ABSTRACT

HANNAH MICHELLE SMITH. The Polarizing Effects of Racialization in Political Discourse: A Discursive Analysis of Donald Trump’s Tweets. (Under the direction of Professor Agnes Bolonyai.)

This research looks at Donald Trump’s twitter feed to explore the effects of racializing discourses in political speech. It is commonly assumed in contemporary scholarship that race is socially constructed (Dick and Wirtz 2011). In this study, I identify and explain three strategies: *Racialization through Identity*, *Racialization through Membership Categorization*, and *Racialization through Exclusionary Practice* to explain Donald Trump’s use of racialization online through political speech. This research uses various discursive mechanisms such as stancetaking and indexicality (Bucholtz and Hall 2005), plausible deniability and covert racism (Dick and Wirtz 2011), and semiotic practices (Gal and Irvine 1995) to analyze a group of tweets collected from Trump’s personal twitter feed. This study is exploring whether Trump engages in discourses of racialization by drawing on the framework set by Omi and Winant (2014) that racializing discourses extend racial classification on a social practice or group. This paper will be discussing three strategies of racialization that Trump uses on twitter to try and answer the questions: How does Trump use racialization through identity construction? How is racialization accomplished through membership categorization analysis? And how is racialization executed through exclusionary practice? Through answering these questions and analyzing Trump’s language use within a framework of racialization, my study shows that Trump does in fact promulgate racist discourse.