



Media and  
Communications

## Media@LSE Working Paper Series

Editors: Bart Cammaerts, Nick Anstead and Richard Stupart

### **Civic State of Mind**

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Celebrity Language on  
Citizenship and Democracy

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Published by Media@LSE, London School of Economics and Political Science ('LSE'), Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE. The LSE is a School of the University of London. It is a Charity and is incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act (Reg number 70527).

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## ABSTRACT

*The 2016 election of Donald Trump, a former reality television mogul, brought celebrity to the centre of American politics. Separately, over the course of the campaign, celebrities were used strategically to speak on behalf of Trump and his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton. Effects of celebrity and media in politics has been the primary focus for research in this subject area, with many debating if its presence leads to 'an absolute decline in politics as a transformative force' or if instead 'politics is being renewed and further democratized by popular culture' (Couldry & Markham, 2007: 3). The content of the work of the celebrity politicians has yet to be significantly scrutinised and understood. As a populist representative of the people (Brockington, 2014; Street, 2004), it should be examined if celebrity is adding social value and other 'conditions through which a transformation in democratic behaviour may occur' (Wheeler, 2013: 30). This study will thus look at those unelected representatives heard on the campaign trail in 2016. Specifically, it will provide an explanatory critique of celebrity's discourse in the context of citizenship and democracy in the United States. Drawing on ideas of political efficacy and Dahlgren's (2001, 2009, 2011) model of civic culture, this study compares the reality of American democracy with normative states of citizenship and democracy. By conducting a Thematic Analysis and Fairclough's (1992) Critical Discourse Analysis on texts delivered over the course of the campaign, the purpose of this research will be to understand how language may have reproduced the power of the celebrities in the political arena. Furthermore, this study will explore how celebrities may have communicated contradictory ideas of citizenship and democracy regarding citizen involvement in politics.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In many ways, it is understandable that some people do not like continued involvement of celebrities in politics. It is largely shallow and superficial. To speak nothing of their motives in doing so, what qualifies Angelina Jolie to lecture on international human rights, or George Clooney to advocate for a peace resolution in Darfur in 2006? Regardless, the realms of celebrity and politics continue to overlap, and the boundary between the two is increasingly blurred (Couldry & Markham, 2007). The most blaring example of this trend is the rise of Donald Trump, a former reality television mogul, to the U.S. presidential office. Since his election, celebrities have taken on more complex roles within the administration, such as Kim Kardashian and prison reform (Izadi, 2018). Given this reality, *how* are celebrities involving themselves in politics and political decisions, and what are the *consequences* of these expressions of public involvement?

The 2016 United States presidential campaign provides an interesting field of study for how celebrities operate on the political playing field. Donald Trump, a pseudo-celebrity in his own right, entered the race as a businessperson and media personality. On the campaign trail, Trump employed lower-ranking celebrities in his appeal to the white majority who feared changing economic opportunities, liberal social changes and a crumbling sense of self-identity (Taub, 2016). Meanwhile, though not a celebrity outside of politics, Hillary Clinton was well-known for her life of public service as Secretary of State, a U.S. Senator from New York and as First Lady. Clinton assembled an 'A-list' group of celebrities to act as surrogates for her campaign; names varied from singer Jennifer Lopez to television personality and NBA owner Mark Cuban (Burns & Harris, 2016) to three-time Academy Award-winner Meryl Streep. Despite this, Clinton's use of celebrity endorsements was not enough to mobilise millennials, minorities or the working class in large enough numbers to win the election (Ball, 2016).

While others have debated the facts of whether celebrities might influence the outcomes of elections, it is clear that celebrities are used strategically to speak on behalf of politicians (see: Brockington, 2014; Corner & Pels, 2003; Couldry & Markham, 2007; Marshall, 1997; Street, 2004; West & Orman, 2003; Wheeler, 2013). Rather than conducting effects research, this study will begin to observe how celebrities communicated ideas of citizenship to the American public during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign.

This dissertation is built on several important concepts, which will be explained in the following order. First, there is a social expectation that the 'ideal' American citizen is highly engaged and aware of political events and debates. This is despite the fact that the day-to-day operation and functioning of American democracy and government is not reliant on the input and engagement of everyday citizens. (Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Second, celebrity power uses common populist themes by its ability to '[appeal] to the masses' (Brockington, 2014: 42) and, therefore, celebrity influence is given legitimacy by serving as representatives of the people (Brockington, 2014; Street, 2004). Third, political discourse is performed to both accomplish and symbolise action (Fairclough, 1992, 2000), while acting as a meaning-making tool that shapes perceptions and understandings of reality (Chouliaraki, 2008).

By looking at the construction of celebrity discourse, this paper hopes to understand the different realities of American democracy and citizenship that are communicated on the behalf of politicians by celebrities to the masses they represent.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.1 Citizenship, Civic Culture and American Democracy**

#### **1.1.1 The Ideal Democracy and its Citizens**

In conceiving his ideal society, Aristotle argued society was better served and more stable when "ruled by the many" as opposed to citizens acting individually (Carpini & Keeter,

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1996: 26). Similarly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1968) saw a functioning society as democratic, in which people came together to protect their private interests and those of their fellow citizens. Collectively, they deliberated on public issues in order to create legislation (Rousseau, 1968). In a participatory democratic model, such as that proposed by Jürgen Habermas in his Public Sphere Theory, citizens actively participate in public life through thoughtful, balanced and factual discussion, also called rational critical deliberation. Similarly, strong democracy calls for direct self-government via the citizens, as opposed to a representative style of governing (Gamson, 2001).

What these models have in common are a highly active and engaged citizenship. This is also called ‘thick’ citizenship, where being a citizen of a collective nation is central to one’s identity (Conover, Crewe, & Searing, 1991) and it ‘occupies a significant share of transactions, rights and obligations sustained by state agents and people living under their jurisdiction’ (Tilly, 2018: 8). As Almond and Verba (1989) elaborate:

*The democratic citizen is expected to be active in politics and to be involved. Furthermore, he is supposed to be rational in his approach to politics, guided by reason, not emotion. He is supposed to be well informed and to make decisions—for instance, his decision on how to vote—on the basis of careful calculation as to the interests and the principles he would like to see furthered. (p. 29)*

In other words, citizenship in a normative democracy requires participating in and making informed, evidenced decisions with the aim of bettering civic or public life (Almond & Verba, 1989; Conover *et al.*, 1991; Dahlgren, 2009; Flathman, 1995). The ideal only works, however, if everyone is participating (Carpini & Keeter, 1996). In return, citizenship provides certain legal protections, rights and varying levels of equality and freedom (Dahlgren, 2009; Flathman, 1995). It is with active citizenship then, that one is able to be political; as Dahlgren (2009) puts it, civic involvement is ‘a precondition for the political’ (58). For example, Americans are afforded several rights by the Constitution, such as the

freedoms of speech, of the free press, of religion and of peaceful assembly. To properly practice those rights, citizens are expected to be informed about politics. This knowledge 'is essential if citizens are to discern their real interests and take effective advantage of the civic opportunities afforded to them' (Carpini & Keeter, 1996: 3). Citizens also need to have a working knowledge of how government functions, what it does and the current events facing the nation (Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001).

No one is born with the ability, let alone the desire, to be an active citizen. Thick citizenship, therefore, requires a sense of one's own *political efficacy*, that is to say, that they have a degree of *civic agency* (Dahlgren, 2009). Political efficacy means that citizens must be 'able to see themselves as participant[s]' (Dahlgren, 2009: 103); moreover, having civic agency is believing that one has the ability to operate as a person whose actions may enact social change and hold influence over the government (Condon & Holleque, 2013; Dahlgren, 2009; Martin, Martins, & Naqvi, 2016; E. West, 2016). Without this belief, there would be little motivation for citizens to act, even on the behalf of the public good.

## 1.1.2 The Real American Democracy and its Citizens

Contrary to this ideal of citizenry, reaching or acting on each of the aforementioned characteristics of citizenship is likely unattainable and potentially 'irrelevant to political life and practice in the modern nation-state' (Flathman, 1995: 105). Scholars often frame the debate as crises of citizenship and democracy, citing *inter alia* issues of passivity and citizen disengagement (Blumler, 1997).

According to Dahlgren (2001), Western democracies are going through a period of 'anti-politics', in which there is poor voter turnout, widespread cynicism and 'serious erosion of civic engagement' (43). A passive citizenry may, normatively, signify a weak democracy. They either do not vote, are uninformed or are apathetic towards democratic processes (Almond & Verba, 1989). Given this situation, Brockington (2014) writes that many modern democracies can be identified as post-democracies, where low public engagement and

overall disillusionment and dissatisfaction go hand-in-hand with political systems that privileges the elites.

While it would be difficult to argue that all citizens in a post-democracy are passive, post-democracy does not appear that it would equate to or produce the feelings of political efficacy needed for a thick sense of citizenship. Instead, democracies are often made of people with feelings of thin citizenship. Thin citizens still view themselves as a network of connected citizens; however they work autonomously in the pursuit of their private interests rather than working towards the public good. Citizenship makes up only a small portion of their overall identities and they have relatively fewer interactions with the state (Conover *et al.*, 1991; Tilly, 1995). Dahlgren (2011) describes these phenomena relating to post-democracy as deriving from issues due to societal structures, saying that they may result from 'mechanisms at work that can delimit participation' (13).

Though generally considered a model for democracy, the United States, regardless, falls into the category of thin citizenship and post-democracy. Over the past few decades, there has been a decline in voter participation, party involvement, and trust in and respect for politicians (Gitlin, 1998). Political scientists question people's abilities to adequately self-govern (Carpini & Keeter, 1996). This scepticism, built into the architecture of American democracy assumes some level of disengagement by putting checks and balances on separated branches of government, empowering state and local governments, and providing indirect forms of representation (Carpini & Keeter, 1996).

Despite this system, Carpini and Keeter (1996) describe the disconnect between the aforementioned, that allows for low engagement in government, and the contradictory social expectations that assume Americans are highly engaged. In other words, American democracy actually 'assumes more civic input from its citizens than is often understood or articulated' (Carpini & Keeter, 1996, p. 4). In making an 'informed' voting decision, for example, citizens must be highly engaged in learning and being aware of a varying amount of political information.

To further reiterate the seemingly contradictory nature of this point, Carpini and Keeter (1996, p.4) list a number of civic activities in which citizens of the United States are, to a degree, assumed to participate other than voting; some of which include selecting representatives and holding them accountable, running for office, volunteering on campaigns, reading the news, attending civic meetings and actively shaping political agendas. 'Thus the democratic citizen is called on to pursue contradictory goals; he must be active, yet passive; involved, yet not too involved; influential, yet deferential' (Almond & Verba, 1989: 343-344). Considering the actual daily demands on citizens, separate from politics, it is not surprising that citizens are unable to reach or maintain thick levels of citizenship (Almond & Verba, 1989).

### 1.1.3 Framing Citizenship: Civic Culture

Civic culture helps bridge the gap between how the public views its role in democracy and what is demanded of them by democratic institutions. Almond and Verba (1989), early theorists of the concept, describe it as the fundamental beliefs and attitudes citizens hold towards their own democratic systems. Dahlgren (2003, 2009) explains that civic culture is founded in both the private and public everyday practices of citizens in certain social environments. Through these practices and contexts, one's identity as a citizen is formed, while also building feelings of political efficacy and civic agency (Dahlgren, 2009). For example, these feelings could manifest in the belief that as a citizen, every vote matters. Thus, depending on a country's specific civic culture, it can serve to shape and empower citizens in the political realm (Dahlgren, 2009). Civic culture is, therefore, a prerequisite for political participation and needed for the continuation of democracy (Dahlgren, 2003, 2009).

In his work on civic culture, Dahlgren's (2003, 2009, 2011) goal was to build a framework in which citizenship could be analysed empirically and '[sought] to identify the possibilities of people acting in the role of citizens' (Dahlgren, 2003, p. 155). Almond and Verba (1989) saw civic culture as made up of 'an unproblematic bundle of features' that were simply 'there,' while Dahlgren was more constructionist in his view (Couldry *et al.*, 2014, p. 2). Both

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perspectives require an active citizenship, but Dahlgren creates a normative understanding of the concept where civic culture is necessary for democracy, while also basing civic culture in real life (Almond & Verba, 1989; Couldry *et al.*, 2014; Dahlgren, 2003).

First in 2003, Dahlgren built a six-dimensional circuit of civic culture where the points are all interrelated. In his updated model from 2009 and 2011, those dimensions are knowledge, values, trust, spaces, practices, identities.

In the dimension of *knowledge*, citizens should have access to information and the ability to learn new information regarding politics, political culture and the political system (Almond & Verba, 1989; Dahlgren, 2009, 2011). The media plays a significant role in this aspect of civic culture as producers and disseminators of political knowledge (Dahlgren, 2011). Information from the media must be accurate and reliable and requires some level of literacy and education to be useful (Almond & Verba, 1989; Dahlgren, 2009, 2011). Political knowledge is also discursive, meaning that it can change based on interactions with different people and other forms of media (Dahlgren, 2009). If citizens have access to factual and quality information, they always have the ability to become knowledgeable members of a democracy (Carpini & Keeter, 1996).

*Values* are the everyday shared beliefs among citizens that ground democracy. They are often positive, such as values of tolerance and openness, but can also be negative (Dahlgren, 2009, 2011).

*Trust* refers to the degree of confidence citizens have in their democratic institutions or fellow citizens (Dahlgren, 2011). Trust allows people to take part in collective action and create social ties (Dahlgren, 2009). Dahlgren (2009), however, discusses how too much trust is also not ideal:

*Politics involves conflict of interest, as well as identities in opposition, which insert an element of mistrust into these social relationships from the state. Thus, in*

*the democratic tradition, excessive trust is unsuitable in the sense that it can suppress conflict and sustain oppressive relations. (113)*

Political participation must take place somewhere. Those *spaces* are the fourth dimension. For instance, the internet is often cited as a new and expansive forum for political activity. 'Access' is a key requirement for involvement in political spaces (Dahlgren, 2009).

The reoccurring democratic actions of citizens are considered *practices*. Practices can take several forms, such as political deliberation or voting in elections (Dahlgren, 2011). Practice is the most concrete dimension that requires a sense of political efficacy and that one can make a difference, while also clearly empowering citizens as it requires knowledge, trust in the system, and creating one's identity as a citizen (Dahlgren, 2009). Further, it demands a feeling that it is safe to practice (Almond & Verba, 1989).

The final dimension, *identities*, refers to one's self-conception as a member of a democratic society (Dahlgren, 2011). It is about feeling as though one is a member of a political community; part of a 'we' group (Dahlgren, 2009, 2011). Thus, as a member, a citizen could feel empowered to create change in their community. Political exclusion – such as the exclusion of a racial minority group – can undermine this dimension (Dahlgren, 2009, 2011).

## 1.2 Celebrity Politics

### 1.2.1 Defining Celebrity and Celebrity Power

Street (2004) characterizes a celebrity as a person who benefits from more activity and agency than others in civil society due to their presence in the mass media. Wheeler (2013) suggests that celebrities gain 'celebrity-ness' (8) through the media curation of their public image. Celebrities hold a privileged space where they enter the public sphere, and because of their public legitimation by the media, celebrity voices often stand out above others (Marshall, 1997; Rojek, 2001). Furthermore, celebrities represent 'the potential of the individual' (Marshall, 1997: 17), helping to take the individual citizen out of the collective. At

the same time, celebrities exemplify the cultural and societal norms that have been constructed and allow people to make sense of their place within society (Marshall, 1997; Rojek, 2001).

## 1.2.2 Defining Celebrity Politics

Celebrities are everywhere in the media. Whether on the cover of a monthly magazine or in interviews on late-night talk shows, celebrity is present in daily life. Despite their fame, there is a lack of evidence that people *identify* with or even *care* about celebrities. Regardless, stars still hold a significant place within cultural studies, political studies and marketing strategies (Couldry, 2004; Brockington, 2014).

In the political literature, there are two types of celebrity politicians: 1) elected politicians who have additional backgrounds in the entertainment industry, and 2) the celebrities that are *used* by politicians as leverage for the politician's image or campaign messaging (Street, 2004: 437). In this second instance, the celebrities chosen typically have some political authority, stemming from a pseudo-credibility that involves a mix of expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness (Mishra & Mishra, 2014; Street, 2004). Similarly, Marsh, 't Hart, and Tindall (2010) lay out some of the political roles a celebrity may fulfil: celebrity advocate, celebrity endorser or celebrity-turned-politician.

This paper will explore 1) the celebrities in which politicians' use for political gain, and 2) the political discourse that the celebrity delivers.

## 1.2.3 The Debate: Researchers v. Celebrity Politics

Several investigations have focused on celebrities' impact on politics, policy and governmental institutions. Some believe that celebrity and media presence leads to 'an absolute decline in politics as a transformative force' (see: Gitlin, 1998), while others 'argue that politics is being renewed and further democratized by popular culture' (Couldry &

Markham, 2007: 3) (see: Corner & Pels, 2003; Street, 2004). Clearly, despite the lack of consensus, the potential effects of celebrity involvement in politics cannot be dismissed.

## 1.2.4 An Argument in Favour of Celebrity Politics

Celebrity popularity is built on celebrities' 'ability to make claims to represent the people' (Street, 2004: 442); this representation, whether they deal with the individual or the masses, can go beyond brand endorsement. 'Celebrity advocacy matters because it is a means of speaking to power' (Brockington, 2014: 8). Politicians, elites and non-governmental organizations provide platforms for celebrities to share their perspectives and establish connections with 'the people,' reframing the celebrity as representative (Brockington, 2014; Street, 2004).

Today's platforms give celebrities easy access to the public 'by offering forms of popular appeal and emotional identification that cut through technocratic smoke-screens and institutional inertia' (Corner & Pels, 2003: 10). Meaning, apathetic citizens can be informed of political topics and ideas by their typically a-political celebrity idols. A study conducted by Austin, van de Vord, Pinkleton, and Epstein (2008) concluded that youth voters were more likely to feel higher levels of political efficacy when exposed to celebrity endorsed 'get out the vote' (GOTV) campaigns.

Furthermore, when celebrities make political arguments, they tend to simplify messaging to make complicated topics more accessible to everyday citizens (Marsh *et al.*, 2010). With celebrities' widespread mass appeal, their endorsement or explanation of a message may expand public deliberation by encouraging citizens to speak up when they otherwise might not have (Brockington, 2014). This may be because individuals—not necessarily purposefully—develop distant parasocial connections with celebrities and, thus, are more likely to identify with and 'adopt similar attitudes and beliefs' to those celebrities (Austin *et al.*, 2008: 424). They are more open to the celebrities' direction because the positive traits of the celebrity are projected onto the endorsed politician or policy (Nownes, 2012). This

phenomenon of guidance and transfer can result in positive democratic outcomes (Corner & Pels, 2003), such as the aforementioned increase in civic agency (Austin *et al.*, 2008) or the creation of further reference points for citizens' political decisions (Austin *et al.*, 2008; Wood & Herbst, 2007). This identification could be sufficient reason for voters to cast their vote in favour of the endorsed party (Mazzoleni, 2000).

In a designed experiment with American and Canadian students, researchers examined how the character of the celebrity affected the participant's support of a political cause. The study found that celebrities did have an impact, with some gathering more support than others (Jackson & Darrow, 2005). Likewise, studying results from the 2008 U.S. presidential election, Pease and Brewer (2008) found clear influence on voters in favour of then-candidate Barack Obama following Oprah's endorsement of his campaign.

In sum, celebrity politics is a shift in the way in which politicians communicate with the public. The notoriety and fame of the celebrities are the tools in that communication (Street, 2012). Corner and Pels (2003) maintain that citizens no longer want to vote for a party; instead, they want to vote for ideas and specific people. Through effective use of celebrity endorsements and surrogates, representatives can communicate with the public outside of the traditional political system, in a more individualised manner (Corner & Pels, 2003; Brockington 2014; Couldry & Markham, 2004). The idea is to emphasise key ideas through celebrities with likeable personalities, as opposed to the 'distanced, self-absorbed political professionals' (Corner & Pels, 2003: 2).

It is necessary to note the alternative argument, in which some say that celebrity involvement trivialises politics and representation. Researchers need 'to recognise that popular culture is not always the bridge to effective and expanded democracy that we would like it to be' (Couldry & Markham, 2007: 26).

Celebrities do not have the knowledge or skill to adequately speak for citizens. They are likely unfamiliar with public policy and may not have political skills such as bargaining and

compromise; rather, they might enter politics only apt in media management and fundraising (Street, 2004). Political points then become over-simplified through ‘irrelevant gestures and superficial appearances’ (Street, 2004: 439). When celebrities are covered in the media because of their involvement in politics, the voices of competent experts are often overshadowed (Marsh *et al.*, 2010).

As for the question of representation, Brockington (2014) suggests that popularity is not equivalent to popular consent, but that the political elite misconstrue celebrity’s popular appeal as representative of the public. Because celebrity is primarily a mediatized and marketed commodity, the issues they pursue ‘standardize social conditions to perpetuate consumption and subdue the masses’ (Wheeler, 2013: 10-11). These issues are oftentimes manifested in directing politics towards the interests of the rich and dismiss social problems of significance (Street, 2004). In these ways, celebrities actually disempower the public.

There is, however, another important question that must be addressed: Why is there such a widespread assumption that celebrity *should* affect politics? Brockington (2014) surmises that because celebrities are often covered in the media, and are utilized for political gain, it is taken for granted that – quite simply – someone in the public has to care. The assumption that others care about celebrity means that ‘the force of celebrity derives from the perception of its power’ (Brockington, 2014: 10).

With those concerns in mind, it is useful to look at celebrity through a different lens, one that does not involve effects. Instead, research can seek out what social values celebrity politics adds and if it provides ‘the conditions through which a transformation in democratic behaviour may occur’ (Wheeler, 2013: 30). In this dissertation, these ‘conditions’ are the messages of citizenship and the citizen’s level of engagement.

### **1.3 Discourse: Bridging Citizenship and Celebrity**

As mentioned, celebrity serves a communicative function in politics. Moreover, the rise of the individual identity explains celebrity’s increased presence in politics and thus serves to

enable celebrity power while also shaping personal views of citizenship, democracy and civic engagement (Dahlgren, 2003). These divergent ideas merge through the understanding of language as a source of power that can contribute to the production or reproduction of power relations in a society (Breeze, 2011; Bryman, 2012; Fairclough, 1992; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002a; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). For example, this could refer to the continued power imbalance between men and women or among social classes (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002a; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Discourse can thus work in two seemingly opposing ways. Productions and ideas of power in discourse tend to stabilize over time, making power habitual, and yet when used creatively, discourse can also be seen as a form of resistance to stable practices (Wodak, 2001).

As a source of power, discourse is a social construction, an amalgamation of 'conditions of [...] political, social and linguistic practice' (Wodak & Meyer, 2016: 17). Meaning produces certain social realities within certain contexts (Chouliaraki, 2008; Fairclough, 1992; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Discourse is constructed to fit the specific time, space and moment in history in which it was built (Gill, 1996; Wodak, 2001).

Discourse also provides 'one version of the world in the face of competing versions' (Gill, 1996: 143). Discourse then is not a transparent reflection of the world, it is a single symbol of it, almost as if creating a 'parallel world' (Fairclough, 1992, 2000). While creating text, the producer's choice of language is also a choice of what to exclude (Bryman, 2012). Potter (1996) calls this process ontological gerrymandering. Part of ontological gerrymandering deals with categorizing the text by what was said and how. The other side of it looks either at what was not said or alternative ways to describe the same thing. 'The argument here is that one of the powers of descriptions often lies in what they fail to describe, what is ignored or left out' (Potter, 1996: 186).

In practice, discourse is a 'mode of action' (Fairclough, 1992); it is meant to accomplish something like an accusation or an excuse (Gill, 1996), and is rarely a 'neutral device for imparting meaning' (Bryman, 2012: 529).

Differently, discourse should also serve to empower the populous in providing them with a voice and agency in order to protect their interests (Gamson, 2001). As representatives of the people, celebrity should be creating an atmosphere in which ‘democratic behaviour may occur’ (Wheeler, 2013: 30); in this case, this means empowering the populous to act as citizens. As another layer, civic culture partially emerges from the ‘structural relations of power’ (Dahlgren, 2011: 18), discourse is a clear opportunity in comprehending how power and civic culture may be related.

This study hopes to fill a gap in research that Marsh *et al.* (2010) acknowledges, by providing systematic analysis to an area of political science that has traditionally been ‘superficial and anecdotal’ (322). Existing academic studies of celebrity politics ‘focuses either upon classifying different types/categories of celebrity politicians and their roles in politics, or upon the question of whether the growth of celebrity politics undermines or enhances democracy’ (Marsh *et al.*, 2010: 322). Few studies have used case examples to illuminate their arguments.

Thus, this dissertation will ask the following questions:

RQ1: In what ways did celebrity discourse during the 2016 U.S. Presidential election campaign discuss ideas about American citizenship and democracy?

RQ2: What is the difference between Democratic and Republican celebrity messaging?

### **3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **1.4 Sampling**

This dissertation will conduct a Thematic Analysis (TA), followed by a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of 12 texts presented in the months preceding the U.S. Presidential election on November 8, 2016. Six texts by celebrities supporting the Democratic Party were sampled, published on or between the Democratic National Convention, which began on July 25, 2016,

and the day of the election. Six texts by celebrities supporting the Republican Party between the Republican National Convention, which began on July 18, 2016 and Election Day were also sampled.

More Hollywood celebrities endorsed or spoke on behalf of Hillary Clinton than for Donald Trump. To ensure quality, comparability and equal sample size for both parties, this study focused primarily on rally speeches because rallies are produced with the purpose of being a space in which the politician is supported and pushing electors to vote. It was assumed because of this, fundamental ideals of citizenship and democracy would be therefore be expressed. Also analysed, was a single speech at either convention, one text that was published in a media outlet, and one social media post. The TA was conducted on all 12 texts, while the CDA was carried out on six texts for a deeper analysis (Suri, 2011). Specifically, for Republicans, CDA was conducted on the discourses of musician Ted Nugent, Miss. USA contestant Madison Gesiotto, and actor Anthony Sabato Jr. On the Democratic side analysis was conducted on the discourses of musician Pharrell Williams, actress Meryl Streep, and musicians Jay-Z and Beyoncé—who spoke jointly at one rally.

Choosing the specific celebrity texts to analyse presented a population-related sampling challenge, in that the list of celebrities for the Democratic side was quite large, from those who tweeted about Hillary Clinton to those who travelled with her on the campaign trail. On the other hand, many of Donald Trump's campaign's celebrity endorsers and surrogates were not as high-profile.

Discourse selection combined purposeful random sampling with criterion sampling. The broader population could be considered for a purposeful random sampling because there was a limit to the total number of celebrities who acted as surrogates (Suri, 2011). The search could be exhaustive as it did not extend past those who did not provide endorsements of Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump. Beyond that however, the chosen samples met certain criteria in order to ultimately narrow that search. The definition of celebrity thus included those of varying celebrity status, while maintaining the requirement of being persons

privileged by the media and known in their respective fields. This allowed them a sphere of influence, regardless of whether they were top-level international superstars. To shortlist endorsements and prevent sampling bias, content was not taken into consideration. The primary determining factors were 1) length of the text (e.g., 140-character Tweets were not included, as they were far too short and would not provide sufficient depth), and 2) the availability of a cursory transcript of the speeches, mostly enabled by using content posted on YouTube or C-SPAN.org.

## 1.5 Defining Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis is a qualitative method of textual analysis which involves ‘identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (‘themes’)’ (Clarke & Braun, 2017: 297). These patterns can then be related to experiences, perspectives, behaviours and surface-level understanding of reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017).

TA is a flexible and accessible method of analysis that can be used as a basis for other forms of qualitative research (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). For this study, TA will serve as the foundation for understanding the broader ideas of the text and providing a focus for the CDA. Moreover, it will be used to effectively compare and contrasts the texts between parties (Nowell *et al.*, 2017).

A theoretical framework, shaped by Dahlgren’s (2009, 2011) circuit of civic culture, was the beginning of the coding scheme for the TA. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that approaching TA in this way risks a less ‘rich description of the data overall’ (84). As such, in consideration of this shortcoming, the codebook was founded on Dahlgren’s model, coupled with an inductive framework in which the coding was based on the text itself (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## 1.6 Defining Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is a method of text analysis which reveals articulations of power in a society. By understanding discourse as a source of power, this analysis will be based on Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model:

1. *Textual Analysis*: This is a description of the discourse (Janks, 1997). Textual analysis requires understanding the formal features of the discourse, such as vocabulary, grammar, and structure (Fairclough, 1992; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002a).
2. *Discursive Practice*: This is the interpretation of the production and consumption of the text (Janks, 1997; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002a). Specifically, discursive practice looks at intertextuality, e.g., how the text in question utilises other texts over history and how the piece of discourse fits into those of a similar genre (Fairclough, 1992; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002a, 2002b).
3. *Social Practice*: This is an explanation of the discourse in which the researcher places it within its context (Janks, 1997; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002a). The context refers to the circumstances in which it was actually delivered (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002a).

CDA was chosen to conduct this analysis because it does not take discourse at only face value. Fairclough (1993: 135) noted that by understanding:

*How such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power [...] how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (As cited in: Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 4-5).*

These aspects of power are important in politics. Politicians are at the heart of power relations because their decisions can sustain or change the status quo (Fairclough, 1992). Political discourse is typically managed and controlled so politicians project the most effective message (Fairclough, 2000). Fairclough (2000) argues that much of politics is a fight

over dominance via language. For example, it is informative to look at the politician's audience, who they are excluding (what is being ontologically gerrymandered), and what identity they are trying to perpetuate.

## 1.7 Methodological Limitations and Reflexivity

In implementing the research design, some of the limitations of TA and CDA were taken into account. Firstly, since TA and CDA are both flexible in their methodological framework, there is risk of unsystematic and inconsistent application (Breeze, 2011; Nowell *et al.*, 2017). To prevent this, a detailed coding book was laid out in which every code was carefully considered while conducting the TA. For CDA, although more difficult to prove, the researcher considered that certain questions were consistently being answered within the textual structure. Moreover, because themes were the basis of continuing CDA, it was easier to compare the categorisation of discourses.

Second, discourse-based methodological analyses are susceptible to political bias (Wodak, 2001). There will be ideological and judgmental underpinnings that must be made explicit (Graham, 2018). Thus, the political bias of the researcher should be noted. In the 2016 election, a ballot was cast for Hillary Clinton. Furthermore, at the time of writing, the researcher felt that President Trump does threaten foundational American democratic values. Although this view lines up with the theoretical work of this study, the point of the study is not to prove influence or effects. It is an explanatory critique of discourse during the electoral process (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002a) in which personal biases can be more carefully avoided.

Finally, some CDA researchers make assumptions about effects of discourse on audiences without necessarily studying the audience itself. This raises the question of whether one can truly talk about effects without interviewing the audience in question (Fairclough, 1992). Breeze (2011) also addresses this shortcoming, noting that in existing research, the only links between discursive practice and their effects are purely theoretical. Given this lack of

explanatory evidence and the gap in case study application of celebrity political research, this study merely asks how the discourse *discusses* ideas of citizenship.

## 1.8 Ethics

The methodological framework for this dissertation received the approval of the researcher's supervisor in addition to meeting the ethical requirements as laid out by the London School of Economics and Political Science.

## 4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This analysis will combine the textual and discursive practices of Fairclough's (1992) CDA model in addition to the TA, as it allows a clearer understanding of the content and structures. It will then be followed by an articulation of Fairclough's understanding of social practice in relation to the texts. This analysis will include: 1) GOTV style speeches, 2) the emergent themes of values, identity, trust and political efficacy, 3) the context of the speeches in regard to who delivered them and where and 4) how the context potentially relates to the ontological gerrymandering of knowledge. This analysis will conclude with a discussion of how this relates to the broader question of citizenship.

## 1.9 Political Discourse and 'Get Out the Vote'

All speeches were delivered as a form of political discourse with the intent to 'get out the vote' (GOTV). Discursively, there are ritualistic patterns GOTV texts tend to follow; they are often broad with minimal content regarding substantive issues (Bennett, 1997). Across Democratic and Republican discourses, the speeches were similar. Specifically, although this will be expanded further, speeches established political efficacy and agency in similar ways, used similar intertextual elements, and for the most part, did not discuss civic knowledge.

Campaign rhetoric provides the opportunity for the public to 'work out its tensions and satisfy its needs for security, order, leadership, and control over the future' (Bennett, 1997:

220). Through this negotiation, candidates produce power for the electorate. Moreover, the idea behind much of campaign and GOTV rhetoric is to encourage voting. The purpose of voting, which Dahlgren (2009, 2011) considers as the epitome of civic practice, is to empower the electorate in governmental decision-making.

Alternatively, as mentioned, voting is just one of many possible ways for citizens to get involved in politics. Instead of giving power to the electorate, perhaps GOTV speeches merely reproduce the same power the electorate already had. This means that instead of more active political involvement, GOTV continues the normalisation of thin, not-demanding, civic involvement in politics by primarily centring the electorate's attention on voting.

Each one of the six discourses observed for CDA framed the 2016 election as a historically ethical or moral choice. Tonally, the Republicans were quite negative, with Nugent, (2016) declaring that with a Clinton win, 'America is done'. Sabato (2016) warned that America is becoming the very communistic state that his parents fled. On the other end, the Democratic endorsements positively endorsed Clinton as a historical opportunity to elect the first female president. Phrases such as 'brink of making history' (Beyoncé, 2016), 'on the doorsteps of history' (Jay-Z, 2016) or 'she will be the first in a long line of women' (Streep, 2016) illustrate this point. Morally, Democrats emphasised how the consequences of the election stretched far beyond the current election. Williams (2016) was excited by the likely 'halo effect on young women' that might have come with Clinton's presidency.

In a further effort to boost voter turnout, the consequences of voting or practice—of Dahlgren's (2009, 2011) model—were highlighted. Put differently, the speeches discussed the outcome of one's vote. When discussing Donald Trump, Republican endorsements struck a positive tone, in which one's vote would result in unity, a great America, independence, and protecting one's rights. Alternatively, not voting was associated with being complacent of a negative future under a Clinton presidency. In contrast, Democratic

endorsements encouraged voting to not only ‘make’ history, but also to feel empowered and to forge progressive paths.

## 1.10 Values

Since the 1960s, political discourse has prioritised the discussion of the values associated with American citizenship. This provides ‘a qualified optimism regarding democracy’s future. For U.S. citizens, this means that affirming the value of rights, has had an impact on the character of democracy and citizenship’ (Dahlgren, 2009: 111). This analysis also found that, across the texts, Dahlgren’s (2009, 2011) dimension of values was one of the most prominent themes.

Celebrities specifically articulated the importance of voting for a candidate who shared their values, and by extension, shared the values that were most important in U.S. democratic society. Sabato (2016) characterised Donald Trump as someone, ‘who shared my beliefs, my faith, to get our country back on track.’ Jay-Z (2016) instead called out Donald Trump as someone who *does not* share his values; Trump’s ‘conversation is divisive and that’s not an evolved soul to me. So he cannot be my president. He cannot be our president’ (Jay-Z, 2016). These stars are not solely speaking for themselves; they are speaking as representatives of the electorate, which can be seen through the use of ‘our’ in both quotes. The speakers are reproducing a view of society that emphasises these values and that they should not be simply ‘taken-for-granted’ (Dahlgren, 2009: 112).

Values were also conveyed intertextually by evoking the vision of the ‘American dream,’ in which the ordinary citizen can become the extraordinary. The American dream advances the promise of opportunity for a ‘better life’ via one’s agency (Rowland & Jones, 2007: 430).

*The principle driving the plot—the progressive development of a better society—is dependent upon the values inherent in the scene. In this view, America is a place of opportunity and challenge, where every individual who is willing to work long and*

*hard has the possibility of producing a better life. (Rowland & Jones, 2007: 430-431)*

This agency, which will also be returned to further on, is based on the values of personal determination and the perception that society functions in a way that enables upward mobility and freedom (Rowland & Jones, 2007). Sabato (2016) illustrates achieving the American dream after moving to the U.S. from Italy in 1985 and undergoing the naturalisation process. Being an immigrant manifested in Sabato's understanding of the value of fairness, for example, 'others, who want to come to the U.S. to live and work, should follow the same rules! That's right. We are a nation of laws for a reason'.

In the construction of his discourse, Nugent (2016) chose the word 'real' to reference Republican Michigan residents who share his American values:

*Is the real Michigan ready to take Michigan back? I was born in Detroit in 1948, everybody in Michigan put their heart and soul into being the best that they could be everybody in Michigan busted their ass to be as productive as they could. The whole world looked to Michigan as the work ethic epicenter of humanity, world-class productivity, the hardest-working shit-kickers that mankind has ever known.*

Nugent is talking about the values of a hardworking, 'shit-kicking,' Michigan elector who works to benefit one's country. He also depicts an American dream of a folksy, bootstrapping American hero. The emotional commitment to values can also lead to partisanship (Almond & Verba, 1989). Almond and Verba (1989) comment that a degree of partisanship is expected, however it can lead to difficulty when partisanship results in citizens and politicians not being able to accept opposing viewpoints. Partisanship primarily emerged in Republican discourse. Above, when Nugent (2016) asks if, 'the real Michigan ready to take Michigan back?' he conveys his understanding of American values, while simultaneously separating himself and any sort of positive values from Democrats.

Streep (2016) drew on societal values through America's 'female firsts' such as, Sandra Day O'Connor, Rosa Parks and Amelia Earhart, 'these women share something in common: capacity of mind, fullness of heart and the burning passion for their cause. They have forged new paths so others can follow them' (Streep, 2016). Streep explains that the values these women shared along with their commitment to what America could 'be,' drove them to action. This illustrates the American dream as a positive manifestation of the values of freedom, independence and the rights provided to citizens by the government.

Furthermore, as touched on, within GOTV discourses, values also serve to fuel feelings of political efficacy as it 'can evoke response, stimulate engagement, and generate action' (Dahlgren, 2009: 112). As outlined in Streep's (2016) speech, the 'female firsts' were given agency and had political efficacy because of the values they saw in being an American citizen. In the context of GOTV campaigning, simply feeling that one's vote can make a difference is fundamental in actually voting.

## 1.11 Identity

The way one views themselves in the terms of their relationships with others is often how one's identity is formed. This results in the creation of *in-groups* ('we') and *out-groups* ('they') (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Dahlgren, 2009). In general, people have positive feelings towards the in-group and negative feelings against the out-group (Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

As illustrated in the above quotes, Nugent views himself as a member of American democracy, but also specifically as a 'shit-kicking' Republican and Michigan citizen. Sabato identifies as both a U.S. citizen and an immigrant. Gesiotto is an American and a millennial. She clearly demarcates an in-group and an out-group in her discourse, claiming that Clinton 'thinks we're dumb. She thinks we won't be smart enough to find the facts. She assumes young people will be fooled by her campaign's rhetoric and lies about Donald Trump' (Gesiotto, 2016). Gesiotto creates a division between millennials or 'we' and Clinton, by noting that Clinton will not serve the best interests for the identities of young people.

Williams (2016) appealed to two different in-groups in his discourse. First, he called on women—of all parties—to ‘show everybody your power when women come together and galvanize’. In this, Williams also conveys the importance of the collective identity by saying that people are stronger in larger numbers. Similarly, toward the end of his speech, Williams, as an African American, calls on that identity, ‘we're black. Beautiful. [...] If you've ever been called a minority, go out and vote and show everybody that you're actually really the majority’ (Williams, 2016). Williams empowered these groups by connecting with them via their identities. As a collective, the in-group can work towards the same goals for the benefit of everyone.

This supports Dahlgren’s (2009) claim that another foundation for agency and political efficacy is identity. By creating an image of oneself as part of a group, identity manifests itself in the ‘we’ collective. One feels able to act because they are not acting alone. Instigating change seems more possible with others (Dahlgren, 2009).

### 1.12 Trust

In order to build social relationships that form one’s identity, trust is vital. Similarly, in building a relationship with the government and for the continued functioning of the government a degree of trust from the electorate is also needed (Dahlgren, 2009). Tilly (2007) argues that people ‘integrate their trust networks into public politics [and] come to rely on governmental performance for maintenance of those networks’ (95). With trust comes an incentive to support the government (Tilly, 2007).

Streep (2016) discursively references the story of Deborah Sampson, who ‘was the first woman to take a bullet for our country. She served, disguised as a man, in George Washington’s Continental Army and she fought to defend a document that didn’t fully defend her. All men are created equal it read. No mention of women’. Because Sampson had this fundamental trust in the values and the promise of what a free America could offer, she wanted to defend her country. Without that trust, Sampson would have not acted.

Because politics is so based in personal ideology, conflicting views can result in a level of distrust between persons (Dahlgren, 2009). This lack of trust proved strong in Republican rhetoric—which is not surprising as they do not share the values of Obama or Clinton, nor do they see the future of the country under Clinton as a promising one. It is not just distrust they express however; it is a sense of victimization at the hands of the Obama administration. Nugent (2016), for example, explained feeling like a criminal at home in Michigan because of ‘a criminal oath violating law that when I’m at my deep on my own farm, I gotta have my rifle or shotgun in a case on my own farm if I’m on an ATV’. The word ‘criminal’ equates to Nugent’s suffering at the hands of the government; he is being persecuted for exercising his Second Amendment rights on *his own* property.

Others expressed this mistrust via *nominalisation*, which is textual element constructed through passive language and using verbs as nouns. By doing this, the speaker oftentimes removes agency in the text, by backgrounding certain information or creating a new ‘participant’ in the action of the sentence (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Both Gesiotto and Sabato applied similar language in this way. Sabato (2016) claimed, ‘In the past eight years, failed policies have caused our country to deteriorate. Our rights have been trampled, our security threatened,’ while Gesiotto (2016):

*For the past eight years our country has been on a path to economic destruction, tax increases, wage reduction, increased regulations, along with of course the multiple failed economic policies of the Obama administration have left too many young people without jobs, without savings and with little hope.*

Both speakers evoke feelings of victimisation via the Obama administration by nominalising the word ‘failed’. Gesiotto additionally nominalises ‘destruction,’ ‘increases,’ ‘reduction’ and ‘regulations’. By forming these nominalisations, the speakers erase the fact that there is a process behind policy decisions; it is not as simple as Obama deciding to increase taxes. They

do not take away Obama's decision-making agency, but they make his decisions seem inevitable.

The dimension of trust within the civic culture model allows for feelings of political efficacy because if one does not have trust in the system to allow it to continue, there is no reason to act in that system at all. Similarly, even certain degrees of distrust can result in feelings of agency (Dahlgren, 2009). In their texts, by promoting political parties, the celebrities are simultaneously establishing the need for the continuance of government and political engagement. Trust, or distrust, no one is trying to create a new political system. There is still an inherent trust by the people in what the government does.

### 1.13 Political Efficacy

Although every aspect of Dahlgren's (2009, 2011) model of civic culture may contribute to a sense of political efficacy, in the terms of these speeches, civic agency was primarily expressed through the dimensions of values, identity and/or trust. This point was inevitably alluded to throughout the analysis, but it is worthwhile to clearly illustrate the interconnected dimensions that were communicated by every single speaker, across party lines. In Beyoncé's (2016) speech:

*I should stop because there is something I want to say. There was a time when a woman's opinion did not matter. If you were black, white, Mexican, Asian, Muslim, educated, poor or rich. If you were a woman, it did not matter.*

Beyoncé is speaking on behalf of Clinton for reasons of identity and democratic values. Her identity as a *woman*, enables her to first-hand recognise the election as a turning point in American history. Second, because of Beyoncé's values of, for example, equality, she sees it as another step towards progressiveness. Williams (2016), captures the trust citizens must have in one another to act as a collective in order to break the 'glass ceiling' of having a female president:

*I want to see that glass shatter on the floor, and I want us all to stomp on it together. You know why? Because my mother is able. Your grandmother is able. Your aunts are able. Your nieces are able. Your daughters are able.*

Here Williams does a two interesting things. First, he thinks of Americans as a collective identity, in which citizens can trust each other and act as a unit. Second, and he is not the only one to do this, he uses active verbs and language to express that citizens should feel *able* to act in politics. Because of the values of the country, women should be just as able as men to act and, in this case, hold the highest political position in the world.

In addition, Williams (2016) and Sabato (2016) express their own agency as citizens in a personable and humble way. Both recognise themselves as not the usual political types, but the importance of the election incentivised their involvement. Sabato (2016) declared that his, 'belief in this country, and my faith in Jesus Christ have compelled me to speak now'. Williams recognised that he is, 'a human being that shares this earth with other human beings. This election is just too important. I couldn't stand on the side lines and just be quiet'. In both instances, the identities and the values of each man are at the heart of their agency. Both speakers volunteer a degree of humanity to the political discussion by relating to voters and explaining that they are 'just like them'.

### **1.14 Rallies, Conventions and Concerts**

While there could be a wider conversation in regards to citizenship and how it relates to gender, race and class, in following Fairclough's (1992) model however, this analysis will primarily focus on the context in which the discourse was actually delivered. Purposefully, the six speeches for CDA were chosen due to their similar contexts, which are as follows: a celebrity delivered speech to an audience of supporters at an event promoting a candidate, in a 'swing state'.

Two of the six speeches were delivered at party conventions launching the official campaign season, while the other four were delivered at campaign events approaching Election Day. That said, both share two characteristics: 1) they are media events, and 2) they are events with public speakers. Fundamentally, these events are fabricated to garner media attention. When considering the current digital era, although speeches are delivered to supporters, ideally the messaging extends beyond solely those present (Marshall, 1997). Further, public speaking reinforces the political power of the speakers by legitimising their privileged status. Rallies are encouraged as opportunities for deliberation, when in reality there is a powerful person speaking and subordinates listening (Dahlgren, 2009).

In addition these speeches were delivered to crowds of political supporters. Constructing the perception of massive support is another way in which power and authority is given to the speaker and the political party (Marshall, 1997). Some of the rallies simultaneously operated as concerts, specifically Beyoncé and Jay-Z's joint event and Ted Nugent's. This also served the necessary function of direct address in order to connect with the audience. Additionally, merging concerts with rallies has the added benefit of serving a call and response relationship between the performer and the audience (Marshall, 1997). While the audience supports and celebrates the skill of the musician, the supporters are giving further legitimacy in being on stage and therefore the political views of the celebrity.

All speeches were additionally delivered in states considered competitive battleground or 'swing' states; this means, in recent election cycles the electoral votes in those states have 'swung' back and forth between parties (Mahtesian, 2016). Choosing to analyse rallies in swing states was not part of the original sampling criteria, regardless this characteristic emerged. This is likely because candidates put the most time and money into earning the electoral votes in these states because they have the most impact on the success of a campaign come Election Day (Mahtesian, 2016). By doing so, it could be argued that political efficacy is only being given to those voters with more voting 'status' than others, thereby

reproducing the power of the Electoral College. Even though every citizen gets a single vote, voting power is unequal.

## 1.15 Celebrity and Citizenship in a Post-Democracy Era

As touched on earlier in this paper, the quality of information celebrity brings to the political sphere is in question. Despite this shortcoming, it is important to document how celebrities use language to communicate their public endorsements.

Symbolically, celebrities represent success via individualism and are constructed in terms of values and emotion. In some contexts, these attributes are considered to be human irrationality (Marsh *et al.*, 2010; Marshall, 1997). Marshall (1997) asks the question:

*Can a parallel form of rationalization of the irrational – that is positioning these undisciplined areas of human life within a prevalent and coherent worldview – explain the role and power of the celebrity. (54)*

By introducing the celebrity into the public sphere, political parties bring the *irrational* and *private* lives of citizens into the public. This presence disrupts the foundational requirements of the ideal democracy because these normative theories require rational deliberation to resolve public issues (Dahlgren, 2009; Lunt & Stenner, 2005). In these highly politicised times, when one party calls the presidential candidate from the other party 'evil' (Nugent, 2016), consensus often times seems unachievable.

It also explains the reason why the civic culture (Dahlgren, 2009, 2011) dimension of knowledge seemed to be ontologically gerrymandered from discourses. Although the dimension of space was rarely talked about as well, lack of knowledge was a significant concern among theorists. The foundation of American democracy did not believe that citizens could be trusted to make informed decisions with sufficient political knowledge. To be fair, Gesiotto's endorsement of Donald Trump actually had a significant amount of

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political information regarding how Trump's business experience could transform the economy for millennials. But again, this means only one of 12 speakers felt any significant amount of political knowledge should be discussed. This is likely a continuation of the patterns described by Bennett (1997) in national elections, noting that elections do not tend to be 'forums in which serious political issues are resolved' (219). What this says however, is that politicians simply use celebrity to further reproduce the assumption that citizens are not interested in educating themselves on issues of public concern. It also advances Saward's (2006) argument that representation is not about 'fact-adducing' at all, it is just about 'claim-making' (302). Moreover, when considering the attraction of celebrity, people do not typically approach them for what they know, but instead for what they do and the emotional attachment they represent (Marshall, 1997). Perhaps politicians saw no need for these speeches to include political information. If celebrities represent the irrational, rational knowledge from a celebrity will not make someone more likely to vote one way or the other.

Celebrity discourse may be pushing America further into a post-democratic society. The content of the discourse, superficially promotes ideals of a thick and active citizenry in which citizens experience high levels of democratic transactions and identity.

On the one hand, these speeches do promote democratic citizens that participate and have high levels of political efficacy via the appeals to values, identities, and trust. The importance of including political efficacy in celebrity discourse should not be understated because engagement does 'have consequences on the system's equity' (Kenski & Stroud, 2006: 174). Most conversations regarding the dimension of practice however had to do with voting and were delivered in swing states. Perhaps instead of an active and thick citizenry for all, celebrity discourse is instead giving power to a few through limited types of transactions.

Considering the number of statements that use 'we' or 'our,' it would also seem that the speakers are implying thick levels of citizenship from the perspective of identity. Looked at another way, in simply attempting to motivate the public to have agency, one could assume that the celebrity has a strong connection to the state. In reality however, if the prominence

of celebrity is a response to increasing individualisation in society, it is difficult to argue for a thick citizenry. Because identity is not static in modern society, 'we operate in a multitude of different 'worlds' or realities; [...] we operate in different registers in different contexts' (Dahlgren, 2009: 119). Thus, it seems unlikely that being an American citizen is the primary way in which anyone views themselves.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study begins to fill the gaps in celebrity politics research, by carrying out a systematic and in-depth analysis of an actual case study of celebrity involvement in the 2016 U.S. election (Marsh *et al.*, 2010). This case study, however, has limitations. In the digital age, where the public receives information from celebrities via social media, citizenship may have been conveyed very differently and perhaps more honestly, through those platforms. Separately, although limitations of the methodological framework were addressed, coding for both the TA and CDA were subject to researcher-bias and inconsistency and can be improved by including multiple coders and a check on inter-coder reliability.

In the future of celebrity politics research, it would be interesting to address shortcomings of various CDA projects by conducting CDA in conjunction with audience research. In the context of this study for example, research may be conducted on how celebrity discourse enables or inhibits understandings of citizenship, or if the status of the celebrity strengthens or weakens feelings of political efficacy and agency among citizens.

Regardless of concerns over the strength of citizenship of individual Americans, what this study concludes is a widespread belief, among celebrities, politicians, political parties and citizens, of a fundamental commitment to citizenship and American democracy. There are certainly reasons that validate the concerns of theorists regarding issues of partisanship, mistrust, and knowledge in democracies. Moreover, perhaps GOTV messaging does not empower citizens in the ways in which campaigns intend. But, the discourse does support

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the continued and peaceful transition of power in American government. Celebrities are telling the electorate that they should have a belief in the values of their institutions and the underlying abilities of government, despite views on individual government administrations. Despite fears that voters are experiencing feelings of 'anti-politics,' ultimately 'the contemporary political malaise does not appear to have shaken people's commitment to democratic values' (Dahlgren, 2009: 83).

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Celebrity: Anthony Sabato Jr., actor and model

Text: RNC speech

Date: July 18, 2018

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEee4uJG68w>

Tone: Bleak

Themes discussed often: Values, trust, identity, trust

Themes discussed one-two times: Knowledge, space, future, importance of election, future, Political efficacy, voting consequences

Themes not discussed: Discussion

AS: Good evening. I'm honored to be here and this November, we're going to win.

I know I'm not your typical convention speaker. Well the truth is that I've never considered myself very political or spoken out politically before. Well my belief in this country, and my faith in Jesus Christ have compelled me to speak now. That's right!

I'm concerned about our country's future. I'm concerned about my children's future. I believe we need Donald Trump, who shares, that's right, who shares my beliefs, my faith, to get our country back on track.

In the past eight years, failed policies have caused our country to deteriorate. Our rights have been trampled, our security threatened. We are weaker by almost every measure. We are on the wrong path. It is clear that to someone who was not even born here. I came to the United States from Rome, Italy in 1985. That's right. [Says something Italian 1:35]

I follow all the rules. I finally became a naturalized citizen in 1996. That's right.

Others, who want to come to the US to live and work, should follow the same rules! That's right. We are a nation of laws for a reason. There should be no shortcuts for those who don't want to pay or wait. You know, my mother was born in communist Prague. Escaped the Czech Republic and met my dad in Italy. I know what socialism looks like. I don't want that for my children. Not at all. But that's the path. That's the path we are headed down with the leader we've had. And the candidate he endorses. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton promote division, don't be fooled but Donald Trump is for unity. Donald Trump believes in one America. With liberty and justice for all. Having secure borders, protecting our citizens. None of this is hateful. This is the responsibility of the government. That's right and it's the right thing to do. Donald Trump will get it done and put us on the right track. People know this and that's why they have voted as they have. We can no longer afford to be silent. Our Country needs Donald Trump to make us great again. God bless you and God bless the United States of America.

Comment [x1]: Space

Comment [x2]: Identity→Affinity "we" group

Comment [x3]: Trust→In institutions

Comment [x4]: Identity→Member of Dem Society

Comment [x5]: Values→Positive manifestation

Comment [x6]: Practice→Act

Comment [x7]: Political efficacy→Voice, positive; as a result of identity and values

Comment [x8]: Future→Negative

Comment [x9]: Values →Daily virtues

Comment [x10]: Identity→Affinity "we" group

Comment [x11]: Identity→Affinity "we" group

Comment [x12]: Trust→Lack of trust

Comment [x13]: Values→Partisanship

Comment [x14]: Identity→Member of Dem society

Comment [x15]: Identity→Affinity "we" group

Comment [x16]: Identity→Dem society

Comment [x17]: Values→Lack of values

Comment [x18]: Values→Lack of values

Comment [x19]: Future→Negative

Comment [x20]: Voting→Consequences

Comment [x21]: Trust→Lack of

Comment [x22]: Values→Negative manifestation, partisanship

Comment [x23]: Voting→Consequences

Comment [x24]: Knowledge→About function of gov.

Comment [x25]: Values → Daily virtues, partisanship

Comment [x26]: Political efficacy→Able to act, as a result of values

Comment [x27]: Practice→Action, voting

Comment [x28]: Importance of election→ Dire

# APPENDIX A: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

**Sentence structure**      Related to discursive analysis

**We/Our v. They v. You**      Expression of political efficacy

**Language/Word choice**

**Celebrity: Anthony Sabato Jr., actor and model**

Text: RNC speech      We – Everyone is included on this path to Socialism. Not so much a conversation regarding "they" group because everyone is down this bad path. Not much about the individual

Date: July 18, 2018 Political efficacy

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEee4uJG68w>

AS: Good evening. I'm honored to be here and this November, **we're** going to win.      How AS views himself as an effective citizen

**I know I'm not your typical convention speaker. Well the truth is that I've never considered myself very political or spoken out politically before. Well my belief in this country, and my faith in Jesus Christ have compelled me to speak now.** That's right!      List to make all groups equal

I'm concerned about **our** country's future. I'm concerned about my children's future. I believe **we** need Donald Trump, who **shares**, that's right, who **shares** my beliefs, my faith, to get **our** country back on track.      Uses passive voice to get rid of the process behind policy making. Nominalizes failure. Also doesn't really provide agency potentially to make more ominous.

**"Share"** by using this word they are emphasizing the need to elect someone who shares their values.

**In the past eight years, failed policies have caused our country to deteriorate. Our rights have been trampled, our security threatened. We are weaker by almost every measure. We are on the wrong path. It is clear that to someone who was not even born here, I came to the United States from Rome, Italy in 1985. That's right. [Says something Italian 1:35]**

**I follow all the rules. I finally became a naturalized citizen in 1996.** That's right.      A bit confusing because of the structure seems to almost equate illegal immigration with socialism

**Others, who want to come to the US to live and work, should follow the same rules! That's right. We are a nation of laws for a reason. There should be no shortcuts for those who don't want to pay or wait. You know, my mother was born in communist Prague. Escaped the Czech Republic and met my dad in Italy. I know what socialism looks like. I don't want that for my children. Not at all. But that's the path. That's the path we are headed down with the leader we've had and the candidate he endorses. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton promote division, don't be fooled but Donald Trump is for unity. Donald Trump believes in one America. With liberty and justice for all. Having secure borders, protecting our citizens. None of this is hateful. This is the responsibility of the government. That's right and it's the right thing to do. Donald Trump will get it done and put us on the right track. People know this and that's why they have voted as they have. We can no longer afford to be silent. Our Country needs Donald Trump to make us great again. God bless you and God bless the United States of America.**      A bit of a slippery slope argument here. If HC, then socialism. Very simplistic.

**Active-giving agency**

*To seem more humble? The speaker is describing himself passively, almost as if he didn't have agency*

*We are the victims of the Liberal administration*

*Uses personal ex. To establish authority on immigration and socialism*

*Last four blue sentences make it seem like speaker is trying to convince the audience till why DT was a good choice. The people voted for him and actually you might think one thing about him but he is actually a unifying figure*

# APPENDIX B: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

#### Discursive –

- Celebratory goal of speech
  - Reproduces the status quo of the way in which American politics and citizen engagement are conducted in the US
  - Reproduces the power of the party elites by having these self-important events
- Goal – GOTV, voter mobilization style speech
  - The idea of a GOTV speech sort of implies the concern about mobilizing apathetic voters. Therefore we want to avoid the post-democracy, lack of engagement
  - Voting consequences
    - Not voting will lead to socialism
    - Unity
    - Make USA great again
- What kind of citizen is the speaker?
  - Authority- At first it is a bit humble, like the everyman who does not get involved in politics. But also in some ways seems like he has no authority over politics until he talks about assumed shared values with the audience. Later though in order to discuss immigration and socialism the speaker uses a personal example of being an immigrant. Shows that there is no room for excuses not following the immigration laws because he has done it. Because he has properly gone through the immigration process he can provide an authoritative understanding of American citizenship and politics.
  - He views himself as an effective citizen
- Political-efficacy—Efficacy again is pushed by values and identity. The idea is that we need to vote for someone based on shared values.

#### Social –

- Convention speech
  - Talking to supporters, predisposed to support you
  - More of a pomp and circumstance situation, but this particular speech is a bit weird because it seems more like the speaker is still trying to convince people that DT was the best choice. Instead of supporting it.
- The elite are pushing the trust/values of the system
  - What does it mean that a celeb saying this over politician?
  - Reinforcing and legitimizing celebrity power and presence in politics
- Celebrity brings “private” sphere into “public” sphere
- What does this all mean in terms of political efficacy?
  - Efficacy is pushed by values and identity. Those are the primary reasons behind being an engaged citizen willing to act. Moreover, we need to vote for someone with our shared values.
- How does this speech compare to the idea of democracy and post-democracy?
  - This is way more emotional than the ideal democracy. Why are we systematically not talking about knowledge? You get the vibe that people are clearly not happy about politics, but there isn't a sense that people aren't willing to act or there should be an anti-politics movement. Instead, you must use your political efficacy via voting. At the end of the day your voice matters. The idea of a GOTV speech sort of implies the concern about mobilizing apathetic voters. Therefore we want to avoid the post-democracy, lack of engagement
- What does this say about thick v. thin v. passive v. active citizenship?
  - They have this belief that the thick citizen exists which is why there is so much push regarding collective identities. Neither active nor passive - Definitely not passive, they want people to vote so they aren't pushing for that but again they aren't really pushing for anything beyond voting. What kind of citizen is the speaker? Authority- At first it is a bit humble, like the everyman who does not get involved in politics. But also in some ways seems like he has no authority over politics until he talks about assumed shared values with the audience. Later though in order to discuss immigration and socialism the speaker uses a personal example of being an immigrant. Shows that there is no room for excuses not following the immigration laws because he has done it. Because he has properly gone through the immigration process he can provide an authoritative understanding of American citizenship and politics. He views himself as one with efficacy, and v thick member of USA, but perhaps not the most active.

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ISSN: 1474-1938/1946