, 2015b) "... that's why there are no better economic fundamentals, there are no better economic prospects, and there is no better place to be—that's our Conservative record." (Harper, quoted in TAG TV, 2015)	Abbas, 2019; Jamieson & Taussig, 2017
		Conversational direct address	Directly addressing the audience in a conversational, informal style. Commands: remember, watch, choose me, believe me Questions: What do you have to lose? Wouldn't that be wonderful? Collective nouns: friends, ladies and gentlemen	"And I say what do you have to lose? Choose me. Watch how good we're going to do together. Watch. You watch." (Trump, 2016c) "But we've got a little bit of work to do first, ladies and gentlemen." (Scheer, quoted in CPAC, 2019)	Montgomery, 2017

Category		Definition + Instructions	Example	Code Source
Praise, Blame, and Accusations	Praise	Assigning praise for positive outcomes to a specific person or people. Note especially any appeals to the quality of the speaker (ethos).	"Now I have great relationships with China. I've done great business with China, I've done really well with China. I have these tenants, I sell condos..." (Trump, 2016b) "The average Canadian family has, due to our Conservative policies, more than six and a half thousand additional dollars in their pockets." (Harper, quoted in Chakde TV, 2015)	Ahmadian et al., 2017; Montgomery, 2017
	Blame + Accusations	Assigning responsibility for negative outcomes to a specific person or people or accusing them of negative hypothetical outcomes (future-oriented blame). Note who is being blamed: is it a group, individual, or both? (e.g. Justin Trudeau and the Liberals) Is the person low/high status? Is the group privileged/marginalized?	"Hillary Clinton who, as most people know, is a world class liar..." (Trump, 2016a) "... the NDP's economic management was a disaster for this province and British Columbians. The 1990s in particular were a decade of darkness under the NDP." (Harper, quoted in Channel Van Media, 2015)	Abbas, 2019; Lamont et al., 2017
Framing Techniques	Nationalism	Appeals to national identity and the national interest, often at the expense of the "other" and/or accompanied by appeals to tradition and a pure, uncorrupted past.	"We are going to make America great again. We're going to start winning. We're going to put America first." (Trump, 2016b) "... my Canada is a country of yes. Yes! Yes to a stronger more united country." (Scheer, quoted in CPAC, 2019)	Carlaw, 2018; Smith, 2012
	Populism	Who are the others and how are they described? (e.g. elites, barbaric, liberals, immigrants, economic, cultural)	"Corruption is massive. We will drain the swamp in Washington, D.C. and replace it with a new government of, by and for the people. Believe me." (Trump, 2016e) "We know who gets ahead under Justin Trudeau's government. And it's not hard-working individuals. It's not small and medium-sized business owners. It's the corporate elite." (Scheer, quoted in Global News, 2019a)	Carlaw, 2015, 2018; Lamont et al., 2017; Liu & Lei, 2018; Montgomery, 2017; Snow & Moffitt, 2012
	Choice/ market-oriented frame	Appealing to the virtues of individual choice and the free market. Using choice as the main rationale to justify claims and/or decrying obstacles to free choice.	"No amount of government can match the power of the free market." (Scheer, quoted in CPAC, 2019)	Saurette & Gunster, 2013; Sawer & Laycock, 2009

Findings and Discussion

This section will lay out the results of my rhetorical analysis of Conservative campaign speeches, presenting the findings under each category of the codebook one by one. The codebook categories have been divided into four broad thematic sections: 1) linguistic and syntactic structures, 2) sentence-level features, 3) praise, blame, and accusation, and 4) framing techniques. Each of these sections encompasses two or three codebook categories, which are each discussed separately and in depth, followed by a brief section summary. Finally, a closing discussion considers the broader trends found across the codebook and related research.

Linguistic and Syntactic Structures

Parataxis

The first broad section of the codebook, linguistic and syntactic structures, refers to three of the most prominent markers of Donald Trump's rhetorical style. The first of these is parataxis, a sequence of consecutive sentences or clauses without the use of transitioning words between them (Theye & Melling, 2018). For example, Trump delivered the following statement during a 2016 primary debate: "That's wrong. They were wrong. It's The New York Times, they're always wrong. They were wrong" (quoted in Stevenson, 2016). This kind of off-the-cuff, stream of consciousness delivery can give the impression of simply speaking one's mind and sharing unfiltered thoughts, which may have the persuasive effect of signaling authenticity and trustworthiness.

Paratactic sentence construction was rarely found in the six Conservative Party of Canada campaign speeches analyzed in my study: just once per speech. For example, speaking about the recently increased Universal Childcare Benefit, Stephen Harper said,

Now in fact, let me just remind you—Pierre Polliver¹ makes me do this. Let me just—you guys know about this. Pierre Polliver makes me do this. Let me just remind you that for a few weeks our enhanced Universal Childcare Benefit has been arriving in mailboxes... (Quoted in Chakde TV, 2015)

Here, Harper's self-interruptions and repetition of the same phrases give the impression of a more casual, unscripted remark, especially combined with the informal "you guys," and the almost self-deprecating admission that Harper's colleague "makes [him] do this." Two more instances of parataxis were found in the remaining Harper speeches. While these passages do work to express a degree of informality, they are also quite rare, suggesting that the Conservative Party is not interested in conveying this kind of congenial atmosphere through its rhetoric, or else is using other rhetorical strategies to do so.

In Andrew Scheer's speeches, the use of paratactic statements is also uncommon, again occurring just once per speech. However, unlike in Harper's speeches, the paratactic passages in Scheer's speeches are each about the same subject matter: repealing the Carbon Tax. As discussed, paratactic sentence structure gives an impression of a more casual, improvised style of speaking. What is notable here is that these remarks were repeated in largely the same terms on multiple occasions, which suggests that this particular phrasing was used intentionally as a rhetorical tool. On September 16, 2019, at a campaign rally in Calgary, Scheer said:

It starts, job number one—my colleagues in the House of Commons know this already but Jag², you heard it here first if you haven't heard it already—job number one for a Conservative government will be called an Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, that's job number one! (quoted in Global News, 2019a)

Much later in the campaign, Scheer spoke in Richmond Hill on October 19:

But of course, job number one, the very first piece of legislation that we will be, that we will bring in, the first order of business for a Conservative government, will be called an Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax. (Quoted in CPAC, 2019)

¹ Harper's Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

² The local Conservative MP candidate

And the next day, in Vancouver:

Of course, of course job number one, my very first act as Prime Minister, the first piece of legislation for a Conservative government—my colleagues know this, Canadians know this—the first piece of legislation will be called an Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, ladies and gentlemen! (Scheer, quoted in Global News, 2019b)

As with Harper, Andrew Scheer’s paratactic statements occur infrequently and appear to be an exception to his typical rhetorical style. However, the way parataxis is used in the above passages—though uncharacteristic of Conservatives’ typical rhetoric—is revealing nonetheless. In these remarks, the paratactic sentence construction helps build momentum, driving the statements forward with a series of introductory phrases (“job number one, my very first act as Prime Minister, the first piece of legislation...”) that build anticipation for the ultimate promise (“... will be called an Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax!”). Repealing the Carbon Tax was a central item on the Conservative agenda in 2019 (Conservative Party of Canada, 2019), and the above statements demonstrate how Scheer used parataxis as a rhetorical strategy to generate enthusiasm for this signature policy promise while contributing to a sense of casual comradery between speaker and audience.

Repetition

A rhetorical strategy related to parataxis is lexical repetition, another key marker of Trump’s distinctive rhetorical style (Abbas, 2019; Liu & Lei, 2018; Montgomery, 2017; Savoy, 2018; Theye & Melling, 2018). In the initial coding, lexical repetition referred to using the same word or short phrases in close succession. Trump’s use of both strategies—parataxis and repetition—is exemplified in this excerpt from a speech delivered at a campaign rally in Phoenix, Arizona:

Number three. Number three, this is the one, I think it’s so great. It’s hard to believe, people don’t even talk about it. Zero tolerance for criminal aliens. Zero. Zero. Zero. They don’t come in here. They don’t come in here. (Trump, 2016c, n.p.)

Like many of Trump’s remarks, the Conservatives’ statements examined in the previous “parataxis” category also contained some internal repetition. However, the coding process revealed another way that repetition is used by Conservative leaders.

Repeated phrases are commonly used in Conservative Party campaign statements as a way to structure different sections of a speech. For example, the refrain, “Our Economic Action Plan. That’s why…” is present across all three of Stephen Harper’s speeches. The phrase is repeated at least four times in each speech, followed by descriptions of the specific outcomes attributed to the plan, as in the following passage:

Our Economic Action Plan. That is why the Canadian economy has been growing steadily, steadily creating jobs for the past six years... Our Economic Action Plan. That's why, to encourage growth and employment, we have lowered taxes, for individuals, for families, and for job creating businesses. (Harper, quoted in TAG TV, 2015)

This repetition framework is also frequently combined with comparison and contrast arguments, juxtaposing the speaker’s policy plans against his opponents’ (arguably) worse ones, as seen in this passage by Andrew Scheer:

Where Justin Trudeau will abuse the power of his office... I will bring back integrity and ethics to government and shine a light on his corruption. Where he will call small business owners tax cheats, I will always be on their side! Where he will be bullied and pushed around on the world stage, I will always stand up for Canada with strength and for Canadians! (Quoted in CPAC, 2019)

The above sample goes on to repeat the refrain another five times, and the same type of “What my opponent will do versus what I will do” construction is used in four of the six speeches analyzed (one by Harper and all three by Scheer).

While Trump’s lexical repetition suggests a sort of unplanned, thinking-out-loud style of speaking, this use of repetition by the Conservative Party is clearly intentional and prepared. The Conservative leaders use repetition to structure whole sections of speeches, using repeated

refrains to emphasize the main point—which is often the differences between the speaker and his opponents.

Digression

A final variable that came under this section of the codebook was digression, to assess whether Conservative Party leaders share Donald Trump’s tendency to veer off topic and interrupt a flow of ideas with seemingly unrelated asides. Like parataxis and repetition, Trump’s digressions also illustrate his spontaneous, unscripted style, suggesting he says whatever is on his mind, making him seem genuine and sincere. However, no instances of digression were found among the Conservative leaders’ speeches analyzed.

Summary

The general takeaways from these three variables in the codebook suggest that parataxis, repetition, and digression are more idiosyncratic features of Donald Trump’s personal speaking style than strategic choices being made to enhance the quality or persuasiveness of his rhetoric. When used together, as they often are in Donald Trump’s speech, these three rhetorical features give the sense of an off-the-cuff, improvisational, and authentic communication style that evidently appealed to his supporters. In contrast, the Conservative Party’s discourse appears rather formal by comparison, suggesting that the Conservative Party favours a strategy of message discipline and asserting credible authority.

Sentence-level Features

While the previous section examined specific stylistic elements and sentence construction, the rest of the codebook focuses more directly on the content of Conservative Party rhetoric. This section begins to examine content at the sentence-level, before moving on to higher-level trends in later sections.

Hyperbole

The next category, hyperbole, is drawn from Trump's repeated use of blatant exaggerations, to the point where "many of his campaign utterances had a questionable relationship to truth" (Montgomery, 2017, p. 623). In political rhetoric, hyperbole might be used to add to the persuasiveness of a claim through strategic embellishments that increase its impact or attract greater attention (Abbas, 2019, p. 506). However, this is not a particularly common tactic within Conservative Party discourse, and it was entirely absent from Andrew Scheer's speeches. For Harper, seven hyperbolic statements were recorded. Most of these were largely intangible matters of perspective or opinion, asserting that Canada is "the best country in the world" (Harper, quoted in Chakde TV, 2015) or that "the choice in this election could not be more clear and more important" (Harper, quoted in TAG TV, 2015). However, these exaggerations are not especially salient in Conservative Party discourse, and become even less common—indeed, they disappear entirely—in the most recent election under Andrew Scheer.

Conversational Direct Address

The next category refers to how speakers directly engage the audience in a more candid, straightforward mode of expression. Montgomery (2017) ascribes this style to Trump based on his repeated use of commands such as "remember," and "believe me," as well as questions like "what do you have to lose?" or "wouldn't that be wonderful?" (Trump, 2016c). The use of direct commands is rare in Conservative speeches. On four occasions, Stephen Harper tells his audience to "never forget" key Conservative policy victories (Chakde TV, 2015; Channel Van Media, 2015), and once warns a Vancouver audience, "Do not kid yourself. BC's prosperity, Canada's prosperity, these things are what is at risk in this election" (quoted in Channel Van Media, 2015). There are also numerous calls to get-out-the-vote,

mobilize your community, and support the Conservative Party generally, but these are typically phrased more as invitations or requests, rather than direct commands:

But now is when I need your help, our candidates need your help the most. In these critical final days when we have to push the hardest to get our vote out. So I want to thank you all for the work you've done. But we're gonna need everything you have left to convince your friends and neighbors to join the millions of Canadians who are already voting Conservative in this election. (Scheer, quoted in CPAC, 2019)

Rhetorical questions are used in all of the speeches analyzed; however, Conservative leaders' use of questions differs from Donald Trump's distinctive style. Trump often places questions at the end of a sentence to offer some kind of commentary or affirmation to what was just said. For example, "We're very proud of our country. Aren't we? Really?" (Trump, 2016c). These open-ended questions create a pause in the speech and give audiences an opportunity to respond, which could perhaps account for the numerous mantras and slogans often chanted by crowds at Trump's rallies, such as "Drain the Swamp," or "Build the Wall" (Fernandez & Clark, 2018, p. 5).

In the Conservative Party speeches, rhetorical questions are more often used as an organizing device. As opposed to leaving the questions open-ended and unanswered, as Trump's often are, the Conservative speeches analyzed in this MRP commonly use rhetorical questions as a way to introduce a topic or put forward a position: "Is family important to you? Conservatives are the party that puts families first" (Harper, quoted in Chakde TV, 2015). Here, the speaker actually responds to the question, slightly lessening the conversational tone. One exception is when Andrew Scheer says that Justin Trudeau "has had to take 4.5 billion dollars of your tax money and send it to American investors so they can build pipelines in other countries competing with our own oil and gas sector. Shameful, isn't that?" (quoted in

Global News, 2019a). Still, it seems that this is another marked difference between the discourses of Donald Trump and the Conservative Party.

The use of collective nouns (e.g. “friends,” “folks”) was also included under this category. Along with commands and rhetorical questions, these nouns of address act as a way to engage the audience and sustain their attention by calling on them directly at various moments throughout the speech. Both Stephen Harper and Andrew Scheer use collective nouns frequently in their speeches, though they differ in their choice of words. Harper exclusively addresses his audience as “friends” (with the exception of one instance of “you guys,” discussed earlier), while Scheer uses “ladies and gentlemen.”

This difference is worth examining. Addressing an audience as one’s “friends” implies a familiar, favourable relationship between peers. “Ladies and gentlemen” is more formal, signaling the speaker’s respect for their audience and suggesting a less developed social relationship between the two. The formal tone is also heightened by the somewhat old-fashioned nature of the phrase; referring to audiences in gendered terms may also indicate the Conservatives’ commitment to more traditional social structures, like gender norms. That Andrew Scheer, running in his first election as leader of the Conservative Party, would opt for a more formal noun of address is understandable; previously unknown to many Canadians and 20 years younger than his predecessor, it seems reasonable that he would choose to introduce himself with a respectful, serious tone. What is perhaps more interesting is that Stephen Harper, then in his tenth year as Prime Minister of Canada, would choose to address the Canadian public—over whom he held considerable power—as his “friends” and equals. This choice may reflect an attempt to make Stephen Harper seem closer, more accessible, and more personable to “ordinary Canadians.” Having developed a reputation for being inauthentic and

stiff (McCutcheon, 2016), it could be that this was one part of an attempt to make Harper seem more like a “man of the people,” not unlike many perceptions of Donald Trump.

Summary

In keeping with findings from the previous section, when Conservative leaders use hyperbolic statements and techniques of conversational direct address, they do so in ways that are markedly different than Donald Trump’s usage. Harper and Scheer’s use of hyperbole is infrequent, occurring just seven times across the texts analyzed. These instances of exaggeration seem more like the strategic embellishments observed in typical political rhetoric than the spontaneous overgeneralizations and conspicuous boasting associated with Trump. Their use of conversational direct address in most forms is also relatively infrequent. Though they often call out to the audience using collective nouns, this appears to be a more surface-level engagement strategy than commands or questions, which invite participation from listeners.

Praise, Blame, and Accusations

Classical rhetorical studies often draw on Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, where he defines three forms of persuasion: appeals to *pathos*, or emotion; appeals to *ethos*, or character; and appeals to *logos*, or reason (Martin, 2015). In the following sections, I use these Aristotelian terms to describe how Trump and the Conservative Party refer to themselves and others through praise, blame, and accusations.

Praise

Some authors (Ahmadian et al., 2017; Montgomery, 2017; Theye & Melling, 2018) have noted Trump’s exceptional reliance on *ethos* appeals, or justifying claims by referencing one’s own merits, such as in this statement: “Nobody knows the system better than me, which

is why I alone can fix it” (Trump, quoted in Montgomery, 2017, p. 631). However, for the purposes of coding, this category was broadened to include any instance of praise, which I defined as assigning responsibility for positive outcomes to a specific person or group of people. The reason for this change is that there were no obvious instances of ethos appeals in the sample. As discussed previously, some of the Conservative leaders’ arguments were centered around highlighting their own virtues in contrast with their opponents’ alleged shortcomings; however, neither leader made explicit reference to his own qualifications or character.

Each of Stephen Harper’s speeches contained multiple instances of praise. The most common recipients of praise were the Harper administration (referred to interchangeably as “our [Conservative] government,” “this [Conservative] government,” or simply “we”), the Economic Action Plan, and various other Conservative policies implemented during Harper’s tenure. Previous Conservative governments and the Conservative Party as a whole also received considerable praise. As mentioned, none of these statements were praising Stephen Harper himself. In contrast to Trump’s notable reliance on ethos appeals, when Harper issued praise, it was most often combined with another of Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals: logos, or “logical claims supported by evidence” (Martin, 2015):

...it was Canada's Conservatives that gave this country its first Bill of Rights. And enshrined multiculturalism into law. (Quoted in Chakde TV, 2015)

Our Economic Action Plan. That is why the Canadian economy has been growing steadily, steadily creating jobs for the past six years... Since the end of the global financial crisis, Canada's economy has created nearly 1.3 million net new jobs... That is the best job creation record in the G7. (Quoted in TAG TV, 2015)

In these statements, Harper is appealing to verifiable matters of record to support his overall agenda (attracting Conservative Party supporters and securing re-election). He praises the

Conservative Party and his own administration by drawing on their history of good governance, citing particular policy decisions and outcomes, rather than his own personal capabilities or beliefs.

In contrast, praise was almost entirely absent from Andrew Scheer's speeches. The assertion that "it is Canadians who make this country work" was made in two different speeches (CPAC, 2019; Global News, 2019b), but no other instance of praise was recorded. This can be explained, at least in part, by Scheer's relative newcomer status in the 2019 election. As a first-time Prime Ministerial candidate, Scheer simply did not have the same personal record of achievement to draw on that Harper did in 2015 as a sitting Prime Minister. Still, it is interesting that, unlike Harper, Scheer made no reference to the Conservatives' historical policy accomplishments or to the party's legacy more broadly.

Blame + Accusation

The next category of the codebook analyzed instances of blame and accusation. Blame was defined as assigning responsibility for negative outcomes to a specific person or group of people. Accusations were combined with blame for the purposes of coding because accusations often represent a kind of future-oriented blame, in essence suggesting that someone *will be* responsible for negative outcomes in the future. These two tactics are widely found in Donald Trump's rhetoric: globalization is often blamed for the loss of working-class jobs; immigrants (especially Mexicans and refugees) are scapegoated as a source of crime and terrorism; political adversaries are accused of having poor moral character, often through name-calling like "Lyin' Ted" or "Crooked Hillary" (Abbas, 2019; Lamont et al., 2017).

Both Stephen Harper and Andrew Scheer used blame and accusation several times throughout each speech analyzed. For Harper, these most often came in the form of accusation

as he expressed his skepticism toward the Liberal and NDP's campaign promises and warned of the potential costs of their policy proposals: "Liberals and the NDP are making tens of billions of dollars of spending promises—money they do not have, money they can get only through running permanent deficits and raising your taxes" (quoted in TAG TV, 2015).

Andrew Scheer, however, was less likely to reference the NDP, and more often mentioned Justin Trudeau by name. For example, "Justin Trudeau will raise your taxes, run massive deficits, and impose greater amounts of debt on current and future generations of taxpayers" (Scheer, quoted in Global News, 2019a). For both leaders, this category contained a relatively even mix of blaming others for real outcomes and past events, and future-oriented accusations.

While ethos appeals were notably absent from Conservative leaders' expressions of praise, they are present—though uncommon—in their expressions of blame. Both Stephen Harper and Andrew Scheer's speeches included ad hominem attacks on Justin Trudeau, attempting to discredit him by appealing to his (allegedly) poor character or lack of qualifications. These attacks were included in the coding for this category as another form of accusation. For example, the accusation that Justin Trudeau was "just not ready" to be Prime Minister was included in two of Stephen Harper's speeches (Chakde TV, 2015; Channel Van Media, 2015). Later, Andrew Scheer would question Trudeau's trustworthiness and accountability to voters by arguing that "he's always in it for somebody else" (quoted in Global News, 2019b).

Justin Trudeau's trustworthiness and ethics are a common subject of critique for Andrew Scheer, leading to one particularly interesting moment on the campaign trail. In Richmond, BC, Scheer begins to highlight Trudeau's record of ethical missteps:

...the Ethics Commissioner found him guilty of breaking ethics laws not once, but twice. And he still won't let the RCMP investigate the SNC Lavalin corruption scandal.

And that's why when we form government, I will hold a judicial inquiry into his scandal to get to the bottom of what he's done! (Quoted in CPAC, 2019)

In a surprising moment, the crowd of Conservative supporters begins to chant, “Lock him up! Lock him up!” After a brief hesitation, Scheer is quick to refocus the audience: “Well... now... let's... we're gonna get to the bottom of his scandal. We're gonna vote him out! Vote him out! Vote him out!” (Scheer, quoted in CPAC, 2019).

This moment demonstrates the influence of US politics on Canadian observers. The “lock him up” chant is of course a clear imitation of the “lock her up” chants often heard at Donald Trump’s campaign rallies in 2016, sometimes with the encouragement of the candidate himself. The difference here is that Andrew Scheer quickly interrupts the chant, perhaps in an intentional effort to distance himself from associations with Donald Trump. Trump was also criticized for his role in advancing the “lock her up” chants, as the idea of imprisoning one’s political opponents is a radical departure from democratic norms (Melber, 2016; Prokop, 2016). To this end, Scheer makes a point of replacing “lock him up” with “vote him out,” reminding his followers that while Trudeau deserves to be held accountable for his actions, the best way to do that is through the democratic process.

Summary

The language of praise and blame plays a significant role in the campaign rhetoric of both Donald Trump and the Conservative party. The main difference, however, lies in which person or group is most often receiving praise or blame. Donald Trump has demonstrated a tendency for self-praise, or ethos appeals, that is unusual in American presidential politics. These are almost entirely absent from Conservative leaders’ rhetoric, which focuses on praising the party as a whole by drawing on specific outcomes and its overall record of achievement. Conservatives are more likely to appeal to an individual’s personality traits when

issuing blame or accusations by attacking their opponent's credibility based on their moral character and qualifications, but unlike Trump, appear hesitant to encourage more extreme forms of blame and accusation when they are shouted out from an enthusiastic audience. While Donald Trump has been shown to direct blame and accusations toward numerous actors (China, the media, and Muslims, to name a few) (Lamont et al., 2017), in their campaign speeches, Conservative leaders limit any blaming or accusation to political actors—that is, parties and their leaders. By comparison, it seems that the Conservative Party's rhetoric is less divisive than Donald Trump's. Instead of pitting social groups against each other by blaming them for one another's hardships, these negative outcomes are attributed to failures of political leadership and ideology, represented by a particular party or politician—not entire social classes or communities.

Framing Techniques

Populism

The existing bodies of literature on both Donald Trump and the Canadian Conservative Party's discourse suggest that populism is an observable feature of their respective communication styles. Montgomery (2017), for example, characterizes Donald Trump's rhetoric as a style of "authoritarian populism," comprised of xenophobia, patriotism, protectionism, anti-elitism, militarism, and belief in a strong government (2017, p. 622). Snow and Moffit (2012) have argued that Stephen Harper "successfully employed mainstream iterations of populism, using wedge politics to divide the community between 'ordinary'... Canadians and an 'out-of-touch' elite (and associated 'others')" (2012, p. 271).

This category of the codebook attempts to further examine whether and how populist language is used in Conservative Party campaign rhetoric, and how this might relate to Donald

Trump’s populism. For coding purposes, I drew from Snow and Moffit’s (2012) definition of populism, which sees populism as “a discourse that simplifies political space through a symbolic division of society into two antagonistic groups: ‘the people’... and an ‘other’” (2012, p. 273). Unlike some more traditional conceptions of populism, which typically position “the people” against “the elite,” Snow and Moffit’s definition refers to a more generalized “other.” The authors justify this choice “because numerous contemporary forms of populism have displaced the common antagonism of ‘the elite’ with minority groups (such as immigrants, Muslims, and homosexuals)” (Snow & Moffitt, 2012, p. 273). This expanded definition allows for a more fruitful comparison with Donald Trump, whose assessment of which social forces are threatening “the people” includes not only the elite, but other groups as well, as briefly noted in the previous section on blame and accusation. Following this definition, then, a passage was coded under this category if the speaker positioned two groups against each other, creating a kind of “us versus them” divide that could be configured as “the people versus the other”. Table 2 outlines all of the passages coded under this category, and how the two groups are defined by the speaker.

Table 2

Passage	Source	The People	The Other
<i>"... we as Conservatives know that your money belongs to you—not to the bureaucracy in Ottawa."</i>	Harper, quoted in Chakde TV, 2015; TAG TV, 2015	"you"	"the bureaucracy in Ottawa"
<i>"We know who gets ahead under Justin Trudeau's government. And it's not hard-working individuals. It's not small and medium-sized business owners. It's the corporate elite."</i>	Scheer, quoted in Global News, 2019a	"hardworking individuals" "small- and medium-sized business owners"	"the corporate elite"
<i>"Well, trust fund millionaire Liberals like Justin Trudeau might not worry about \$2 a litre gasoline, but the hardworking Canadians I meet every single day, they definitely do..."</i>	Scheer, quoted in CPAC, 2019; Global News, 2019b	"hardworking Canadians"	"trust fund millionaire Liberals like Justin Trudeau"
<i>"And you know, the government shouldn't be for the people who are already doing well. Conservatives. We're in it for the people who just need a break."</i>	Scheer, quoted in CPAC, 2019; Global News, 2019b	"people who just need a break"	"people who are already doing well"
<i>"... the dollar left in the pocket of the Canadian who earned it is always better spent than in the hand of the politician who taxed it"</i>	Scheer, quoted in CPAC, 2019	Wage-earning Canadians	Politicians who tax them
<i>"Life shouldn't be this difficult for people who work hard and do everything right. And here's the thing about Liberals like Justin Trudeau. He's always in it for somebody else. It's never for you. He's in it for somebody who has the money to hire a lobbyist, a special interest with an insider connection, or a billion-dollar corporation with a huge government relations team. For four years he has turned his back on Canadians like you. And has governed this country exclusively for them."</i>	Scheer, quoted in Global News, 2019b	"people who work hard and do everything right" "Canadians like you"	"somebody who has the money to hire a lobbyist" "a special interest with an insider connection" "a billion-dollar corporation with a huge government relations team"

In CPC discourse, “the people” are broadly envisioned and articulated as “people like you,” with occasional reference to their labour force participation (e.g., “hardworking,” “small- and medium-sized business owners”). These are general, sweeping descriptors that could ostensibly apply to anybody. Notably, the Conservatives do not claim to represent the interests of or speak for any particular social group or economic class in these statements. In contrast, “the other” is a narrower group, always described in terms of their economic dominance, insider status, or some combination of the two, as in the cases of “somebody who has the money to hire a lobbyist” or “a billion-dollar corporation with a huge government relations team” (Scheer, quoted in Global News, 2019b). In these latter articulations, Scheer claims that “Liberals like Justin Trudeau” can be bought or swayed by hired insiders, while Conservatives govern only in the genuine interest of the people. Not only do these statements hint at some degree of corruption within the Liberal Party, they also suggest that Liberal voters themselves are members of an elite class with dubious morals, willing to circumvent democratic equality by using their wealth to influence political processes. These privileged, powerful Liberals are contrasted with the pure “people”: Conservative “Canadians like you” who “work hard and do everything right” (Scheer, quoted in Global News, 2019b). At least in their campaign speeches, it seems that the version of populism articulated by the Conservative Party takes aim at the traditional economic elite—“trust fund millionaires” and “billion-dollar corporations”—and not at any kind of marginalized community (CPAC, 2019; Global News, 2019b).

Nationalism

Nationalism was another hallmark of Donald Trump’s campaign rhetoric, exemplified in his slogan, “Make America Great Again,” and repeated pledges to put “America first”. The next category of the codebook seeks to capture and characterize the Conservative Party’s

conception of Canadian nationalism, and the degree to which it operates in Conservative campaign rhetoric. While Donald Trump's nationalism has a distinct quality of past-looking restoration, most succinctly represented in the MAGA slogan, the expressions of nationalism made by Conservative Party leaders rarely take on this dimension. Only one statement coded under the nationalism category makes explicit reference to the past: "We're proud of our history," asserted Stephen Harper in 2015 (quoted in Chakde TV, 2015). However, the statement continues: "[we're] confident in our future, in this country, Canada! The best country in the world!" (Harper, quoted in Chakde TV, 2015). Unlike Trump's nostalgic, backwards-looking appeals to a purer past, all of the nationalism appeals recorded in the texts analyzed are either present-oriented or forward-looking.

While most of the Conservative Party's appeals to nationalism tend to be more optimistic and progressive than the MAGA-type claims made by Donald Trump, there were a handful of passages coded in this category that subtly imply that Canada or its excellence are at risk. Stephen Harper, for example, claims that Canada is "worth fighting for," and that "this must remain our Canada, the best country in the entire world" (quoted in Chakde TV, 2015). The phrase "worth fighting for" suggests that the country is somehow under threat. Likewise, declaring that Canada "must remain" the best country in the world implies that status is fleeting. Andrew Scheer also contends that "Canada should be a place where hard work is rewarded, where no goal is out of reach, and where no ambition is too big" (quoted in CPAC, 2019). Here, the word "should" implies that this is not currently the case. For Trump and his supporters, the MAGA slogan suggests that America has somehow been damaged or corrupted, but it promises that the country can be improved by looking to the past. Some statements made

by Conservative leaders similarly concede that Canada must continually work toward improvement, but they do so in a way that is positive, affirming, and forward-looking.

CPC expressions of nationalism also work to position the party as representing the values of Canadians—particularly new Canadians. While not present in every text analyzed, each leader gave at least one speech where they spent considerable time aligning themselves with immigrant voters, and the values they supposedly came to this country to find. Speaking in Brampton, Ontario, Stephen Harper delivered the following message:

Because with all my heart I believe, I know that our party, the Conservative Party of Canada, best reflects the values and aspirations of new Canadians from one coast of the country to the other. Is family important to you? Conservatives are the party that puts families first. Do you believe in judging people on merit and nothing more? We're the party that believes that who you are and what you've done matter more than who you know and where you're from. Do you admire people who succeed by working hard and playing by the rules? Then welcome home. (Quoted in Chakde TV, 2015)

In 2019, Andrew Scheer echoed similar sentiments at a rally in Vancouver:

And we know that Conservative values are what built this country. And they're needed now more than ever... I have met so many new Canadians. Families who have come from all over the world in search of freedom, hope, and opportunity. And they have found those same values here in the Conservative Party of Canada. Because new Canadians recognize that the values Conservatives hold dear are the very same values they came to Canada in search for. Strong families, safe communities, hard work paying off and the fundamental freedoms of thought, of speech, of religion. (Quoted in Global News, 2019b)

Here, both Harper and Scheer outline the specific values and norms they hope to represent for new Canadians, like family, hard work, and democratic freedoms, positioning the Conservative Party as the natural choice for immigrant voters and the very embodiment of the opportunities that brought them to Canada.

This is decidedly different from Donald Trump's nationalism, which regards immigration as a source of social unrest. His communications on this issue rely on sometimes veiled, and sometimes outright racist language. He famously kicked off his 2016 presidential

run with a speech calling Mexican migrants criminals and rapists; later in the campaign, he called for “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States” (quoted in Taylor, 2015)—a promise he would eventually try to implement once in office. In contrast, the Conservative Party makes explicit overtures to so-called “new Canadians.” Even the term itself has a more welcoming and inclusive tone than the impersonal “immigrants”. While nationalist rhetoric does play a role in their campaign discourse, the Conservatives’ conception of nationalism does not have the same fractious, nativist tenor as Donald Trump’s.

Market/choice

The final category was not derived from the Trump literature, but from the scholarship on Conservative Party discourse and branding. Observers of the Conservative Party (Richardson et al., 2013; Saurette & Gunster, 2013; Sawyer & Laycock, 2009) have noted the party’s overall ideological orientation towards the value of choice, which is ultimately equated with minimally regulated market activity. This section of the codebook attempts to capture that ideology in practice, mapping out how appeals to freedom of choice and limited market intervention are used in campaign-period rhetoric. Passages were coded under this category if the speaker appealed to the value of choice, specifically in the context of activities that affect the market (e.g. taxation, regulation, personal or government spending).

The market-oriented/choice frame is used just once by Stephen Harper on the topic of the Universal Childcare Benefit. As discussed earlier, Richardson et al. (2013) have demonstrated how the Conservative Party’s framing of the issue of childcare has sought to position Canadians’ spending choices (i.e., market activity) as the most important choices they make, while any intervention into free market activity is thought to be fundamentally opposed to Canadian’s freedom of choice. As explained by Sawyer and Laycock (2009), within the logic

of the market-oriented/choice frame, “tax cuts represent the expansion of choice, while public programmes, demanded by ‘special interests’ such as anti-poverty coalitions or equality-seeking groups represent its narrowing” (p. 140). This was the Conservatives’ justification for introducing a financial benefit to help parents afford private sector childcare, even though other policy solutions (i.e., universal childcare access under a national scheme) would have arguably given parents a wider selection of childcare options. This market-based justification was used in Harper’s campaign rhetoric when he said, “We know you make better choices for your family than governments ever will... That’s why we stopped giving money to bureaucrats to raise our children and instead gave that money directly to Canadian families in their place” (quoted in Chakde TV, 2015). This example clearly exemplifies this market-oriented/choice rhetoric: Harper explicitly uses the word “choice,” and positions individuals as more intelligent and responsible than an interventionist bureaucracy that wants to make their decisions for them. Though this is a clear example, it was the only one found in the speeches made by Stephen Harper.

Andrew Scheer, however, makes several campaign statements that adopt this market-oriented/choice discourse. For example, in two similar statements he explicitly refers to “the power of the free market” as being superior to government initiatives:

... no program or bureaucracy can replace the power of the human spirit and the free market. (Scheer, quoted in Global News, 2019b)

No amount of government can match the power of the free market... Because the dollar left in the pocket of the Canadian who earned it is always better spent than in the hand of the politician who taxed it. (Scheer, quoted in CPAC, 2019)

In the latter statement, he also raises the idea of choice by suggesting that money is “better spent” by individuals than by politicians—or, that individuals make better *choices* with their money than governments do. The reference to “the human spirit” in the first statement also

implicitly invokes the idea of individuals as effective, rational choice-makers. While the above statements represent Scheer's clearest examples of the market-oriented/choice frame, he also uses this strategy in two other statements:

... that is what Conservatives are all about. Getting government out of the way so that people can create for themselves a brighter, more prosperous future. It's not the government that should be getting bigger, it's your paycheck that should be getting bigger! (Quoted in CPAC, 2019)

This is what I am offering in this election... A government where wealth isn't taxed and regulated and controlled, but created and unleashed and multiplied. (Quoted in Global News, 2019b)

Taken together, these statements confirm that this market-oriented/choice ideology does indeed have a manifest presence in Conservatives' campaign rhetoric, occurring multiple times across the various speeches. For Harper, it is used to justify a specific policy decision—the Universal Childcare Benefit. For Scheer, however, this frame is not used in relation to any particular policy or promise; rather, it is used in broader statements that attempt to promote the Conservative Party's overall ethos of low taxes and small government.

Summary

The ways in which various framing techniques are used in Conservative campaign rhetoric offer a number of insights. For Donald Trump, populism and nationalism go hand in hand. His exclusive nationalism, which seeks to position “real” Americans and American values above all others, feeds into a divisive populism that sees the pure, idealized “people” as under threat from a hostile, often racialized, “other.” While the Conservatives do use populist and nationalist language, there were no such instances of overlap between the two frames, and neither takes aim at a particular marginalized group. In their populist remarks, Conservative leaders' imagination of “the other” is solely confined to an economic or political elite, which leaves room for the inclusion of “new Canadians” in their vision of the Canadian nation.

Conservative leaders also appeal to the values of individual consumer choice and the virtues of the free market—though, not to the degree that previous literature might suggest, occurring only a handful of times in Andrew Scheer’s speeches, and just once in Stephen Harper’s. Still, combined with the findings from the populism category, the ways in which the market-oriented/choice frame is invoked reinforces the notion that Canadian populism—as it is rhetorically expressed by Conservative leaders—is centered around a traditional economic elite class that is allegedly siphoning power away from “the people”.

Discussion

Having presented the results of my rhetorical analysis, it is now helpful to return to the original research questions:

RQ1: What are the common discursive features of the Conservative Party of Canada’s campaign rhetoric?

RQ2: Has the Conservative Party adopted any elements of a “Trumpian” style of discourse?

My analysis has indicated that the rhetorical styles of the CPC and Donald Trump are more different than they are similar. Nonetheless, using Trump as a point of comparison served as a useful tool to unpack Conservative campaign discourse and begin to identify some of its core rhetorical features.

Overall, the Conservative Party’s campaign rhetoric can be described as semi-formal and disciplined, which I suggest reflects a general strategy of projecting credibility. This trend was observed across a number of codebook categories, particularly the section encompassing linguistic and syntactic structures. The Conservatives’ sentence construction is intentional, complex (but not confusing), organized, and broadly repetitive across texts, revealing that candidates strictly adhere to prepared scripts and talking points. These observations align with

a broader history of the Conservative Party's commitment to message discipline and strong branding. Fiřtová (2019) attributes this to the CPC's roots under the Reform and Canadian Alliance banners, where the parties' far-right rhetoric proved to be a barrier to broader electoral success. Thus, wary of accusations of similar extremism, "Stephen Harper kept tight control over all aspects of the new Conservative brand; language control and framing were indissolubly attached to his brand messaging" (Fiřtová, 2019, n.p.). Similar conclusions have been drawn by Tom Flanagan, a political scholar and conservative activist who served as campaign manager during both of Stephen Harper's party leadership races (once for the Canadian Alliance and again for the CPC) as well as his 2004 federal election campaign. Among his "Ten Commandments of Conservative Campaigning" (2009), Flanagan places "Self-discipline" at number six:

The media are unforgiving of conservative errors, so we have to exercise strict discipline at all levels: there must be a complete plan for the campaign, so the leader is not forced to improvise; staff must avoid the limelight and let the communications department deal with the media... members and supporters must be careful and dignified in all their communications, even email and website postings. (2009, p. 284)

Here, Flanagan draws attention to what he sees as a pre-existing media bias³ against conservatives, suggesting that the CPC must be especially cautious in its communications so as not to invite any additional scrutiny. This larger trend was observed in my results, which confirm that in its campaign rhetoric, the Conservative Party appears to be similarly committed to repeating its key platform takeaways through formal, scripted language.

The Conservatives' strict adherence to party messaging aids in constructing an image of good organization and responsible management, which ultimately adds to the party's

³ In this, perhaps, Conservative communications strategists are not so different than a president who has, on more than one occasion, disparaged the "fake news media" as the "enemy of the people"—their strategies for combatting this perceived prejudice, however, are markedly so (@realDonaldTrump, 2017, 2019).

credibility. Conversely, Donald Trump's rhetorical appeal depends less on the content or accuracy of his remarks, but on the perceived authenticity with which they are delivered. As stated by Montgomery (2017), "Trump's campaign discourse rested ultimately upon a simple overriding claim to be a vernacular authentic voice of himself and at one and the same time to be voice of the people" (2017, p. 236). While Donald Trump's improvisational, unstructured, and unfiltered rhetoric gives the impression of authenticity, the Conservatives' propriety reinforces the idea that they are reasoned, sensible leaders. When it comes to hyperbole, self-praise, and personal attacks, the Conservatives do not attempt the same exaggerated falsehoods, personal flattery, or vicious name-calling often heard in Donald Trump's rhetoric; such excessive language would arguably stretch the limits of their credibility, and potentially invite accusations about a resurgence of the extremist rhetoric heard during the party's Reform and Canadian Alliance days. Instead, the Conservatives' rhetoric reads as thoughtful, measured, and planned in a way that implies it is well-reasoned, and therefore true. Their policy proposals, then, become trustworthy promises, and their claims about their record of achievement become unimpeachable credentials that uniquely qualify them for the job.

Another key difference between the rhetorics of Donald Trump and the Conservatives lay in their broader ideological undertones. Donald Trump's divisive populism, regressive nationalism, and outright racism is another element of his discourse that enhances his perceived authenticity. His disruptive rhetoric suggests that he sees the world in stark dualities, a simplistic outlook adds to his "everyman" persona and highlights him as an outsider to the political arena, unencumbered by political correctness. In the Conservative speeches analyzed, however, the language used could rarely, if ever, be similarly characterized as disparaging. The Conservatives' articulation of populism, unlike Trump's, appears to be solely concerned with

exposing an economic elite, not targeting a generalized “other.” Similarly, “new Canadians” are explicitly welcomed into the fold of Canadian nationalism, never scapegoated or blamed for social ills.

The Conservatives’ overtures to new Canadians may at first seem surprising, in the midst of a rise in ethno-nationalist xenophobia sweeping many Western democracies. However, this is actually evidence of a well-documented strategy implemented by the federal Conservatives in the last 15 years. According to Flanagan (2011), the newly-formed party was seeking a third pillar of support to complement its usual strongholds among Western populists in the prairies and traditional Tories on the east coast. “The traditional Conservative base of Anglophone Protestants is too narrow to win modern Canadian elections,” warns Flanagan in his third commandment of conservative campaigning: inclusion (2009, p. 279). “The key to the long term success of the Liberals has been their cultivation of minority groups. We have to take away that advantage before we can become the dominant political force in the country” (Flanagan, 2009). After failing to make substantive gains in Quebec in the 2004 federal election, the Conservatives turned their focus to making so-called “ethnic voters” the third pillar of their base. A 2011 strategy presentation leaked from the office of Jason Kenney (then-Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism) describes a “New Reality” in which “There Are Lots of Ethnic Voters, There Will be Quite a Few More Soon, [and] They Live Where We Need to Win” (Nejatian, 2011). Thus, the inclusive rhetoric toward new Canadians captured in the speeches analyzed can be seen as further evidence of both the Conservative’s targeted outreach to ethnic voters, and its steady, calculated strategic message discipline.

However, the rosy rhetoric toward new Canadians found in the speeches examined does not tell the full story of the Conservatives' discourse surrounding minority communities. Though this wasn't captured in the speeches analyzed in this study, Harper's 2015 federal campaign took a distinctly xenophobic turn in the latter half of the 11-week election period. A debate over whether niqab-wearing Muslim women seeking Canadian citizenship ought to be legally required to remove the garment while swearing their citizenship oath became a surprisingly dominant issue, when in September 2015, just four weeks before the October 19th election, the Federal Court of Appeal issued a decision that would lift the existing ban on niqabs in citizenship ceremonies (Crawford, 2015). Harper had previously stated that he found it "offensive that someone would hide their identity at the very moment where they are committing to joining the Canadian family. This is a society that is transparent, open, and where people are equal. And that is just... I think we find that offensive" (quoted in Patriquin, 2015, n.p.).

In addition to pledging to appeal the Court's ruling and reinstate the niqab ban, Harper promised that a re-elected Conservative government would explore legislation barring all federal civil servants from wearing the niqab (Payton, 2015). The Conservatives brought excessive attention to the matter by making it a major campaign topic, in what has been regarded by many as a clear attempt to redirect voters away from the party's policy record and unpopular leader (Clarke et al., 2017; Fiřtová, 2019; Kellogg, 2018; Payton, 2015; Wherry, 2015). In addition to the niqab issue, the 2015 election also saw the Conservatives pledge to create an RCMP-run hotline to which people could report "barbaric cultural practices," once again drawing on hateful stereotypes and suggesting that certain minority communities regularly disrespect so-called Canadian values (Kellogg, 2018).

In summary, there is an obvious tension between the Conservatives' long-term strategy of attracting the support of new Canadians, and later decisions to wade into cultural wedge issues that obviously demonized many of the very same voters. However, this tension was not captured in the campaign speeches examined. While that might reflect a tactical decision to exclude these more controversial issues from the statements made at campaign rallies, it could also indicate a limitation of the methodology used to conduct this analysis. The next section will highlight other such considerations and suggest directions for further study on this topic.

Conclusion

The aim of this major research paper was twofold: first, to assess the overall character of the Conservative Party's campaign rhetoric, and second, to determine whether it has undergone any noticeable shifts following (and perhaps as a result of) Donald Trump's electoral success in the United States. On a syntactic level, my analysis has indicated that Conservative rhetoric is formal, consistent, and projects credible, responsible leadership. Overall, the Conservatives' campaign speech rhetoric does not appear to be converging with Donald Trump's. However, other sites of discourse may reveal otherwise—particularly when it comes to broader ideological orientation and the treatment of minority groups.

This conclusion affirms much of the existing literature on the Conservative Party's discourse. Recall Saurette and Gunster's characterization of Canadian conservative discourse as so-called "cappuccino conservatism," a rhetorical strategy that is "much frothier and sweeter than its dark, acidic, and over-roasted American cousin" (Saurette & Gunster, 2013, p. 242). The "American cousin" the authors refer to here is backlash populism, a political rhetoric which attacks an alleged political elite class for subverting the will of the people, with a particular focus on how social progressives have hijacked the political agenda at the expense

of “ordinary Americans.” Unlike other strands of populism, backlash populism pays little attention to economic status, and instead classifies “the elite” versus “the people” according to social values and perceived authenticity. Donald Trump’s rhetoric, then, in its simplistic spontaneity and contempt for the establishment, represents a textbook example of backlash populism, while the Conservative Party speeches analyzed in this study exemplify the “frothier, sweeter” blend of cappuccino conservatism that Saurette and Gunter (2013) ascribe to Canadian right-wing discourse. The close rhetorical analysis of this study adds another layer of richness and detail to existing scholarship by demonstrating how some of this “sweetness” operates in context.

Limitations and Further Research

The biggest limitation for this research was the methodological challenge of obtaining transcripts of Conservative Party campaign speeches. I was not able to find an official database of transcripts, or even a campaign schedule that might indicate how many speeches each candidate made over the course of their respective campaigns. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether the speeches analyzed actually constitute a representative sample of the full number of speeches given by the Conservative leaders. This limitation may account for the apparent gap in findings discussed in the previous section. Perhaps the niqab ban *was* a topic of discussion in some of Harper’s 2015 campaign speeches—just not the few speeches that were uploaded to YouTube.

Future studies on this topic might consider other sites of conservative discourse besides campaign speeches. For example, how does the Conservative Party’s campaign rally rhetoric differ, if at all, from press conference remarks, leaders’ debates, written campaign materials, or social media posts? Twitter, of course, would be a worthwhile site for further comparison with

Donald Trump. It would also be useful to compare the Conservative Party's rhetoric with that of other Canadian parties at both the federal and provincial levels, or even other CPC members besides its leaders (e.g., MP candidates in various ridings). Further research could also examine how Conservative supporters (who are not party officials) react to party messaging, and the degree to which supporters adopt similar rhetorical styles in their own discussions. This could be done by looking at online forums, such as comment sections on news websites or social media.

This research could also contribute to broader study of the Conservative Party brand. I began to explore this theme in my discussion of credibility versus authenticity, and how the party has tried to market itself to new Canadians. Tom Flanagan's writings on his experience and contributions as a Conservative Party strategist were helpful in this regard (2009, 2011). Additional input from former CPC campaign staff could allow for further investigation into how the party conceptualizes its own brand identity, audience, and media strategy, contributing to a deeper analysis of how party's image and brand are rhetorically constructed through campaign speeches and other sites of discourse.

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