SINISTER SUBSHADE: THE REVIVAL OF THE KU KLUX KLAN IN MODERN

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Abstract

Through the implementation of qualitative analysis this study purposes to discover if there exists possible correlation between President Trump's assent to power and the increasing legitimacy of the Ku Klux Klan. Using Ernest Bormann's (1972) Fantasy Theme Criticism, the Knights Party official website and the Donald J. Trump official website are systematically analyzed for dramatis personae (character), setting and action. The rhetorical visions compiled from each analysis are compared employing Ernest Bormann's (1980) Symbolic Convergence Theory. Resulting analysis suggests little to no correlation between the two movements. The two websites provided very different rhetorical visions with no overlap. The work presented here could have profound implications for future studies of social movements and may one day help to solve the problem of surviving hate groups in America.

Keywords: Ku Klux Klan, Donald Trump, Fantasy Theme

Sinister Subshade: The Revival of the Ku Klux Klan in Modern America

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

As of December 3, 2017, the top two suggested searches on Google for "2017 was a…" remain "bad year" and "real eye-opener". If entered into the search bar with no completion, the first search result is an article by The Atlantic (2017) entitled "Why 2017 Feels Like a Media Apocalypse". The article highlights the struggles media has faced this year, citing the newest President as the biggest dilemma, going so far as to create a new term to describe the phenomenon: "the Trump effect". Many Americans would point to the new President as the source of much contention in the United States this year. The past year has been peppered with conflict centering around sexual misconduct and race relations. From the onslaught of Hollywood sexual misconduct testimonies to the debates about the NFL protests, it is as if the two weakest points (sexual misconduct and race-relations) of the President's campaign are haunting the Nation.

One such cornerstone conflict in Trump's short-lived Presidency has been the 2017 Charlottesville Riots. In what can only be described as a white supremacy comeback, thousands gathered to protest the dismantling of a statue of Robert E. Lee, the premier Confederacy General of the Civil War. The second riot pivoted out of control as protesters and counter-protesters clashed, resulting in tear gas, pepper spray, over 30 injuries and one death. Bewildered Americans gathered around televisions and computer screens as news of the "Unite The Right" rally unfolded. In the days following the debacle, conversation could be heard around water coolers and coffee shops across the country. Questions akin to "Do white supremacists really still exist? I thought the Ku Klux Klan died out? How can this be happening?" bubbled into the social sphere as the result of a nation in unrest.

The KKK's unexpected rebirth seemed to inspire a renewed fascination with the antiquated hate group as citizens stood in disbelief over its combustive revival. Of course, there were the ever-present gesticulations that the President had served as a social catalyst. When examined more closely however, there were several facts that made correlation questionable.

Firstly, there were ten times the amount of counter-protesters as there were actual protesters in the original rally posed by the Ku Klux Klan. It would seem according to the turn out that a much larger sample of citizens opposed the values of this small handful than supported it. Secondly, the Unite the Right Rally was arranged by a little known white nationalist with no affiliation with the White Knights Party. Lastly, it seemed that the KKK, previously a decaying hate group on its way out, was getting most of the credit for the happenings at Charlottesville, a connection that made little sense when reviewing the failure of their own first, smaller protest.

This study purposes to discover if there exists possible correlation between President Trump's assent to power and the increasing legitimacy of the Ku Klux Klan. The researcher intends to apply Ernest Bormann's Symbolic Convergence Theory and Fantasy Theme Criticism in order to discern whether or not the two movements share a rhetorical vision. If the two movements do in fact overlap, sharing a rhetorical vision, then it would follow that symbolic convergence has occurred evidencing the possibility of correlation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fantasy Theme Origination

Ernest Bormann (1972, 1973, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1994, 1996) originated Symbolic Convergence Theory and Fantasy Theme Criticism after first studying the work of Harvard social-psychologist Robert Bales and his colleagues (1950, 1970). Bales' work began with his interest in small face-to-face groups, labeling them "systems of human interaction" (Bales, p. 257, 1950). In his analyzation of discourse within small groups, Bales found that group interaction inspired anxiety in certain members. These members often found one of three ways to cope with the social discomfort; being friendly, dramatizing, or agreeing.

Dramatizing consists of members telling stories of unrelated thoughts or ideas. The interesting outcome of dramatizations in Bales' observation would be the other group member reactions. When one member would begin to dramatize, other members would "come alive … in the symbolic reality they create together, in the drama of their own action" (Bales, p. 152, 1970). Bales notes that the moment groups begin to dramatize together is often the moment individual members identify as becoming a part of the group. Bales (1970) called group dramatizations "chains of fantasy".

Fantasy here should not be mistaken for that dreamy illusion elaborated upon by writers of fiction. Rather, fantasy refers to the bonding symbols pervaded by small groups which begin with one member's thoughts or ideas, and continue with other member's adaptations. For example, in a group project one student might grumble to another, "Our teacher is a mean old witch for making us work so hard." If other members choose to accept this fantasy they may add comments similar to, "Isn't she? I hear she eats students for breakfast!" Group participation and

acceptance of the one member's dramatization constitute the fantasy chaining out. The other members have accepted the fantasy and built upon it, therefore it becomes a defining quality, or symbol of the group, bonding each member as "one of the group".

Bales' (1970) later work at Harvard caught Ernest Bormann's (1972) eye while working on his own research on small groups at the University of Minnesota. Unlike social-psychologist Bales, Bormann's work was deep seated in the then-budding discipline of communication from the start. He and his colleagues were in the trenches of mass media, seeking clarity on how ideas graduate from small groups to larger groups such as in the realm of public address. It was around this time that the team encountered Robert Bales' (1970) book, *Personality and Interpersonal Relations*. Bormann was instantly fascinated with the psychologist's findings, particularly for the application to small group communication. Bales had discovered by accident precisely what Bormann had intended to study on purpose; small group ideas bubbling into public life. Bales' research indicated that some ideas were nearly contagious in a small group setting. When one member chose to dramatize, the rest of the group did not stop at acceptance. Rather the fantasy was fleshed out and built upon, with active involvement from other members. As Bormann (1972) put it, "When group members respond emotionally to the dramatic situation they publicly proclaim some commitment to an attitude (Bormann, p. 397, 1972). In other words, fantasy themes that retained heavy involvement came to signify group values and culture.

With Bormann's background in mass media, he was quick to reason that studying dramatizations chaining out in small groups lead to understanding dramatizations, and therefore values, of the larger cultures in which they are part. Bormann (1972) exercised this reasoning by studying anecdotes used in Puritan rhetoric in his work "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality". The Minnesota researcher believed that anecdotes which

are used merely to illustrate a point in rhetoric are themselves fantasy themes. An example of

such an anecdote might be the popular use of sayings centered around money in Western

cultures. "You will pay for this", "That nearly cost me my life", "Speak quickly because time is

money", these fantasy themes indicate a value generally held by people belonging to this culture;

money. Money is used to illicit the importance of a betrayal, of life, and of time, speaking to the

overarching precious nature of the wealth itself.

Bormann's Symbolic Convergence

Bormann (1980, 1982, 1983, 1985) continued to elaborate on Bales' (1950, 1970)

research on dramatizations and fantasy, eventually formulating symbolic convergence theory. It

is important to note that symbolic convergence relies on a social constructivist paradigm; it

assumes that communication creates reality. Therefore, it is implied that symbols do not only

create shared meaning for groups, but shared reality. In small groups, members generally try to

make sense of the things that are said or done to them. It is human nature to frame social and

physical contexts through the use of symbols in order to make sense of happenings within these

contexts. A small group consists of many individuals sense making through the use of symbols,

and these frameworks tend to overlap. Small group members graduate from individuals with

personal realities, to groups with shared reality, "private symbolic worlds incline toward each

other, come more closely together, or even overlap during certain processes of communication"

(Bormann, p. 102, 1983).

Fantasy themes create a converged reality by recoloring events through the small group's

shared narratives, resulting in a coherent rhetorical vision. The inside jokes, anecdotes and inner

narratives shared by the group begin to construct an overarching belief or value. It is at this point

of symbolic convergence that fantasy themes can chain out to individuals outside of the group.

Symbolic convergence theory brought with it a method for studying rhetoric that contains symbols, rhetorical visions and fantasy themes; fantasy theme analysis. This theme and rhetorical criticism are difficult to separate, as they exist in a symbiotic relationship. Fantasy theme analysis is the vehicle with which to apply symbolic convergence theory.

Fantasy theme analysis and symbolic convergence theory are often applied to movements in tandem to analyze the motivations of people who have bought in to the rhetorical visions fueling the movement. One such instance would be a study conducted by Bormann, Cragan and Shields (1996) in which they applied symbolic convergence theory by analyzing eighty-seven diverse studies conducted using fantasy theme analysis to make sense of the birth and death of the Cold War rhetorical vision.

In order for researchers to determine if symbolic convergence has taken place, rhetorical visions must be identified. Rhetorical visions in turn can be identified after first delineating messages into fantasy themes. There are three main classifications of fantasy themes; Dramatis personae (character), setting and action. Character themes call out the main players in the group drama- these can often be separated into archetypes such as "hero" and "villain". In the modern feminist movement, some character themes may be women such as Gloria Stein as heroes and men such as Donald Trump as villains. Setting themes describe the situation in which the drama takes place. For example, much of the feminist movement is often set in America. Lastly, action themes lend to the movement of the narrative through plot or character operation. One such plot line in the modern feminist movement might be bra-burning or bra-shunning.

In one of his earlier publications Bormann (1973) modeled the application of fantasy themes by applying dramatis personae to ascertain the cause of a muddled political situation dubbed "the Eagleton affair". Bormann studied 1972 Democratic presidential nominee George

McGovern's choice for vice president; former Senator Thomas Eagleton. Former Senator

Eagleton allegedly struggled with severe clinical depression and was forced to resign from the

nomination when word of his electro-shock therapy spread, earning him the unfortunate title,

"Electric Tom". Bormann explained the withdrawn nomination's connection to dramatis

personae in his abstract, "The breaking news of Senator Eagleton's mental health, coming at a

strategic time, created a fantasy that chained through the electorate and presented the

McGovern *persona* as inconsistent, inept, and untrustworthy" (Bormann, Abstract, 1973).

It is important to note, that even messages with implicit fantasy themes do not always

manage to "chain out". Citizens of the West remember with mixed feelings what has been

dubbed the "red cup incident" of 2015. Starbucks took a risk by issuing a plain two-toned red

holiday cup in lieu of the ornate seasonal symbols they sported in the past (such as reindeer,

Santa and snowflakes). Starbucks vice president Jeffrey Fields hailed the creation of the new

cups as, "a purity of design that welcomes all of our stories" (Wattles, 2015). The red cups

sparked backlash with many self-identified Christians who claimed the cups were trying to erase

Christmas. Patrons began ordering drinks using the name "Merry Christmas" in order to force

employees to say the words and others flat-out boycotted the business. In the end, Starbucks

produced Holiday-themed cups in both 2016 and 2017, eschewing the controversial plain design.

Starbuck's rhetorical vision of inclusion failed to chain-out in North America. Bales would argue

that groups respond to fantasy themes based on personal need, therefore failure to chain out

would speak to the needs of the larger society surrounding the group. However, Bormann (1982)

has referred to fantasy themes as "constructed", suggesting the artistry involved in a successful

theme's catching on. Bormann might ascribe the failure of this particular message to Starbuck's

marketing department.

Cragan and Shields

In the late 1970's, communication theorists John F. Cragan and Donald C. Shields (1977, 1978) began expounding further on the foundation of symbolic convergence set by Bormann (1972). The researchers added more dimension to Bormann's theory and furthered his small group communication aspirations by testing various fantasy themes with focus groups to see which chained out and which did not. Cragan and Shields also made symbolic convergence theory more practical and pragmatic, producing copious amounts of material on a diverse range of artifacts. The duo applied fantasy theme and symbolic convergence to a myriad of rhetorical situations including political campaigns, marketing campaigns, speeches and university settings.

In 2005 Cragan and Shields applied symbolic convergence to the life of the average college student by crafting a rhetorical vision profile that helped college students better understand the rhetorical visions that formulated their perspectives on educational success. The students were directed to complete a quiz that resulted in one of six possible "master analogues". The master analogues compiled ascribed fantasy themes of the students into six different rhetorical visions pertaining to the students' perceptions of "university success". This study was written for a layman audience and its first-person rhetoric targeted college students specifically, "SCT [Symbolic Convergence Theory] explains the way your view of campus life depends upon the rhetorical vision in which you participate" (Cragan & Shields, p. 12, 2005). Cragan and Shields were radical theorists who helped evolve symbolic convergence theory beyond the realm of theorists into a pragmatic and practical tool with many uses.

Existing Research

With the rise of the new millennium communication scholars began to build upon Bormann's foundation by applying his fantasy theme analysis and symbolic convergence theory

to the unique rhetorical situation presented by the creation of the internet. One such scholar, Margaret Duffy (2003), applied Bormann's work to the internet presence of four specific hate groups; White Nationalists, Neo-Nazis, the Knights Party and Black Seperatists. Duffy studied one website from each group for symbolic cues, dramatis personae, action and setting. She then compiled the resulting fantasy themes of each group into rhetorical visions.

The researcher found that in analyzing all four websites the resulting two rhetorical visions were, "master analogies of 'God's chosen people' and 'We shall overcome'" (Duffy, p. 308, 2003). Duffy also bore a warning of foreshadowing in the conclusion of her research, "As the technology-savvy extreme goes mainstream, the implications for the effectiveness of this medium in communicating the rhetorical visions of hate groups has the potential for insidious social consequences" (Duffy, p. 310, 2003). Over a decade after Duffy's publication, it has become clear that her predictions were correct in that the internet has become a medium for which hate groups communicate their rhetorical visions with ease.

McNamee, Peterson and Peña (2010) continued Margaret Duffy's (2003) research by studying the online communication of seven modern hate groups including the KKK. Unlike Duffy (2003), the researchers utilized a grounded theory of hate group communication to study themes in the online conversation that specifically aided in reinforcing each group's identity. The researchers concluded that hate group messages focused specifically on educating others, encouraging participation, invoking divine privilege and indicting outsiders (those that disagree with the message of the group).

The researchers contended that studying the online communication and central themes of hate groups offers a "practical resource for combating hate groups' reach" (McNamee, Peterson & Peña, p. 277, 2010). The authors also asserted that further study of hate group communication

could aid in containing small groups who have a negative impact on society such as terrorist organizations. Understanding their central themes could help to "undercut" their narratives, stopping the rhetorical visions before they chain out.

Where Duffy (2003) and McNamee, Peterson & Peña (2010) studied a slew of hate groups and hate group websites, researcher Denise Bostdorff (2009) studied the Ku Klux Klan's internet presence more exclusively. Bostdorff rhetorically analyzed the persuasive tactics used in multiple Klan websites in order to offer "practical actions that might counteract the [rhetorical] 'medicine' that hate group websites prescribe" (Bostdorff, p. 341, 2009). The researcher intended not only to analyze the rhetorical appeals of the groups but to create tangible action plans for combatting the hateful verbiage.

After analyzing several KKK factions, Bostdorff concluded that the websites consistently used appeals to white masculinity in order to create a community built by opposition to minority groups. The researcher also pointed that the Klan's internet-focused efforts may be self-defeating in that the internet can distance the audience from the group. Lastly, the researcher offered a practical solution to combatting the negative influence of hate groups on the web. Bostdorff suggested that communication scholars intentionally bring more awareness to online hate groups asserting that awareness is partially what helped the civil rights movement to combat widespread prejudice in the 60's and 70's.

As opposed to fantasy theme application to hate groups, comparatively little research focusing on President Trump's candidacy using Bormann's method has been published using fantasy theme analysis due to the recency of his term. However, researcher John P. McHale detailed the 2016 Presidential campaign in light of the fantasy themes that helped paint President Trump as a "corrupt business man" and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as "crooked".

McHale studied how media coverage can influence voters by using fantasy theme analysis to delineate the media coverage of the campaigns into succinct rhetorical visions.

The researcher indicated that his results evidenced narratives produced by the media focused on fantasy themes of corruption and negativity, "further indicating that the media's obsession with scandal contributed to and supported the narratives that portrayed both candidates as corrupt, adding pollution to the 2016 U.S. political environment" (McHale, Abstract, 2016). McHale illustrated the powerful impact that media can have on the perception of the public concerning public figures. In this instance, social media served as a catalyst for the chaining out of the corruption fantasy themes.

Researcher Christine Edwards (2017) also utilized fantasy theme analysis to study the 2016 U.S. Presidential debates between President Donald Trump and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Edwards (2017) sought to discern the leadership styles of the two candidates by analyzing their rhetoric for repeated fantasy themes. The researcher concluded that President Trump's repeated fantasy themes centered around what he wished to pursue and accomplish, "(1) Trump will … make American communities safer, (2) Trump will work to improve inner cities … (3) Trump will improve the economic environment…" (Edwards, p. 259, 2017). For this study's purposes, it is important to note that the President's language almost always centered on what he wished to do for and to America. During the campaign, his themes set a clear agenda and were almost exclusively self-focused.

Communication scholar James Sanchez (2018) was also intrigued by the rhetorical patterns of President Trump. However, he chose to study the rhetorical patterns of hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan in tandem with those of the President in order to discern their perceived similarities. Though Sanchez (2018) utilized the idea of rhetorical versatility and rhetorical

culture rather than symbolic convergence or fantasy theme criticism, his work is highly relevant

to this study due to the rhetorical nature of his comparison between the two movements. The

researcher analyzed the use of terms such as "patriotism", "heritage" and "security" in artifacts

produced by both groups in order to discern the ideologies that motivated them.

Sanchez concluded that the rhetoric supported "textual winks" by both the President and

the Ku Klux Klan pointing to their ideologies of civic white supremacy. He states that the

language of this ideology remains versatile as, "the KKK often employs explicit bigoted

language while Trump often masks his language with polysomic terms." The two groups use

"different ends of white supremacist rhetoric" (Sanchez, p. 56, 2018). Where the Ku Klux Klan

purports overtly racist language, President Trump's rhetoric is more covert in nature. The

researcher asserts that the President's rhetorical patterns hint at his ideology rather than clearly

stating it.

Recent Events of the Ku Klux Klan

In the summer of 2017, several riots broke out in Charlottesville Virginia. Three protests

occurred in reaction to the city's decision to dismantle a statue of Robert E. Lee, the lead General

in the Confederacy, from Emancipation park. In one such instance roughly 50 members of the

Ku Klux Klan and others with similar ideals banded together as what the media dubbed "Alt

Right". The grouping drew quite a crowd as the pointed hats and glaring confederate flags

bobbed behind the protection of armored police. Thousands drew in protest to the handful,

booing loudly and hurling profanity-laced proclamations as well as bottles and apple cores.

According to the New York Times (July 8, 2017), the counter-protesters became further violent

and followed the KKK members back to their cars, resulting in the police physically holding

back the crowd to allow the original few a safe passage to the exit. What began as a protest by a

smattering of KKK members ended in the police using three canisters of tear gas on citizens opposing the hate group.

In the following month, a similar protest occurred garnering national media attention to the small Virginian city. This time, hundreds gathered for a "Unite the Right" rally partially in response to the statue's removal, and largely with the intent of garnering national attention. The rally ended with a white supremacist charging his car into the crowd, harming dozens and killing one. Matthew Heimbach, founder of the Nationalist Front, a neo-Nazi organization, called the "Unite the Right" rally a success, sharing in an interview, "We showed that our movement is not just online, but growing physically. We asserted ourselves as the voice of white America" (Fausset & Feurer, 2017).

The New York Times (2017) asserted the protest was "the most visible manifestation to date of the evolution of the American far right" pointing to "social media and … the election of Donald J. Trump" (Fausset & Feurer, 2017) as the source of the emboldened display. The New York Times is not the only entity to make the connection between the recently elected President and a seemingly newly brazen KKK. According to the Associated Press, "Klan leaders say Donald Trump's immigration position and his ascendancy in the GOP are signs things are going their way" (Reeves, 2016). Current Arkansas based KKK National Director, Thomas Robb, furthered this sentiment stating, "You know, we began 40 years ago saying we need to build a wall," (Reeves, 2016).

The majority of Americans were dissatisfied at the President's response in the rally's aftermath, furthering speculation of his affiliation with Klan ideals. President Trump refuted the KKK outright at a press conference at the White House stating, "Racism is evil, and those who cause violence in its name are criminals and thugs – including the KKK, … [they] are repugnant

to everything we hold dear as Americans" (Schallhorn, 2017). However, the President had beforehand cited violence on "many sides", a comment that left Americans concerned and disquieted. According to a poll by the Washington Post in which 1,014 adults were surveyed, "56% of adults disproved of the President's response, while only 28% approved" (Reilly, 2017). According to the New York Times, the mayor of Charlottesville, Mike Signer, covertly accused the President of affiliating with the hate group saying, "I do hope that he looks himself in the mirror and thinks very deeply about who he consorted with during his campaign," (August 12, 2017).

Former Louisiana politician and KKK leader David Duke's apparent support for President Trump was another factor that greatly impacted the President's credibility concerning the hate group. The New York Times quoted Duke as stating that protestors were, "going to fulfill the promises of Donald Trump" to "take our country back" (August 12, 2017). The former leader later tweeted, "Thank you President Trump for your honesty & courage to tell the truth about #Charlottesville & condemn the leftist terrorists" (Fausset & Feurer, 2017).

David Duke transformed the Klan's image in the 70s by starting a new chapter in Louisiana and declaring himself "Grand Dragon" at the age of 24. Duke sought to put a more tolerable face on the Klan by rationalizing their methods, changing the rhetorical landscape. He transformed the typical racist mutterings of the small group from "anti-black" to "pro-white", leading to the "white heritage" banner of the current group. One follower at the height of his fame cited Duke as the "Martin Luther King" of white people (Newsweek, 1976). Interestingly, University of Alabama political science professor, George Hawley, pointed that many of the white supremacists in attendance at the rally were new and had learned their racism online. Many

had never even heard of David Duke, regardless of his key role in building the Klan in the 70s, 80s, and 90s.

The new wave of Klan followers' ignorance to this cornerstone leader of white supremacy speaks to the media's influence on this growing movement. New radicals are completely unaware of the groups' history, caught up in the rhetorical visions of the movement due to the merit of their strengthening online presence alone. The Klan's use of media is effective because it is low-cost and reaches a wider audience. Young people are more likely to be drawn in by the web-based rhetorical appeals because they feel more comfortable viewing the hate messages in the privacy of their homes ("Hate on the Net," p. 46, 1999; "Internet Hate," p. 48, 2000).

The parallels drawn between President Trump's ascension to office and the renewed vitality of the KKK could evidence symbolic convergence taking place. When the fantasy themes of a small group are reflected in larger society (for example in their media) it is a sign that the rhetorical visions of the group have chained out and have become part of the fabric of the society as a whole.

The Modern Klan

Unlike dynasties before it, the modern Ku Klux Klan has become a spattering of factioned small groups functioning as independent chapters. What was once a grand shadow has become a sinister sub shade, coloring the media in spurts. According to a report by the Southern Poverty Law Center (2016), in the year 2000, KKK groups numbered no more than 110, dropping down to a mere 72 in 2014, causing many to speculate that the hate group was dwindling to its end (George & Wilcox, 1996; Sims, 1996). However, in 2015 the number of groups skyrocketed to 190, resurging by a whopping 118 new groups. As late as 2016 the center

gesticulated "between 5,000 and 8,000" current members. The Associated Press (2016) additionally put the number of Klan members at 6,000 in 2016, noting the difficulty of obtaining an accurate count due to the Klan's overt secrecy.

Though member numbers remain limited in comparison with the millions of the 1920's, it is doubtless that the Ku Klux Klan finds itself once again on the rise, with "more than half of today's Klan(s) formed in the last three years" (Trimble, 2017). The KKK isn't the only hate group to find itself gaining numbers, either. CNN reports an increase of approximately 500 hate groups in America since the year 2000, totaling in at 917 groups as of August 2017. The concern inspired by the recent spike in members lies not in the comparatively small size of this particular hate group, but in the insurmountable parallels it holds to the original Klan. The modern KKK though disunified follows the pattern of its' predecessors who also operated at the local level in disjointed small groups in their beginning.

With the advances of technology and resulting widespread use of the internet, comes a more sophisticated, modern approach from the Ku Klux Klan, "What might be termed the "newer" media, such as … the internet have become the principal tools for far-right propaganda" (Hillard & Kieth, p. 5, 1999). Different factions of the disjointed far-right movement have taken to voicing their doctrines on the internet, but the most outspoken media presence is by far the self-branded "alt right" group, The Knights Party. With Baptist minister Thomas Robb at the helm, this Klan organization and their sister church, the Christian Revival Center, have perpetuated the message originated by first-wave Klansmen with newer tactics. Robb has pioneered the Klan by transforming their rhetorical approach. He intends to keep up with the times and puts a gentler, less overtly intimidating face on the hate group, citing racial pride as the group's chief motivator rather than racial supremacy. Robb has also continued another rhetorical

change originally modeled by David Duke; he has shed the Klan's famously sinister white garments for suits and ties.

Although the KKK's message may be antiquated, their methods have changed drastically. This new breed of hate group is well aware of its' media presence. Much can be gleaned from The Knights Party's website, where they include an easily accessible "Facts and Questions" section listing commonly asked questions and spinning their agenda with a clear emphasis on logos and ethos.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Bormann's Fantasy Theme Criticism systematically employs various aspects of drama (Bormann, 1994) in order to determine whether symbolic convergence has taken place. The researcher must analyze a rhetorical work for three forms of fantasy; dramatis personae, setting and action. Firstly, dramatis personae, or character themes, call out the main players in the group drama- these can often be separated into archetypes such as "hero" and "villain". In the Ku Klux Klan movement, some character themes may be white males such as current President Trump as heroes and minorities such as former President Obama as villains. Setting themes describe the situation in which the drama takes place. For example, much of the Ku Klux Klan and President Trump narratives are set in America. Lastly, action themes lend to the movement of the narrative through plot or character operation. One such plot line in the President Trump administration might be "taking back America".

Once fantasy themes have been defined, they are investigated for fantasy types. Fantasy types are scenarios in the narrative that are repeated over and over (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991). These scenarios are repeated so often that the small group can fill in gaps without further

prompting. One such example would be a phrase such as "…our jobs are being taken…" members of both the Trump and KKK movements are likely to identify immigrants as being the supposed root cause of blue collar Americans losing their jobs. When narratives are repeated often enough that they are recognizable though fragmented, the fantasy type is considered a "trigger". Group members do not need to be reminded of their resentment towards illegal immigrants, who they consider have replaced or are replacing them in the work force. Once the trigger is activated, members share a unified emotional response through the message. Hence, the colossal reaction President Trump received at rallies when inciting that America "build a wall".

Lastly, the critic must determine the rhetorical visions resulting from fantasy themes. Rhetorical visions are defined as "unified putting together of various scripts that gives the participants a broader view of things" (Bormann, 1985, p.133). They are further defined as the "total of all the communication acts that, when taken together, comprise the index of the complete drama" (Rybacki & Rybacki, 1991, p. 96). They may consist of slogans, names, phrases or labels that adequately sum the fantasy themes contained within the small group narrative. A speaker may incite a rhetorical vision much like a trigger in order to invoke response from the group. Rhetorical visions drive members to act, serving as motivators. These visions compile the social reality, or convergence of the group.

The researcher intends to identify fantasy themes of both The Knights Party and Donald J. Trump websites by analyzing their "about" and "facts and questions" pages. Each line of text will be sorted into "dramatis personae", "action" and "setting". The researcher will study the two charts for repetition, organizing the information into fantasy types. Lastly, the types will be condensed into rhetorical visions. If the same rhetorical visions are produced from both

movements, or there is reasonable overlap, then it follows that symbolic convergence has taken place insinuating the possibility of correlation.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The first question and answer of the "Facts and Questions" page of the Knights Party website and the "About" section of the Donald J. Trump website were first studied for repeated fantasy themes. Each line of text from both websites was systematically analyzed for Dramatis Personae, Action, and Setting. The researcher documented the fantasy themes and compiled them in table-form. These findings can be located in two completed charts in Table 1 and Table 2 of the Appendix. Once the fantasy themes were compiled, their repeated variables were condensed into comprehensive rhetorical visions for comparison. If the rhetorical visions of the Ku Klux Klan website and the Donald J. Trump website had any overlap, it would evidence symbolic convergence and therefore possible correlation between the two movements.

Analysis of The Knights Party Website

The "Facts and Questions" page of the Knights Party website was firstly analyzed for Dramatis Personae. Line by line analysis of the question and answer can be found in Figure 1 A. Of 33 total central character analyses, White people were considered a central character 18 times, with Non-White people considered central characters 12 times. Other main characters were the Knights Party themselves (three mentions) and Social Engineers (three mentions). Social Engineers, from the perspective of The Knights Party, are conspiratorial persons of power and influence who are planning the demise of white people.

Repeated character types consisted of White people as heroes and minorities as villains. The author uses "minority" in this context to address individuals the Knights Party deems as

opposition. Minorities consist of any race other than Caucasian as well as Caucasians who do not conform with the ideals of the Ku Klux Klan ("social engineers"). It is important to note however that The Knights Party considers White people to be the true racial minority.

The KKK (2017) asserts that White demographics are being systematically depleted stating, "White people are being systematically replaced, maligned, targeted, slandered, and victimized both physically and mentally. This is genocide!" (The Knights Party, 2017). Through consistent analysis of the character types it is clear that the Knights Party considers themselves and their race at large to be victims of all other races. The Knights Party's narrative indicates that they are protagonists antagonized by everyone who disagrees with them. White people with opposing view-points are not exempt in the villainy- they are considered to be worst of all earning titles such as "race traitors" and "social engineers". Rhetoric surrounding mention of the two main character types is highly conspiratory and dramatic, supporting the typical hero and villain archetypes presented in the narrative as seen below.

Figure 1 A

Quote	Dramatis Personae
"We want to stop White genocide"	We (The Knights Party)
"They look around and they don't see masses of white bodies floating down a river as one might see with the victims of the Rwandan genocide of recent years. They don't turn on the evening news and see bodies of massacred white people laid out in a field or on a street."	White victims

"They think white genocide is a joke or some crazy idea we have come up with. They don't take it seriously."	They (everyone else)
"Genocide is the planned extermination of a people. Genocide may sound too extreme to be applied to what is happening to white people."	White people/non-White people
"However, social engineers have in fact orchestrated the demise of white people."	Social Engineers
"They are betraying their own people out of a sense of self hatred and reward."	White Social Engineers
"Besides millions of blacks that live in the United States now, we have millions immigrating annually"	Non-white people
"Whites today in record numbers are leaving areas that non-whites are filling up."	White people
"The state of California is a prime example. White flight is nothing more than ethnic cleansing of whites."	White people
"Violence and discrimination against whites in the large cities are forcing them to hand over America's metropolitan areas and many smaller areas as well to non-whites."	Non-white people
"Soon America will be Brown – will whites be treated as humanely by nonwhites as whites have treated them?"	White people/ "Brown" people
"The discrimination and violence perpetrated against whites in America…	White people

…is accomplished through the mindset Americans are being lulled into which is that white people are just parasites on the world and if there wasn't any such thing as "whiteness" ahh the world would be so much nicer."	White people
"This is why it is so important for them to destroy white culture and heritage and to malign our heroes and ideas in our schools and universities."	Them (Social Engineers)
"The book "Hating Whitey" documents widespread anti-white speech by professors in classrooms across America openly smearing whites as the scourge of mankind."	Professors
"Evidence points that the non-whites in America today, mainly the black and the massive Hispanic population are very much anti-white."	Non-Whites
"The blacks of today suffer…from…Victim Based identity."	Black people
"In short it means that blacks since birth are taught they are the victims of the white race and…they…must overcome this by any means."	Black people
"The non-white Hispanics believe they have a historic grievance against the United States."	Hispanics

"They believe we robbed their country of half its land when Mexico was young and weak."	Hispanics
"An example of white genocide is the small country of Zimbabwe in Southern Africa."	South Africans
"Violence against whites is coming close to catastrophic."	White people
"This is an accurate example of what will happen when blacks outnumber whites."	Black people/ White people
"This genocide is not based on geography, but race. It is a world-wide phenomena."	White people
Whites will be faced with crime rates never seen before in history, in some places mass killings, arrests and displacement, will occur.	White people
On May 5, 1997, Mahathir Bin Mohamad, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, advocated the "flooding of developed countries with millions of migrants if globalization fails to improve the lot of poor nations."	Mahathir Bin Mohamad

March of 1998 was reported to have rounded up and refused admittance to 5,000 illegal aliens who were waiting along Sumatra's borders hoping to enter and find jobs.	Mahathir Bin Mohamad
Whites are in fact the global minority hovering around 11% of the population.	White people
Historically white nations are seeing drastic demographic changes and within two decades will also be minority white.	White people
White people are being systematically replaced, maligned, targeted, slandered, and victimized both physically and mentally. This is genocide!	White people
We don't care who is superior and who isn't.	We (The Knights Party)
God made us all.	God
We simply believe that the United States of America was founded as a white Christian nation.	We (The Knights Party)

The "Facts and Questions" page of the Knights Party website was secondly analyzed for

Action. Line by line analysis of the question and answer can be found in Figure 1 B. Of 33 total

action analyses, there were 11 references to White genocide with variations of "extermination"

or "demise" of White people and 21 references of a negative action (commonly violence) towards White people by Non-White people. The character type of victim is continued through statements of violent actions toward White people, "Whites will be faced with crime rates never seen before in history, in some places mass killings, arrests and displacement, will occur" (The Knights Party, 2017).

With the copious violent actions mentioned on the website, never are White people considered the perpetrator unless the perpetrator is a "race traitor"- in which case the victim remains White people in general. Acts of violence as an overarching action theme escalate to mentions of genocide, "Genocide is the planned extermination of a people…social engineers have in fact orchestrated the demise of white people" (The Knights Party, 2017). The character theme of victim is heightened by the action theme of genocide- this is the ultimate victimization a people group can endure.

The action themes contained within the rhetoric of the Knights Party website provides insight to the extreme level at which their victimization lives. The KKK paints lofty images of horrible crimes against White citizens relying heavily on pathos with little to no evidence in their action fantasies, "Americans are being lulled into [the idea that] white people are just parasites on the world and if there wasn't any such thing as "whiteness" ahh the world would be so much nicer" (The Knights Party, 2017). Here the author levies a hefty claim that White people are considered to be "lesser than" by other races. The action of "lulling" is a type of verbal violence apparently impressed upon White citizens by minority opposition.

Figure 1 B

Quote	Action
"We want to stop White genocide"	Stop White genocide
"They look around and they don't see masses of white bodies floating down a river as one might see with the victims of the Rwandan genocide of recent years. They don't turn on the evening news and see bodies of massacred white people laid out in a field or on a street."	Floating down rivers/laid out in fields and streets
"They think white genocide is a joke or some crazy idea we have come up with. They don't take it seriously."	Call White genocide a joke
"Genocide is the planned extermination of a people. Genocide may sound too extreme to be applied to what is happening to white people."	Planned extermination of (White people)
"However, social engineers have in fact orchestrated the demise of white people."	Planned the demise of White people
"They are betraying their own people out of a sense of self hatred and reward."	Betray other White people
"Besides millions of blacks that live in the United States now, we have millions immigrating annually"	Immigrate to the United States
"Whites today in record numbers are leaving areas that non-whites are filling up."	Leaving

"The state of California is a prime example. White flight is nothing more than ethnic cleansing of whites."	Leaving (Being ethnically cleansed
"Violence and discrimination against whites in the large cities are forcing them to hand over America's metropolitan areas and many smaller areas as well to non-whites."	Discriminating against/ violence towards White people
"Soon America will be Brown – will whites be treated as humanely by nonwhites as whites have treated them?"	Treating other races humanely
"The discrimination and violence perpetrated against whites in America…	Being discriminated against
…is accomplished through the mindset Americans are being lulled into which is that white people are just parasites on the world and if there wasn't any such thing as "whiteness" ahh the world would be so much nicer."	Are viewed as parasites
"This is why it is so important for them to destroy white culture and heritage and to malign our heroes and ideas in our schools and universities."	Destroy white culture/heritage…malign heroes/ideals /schools/universities
"The book "Hating Whitey" documents widespread anti white speech by professors in classrooms across America openly smearing whites as the scourge of mankind."	Spreading anti-white speech…smearing Whites as the scourge of mankind

"Evidence points that the non-whites in America today, mainly the black and the massive Hispanic population are very much anti-white."	Are anti-White
"The blacks of today suffer…from…Victim Based identity."	Suffer from a victim-based identity
"In short it means that blacks since birth are taught they are the victims of the white race and…they…must overcome this by any means."	Are taught they are victims… they must overcome white people
"The non-white Hispanics believe they have a historic grievance against the United States."	Believe they were wronged by the United States
"They believe we robbed their country of half its land when Mexico was young and weak."	Believe they were robbed of their country by the United States
"An example of white genocide is the small country of Zimbabwe in Southern Africa."	Committing White Genocide
"Violence against whites is coming close to catastrophic."	Victims of violence
"This is an accurate example of what will happen when blacks outnumber whites."	Former outnumbering the latter
"This genocide is not based on geography, but race. It is a world-wide phenomena."	Genocide (of)

Whites will be faced with crime rates never seen before in history, in some places mass killings, arrests and displacement, will occur.	Will be victims of crimes
On May 5, 1997, Mahathir Bin Mohamad, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, advocated the "flooding of developed countries with millions of migrants if globalization fails to improve the lot of poor nations."	Suggested flooding developed countries with his own citizens
March of 1998 was reported to have rounded up and refused admittance to 5,000 illegal aliens who were waiting along Sumatra's borders hoping to enter and find jobs.	Refused admittance to illegal aliens
Whites are in fact the global minority hovering around 11% of the population.	Are the minority
Historically white nations are seeing drastic demographic changes and within two decades will also be minority white.	Will be the minority
White people are being systematically replaced, maligned, targeted, slandered, and victimized both physically and mentally. This is genocide!	Are victims of genocide
We don't care who is superior and who isn't.	Don't care about superiority
God made us all.	Made all people
We simply believe that the United States of America was founded as a white Christian nation.	Believe the United States should be white and Christian

The "Facts and Questions" page of the Knights Party website was lastly analyzed for

Setting. Line by line analysis of the question and answer can be found in Figure 1 C. Of 33 total

setting analyses, there were 21 mentions of America and 8 references to "The World" in general. Other settings included "Developed Countries", Zimbabwe and Malaysia.

The setting that takes priority in this drama is the setting of America. While the Klan makes it clear that that conflict portrayed as action is global, their first priority is their home country, America. Not only does this shed insight on the ethno-centric attitude of the Ku Klux Klan, it also serves to highlight the main stage of the drama. There is no question that the majority if not the whole of this movement is stationed in America.

Further, the Klan's rhetoric often leans on patriotic and religious pathos. The setting has a distinctive impact on this part of the dramatization, "We simply believe that the United States of America was founded as a white Christian nation" (The Knights Party, 2017). America is a country that has historically intermeddled religion with patriotism due to its religious roots. The Ku Klux Klan plays on this fact, bending American history to serve its own purposes. They hope to ensnare White American citizens by centralizing their message around familiar concepts.

However, it is not enough for the Ku Klux Klan to stop at America. This movement extends the conflict of their action to a global setting, "This genocide is not based on geography, but race. It is a world-wide phenomenon. Whites will be faced with crime rates never seen before in history, in some places mass killings, arrests and displacement, will occur" (The Knights Party, 2017). The author capitalizes on the drama of the action of genocide by illustrating a world stage setting. The expansion of the setting in the latter half of the message is relevant because it also expands the Klan's intended audience. Though they centralize their narrative on White American citizens, they truly intend for their ideology to impact as many people as

possible. They make it clear that their conflict is not solaced to America, but to all White people

all over the globe- expanding not only the setting but the characters as well.

Figure 1 C

Quote	Setting
"We want to stop White genocide"	America
"They look around and they don't see masses of white bodies floating down a river as one might see with the victims of the Rwandan genocide of recent years. They don't turn on the evening news and see bodies of massacred white people laid out in a field or on a street."	America
"They think white genocide is a joke or some crazy idea we have come up with. They don't take it seriously."	America
"Genocide is the planned extermination of a people. Genocide may sound too extreme to be applied to what is happening to white people."	America
"However, social engineers have in fact orchestrated the demise of white people."	America
"They are betraying their own people out of a sense of self hatred and reward."	America
"Besides millions of blacks that live in the United States now, we have millions immigrating annually"	America
"Whites today in record numbers are leaving areas that non-whites are filling up."	America

"The state of California is a prime example. White flight is nothing more than ethnic cleansing of whites."	California
"Violence and discrimination against whites in the large cities are forcing them to hand over America's metropolitan areas and many smaller areas as well to non-whites."	Large cities (in America)
"Soon America will be Brown – will whites be treated as humanely by nonwhites as whites have treated them?"	America
"The discrimination and violence perpetrated against whites in America…	America
…is accomplished through the mindset Americans are being lulled into which is that white people are just parasites on the world and if there wasn't any such thing as "whiteness" ahh the world would be so much nicer."	America
"This is why it is so important for them to destroy white culture and heritage and to malign our heroes and ideas in our schools and universities."	America
"The book "Hating Whitey" documents widespread anti white speech by professors in classrooms across America openly smearing whites as the scourge of mankind."	Classrooms across America
"Evidence points that the non-whites in America today, mainly the black and the massive Hispanic population are very much anti-white."	America

"The blacks of today suffer…from…Victim Based identity."	America
"In short it means that blacks since birth are taught they are the victims of the white race and…they…must overcome this by any means."	America
"The non-white Hispanics believe they have a historic grievance against the United States."	America
"They believe we robbed their country of half its land when Mexico was young and weak."	America
"An example of white genocide is the small country of Zimbabwe in Southern Africa."	Zimbabwe
"Violence against whites is coming close to catastrophic."	Zimbabwe
"This is an accurate example of what will happen when blacks outnumber whites."	The World
"This genocide is not based on geography, but race. It is a world-wide phenomena."	The World
Whites will be faced with crime rates never seen before in history, in some places mass killings, arrests and displacement, will occur.	The World

On May 5, 1997, Mahathir Bin Mohamad, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, advocated the "flooding of developed countries with millions of migrants if globalization fails to improve the lot of poor nations."	Developed countries
March of 1998 was reported to have rounded up and refused admittance to 5,000 illegal aliens who were waiting along Sumatra's borders hoping to enter and find jobs.	Malaysia
Whites are in fact the global minority hovering around 11% of the population.	The World
Historically white nations are seeing drastic demographic changes and within two decades will also be minority white.	The World
White people are being systematically replaced, maligned, targeted, slandered, and victimized both physically and mentally. This is genocide!	The World
We don't care who is superior and who isn't.	The World
God made us all.	The World
We simply believe that the United States of America was founded as a white Christian nation.	The United States

Once the fantasy themes were compiled, their repeated variables were condensed into comprehensive rhetorical visions for comparison. Repeating character types were White people

as protagonists and minorities or ideological opposition as antagonists. Of 33 total analyses, White people were considered a central character 18 times, with Non-White people considered central characters 12 times. Action themes centralized around violence from antagonists to protagonists and escalated to the genocide of protagonists (White people). Of 33 total action analyses, there were 11 references to White genocide with variations of "extermination" or "demise" of White people and 21 references of a negative action (commonly violence) towards White people by Non-White people. Lastly, the setting was largely split between America and then the world at large. Of 33 total setting analyses, there were 21 mentions of America and 8 references to "The World" in general. Rhetorical visions to be drawn from the repeated shared fantasy types are "White people are victims of Non-White people" and "Non-White people universally wish harm to White people".

First the Knights Party website Facts and Questions page was analyzed for repeated fantasy types. These fantasy types were then compiled to form succinct rhetorical visions that represented the elements of Dramatis Personae, Action, and Setting. The repeated variables within these subcategories were condensed into comprehensive rhetorical visions for comparison. If the rhetorical visions of the Ku Klux Klan website and the Donald J. Trump website had any overlap, it would evidence symbolic convergence and therefore possible correlation between the two movements.

Analysis of the Donald J. Trump Website

The researcher repeated the same methodology used on The Knights Party website for the Donald J. Trump website. The "About" page was systematically analyzed for Dramatis Personae, Action and Setting. The total composition of these findings can be located in Table 2 in the

Appendix. The repeated fantasy types were then condensed into comprehensive rhetorical visions for comparison against the rhetorical visions found in the Ku Klux Klan website.

The "About" page of the Donald J. Trump website was firstly analyzed for Dramatis Personae. Line by line analysis of the about section can be found in Figure 2 A. Repeated character types in the 17 total analyses were Trump followers with four mentions and Donald Trump himself with 13 mentions.

Due to the political nature of the Donald J. Trump website, the rhetoric deals almost exclusively in terms of "We" and "I". Consideration of the website's goal lends perspective to the ego-centric character themes. The website is self-driven and purposes to promote Donald Trump for president. Similar to the Ku Klux Klan website, President Trump's characters cast those involved in his movement as heroes. However, unlike the Ku Klux Klan website, no particular villain is noted. It is inferred that any opposition to the movement would constitute as villainous, however, the wording on the website remains fairly positive especially when mentioning main characters.

Sentence structure remains consistent within the website with simple phrases that repeat characters and setting while changing only action such as, "We will make America strong again…We will make America proud again… We will make America safe again" (Donald J. Trump, 2017). The consistent repetition of "We" and "I" in congruence with positive actions serves to reinforce the heroic quality of Donald Trump and all who choose to associate with or support him in his endeavors.

Figure 2 A

Quote	Dramatis Personae
"We will make America strong again.	We (Trump followers)
We will make America proud again.	We (Trump followers)
We will make America safe again.	We (Trump followers)
And we will Make America Great Again"	We (Trump followers)
"Donald J. Trump is the very definition of the American success story…	Donald Trump
…setting the standards of excellence in his business endeavors…	Donald Trump
and now, for the United States of America."	Donald Trump
"President Trump has always dreamed big and pushed the boundaries of what is possible his entire career…	Donald Trump
…Devoting his life to building business, jobs and the American Dream."	Donald Trump
"This was brought to life by a movement he inspired in the people of America when he announced his candidacy for President of the United States in June 2015."	Donald Trump
"This was brought to life by a movement he inspired in the people of America when he announced his candidacy for President of the United States in June 2015."	Donald Trump's movement
"Ever the leader, Trump followed no rule book and took his message, "Make America Great Again" directly to the people."	Donald Trump/ the people
Campaigning in historically democratic states and counties across the country, Trump was elected President in November 2016 in the largest electoral college landslide for a Republican in 28 years.	Donald Trump

President Trump is working hard to implement his 'America First' platform	Donald Trump
continuing his promise to the American people to lower taxes, repeal and replace Obamacare, end stifling regulations, protect our borders, keep jobs in our country, take care of our veterans, strengthen our military and law enforcement, and renegotiate bad trade deals, creating a government of, by and for the people.	Donald Trump
"He is making America First, again…	Donald Trump
… restoring our nation's faith, ushering in a bright, new future now and for generations to come.	Donald Trump

The "About" page of the Donald J. Trump website was secondly analyzed for Action. Line by line analysis of the about section can be found in Figure 2 B. Of 17 total analyses, action themes consisted of 15 mentions of Donald Trump improving America in some way (making it great, strong, faithful etc). Action was the most diverse fantasy theme. Though each action suggested a benefit to America, each one was explicitly different. The one repetitious action was greatness, "We will make America great again" (Donald J. Trump, 2017), due to the slogan of the President's campaign.

Other actions consisted of, "We will make America strong again…We will make America proud again… We will make America safe again…He is making America First, again…" (Donald J. Trump, 2017). Each action mentioned lent itself to the heroic quality of President Trump and his followers. The overall rhetoric of the website remained very uplifting and positive, speaking again to the promotional intent of the content.

Figure 2 B

Quote	Action
"We will make America strong again.	Will make America strong
We will make America proud again.	Will make America proud
We will make America safe again.	Will make America safe
And we will Make America Great Again"	Will make America great
"Donald J. Trump is the very definition of the American success story…	Is the definition of success
…setting the standards of excellence in his business endeavors…	Sets standards of excellence
and now, for the United States of America."	Sets standards of excellence
"President Trump has always dreamed big and pushed the boundaries of what is possible his entire career…	Dreamed big…pushed boundaries
…Devoting his life to building business, jobs and the American Dream."	Devoted his life to the American Dream
"This was brought to life by a movement he inspired in the people of America when he announced his candidacy for President of the United States in June 2015."	Inspired a movement
"This was brought to life by a movement he inspired in the people of America when he announced his candidacy for President of the United States in June 2015."	Inspired people
"Ever the leader, Trump followed no rule book and took his message, "Make America Great Again" directly to the people."	Did not follow the rules…. Spoke directly to the people
Campaigning in historically democratic states and counties across the country, Trump was elected President in November 2016 in the largest electoral college landslide for a Republican in 28 years.	Campaigned/ was elected President

President Trump is working hard to implement his 'America First' platform	Is working hard to implement platform
continuing his promise to the American people to lower taxes, repeal and replace Obamacare, end stifling regulations, protect our borders, keep jobs in our country, take care of our veterans, strengthen our military and law enforcement, and renegotiate bad trade deals, creating a government of, by and for the people.	Keeping his promise/lowering taxes/repealing Obama Care/ ending regulations/protecting boarders/taking care of veterans/strengthening military/creating people-lead government
"He is making America First, again…	Is making America First
… restoring our nation's faith, ushering in a bright, new future now and for generations to come.	Restoring the nation's faith, ushering in a new future

The "About" page of the Donald J. Trump website was lastly analyzed for Setting. Line by line analysis of the about section can be found in Figure 2 C. Of 17 total lines, the setting consistently remained America in every analysis. While America as a setting theme does draw parallels to the Ku Klux Klan's website, it also divulges greatly from the Klan's overall expansion of their setting to the world at large. This result remains consistent with the Donald J. Trump website's agenda to promote Donald Trump as president. Expanding the rhetorical setting to "the world" would detract from the President's intent to portray himself as a leader to this country particularly.

The repeated setting of America serves another purpose beyond simply promoting President Trump as a leader. It also basks the narrative in a patriotic light, "Ever the leader, Trump followed no rule book and took his message, 'Make America Great Again' directly to the people" (Donald J. Trump, 2017). The rhetoric in the Donald J. Trump website is deeply seeped in patriotic beseeching. Nearly every sentence connects the President to America in one way or another. This also contains parallels to the Knights Party website which utilizes patriotic and

religious rhetoric to sway the reader. However, the President's statements strictly connect

himself and the American people to positive actions of greatness, safety and strength. Where the

Donald J. Trump website's tone is overall promotional and positive, the Ku Klux Klan website's

tone is overall extremely negative connecting the central characters to negative actions of

violence.

Figure 2 C

Quote	Setting
"We will make America strong again.	America
We will make America proud again.	America
We will make America safe again.	America
And we will Make America Great Again"	America
"Donald J. Trump is the very definition of the American success story…	America
…setting the standards of excellence in his business endeavors…	Donald Trump's business
and now, for the United States of America."	America
"President Trump has always dreamed big and pushed the boundaries of what is possible his entire career…	Donald Trump's career
…Devoting his life to building business, jobs and the American Dream."	America
"This was brought to life by a movement he inspired in the people of America when he announced his candidacy for President of the United States in June 2015."	America
"This was brought to life by a movement he inspired in the people of America when he announced his candidacy for President of the United States in June 2015."	America

"Ever the leader, Trump followed no rule book and took his message, "Make America Great Again" directly to the people."	America
Campaigning in historically democratic states and counties across the country, Trump was elected President in November 2016 in the largest electoral college landslide for a Republican in 28 years.	America
President Trump is working hard to implement his 'America First' platform	America
continuing his promise to the American people to lower taxes, repeal and replace Obamacare, end stifling regulations, protect our borders, keep jobs in our country, take care of our veterans, strengthen our military and law enforcement, and renegotiate bad trade deals, creating a government of, by and for the people.	America
"He is making America First, again…	America
… restoring our nation's faith, ushering in a bright, new future now and for generations to come.	America

Once the fantasy themes were compiled, their repeated variables were condensed into comprehensive rhetorical visions for comparison. Repeating character types were Donald Trump and his followers as protagonists. Repeated character types in the 17 total analyses were Trump followers with four mentions and Donald Trump himself with 13 mentions. Action themes centralized around positive actions from the ultimate hero; Donald Trump to the other protagonists; his followers. Of 17 total analyses, action themes consisted of 15 mentions of Donald Trump improving America in some way (making it great, strong, faithful etc). Lastly, the setting remained America in every instance. Of 17 total lines, the setting consistently remained

America in every analysis. Rhetorical visions to be drawn from the shared fantasies are "Donald Trump is the greatest" and "Donald Trump will impart his greatness to America".

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

In compiling the fantasy themes (dramatis personae, action, setting) presented in both the Knights Party website and Donald J. Trump website the researcher did not find discernable correlation. Two commonalities between the movements were the consistent setting of America, and the patriotic pathos. However, the websites had very different tones. Where the Knights Party website's rhetoric was negative and focused on fear and condemnation, the Donald J. Trump website's rhetoric was positive and focused on improvement for America.

The Knights Party website Facts and Questions page and the Donald J. Trump "About" section were analyzed for repeated fantasy types. These fantasy types were then compiled to form succinct rhetorical visions that represented the elements of Dramatis Personae, Action, and Setting. The repeated variables within these subcategories were condensed into comprehensive rhetorical visions for comparison. If the rhetorical visions of the Ku Klux Klan website and the Donald J. Trump website had any overlap, it would have evidenced symbolic convergence and therefore possible correlation between the two movements.

Firstly, the characters for both of the movements could not have been more separate. The Knights Party's repeated character themes consisted of White people as protagonists and non-White people/ "race-traitors" as antagonists. The Donald J. Trump website's repeated character themes consisted of President Trump as the ultimate hero with his followers as heroic protagonists in the narrative.

The actions for both movements were also very separate. The Knights Party website's repeated setting themes consisted of violence by antagonists towards protagonists including genocide. The Donald J. Trump Website's actions differed but consistently portrayed a positive correlation between the characters. The overarching action theme was President Trump making the country "great".

The setting was the one commonality between the fantasy themes of both movements. The Knights Party and Donald J. Trump websites both cast America as a repeated setting. However, the Ku Klux Klan eventually promoted their setting to a world-stage where America remained the only setting for the Donald J. Trump website. This consistency in the Donald J. Trump website was expected as the website served as promotional material for the President's campaign.

Rhetorical visions to be drawn from the repeated shared fantasy types of the Knights Party website were, "White people are victims of Non-White people" and "Non-White people universally wish harm to White people". Rhetorical visions to be drawn from the shared fantasies of the Donald J. Trump website were, "Donald Trump is the greatest" and "Donald Trump will impart his greatness to America". The two websites had distinctly opposing rhetorical visions with no overlap suggesting that the rhetorical vision of the Ku Klux Klan had not chained out. Without evidence of symbolic convergence, there is no grounds for correlation between the two movements.

Limitations

While the Knights Party's website had many paragraphs of propaganda, President Trumps' website was limited to a few paragraphs citing his accomplishments. The two websites clearly served different purposes, making correlation difficult to decipher. While the Knights

Party website served to inform the reader about their platform, values, beliefs, etc, President Trump's website could be summed as promotional fluff. Both sites clearly intended to promote the subjects, but the President's website lacked any depth, reading more like the inside of a book jacket than a thoroughly developed personal website.

Further, while The Knights Party's website is updated regularly (as of March 2018 they have a section on their front page where patrons can donate with Bitcoin), the Donald J. Trump website is no longer updated. The latter website's promotional purpose ended when Donald Trump was sworn in as President. These two inhibitions limited the depth and breadth of this study.

Recommendations

Due to the limitations of the material studied, recommendations for future study include analyzing the entirety of The Knight Party's website and finding more supplemental material in an adjacent time frame from the Donald Trump Presidential Campaign and Presidency. Deeper analysis of these two movements would provide more insight as to whether or not public speculation is correct, and correlation truly exists.

This particular study was limited to one question from the facts and questions list available on The Knights Party's official website. Studying all of the questions and answers would provide a broader insight to the values and beliefs of this Ku Klux Klan sect, possibly providing a broader range of the rhetorical visions that spur this hate group. Analysis of other factors from The Knights Party's website such as their merchandise, their articles, their welcome page, their platform, and their "special message" section dedicated to different people groups (women/ law-enforcement/young supporters/ the media/ Christians), would also help to expound

on the rhetorical visions of the group. Other online material from the Trump Presidency would need to be accrued in order to provide fairly comparative artifacts for study.

Further study could also purpose to expand the scope of artifacts studied by analyzing outside of The Knights Party and Donald J. Trump official websites. Thomas Robb's speeches and podcasts from the past two years could be analyzed and compared to President Trump's speech transcripts/campaign material from adjacent time frames. Other artifacts that could be studied in order to discern related rhetorical visions would be social media output from the members of the two movements themselves. Ku Klux Klan follower tweets and President Trump supporter tweets from the beginning, middle, and end of President Trump's campaign and presidency could be compared for overarching visions.

Lastly, the media's portrayals of the two groups from adjacent time frames could be compared to see if or why symbolic convergence exists in the eyes of the public. Media analyzed in this study was kept refined to website material produced by President Trump and the Knights Party. However, comparing and contrasting media outlet portrayal of the two movements could illuminate a third party's hand in manufacturing public perception. News outlets covered President Trump and the Charlottesville riots in tandem, it is possible that this parallel coverage had an effect on citizen outlook concerning the two groups.

Conclusion

From systematic fantasy theme analysis of the "Facts and Questions" page of the Knights Party website and "About" page of the Donald J. Trump website, it would appear that Donald Trump and the Knights Party do not share similar rhetorical visions. Rhetorical visions to be drawn from the shared fantasies of The Knights Party are "White people are victims of Non-White people" and "Non-White people whish harm upon White people". Rhetorical visions to be

drawn from the shared fantasies of the Donald J. Trump page are "Donald Trump is the greatest" and "Donald Trump will impart his greatness to America".

The unaligned rhetorical visions of these two movements evidence no sign of symbolic convergence. The Knights Party is motivated by race victimization and prejudice while President Donald Trump's motivations appear to be self-centered. Further research is needed in order to ascertain whether the rhetorical visions found in this study are consistent with each of these movements as a whole. Lack of overlap in the rhetorical visions suggests symbolic convergence has not taken place. There is therefore little or no evidence of correlation between the increasing legitimacy of the Ku Klux Klan and President Trump's ascension to power.

Public opinion, however, remains in direct opposition to the results of this study. CNN, The New York Times, the Mayor of Charlottesville, former Klan leader David Duke, other White Nationalists and the Knights Party have all implied on separate accounts at the very least a connection or similar grounds between the recognized hate group and the President. Further, not only the Ku Klux Klan, but hate groups at large are on the rise. As stated previously, CNN reports an increase of approximately 500 hate groups in America since the year 2000, totaling in at 917 groups as of August 2017.

One possible explanation for the dissonance between this study's results and public opinion may be the media's portrayal of the President to viewers. Communication experts McCombs and Shaw's (1968, 1972, 1976) Agenda Setting Theory suggests that media tells us not what to think, but what to think about. It is almost certain that the media's consistent coverage of Donald Trump's Presidency in congruence with the Charlottesville riots did little to help his public image or to deter the perception of familiarity with the hate group.

As for the rising number of hate groups and increasing legitimacy of the Ku Klux Klan, evil will thrive regardless of the circumstances surrounding it. Political theorist and philosopher Edmund Burke famously acknowledged, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing". Late Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. is quoted as furthering this sentient in the collection *The Words of Martin Luther King*, "When evil men plot, good men must plan. When evil men burn and bomb, good men must build and bind. When evil men shout ugly words of hatred, good men must commit themselves to the glories of love. Where evil men seek to perpetrate an unjust 'status quo', good men must seek to bring into being a real order of justice" (King, pg. 51, 1985).

The hate that is prevalent within groups akin to the Ku Klux Klan and White Nationalist party is ancient. It began with small groups long ago whose rhetorical visions bubbled into the public atmosphere and solidified. Racial superiority, false victimization, prejudice, these rhetorical themes do not prevail without nurturing. They are the products of many good men who stood quietly and allowed such ideas to flourish. They are the products of many "good" men who stood and stand in silence, afraid of the social punishment they may receive for speaking truth. Where evil men use media to "shout ugly words of hatred", good men must commit themselves to doing just the opposite. True revitalization and reconciliation in America will come when good men choose to <u>do</u> <u>something</u>, current President Donald Trump included.

Appendix

Table 1: The Knights Party Facts and Questions Page Question 1

Quote	Dramatis Personae	Action	Setting
"We want to stop White genocide"	We (The Knights Party)	Stop White genocide	America
"They look around and they don't see masses of white bodies floating down a river as one might see with the victims of the Rwandan genocide of recent years. They don't turn on the evening news and see bodies of massacred white people laid out in a field or on a street."	White victims	Floating down rivers/laid out in fields and streets	America
"They think white genocide is a joke or some crazy idea we have come up with. They don't take it seriously."	They (everyone else)	Call White genocide a joke	America
"Genocide is the planned extermination of a people. Genocide may sound too extreme to be applied to what is happening to white people."	White people/non-White people	Planned extermination of (White people)	America
"However, social engineers have in fact orchestrated the	Social Engineers	Planned the demise of White people	America

demise of white people."			
"They are betraying their own people out of a sense of self hatred and reward."	White Social Engineers	Betray other White people	America
"Besides millions of blacks that live in the United States now, we have millions immigrating annually"	Non-white people	Immigrate to the United States	America
"Whites today in record numbers are leaving areas that non-whites are filling up."	White people	Leaving	America
"The state of California is a prime example. White flight is nothing more than ethnic cleansing of whites."	White people	Leaving (Being ethnically cleansed	California
"Violence and discrimination against whites in the large cities are forcing them to hand over America's metropolitan areas and many smaller areas as well to non-whites."	Non-white people	Discriminating against/ violence towards White people	Large cities (in America)

"Soon America will be Brown – will whites be treated as humanely by nonwhites as whites have treated them?"	White people/ "Brown" people	Treating other races humanely	America
"The discrimination and violence perpetrated against whites in America…	White people	Being discriminated against	America
…is accomplished through the mindset Americans are being lulled into which is that white people are just parasites on the world and if there wasn't any such thing as "whiteness" ahh the world would be so much nicer."	White people	Are viewed as parasites	America
"This is why it is so important for them to destroy white culture and heritage and to malign our heroes and ideas in our schools and universities."	Them (Social Engineers)	Destroy white culture/heritage…malign heroes/ideals /schools/universities	America
"The book "Hating Whitey" documents widespread anti white speech by professors in classrooms across America openly smearing whites as the scourge of mankind."	Professors	Spreading anti-white speech…smearing Whites as the scourge of mankind	Classrooms across America

"Evidence points that the non-whites in America today, mainly the black and the massive Hispanic population are very much anti-white."	Non-Whites	Are anti-White	America
"The blacks of today suffer…from…Victim Based identity."	Black people	Suffer from a victim-based identity	America
"In short it means that blacks since birth are taught they are the victims of the white race and…they…must overcome this by any means."	Black people	Are taught they are victims… they must overcome white people	America
"The non-white Hispanics believe they have a historic grievance against the United States."	Hispanics	Believe they were wronged by the United States	America
"They believe we robbed their country of half its land when Mexico was young and weak."	Hispanics	Believe they were robbed of their country by the United States	America

"An example of white genocide is the small country of Zimbabwe in Southern Africa."	South Africans	Committing White Genocide	Zimbabwe
"Violence against whites is coming close to catastrophic."	White people	Victims of violence	Zimbabwe
"This is an accurate example of what will happen when blacks outnumber whites."	Black people/ White people	Former outnumbering the latter	The World
"This genocide is not based on geography, but race. It is a world-wide phenomena."	White people	Genocide (of)	The World
Whites will be faced with crime rates never seen before in history, in some places mass killings, arrests and displacement, will occur.	White people	Will be victims of crimes	The World

On May 5, 1997, Mahathir Bin Mohamad, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, advocated the "flooding of developed countries with millions of migrants if globalization fails to improve the lot of poor nations."	Mahathir Bin Mohamad	Suggested flooding developed countries with his own citizens	Developed countries
March of 1998 was reported to have rounded up and refused admittance to 5,000 illegal aliens who were waiting along Sumatra's borders hoping to enter and find jobs.	Mahathir Bin Mohamad	Refused admittance to illegal aliens	Malaysia
Whites are in fact the global minority hovering around 11% of the population.	White people	Are the minority	The World
Historically white nations are seeing drastic demographic changes and within two decades will also be minority white.	White people	Will be the minority	The World

White people are being systematically replaced, maligned, targeted, slandered, and victimized both physically and mentally. This is genocide!	White people	Are victims of genocide	The World
We don't care who is superior and who isn't.	We (The Knights Party)	Don't care about superiority	The World
God made us all.	God	Made all people	The World
We simply believe that the United States of America was founded as a white Christian nation.	We (The Knights Party)	Believe the United States should be white and Christian	The United States

Table 2: Donald J. Trump About Page

Quote	Dramatis Personae	Action	Setting
"We will make America strong again.	We (Trump followers)	Will make America strong	America
We will make America proud again.	We (Trump followers)	Will make America proud	America
We will make America safe again.	We (Trump followers)	Will make America safe	America

And we will Make America Great Again"	We (Trump followers)	Will make America great	America
"Donald J. Trump is the very definition of the American success story…	Donald Trump	Is the definition of success	America
…setting the standards of excellence in his business endeavors…	Donald Trump	Sets standards of excellence	Donald Trump's business
and now, for the United States of America."	Donald Trump	Sets standards of excellence	America
"President Trump has always dreamed big and pushed the boundaries of what is possible his entire career…	Donald Trump	Dreamed big…pushed boundaries	Donald Trump's career
…Devoting his life to building business, jobs and the American Dream."	Donald Trump	Devoted his life to the American Dream	America
"This was brought to life by a movement he inspired in the people of America when he announced his candidacy for President of the United States in June 2015."	Donald Trump	Inspired a movement	America
"This was brought to life by a movement he inspired in the people of America when he announced his candidacy for	Donald Trump's movement	Inspired people	America

President of the United States in June 2015."			
"Ever the leader, Trump followed no rule book and took his message, "Make America Great Again" directly to the people."	Donald Trump/ the people	Did not follow the rules…. Spoke directly to the people	America
Campaigning in historically democratic states and counties across the country, Trump was elected President in November 2016 in the largest electoral college landslide for a Republican in 28 years.	Donald Trump	Campaigned/ was elected President	America
President Trump is working hard to implement his 'America First' platform	Donald Trump	Is working hard to implement platform	America
continuing his promise to the American people to lower taxes, repeal and replace Obamacare, end stifling regulations, protect our borders, keep jobs in our country, take care of our veterans, strengthen our military and law enforcement, and renegotiate bad trade deals, creating a	Donald Trump	Keeping his promise/lowering taxes/repealing Obama Care/ ending regulations/protecting boarders/taking care of veterans/strengthening military/creating people-lead government	America

government of, by and for the people.			
"He is making America First, again…	Donald Trump	Is making America First	America
… restoring our nation's faith, ushering in a bright, new future now and for generations to come.	Donald Trump	Restoring the nation's faith, ushering in a new future	America

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