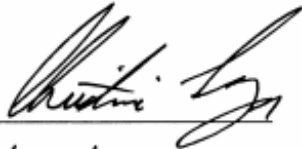


The Language and Linguistics of Donald Trump:
Condoning and Promoting Rape Culture Through Words

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Abstract

This project looks at the intersection of linguistics and social power in relation to rape culture, exploring these concepts in the context of President Donald Trump. Trump's language in speeches, videos, and social media was analyzed for linguistic tactics that contribute to the continuation of rape-condoning attitudes. Several pervasive trends appear, such as deflection/denial of blame, "gaslighting," and treatment of sexual assault as unimportant. These trends demonstrate how seemingly inoffensive language is critical to the continuation of rape culture.

Honor Pledge

On my honor, I have neither given, nor received, any unauthorized aid on this project.
Honor Code Upheld.

—*Elizabeth Reece Baker*

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Introduction

“I’ve said some foolish things, but there’s a big difference between the words and actions of other people.” This quote is from President Donald Trump’s public apology video, which served as a response to the discovery of the infamous 2005 “pussy-grabbing” tapes in which Trump describes his ability to assault a woman without consequence (Johnson 2016). While the words of a person do not necessarily equal their actions, this quote poses the question of whether or not the words of one person can incite actions in others. Can the lewd and predatory comments made by Trump— a strong, powerful, and public figure— contribute to the construction and reproduction of rape culture in our society?

The objective for my final project in Anthropology is to analyze President Donald Trump’s speech in publicized statements, recorded colloquial conversations, and social media posts, to determine if this speech actively promotes or condones rape culture through word choice and phrasing. While the discussion of highly publicized events in which Trump is accused of misogyny or sexism, such as the release of these 2005 tapes (Johnson 2016), is both important and relevant to this study, more consideration will be given to everyday language and speech. I choose to analyze speeches and less publicized quotes in order to see whether the larger events like the 2005 tapes can or cannot be excused as flukes or simple accidents. Many people may look at the “pussy-grabbing” moment and brush it off as “locker room talk” (Reilly 2016); my objective here is to analyze other examples of his speech in order to show whether or not these large events are indicative of actual belief and bias. This area of research is both topical and important— Trump took office on January 20th, 2017, and a complete understanding of

the danger Trump presents to sexual safety and equality of gender is critical. While many studies have focused on the way Trump presents himself through speech, and there is rampant criticism for his response to accusations of sexual assault (see Abadi 2016, Atkin 2016, and Haberman 2016, for examples), I aim to look at the intersection of these two areas. If we can better understand the larger societal implications of the words Trump uses, we can better fight for the protection of gender equality and women's rights.

In analyzing Trump's linguistic discourse, I study speeches, statements, and social media posts, searching for phrasing, metaphors, or other linguistic action that could contribute to the establishment and domination of rape-condoning attitudes in society. I focus specifically on Trump's October 8th, 2016 apology video and his speech from a rally in West Palm Beach, Florida on October 13th, 2016, supplementing these two speeches with tweets from @realDonaldTrump and additional quotes from Trump. This analysis has led me to several discoveries regarding Donald Trump's linguistic style, and eventually, to my conclusion to the research questions that drive this project. In analyzing these two speeches, in combination with specific tweets and quotes, it becomes evident that Donald Trump's language utilizes numerous tactics to contribute to rape culture, including the act of superimposing himself as the victim, the treatment of sexual assault as a trivial issue, denial of blame, and the questioning and de-legitimization of sexual assault survivors. This style of language is particularly dangerous as Trump is both a powerful and public figure whose ideology could soon become the dominant social narrative, especially in social groups that have high approval ratings for Trump (De Klerk, et al. 2007; Bourdieu 1992).

The question that guides my research is: Do Trump's linguistic choices promote rape culture in our society, and if so, how? This question is not wholly unprecedented, and so I find it necessary to consider a few other issues in relation to this topic. To begin, why do the sentences that Trump utters have an effect on our culture? In other words, why does it matter what Trump says or how he says it? Why do words matter — Is it not the thought behind the words that counts? Additionally, to which areas or groups does this kind of speech present the biggest threat? How can we best combat this threat?

At the start of Trump's campaign, I began to realize how evident sexism was in his speech and wondered about the greater effects of such language. He has committed various acts that have made me question his respect for women, but his everyday language and speech was what captured me the most. Trump has received frequent media attention for the “grab her by the pussy” moment and for the accusations of sexual assault against him; however it is easier to understand the problems and effects of these events, as they are more clear-cut and obvious examples of sexism. Considerably less attention is given to his everyday speech tendencies and I argue that these tendencies must be analyzed in order to fully understand the implications of a Trump presidency. The words we speak have certain effects and, at times, these effects can occur regardless of our intention behind the words. Before I began my analysis, I believed that I would find specific linguistic tendencies that added to or condoned rape culture. Having previously studied Pierre Bourdieu's concept of “habitus,” I also believed that these linguistic tendencies would contribute to the development of a dominant social narrative of sexism and inequality.

To elucidate my thesis for this project, an explanation of what rape culture means and how it manifests itself in our society is first necessary before delving into the methodology of this work. I will then move into a review of the relevant literature for this topic, highlighting both why these works are necessary to my project and how exactly they inform my project. Following this review, I will explain two necessary areas of background for my project: the theories of Pierre Bourdieu (1992) and Jane Hill (2008). I will subsequently explore the data that I have discovered in this investigation, giving a thorough presentation of my findings before moving into a discussion of the implication and meaning behind these data. I plan to close my work with a specific example of how linguistic threats can manifest themselves into a community through social acceptance and changes to policy through both ideology and changes to policy. I wish to explore, in light of my findings, what needs to be done to protect and support survivors and to prevent more cases of assault. With this “roadmap” for my project in mind, we continue forward to the first step of the process of framing my project: investigating the intricacies and meanings of “rape culture.”

The Meaning of “Rape Culture”

Before delving into the more intricate scope of this project, it is necessary to establish what exactly the term “rape culture” means. Additionally, we must understand how rape culture manifests itself in our society, as this culture can present itself differently depending on the context. *The Feminist Wire* defines “rape culture” as “the condoning and normalizing of physical, emotional and sexual terrorism against women and girls and marginalized subjects. It is the production and maintenance of an environment where sexual assault is so *normative* that people ultimately believe that rape

is inevitable” Najumi (2013). Many are willing to ignore rape culture’s dominating presence, arguing that few would actively *support* rape as a concept (Thorpe 2016). However, rape culture is a much more nuanced and complicated process than some would choose to believe. One can continuously denounce rape and sexual assault but still be involved in the process of furthering rape culture daily. Rape culture prioritizes masculinity and male sexual aggression above all. Along with this prioritization of male domination comes a number of different but related values. Supporting masculinity and male aggression supports violence against women and a de-prioritization of the female voice. Perhaps most dangerously, these values and priorities of rape culture are perceived as the normal status quo. These qualities are so ingrained in our society and everyday lives that it is difficult to see these processes at work. However, it is easier to see rape culture as a problem when we analyze the many effects that it has produced within our society. For example, it is it is rape culture that has created a society in which that has produced a system of justice in which 97 out of 100 rapists will not spend a day in jail for their crimes (“The Criminal Justice System”). Rape culture has caused sexual assault prevention methods to tell women how to not get raped, rather than telling men to not rape people. This culture causes the media to focus on the ruined lives of student athletes convicted of brutal sexual assault, rather than the victim herself or the student’s actions (Lord 2016). This culture is a pervasive ideology that condones violence, blames victims, and simultaneously silences and invalidates the voice of survivors in our society in our society.

Methodology

With this understanding of rape culture, we can move forward into unpacking the mechanics of this project. My research is framed from a sociolinguistic perspective, meaning that I use language as the guiding framework for my investigation, while at the same time considering factors such as gender and societal status. Because I am looking at Trump's spoken and written discourse, my largest instrument of analysis was transcripts of speeches, compilations of tweets from the social media platform Twitter, and newspaper and magazine articles that include direct quotes from Trump. My goal was to dissect and study the language that Trump uses to better understand if and how he contributes to and/or condones rape culture in our society. I aimed to compare various statements in order to elucidate general tactics of his speech to better understand this process.

To analyze this public discourse, I primarily furthered my investigation of broader language theories, developing what exactly I was looking for in his speech. A few areas of previous research and concepts have become critical to my linguistic exploration of Trump. Primarily, this study is informed by two theorists, Pierre Bourdieu (1992) and Jane H. Hill (2008). While I will dissect Bourdieu's and Hill's concepts later (see "Bourdieu and the Ideas of Habitus and Field" and "Hill and the Language of White Racism"), I want to establish the influence these theorists have had on this project. Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field inform my paper in a broad, structuring sense, while Hill's ideas surrounding the intersection of race and language provide working theories that are directly applied to more intricate sections of my paper. Additionally, I looked at subordinate-superior power relations and how such a discrepancy in social status can affect the way we speak. I found this area to be relevant because of the fame,

attention, and monetary and social power Trump has developed over the years. Finally, I read many studies surrounding language and sexual violence, developing an understanding for rape myths, blaming and invalidating language, and metaphors used by both assailants and survivors.

In giving an overview of my data collection process, I will describe what data I analyzed, why I chose the data I did, and then describe precisely what I was searching for within these data. My job is to demonstrate that the moments that received so much media attention, like the 2005 tapes, are not simply a fluke. Rather, I believe these highly publicized moments that force us to question Trump's treatment of women to be indicative of a larger problem. I aim to suggest the presence of an ideology that actively promotes rape culture by analyzing Trump's everyday language. I focus on his discourse in two main instances, the first being the public apology video Trump released on October 8th, 2016 following the sudden attention given to the 2005 tapes. The second instance I analyze is Trump's speech at a rally in West Palm Beach, Florida, on October 13th, 2016, where many speculated that he would focus on the accusations of sexual assault that had been the hot topic during a debate on October 9th (Blake 2016). I found his apology video to be the best place to begin because of its context and content— this video is indicative of how Trump views and treats sexual assault. I chose the Florida rally speech because of its proximity to more assault accusations that surfaced on October 12th, the day before the rally ("An Exhaustive List" 2016). Additionally, I looked at a number of tweets from Donald Trump's twitter account, @realDonaldTrump, in combination with many articles related to Trump and sexual assault. The tweet that I chose to include in this supplemental analysis is directly related to the topic of sexual assault. While social

media posts and public videos are quite different platforms for language, I found Twitter to be an important area for investigation as well— while Trump’s style of public speaking tends to be quite colloquial, I hoped to find even more candid language among his prolific tweets. In analyzing the articles that discuss Trump and sexual assault, I located a few quotes that I deem most worthy of analysis, based on their connection to sexual assault. Articles quoting Trump often include language that begs for analysis, even if the actual verbal context for the quote is not present in the original article. My sources for data collection vary greatly, as I have included public speeches and statements, short social media posts, and direct quotes from Trump. This variety informs my project in differing ways, in a manner that only looking at one form of speech would not be able to achieve.

In analyzing these texts, I looked for a number of different aspects of language. First, I looked for places where Trump attempts to excuse sexual assault. This excusing could be attempted through invalidation (ex. “That’s not true”), questioning (ex. “Well is that the complete truth?”) or literal excuses (ex. “That’s true but I can justify it”). This could additionally take the form of trying to define sexual assault differently than the interviewer, the public, or the accuser. Additionally, I looked for strategies used to hedge, or limit and qualify, questions or statements. This hedging could appear as questions used to deflect (i.e. answering a question with another question), a general usage of vagueness or passive voice to avoid ownership, or a change of topic and shift of focus away from the question or statement at hand. Finally, I searched for evidence of gaslighting, a form of psychological manipulation, and deflection of blame away from the self.

Before delving into this project further, I would like to point out a few necessary considerations, given the scope of this project. As a woman studying at a collegiate institution, this project is important to me from both an academic and a personal standpoint. The Trump presidency directly affects me as a woman and a survivor of sexual assault, and it has been of paramount importance that I limit my personal bias as much as possible in the execution of this investigation. However, I accept that some bias is inherently present in my work, as no anthropologist is realistically able to completely remove herself from her study. I recognize that this project presents topics that are particularly difficult to separate myself from, given my lived experience as a woman and a survivor. Because I disagree with Trump on a variety of issues, I did my best to assure that the words I chose to analyze were words that anyone, regardless of political orientation or personal bias against Trump, would have chosen in investigating the intersection of Trump and sexual assault. In order to do so, I chose instances where he directly mentions sexual assault in order to attempt to limit any selective choice or “cherry-picking.”

Another necessary consideration here is the heteronormative framework of my project. I am focusing on Trump’s perpetuation of rape culture in our society, and thus, sexual assault and violence are topics discussed both frequently and deeply in my paper. I recognize that sexual assault is not something that occurs only between a man and a woman and I am also aware of the lack of research and attention that assault in queer communities receives. This lack of focus begets a tragic lack of support for queer survivors. At times, sexual assault is also perpetuated by women on cisgender and heterosexual men, and this arena is too often ignored in society as well. In order to not

contribute to the narrow lens of assault that the media presents (i.e. an unknown male violently attacks a female), I find the discussion of these considerations both necessary and essential to the development of my project. However, men are also the overwhelmingly largest group (almost 98%) of assailants for sexual violence, especially on college campuses (“Victims of Sexual Violence” and “Causes, Statistics, and Sex Assault” 2016). Rape culture is driven, at least in large part, by a patriarchal society and must be examined as such in this context (Jensen 2016).

Additionally, I would like to note that in the community of people who have experienced sexual assault, there is somewhat of an ongoing debate regarding the nomenclature of such a group (see Wood 2013, Waddingham 2015 and Gupta 2014). While some choose “victim” as their preferred term of reference, I choose to mainly utilize the word “survivor,” as I agree with the strength and future-oriented nature of this phrase. However, at times I may employ the word “victim” because of the situational context and scenario of what I am discussing. Between “victim” and “survivor,” no word is better or more correct, rather it is completely up to each individual which term they prefer.

With these considerations about rape culture, the heteronormativity of this project and the nomenclature of survivors in mind, I continue forward. The scope of my project may be small but the importance is incredibly vast. From here, we enter into a review of the relevant literature and explorations of the theories of Bourdieu and Hill.

Literature Review

As I mentioned in my methods section, Donald Trump has been the obvious focus of many news outlets during his campaign. Many media outlets have discussed the

amount of “free” media that Trump has received over the course of his campaign— “free” or “earned” media contrasts to paid media in that free media is generated when the candidate is discussed on television, radio, social media, or another such platform, rather than a paid commercial or endorsement coming directly from the pockets of the campaign. MediaQuant, an organization that analyzes media prominence using advertising rates to assign a monetary value to coverage received, estimates that Trump received over \$4.96 billion in “free” media. MediaQuant writer, Harris, states, “while ‘free media’ has long played an important role in our democracy by fostering political discourse and disseminating electoral information, the [sheer] enormity of coverage on Trump puts a spotlight on how the media may have influenced the course of the election” (Harris 2016). Now that the election is over and Trump has been inaugurated, the media continues to focus on Trump’s actions and statements as the new president. Lithwick and Tsai (2016) discuss the transition of Trump from President-elect to President of the United States:

Trump no longer speaks as a private citizen when he howls at the moon. Instead, his statements carry sovereign meaning... It’s not just the media that cares: Litigants, activists, and government officials will almost certainly quote his utterances as evidence of his true intentions, plans, and views about the law. Foreign leaders will hear his threats and promises, and take them as pronouncements of intent. People who admire him will strive to act in his name and joyfully pursue his perceived agenda, pressed on by his words... Words are signifiers of a person’s purposes and beliefs, and words have consequences

(Lithwick and Tsai 2016)

Media therefore emerges as a necessary area of analysis in the course of this campaign—what has assisted Trump in being such a celebrity in the media? Many would argue the answer to this question is the language he used in official statements, recorded conversations, and social media platforms. Additionally, the amount of free media Trump

has received over the course of this campaign calls for an analysis of what is being quoted and said. What content is being publicized so heavily during Trump's rise to the position of President-elect and now to President? In order to begin the process of answering these questions, we must first build a foundational understanding of the relevant literature.

My research looks to explore the conjunction of three previously discussed topics: linguistic strategy at large, the language that surrounds sexual assault, and the linguistic strategy of Donald Trump. The intersection of these three topics, studied from a sociolinguistic lens, will elucidate Trump's role in the construction and reproduction of rape culture. A large amount of literature focuses on various language theories and, even considering how recent Trump's campaign and election are, many linguists have already analyzed Trump's speech in order to better understand his style and success. The language theories that are relevant to my topic generally focus on power dynamics and their effect on verbal communication. A frequent focus within this realm is the role of metaphor and indirect language in our speech. Within language theory, there is a great quantity of literature that investigates the intersection of sexual assault and language. The discussion of metaphor and humor in relation to sexual assault and violence is common in this field, as well as the investigation of dominant social narratives. In analyzing the linguistics of Trump, articles frequently highlight certain themes, such as how his language "others" people and his short, simple words and sentence structure. While the arenas of language theory, language of sexual assault, and the speaking style and discourse of Donald Trump have sufficient literature, I aim to synthesize these topics and produce an analysis that is informed by all three categories.

Primarily, a review of language theory relevant to this topic is necessary. Morand (2000), Eisikovits and Buchbinder (1997), and Hill (2008) have all written on the topic of language and linguistics and between their three works, a common thread emerges. These three studies, despite their differing topics, all converge on the idea that language has an astounding impact on our social interactions and presence, and that our language will change or be changed depending on our social context. While this connection unites these three works, the differences between the three is where the importance lies. Using a framing theory of “politeness,” Morand (2000) analyzes the daily discourse of people who are simultaneously conversing and negotiating a power imbalance between superior and subordinate. Morand’s article is both relevant and informative to my research, as Trump has many privileges that afford him power in society. He is a white, famous male who is part of the socio-economic upper class and an important political figure. These aspects of his person afford him the “superior” status in many of his interactions. Morand would agree with this assertion, as he states “power is surely not an abstraction that hovers above actors as they go about their daily business” (2000: 235). This theme of power continues in Eisikovits and Buchbinder’s (1997) article, where the authors discuss the use of metaphor by men (who generally experience a superior status in society) who utilize violence against women (who usually experience a subordinate status in comparison). The authors categorize these metaphors into three main groups: war metaphors, metaphors presenting the self as dangerous, and metaphors of de-escalation. They then argue that an analysis of these metaphors is essential to understanding the consequences and effects of violence against women. This article informs my project in that it exposes the negative effects of excusing certain forms of speech as unimportant or

not indicative of a larger problem at hand. Following this narrative of the importance of language in unequal power relations and the danger of excusing questionable speech, Hill (2008) discusses the language of racism and white supremacy and how racial gaffes, or “slips,” can have a profound effect on both the listeners and speakers, despite seeming like innocent mistakes. Hill discusses the effects of this racist language when it is uttered by a public figure, demonstrating how “personalism”— or the idea that the meaning of words lies not just in the content of a word, but also in the speaker’s intended meaning— can allow offensive and damaging language to be excused (2008: 89). Hill’s (2008) book, while discussing the intersection of racism and language, provides numerous useful theories that I will later argue are also applicable to the intersection of sexism and language. This analysis of the effects of speech from a public figure leads me to the next topic of the linguistics of Donald Trump.

In the analysis of Donald Trump’s linguistic style, one theme remains evident: his speech is certainly not typical of a presidential candidate. Atkin (2015) cites that “Trump is unlike other presidential candidates in almost every way in terms of his speech— his word choice, the way he tells stories, and even how he uses his hands,” and Shafer (2015) agrees, stating “by not conforming to the standard oratorical style, he distinguishes himself from the pompous politician. Less is more when you’re speaking Trumpspeak.” Shafer argues that Trump’s simple, blocky speech has assisted him in his campaign by allowing him to seem more accessible, rather than speaking over an audience’s head. Atkin (2015) agrees with this proposition but takes her analysis a step further. . . Atkin additionally analyzes Trump’s prolific hand gestures, his inconsistent storytelling, and his occasionally incoherent manner of speech, arriving at the previously discussed

conclusion that Trump speaks unlike any other presidential candidate in history (2015). Abadi (2016) agrees with the uniqueness of Trump's speech but focuses on one aspect of his language that is more negative: Trump's use of "the" preceding certain demographic groups. For example, Abadi quotes Trump in saying the following sentences and fragments: "I have a great relationship with the blacks," "...how well we're doing with the Hispanics, the Latinos," "I love the Muslims," "Ask the gays," and finally, "I will be phenomenal to the women" (2016). Abadi argues that the use of the article "the" in front of social groups creates othering and marginalization. Abadi states that this use of "the" distances the speaker from this group and additionally homogenizes the group, implying that all members of this group have identical experiences. As Abadi argues, Trump's language promotes a social and racial division.

The investigation of the linguistics of sexual assault and harassment is showcased in French and Brown (2011), de Klerk, Klazinga, and McNeill (2007), Ryan and Kanjorski (1998), and O'Hara (2012). French and Brown investigate the assignation of blame in acquaintance rape cases and how symbolic action and nonsymbolic motion inform this decision. They define "symbolic action" as systems of communication that rely on symbols and "nonsymbolic motion" as "physical processes uncontrolled by human speech or intentional acts" (2011: 2). This dissection and discussion of blame relates directly to Trump's response to the sexual assault accusations made against him and will inform a later discussion of victim blaming and shaming. De Klerk, et al. (2007) analyze blame from a different angle, looking at the ways in which response to sexual assault includes a blaming of the female body in the context of Rhodes University campus. De Klerk, et al. (2007) additionally argue that Bourdieu's concept of "habitus"

plays an essential role in the perpetuation of rape culture. Swartz (2002) discusses habitus as “structuring structures” that generate “perceptions, expectations, and practices that correspond to the structuring properties of earlier socialization” (63). De Klerk, et al. state that the “habitus of the dominant tends to pervade the social system, making it difficult for those with an alternative ‘habitus’ (such as females or members of racial minorities) to participate as equals” (2007: 115). The construction of a dominant social narrative in college students also pertains to Ryan and Kanjorski’s (1998) article in which they investigate a proposed correlation in college males between enjoyment of sexist humor and rape-related beliefs. These authors elucidate the danger of a dominant social narrative that excuses rape, stating, “cultures where women and their sexuality are a joke may be cultures that foster rape” (1998: 753).

The division of these three topics of relevant language theory, the linguistics of Donald Trump, and the language surrounding sexual assault show that the literature on my topic is both vast and varied. However, a need for a comprehensive and combined analysis remains, and I imagine this dearth is due in part to how recently Trump took office as President. This context makes my investigation even more topical and important, furthering the necessity for my study.

Bourdieu and the Ideas of Habitus and Field

This paper adopts a Bourdieuan sense of the world and our roles in it. Bourdieu saw the world as a game: he proposed that everyone’s lived experiences are guided both by overarching societal “rules” as well as individual behavior and strategy; these three arenas are combined into the larger concept of a social “field” (Moberg 2013: 222). Bourdieu argues that we interact with a number of different social fields in our lives—

like a restaurant or a college campus— with each containing a unique set of social structures and rules that individuals then negotiate. Moberg (2013) further explains how a social field, along with one’s lived experience, can produce “habitus,” or socially-learned skills, opinions or ideas:

Within a given social field, the individual develops a certain *habitus* that is typical of his position with regard to class, capital (in all its variants) and ‘feel for the game,’ or particular ability to operate within that field... [Habitus] does not primarily operate at the conscious level... Habitus contributes to society’s reproduction by generating and regulating the practices that make up social life.

(2013:223)

In other words, Bourdieu proposed that his concept of “habitus” does not control behavior, but rather that it predisposes us to act in certain ways based on our internalization of past experiences. Bourdieu believes habitus to be a set of perceptions that we acquire as a result of living our lives; these perceptions both guide us in our actions and inform these actions (Bourdieu 1992). It is through this construction of guiding sets of social beliefs that individuals internalize “not only values, but taste, opinion, and even bodily dispositions such as tone of voice or mannerism” (Moberg 2013:223). Through this discussion of habitus and field, we can more readily understand how ideas, perceptions, and values can arise in different societies.

The ideas of habitus and field are both linked and fluid, with both notions shaping and structuring each other. Henry and Powell (2014) discuss this relationship between the habitus and the field, with a specific gendered focus on changing the way rape culture manifests in a school environment. The authors state, “Using these [concepts of habitus and field], members of the school community can be encouraged to think about how discourses and practices of gender are shaped by the home, local community, school and

broader society and yet appreciate that there is always the potential for performing gender ‘habits’ differently” (2014:Section 6).

The relationship between habitus and field, as well as the greater theories surrounding these two ideas, provide an outer structure for my project; the production and reproduction of these guiding social rules will become salient in the analysis of the effect of Trump’s language on the public. While this is not a complete overview of the intricacies and nuances of these theories, my hope is that I have extrapolated the most important and relevant parts of Bourdieu’s ideas. With the establishment of a Bourdieuan outer structure of this work, I now move on to further investigate another set of framing concepts for my work: Hill’s (2008) theories surrounding the intersection of racism and language.

Hill and the Language of White Racism

Hill’s (2008) work, *The Everyday Language of White Racism*, which I introduced briefly in the Literature Review, focuses on how everyday language can have a large effect on the furthering and promotion of racist ideals in society. Before entering into the nuances of linguistic racism, it is first necessary to establish why Hill’s theories, which have a singular focus on racism and white supremacy, can be applied to sexism and male supremacy. Once this connection has been established, the reader can see how sexist and misogynistic language can function in a similar manner to that of racist language when uttered by a public figure or celebrity.

I argue that Hill’s ideas on racism can be directly applied to sexism for a number of reasons. Russell (1994) states, “the seeds which spawn the racist mentality also spawn the sexist mentality, though the results differ in both their historical manifestations and

degree of oppression” (oppression” (1). The core action of both racism and sexism is to systematically marginalize and other members of society who differ from the perceived norm—i.e. white males. While the scope of racism and sexism differ, as racism focuses on the “non-white” aspect of people and sexism focuses on the “non-male” aspect, the two function similarly in a broad view. I do not mean to conflate the issues of sexism and racism, as each is a nuanced and unique process of discrimination. Yet, in looking at the way these methods of oppression function, racism and sexism are systems that operate quite similarly, making Hill’s analysis of race and language both applicable and salient to our discussion of sexism and language.

The most relevant part of Hill’s work for this project comes in Chapter 4, entitled “Gaffes: Racist Talk without Racists.” This title refers to the fact that those who utter gaffes— accidental slurs or racist language— generally do not perceive themselves as racist. Slurs and gaffes tend to be quite similar in terms of content but the defense for these words is different: people who use slurs can defend their usage by saying that the words in question are not racist, while people who use gaffes generally would argue that they themselves are not racist and the utterance was therefore unintentional (2008:88).

Hill discusses how gaffes can incite a “moral panic” when they are uttered by a public figure. She states, “[moral panics] play out in mass media firestorms where the potentially offensive utterance is repeated again and again over days and even weeks, both by those who intend to discredit the speaker and by those who intend to support and defend him... Indeed, such panics precipitate what we might call a ‘hyper-repetition’ of slurs and stereotypes” (2008:92). Hill argues that this panic most likely occurs because of an unsettlement felt by audiences, who have supported and continue to support this public

figure. If a public figure receives criticism for racist actions or words, the people who support this figure could then be accused of the same prejudice. Hill states that “when utterances of racist words and propositions by public figures, especially by highly placed White men, become public, this is profoundly unsettling for many White Americans. They have invested, at the very least, attention to these figures in their role as celebrities. And many have invested far more: admiration, envy, votes, financial contributions, hero-worship, and the like” (2008:92-3). Through Hill’s analysis, we can more readily see how people may be more inclined to defend or ignore Trump’s language.

Hill’s work has elucidated the general effects of the utterance of offensive language, particularly by a respected or well-known public figure. We can see the way this language is repeated and perpetuated as audiences discuss the event, both to condemn the speaker and to defend them. Hill’s discussion of gaffes shows the dangers of accepting the use of offensive and damaging language solely on the grounds of a speaker’s intention. These ideas will continue to be developed when I apply Hill’s theories to the context of Donald Trump and his language.

Analysis

While many would agree that the comments that Donald Trump made in the 2005 video with Billy Bush were reprehensible (Farenthold 2016), in light of the 2016 election results, it is clear that many voters were willing to overlook these comments and accusations against Donald Trump. Perhaps these comments were excused as a mistake or believed to not be indicative of who Trump *really* is, or maybe they were simply overlooked in light of other, more appealing, aspects of the Trump campaign. Regardless, these highly-publicized comments should make the public question whether or not there

is other evidence of sexist or misogynistic tendency buried in his less-publicized speech. Further analysis of Trump's language is necessary to ascertain both the significance and the effects of his words.

We begin with the apology video that Trump released early in the morning on October 8th, 2016. In total, this video is only 1 minute and 28 seconds long, prompting a Republican strategist to incredulously question, "That took 10 hours?" after the brief statement was finally released (Haberman 2016). Haberman additionally describes Trump's response video as a "strikingly brief articulation of regret" (2016). Trump's campaign was aware that a timely response to the 2005 tapes was necessary "at a minimum to try to stop the defections of Republican officials who had begun to shun and loudly denounce him" (Haberman 2016). Perhaps this time constraint contributed to Trump's brevity on such an important topic, or perhaps Trump did not feel this moment deserved more attention at this point in time. Regardless, the language he uses in this 88 second video begs for analysis.

The first problematic use of language that arises in Trump's apology statement is the act of framing himself as the hero. By focusing on the trouble that the attention to the 2005 comments has caused him, he frames himself as a victim who has risen to the respected status of a presidential candidate (and eventually, President of the United States). This process is apparent in a segment of the video in which Trump discusses the ways in which traveling the country for his campaign has changed him. At minute 0:40, he begins to discuss how he has been "humbled" by the faith in him that the "great people" he has met have, people "from all walks of life who just want a better future" ("Transcript" 2016). This focus on the ways in which he has changed detracts from what

arguably should be the focus of the video: an apology for the ways in which he has verbally degraded women. Haberman (2016) comments on this linguistic construction:

Oddly, Mr. Trump seemed to frame his comments not as sincere concern about those he may have hurt or offended, but as part of his own journey, describing his growth as a person and how humbling it has been for him to campaign across the nation and learn of other people's worries and travails.
(2016)

This concentration on his personal journey alone would not be enough to argue that Trump has a damaging ideology regarding women, but in combination with other tactics used in this “apology” video, we can readily see the threats against society that Trump’s speech and use of language pose.

The second, perhaps less obvious, problem with the way Trump speaks in this video is that he treats sexual assault as a non-issue in our society. During this video, Trump calls the attention that the public has given to his 2005 statements a distraction technique. Trump states at minute 0:51 that “This is nothing more than a distraction from the important issues we’re facing today” (“Transcript” 2016). This sentence proposes that assault and harassment are not one of the “important issues” that plague our society today, as these 2005 statements constitute sexual harassment at the very least and, more realistically, sexual assault (Fahrenthold 2016).

The second quote which follows this construction of sexual assault as a nonissue comes at minute 0:58 of his apology video. Trump states, “Let’s be honest — we’re living in the real world... We are losing our jobs, we’re less safe than we were eight years ago, and Washington is totally broken. Hillary Clinton and her kind have run our country into the ground. (“Transcript” 2016). By prefacing this statement with “Let’s be honest” and framing it with “we’re living in the real world,” Trump proposes that

focusing on assault is not practical, nor pressing. Trump moves his audience's focus to other aspects of his campaign, most notably, attacking Hillary Clinton. Trump's reference to the "real world" here proposes that the issues of violence against women, particularly his predatory comments, should take a backseat to the discussion of the job market, of safety—which he doesn't seem to equate with gender equality or prevention of assault tactics—and of his opponent. If these lewd comments from Trump truly were a mistake and he is the changed man as he so heartily professes himself to be, then why do the contents of the video, which was originally framed as an apology, not treat these issues as what they are—important, valid, and pressing?

In sum, two linguistic tactics arise in this video that are worth noting—the construction of Trump as a victim-turned-hero character, and the invalidation of the importance of discussing the issue of sexual assault. These tactics will appear again as we continue forward with this analysis. We now turn to the investigation of the second sample of Trump's speech, a political rally for his campaign in Florida.

On October 13th, 2016, many residents of West Palm Beach, Florida participated in a rally for Donald Trump. After the release of his apology video on October 8th and the discussion of his lewd comments in the presidential debate on October 9th, new allegations of sexual assault arose against Trump ("An Exhaustive List" 2016). Many believed he would focus this October 13th speech on responding to the accusations and allegations, as West Palm Beach was the first public speech he gave after these new allegations arose (Pacanti 2016). His speech in Florida was 48 minutes and 19 seconds long, according to NPR who transcribed the speech (2016). Trump does not address these accusations until minute 13:11. He spends just 9 minutes and 46 seconds total on this

topic and, during these minutes, frequently interrupts himself to mention other issues or ideas.

First, we examine this speech to ascertain whether or not Trump uses the same linguistic tactics that he used during his October 8th apology video: the construction of Trump as a victim/hero and the invalidation of the significance of sexual assault. Primarily, Trump uses language in this video to superimpose himself on the position of victim; this task is achieved first by using language like the word “attack.” At minute 13:23, Trump states that these accusations are “part of a concerted, coordinated and vicious attack” orchestrated by the Clinton campaign (“Donald Trump’s Speech” 2016). Later, at minute 15:39, Trump states, “six months ago, the failing New York Times wrote a massive story attacking me” (ibid). This use of “attack” constructs Trump as the victim in this scenario. Trump builds on this construction later in his speech, to establish himself as a hero who overcame these “attacks.” At minute 35:13 in his speech, Trump discusses his accomplishments:

I built a great company and I had a wonderful life. I could have enjoyed the fruits and benefits of years of successful business deals and businesses for myself and my family. Instead of going through this absolute horror show of lies, deceptions, malicious attacks — who would have thought? I'm doing it because this country has given me so much, and I feel so strongly that it's my turn to give back to the country that I love.

(“Donald Trump’s Speech” 2016)

With these statements, Trump positions himself— rather than the many women who reported multiple accounts of sexual violence perpetrated by him— as a victim of malicious attacks who overcame multiple hardships in a quasi-heroic manner in order to arrive on the stage in Florida.

Just as we have seen a connection between Trump's apology video and his West Palm Beach rally speech in language of victimization, we can see similarities to his apology video in Trump's framing of sexual assault as an unimportant topic. In his rally speech, Trump primarily deems this topic less important by not discussing it until his thirteenth minute on stage. While it is important to consider that this speech took place at a rally for his own campaign— and therefore, he may have buried this topic in the middle of his speech intentionally— we must also consider the fact that these allegations were recent and received copious amounts of media attention. The significance of being accused of multiple counts of sexual assault, in combination with the temporality and public focus, forces the observer to question why Trump would have waited until the thirteenth minute to discuss this topic. Furthermore, Trump uses similar language as he did in his apology video in order to sideline the issue of sexual assault. Trump states in minute 22:40, "I will not allow the Clinton machine to turn our campaign into a discussion of their slanders and lies, but, will remain focused on the issues facing the American people" ("Donald Trump's Speech" 2016). With his use of the conjunction "but," Trump insinuates that this topic of sexual assault is not an issue that faces the American people. The similarities are apparent between Trump's apology video and this rally speech, in terms of victimization and ignorance of the importance of the discussion of sexual assault. However, given the time discrepancy between these two speeches (90 seconds compared to over 48 minutes), further analysis of the West Palm Beach rally speech is necessary in order to elucidate Trump's use of other linguistic tactics.

Another issue that arises in further analysis of the Florida rally speech is the language Trump uses to describe the accounts of sexual assault. Not once in his 4,798

words does Trump use the phrase “sexual assault” or “sexual harassment.” While unfortunate from an awareness and advocacy perspective, this fact is perhaps not surprising. In a rally for one’s own campaign, perhaps one might refrain from using trigger words like these in order to stay out of the media’s focus or in order to not anger his supporters. However, Trump does not use more neutral language— language that would not admit any kind of guilt— to describe what has occurred. Trump uses “accusation” zero times and “allegation” only once. In place of these words, Trump uses language that frames these events as absurd and crazy. At various times throughout the course of his speech, Trump refers to these accusations of sexual assault as “slander and libels,” “vicious claims,” “slander and lies,” “nothing more than false smears,” and “wild and false allegations that fail to meet even the most basic test of common sense.” Additionally, he states at minute 14:24, “These claims are all fabricated. They’re pure fiction and they’re outright lies” and at 14:45, “The claims are preposterous, ludicrous, and defy truth, common sense and logic.” He refers to his accusers as “horrible people” and “horrible, horrible liars.” Finally, he uses “ridiculous tale” and “invented account” to describe the stories that are surfacing regarding his inappropriate behavior (“Donald Trump’s Speech” 2016).

No one could realistically expect Trump to use language that would imply guilt in this scenario— at this point in time, he was a public figure running for the most important political position in our country. However, I argue the use of this type of language in place of something more neutral creates a scenario in which anyone who chooses to believe the allegations of sexual assault is also framed as crazy and absurd. Trump’s use of such strong words makes it contradictory to both believe the accusations and be seen

as a rational, sane human being. This contradiction is most likely the Trump campaign's goal— after all, who would elect a president that could be seen as guilty of sexual harassment and assault? Yet, this type of language creates a problem: Trump is showcasing that, as an upper class, famous white man, he can simultaneously pose himself as a victim while also invalidating both any accusations against him and the people who support those accusations.

Finally, I choose to address a moment in Trump's speech in which he adopts a new tactic. At minute 17:30, Trump begins discussing a writer from *People Magazine*, Natasha Stoyneff. Stoyneff wrote an article about Trump and his wife, Melania on their first anniversary in 2005 ("An Exhaustive List" 2016). On October 12th, 2016, the day before the West Palm Beach rally took place, this writer came forward with allegations of sexual assault that occurred while she was interviewing Trump. Stoyneff states that, while on assignment for the Trump and Melania story, she and Trump "walked into that room alone, and Trump shut the door behind us. I turned around, and within seconds, he was pushing me against the wall, and forcing his tongue down my throat" ("An Exhaustive List" 2016). Trump deems this specific accusation worthy of a lengthy discussion in his rally speech and I include this quote in its entirety because of the many implications and overall significance of this portion:

Last night [October 12th] we hear that after 12 years — this took place 12 years ago, this story — a new claim that I made inappropriate advances during the interview to this writer. *And I asked very simple question, why wasn't it part of the story that appeared 20 or 12 years ago? Why wasn't it a part of the story? Why didn't they make it part of the story?* I was one of the biggest stars on television with *The Apprentice* and I would've been one of the biggest stories of the year. Think of it, she's doing this story on Melania, who was pregnant at the time. And Donald Trump, our one year anniversary, and she said I made inappropriate advances, and by the way, the area was a public area, people all over the place. *Take a look, you take*

a look. Look at her, look at her words. You tell me, what you think. I don't think so. I don't think so.

(“Donald Trump’s Speech” 2016; emphasis added)

By aggressively questioning why this allegation was not made until recently, after twelve years of silence, Trump is attempting to negate Stoyloff’s choice and personal autonomy in deciding if and when to go public with an accusation of sexual assault. In this questioning, Trump ignores numerous power structures, the significant effects of seeing one’s abuser emerge in the new public light of presidential candidate, and other personal choices that undoubtedly affected Stoyloff’s decision to come forward. Furthermore, this questioning leads to a scenario in which suddenly, Stoyloff is at fault. Trump evades any potential blame for this incident where he is accused of “forcing his tongue” down the throat of a woman by throwing this blame back at her. This series of accusatory questions leads us to a topic that begs discussion here— the concept of gaslighting, a form of psychological manipulation. Abramson (2014) of *Philosophical Perspectives* defines gaslighting as “emotional manipulation in which the gaslighter tries (consciously or not) to induce in someone the sense that her reactions, perceptions, memories and/or beliefs are not just mistaken, but utterly without grounds—paradigmatically, so unfounded as to qualify as crazy” (2014:2). Abramson explains how gaslighting differs from simply dismissing someone, stating “[gaslighting] almost always involves multiple incidents that take place over long stretches of time; it frequently involves multiple parties playing the role of gaslighter, or cooperating with a gaslighter; it frequently involves isolating the target in various ways” (2014:2). This concept of gaslighting is inherently tied to Trump’s language and discussion of sexual assault allegations.

I wish to refer now to an article recently published in *Teen Vogue*, a magazine which previously focused mainly on fashion, but has recently gained attention for its feminist and socially aware content (Mettler 2016). In *Teen Vogue*, Duca (2016) reiterates Abramson's (2014) statements, explaining that "to gas light is to psychologically manipulate a person to the point where they question their own sanity, and that's precisely what Trump is doing to this country." Duca then justifies this claim even further:

[Trump] gained traction in the election by swearing off the lies of politicians, while constantly contradicting himself, often without bothering to conceal the conflicts within his own sound bites. He lied to us over and over again, then took all accusations of his falsehoods and spun them into evidence of bias. At the hands of Trump, facts have become interchangeable with opinions, blinding us into arguing amongst ourselves, as our very reality is called into question.

(Duca 2016)

The author connects this aspect of Trump to gaslighting when she explains that "the fictions are disputed by the media, and Trump doubles down on his lies, before painting himself as a victim of unfair coverage, sometimes even threatening to revoke access" (ibid). The questions that Trump asks back to the public regarding Stoyloff are precisely tied to this process. He frames himself as a victim by stating that, because Stoyloff waited to come forward with her story, her allegations must be part of an organized attack against his credibility— rather than a deeply concerning accusation— which he argues is only occurring because he is in the public light during his path to presidency.

In sum, Trump's apology video and his rally speech in Florida have exemplified Trump's use of gaslighting, his tendency to frame himself as the victim, his ignorance of sexual assault as an issue, and his use of extreme language to describe the allegations of

sexual assault. I now wish to support these findings with supplementary evidence from Trump's Twitter and additional quotations from Trump.

In response to public attention to old allegations that President Trump violently attacked his first wife, Ivana Trump, Donald Trump's lawyer made an alarming comment on behalf of the Trump campaign: "You're talking about the front-runner for the GOP, presidential candidate, as well as private individual who never raped anybody. And, of course, understand that by very definition, you can't rape your spouse" (Brand 2015). Michael Cohen's assertion that you cannot rape your spouse is, by definition, completely false, as marital rape has been illegal in all 50 states since July 5th, 1993 (Millhiser 2015). While Cohen's words are deeply disturbing, Cohen spoke them, not Trump—the relevance to this project comes with analysis of Trump's response to this statement. Trump explained to CNN that Cohen was "speaking for himself. He's not speaking for me, obviously," (Diamond 2015). Trump distances himself from the comments but does not refute them in any manner. In light of how much negative attention Cohen received for this statement ("Donald Trump Adviser" 2015), it appears that Trump did just enough to shirk blame, but had no interest in disputing the comments that his top lawyer made. By not negating these comments in some form, Trump subtly insinuates that he does not believe marital rape is an issue worthy of discussion. This moment gives another clear example of one of Trump's habits that we discovered in his two speeches—the framing of sexual assault as non-issue.

We see this trend continue in Trump's speech during the second presidential debate against Hillary Clinton. Anderson Cooper, the debate moderator, asks Trump a question, saying "You called what you said locker room banter. You described kissing

women without consent, grabbing their genitals. That is sexual assault. You bragged that you have sexually assaulted women. Do you understand that?" (Blake 2016). Trump responds, stating, "No, I didn't say that at all. I don't think you understood what was— this was locker room talk. I'm not proud of it. I apologize to my family. I apologize to the American people. Certainly I'm not proud of it. But this is locker room talk" (ibid). Apart from being incoherent and contradictory, this statement attempts to downplay sexual assault as something common and everyday. Furthermore, by calling his words "locker room talk," Trump attempts to shirk blame and normalize sexual assault by framing his words and actions as something that millions of men do in the absence of women.

Continuing this verbal trend, Trump had a suggestion for the state of Indiana in light of his professional boxer friend Mike Tyson's 1992 rape case: "The proceeds from [Tyson's] next fight, his next two fights for rape victims, and I think that's a lot better than having Mike Tyson serve jail for 10 years or something. I think it's gonna do a lot more in terms of a cause" (Kaczynski 2016). Here, Trump implies that rape is inconsequential and that being guilty of assault is something you can buy your way out of. Stating that Tyson should be allowed to pay money instead of serving jail time assumes that rape is an accidental or unintentional event and not at all indicative of problematic personal beliefs or a larger problem society.

The final instance of treatment of sexual assault as unimportant comes from a speech Trump made announcing his presidential campaign. Trump attacked Mexican immigrants, stating "They're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime. They're rapists," Trump said. "And some, I assume, are good people" (Thompson 2015). Putting aside the blatant racism that Trump displays here, this quote frames rape as the result of a foreign

entity and something that does not happen in the United States. Trump insinuates that if we strengthen our borders and the Mexican “rapists” cannot enter our country, we will be safe from sexual assault. His unwillingness to confront rape as something that happens frequently in our country and is perpetrated by U.S. citizens contributes to a public ignorance of the issue.

Another one of Trump’s damaging linguistic habits, the questioning and gaslighting of victims or accusing parties, is exemplified in a post Trump made on Twitter in May of 2013. Trump tweeted, “26,000 unreported sexual [assaults] in the military-only 238 convictions. What did these geniuses expect when they put men & women together?” (“This Is What Trump Just Said” 2016). Trump blames rampant sexual assault cases on the mere fact that men and women are serving together in the military. By using the phrase “what did these geniuses expect,” Trump implies that there exists no other possible scenario than for a man to rape a woman when they are together for an extended period of time. He insinuates that anyone is crazy to think that sexual assault would not occur when women were included in the military. Additionally, he places the blame on the shoulders of the women who willingly signed up to be in such close proximity with men. In turn, following Trump’s logic, these men obviously must be expected to sexually assault women.

These accusations of gaslighting that began during Trump’s campaign have continued as Trump assumes his new position of President of the United States. NBC News published an article just five days after the inauguration of Trump in which they quote Bryant Welch, author of “State of Confusion: Political Manipulation and the Assault on the American Mind.” NBC’s Fox (2017) quotes Welch as saying “The very

state of confusion they are creating is a political weapon in and of itself" (Fox 2017). The article continues quoting Welch, stating that "If Donald Trump can undercut America's trust in all media, then he starts to own them and can start to literally implant his own version of reality" (ibid). Seven days after the Trump inauguration, the Washington Post commented on Trump's use of gaslighting as a technique to make his own opinion fact: "some psychologists...drew parallels between Trump's actions and the classic tricks of gaslighting — such as undermining the victim's perspective, controlling the topic of conversation and forcefully denying the truth" (Gibson 2017). Essentially, the instances of gaslighting that we saw at Trump's rally speech in October 2016 were not isolated events, but have continued into his presidency.

The final linguistic trend that is supported by additional citation is that of Trump's tendency to frame himself first as the victim and then as the hero. As shown earlier in the second presidential debate, Trump was asked to speak about his use of the term "locker room talk." Trump speaks just 47 words about this comment, and then switches topics: "You know, when we have a world where you have ISIS chopping off heads, where you have— and, frankly, drowning people in steel cages, where you have wars and horrible, horrible sights all over, where you have so many bad things happening, this is like medieval times. We haven't seen anything like this, the carnage all over the world." (Blake 2015). To abruptly switch topics like Trump does here shifts the focus of the conversation away from his actions and affords him the opportunity to pose himself as the hero. Trump brags, "I will knock the hell out of ISIS. We're going to defeat ISIS. ISIS happened a number of years ago in a vacuum that was left because of bad judgment. And I will tell you, I will take care of ISIS" (Blake 2015). Trump ignores the issue with his

words and instead frames himself as the brave man who will “knock the hell” out of the Islamic State.

These verbal trends are both evident and frequent in occurrence. The analysis of these sources has shown that Trump utilizes a number of different linguistic strategies when discussing rape and sexual assault, and the task at hand is now to show how these trends and strategies further rape culture in our society. Additionally, it is important to consider the effects of this act of condoning sexual misconduct on society as a whole.

Discussion

Paradoxically, many people who are involved in the process of perpetuating rape culture might openly speak against rape or denounce it as a concept. We now can understand that when Donald Trump states, “I have great respect for women. Nobody has more respect for women than I do,” there is a great need to unpack his words and actions before we can readily agree that Trump respects women (Blake 2016). Trump’s linguistic strategies when discussing sexual assault are, at the very least, concerning from a standpoint of deconstructing rape culture.

Primarily, Trump’s tendency to downplay the importance and critical nature of sexual assault in his speech perpetuates rape culture. When we are unable to see something as a problem, we are unwilling to address the effects of this problem or the problem itself. By constantly switching topics and deflecting questions about sexual assault, Trump treats the issue as secondary to issues like ISIS, Hillary Clinton, the Mexico-United States border, and the New York Times news outlet. We cannot begin to combat a problem if we do not recognize that there is a problem in the first place. Furthermore, the language that Trump employs to describe the allegations of

assault is another tool he uses to further the presence of rape culture in our society. As shown in his two speeches, Trump utilizes a description of these events that constructs them as so absurd, so crazy, and so out of line that we would be fools to believe them.

Furthermore, Trump's strategy to repeatedly question *People Magazine* writer Natasha Stoyneff ("Donald Trump's Speech" 2016) amounts to victim blaming and gaslighting, both of which are critical tactics of rape culture's survival in our society (Duca 2016). To question why Stoyneff did not come forward with accusations sooner encourages a denial of the legitimacy of these claims. To question Stoyneff like Trump has done shows an ignorance of what it means to be a survivor of assault and the nuanced difficulties of coming forward. If a person does not come forward with sexual assault until many years later, that is in no way indicative of a fabrication of said story. To claim that these accusations are false just because she did not go public until 12 years after the event supports our culture's habit of victim blaming. Additionally, to turn the tables and frame his victims as his attackers and himself as the victim ("Donald Trump's Speech" 2016 and "Transcript of Donald Trump's" 2016) greatly contributes to this act of victim blaming.

While the problems with Trump's speech may be more apparent when one is considering sexism and rape culture, it is important to analyze the effects of this type of speech in broader, more general terms. In other words, we may now recognize that Trump's language is problematic and offensive, but why is his speech damaging when it's just one person utilizing this language? In order to answer this question, we return to the previous discussion of gaffes and racist language from Hill (2008). Hill discusses what happens when a celebrity or public figure utters an offensive statement: "when we

read or hear, perhaps dozens of times in a week, about how some important public figure was overheard using a racist epithet, that epithet is irrevocably reinscribed in our understanding” (2008:43). Trump, as the President of the United States, is the very definition of “important public figure”— his whiteness, his masculinity, his financial status, and his fame all afford Trump a great deal of power. When the messages that he sends are ones of victim blaming, gaslighting, and downplaying of sexual assault, these problematic messages are repeatedly relayed through media and legitimized.

Hill additionally states, “Linguistic ideologies persist not only because they have a certain internal coherence, and because they resonate with other cultural ideas, but because they support and reassert the interests of many (but not all) who share them” (2008:34). When Trump’s sexist slurs are broadcasted to the masses through public media day after day, their effects are broad and far-reaching. Furthermore, when Trump utilizes sexist and rape-condoning language, his words are heard by a society that has already internalized rape culture. His words may not have created this rape culture, but they certainly aid in the furthering and strengthening of such a culture.

Essentially, words matter, especially the repetition of words and especially when you are the President and have garnered more than \$4.96 billion in free media value (Harris 2016). Ryan and Kanjorski (1998) state that “attitudes are an important predictor of sexual aggression in men. The most commonly-studied attitudes are Rape Myth Acceptance, Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence, Adversarial Sexual Beliefs... and Hostility Toward Women” and the authors note that “all of these attitude measures have been positively correlated with college men’s estimates of their own likelihood of forcing sex and self-reported sexual aggression...” (1998:744). With this proposed correlation,

these authors discuss an incredibly important point about rape culture, one that is both framed and supported by Hill's (2008) work— word and attitude are linked to behavior in a society.

Hill's literature on racist gaffes has provided some foundation for Trump's perpetuation of rape culture and, in order to continue this connection, I return here to the theories of Bourdieu regarding habitus and field. As we have seen, the generative capacity of habitus can explain both how and why seemingly unrelated aspects of rape culture are in fact related— for example, the ideas of Bourdieu can elucidate why Trump's "grab her by the pussy" moment is connected to large amounts of sexual assault on college campuses. If Trump continues to speak about sexual assault in the manner that he does, this narrative will be reinforced within his field. We can recall Moberg (2013) in discussing how "values...taste, opinion" can develop through the internalization of society's guiding set of beliefs. De Klerk, Klazinga, and McNeill (2007) note that "repeated experience and patterns of behaviour reinforce existing social structures and practices as 'normal,' and limit the potential for change" (115). In other words, when we repeatedly do something, this action becomes habit, and habits are difficult to change.

However, with the acceptance of Bourdieu's theories comes an understanding that these guiding principles of habitus are *not* concrete and restrictive. In other words, a change to the current habitus is difficult, but possible. Informed by Bourdieu's work of *The Logic of Practice*, Walklate and Spencer (2016) state, "New information that calls into question accumulated past experience is often rebuffed because of the constancy of the habitus. It is by exposure to new information accidentally or by force that changes in the habitus *may* be produced" (18). It appears that, in order to change one's habitus, one

must first involve herself with ideas that are contradictory or just even slightly different than what was previously believed.

These ideas surrounding the sociolinguistic effects of Trump's speech have been elucidated throughout the course of this project. By a way of conclusion, I would now like to take these larger concepts and apply them to a particular situation, or "field," as Bourdieu would say, in society. In seeing the practical effects of rape culture perpetuation in a specific location, the threat this speech poses will become even clearer.

Conclusion: Trump and Rape Culture on Campus

The previous sections of my project have highlighted precisely how Trump perpetuates rape culture through speech. By understanding how this process works, we are better suited to involve ourselves in dismantling it. However, the question remains—how do we dismantle a system so deeply embedded in our society?? The answer to this enigmatic question is that we first must educate ourselves and engage in constructive dialogue with the people around us. Many marginalized groups face a direct threat from the Trump administration and the to-do list is constantly expanding with every day of Trump's presidency. However, one area stands out in relation to the scope of this project: college campuses and sexual assault.

RAINN, a leader in sexual violence prevention, cites that college women aged 18-24 are three times more likely to be sexually assaulted, when compared to statistics for all women ("Campus Sexual Violence"). Additionally, for undergraduate students, RAINN states that 23.1% of women "experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation" (ibid). Sexual assault on college campuses is clearly a major

threat to our society, one that I argue will only worsen with President Trump's perpetuation of rape culture.

In December 2016, just one month before Trump's inauguration, Wu (2016) stated, "A radically different legal landscape for campus sexual assaults likely awaits colleges and their students after the winter holidays." While the treatment of sexual assault on college campuses has always been lacking, this arena saw considerable attention from the Obama administration's eight years. Areas such as sexual assault awareness and survivor support saw great attention, and more than 200 violations to Title IX (the anti-gender discrimination law in education) were investigated (Wu 2016). Wu stated that the threat to sexual safety on college campuses under Trump is varied but strong, noting a potential raise in the "burden of proof" for sexual assault cases. These potential policy changes, combined with Trump's linguistic promotion of rape culture, directly threaten survivors of assault on college campuses.

Wu (2016) was correct in arguing that Trump's presidency would present a number of threats to sexual safety on college campuses, and as Trump picks his cabinet, it is clear that one of the larger threats to sexual safety from the Trump administration comes from Betsy DeVos, the new Secretary of Education. The Department of Education is responsible for handling and upholding Title IX, which is supposed to protect students from gender- and sex-based discrimination in educational environments (Uffalussy 2017). DeVos was asked during her confirmation hearing whether or not she would uphold the 2011 changes to Title IX that require campuses to take an active part in combatting sexual assault on campuses. DeVos first did not respond directly to the question, and when pushed for a yes or no answer, stated "It would be premature for me

to do that today” (Ufalussy 2017). Additionally, DeVos received media attention for donations made by her family’s foundation to the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). FIRE has supported the SAFE Campus Act, which would require survivors to go to the police in order to have their school investigate an incident. Ufalussy states that “mandatory reporting laws can penalize survivors even further by saying that merely being a student at an academic institution is not enough to be guaranteed the rights afforded by Title IX” (2017).

We can clearly see the ways Trump furthers rape culture in society through language and action. His words may not seem that influential, but when juxtaposed with clear action against survivors (like the appointment of DeVos) and the pervasiveness of language ideology (as discussed by Bourdieu and Hill) we can see the way these nuanced aspects of rape culture are inherently intertwined within a Trump presidency.

I have shown how Trump perpetuates rape culture through his everyday language and speech. He has received vast amounts of criticism for large events concerning sexism, but considerably less attention has been given to his everyday language surrounding women and sexual misconduct. When a person who holds as much power as Trump furthers a platform of sexism and abuse, this platform can be normalized within society, thereby furthering rape culture itself. In consideration of potential policy changes to how college campuses handle sexual assault cases, it is clear from a sociolinguistic perspective that action is necessary in order to protect these institutions. While a large-scale solution is not readily available to us currently, we can take steps to combat this perpetuation of rape culture. Primarily, education remains as the most important foundation for this process. College campuses must also be pushed to develop realistic

policies in regards to sexual assault that focus on prevention from an active standpoint. It is simply not enough to teach women how to act in order to not get raped; a focus on teaching men how to not rape is paramount. Additionally, de Klerk, Klazinga, and McNeill (2007) state that “a focus on alcohol implicitly blames the survivor for drinking and not being ‘responsible’ enough, rather than [people who sexually assault]. It also imputes the individual victim for not being responsible for her own safety, rather than the security system, supposedly designed to protect students and staff” (2007:122).

Addressing perceived problems such as women’s clothing and alcohol consumption do not address the problem at large— that men feel a sense of entitlement when it comes to women’s bodies. The authors additionally state that “[College] administration must challenge the sexist macho male ethos on campus in order to stop the objectification and dehumanisation of women” (2007:123). This “sexist macho male ethos” is precisely what Trump frequently reinforces with his language.

President Trump was correct on a number of things when he stated, “I’ve said some foolish things, but there’s a big difference between the words and actions of other people” (Johnson 2016). Trump has said many foolish things and is not wrong in arguing that words do not equal actions. However, the President fails to recognize the connection that lies between the words of a rich white man in power and the actions of those who hear these words repeated and reinforced by such a man almost daily. Trump’s words matter and are indicative of sexism and a willingness to condone violence and assault. It is time to start recognizing the consequences of these words.

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