DONALD TRUMP’S JANUARY 6TH SPEECH: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

January 6 2021 marks one of the most significant dates in recent American history. On this day, Donald Trump held his last official speech as the president of the United States in front of thousands of people in Washington. For the first time in US history, a sitting president refused to commit to a peaceful transition of power. Right after the speech, his followers violently entered the Capitol building and tried to stop the certification of the election.

Trump’s final speech on January 6th is a great representation of his rhetorical strategies, which culminated in this artifact. However, it was not his final speech but the larger narrative that included an “us vs. them” rhetoric, blaming the “fake news and media” as well as the “radical left” Democrats and “weak” Republicans that potentially had an impact on the violent outcome. In this larger narrative as well as in the speech, Trump appealed to the notion of a strong patriotism, using hegemonic, toxic masculinity as a rhetorical device to create pathos within his audience. All those narratives support his main story of a rigged election. Using narrative theory, this thesis aims to conduct Trump’s amplified narratives and rhetorical strategies to examine if the violent outcome could have been anticipated.
Chapter 1: Introduction

January 6th of 2021 marks a significant date in recent American history. On this day, Donald Trump held his last official speech as the sitting President of the United States. He held the speech at The Ellipse in Washington, DC. Trump spoke for around one hour and twenty minutes in front of more than 10,000 people. Among the audience were mostly ordinary Trump supporters, with the exception of some more extreme groups that lean to the far right on the political spectrum.

During Trump’s rally, the certification of the election was in process, as Vice President Mike Pence was about to sign the final documents in the Capitol. While Trump was giving his speech, several thousand people were not only attending his rally, but also protesting in front of the capitol building. It was planned that the protest would continue after Trump’s speech, since the capitol is only a 30-minute walk from The Ellipse.

The reason the given date is such a significant one in recent American history, no comma needed is that right after Trump’s speech, while Congress attempted to certify the electoral votes for then President-elect Joe Biden, Trump supporters stormed the nations’ capitol to conduct an insurrection to undermine America’s democratic process and force the electoral vote to favor Trump (Timberg, 2021). The storming of the Capitol is unheard of in American history and, as mentioned, it happened right after Trump’s speech.

“I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the Office of the President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States." Every four years on January 20, a president-elect
stands before the nation and takes this oath of office during the inauguration. These words have been said by every president of the United States since 1789, when George Washington became the nation's first president. The swearing-in ceremony allows for the peaceful transfer of power from one president to another. It formally gives the "power of the people" to the person who has been chosen to lead the United States. This oath makes an ordinary citizen a president (McDonald, 2000).

As the election was technically over, it was only two weeks until Democrat Joe Biden would be sworn in as the next President of the United States. Nevertheless, Trump kept denying the election results in his speech, and additionally he already questioned the legitimacy of the votes during his whole presidential campaign. It is important to note that in his speech and in the process leading up to the final outcome, for one of the first times in the history of the United States of America, a sitting president questioned the election process and its final outcome, threatening the core democratic principles of a peaceful transition of power.

Apart from Trump’s denial of the electoral outcome, the storming of the Capitol represents an action that is unprecedented in American history, as it disregards core democratic values of the country. It is of discussion by the public, by legal departments as well as by academics within the field whether Trump’s rhetorical strategies in the speech had a possible impact on the aftermath. For instance, many political pundits considered Trump’s speech to be the direct impetus of the insurgency at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021 (Cineas, 2021).

It is especially significant not only that the more extreme groups within his audience conducted the storming of the Capitol, but even more so that regular citizens
were responsible for the violent actions that were taken after Trump’s rally. This last
official speech offers a great representation of his rhetorical methods in terms of how he
persuaded and polarized his audience throughout his presidency.

Months prior to the event, the two candidates in the 2020 presidential election,
Donald Trump and his contestant, Democrat Joe Biden, were campaigning to determine
who will be next in office. The election process was overshadowed by provocations
between the Republican and Democratic parties. Trump did not hesitate to attack his
opponent on both political and personal levels. For instance, Trump mocked Mr. Biden’s
mental faculties (Glueck, 2020), and called him “sleepy” Joe Biden in various tweets.

Throughout his years as the president, Trump’s rhetoric toward the Democratic
Party had constantly been one of scapegoating them as his and the Republicans’ enemies.
However, as things pointed toward his losing the election, things got more extreme than
ever before. On the campaign trail and during his presidency Trump did not merely attack
his opponents and “enemies” with aggressive and degrading language, he condoned,
praised, and even encouraged physical violence against various enemies (Nacos, 2020).

Additionally, many times throughout the election process, Trump questioned the
fairness of the election, which led to even more tension. Therefore, since the early days of
campaigning and throughout his presidency, Donald Trump has adopted belligerent
rhetoric to attack the mainstream media as being unfair, dishonest, biased, and as
operating against the interests of the American public (Meeks 2020).

Not only did Trump emphasize the unfairness of the media throughout his
campaign, the president has also repeatedly raised the prospect of a “rigged election” and
declined to say if he would accept the results (McCarthy, 2020). He did so even though comprehensive research shows that voter fraud is virtually non-existent (Bump, 2016).

Even before he was elected president, Trump frequently made unsubstantiated assertions about widespread voter fraud. He called for a do-over after losing the Iowa caucuses to Ted Cruz in 2016, and he made claims about “serious voter fraud in Virginia, New Hampshire and California” after failing to carry those states in the general election that year.

During the 2020 campaign, Trump’s rhetoric pointed increasingly to the possibility that he would dispute the outcome in a year marked by primary election administration meltdowns - a prospect that was heightened by his absolute control of state and national party machinery and an attorney general who has amplified Trump’s unsubstantiated claims about mail-in voting fraud (McCarthy, 2020). “I don’t have any doubt that’s where he’s headed,” Pete Giangreco, a Democratic strategist who has worked on nine presidential campaigns, said of Trump’s efforts to discredit the election. “He wants to delay the election because if they had the election today, he’d lose. The further out he gets from today, the better off he is. So, he wants more time to jerry-rig the system to somehow spit him out as the winner” (McCarthy, 2020).

Trump’s accusations of a rigged election culminated in his main narrative during his speech on January 6th. Repeatedly, Trump reinforced the plot of a stolen election in front of a huge crowd. In order to support this narrative, he amplified several other stories.

As already briefly mentioned, one of them was the notion of the “fake news and media” that influenced and manipulated the American public. Furthermore, in his speech,
Trump fostered the “us vs. them” mentality between his crowd and the opposing political party as well as the political establishment and between the - as he calls them - “weak” Republicans. In addition to that, Trump used the narrative of patriotism with a strong emphasis on the importance of the military in order to differentiate his supporters from his opponents.

Considering that these narratives were a part of Trump’s rhetorical repertoire for a long time, I argue that this rhetoric reached its pinnacle during his speech at the Ellipse on January 6th. Even though this thesis does not claim that Trump’s speech was the pivotal impulse that ultimately led to the storming of the nations’ Capitol, its goal is to examine Trump’s rhetorical devices and to scrutinize how his spun narratives had a possible impact on the violent outcome. Indeed, this thesis will evaluate how Trump’s narratives set in motion a series of events, which by examination of his rhetoric had an anticipated conclusion, so that the end of the overall story is not a surprise at all.

Connected to the violent escalation as the anticipated end of the story, there has been previous research in our field that evaluated whether Trump’s rhetoric had an effect on hate crimes. Going back to Trump’s first presidential campaign, examining whether correlations existed between counties that were venues of Donald Trump’s 275 campaign rallies in 2016 and the location of subsequent hate crimes, three political scientists found “counties that had hosted a 2016 Trump campaign rally saw a 226 percent increase in reported hate crimes over comparable counties that did not host such a rally” (Nacos, 2020). While cautioning that this analysis cannot be certain it was Trump’s campaign rally rhetoric that caused people to commit more crime in the host county, the researchers also found it hard to discount a ‘Trump effect’ since data of the Anti-Defamation League
showed “a considerable number of these reported hate crimes referenced Trump.” (Feinberg, 2019) Similar to this conclusion, I am aware of the fact that correlation does not equal causation, but I argue that the examination of Trump’s rhetorical strategies leads to the conclusion that his supporters are capable of violent actions.

In order to examine Trump’s speech, it is beneficial to look at his ways of persuading his audience through narrative theory as a theoretical lens. When we discuss politics, the grounds of argument are certainly not restricted to strict propositional logic: appeals to the audience are based on emotions, on character, and on popular beliefs (Leslie, 2015). Therefore, narrative theorist Walter Fisher claims that storytelling is more persuasive than logically constructed arguments, and storytelling is a rhetorical strategy that Trump mastered during this speech.

As a matter of fact, this thesis will examine why Trump’s speech is so effective, even though his claims are almost never backed up by evidence. Therefore, the literature review will offer a deeper look into narrative theory and expound on why storytelling as a way of persuasion is so successful. Furthermore, the descriptive analysis of the speech will connect Trump’s specific statements to narrative theory and shine light on how exactly Trump amplified his different narratives to unify and polarize his crowd.

However, Trump also uses several other rhetorical devices that assist his different narratives. Therefore, this thesis will provide an insight in how Trump’s demagoguery becomes evident throughout his speech and partly connect it to his demagogic leadership style in the past. Connected to that, Trump utilizes this demagoguery by applying populist language, creating a victim mentality that he and his audience embodies, which is closely tied to hegemonic, toxic masculinity.
Therefore, processes of hegemony have been hypothesized to be powerful tools in the reinforcement and maintenance of the status quo (Gramsci, 1970). Trump’s application of hegemonic, toxic masculinity underlines his last attempts to stay in office. In order to strengthen this hegemonic, toxic masculinity, the strong emphasis on the military within his rhetoric during the speech will be shown to be a vital part of this thesis.

In his last official speech as the president of the United States on January 6th, the main narratives that Trump spun throughout his presidency culminate in this one artifact. Contemplating that culmination, it becomes evident that Trump employed these narratives as rhetorical devices throughout his four years in office and even before that. Trump constantly repeated the same narratives, which results in a narrative consistency and coherence that effectively draws in the audience. Repetition is a rhetorical strategy that Trump deployed over the years with the same stubbornness as he did during his speech on January 6th, which is why this thesis will shine light on repetition as a rhetorical tool as well.

I believe that analyzing this speech has significant value to the field, as January 6th is one of the most important dates in recent American history. Therefore, discussing Trump’s rhetorical strategies and their possible impact on what happened after the speech is of importance in order to work through to create an understanding of this historic day.

This rhetorical analysis of Donald Trump’s January 6th speech speaks to several issues of importance to rhetoric and communication scholars. Throughout Trump’s presidency, his rhetoric has been discussed through the lens of multiple theoretical approaches. It became evident that Trump’s rhetoric is one that threatens liberal
democracy in various ways, which is one of the reasons the thorough analysis of it undertaken here is so significant.

The questions at hand that drive the conversations in our field are how and why Trump’s rhetorical strategies were so efficient in their ways of persuading his own audience. As mentioned, not only does Trump’s rhetoric threaten liberal democracy, it also further divides a whole nation and society, and it fosters a segregated America in the light of toxic masculinity, drifting away from feminist political ethics (Johnson, 2017). Trump’s rhetoric aims at instrumentalizing the “ordinary” against the establishment. More understanding and awareness within the field can help identify similar demagogic leadership styles in the future.

Furthermore, with my personal context coming from Germany, looking at hegemonic, toxic masculinity and the use of demagogic rhetoric connected to several narratives that create an “us vs. them” mentality within the population, I also cannot dismiss the historical tragedy that this rhetorical style has led to in the past. By examining Trump’s demagoguery in terms of scapegoating outside groups, creating a victim mentality and stressing the importance of a strong patriotism, I think it is crucial that scholars in our field are constantly aware of (the thin line between all those points), considering the possibility that these methods evoke right-wing nationalism and conclude in violence.
Chapter 2: Context

2.1 Events and Involved People Before and After the Speech

While a comparison between 9/11 and January 6th might be misplaced, what the two dates have in common is that as soon as they are mentioned, Americans can most likely remember where they were and what they were doing that day, and no year needs to be attached to these specific dates.

On Wednesday afternoon of January 6th, 64 days after Election Day 2020, Trump gave his last speech as the president of the United States. Afterward, a mob of his supporters stormed and assaulted the Capitol, resulting briefly in what Vice President Mike Pence had refused to do originally: Disrupting the ceremonial certification of the electoral votes confirming that Joe Biden would be the new president of the United States.

Prior to these events, Trump had lost the election against Democrat Joe Biden. Even though this thesis does not aim to settle the question of whether Trump was responsible for the Capitol riot, it is important to have a more specific context in order to grasp the significance of what happened after Trump’s speech and to gain a better perspective about what specific role his speech actually played in the process.

Therefore, the following section will briefly move away from focusing on Trump’s rhetorical strategies within the speech, and highlight characteristics of his past rhetoric and especially give more background information to how and why things developed the way they did on January 6th.

Furthermore, this section will describe some more context about the legal aftermath that took--and still takes--place while this thesis is written, highlighting
different perspectives, and involved people and institutions. Since the storming of the Capitol is of such historic significance, the evaluation of his speech that follows in Chapter 4 will always be couched in light of the rhetorical aftermath, and discuss how Trump’s rhetoric was used, circulated, and amplified by the people who attacked the Capitol.

At this point in time, Donald Trump was the president of the United States for the past four years. For more context, it is important to mention his political views, his ideals, and values. Therefore, he represents the Republican Party and is known for his conservative views and his affiliation with the far right. Indeed, he can be considered a right-wing populist.

Trump has appeared in the public scene as a populist leader employing a colloquial language that has resonated with his electorate. Using hyperbolic language, he presents simplistic solutions for complex situations where fear (Wodak, 2015) has been a constant factor to legitimize his presidential campaign, offering himself “to the nation as the new, worthy leader” (Austermuehl 2020, p. 21).

Right-wing populists, as a product of the far-right ideology, share common “political issue clusters”: immigration, security, corruption, and foreign policy (Mudde 2019, 31). Politicians present those issues as hyperbolic threats, to later emphasize thorough repetition and catchy phrases, that as leaders, they are capable of meeting those threats, get the job done and solve the situation, without much detail about the means, but with a focus on the goal (in Trump’s case in the speech: to convince his audience of a rigged election).
It was December 17th, 2020, three days after electors in state capitols across the country cast their votes in the Electoral College to formally confirm that Mr. Biden had been elected the 46th president of the United States. Under regular circumstances, that would have been accepted as the end of the election. On December 19th, 2020, six weeks after losing the election, Trump Tweeted to his supporters to join him in Washington for one last rally to protest the results of the vote.

A date was set for January 6th, 2021 - the day Congress would oversee the final certification of the count. “Be there,” Trump wrote, “will be wild!” The response online was huge and instantaneous. Within hours, the president’s words had been amplified by a network of right-wing activists and hard-core conservatives in Congress. In the offline world, pro-Trump organizers set to work obtaining permits, and people across the country started to mobilize, making travel plans and arranging for hotel rooms (New York Times, 2022).

Ultimately, thousands of Trump supporters came to Washington that day and many listened to the president deliver his speech at the Ellipse near the White House. They heard his claims that the election had been stolen and his encouragement to “fight like hell” to save the country. Thousands followed his call to march from the Ellipse to the Capitol. While only a fraction of these people eventually took part in the riot, investigators - both in Congress and in the Justice Department - have been focused on an array of questions that concern the crowd. Those were: How did it come together? Who, aside from Trump, helped direct it toward the Capitol? And how was it transformed into a violent mob?
The inquiries remain ongoing but have touched on a diverse cast of characters: figures in the White House and the Trump campaign as well as political activists and members of Congress allied with Mr. Trump, also far-right extremist groups that placed themselves at the center of action (Feuer, 2022).

Looking at the audience present during his speech, among them were mostly ordinary citizens who identified as Trump supporters. In addition to that, there were more extreme groups who emerged throughout the four-year reign of Donald Trump. One of those groups was the “QAnon” conspiracy group, a movement that believes in various conspiracy theories surrounding the government of the United States. Another group that was present in the audience were the so-called “Proud Boys,” a group of far right nationalists, and the “Oath Keepers,” which is a far-right paramilitary collective. It was later proven that the Oath Keepers showed up to the event with military equipment, radios, and were ready to “receive Trump’s orders.” Considering these groups, it is evident that parts of the audience were receptive to any calls of further action or violence (Logan, 2022).

In general, Trump knows that the audience mainly consists of people who support his politics and his vision. Therefore, his speech aims at further separating his audience members from the political establishment and convincing them that he and his party are entitled to stay in office. It is significant to keep in mind that all his rhetorical strategies are practiced in total awareness of his audience, and that they would not be as effective if they were directed to more neutral listeners. Apart from that, it is also important to be aware of the fact that - as prosecutors have repeatedly pointed out – that a significant role was played by more ordinary people who had no affiliation with right-wing
organizations. Court records show, in fact, that those who acted most violently on January 6 were in many ways those with the most ordinary backgrounds.

It is useful to trace back a little bit and look at Donald Trump’s past and a few of his characteristics that are significant to understand the context. For years, Trump had railed against contests in which he failed, disliked the outcome, or feared he might be defeated. He objected nearly two decades ago to the results of the Emmys and falsely claimed that President Barack Obama had not won the popular vote. He asserted that Senator Ted Cruz “stole” a primary victory from him in Iowa in 2016 and predicted, before he defeated Hillary Clinton that year to win the presidency, that the general election would be manipulated (Feuer, 2022).

Therefore, the fact that in the months leading up to the 2020 election, trailing in the polls, he again predicted that he would be cheated out of a victory, and refused to commit to a peaceful transfer of power, in some ways did not come as much of a surprise. Trump’s lies found an eager audience in a broader movement fueled by hard-right groups who believe the United States, with its increasing racial and ethnic diversity, is being stolen from them.

The message of a stolen election was not entirely new either. For years, allies of Donald Trump had promoted the false “Stop The Steal” narrative that elections were being stolen in districts across the country (Feuer, 2022). That narrative heated up months before the 2020 election when some of Trump’s allies raised doubts about the security of mail-in ballots - an option that grew more popular during the pandemic - and began to spread claims that China or other nations would interfere in the election in order to harm Trump.
Trump’s personal lawyer, Rudolph W. Giuliani, who is under federal investigation for his pro-Trump activities in Ukraine, was perhaps the biggest promoter of the lie, traveling around the country to hold hearings and collect dubious testimonies about how the election was purportedly stolen. A large number of Trump supporters gathered at the event on January 6th, next to several officials of the Republican Party and Trump’s closest entourage. Rudolph W. Giuliani, Trump’s personal lawyer, spoke shortly before Trump and among other things called for “trial by combat.” Months before this speech, Giuliani publicly stated that Trump won the election “by a landslide” (Arkin, 21).

Therefore, Trump consciously uses his allies in order to support his claims. He is aware that Giuliani represents a successful public figure as a lawyer, and that his own credibility will rise if more public figures support his claims.

In addition to that, Trump set up legal strategies through which he planned to combat the election results. Trump made no secret of his plan to wage a legal battle in his bid to hold on to the White House. Two days before Election Day, he stood in front of reporters at a North Carolina airport and declared that as soon as the election was over, he and his party would plan to involve their lawyers and take legal action (Feuer, 2022). In the chaotic postelection period, a hotline Mr. Trump’s legal team set up for fraud allegations was flooded with unverified claims.

For instance, a Postal Service truck driver from Pennsylvania stated without evidence that his bus had been filled with fake ballots. Republican voters in Arizona complained that some ballots had not been counted because they were marked with Sharpie pens that could not be read by voting machines. Trump appeared to be aware of
many of these reports, and spoke about them often with officials, stating various theories about voting fraud even as the officials disproved them one by one.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, part of the Department of Homeland Security, announced that there was no evidence of fraud in the election. That finding was backed up by Attorney General William P. Barr, who alerted Mr. Trump privately in November and acknowledged publicly on December 1st that the Justice Department had not found any evidence of fraud “on a scale that could have effected a different outcome in the election” (Feuer, 2022). While Trump’s wide-ranging legal effort was a failure as a legal matter, it did accomplish something that eventually assisted him: It helped to sow doubts in the public mind about the vote-counting process and kept alive the falsehood that the election had been rigged.

Since the capitol riot happened, an investigation has been going on for over a year. In this investigation, the so-called House select committee was tasked with evaluating and prosecuting the case. Considering that mission, the House select committee issued a series of public hearings that still go on to this day. There are nine members of Congress on the House select committee that is scrutinizing the causes of the riot at the U.S. capitol on January 6, 2021. It is worth noting that the House select committee, which has the power to subpoena testimony and documents, name the events as a “domestic terrorist attack.” (Feuer, 2022, p. 3). This label underlines the magnitude and seriousness of January 6th in American history.

The committee does not have the authority to pursue criminal charges, but it can make referrals to the Justice Department. A criminal referral from Congress would merely be a recommendation for the Justice Department to investigate a case. It would
carry no legal weight, since Congress has no authority to tell federal prosecutors what charges to pursue. Given that the committee’s staff is led by a bipartisan pair of former U.S. attorneys, any recommendation they make would most likely be taken seriously by federal prosecutors, who could then pursue charges (Feuer, 2022).

Initially, the Justice Department’s investigation focused on the rioters who violently entered the Capitol on January 6\textsuperscript{th}. Therefore, more than 800 people were charged and prosecuted. Furthermore, the House select committee has interviewed more than 1,000 people that are in some way connected to the January 6\textsuperscript{th} attack, amongst them several key people of interest. For instance, Rudolph W. Giuliani was one of them, as well as Trump’s daughter, Ivanka Trump.

2.2 The Location of the Speech

Apart from the aftermath’s legal aspects, the determined location of the speech plays a critical role and is worth mentioning to gain more context. In their article “Location Matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest,” Dannielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook examine how the chosen place impacts social movements and has a rhetorical effect on the audience. In general, the rhetorical deployment of place is a common tactic for social movements. In our case, Trump’s speech and the whole event can be considered a “social movement” of its own kind.

Beyond referencing particular places in their arguments for social change, social movements have also relied on the rhetoricity of places themselves by holding protest events in particularly meaningful places or using protest events to create temporary fissures in the dominant meanings of places (Endres & Cook, 2011). “In short,” as Tim Cresswell notes, “the qualities of place that make them good strategic tools of power
simultaneously make them ripe for resistance in highly visible and often outrageous ways” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 209).

Endres and Cook describe “Place-as-rhetoric” as the core contribution to their study of place in protest and place generally; it assumes that the very place in which a protest occurs is a rhetorical performance that is part of the message of the movement. They state, “Place refers to particular locations (e.g., a city, a particular shopping mall, or a park) that are semi-bounded, a combination of material and symbolic qualities, and embodied. For example, a city is semi-bounded by city limits (semi-bounded because these limits can be a matter of debate, change over time, or be re-drawn within a single year), includes material structures like buildings and roads, has symbolic meanings such as being perceived as a college town or an urban metropolis, and is experienced on a daily basis by the people who live, work, or visit it” (Endres & Cook, 2011, p. 262).

Using place as a heuristic for studying social movements recognizes not only that social protest is inherently out of place, but also that place is more than just a backdrop for the rhetoric of social protest. As de Certeau contends through his discussion of the “rhetoric of walking,” the place and the visitor rhetorically engage one another as the place communicates and the pedestrian “speaks” back (De Certeau, 1984, p. 70).

The first and more traditional conceptualization of place in protest - place-based argument - involves a discursive description of a specific place as support for an argument. This way of thinking about place has been around for a while as rhetoricians have shown how invoking a conception of place is an argumentative resource for movements.
In the context of social movements, place-based arguments are meant to support the goals of the movement. Michael Heaney and Fabio Rojas note, “places are symbols in the discursive repertoires of movements” (Heaney & Rojas, 2006, p. 488). Place-as-rhetoric refers to the material (physical and embodied) aspects of a place having meaning and consequence through bodies, signage, buildings, fences, flags, and so on.

Considering Endres & Cook’s research on place-based argument and place-as-rhetoric, it becomes evident that Trump deliberately chose The Ellipse in Washington as his location. First and foremost, The Ellipse is in walking distance to the Capitol, where thousands of his followers were already protesting. As he states during his speech that he and his crowd will walk to the Capitol together, a different location would have been disconnected from his rhetoric.

Furthermore, Washington is the home and center of US Government. The Ellipse is not only physically located near Congress, it is also symbolic of the nation’s values and ideals. During his speech, Trump emphasizes American values many times, and the location supports his rhetoric. Because of the location, the audience connects even more to the narrative that Trump is creating. Therefore, The Ellipse as the chosen location plays a significant role.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Hegemonic, Toxic Masculinity

Paul Elliot Johnson argues that Trump’s rhetorical form functions through a toxic masculinity. In order to understand the concept of toxic masculinity, it is significant to look at masculinity and hegemonic masculinity as subtopics. Ebben and Garza state that masculinity refers to behaviors or culturally prescribed characteristics, roles, and/or sets of expectations that are considered normal, typical, or exemplary for boys and men (Ebben, 2017). Current scholarship recognizes masculinity as discursive and performative, a complex cultural gender construction that describes, prescribes, proscribes, and regulates meanings of what it means to be “male.” Thus, masculinity is produced in the discourse of dominant social norms and works to order bodies accordingly.

The study of hegemonic masculinity, made popular in the work of Connel (1995) and other scholars, draws a distinction from previous understandings and forms of traditional masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity has been identified as a particular “pattern of practice (i.e. things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832).

Hegemonic masculinity has been linked to power, and although that linkage does not necessarily signal violence, it could allow for force with “ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion” (Connell & Messerschmidt, p. 832). However, because hegemony is never finished, there is the potential for the social transformation of masculinity.
An especially significant strain of hegemonic masculinity is toxic masculinity. It differs from generally hegemonic masculinity in its intensity and aggressiveness as well as in its capacity to cause harm both to those upon whom it is imposed and on those who enact it. Kupers (2005) offers the following definition of toxic masculinity: “Toxic masculinity is constructed of those aspects of hegemonic masculinity that foster domination of others and are, thus, socially destructive.

Unfortunate male proclivities associated with toxic masculinity include extreme competition and greed, insensitivity to or lack of consideration for the experience and feelings of others, a strong need to dominate and control others, an incapacity to nurture, a dread of dependency, a readiness to resort to violence, and the stigmatization and subjugation of women, gays, and men who exhibit feminine characteristics.” (Kupers, 2005, p. 717)

In relation to Trump’s speech, this hegemonic and toxic masculinity helps his audience to get into the victim-role as they follow Trump's claim that “real America” is displaced from the political center by a feminized political establishment. For instance, according to a poll, Trump supporters were more likely to believe men are discriminated against and that society has become “too soft and feminine” (Khazan, 2016). For voters who feel men’s status is declining, social scientists and popular commentators speculated (Katz, 2016), Trump - and in particular, Trump head-to-head against Clinton - served as a powerful symbol for their desire to return to a more gender-conventional society in which masculinity is publicly considered to be higher status than femininity.

Therefore, Trump distances himself from the establishment and the mainstream media and creates the image of the voiceless American that is desperate for change, an
image that his audience follows. Trump creates an avenue where it seems as if white supremacy and masculinity is not a thing, because how can white masculinity organize a society in which apparently it has no part? As a result, this stance of white, masculine victimhood strengthens Trump’s position.

In order to understand the issue of hegemonic and toxic masculinity, it is important to compare it to feminism and look into how it affects feminism and women in general. A growing body of literature demonstrates the lengths to which men will go to reassert their masculinity when it is called into question. In response to such gender identity challenges, researchers have found that men are more likely to sexually harass a fictitious female research participant (Maass, 2003), show increased support for the Iraq war and homophobic views (Munsch & Willer, 2013), place greater blame on a female date-rape victim (Munsch & Willer, 2012), and become physically aggressive (Bosson, 2009).

Most studies have not found this overcompensation effect among women when their femininity has been called into question (Munsch & Willer, 2012), suggesting that masculinity is precarious and easily lost, whereas femininity is not (Vandello, 2008). The fact that the overcompensation effect is found only among men aligns with both Ridgeway’s (2011) assertion that masculinity is regarded as more desirable and respectable than femininity and Connell’s (2005) conceptualization of gender relations as hierarchical. Because femininity is subordinate to masculinity (Connell, 1985) and men feel they have more to lose, men feel more compelled to overcompensate in the face of a gender identity threat than do women.
Looking at Trump and his rhetoric throughout his presidency, from claiming to kiss and grope women without their consent (Fahrenthold, 2016) to mocking a handicapped male journalist (Carmon, 2016), Trump’s actions and rhetoric work toward the subordination of women and particular groups of men. Therefore, Trump’s actions and statements embody a form of masculinity that underlies Connel’s (1995) conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity, and as I am arguing, toxic masculinity in particular.

Given that men have more physical, social, and economic power than women (Pratto, 2004), masculinity and manhood are valued and normalized, whereas femininity and womanhood are othered and in need of explanation (de Beauvoir, 1952). As de Beauvoir noted, the othering of women (or the gender binary) is at the heart of hierarchical systems that oppress women (de Beauvoir, 1989); this process includes women with various intersecting identities (Davis, 1983), as well as men who belong to marginalized ethnic, economic, religious, and sexual groups (Lerner, 1986).

As a result, the state institutionalizes a male point of view (Fernbach, 1981) and masculinity long has been embedded in the political discourse of the United States (Ducat, 2004), perpetuated by candidates who strategically symbolize masculine ideals while attempting to emasculate their opponents (Fahey, 2004).

Dittmar (2017) points out that male candidates have long “played the gender card” by seeking to prove they are “man enough” for leadership roles. Trump, in particular, turned the primary and general election of 2016 against Clinton into a “masculinity contest” (Berdahl, 2018, p. 433) by emphasizing toughness, aggression, stamina, and domination. Furthermore, Trump predominantly communicated a hostile
sexist view toward women throughout his presidency and before that. He did so by commenting negatively on their appearance, bragging on tape about sexually assaulting women, and encouraging “lock her up” chants at rallies.

At the beginning of his presidency, Donald Trump distanced himself from the policies of previous Republican Party presidents on trade, immigration, and war, in favor of a more nationalist and populist platform (Rothwell & Diego-Rosell, 2016). Populist leaders promote traditional and conservative values and morals around family structure and gender roles (Wodak 2017, 5). Considering that, Trump’s message has also been approached from a gender preference perspective (Harp, 2019), in particular, in relation to performing a sort of “hypermasculinity” (Smith and Higgins, 2020). As “hypermasculinity” can be seen as a synonym for toxic masculinity, Smith and Higgins suggest with their comment that Trump’s rhetoric as a populist leader has to be seen in light of those concepts.

Hegemonic, toxic masculinity emerges in several themes that Trump addresses in his speech on January 6th. When looking at one of the main topics of his rally, patriotism with an emphasis on the military, it is impossible to ignore the patriarchy and connected toxic, hegemonic masculinity that is in place. Therefore, Trump’s shared ideological privileging of masculinity promotes and perpetuates the unique connection between militaristic and nationalistic activity and the patriarchal framing of social experience (Enloe, 2000). This interrelationship is particularly significant for the United States, which operates one of the most powerful militaries in the world. The US president is the commander-in-chief of that military might.
It is crucial to take into consideration that Trump’s narrative of a strong military which is closely connected to masculine values, has a direct impact on society as a whole. Therefore, Weinstein & D’Amico state, “Americans need to understand the relationship between the military and society because the military both reflects the larger society and serves as one avenue to change society” (Weinstein & D’Amico, 1999, p. 3).

As a consequence, this relationship means that if the military, which is closely tied to patriotic or nationalistic values, promotes patriarchy and a hegemonic system, this automatically translates into the reality of America as a country. Connected to that, United States’ nationalism promotes “liberty,” “freedom,” “economic opportunity,” and its own hegemonic place among global actors. As an ideological system it is those in power like US presidents who are best able to produce and benefit from the accepted nationalism (Enloe, 1990).

Indeed, the study of nationalism and militarism has been the study of patriarchy (Enloe, 1990). Nagel (1998) states that women “are not expected to defend our country, run our country, or represent our country. Of course, many women do these things, but our presence in the masculine institutions of state – the government and the military – seems unwelcome unless we occupy the familiar supporting roles: secretary, lover, wife” (p. 261).

It is the study of a “hegemonic masculinity,” denoting specific images and qualities of what it means to be a desirable man and a “hegemonic nationalism” denoting specific features and actions of the desirable state of the nation. As gendered ideologies they privilege “toughness,” “competitiveness,” and “the subordination of women” (Connell, 1990, p. 94). Attributes like, “toughness” and “competitiveness” are constant
parts of Trump’s rhetoric, and even though he never directly talks about the “subordination of women,” his language and rhetoric indicates that aspect.

Patriotism or nationalism defines who is desirable as a national representative, its masculine components reserve such positions for men. Militarism is privileged in the national ideology, and hegemonic masculinity experiences its most intense expression and reinforcement in the form of militarization (e.g., the acts of protecting, killing, warring, and conquering). Looking at Trump’s language throughout the speech, words like “fighting,” “strength,” and his strong emphasis on the military all suggest this hegemonic, toxic masculinity. As a consequence, for masculinity to be realized as strong, ideal, and dominant, femininity must be framed as weak, flawed, and subordinate (Weinstein & D’Amico, 1999; Enloe, 2000). The dichotomous framing of masculinity and femininity is enshrined in the enactment of the patriarchal military-civilian relationship (D’Amico & Weinstein, 1999).

One big problem in practicing rhetoric in light of hegemonic/toxic masculinity, is that this rhetoric and worldview usually stands in close correlation to other dangerous attitudes. In their study, Vescio and Schermerhorn discovered that masculinity has been found to be associated with sexism (Kimmel, 2008), xenophobia (Connell, 2003), homophobia (McCusker, 2011), and racial and religious outgroups (Kimmel, 2013). Significantly, Vescio and Schermerhorn found out that based on the findings of seven studies involving 2,007 people, men’s and women’s endorsement of hegemonic masculinity predicted support for Trump over and beyond these factors, even when controlling for political party affiliation (Vescio & Schermerhorn, 2020). This finding
leads to the conclusion that hegemonic masculinity, a strong predictor for Trump support, can also be seen as a main contributor to sexism, racism, homophobia and xenophobia.

Threatening men by leading them to believe that they were more like women (versus men) resulted in the greater justification of social inequality (Weaver, 2015), less support of gender equity (Kosakowska-Berecka, 2016), and more expression of sexism (Dahl, 2015) and homophobia (Willer, 2013). Situational threats to masculinity have also been linked to increased support of aggressive policies - like support for the Iraq war (Willer, 2013) and gun enthusiasm (Matson, 2019).

Likewise, the endorsement of hegemonic, toxic masculinity legitimizes and justifies notions of dominant group supremacy, which reinforces and maintains the othering and marginalization of racial minority, non-straight, physically disabled, religious minority, elderly, and immigrant men. Therefore, hegemonic, toxic masculinity is related to but distinct from sexism and prejudice, allowing processes of hegemony to operate (Gramsci, 1970) by veiling sexism and prejudice and subtly contributing to the reinforcement of male dominance and dominant group supremacy.

Vescio & Schermerhorn’s theoretical conceptualization also positions populism as an effect of hegemonic masculinity. Therefore, Trump’s 2016 victory was initially seen as having a populist explanation: Trump was an anti-establishment, political outsider, who resonated with voters who felt that the government was no longer representing their interests (Oliver, 2016). Masculinity scholars have suggested that populists presumably have nostalgia for a racially homogenous, male-dominant past in which women and minorities were often blamed for taking jobs (that “should” belong to White men) and breaking apart the family (Kimmel, 2013).
Considering that Trump utilizes toxic, hegemonic masculinity in order to stay President, it is interesting that several research projects point to the fact that hegemonic masculinity is mostly prevalent in the rhetoric of people who want to keep the status quo.

In light of that, processes of hegemony have been hypothesized to be powerful tools in the reinforcement and maintenance of the status quo (Gramsci, 1970). As a result, the state institutionalizes a male point of view (Fernbach, 1981), and masculinity long has been embedded in the political discourse of the United States (Ducat, 2004), perpetuated by candidates who strategically symbolize masculine ideals while attempting to emasculate their opponents (Fahey, 2004).

In fact, since the 1980s, Republicans have defined their party as masculine by feminizing the Democratic Party and running campaigns based on strength and protection (Katz, 2016). Logically, Vescio & Schermerhorn note that status threat, or the increase in cultural diversity that threatens the status quo, is a broader factor that predicts support for Trump. Dominant groups, such as men, tend to defend their privileges, especially if they perceive a challenge to their power, either individually or as a group (Sidanius and Pratto, 2001). This challenge is exactly what Trump is warning of in his speech on January 6th, as he clings to the last straw that could keep him as the president of the United States.

3.2 Demagoguery

Looking within our own field, Paul Elliot Johnson is one of the few scholars who pinpointed Trump’s demagoguery. In his piece “The Art of Masculine Victimhood: Donald Trump’s Demagoguery,” he mentions that while the press was quick to label Trump as a demagogue, most contemporary scholars of the field refused to use the term.
This hesitation comes from a fear of politicizing rhetorical studies. Johnson claims that it is exactly this gap between rhetoric and politics and form and content that Donald Trump’s rhetoric points to (Johnson, 2017). But instead of assuming a gap between rhetoric and politics, the author returns to demagoguery in order to highlight Trump’s persuasive skills and to explain how they threaten liberal democracy.

In order to do so, Johnson defines what demagogues do: they encourage the audience to self-identify as victims, they encourage the well-off and privileged to practice victimhood at the expense of those who occupy worse positions. This particular strategy can be seen several times throughout Trump’s speech at The Ellipse. He and his audience are victims to the fake news and media; his people will suffer from looser immigration policies; the left and feminist establishment is responsible for manipulating the election. I will analyze all of those aspects in depth later.

One aspect about demagoguery in rhetorical studies that leaves questions within the field is pointed out by Hogan and Tell. As Patricia Roberts-Miller defined demagoguery as “polarizing propaganda that motivates members of an in-group to hate and scapegoat some outgroup(s), largely by promising certainty, stability, and … an ‘escape from freedom’” (Roberts-Miller, 2005), Hogan and Tell argue that this definition leads scholars in a direction where they label only speech with which they disagree with as demagogic (Hogan, 2006).

Ultimately, Hogan and Tell worry that politicizing scholarship might inaugurate an era of “ethical relativism” in which scholarly judgment can no longer identify violent extremism because “rhetorically” there is “little to distinguish left-leaning populists from those who lean to the right” (Hogan, 2006, p. 485).
That being said, Hogan and Tell emphasize the importance of context and social locations for judgment of rhetorical practice. When looking at the context and social location of Donald Trump’s January 6th speech, I argue that Trump uses both context and social location to fully display his demagogic rhetorical style, as I evaluate in chapter 2.2.

Analyzing this speech has significant value to the field, as January 6th is one of the most important dates in recent American history. Therefore, discussing Trump’s rhetorical strategies and their possible impact on what happened after the speech is of importance in order to work through this historic day.

Furthermore, coming from Germany, looking at toxic, white masculinity and the use of demagogic rhetoric from a personal context, I also cannot dismiss the historical tragedy that this rhetorical style has led to in the past. Just by examining Trump’s demagoguery in terms of scapegoating outside groups, creating a victim mentality, and stressing the importance of a strong patriotism, I think it is crucial that scholars in our field are constantly aware of the thin line between all those points, considering the possibility that these methods develop into right-wing nationalism.

3.3 Narrative Theory

We live our lives as stories - or as "narratives," as the literary scholars prefer to say. That stories, or to use the more academic term “narratives,” have a persuasive impact has long been understood.

A rhetoric of narrative begins with a view of narrative not as a world but rather as a communicative act, an intersubjective experience between speaker and audience (or listener/viewer) (Rodden, 2008). Narrative theory, also called Narrative Paradigm, is a
communication theory developed in the 20th century by Walter Fisher. In general, the paradigm claims that all meaningful conversation occurs through storytelling or the reporting of events.

Therefore, humans are the center of storytelling, and they either act as the storyteller or as the observer of narratives. Narrative can be seen as interpersonal communication, as an act between a particular speaking subject and a responding listener.

Narrative is an enunciative act, a matter of reader performance or "story-telling." On this view, the term "narrative" itself is revealing: narrative suggests both a "story-" (intelligible as a world) and a "-telling" (assignable to a speaker, or narrator) (Langellier 1981, p. 83-90). In our case, the storyteller would be Donald Trump, and the observers of the narrative are his audience. Narrative theory can provide a powerful account of political discourse, and it is essential for explaining Donald Trump’s rhetoric, for it is the predominance of the narrative form in Trump’s rhetoric that has established the climate of interpretation within which he is seen and judged.

An important aspect of the theory is its claim that stories are more persuasive than arguments. In other words, stories and narratives are more compelling to an audience than logic. If we take a step away from the January 6th speech, it becomes evident that throughout his presidency, Donald Trump emphasized spinning narratives rather than looking at logic or scientific evidence.

It has to be highlighted that story-telling is fundamental to the relationship between Trump and his audience. Stories are not just a rhetorical device that Trump uses to embellish his ideas; Trump’s message is a story. Trump uses story-telling to direct his policies, ground his explanations, and inspire his audiences, and the dominance of
narrative helps to account for the variety of reactions to his rhetoric. As this paper will evaluate further on, this story-telling is exactly what Trump proceeds to do in his speech at The Ellipse.

Getting back to Fisher’s theory, the narrative paradigm helps us to examine how humans are able to comprehend complex input through narrative. Fisher’s development of the theory is based on the attempt of finding a solution to make cohesive arguments. Especially when looking at the public sphere, the narrative paradigm is helpful to combat issues.

In order to explain his theory, Fisher states that humans are not rational and logical, therefore he proposes that narrative and storytelling is the basis of communication. Connected to that, Fisher states, “Humans see the world as a set of stories. Each accepts stories that match his or her values or beliefs, understood as common sense” (Jameson, 2001).

This quote is crucial when looking at Trump’s speech and the reactions he evokes in the audience. Those reactions are not the same for everyone, as people hold different sets of values or beliefs. As he encounters his own audience with the described groups, he is speaking to his own followers who share values and beliefs with each other as well as with Trump.

Therefore, this process ranges on a continuum of poles between a complete accommodation of speaker ideas to audience views (telling people only what they want to hear) at one extreme to total intransigence at the other ("my facts speak for themselves" or "my viewpoint is the only reasonable/moral/etc. one") (Rodden, 2008). Rodden explains that if the speaker tries to be convincing, he or she must always be adjusting his
or her ideas to the one’s of the audience, as the listeners are constantly judging and evaluating the speaker and what he or she has to say. This means that the speaker projects a certain image to the audience, and as the discourse proceeds, the audience members reconsider their impressions of him, filling in the missing links of his argument, placing it within the context of their own experience and relating to it in their own way (Rodden, 2008).

Going back to the argument that people are not rational, Fisher states, “Although people claim that their decisions are rational, incorporating history, culture, and perceptions about the other people involved, all of these are subjective and incompletely understood” (Jameson, 2001). This characterization again fits Trump's rally. For instance, Democrats would interpret Trump’s words as irrational, meanwhile many Republicans - certainly the ones who attended the speech - view them as rational. This is due to Fisher’s described issue of subjectivity.

Considering Fisher’s convincing belief that narrative is the most important form of communication, it only seems fitting that “storytelling is one of the first language skills that children develop. It is universal across culture and time” (Kristin, 1989).

Another important part of using narrative theory as a rhetorical strategy is myth. Myth informs all of Trump’s rhetoric. In the broad sense in which it is used here, myth refers to “any anonymously composed story telling of origins and destinies: the explanations a society offers its young of why the world is and why we do as we do, its pedagogic images of the nature and destiny of man”(Wellek, 1956).

Trump’s myth applies not to the destiny of humanity, but also to the destiny of Americans. It is a simple and familiar story that is widely taught and widely believed. It
is not exactly a true story in the sense that academic historians and scholars would want their descriptions and explanations to be true, but it is not exactly fiction either. As Jerome Bruner wrote of myth in general, “its power is that it lives on the feather line between fantasy and reality. It must be neither too good nor too bad to be true, nor must it be too true.” (Bruner, 1985, p. 17)

Myth provides a sense of importance and direction and it provides a communal focus for individual identity (Lewis, 1987). When looking at Trump’s rhetoric throughout the speech, it becomes evident that he sees America as a chosen nation, grounded in its families and neighborhoods, and driven inevitably forward by its heroic working people toward a world of freedom and economic progress unless blocked by the opposing political party, the fake news and media, or military weakness.

Trump portrays America’s destiny as a continuing struggle for progress against great obstacles imposed by the Democrats, the fake news and media, or the Government. All the themes of Trump’s rhetoric are contained in this mythic destiny - America’s greatness, its commitment to freedom, the heroism of the American people, the moral imperative of work, the priority of economic advancement, the domestic evil of taxes and government regulation, and the necessity of maintaining military strength.

The main reason Trump’s use of this particular narrative was so successful not only during his speech on January 6th but throughout his presidency is that his narratives provide a focus for identification by his audience. Trump repeatedly tells his audiences that if they choose to participate in the story, they will become a part of America’s greatness. Like all of Trump’s rhetoric, the logic of the speech is a narrative logic that
emphasizes the connection between character and action, not a rational logic that emphasizes the connections between problems and solutions.

This approach is so effective because, according to Rodden, the audience often feels more detached from an overtly argumentative story. He states that the audience feels “distanced, perhaps even alienated” (Rodden, 2008, p. 23).

To accept Trump’s story is not just to understand the course of an American destiny that is enacted in other places by other people, it is to know that the direction and outcome of the story depends upon you as a part of the audience. Proper action makes the audience member into a hero; inaction or improper action makes the listener responsible for America’s decline. This situation means, "the implied orator's argumentative success hinges not only on the quality of his argument, but also both on the listeners' belief in his character and good will (the orator's ethos) and on their emotional response to him (pathos), he will necessarily seem (and be) much more immediate and ‘present’" (Perelman 1971, p. 19).

Many of Trump’s critics have attempted to dismantle Trump’s rhetorical style. What is seen by his supporters as a clear direction has been attacked by opponents as ideology without ideas. The criticism tends to be the same: Trump is accused repeatedly of being unrealistic, simplistic, and misinformed.

In the story that emerges through his speeches generally and the January 6th speech in particular, however, Trump plays two roles that have succeeded in encompassing the perspective of his critics. As a character in the story, Trump is a mythic hero to his audience. He embodies the role of the strong, committed political outsider; he
is the active force that has arrived to help right the prevailing wrongs and to get things moving again.

As the narrator of the story, Trump is portrayed as simply presenting the nature of the situation. There is no threat for his audience in this style of realistic narration, Trump as the narrator just presents things as they are. Such descriptions reveal Trump’s success in establishing himself as a variation on a dominant type of American mythic hero - strong, aggressive, in control, and in Trump’s case and from Trump’s perspective, able to see the situation clearly and to explain it to a confused public.

Trump’s story encourages his audience members to see America as a chosen nation leading the world to freedom and economic progress, to see Trump as a dominant, powerful leader and as a narrator of the American story, and to see themselves as heroes in the unfolding narrative of American greatness. In Trump’s rhetoric, the nature of the world, his policies, his values, his character, and the character of his audience are defined together by the story that he tells. The consequences of this reliance on narrative form need to be considered carefully.

In a 1984 review essay on “Narrative Theory and Communication Research,” Robert L. Scott observed that despite the suggestive correspondences between narrative forms and rhetorical functions, “no rhetorical critic (...) has pressed along the lines suggested thus far by narrative theorists.”

In contrast, Fisher offered the “narrative paradigm,” which presumes that humans are essentially story-tellers who act on the basis of good reasons derived from their experience in a world that is “a set of stories which must be chosen among to live the good life in a process of continual recreation” (Fischer, 1994, p. 8).
Fisher’s conceptualization of the narrative paradigm emerged from his disbelief in the Rational World Paradigm. The Rational World Paradigm proposes that an argument is most persuasive when it is logical, based on the ancient teachings of Plato and Aristotle (Lucaites, 1999).

As this rhetorical criticism evaluates Trump’s speech, it is important to keep in mind that Fisher is convinced that logic is less important than storytelling or the creation of different narratives. Furthermore, it is significant to evaluate whether Trump’s speech incorporates aspects of narrative rationality. The concept of narrative rationality “requires coherence and fidelity, which contribute to judgment about reasons” (Dainton, 2011, p. 65). Specifically, narrative coherence is the degree to which a story makes sense in itself. A few characteristics of a coherent narrative are that it is internally consistent, with enough detail and persuasive characters, and free of significant surprises. Is this really the case in Trump’s speech – and connected to that – is it a coherent narrative? Does it even matter? These questions will be answered further on.

Narrative fidelity, on the other hand, is the degree to which a story fits into the observer’s experience with other accounts. In other words, does the story connect with the observer’s personal life experience? If it does so, how does it impact the observer’s values and beliefs? Reactions diverge because listeners perceive Trump and his speeches differently, and because they apply different standards of judgment to what they perceive.

According to Fisher, the "stories” that people tell somehow reflect their own personal values, and the receiver takes into account his or her personal beliefs when evaluating the message as believable or credible. Fisher believes that we are basically "storytelling animals" who take complicated information and make stories out of it.
According to him, all meaningful communication is a form of storytelling. Human beings experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, each with its own conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends. For Fisher, the way in which people explain and/or justify their behavior, whether past or future, has more to do with telling a credible story than it does with producing evidence or constructing a logical argument.

Fisher proposes narrative rationality and coherence (measures of fidelity and probability) as an a priori, thereby serving as the basis upon which to distinguish good and bad stories. Therefore, he argues that human communication is more than its rational form: its cultural context and the values of the audience are equally important (Fisher, 1994). With reference to fidelity, Fisher states: “Rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings – their inherent awareness of narrative probability, what constitutes a coherent story, and their constant habit of testing narrative fidelity, whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives…” (Fisher, 2003, p. 14).

This statement relates to Trump’s rhetorical strategies within the speech in several ways. Considering Trump’s attempt to persuade and convince his crowd, especially important is the aspect of “stories they experience ring true with stories they know to be true in their lives.” As Trump’s narratives lack narrative coherence (to a neutral audience), his appeal to the audience members’ life experience and their emotions is a key aspect.

This means that narrative form shapes ontology by making meaningfulness a product of consistent relationships between situations, subjects, and events and by making truth a property that refers primarily to narratives and only secondarily to
propositions; narrative form shapes morality by placing characters and events within a context where moral judgment is a necessary part of making sense of the action; and narrative form shapes epistemology by suggesting that all important events are open to common sense understanding (Lewis, 1987).

Trump’s stories are sometimes presented as fictional, sometimes as fact. In either case, their appropriateness to political discourse depends upon their consistency with the personal life experiences of the audience. When narrative dominates, epistemological standards move away from empiricism. History is more likely to be seen as a literary artifact, fiction is more likely to be seen as a mimetic representation of reality, and the two forms “cross” in the historicity of the narrative form (Ricoeur, 1981). Understanding this shift in perspective is essential to understanding Trump’s rhetoric and the reactions to it, especially when looking at his speech on January 6th.

As Bennett and Feldman found in their examination of story-telling in jury trials, “judgments based on story construction are, in many important respects, unverifiable in terms of the reality of the situation that the story represents” (Bennett & Feldman, p. 33). The story becomes increasingly dominant as the empirically defined context for the story becomes increasingly distant from confirmation by either experience or consensus.

Bennett and Feldman identify two situations in which “structural characteristics of stories become more central to judgment”: First, if “facts or documentary evidence are absent,” or secondly, if “a collection of facts or evidence is subject to competing interpretations” (Bennett & Feldman, p. 89). Both of these conditions are typically present in major political disputes, and so they are in Trump’s speech at The Ellipse.
Considering that, even the most obviously fantastic stories make a claim to truth for the order that they impose on a chaotic world. To support the claim that fairy tales give meaning to a child’s life, for example, Bruno Bettelheim quotes the German poet Schiller as saying, “deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told to me in my childhood than in the truth that is taught by life” (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 49). Events become significant in stories and significance depends upon the importance of the events within the context of the story. As a consequence, the perception of truth depends upon the story as a whole rather than upon the accuracy of its individual statements and facts.

Louis O. Mink argues that a historical narrative “claims truth not merely for each of its individual statements taken distributively, but for the complex form of the narrative itself” (Canary, 1978, p. 148). The “complex form” of a narrative makes isolated events and individual statements meaningful. Mink concludes, “the significance of past occurrences is understandable only as they are locatable in the ensemble of interrelationships that can be grasped only in the construction of narrative form.”

The diversity of technical terms developed leads to a single basic conclusion: somehow it has to be recognized that stories consist of a dual evaluation. Alasdair MacIntyre studies moral discourse in terms of verisimilitude and dramatic probability (MacIntyre, 1981). Fisher uses narrative fidelity and narrative probability to express a parallel distinction. In other words, each theorist sees narrative credibility (and narrative power) as having both substantive and formal possessions.

The basis for accepting the referential value of Trump’s stories is not empirical justification, but consistency with the moral standards and common sense of his audience. Narrative form shapes interpretation by emphasizing the moral dimension of
understanding. As Hayden White says of historical narrative, “story forms not only
permit us to judge the moral significance of human projects, they also provide the means
by which to judge them, even while we pretend to be merely describing them” (Dallek,
1984, p. 95). White takes the “moral impulse” to be a defining characteristic of
narrativity; Fisher uses moral argument to distinguish that form of public argument most
suited to narrative; Ronald Beiner explains and exemplifies the moral impulse of
narrative in political discourse. “In attempting to define a conception of the human
good,” he writes, “we tell a story” (Beiner, 1982, p. 67). The significant point here is that
whatever story is told will provide a moral direction and this is especially true for
narratives that are presented as historical fact. Narrative truth assumes a type of
knowledge that differs from the knowledge produced within and sanctioned by rational
argument (Lewis, 1987).

Since narrative makes sense of experience, the sense that is made will be
grounded in the presuppositions of those who accept the narrative, and those
presuppositions are, for them, common sense. This means that persuasive narratives both
express and assume a knowledge that is shared by the community. The emphasis on
common sense is significant for, as Clifford Geertz in anthropology and Alasdair
MacIntyre in philosophy have shown, “common sense” is a culturally defined set of rules
and expectations (Geertz, 1983). Just as reliance on a common morality de-emphasizes
practical and technical concerns, reliance on a common understanding de-emphasizes
objections based on claims to special knowledge or expertise (Lewis, 1987).

Common sense is so obvious to those who accept it that disagreement with its
implications will often seem irrelevant or impractical. In this way, common sense
insulates its claims from alternative conceptions; it consists of an unreflective, self-evidently “true” set of beliefs that are used to make sense out of situations and events. Common sense establishes a transparent realism - a common-sense statement is what everyone knows, a common-sense judgment is what any reasonable person would do.

Looking at Trump’s speech on January 6th, the consequences of the emphasis on common sense on his expression and his analysis are evident in the style, the logic, and the attitude of his rhetoric. In brief, the common-sense grounding that is an element of Trump’s dominant narrative suggests a pattern of understanding that parallels Geertz’s informal categorization of the “stylistic features, marks of attitude” of common sense.

Geertz identifies five “quasi-qualities” of common sense: naturalness, practicalness, thinness, immethodicalness, and accessibleness (Geertz, 1983, p. 84-92). Trump’s rhetoric employs a simple, familiar, and personal style; a logic grounded in practical analogy and an attitude that offers a singular perspective, unquestioned assumptions, and definitive portrayals. Trump’s style encourages the perception that political problems can be solved by the common action of ordinary people.

Since common sense is “thin,” political understanding requires no mysterious perceptiveness; things are as they appear. The simplicity of apparently complex issues has been a continuing theme in Trump’s rhetoric. Much of Trump’s relationship to his audience is contained in this “common sense” observation.

The reference to “you and I” places Trump and the audience together against the forces that oppose the participation of the people in political decision-making and the reference to “simple answers” opens up the political process. Trump’s character and style
combine to reinforce the presumption that willpower, strength, and courage, not intelligence or expertise, are all that are required to solve difficult political problems.

Connected to that, Aristotle noted that comparison with the familiar allows us to understand the unfamiliar and the assumptions of common sense move that observation farther: unfamiliar events and complex situations are seen to be really like the simple and familiar understandings and beliefs of the group. Since common sense justification relies on doing what any reasonable person would do based on what everyone knows to be true, a narrative frame may encourage those within it to see intelligence in practical terms and to emphasize sensibility over intellectual analysis.

Fisher’s description of the rational and narrative paradigms neatly summarizes a major difference in perspective. From the point of view of the rational world paradigm, a story should be substantively true so that it can be used as evidence by example or analogy, or it should be vivid enough to illustrate the problem or its possible solution. In either case, stories are not considered likely to be able to carry the knowledge one needs to analyze and solve a problem. From the point of view of the narrative paradigm, a story should be a good story judged by internal aesthetic criteria and by external criteria of fit with the audience’s experience and morality. In any case, it is likely to best express what one really needs to know to get by in the world.

The two perspectives clash over standards for evidence and the appropriate basis for judgment. Therefore, it is not just the nature of the particular story, but the reliance on storytelling that defines the relationship of those who accept Trump’s rhetoric to a complex of significant issues. A narrative perspective uses consistency with the story as the primary measure of truth, emphasizes moral standards for judgment, and features
common sense as the basis for making political decisions (Lewis, 1987). The reason that repeated charges of ignorance and factual error have not affected either Trump’s popularity or his credibility is that, for his followers, truth is judged in the context of the story and the story is judged for its fit with popular morality and common sense.

The effectiveness of Trump’s transcendent narrative depends upon establishing the story as the primary context for understanding people and events. Such a self-contained communication form is effective because it is clear, complete, and therefore reassuring. In addition to its evident effectiveness, however, such a narrative is also unstable and dangerous.

Therefore, Lewis points out that a dominant narrative structure is fragile because the requirement of internal consistency is permanent, while the ability of people responding to events to maintain that consistency is inevitably partial and temporary (Lewis, 1987).

In his article, “Telling America’s Story: Narrative Form and the Reagan Presidency,” Lewis specifically talks about President Reagan’s use of narrative form. Lewis says, “Reagan’s consistency provides his audiences with a clear, simple, and familiar framework within which to encompass complex or unfamiliar problems. Holding on to this enticing vision can be dangerous, however, because the assumption of the story’s truth hides its contingent nature and its implicit ideology. Adherence to a single story with a single point of view can make good judgment more difficult by reinforcing the legitimacy of a single set of social stereotypes and by promoting an exclusively American point of view on international problems” (Lewis, p. 6)
When connecting that statement to Trump’s rhetoric and use of narrative form in his speech on January 6th, these dangers become evident as well. Drawing the comparison to Reagan again, in his article Lewis explains, “A related danger concerns the role of the public in Reagan’s version of America’s story. Relying on the (presumably) established moral code and the (presumably) accepted common sense of the American people to establish the legitimacy of the story implicitly denies the legitimacy of either change or challenge with the result that the story’s participants are driven to a posture of passive acceptance. Ironically, Reagan’s story of an actively heroic American public forces those who accept it into the position of being listeners rather than creators. At most, the individual becomes a participant in a pre-established historical frame” (Lewis, p. 6).

Again, the similarities between Reagan and Trump’s use of narrative form and the consequences that it brings cannot be overlooked. Trump also has to rely on the presumed established moral code as well as the presumed accepted common sense of his specific audience, which automatically illuminates and excludes other perspectives. The consequence of Trump's narrative form is this clear separation to different values, beliefs, and perspectives, which ultimately leads to more extremism on both the right and left of the political spectrum. As both ends of the political spectrum as well as the whole nation gets segregated by Trump’s use of narrative form, the development of extreme groups must be considered when contemplating the possible impact Trump’s speech had on the aftermath of January 6th. Therefore, there should be an awareness that Trump’s emphasis on several strong narratives that will be evaluated in the following chapter had a possible impact on his audience and the storming of the Capitol.
Chapter 4: Trump’s Speech - Rhetorical Analysis

When analyzing Trump’s rhetorical strategies, it is necessary to take an in-depth look at Trump’s speech and examine the topics he addressed, as well as the language he used and how the language used conforms to different narratives.

Therefore, in the following chapter I will evaluate five main themes and narratives of his speech that I identified: Trump’s use of “us vs them” rhetoric, his emphasis on the “fake news and media,” Trump’s amplification of patriotism and the military, his notion of his and the crowd’s common enemy – the “radical-left” Democrats and “weak Republicans,”- and his story of a rigged election.

I will analyze all of those themes through narrative theory as a theoretical lens, and I will connect his rhetorical strategies to Trump’s demagoguery and take account of his use of masculine victimhood as well as his evident hegemonic and toxic masculinity.

The last subchapter will concentrate on Trump’s main message - the story of a rigged election. Considering that, it is important to keep in mind that all his other themes serve the purpose to build and support the main narrative of the stolen election.

4.1 Us vs Them

In order to successfully convey the narrative of a rigged election, Trump utilizes an “us vs. them” rhetoric throughout his speech. Therefore, all of Trump’s main themes in the speech aim to separate his audience further from the political establishment. Trump uses various statements in order to polarize and create common enemies for himself and his crowd.
As I will evaluate in the next chapters, the common enemies Trump portrays are the mainstream media or as he calls them the “fake news and media,” and the Democrats and “weak Republicans.” This is where Trump’s political identification as a populist becomes evident and comes into play. When citizens are unsure if they can trust the institutions that uphold democracy, populist discourses can leverage hostile attitudes against the “establishment” and the news media (Schulz, Wirth, and Müller 2020). This attitude shift is exactly what Trump attempts to do in his speech.

In order to emphasize that he and his audience are operating as one unit and working against the establishment, Trump consistently uses the word “we.” For instance, in his speech, Trump states, “we will not let them silence our voices. We’re not going to let it happen, I’m not going to let it happen.” Trump proclaims his leadership status by ending the statement with himself as the main figure of action, but he makes clear that his audience will have a vital impact. Within this statement, one can identify Trump’s first implications of victimhood that underline his use of demagoguery as a rhetorical strategy.

In addition to that, this identification with his audience is what makes the “us vs. them” rhetoric or narrative so effective. By giving his audience the belief that they can be a part of this meaningful change if they show action, he evokes their emotions and uses pathos to full effect.

First, Fox News used the rhetoric of polarization to create an “us vs. them” dichotomy between a “fair and balanced” conservative perspective and a threatening “liberal other,” such as the “mainstream media” (Sentell, 2017). Trump’s campaign was often described as populist, and populism is, at base, us vs. them politics in which one group defines itself at least partially in opposition to other groups (McTernan, 2016).
Throughout his presidency, when his statements were criticized, Trump used polarizing rhetoric to blame the liberal media for misinterpreting his words, if not outright lying (Sentell, 2017). Newt Gingrich, for instance, said Trump’s 2016 campaign was about “breaking the elite media, which has become a phalanx of the establishment” (Rucker, 2016, p. 3). In short, Trump amplified Fox’s “us vs. them” dichotomy to portray himself as a victim of the liberal media by condemning both its criticism and its straightforward news reporting as evidence of bias (Sentell, 2017).

Even though Rucker and Sentell are talking about Trump’s 2016 campaign, the same methods can be seen during his 2020 campaign and particularly during his speech on January 6th. For example, in his speech, Trump states that the media is the biggest problem in the country, as it suppresses speech and it has become “the enemy of the people.” He specifically says that the media is not only his enemy, but also the people’s enemy. Again, Trump involves the audience that way and creates an emotional response (pathos), which is one of the main aspects that makes a certain narrative effective. From an unbiased perspective, there is no rationality behind his claims, but that does not matter because the narrative fidelity is so dominant within his own audience.

In general, the focus on audience identification is the key to success for Trump’s “us vs. them” narrative. Trump portrays his enemies as the enemies of the country. As discussed earlier, the Republican Party is seen as the more patriotic party, which as a consequence means that the enemy of the country automatically represents the enemy of the audience. Looking at a specific quote from the speech, Trump states: “Did you see the other day where Joe Biden said, I want to get rid of the America First policy? What's that all about? Get rid of. How do you say I want to get rid of America First? Even if
you're going to do it, don't talk about it, right? Unbelievable what we have to go through. What we have to go through.” Once more, it is “us vs. them,” as Trump evokes the pride of his audience when saying that Biden will not put America first and he creates unity by emphasizing that he and his people have to go through everything together.

During Trump’s “us vs. them” narrative, hegemonic, toxic masculinity becomes evident several times. For instance, Trump states, “Republicans are constantly fighting like a boxer with his hands tied behind his back. It's like a boxer. And we want to be so nice. We want to be so respectful of everybody, including bad people. And we're going to have to fight much harder.” The image of a boxer who has to fight in order to “survive” is a perfect example of masculinity as a rhetorical device. The notion of “strength” and “fight,” attributes closely tied to masculinity, are being emphasized; Trump even underlines that he expects himself and his people to fight much harder than they have so far.

Connected to that, in another sequence of Trump's speech, he mentions, “you have to get your people to fight. And if they don't fight, we have to primary the hell out of the ones that don't fight. You primary them. We're going to. We're going to let you know who they are.” It is “us vs. them” rhetoric, combined with hegemonic, toxic masculinity that evokes an emotional response from his audience. Another example within his speech is when Trump proclaims, “we fight. We fight like hell. And if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore.”

As mentioned in the literature review of hegemonic, toxic masculinity, the consequence of this rhetorical style is that it also affects other values. As a reminder, Vescio and Schermerhorn found that masculinity has been associated with sexism
(Kimmel, 2008), xenophobia (Connell, 2003), homophobia (McCusker, 2011), and racial and religious outgroups (Kimmel, 2013). Significantly, Vescio and Schermerhorn found that, based on the findings of seven studies involving 2,007 people, men’s and women’s level of endorsement of hegemonic masculinity predicted corresponding support for Trump over and beyond these factors, even when controlling for political party affiliation (Vescio & Schermerhorn, 2020). This leads to the conclusion that hegemonic masculinity, a predictor for Trump support, can also be seen as a main contributor to sexism, racism, homophobia and xenophobia. This separation of groups is a significant factor of Trump’s “us vs. them” rhetoric.

In our case of Trump’s speech, this separation becomes evident when Trump states during his speech, “we set a record with Hispanic, with the Black community, we set a record with everybody.” Similar to before, Trump includes his audience in this “success.” Most importantly, it is significant to note that with that comment, Trump separates himself and his audience from the cultures mentioned. Even though these cultures do not “belong” to him and his audience as he specifically mentions them separately, according to him, he nevertheless managed to get record numbers in votes from “them.” This statement highlights how hegemonic, toxic and in this case white masculinity can lead to subtle and underlying racism and the scapegoating of outside groups. Consequently, this pattern fosters the “us vs. them” image that Trump is constantly trying to create.

One thing that stands out when looking at Trump’s use of “us vs. them” rhetoric is that he enforces the consistency of this narrative by repeating his statements over and over. In short, one can say that in his speech on January 6th, in which Trump speaks for
around one hour and twenty minutes, Trump rarely gets outside of the scope of his five dominant narratives (us vs. them, the fake news and media, the Democrats and weak Republicans, patriotism and military, and the rigged election). Therefore, he keeps circling inside the same interconnected narrative, creating narrative coherence and fidelity (for his audience). The narratives are interactive and do not work without the support of the other. Logic and facts are secondary, which underlines Fisher’s claim that stories are more persuasive than logical constructed arguments.

Even if a claim is fact-checked and debunked, Trump often repeats the claim in an attempt to imbue it with familiarity and thus promote a sense of truth (Sentell, 2017). Why is not Trump mentioning each of his narratives once and then moving on to other topics? The reason for that is that repetition is a proven rhetorical strategy that scholars in our field have examined over the years. Psychological research shows that the more familiar ideas become through repetition, the more truthful they seem to be regardless of the source’s perceived credibility (Foster, 2012).

Neither Trump nor his supporters care much for the facts, or lack thereof, behind his claims. The claims feel like accurate representations, and hearing them often enough make them seem true enough. The more he reflects and confirms his audience’s perception and emotion, the more he reinforces that perception and his position as a potential savior (Sentell, 2017). Trump does not shy away from repeating his claims more than once over the course of the speech. The fact that he insists on easily disprovable “alternative facts” (to borrow a phrase from his campaign manager and adviser Kellyanne Conway) shows his commitment to the strategies of polarization and repetition (Bradner, 2017).
By doing so, he is able to direct his audience’s attention and focus away from logic. This choice means that he uses pathos, as he is appealing to the audience's feelings and emotions rather than their rational thinking. Aristotle in his Rhetoric, identified more than one kind of rhetorical appeal that comprised the various modes of persuasion. Rhetoric - “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle 2012; Charteris Black 2014) - did not only, or even primarily, depend upon truth. It consisted of at least three different kinds of appeal: logos - an appeal to argument and evidence; pathos - an appeal to emotion; and ethos - an appeal based on the character and the qualities of the speaker.

When looking at Trump’s discursive relationship to his base, it is clear that his main rhetorical appeal is not so much in terms of argument and evidence. His rhetorical appeal is almost solely connected to the audience’s emotions as well as to his own qualities and character. The audience’s emotions get provoked and stirred up in Trump’s “us vs. them” rhetoric and his creation of common enemies for himself and his crowd, which is why the effect of that rhetorical device is so significant, especially in light of what happened after the speech.

4.2 The Fake News and Media

“Media will not show the magnitude of this crowd. Even I, when I turned on today, I looked, and I saw thousands of people here. But you don't see hundreds of thousands of people behind you because they don't want to show that.” This statement, the first sentence of Donald Trump’s January 6th speech, underlines that one of the
narratives that supports the speech’s main story of a rigged election is Trump’s notion of the “fake news and media.”

Throughout his speech, Trump continuously blames them for manipulating and influencing voters, for spreading misinformation, for covering the news in dishonest ways; he portrays the media as one of his and his audience’s main enemy. Given that, the term “fake news” has been a recurrent feature of Donald Trump’s rhetoric (Meeks 2020), not only throughout this speech but during Trump’s whole time in office.

In fact, the term “fake news” has been the subject of substantive public debate since the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Rossini, 2021). Scholars have argued that “fake news” is used by journalists, politicians, and pundits in ways that harm public understanding of what they are really talking about (Van Duyn and Collier 2019). Researchers have focused on “fake news” as a genre - referring to concepts, such as misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, partisan news, biased news, etc., and discussed the boundaries of what is “fake” (Tandoc, Lim, and Ling 2018). As a consequence, the democratic role of the media is challenged by widespread decline in trust in the press, and the reduced willingness of the public to believe in news content (Hanitzsch, Van Dalen, and Steindl 2018).

Throughout his presidency, Trump used the fake news and media as an escape when being criticized. Connected to that, some research has focused on “fake news” as a label “describing the political instrumentalization of the term to delegitimize news media” (Egelhofer and Lecheler 2019).

During his speech, this is exactly what Trump proceeds to do over and over again. Therefore, his language already suggests the delegitimization of the media, as he almost
exclusively names them “fake news and media.” According to Lakoff (2017), Trump and his team deployed the label at the start of his presidency as a way to describe and delegitimize any news that is not reported on by the alt right media sphere. Furthermore, Anderson (2020, p. 235) describes Trump’s use of the label as a co-optation of the phrase from efforts to “mislead or to deceive” to “describe any news he doesn’t like.” As Keener (2019, p. 137) highlights, Trump uses the label to discredit the media for not abiding by “his personal narrative of truth.”

When discussing Trump’s narrative of “fake news and media,” it is necessary to take an excursion into what is called “post-truth.” Post-Truth is a relatively new phenomenon, which especially emerged through the rise of social media, and which Trump capitalized on through his presidential campaigns.

“Post-truth” is defined by the Oxford Dictionaries, which selected it as their word of the year (2016), as statements “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” Post-Truth is an important circumstance that has to be taken into consideration when evaluating Trump’s rhetorical strategies.

Fisher’s narrative theory claims that arguments and facts are less convincing than narrative, Aristotle states that Logos is only one way of persuasion next to the appeal to emotions and the speaker’s character, and, according to Rodden, the audience often feels more detached from an overtly argumentative story. Looking at the 2016 election, indeed, if strict measurement by the yardstick of truth had counted for anything, Trump should have been resoundingly defeated.
By November 2016, for instance, 233 of his statements had been ruled by PolitiFact - a fact-checking site - as largely false, false, or outright lies, compared with 76 for Clinton. In the Post-Truth Era, right-wing populist leaders - like Trump - have adopted an anti-intellectual political attitude, “rejecting a priori the worldviews not conforming to their own, decline any debate with differing opinions and are unable to show empathy for others” (Degani 2016, 131). The dangers that come with that attitude are that, in addition to traditional and conservative values and morals around family structure and gender roles, populist politicians engage in simplistic explanations and solutions based on common sense, and part of an anti-intellectualism vision (Wodak 2017, 5).

They claim to “reflect the voice of the people” (Norris and Inglehart 2019, 66) while asserting that mainstream media constitutes “fake news” and elections are “fraudulent.” Like Trump, right-wing populist politicians present themselves as the “true representatives of the people,” while previous politicians and their opposition represented the “untrustworthy political classes” who failed to represent the people and the country (Wodak 2017, 2). In this sense, populist discourse “delegitimizes established power structures and the role of elected representatives in liberal democracy while claiming that the people should rule” (Norris and Inglehart 2019, 65).

This delegitimization of the political establishment results in a loss of trust in the political system, which has spread to other domains such as traditional media, scientific research, facts, and evidence in general. Sources traditionally related to truthful and trustworthy information, are now rejected and challenged (Block, 2019). As a conclusion, the post-truth regime means distrust in news and media, experts and established
politicians, and the replacement of arguments and evidence by pure ideology. It is significant to keep the concept of post-truth in mind when further examining parts of Trump's claims against the media during his speech.

“We have hundreds of thousands of people here and I just want them to be recognized by the fake news media. Turn your cameras please and show what's really happening out here because these people are not going to take it any longer. They're not going to take it any longer. Go ahead. Turn your cameras, please. Would you show?” In his speech, Trump starts his narrative of the fake news and media by stating that they would not cover the event correctly, as they are not presenting the real amount of spectators in the audience.

Rhetorically, stating that the media would not represent the accurate audience number is highly effective. According to Fisher, evoking emotions through a story is more effective than presenting facts and truth to an audience. As audience identification is a key aspect of narrative theory, Trump is digging into the sensibility of his audience’s wish to be a part of his movement. If the media is not covering the crowd, how are they going to be recognized as a part of this significant event? By saying that the media is not only betraying him, but in this case even more so his listeners, Trump is able to exploit pathos in evoking anger toward the media within his audience. The first step of creating further division between the crowd and the mainstream media is done.

Trump repeats his statement with different wording later on, as he mentions: “By the way, this goes all the way back past the Washington Monument. You believe this? Look at this. (...) Unfortunately, they gave the press the prime seats. I can't stand that. No. But you look at that behind. I wish they'd flip those cameras and look behind you. That is
the most amazing sight. When they make a mistake, you get to see it on television. Amazing. Amazing. All the way back.” By saying that the press got the prime seats, Trump uses demagoguery, as he claims that the media took away the spots of the “ordinary” people, his people.

Praising his audience for their loyalty to him and blaming the media for not covering it builds up more and more narrative coherence within his audience to see the press as their common enemy. Fittingly, Trump explains how he sees the “fake news and media” as the single biggest problem that this country has and as the enemy of the people.

His wording is direct, he's not “sugarcoating,” attributes that underlie his populist style as a demagogue. Repetition as a rhetorical strategy proves noticeable especially with Trump’s use of the word “suppression.” Trump draws comparison to past times and how much better the media operated back then, and he continues by comparing the media’s behavior of today to a communist country.

With this notion of a communist country, Trump utilizes the word “suppression” again. As repetition is an effective device in order to force the truth, his audience fully buys into the story and supports his claims with frenetic applause. Trump’s arguments are not logical or backed up by any sort of evidence, but his narrative is displaying what persuasive narratives should display: they appeal to the audience’s emotions. Trump declares: “These are the facts that you won't hear from the fake news media. It's all part of the suppression effort. They don't want to talk about it. They don't want to talk about it. In fact, when I started talking about that, I guarantee you, a lot of the television sets
and a lot of those cameras went off. And that's a lot of cameras back there. But a lot of them went off.”

Hegemonic, toxic masculinity also appears in connection to Trump’s narrative of the “fake news and media.” For instance, Trump encourages his crowd several times to fight against the suppression of the media, and he announces that the people “are not going to take it any longer.” Additionally, he points out that the election was “stolen by the fake news media. That's what they've done and what they're doing. We will never give up, we will never concede. It doesn't happen. You don't concede when there's theft involved.”

The notion of “not giving up” and “not conceding” is an exhibit of masculinity as a rhetorical blueprint. Further on, Trump remarks that he and his audience “will not be intimidated into accepting the hoaxes and the lies that we've been forced to believe.” Trump urges the masculinity of his audience to the forefront, as being intimidated and fearful of something is considered a feminine attribute in the light of toxic, hegemonic masculinity.

Scholarship in the “fake news and media” genre also examined the role of digital media affordances, especially social media platforms, in facilitating the spread and uptake of this problematic information (Bakir and McStay 2018; Tandoc, Lim, and Ling 2018). Bloggers, forum participants, twitter, Instagram, and other social media users all upload and comment upon political content, competing for authenticity with traditional media, and becoming highly influential in the political process of a country. Throughout his years as president, Trump was notorious for his Twitter output. It is a popular belief that Trump’s success in the 2016 election was primarily because of the
spreading of fake news through social media. In light of the 2016 election, Facebook has attempted to operate a fake news filter in time for the German elections: “The 2016 United States presidential elections saw the emergence of Donald Trump as the country’s new head of state. However, that election was hounded by a slew of fake and unreliable news which greatly misinformed the voting public. With the federal elections looming in Germany, Facebook will try to live up to its promise of eradicating hoaxes once and for all, by rolling out its fake news filter in the country” (Alforque, 2017). It is important to note that Facebook started this initiative in Germany as a result of the 2016 American elections, where Trump highly profited from fake news on social media.

Contemplating that, it seems ironic that Trump blames social media and Twitter in particular for suppressing free speech during his rally on January 6th, especially when taking into consideration that Trump used Twitter to promote the event. Nevertheless, Trump states, “they also don't let you get out. You know, on Twitter, it's very hard to come onto my account. It's very hard to get out a message. They don't let the message get out nearly like they should. (...) I don't care about Twitter. Twitter's bad news. They're all bad news.”

To conclude this chapter, I think it is interesting to look at a statement that Trump made in 2015 about his relationship with the media: “The personal exchanges between me and others become the big story of the debate and the focus of news coverage for weeks. (...) I use the media the way the media uses me – to attract attention. (...) So sometimes I make outrageous comments and give them what they want – viewers and readers – in order to make a point. I’m a businessman with a brand to sell. (...) The cost of a full page ad in the New York Times can be more than $100,000. But when they write
a story about one of my deals, it doesn’t cost me a cent, and I get more important publicity. I have a mutually profitable two-way relationship with the media – we give each other what we need. And now I am using that relationship to talk about the future of America. (...) These media types sell more magazines when my face is on the cover, or when I bring a bigger audience to their television show than they normally attract, and by far. And what’s funny is that it turns out the best way for them to get that attention is to criticize me” (Trump, 2015).

4.3 The Radical Left and Weak Republicans

Donald Trump has been characterized and criticized as populist and autocrat. He certainly is first of all a demagogue who, like all demagogues, has distinguished between his loyal ingroup on the one hand and the disloyal outgroup(s) on the other hand. This polarization allows demagogues to stir “hatred of the outgroup(s)...through scapegoating” (Roberts Miller, 2005, p. 464). In his speech, Trump portrays the radical left Democrats and the “weak” Republicans as the disloyal outgroups, and he identifies them as a common enemy for him and his crowd.

Trump exploited the narrative of portraying the Democrats not just as political opponents, but even more so as the enemies of the Republican Party, since the early days of his political career. For instance, Trump’s obsession with attacking and denigrating Obama as president and ex-president is documented in his tweet history. In 2016, before Trump announced his candidacy, 10 percent of his tweets were about or mentioned Obama; during his presidency (up to May 1, 2020) still 2.7 percent were of the anti-Obama variety (Nacos, 2020).
Democrats were collectively and individually the most often attacked targets in Trump’s total tweet output (before his candidacy, during the campaign months, and during his presidency) with 44 percent, surpassing the 23 percent tweet total directed at the media. As president, he devoted 46 percent of his tweets to Democrats compared to the media in second place with 25 percent, and merely 3 percent for the Republican Party that he totally controlled (Nacos, 2020).

Furthermore, at a rally in Louisiana in late 2019, Trump said, “Democrats are becoming increasingly totalitarian,” and are “trying to overthrow American democracy to impose their socialism agenda.” He accused Democrats of “trying to rip our nation apart” (Egan, 2019). Over the years, Trump built the foundation of scapegoating and blaming the Democrats and the “radical-left.” As a persuasive narrative is inherently consistent, Trump’s followers fully buy into the story, which continues during his speech at the Ellipse.

Again, in Trump’s point of view, the radical-left Democrats are responsible for the “stolen election.” Therefore, he incorporates repetition as a strategy, just like he did when talking about the fake news and media.

One thing that differs in comparison to his scapegoating of the media, is that his attacks become markedly more personal. He names people directly by their name, most of all the new President Joe Biden. For instance, he mentions that it is impossible that Biden had 80 million votes, without further explaining why it is impossible, except for the simple claim that the election was rigged. “And by the way, does anybody believe that Joe had 80 million votes? Does anybody believe that? He had 80 million computer votes. It's a disgrace. There's never been anything like that. You could take third-world
countries. Just take a look. Take third-world countries. Their elections are more honest than what we've been going through in this country. It's a disgrace. It's a disgrace.” With the comparison to third-world countries, Trump indicates that this is the direction in which the country is heading if the Democrats are in power.

Furthermore, addressing Joe Biden, Trump says: “Did you see the other day where Joe Biden said, I want to get rid of the America First policy? What's that all about? Get rid of. How do you say I want to get rid of America First? Even if you're going to do it, don't talk about it, right?” These statements synthesized his attacks on Democrats as not loving, but rather hating, their country, as individually and collectively threatening the constitutional rights of patriotic Americans, and as “radical left” harboring Socialist and Communist designs for this country.

Right after this direct attack against his political enemy, he engages with his audience by stating: “We will not let them silence your voices. We’re not going to let it happen, I’m not going to let it happen.” It gets evident that by “them,” Trump is referring to both the fake news and media as well as the Democratic Party and the political establishment. The word “them” incorporates that they do not belong to or see eye to eye with him and his audience. Scapegoating and excluding other groups is a typical sign of Trump’s demagoguery as a rhetorical device. Furthermore, in his story, it is proof of narrative coherence, as it only seems logical (for him and his audience), that the enemies cooperate in order to win the election.

Additionally, Trump portrays the Democrats as unpatriotic and anti-American. The Democrats stand in direct contrast to his crowd, who he portrays as patriotic and truly American. In fact, research suggests that Republicans hold a decided advantage over
Democrats in terms of expressions of fervent patriotism and American exceptionalism in public discourse (Hart, 2009). For instance, Hart, (2009) also suggested that Republicans more commonly express patriotic feelings in their public communications than their Democratic counterparts.

Similarly, Kalmoe and Gross (2016) argued that Republicans regularly take “advantage of perceived Democratic weaknesses on patriotism,” and that “the public appears to agree that Republicans ‘own’ patriotism” (p. 884). Trump uses this advantage by underlining that his political enemies do not share the same values as he and his party. This notion of patriotism is significant in creating audience identification and it is further displaying Trump’s “us vs. them” rhetoric. I will examine Trump’s narrative of patriotism in the next subchapter.

Over and over, Trump is stating that America is facing destruction under the reign of Biden and the Democratic Party. For instance, when Trump brings up that Biden wants to get rid of Trump’s America First policy, he directly draws the crowd into it by saying: “Unbelievable, what we have to go through.” By using the word “we,” Trump gives his audience the feeling that he is level with them and is on their side, they operate as a unit and have a common goal.

In order to underline how the Democrats are the destructive force within the country, Trump points out several things that he and his administration achieved during his presidency. He mentions his success in honoring the military and veterans, he brings up the massive tax cuts that were achieved under his administration, and the strengthened economy. Whether or not these things were actually achieved under his reign is
secondary, what is important is that he incorporates the claim that the Democrats would not have been able to do that - and worse, they will try to undo his achievements.

When he names his achievements, again, he constantly uses the pronoun “we,” which includes the crowd. This gives them a feeling of pride, a feeling of accomplishment, as if they are part of Trump’s success. The thought of the Democrats taking that away from them draws an even bigger separation between the audience and their opposing political party.

This is where masculine victimhood as a rhetorical strategy comes into play. As already pointed out, masculine victimhood is a typical rhetorical strategy deployed by demagogues: They encourage the audience to self-identify as victims, they encourage the well-off and privileged to practice victimhood at the expense of those who occupy worse positions (Johnson, 2017). By pointing out his own achievements and claiming that the Democrats will undo all of them, Trump puts himself and his audience in that victim role.

When talking about Democrats or the “radical left,” Trump’s tone is aggressive and offensive. ”If this happened to the Democrats, there'd be hell all over the country going on. There'd be hell all over the country. But just remember this: You're stronger, you're smarter, you've got more going than anybody. And they try and demean everybody having to do with us. And you're the real people, you're the people that built this nation. You're not the people that tore down our nation.” Looking at this comment, Trump considers Republicans as “stronger and smarter.” Again, Trump assigns masculine values (“stronger”) to his audience, in order to evoke a feeling of dominance and power.
Hegemonic, toxic masculinity as a rhetorical strategy becomes evident in his narrative of the radical-left Democrats. In contrast to that, when speaking to his crowd, his tone and language are filled with appreciation, love, and respect. He makes his crowd feel as a unit that is working toward a common goal and for a bigger purpose, as he claims that they are the ones who “built this nation.” By acknowledging them, he makes them feel special and it is easy for the crowd to identify themselves with him and his party. He keeps fostering an “us vs. them” mentality. This mentality gets strengthened as Trump highlights his achievements of the past four years, comparing them to the failures of the Democrats.

An important device in the demagogue’s linguistic toolbox blemishes the humanity of groups that do not belong to the ingroup. The goal is to reduce “an entire segment of the population into profligate, pernicious, and dastardly subhumans” (Tsesis, 2002, p. 89). This claim might sound extreme, but when looking at statements like “The radical left knows exactly what they're doing. They're ruthless and it's time that somebody did something about it” or “He said he played offensive line in football. I'm trying to figure that out. I'm still trying to figure that out. He said that the other night, ‘I was an offensive lineman.’ I'm saying: ‘Really? That must have been a very small team’” (referring to Brian Kemp), it shows that Trump tries to denigrate both the character and physical appearance of his political opponents. Connected to that, Albert Bandura noted, “dehumanized persons are treated much more punitively than persons who have not been divested of their human qualities.” As a consequence, it is much easier for Trump’s audience to chime in on the exclusion and disrespectful behavior toward their political counterparts.
In addition to his bashing of the Democrats, Trump also criticizes various members of his own Republican Party. Therefore, he refers to the term “weak” Republicans. “The weak Republicans, and that's it. I really believe it. I think I'm going to use the term, the weak Republicans. You've got a lot of them. And you got a lot of great ones. But you got a lot of weak ones.“

He starts by mentioning “great” Republicans, and takes his personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani as a prime example. Then he moves on to point out the “weak” Republicans, in particular Mitt Romney and, in underlying messages, Mike Pence. When talking about Mike Pence, he does not directly proclaim that he is weak, but he notes that it is Pence’s responsibility to change the outcome of the election (at this moment, Pence is in the Capitol certifying the election). Trump is certainly aware of the fact that Pence will not change the outcome of the election, which means that he indicates that Pence is one of the weak Republicans.

What stands out most is that Trump aggressively emphasizes that everyone who attended his speech belongs to the strong Republicans, which indicates that they are willing to go further than the “weak” ones. The narrative is that the strong Republicans are the ones who go the distance, they are the ones who are capable of doing what it takes in order to change the outcome of the election. This quote is very fitting to this context: “Because you’ll never get back our country with weakness. You have to show strength and you have to be strong.” Another one: “Today, we will see whether Republicans stand strong for the integrity of our elections. But whether or not they stand strong for our country - our country, our country has been under siege for a long time.”
In this quote, “they” are the “weak Republicans.” By using the term “they,” it becomes evident that he does not see them as one of his own (and the crowd’s own). Trump does not only distinguish between Democrats and Republicans, he even separates within his own political party, which presents the narrative of another common enemy. Trump’s rhetorical use of hegemonic, toxic masculinity is visible in those two statements. Indicating weakness in anyone who will not fight for their country, Trump appeals to the masculinity of his audience. Weakness is associated as a female attribute which is not acceptable - another display of hegemonic, toxic masculinity.

4.4 Patriotism and the Military

As explained in the previous chapter, Trump successfully portrays a picture of the Democrats being unpatriotic and anti-American. In contrast to that, Trump’s audience is described as truly patriotic and American. The narrative of patriotism is one that Trump utilized successfully throughout his political career, as he appeals to the national pride of his supporters to create a feeling of community, purpose and belonging.

Plenty of research on patriotism has been conducted within the field. Research on patriotism has been marred by a confusing array of terms, definitions, and expected consequences in which patriotism is variously defined as a sense of national loyalty, a love of national symbols, specific beliefs about a country's superiority, and as a crucial ingredient in the development of civic ties to a mature nation (Hurwitz and Peffley 1999). Furthermore, there is broad agreement on the meaning of patriotism as “a deeply felt affective attachment to the nation” (Conover and Feldman 1987, p. 1) or the “degree of love for and pride in one's nation” (Kosterman and Feshbach 1989, p. 271).
As Trump represents the Republican Party, it is important to note that patriotism items are commonly tinged with political ideology in the United States, resulting in greater apparent patriotism among political conservatives than liberals. Connected to that, research suggests that Republicans hold a decided advantage over Democrats in terms of expressions of fervent patriotism and American exceptionalism in public discourse (Hart, 2009). For instance, the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at Cornell University has collected public opinion polling data on perceptions of partisan patriotism over the past four decades. Notably, the data support the notion that Republicans tend to own patriotism in the eyes of the American public. Two national polls conducted in 2001 and 2010, for example, focused on determining which party Americans perceived to be more patriotic (Roper, 2018). In both polls, respondents viewed the Republican Party as substantially more patriotic (41% and 43%, respectively) than the Democratic Party (24% and 29%, respectively).

Therefore, Trump is aware that his audience almost solely consists of supporters of him and his political ideology. This means that Trump knows that his notion of patriotism will be loved by his audience, as it rings true to their personal beliefs and values.

We already briefly touched base on the narrative of patriotism when talking about Trump’s strategy of using the Democrats and weak Republicans as his enemies. In that case, Trump portrayed the Democrats as anti-American and unpatriotic. By doing so, he indicates that they do not have the best interest of the country at heart and that they are not proud to be American. For instance, he proclaims: “But it almost seems that they're all going out of their way to hurt all of us and to hurt our country. To hurt our country.”
There is narrative coherence between his overall story of a rigged election and his portrayal of unpatriotic Democrats. Someone who does not have the best interest for the country at heart - someone who actually wants to “hurt” the country - would logically be able to commit fraud in terms of a rigged election.

As I already evaluated, the basis for accepting the referential value of Trump’s stories is not empirical justification, but consistency with the moral standards and common sense of his audience. Common sense applies for the audience to their own moral sets of values and beliefs when they make the logical connection for them that the people who do not care about the Constitution would be able to rig an election. The consequence is that the crowd distances itself even further from the opposing party and everything that it stands for, and that they are truly convinced that they are fighting for the right thing in order to save “their” country.

Trump uses this separation to his advantage by thoughtfully and continuously pointing it out throughout the speech. For instance, he states: “It's just a great honor to have this kind of crowd and to be before you and hundreds of thousands of American patriots who are committed to the honesty of our elections and the integrity of our glorious Republic. “ In regular gaps, the departing president reassures his crowd of their common, and most important, value of being patriots and standing up for what is right for America. Another example: “Many of you have traveled from all across the nation to be here, and I want to thank you for the extraordinary love. That is what it is; there's never been a movement like this ever, ever for the extraordinary love for this amazing country. And this amazing movement. Thank you.” Furthermore, he pinpoints: “We have overwhelming pride in this great country and we have it deep in our souls. Together, we
are determined to defend and preserve government of the people, by the people and for the people.”

The narrative is clear: his crowd are patriots, Democrats are not. His crowd stands for an honest election and integrity, the Democrats do not. His people love the country, Democrats do not. Trump claims: “As this enormous crowd shows, we have truth and justice on our side. We have a deep and enduring love for America in our hearts. We love our country.” There is narrative coherence, as only patriotic people value the Constitution of the United States. Why would unpatriotic Americans do so if they do not love and want the best for their country? Why would someone who does not care about what is good for America hold the basic set of values to respect the laws that the country stands for? All these questions appear to be logical and coherent when listening to Trump’s narrative from his audience’s point of view.

In addition to that, it builds narrative fidelity as parts of the crowd are far-right nationalists, whose political viewpoints and values are the complete opposite from the left side of the spectrum. This means that the narrative fits perfectly into their own life experience.

In his speech, Trump continues to highlight several acts of the Democratic Party which he considers as unpatriotic. For instance, he talks about the Washington Monument and that the Democrats want to take it down (the Washington Monument was built by slaves). He also mentions the Jefferson Memorial and that Democrats are planning to take it down. In his viewpoint, the monuments represent American history. This directly incorporates that the Democrats do not respect America’s history, which is something no patriot would fail to do.
By channeling the notion of being patriotic within his crowd, the crowd creates a feeling of belonging, they feel unity, they feel like they are fighting the good fight. Naturally, the crowd responds with frenetic applause. “Patriotism or national pride is the feeling of love, devotion, and sense of attachment to a homeland or the country and alliance with other citizens who share the same sentiment to create a feeling of oneness among the people. This attachment can be a combination of many different feelings, language relating to one's own homeland, including ethnic, cultural, political, or historical aspects” (Chisick, 2005). Chisick is emphasizing the feeling of oneness that emerged in the crowd. A consequence of this feeling is that people who are opposed to their points of view seem to be a threat to that oneness and unity.

One threat to this oneness and unity that Trump portrayed throughout his presidency and within the speech as well is immigration. Considering that, he mentions in his speech: “You know, the wall is built. We're doing record numbers at the wall. Now, they want to take down the wall. Let's let everyone flow in. Let's let everybody flow in. We did a great job in the wall. Remember, the wall, they said it could never be done. One of the largest infrastructure projects we've ever had in this country, and it's had a tremendous impact, that we got rid of catch and release. We got rid of all of this stuff that we had to live with.” He creates a sense within the audience that the country “belongsTo” to them, and that only real Americans can preserve the right to live in it. By naming possible immigrants “everybody,” he separates a specific group from his audience and portrays it as a threat.

Trump deployed the strategy of framing immigrants that could intimidat America as a country and need a verb here his audience’s sense of patriotism throughout
his presidency and during his campaigns. For example, at a campaign rally in Minnesota, he warned his supporters that in case of his rival Joe Biden’s election victory their state would become “a refugee camp” filled with “Islamic extremists” - an insult directed at Minnesota’s more than 50,000 Somali immigrants (Wilson, 2020).

When asked by a reporter whether his rhetoric was dividing Americans, Trump answered, “I don’t think my rhetoric does at all. My rhetoric is very - it brings people together.” Obviously, he counted only his, the real people united and excluded the rest of the nation or immigrants.

Fittingly, in his speech he states: “But now, the caravans, I think Biden's getting in, the caravans are forming again. They want to come in again and rip off our country. Can't let it happen.” “The caravans” are immigrants that try to get into the country. He degrades the immigrants by using this term, and the clear lack of empathy toward these people in his language presents a toxic masculine feature displayed by Trump’s demagoguery.

Connected to that, Chisick also states that patriotism “encompasses a set of concepts closely related to nationalism and mostly liberal nationalism.” Nationalism is a secondary feature of authoritarianism. Demagogues try to create an “artificial bond” (Adorno 1991, p. 135) such as the nation. Demagogues use what Adorno calls the unity trick: They argue that everyone, except outsiders, is part of the nation and that out-groups are threatening this unity. They make use of the logic of repressive egalitarianism (Adorno 1991, p. 146). As already stated, parts of Trump’s crowd identify with a nationalistic point of view.
As the author of this paper is German, my personal perspective on the dangers of nationalism lay at hand. In German high school, a huge emphasis of the teachings lies in history classes that examine Hitler’s way to power in detail. With the goal at hand that this dark chapter of humanity never repeats itself, one of the main aspects is that in the beginning of Hitler’s career, he channeled the notion of patriotism that slowly but surely emerged into nationalism.

Additionally, one rhetorical device that stands out as a clear similarity between Hitler’s and Trump’s rhetoric, is the creation of a common enemy. The idea of a common enemy is a symbol of the evil against which people must unite, and it distracts the people from politically-inconvenient issues by relating all evils to the common rhetorical enemy. According to Burke, that creates an antithesis. We are born separate individuals and divided by class or other criteria and so identification is a compensation to division. (Burke, 1969, p. 22).

In Hitler’s case, some of his and his followers’ common enemies were his political opponents (the political establishment), the Jews (and generally people who did not fit into the Arian worldview), and the independent German media. A popular word during Hitler’s time in power that he and his supporters amplified was the word “Lügenpresse” (lying press). This word reemerged in the vocabulary of German right-wing parties and their audience within the last few years, which is problematic as Germans should be aware of what the consequences of this sort of rhetoric can be.

Considering that Trump not only deploys the creation of a common enemy as a rhetorical device, but that he actually uses the same enemies as Hitler, is an alarming signal. Just as Hitler and his propagandists attacked the independent German news media
as “Lügenpresse” (lying press) before turning the press into a propaganda arm of the government, Trump set out to systematically undermine the American public’s trust in the credibility of the mainstream media (Nacos, 2020).

Although a comparison between Hitler and Trump might be a stretch and a little bit too extreme considering what it produced (so far) - their rhetoric is similar in many ways. In light of their demagogic rhetorical style, the separation between groups and the formation of radically opposing positions is likely to happen.

This separation is evident when Trump mentions in his speech that he sees Republicans as “stronger and smarter.” In the same sequence, Trump also gets back to his narrative of patriotism, as he claims that Republicans (during the speech he says “you,” directly referring to his audience) are the ones who built the country, while the Democrats are the ones who are tearing it down. According to Trump, they do so by enacting policies that strip away jobs, weaken the American military, open the borders and put America last.

When Trump is presenting his own accomplishments in the speech, he does so by pinpointing patriotic values. He highlights his achievements in terms of the military, of his treatment of the vets and his primary promise of always putting America first. This whole narrative has one primary goal: creating an “us against the rest” mentality by appealing to the audience’s masculinity. As the crowd becomes more and more emotional throughout this speech, his rhetoric appears to be successful. Once more, this effect underlines Trump’s effective use of pathos.

The way Trump uses the military to his favor in order to underline the difference between the patriotic Republicans and the anti-American Democrats is crucial. He states
that the military flourished under his presidency, and he claims that the Democrats aim to weaken it. Trump is conscious that the military is associated with conservative, nationalist American values, which his audience shares. When looking at Trump using the military and what it stands for to his advantage, hegemonic masculinity as a theme is evident.

Therefore, patriarchy and masculinity form the core structure and meanings around which nationalism and militarism are built (Enloe, 2000). Militarism is privileged in the national ideology, and hegemonic masculinity experiences its most intense expression and reinforcement in the form of militarization (the acts of protecting, killing, warring, and conquering). The military represents values like discipline, strength, honor—all masculine features that he wants to evoke in his audience.

He claims that Biden will take away those features by destroying the military. Especially by naming the destruction of the military, which is an institution that is closely tied to American masculine values, his masculine victimhood is on full display. This helps his audience to get in the victimrole as they follow Trump's claim that “real America” is displaced from the political center by a feminized political establishment (Johnson, 2017).

After emphasizing the importance and his success with the military, Trump deliberately uses “war” language in his rhetoric. His audience is primed on what the military represents for their country, which is why the deployment of that specific language is so effective. In that context, Trump states, “we fight. We fight like hell. And if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore.” Just like the vets and the military, his audience has to “fight” in order to save the country. The military is
representative of the ultimate form of masculinity, and in order for his crowd to get the same amount of respect as the military, they have to show it in their actions.

Similarly, Trump explains, “We had 9,000 people that treated our veterans horribly. In primetime, they would not have treated our veterans badly. But they treated our veterans horribly.” Right after that statement, he continues by saying that he wants “to thank the more than 140 members of the House. Those are warriors. They're over there working like you've never seen before. Studying, talking, actually going all the way back, studying the roots of the Constitution, because they know we have the right to send a bad vote that was illegally gotten.”

Again, “warriors” as the chosen word is used in particular because it is a militaristic representation. Patriotism and warriorism are two traditional core values of the military (Franke, 1997). It evokes the narrative within his audience that they have to be “warriors” as well in order to correct the rigged election and to be of similar significance to the country as the military.

4.5 The Rigged Election

Every narrative displayed by Trump in his speech is supposed to support his main one: the narrative of a rigged election.

It is critical to note that Trump made all of his claims without ever presenting real, fact-checked evidence. Therefore, it is unethical to make claims of widespread voter fraud without even attempting to support those claims with real evidence (Sullivan, 2016). Elections officials of both parties in all 50 states have certified that the vote was fair and did not involve fraud. Trump has presented no evidence to back up his claims.
(Morrow, 2021). Indeed, comprehensive research shows that voter fraud is virtually non-existent (Bump, 2016). Nevertheless, Trump’s narrative of a rigged election found its pinnacle in his speech on January 6th.

As I evaluated in chapter 2.1, in the fear of being defeated, Trump has a history of railing against contests in which he failed or disliked the outcome. This became evident in several cases. In his political career it started when he falsely claimed that President Obama had not won the popular vote when he became president. It continued when he stated in 2016, before he defeated Hillary Clinton, that the general election would be manipulated (Feuer, 2022).

For years, allies of Mr. Trump had promoted the false “Stop the Steal” narrative that elections were being stolen in districts across the country (Feuer, 2022). That narrative heated up months before the 2020 election when some of Trump’s allies raised doubts about the security of mail-in ballots - an option that grew more popular during the pandemic - and began to spread claims that China or other nations would interfere in the election in order to harm Trump.

Taking all of that into consideration, the fact that in the months leading up to the 2020 election, trailing in the polls, he again predicted that he would be cheated out of a victory, and refused to commit to a peaceful transfer of power, did not come as much of a surprise. Trump’s supporters, especially the far-right groups, eagerly supported his false assertions of a rigged election.

The “Stop the Steal” movement and narrative is of high significance considering the aftermath. For weeks, the far-right supporters of Trump railed on social media that the election had been stolen. They openly discussed the idea of violent protest on the day
Congress met to certify the result. “We came up with the idea to occupy just outside the capitol on Jan 6th,” leaders of the Stop the Steal movement wrote on Dec 23rd. They called their Wednesday demonstration the “Wild Protest,” a name taken from a tweet by Trump.

Considering the “Stop the Steal” movement, right in the beginning of his speech, Trump states, “Our country has had enough. We will not take it anymore and that's what this is all about. And to use a favorite term that all of you people really came up with: We will stop the steal. Today I will lay out just some of the evidence proving that we won this election and we won it by a landslide. This was not a close election.” Trump specifically mentions the “Stop the Steal” narrative, as he knows that it resonates with a large segment of his audience. Many of the people within the audience have played an active part in the movement, and the direct recognition of their actions empowers them to go even further.

As with all his narratives, Trump utilizes repetition with the “Stop the Steal” notion as well. He continues later in his speech: “We must stop the steal and then we must ensure that such outrageous election fraud never happens again, can never be allowed to happen again.” Effectively Trump incorporates his audience into his rhetoric by using the word “we,” appealing to their emotions and the illusion that they can actively change the outcome of the election.

Another strategy that Trump uses is to confuse his audience by stating broad and overestimated numbers: “I've been in two elections. I won them both and the second one, I won much bigger than the first. OK. Almost 75 million people voted for our campaign, the most of any incumbent president by far in the history of our country, 12 million more
people than four years ago.” He goes on: “And I was told by the real pollsters — we do have real pollsters — they know that we were going to do well, and we were going to win. What I was told, if I went from 63 million, which we had four years ago, to 66 million, there was no chance of losing. Well, we didn't go to 66, we went to 75 million, and they say we lost. We didn't lose.” These numbers are neither fact checked nor accurate, but by mentioning them his audience loses clarity. Additionally, stating those numbers makes his argument seem more rational in the eyes of his crowd, it creates narrative coherence. Common sense, an important part of narrative theory, emerges - why would Trump state those numbers if they did not prove what they already claim to know - that the election was rigged?

Another rhetorical tactic Trump deploys in his speech is to give the responsibility away to other people - in the following case to Mike Pence. Trump says, “Because if Mike Pence does the right thing, we win the election. All he has to do, all this is, this is from the number one, or certainly one of the top Constitutional lawyers in our country. He has the absolute right to do it. We're supposed to protect our country, support our country, support our Constitution, and protect our constitution.” He goes on to say that “all Vice President Pence has to do is send it back to the states to recertify and we become president and you are the happiest people.” Trump’s victimhood as a rhetorical strategy is on full display, as he is not responsible for producing the outcome. It is not in his hand, he is the victim as he actually won the vote - and so is his audience. As Mike Pence is in the Capitol at this very moment, this also indicates that pressuring him to do the “right thing” for Trump and his audience might be the only way to turn around the election.
Trump's demagoguery as the man who is in charge and who speaks the language of the people becomes evident when he engages in derogatory language. He vocalizes: “That election, our election was over at 10 o'clock in the evening. We're leading Pennsylvania, Michigan, Georgia, by hundreds of thousands of votes. And then late in the evening, or early in the morning, boom, these explosions of bullshit.” He specifically names the election “our” election, including the audience and creating audience identification. The use of the word “bullshit” creates the notion that the mob can go further than what is politically correct, when their leader lives by that example. The reaction of the crowd is immediate, as they respond with chanting “bullshit, bullshit.”

This can be seen as a moment where Trump’s appeal to his audience’s emotions reaches its pinnacle - things drift away from what is considered “normal” at a political rally. Trump is aware of the emotional state of mind his audience is in at this point, and he uses this emotionality to present his “facts.” He voices: “Today, for the sake of our democracy, for the sake of our Constitution, and for the sake of our children, we lay out the case for the entire world to hear. You want to hear it?” Addressing his audience on the most personal level, including their national pride and the well-being of their children, Trump goes on to lay out his case.

Trump first attacks the voting process of Pennsylvania. He explains, “Pennsylvania was defrauded. Over 8,000 ballots in Pennsylvania were cast by people whose names and dates of birth match individuals who died in 2020 and prior to the election. Think of that. Dead people, lots of dead people, thousands. And some dead people actually requested an application. That bothers me even more.” Connected to that, the expansion of absentee voting in Pennsylvania drew attention prior to the election. But
that was done prior to the pandemic and authorized in a law passed with bipartisan support through the state’s Republican-controlled legislature (Cassidy, 2021).

He continues his narrative: “By the way, Pennsylvania has now seen all of this. They didn't know because it was so quick. They had a vote. They voted. But now they see all this stuff, it's all come to light. Doesn't happen that fast. And they want to recertify their votes. They want to recertify.” Considering these statements, U.S. Circuit Judge Stephanos Bibas, a former law professor appointed by Trump, wrote, “voters, not lawyers, choose the President. Ballots, not briefs, decide elections,” as his panel refused to grant a request to stop Pennsylvania from certifying its results (Izaguirre, 2021).

Furthermore, in about 60 cases filed by Trump’s legal team and Republican allies, Trump notched just one small victory in a fight over the deadline to provide missing proof of identification for certain absentee ballots and mail-in ballots in Pennsylvania (Izaguirre, 2021).

Trump continues with similar claims of voter fraud in other states. Ultimately, his narrative stays the exact same. Fake ballots, Democrats who influenced the ballot count process, the fake news and media covering everything up. What stands out is that his evidence is continuously lacking any foundation and proof.

Contrary to Trump’s narrative, state and local election officials have called the November election one of the smoothest in recent memory, with voting spread out across days and even weeks rather than a crush of people at polling places on Election Day. Even Trump’s recently departed attorney general, William Barr, said he saw no evidence of widespread fraud (Cassidy, 2021).
However, Trump’s narrative of a rigged election is deeply engraved within his audience, and their emotionality surpasses their ability to rationally process the given information. When Trump persistently refused to commit to accepting the election results, he reinforced his base’s polarized distrust of the system and their faith in his personal victimhood.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this chapter, I will briefly recap the most important findings of this thesis. Additionally, I will connect the findings to the violent outcome, and incorporate important statements from Trump’s speech that continued his ongoing narratives and inherited a call to action for his audience. Lastly, I will conclude by presenting some of the public reactions of politicians and scholars both nationally and internationally, which underline my claim that Trump’s amplified narratives possibly led to the storming of the Capitol.

Trump’s speech on January 6th represents the main narratives of Trump’s presidency in one artifact. In short, these narratives are: the notion of an “us vs. them” rhetoric that results in creating common enemies such as the “radical left” Democrats and the weak Republicans; the plot of the “fake news and media” which conspires against him and his party; the narrative of masculine dominance displayed by hegemonic, toxic masculinity connected to the deep appeal to his audience’s sense of patriotism that tends to develop into nationalism - with a clear emphasis on the military; and the overall narrative that is supported and built by the previous ones: The story of a rigged election that was stolen from him and his audience.

In order to successfully convey those narratives to his audience, Trump utilizes all the characteristics that make narrative theory an effective rhetorical device. Most importantly, he focuses on audience identification. Therefore, a few things are critical. First, Trump’s awareness of his audience and his knowledge about their political tendencies, and second, his constant appeal to their emotions, utilizing pathos and ethos rather than logically constructed arguments. Knowing their political tendencies and their
value and belief system makes it easy for Trump to create narrative coherence and fidelity within his audience. According to Fisher and several other theorists, appealing to the audience’s emotions is more effective than trying to persuade them with rational arguments.

Trump masters both aspects in his speech, specifically the appeal to his audience’s emotions. The use of pathos is made evident by the reaction of his crowd. It is logical to conclude that the aftermath would have been different if the crowd was not as emotionally charged as they were.

Trump deploys rhetoric typical for demagogues. Therefore, with his language he portrays himself as “self-defined savior of the people” (Wodak 2017, p. 552). His demagoguery is further demonstrated through his populist rhetoric. In this political context, populist “political actors talk about the people and combine this with an explicit anti-establishment position and an exclusion of certain population categories” (Jagers 2007, p. 323).

Considering that, Trump uses this demagogic populist style in order to create an “us vs. them” mentality and narrative that separates his audience further from the political establishment. Consequently, populist discourse “delegitimizes established power structures and the role of elected representatives in liberal democracy while claiming that the people should rule” (Norris 2019, p. 65). Populist politicians engage in simplistic explanations and solutions based on common sense, and as part of an anti-intellectualism vision (Wodak 2017), which results in Trump’s strong emphasis on his audience’s emotions rather than their logical thinking. By doing so, what seems logical from an
outside perspective becomes illogical for his group, as the accepted narrative fits their life experiences and beliefs.

Those established power structures that Trump tries to delegitimize are the “fake news and media” as well as his political opponents, or as Trump names them “the radical left” Democrats and “weak” Republicans. In order to do so, Trump creates distrust between the audience and those institutions or people.

Significantly, the “post-truth” phenomenon comes into play when Trump sows that lack of belief in the political establishment within his audience. This phenomenon – of citing “facts” which did not happen - but addressed to the crowd’s emotions and feelings in order to convince them that “such is true” is called “post-truth.” Trump utilizes “post-truth” by stating “alternative facts” that fit his narrative. As those “facts” ring true to his audience’s emotions and ontology, they are effectively persuading them.

Trump’s relationship with the media is interesting, as he is perfectly aware of the consequences his words and his narrative about the media carries. For instance, in his book “Time to Get Tough: Make America Great Again,” Donald Trump wrote, “Politics and television are nasty businesses. When the two collide, things get even nastier” (Trump, 2015, p. 173).

Furthermore, nearly three decades before he became a presidential candidate, Trump wrote, “If you are a little different, or a little outrageous, or if you do things that are bold or controversial, the press is going to write about you” (Trump, 1987, p. 56). In this, he was right. The more despicable his statements and behavior were, the more media attention he got. It was far less important whether the coverage criticized or praised him. As a businessman Trump had embraced both positive and negative news about him as a
net gain (Trump, 1987), but as a Republican nominee and as president he attacked any journalistic criticism and the refusal of reporters to validate his and the administration’s constant output of “alternative facts.”

This highlights Trump’s demagoguery, as one expert in the field states, “demagoguery may be described as the process whereby skilled speakers and writers seek to influence public opinion by employing the traditional tools of rhetoric with complete indifference to truth” (Lomas, 1961, p. 161). This underlines how deliberately he operates in using the media as the common enemy for him and his audience.

When scapegoating his political enemies, Trump does not hesitate to dehumanize his opponents and attack them on a personal level. He fosters the “us vs. them” narrative by blaming his political opponents for the downfall of America. Additionally, on the campaign trail and during his presidency Trump did not merely attack his opponents and “enemies” with aggressive and degrading language, he also condoned, praised, and even encouraged physical violence against various “enemies.” Before and during his presidency Donald Trump’s preferred words were those that project strength, toughness, and most of all wins. In his tweets he used “win” and “won” 1,136 times; also prominent were the terms “strong” (551 times), “tough” (326 times), “fight” (279 times), and “attack” (226 times). He degraded his opponents as “failing” 234 times, “weak” 199 times, and “loser” 128 times (Nacos, 2020).

This narrative highlights Trump’s excessive use of hegemonic, toxic masculinity. As research shows, the consequence of the deployment of hegemonic, toxic masculinity as a rhetorical strategy is that it fosters other domains and attributes such as sexism, racism, homophobia, and xenophobia. It also creates further polarization and the
language used supports violence. Those are all indicators of how the escalation in the form of the storming of the Capitol seems like the anticipated ending to his narratives.

Hegemonic, toxic masculinity is especially evident in Trump’s narrative of patriotism. Trump addresses the national pride of his audience by continuously explaining how their political enemies in the form of the feminized political establishment are responsible for the destruction of America.

He utilizes an emphasis on his success with the military in order to appeal to the audience’s masculinity. As the military is closely tied to values considered masculine and American (strength, honor, aggression), he evokes those masculine features within his audience. Therefore, patriarchy and masculinity form the core structure and meanings around which nationalism and militarism are built (Enloe, 2000).

Considering that, the danger within this rhetoric is the emerging nationalistic attitude within his crowd. Nationalism is a second feature of authoritarianism. Demagogues try to create an artificial bond (Adorno 1991, p. 135) such as the nation. Hegemonic, toxic masculinity is even more so evident in nationalism than it is in patriotism and therefore further motivates violent acts since hegemonic masculinity has been linked to power, and although that does not necessarily signal violence, it could allow for force (Ebben, 2017).

When taking one last look at Trump’s speech, there are several instances where he directly calls for action within his audience. It is important to note that not all of Trump’s calls for action were of a violent nature. For instance, Trump stated that he knows “that everyone here will soon be marching over to the capitol building to peacefully and patriotically make your voices heard.” This statement significantly differs from his usual
rhetoric within the speech. While he still channels the notion of patriotism, contrary to his usual hegemonic, masculine style, the word “peacefully” seems out of place. The fact that this rhetoric was an absolute exception compared to his usual way of persuading his audience, it almost highlights his demagoguery even more.

Therefore, Trump also says things like: “You have to get your people to fight. And if they don't fight, we have to primary the hell out of the ones that don't fight. You primary them. We're going to. We're going to let you know who they are.” The extensive use of war language and the connected hegemonic, toxic masculinity in this case can be seen as a direct call to violence toward his political opponents in order to overthrow the election. And furthermore: “Together, we will drain the Washington swamp and we will clean up the corruption in our nation's capital. We have done a big job on it, but you think it's easy. It's a dirty business. It's a dirty business. You have a lot of bad people out there.” Polarizing language, “draining the Washington swamp,” “cleaning up,” “dirty business.” These segments of his speech represent a demagogic authoritarian language that supports violent acts. It creates outside groups and a picture of an enemy that is of less worth than the ingroup. This rhetoric represents a dangerous avenue, especially considering that parts of the audience lean to the far-right nationalist spectrum, and that they arrived at the speech with military equipment.

Lastly, I want to present some public reactions to the events of January 6th that I believe underline my claim that Trump’s rhetoric throughout his presidency, and his narratives that culminated in his last official speech as the president in many ways had a possible impact on the aftermath - the insurrection.
Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnel said, “the mob was fed lies” by Trump and others. “They were provoked by the President and other powerful people, and they tried to use fear and violence to stop a specific proceeding of a branch of the federal government,” McConnell said. Furthermore, he guaranteed a “safe and successful” inauguration of Biden. I think it is of significance that this statement came from Trump’s own party, which highlights that the separation between Trump’s in- and outgroup starts even within his own political associates.

Logically, there were also several international reactions worth noting. For example, Steffan Lindberg (Klein, 2021), a Swedish political theorist and director of the Varieties of Democracy Institute, was asked about America and its standing globally, and he suggests, “the world is worried.” Lindberg states “if America continues to digress on this course, it may no longer be considered a democracy; it would be a return to America’s historical norm: some liberal rights for some people” (Klein, 2021). This is a heavy statement as it emphasizes that international politics considers the events on January 6th as threatening for democracy. Lindberg used the words “continues to digress,” which underlines that he sees the events as a continuation of an ongoing story.

Similarly, The Telegraph (England) wrote: “This is exactly the space in which democracy and social stability suffer, and populists and extremists flourish. Where there is no sense of community, there is no trust. Without trust, there is deceit, irresponsibility, corruption and criminality. There is no longer even truth. Alternative communities choose their own facts - these days spread online - and follow leaders regardless of social norms. This is how, without evidence, millions of Americans believe their election was rigged and the mob was right to storm the Capitol” (Editorial Board, The Telegraph,
2021a). The newspaper draws on the distinction that Trump utilized “post-truth” as a rhetorical device, and shows how this phenomenon led to the belief of Trump’s notion of a rigged election. The author even goes so far to say that this was the main catalyst for the storming of the Capitol. While I do not claim this to be the case, it strengthens my description of the effect that Trump’s rhetoric and ongoing narratives had on his audience.

Last but not least, coming from Germany, the press consensus in my home country was clear in its framing. Trump was responsible; first for his antagonism before the breach, and then his lack of response after the riot started. More direct than other international venues, and often more direct than even American news coverage, many of the German media outlets chronicled a timeline of Trump’s implicit and explicit role in the insurrection.

I want to conclude with the statements of then-Chancellor Angela Merkel. She used the language of “anger” and “sadness” as well as “attackers” and “rioters” when directing blame toward Donald Trump and the January 6th insurrection (Reuters Staffs, 2021). At a virtual political event on January 7th, Merkel stated, “I deeply regret that President Trump has not conceded defeat since November, and again refused to do so yesterday. Doubts about the outcome of the election have been stoked, and that set the atmosphere which made the events of the last night possible. A basic rule of democracy is: After elections, there are winners and losers. Both have to play their roles with decency and a sense of responsibility, so that democracy itself remains the winner” (Gehrke, 2021).
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# Jakob Schnaitter

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Wake Forest University  
Winston-Salem, 27106  
NC  
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## EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduating 08/2022</th>
<th><strong>Master of Arts</strong>, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduated 05/2021</td>
<td><strong>Bachelor of Arts</strong>, Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA</td>
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## WORK EXPERIENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>05/2020 – Present</th>
<th><strong>Administrator and Coach</strong>, Benessere Fitness &amp; Wellness, Edling, Germany</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contributing to sales and more effective marketing strategies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Creating development plans for members</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Assisting in lessons and instructions</td>
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<th>06/2019 – Present</th>
<th><strong>Tennis Coach</strong>, Tennisschule Meigel, Ismaning, Germany</th>
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<td></td>
<td>• Contributing in recruiting new members for the club</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Organizing tournaments, camps and events</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Coaching people of all age groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Earned B-Coach status (second highest coaching license in Germany)</td>
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<th>06/2017 – 06/2019</th>
<th><strong>Administrator and Tennis Coach</strong>, TC Gräfelfing, Gräfelfing, Germany</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organized camps over the summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Worked mostly with kids and beginners</td>
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## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

| 01/2022 – 08/2022 | **Master’s Thesis**, Wake Forest Department of Communication |
• Advisor: Nate French, PhD  
• Title: Donald Trump’s January 6th Speech: A Rhetorical Analysis

**SKILLS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluent in German and English</th>
<th>Developed leadership skills as a captain of the Wake Forest men’s tennis team</th>
<th>Advanced writing skills in German and English</th>
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<tr>
<td>Flourishing in team environments through experience in athletics</td>
<td>Worked with diverse groups of people</td>
<td>Capable of managing pressure situations through experience in athletics</td>
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**OTHER**

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<th>08/2021 – 05/2022</th>
<th><strong>Wake Forest Men’s Tennis Team</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• All ACC Third Team, ITA Scholar Athlete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ITA All-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Named Captain in January 2022</td>
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<th>08/2017 – 05/2021</th>
<th><strong>Azusa Pacific Men’s Tennis Team</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Captain from start of Junior to end of Senior Year</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2021 Pac-West Player of the Year</td>
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<td>• 2021 Pac-West Men’s Tennis Scholar Athlete of the Year</td>
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<td>• 2019-2021 Cosida Academic All-American</td>
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