# MIDDLE CLASS ALTERITY:
# A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF
# NATIONAL ECONOMIC IDENTITY

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## ABSTRACT

Lacking concreteness and context, the use of the middle class in Canadian political discourse of recent years is simultaneously ambiguous and ubiquitous. What is meant by the middle class? Who is a member of this meta-material social stratification? Why is it so prominent in political rhetoric? And, what are the consequences of using the middle class as the primary identity guiding federal fiscal policy? With these questions in mind, this thesis will explore the mystery of the political discourse surrounding the usages of the middle class in an attempt to improve our understanding of how identity is operationalized discursively. This study will empirically test the applicability of the methods and theories of Critical Discourse Analysis for researching the rhetorical use of identity, by exploring the language surrounding the 'middle class' in Canadian political discourse. The objectives of this investigation are two-fold: (i) it will attempt to clarify the ideological underpinnings, political purposes and possible consequences behind the seemingly benign use of the middle class by conducting a *Critical Discourse Analysis* of the object at hand. In doing so, this thesis will also (ii) survey the field of critical discourse scholarship and contribute to a theoretical and methodological discussion of how work in this field attempts to research the discourse surrounding various identities. Grounded in the theoretical work of Antonio Gramsci (1971), it will be argued that discursively constructed identities, operationalized hegemonically through othering rhetoric, are used in politics to garner mass consent, frame individual and collective identity, and maintain structures of domination and oppression.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## LANGUAGE AND POLITICS, AND POWER

Class as an analytical subject grounded in political economic theory, has been a contested site of debate within the context of capitalism for nearly two centuries. From the labour movements of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, to the neoliberal turn and its intensification in recent decades, class in Canada has long been relevant the discipline of political science. While critical scholarship on class in Canada has become seemingly irrelevant to political science research in recent years (Pilon, 2018), the reintroduction of class in the political discourse accompanying Justin Trudeau's campaign and tenure as Prime Minister exemplifies an interesting shift in the role of class in Canadian politics. Through the utilization of the 'middle class' as a discursive construct, the fiscal policies released under Trudeau's leadership could be said to have been framed around a class-based identity. As a result of the primacy placed on the middle class as the national economic identity in contemporary Canadian political discourse, a revitalized discussion of the role of class in Canada seems to have shifted from traditional explorations of the materiality of class. Opposed to the orthodox discussion of the relations of production, encompassing the petty bourgeoisie, the managerial and the precariat, the 'class' being referred to through the middle class is much more difficult to place on the material spectrum. Lacking concreteness and context, the use of the middle class in the political discourse of recent years is simultaneously ambiguous and ubiquitous. What is meant by the middle class? Who is a member of this meta-material social stratification? Why is it so prominent in political rhetoric? And, what are the consequences of using the middle class as the primary identity guiding federal fiscal policy?

With these questions in mind, I will explore the discursive production and consumption of economic identity. Specifically, this thesis will explore the mystery of the political discourse surrounding the usages of the middle class in an attempt to improve our understanding of how identity is operationalized discursively. The objectives of this investigation are two-fold: (i) it will attempt to clarify the ideological underpinnings, political purposes and possible consequences behind the seemingly benign use of the middle class by conducting a *Critical Discourse Analysis* of the object at hand. In doing so, this thesis will also (ii) survey the field of critical discourse scholarship and contribute to a theoretical and methodological discussion of how work in this field attempts to research the discourse surrounding various identities. In other words, the objective of this study will be to empirically test the applicability of the methods and theories of critical discourse analysis for researching the rhetorical use of identity, by exploring the language surrounding the 'middle class' in Canadian political discourse. To realize these objectives, I have adopted the three-dimensional framework for analyzing discourse developed by Norman Fairclough in his seminal work *Language and Power*, first published in 1989. This framework will be explained and further developed by exploring how the works of various scholars in the field of Critical Discourse Studies have attempted to substantiate this theoretical and methodological model. In particular, the approaches developed by Paul Baker (2004), T.A. van Dijk (2008), and Ruth Wodak (2001) will offer such substantiation, leading to an enhanced examination of how the middle class has been used discursively. I will demonstrate how an ambiguous definition was attached to the middle class by the Canadian government's use of the identity in their fiscal policies and illustrate the implications the rhetoric surrounding this identity has had on working class politics, the direction of fiscal policy in Canada and the socio-economic circumstances of millions of Canadians. Grounded in the theoretical work of Antonio Gramsci (1971), I will argue that

discursively constructed identities, operationalized hegemonically through othering rhetoric, are used in politics to garner mass consent, frame individual and collective identity, and maintain structures of domination and oppression.

## The Pertinence of the Middle Class

The significance of the middle class in Canadian discourse in particular rests on its pertinence to Justin Trudeau's campaign in 2015 and the consequent direction of fiscal policy under his and Federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau's command. For instance, the middle class has been the most prominent identity present (besides the 'Canadian' identity) in the past four federal budgets, which all include 'the middle class' in their titles: *Growing the Middle Class* (2016); *Building a Strong Middle Class* (2017); *Equality and Growth: A Strong Middle Class* (2018); and, *Investing in the Middle Class* (2019). Not only does the presence of the middle class in the titles of federal fiscal policy exemplify its symbolic import, but both the 'middle' and 'class' rank among the top ten lexical terms used in the news releases and speeches published by the government, which introduce and justify these budgets (**figure 1**).

**Figure 1.** *Lexical frequencies: top 10 lexical terms from Federal Budget Speeches and News Releases (2016-2019)*

| Rank | Word | Count |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Canada | 188 |
| 2 | Canadians | 162 |
| 3 | Help | 116 |
| 4 | Government | 97 |
| 5 | Budget | 97 |
| 6 | Middle | 93 |
| 7 | People | 92 |
| 8 | Class | 89 |
| 9 | Mr. Speaker | 89 |
| 10 | Economy | 87 |

Taken at face value, most of these terms are typical of political discourse (i.e. the place, the people, the economy, and so on). While already appealing as an elusive and significant subject of analysis, what stands out a first glance is the prevalence of the middle class in these documents as a whole. Instead of the popular lexical terms used in political discourse (and the dialogue surrounding economic planning) including *jobs, immigration, investment* and *retirement*, the middle class as both an identity and primary object of discussion for justifying federal fiscal policy necessitates an understanding of who exactly the middle class encompasses. By referring to this identity so frequently, Bill Morneau's news releases and speeches act as a good starting point from which to understand what, or whom, the middle class is meant to embody. So, I ask, what is the middle class?

Based on the various iterations and characteristics that may be used to define the middle class, or whom it is meant to encapsulate, for the time being it can be best described as a discursively constructed national economic identity. That is to say, the middle class can only be defined and characterized by interpreting the language which surrounds it (whether spoken or written). According to Fairclough (1993), "discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities or relations, they constitute them." (3) and for this reason, the meaning behind the middle class becomes reliant on the discourses which surround it. In other words, a discursively created object, or *discursive construct* could be defined as something that exists and whose meaning is tied to the collective act of language. Without the language surrounding it, the middle class as an entity lacks defining criteria from which it becomes possible for an individual to associate with or from it (i.e. if it is in the context of tax policy which outlines an explicit income range, a person is then able to identify within or outside of this range). Given the ambiguous nature of the middle class and the

numerous ways of defining this social stratification, it becomes apparent that further investigation into the contexts that the middle class has been used in is needed if we are to grasp what it is. While examining all the contexts the middle class is found in would be empirically ideal, the extensive use of this identity by the Canadian government seems a practical place to begin. Evidently, such discourse is subject to relations of power, and therefore, the ways in which such power operates in society and the affect it has in the relationship between language and politics should be briefly considered.

**Discourse and Power**

In order to define what or whom the middle class has been meant to describe in the four most recent federal budgets, I will begin by arguing that power plays an intrinsic role in the relationship between language and politics. The rationale behind this argument is that if we want to know what the middle class encompasses, it is apparent that the best place to start is the discourse surrounding the middle class that has the greatest ideological authority, or 'reach' in society. This reasoning is grounded in Gramsci's conception of power's dual role in society. This dual role, or *hegemony* as it is more commonly referred, is the exertion of power through both coercion and consent; originally presenting itself as a rupture in the Marxist understanding of how power operates in a capitalist society. Developing this dual role, Gramsci (1971) begins by dividing society into two 'super-structural' levels: (i) the civil society or private realm of individuals, and (ii) the political society, also known as the state. "Those two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of 'direct domination' or command exercised through the state and 'juridical' government." (12) These two functions according to Gramsci are comprised of:

> i. The ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.
>
> ii. The apparatus of state coercive power which ‘legally’ enforces discipline on those groups who do not "consent" either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed (12)

Working from Marx’s economically deterministic view of how ideology permeates from the dominating bourgeoisie to the dominated proletariat, Gramsci’s notion of hegemony offers an epistemological distinction or separation of power from its economic base (an important distinction for those later developments in cultural, political and social theory: Althusser, 2014; Cox, 1983; Hall, 1978; and so on). By supposing that power can be exerted ideologically through consent, Gramsci was able to conceive of a system of power relations that rely on cultural output to garner consent, which in turn, maintains a ruling position of power in society. If the exertion of power has a dual role, what does the dual role tell us about the relationship between language and politics, and how does this take place in contemporary society? To further understand the role of power in this relationship (and ultimately, our understanding of how the middle class has been operationalized discursively), I will reference the work of Stuart Hall to interpret how cultural output is subject to a power discrepancy between various actors in society.

In *Policing the Crisis* (1978), Hall argues that certain actors in society are granted elevated positions from which to express their opinions through various media outlets, or cultural outputs. These opinions are then widely broadcasted and observed in the cultural realm where the

definitions and opinions of these powerful actors become accepted by the public more generally. As Hall states:

> The practical pressures of constantly working against the clock and the professional demands of impartiality and objectivity – combine to produce a systematically structured over-accessing to the media of those in powerful and privileged institutional positions. The media thus tend, faithfully and impartially, to reproduce symbolically the existing structure of power in society's institutional order. This is what Becker has called the 'hierarchy of credibility' – the likelihood that those in powerful or high-status positions in society who offer opinions about controversial topics will have their definitions accepted, because such spokesmen are understood to have access to more accurate or more specialized information on particular topics than the majority of the population. The result of this structured preference given in the media to the opinions of the powerful is that these 'spokes[people]' become what we call the primary definers of topics. (58)

Lacking the same ideological power, the public cannot be 'definers' in this sense but rather those who internalize the discourse presented to them; from this position, the public becomes susceptible to the dominant ideology of elites. Described as the *definers of discourse*, politicians and media outlets are assumed to possess an elevated position of moral authority and ideological power; a position from which common- or popular-sense is created. As stated by Linda Dunne (2009), "the common-sense, taken-for-granted, self-evident values, discourses, and practices become readily absorbed and remain unquestioned." (44) Take the politician for example: a politician is any 'legal' citizen who is in possession of, or candidate for, an elected position in a government's body. As an individual being, a politician is a person whose natural inclination is to gain certain means of political production, or hegemonic power. These include: government resources (juridical power); fiscal responsibility (economic power); and, an elevated position of moral influence (ideological power). While these forms of power allocated to the politician may each affect the lives of constituents in different ways, the latter is of greatest interest to this thesis. Relating back to Hall's

'definers of discourse' and Becker's 'hierarchy of credibility', the use of identity by Trudeau and Morneau in federal fiscal policy could be viewed as an exertion of ideological power in public discourse. Therefore, in this instance, these ideological actors become the definers of 'class'.

The strength of a politician's ideological power, as compared to any form of power which the voting public holds in the same domain is unequivocal. It could be argued that voting and the right to (peacefully) protest are the only comparable power citizens have. The power of an individual citizen is not only outweighed by the politician's position in the social hierarchy, but also in the ability of the average citizen to have their opinions represented and validated in the media. While digital platforms where collective issues such as the 'Me Too' movement are rallied behind by the general public exist and give the public an enhanced position from which to express their opinions, such movements quickly become absorbed, disseminated and recuperated to the public via positions of greater influence. In this way, the public, who have a platform from which to interject their opinions and ideas, do not inherit the ability to become the definers of discourse, and instead become 'commentators of discourse'. This exemplification of the duality between politician and voting public was not intended to neglect the other forms of ideological power found in society such as pop culture (TV, cinema, music, etc.) or the journalist who also uses their language to give meaning to discourse; rather, it was simply to illustrate that a duality exists between those who are ideologically powerful and those who are not. The numerous positions of increased ideological influence in comparison to the average citizen are interpreted by Baker et al. (2008) as "those groups who are in control of the most influential public discourses, that is symbolic elites such as politicians, journalists, scholars, teachers and writers, [who] play a special role in the reproduction of dominant knowledge and ideologies in society." (280) As a result of

these elevated positions of moral influence and ideological power, I will assume that an examination of these symbolic elites as 'primary definers' of discourse is crucial to any critical analysis of discourse more generally. If the middle class can be understood as a discursively constructed identity, it becomes necessary to explore methods available to us to investigate how the exertion of hegemonic and ideological power 'from above' relate to the construction of identity through language use.

**Critical Discourse Studies**

As was previously noted, it is imperative that the approach adopted for analyzing the discourse surrounding the middle class considers the role of power in the production and consumption of discourse. As a result of this requirement, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (henceforth, CDA) seems like an appropriate approach to linguistic analysis to consider. In the first chapter of *Language and Power* (2001), Norman Fairclough took the Gramscian perspective previously outlined, and developed a methodological and theoretical approach for critically observing discourse. Since for him, and many other who follow the work of Gramsci, "ideology is the prime means for manufacturing consent," (2) Fairclough attempted to create a way in which to identify how, in certain circumstances of language use, this occurs. The approach to linguistic analysis that resulted was CDA, and unlike the orthodox approaches to language at the time, it assumes that language is a form of social practice inherently tied to power.

Originally developed by Fairclough in the late 1980's, CDA was introduced not as a field of study, but rather a method for socio-linguistic inquiry into how it is that language, and subsequently discourse, relate and contribute to the (re)production of social relations of power and

domination. As a trained linguist, Fairclough sought to move away from the orthodox methods of Corpus Linguistics that inherently limited an analyst's research focus to the quantifiable data that could be extracted from 'real world' texts. Corpus Linguistics, or CL, is understood as objectively examining a text without any preconceived notions or biases towards it. The aims of CL are to find "probabilities, trends, patterns, co-occurrences of elements, features, or groupings of features" (Tuebert and Krishnamurthy; 2007: 6) in language use, in an attempt to determine general laws governing how language operates. A CL analysis often involves loading a corpus of texts into a software which identifies word counts and concordance data and sorts linguistic patterns by applying algorithms via a CPU. (Baker et al.; 2008: 274) Once completed, such analysis quantifies the frequency of keywords, illustrates concordances and highlights collocational occurrences. For this reason, CL as a method of linguistic or discursive analysis is primarily quantitative in nature, and it is this nature that limited the analyst's ability to explore the qualitative realm of power in language use. In other words, corpus linguistics offers no critical orientation, from which to subjectively interpret a text or the data extracted from it; instead the method is strictly used to gather linguistic data from a corpus, while ignoring the influence the context in which the corpus was produced and consumed in has on its interpretation by readers and listeners.

In the absence of a method for subjectively and qualitatively examining discourse in CL, CDA attempted to overcome the quantitative primacy of such orthodox methods. According to Fairclough (2001), the motivation behind establishing a form of discourse analysis beyond the quantitative CL approach was two-fold. First, the purpose for developing CDA had to do with the consciousness raising of real material relations of domination that exist in society, and how these relations are (re)produced throughout everyday language. (1) He believed if research existed which

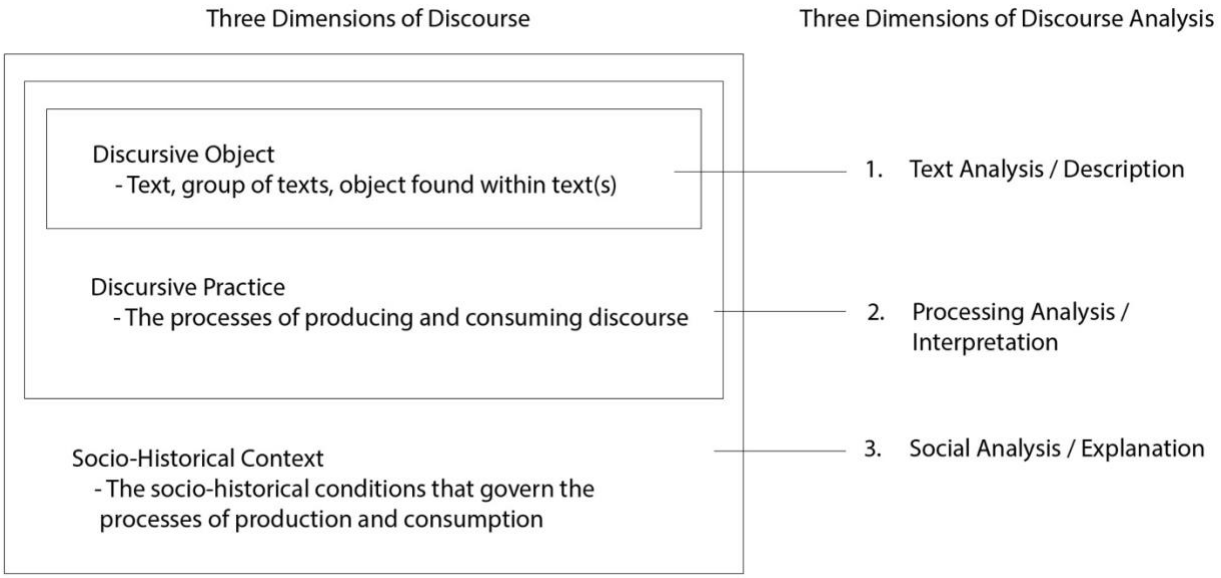
sought to illuminate both the obvious and innocuous ways language perpetuates and changes relations of domination, the public could become more aware of certain societal issues and therefore become capable of 'changing the rhetoric'. Secondly, Fairclough sought to reflect through CDA the developments made in social theory which explored the significance of language as an ideological medium for the exercise, maintenance and change of social relations of power. The most influential of these theoretical contributions according to Fairclough were: Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which pointed to the relevance of ideology as a modern mechanism of power in the social realm; the centrality Foucault placed on discourse in his theorizations of modern power; and, Habermas' theory of communicative action, which illuminated the transformative ability of communication to overcome restraints. (10) While these theories provided insight into the role of language and ideology in the (re)production of social power, they remained theoretical and had not yet been operationalized in a coherently established form of practical discourse analysis.

To better understand the exercise of ideology in language use, Fairclough developed a multi-dimensional framework for analyzing discourse, that attempts to consider the interaction of three separate dimensions of discourse, which he believes constitutes language as a social practice (represented in **figure 2**). To briefly break down the three-dimensions of discourse; (i) the discursive object is the real world use of language, (ii) discursive practice encompasses the human processes of producing and consuming discourse, and (iii) the socio-historical context is the consideration of the environment in which the discourse exists. Simply put, each of these dimensions of discourse interrelate and explain how language operates as a social practice, and therefore is susceptible to relations of power that exist in the social world. Through this depiction

of discourse as language use in society, Fairclough then outlines three-dimensions of discourse analysis that can be conducted to investigate language use in its social totality. The three-dimensional analytical framework is constituted by:

(1) *text analysis*: the description of a text, or an object found within the text
(2) *process analysis*: understanding how the text or object is constructed and interpreted
(3) *social analysis*: considering the social context in which the text or object is used

**Figure 2.** *Fairclough's three-dimension model of discourse and critical discourse analysis*




First, the *text analysis* observes the discursive object under investigation as a linguistic phenomenon and is primarily concerned with the formal properties of the text(s). Similar to a CL approach, this first dimension of analysis seeks to identify certain word choices, patterns, and occurrences to express more generally how language has been used. Secondly, the objective of the *processing analysis* of CDA is to examine both the discursive object and the interactional process between producers and consumers of discourse. Specifically, this dimension considers the human element in discourse, and how the creation of discourse relates to its interpretation more generally. Lastly, the *social analysis* is concerned with how the interaction between producers and consumers

of discourse is influenced by the broader social setting within which the discourse is found. In simpler terms, this level of analysis attempts to consider the social and historic context within which the processes of production and consumption of discourse occurs, while also highlighting the social implications of such language use. (Fairclough; 2001: 21-2) What results from this three-dimensional analytic framework of discourse analysis is not so much a strict methodological program but rather a perspective from which to explore a given discursive object; a perspective that assumes the use of language as a social practice.

It is important to reassert that CDA is not a field of discursive or linguistic analysis with specialized methods or strict theories which guide an analyst step-by-step through a research project. Instead, CDA should be understood as a way of thinking about and conducting linguistic analysis with a focus on the ideological reproduction of, or resistance to, relations of power, domination and inequality. To avoid the widespread misconception that CDA represents a strict and biased method of discourse analysis, T.A. van Dijk (2009) prefers to speak of this movement in linguistic studies as *Critical Discourse Studies*. He writes, "CDS is not a method, but rather a critical *perspective, position or attitude* within the discipline of multidisciplinary discourse studies," (62) whereby scholars share a general interest in the way "discourse (re)produces social *domination*, that is, the *power abuse* of one group over others, and how dominated groups may *resist* such abuse." (63) In other words, CDS is not a methodological program but rather a movement within discourse studies, where the choice of specific methods and theories becomes dependent on an analyst's preferences and their object of investigation. Speaking to this variability of both method and theory that research in CDS adopts, Fairclough (2012) states:

> The choice of appropriate methods (data selection, collection and analysis) depends upon the object of research … the process of

> constructing ‘objects of research’ from research topics involves selecting theoretical frameworks, perspectives and categories to bring to bear the research topic. It is only on the basis of such theorization of the research topic and delineation of ‘objects of research’ that one can settle upon appropriate methods of data selection, collection and analysis. (462)

In other words, Fairclough justifies the variability of method and theory by arguing that different objects of research require specific perspectives if they are to be understood in a critical totality.

Many scholars have called for the generalization of CDA as a discipline, echoing the concern van Dijk had for the misconception of the practice of critically analyzing discourse as a strict methodological program (Baker et al., 2008; Billig, 2003; Fairclough, 1993; Wodak and Krzyżanowski, 2008). As a field of study, work in CDS is conducted through a myriad of methodological approaches and theoretical orientations, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the field’s purpose. This means that it has become difficult to properly outline what characterizes the work CDS is meant to encompass, and as a result, the approach has been increasingly criticized for its lack of a strict and uniform research agenda. Citing the work of Fairclough and Wodak (1997), Mahrukh Baig (2013) lists the most widely cited principles of CDA. These are:

> i. Social Problems: “CDA follows a critical approach to social problems in its endeavors to make explicit power relationships which are frequently hidden.”
> ii. “Power relations are discursive”, that CDA explains how social relations of power are exercised and negotiated in and through discourse.
> iii. “Discourse constitutes society and culture.”
> iv. “Discourse causes ideological change”, that ideologies are often produced or changed through discourse.
> v. “Discourse is history”, that discourses can only be understood with reference to their historical context.
> vi. “The link between text and society is mediated.”
> vii. “CDA goes beyond textual analysis. It is not only interpretative, but also explanatory in intent.” (127)

Adopting these principles, this thesis will observe the language surrounding the middle class as a socially constitutive element in the (re)production of relations of power and domination. Again, the middle class as the object under investigation has been chosen as a result of its primacy as the guiding national economic identity for federal fiscal policy in Canada between 2016 and 2019. Due to the lack of clearly defined parameters outlining what or whom the middle class is meant to incorporate, my exploration into the use of this identity will look to observe how it has been constructed and with what ideological underpinnings. That being said, if CDA is a linguistic approach which assumes the inherent role of power in language use and seeks to answer questions regarding how discourse contributes to the production and reproduction of things like social inequality, racism, domination and so on (Fairclough, 2001), the emphasis placed on the middle class as a political, cultural and economic identity by the Canadian government's fiscal policy proves this approach appropriate.

**Overview**

The second chapter of this thesis will be a detailed critical discourse analysis of the middle class in the contemporary Canadian context. I will utilize this chapter to work through the three-dimensional framework of CDA outlined by Fairclough. Given the methodological variability of CDA, each of these dimensions will be explored and supplemented by advancements made by scholars in the field, which will then be applied to analyze the middle class in context. This exploration will begin with the first dimension of CDA, which is used to examine the use of a given object of discourse in its real-world textual setting. This text analysis or *description* will be supplemented by the incorporation of quantitative linguistic methods whose critical absence Fairclough sought to remedy. Acknowledging the more recent developments in CDA research

exhibited by Baker et al. (2008), I will argue that the incorporation of CL methods in CDA research can enhance the first dimension of Fairclough's framework. To better understand how to incorporate corpus-based methods in a CDA, I will review Paul Baker's (2006) critical examination of 'refugees' as object of discourse in Britain. Adopting the concordance-based approach outlined by Baker, this thesis will then examine the use of the middle class in Canadian discourse in an attempt to answer the primary question guiding this project: *what or whom is the middle class meant to encompass?* The data gathered will be used to supplement the arguments made when examining the middle class through the other two dimensions of CDA.

Following this textual analysis, Fairclough's second dimension of CDA will be conducted. Known as the processing analysis, this examination will observe the processes at play during the production and consumption of discourse by human subjects. To better understand the psycho-socio processes through which discourse is produced and consumed, the work of T.A. van Dijk (2008) and his development of the *Socio-Cognitive Approach to CDA* will be reviewed. This approach will be utilized to explore the role 'othering' plays in how identity is discursively produced and consumed. Understood as the phenomenon through which the self can be observed and known, the 'Other's' significance to CDS research will be surveyed. It will become apparent that critical discourse research is traditionally focused on investigating the use of *exclusionary rhetoric*, where power is used in discourse to (re)produce the domination or subordination of a given identity or 'Other' (i.e. the *Muslim-other*, or the *immigrant-other*). This focus often reflects instances in discourse where negativity is attached to and surrounds an 'Other' (i.e. 'immigrants flooding the border', where a natural disaster is used to speak metaphorically to the movement of people of a given identity). While research focused on investigating such exclusionary rhetoric

aligns well with the purposes of CDS, I argue that instances where the other is subjected to *inclusionary rhetoric* also warrant critical investigation if we are to wholeheartedly understand how the discourse surrounding identities is operationalized to maintain and change relations of power and domination. *Inclusionary rhetoric* will be defined as occurring in those instances where the language surrounding an identity attempts to coalition build with individuals who do not necessarily associate with said identity. When an identity like the middle class lacks a clear set of definitive parameters, an individual's association with it becomes subject to a hegemonic 'war of position', whereby the rhetoric which surrounds the identity becomes significant to an individual's perception of it. I will argue that the ambiguous use of the middle class exemplifies how this identity can be operationalized hegemonically as an 'Other'.

Lastly, the second chapter will observe the socio-historic context which surrounds the use of the middle class in the corpus gathered. Reflecting the final dimension of Fairclough's model, this analysis will focus on the socio-historic conditions that govern the processes of both the production and consumption of said discourse; allowing us to understand (i) the current social state in which the discourse has been presented, and (ii) the social implications of using an ambiguous national economic identity such as the middle class in this context. The work of Ruth Wodak (2001) and her development of the *Discourse-Historical Approach to CDA* will be used to grasp how to analyze the socio-historic setting of a given discourse. Specifically, the investigation of Wodak et al. (2009) into the discursive shifts in Austrian national identity from WWII to the Waldheim affair in 1986 will be surveyed in order to grasp how to (i) incorporate information on changes in the social landscape to a critical discourse analysis and (ii) observe the construction of national identity in discourse. In relation to the construction of the middle class as an ambiguous

national economic identity, understanding the socio-historical environment within which it is being produced and consumed, this third and final dimension of CDA will lead to an enhanced position from which to interpret the use of the middle class in contemporary Canadian political discourse. By observing shifts from the 2008 global financial crisis, to the recent intensification of neoliberal policies, austerity and the 'crisis of labour', this social analysis will explore how the middle class may be used hegemonically to support and garner mass consent for the continuity of the neoliberal project in Canada.

The final chapter will offer a summary of the findings of the preceding CDA, illustrate the effects the use of the middle class has on working class politics and provide a concrete example of how the used of the middle class as an 'Other' relates to income tax policy in Canada. The result of the middle class being operationalized as an ambiguous national economic identity, as a psycho-ideological method for maintaining neoliberal hegemony, will be encapsulated by what Pierre Bourdieu (1992) calls *symbolic violence*. It will ultimately be argued that discourse on identity, operationalized hegemonically through inclusive rhetoric, can be used in politics to garner mass consent and maintain structures of domination and oppression. Functioning as a discursively constructed identity and operating through symbolic violence, the middle class could be seen as a subversion of real, material identities and their struggles; an overshadowing of social issues being replaced with an ambiguous category whose hypothetical struggles dictate the necessity and direction of fiscal policy in Canada.

# CHAPTER TWO

## A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

The relationship between language and politics is inherently tied to power, ideology and domination. From elevated positions of moral influence and ideological power, certain actors in society have an enhanced propensity to become what Stuart Hall termed the definers of discourse. As a result of this structured preference, research approaches such as critical discourse analysis, have been developed to better understand how, and with what consequences, language is exercised to maintain and change social relations of power. Moving beyond the previous descriptive discussion on the ambiguity and ubiquity of the middle class, the role of power and ideology in the relationship between language and politics, and the history and reasoning behind CDS, this chapter will be oriented towards answering the questions posed at the outset of this thesis:

- What is meant by the middle class?
- Who is a member of this meta-material social stratification?
- Why is it so prominent in political rhetoric?
- What are the consequences of using the middle class as the primary identity guiding federal fiscal policy?

In order to so, this chapter will (i) explore different methodological approaches for conducting Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of discourse analysis, and (ii) analyze the use of the middle class in Canada by utilizing the methodological tools of these various approaches.

To conduct a CDA and answer these questions, a corpus of the news releases and speeches accompanying the 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 Canadian federal budgets, along with newspaper articles published in Canada in the same given time period were collected. Specifically, I gathered

eight documents from the government of Canada and 138 articles from seven Canadian newspapers. I included articles who had the 'middle class' in their titles and were published a month before PM Justin Trudeau's election win and four months after the third federal budget was released (October 2015 – June 2018), allowing enough time for publishers to cover the object at hand, and process these articles as online documents. The publications searched included: *The National Post, Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star, The Vancouver Sun, The Hamilton Spectator, The Calgary Herald* and *The Montreal Gazette*. These newspapers were chosen in the hopes of gathering data that represented the vast array of geographical and ideological positions in Canada; while the incorporation of newspaper articles to the corpus is intended to offer a comparative aspect to the research. In reaching these objectives, I will analyze each dimension of Fairclough's framework for CDA (text, processing and social analyses), outline developments made in the field of CDS that provide methodological perspectives and tools from which to conduct each analysis and utilize these methods to analyze the middle class.

**Text Analysis: The Corpus-Based Approach**

The primary objective of this text analysis is to determine what or whom the middle class has been meant to incorporate in the news releases and speeches of the past four Canadian federal budgets. Utilizing and adapting the methods of Paul Baker's analysis of 'refugees' as an object of discursivity in Britain (2004), this text analysis of the middle class will be informed by the *Corpus-Based Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis* (CB-CDA). According to Baker, a corpus-based critical discourse analysis is a "methodological synergy" that attempts to remedy the limitations of both corpus linguistics (CL), and critical discourse analysis (CDA). As theoretical orientations and methodological approaches to analyzing language use and discourse, CL and CDA have long

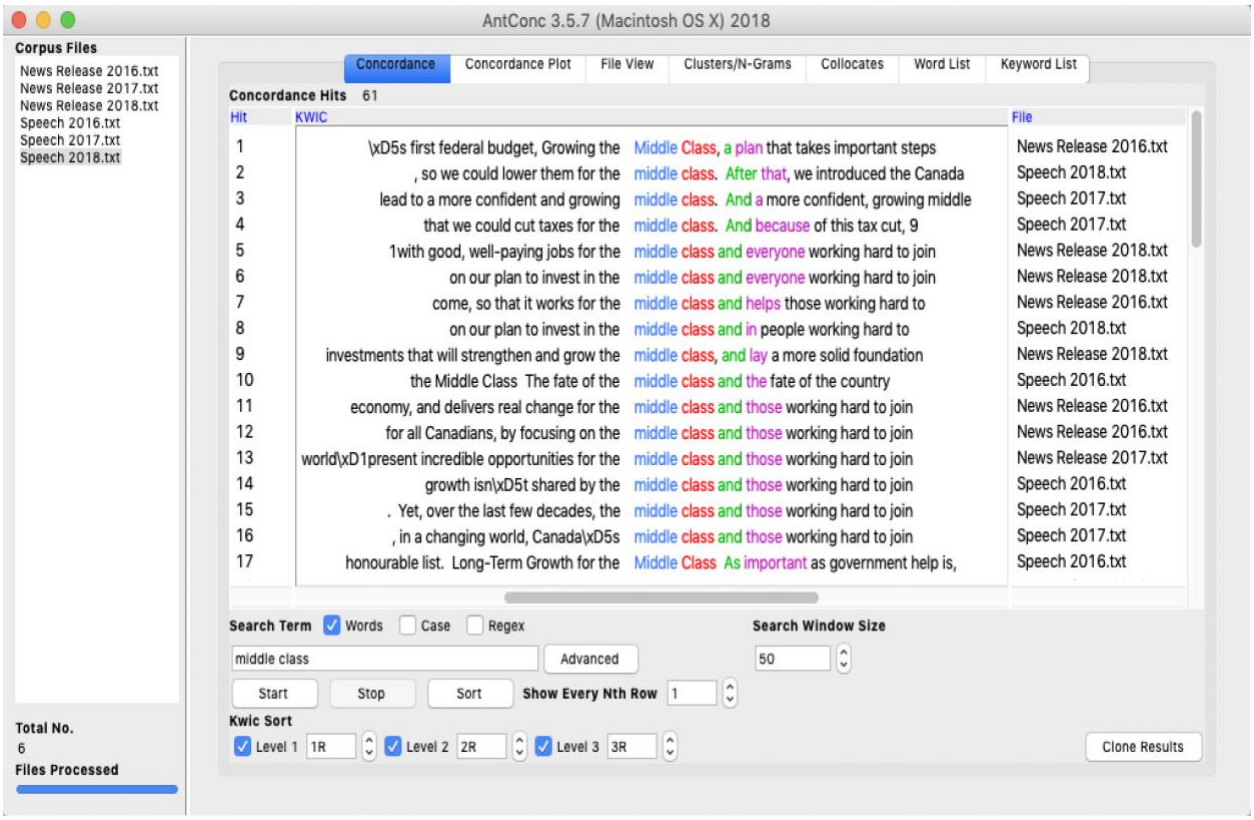
been scrutinized; the latter for its lack of a definitive and objective methodology, and the former for its lack of subjective context analysis. Since the purpose of this text analysis is to determine how the middle class has been defined in its various uses in real world texts, supplementing CDA with empirically grounded corpus-based methods seems to be appropriate. Utilizing this approach to text analysis, I will argue that the middle class as an identity has been ambiguously defined; a discursive process through which political imagination becomes operationalized at both the individual and collective levels.

i. *The Concordance-Focused Approach*

In his work, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis* (2004), Paul Baker exemplifies a critical discourse analysis whereby the CL method of concordance analysis is applied as a tool for the text analysis of a CDA. He defines concordances as "a list of all the occurrences of a particular search term in a corpus, presented within the context that they occur; usually a few words to the left and right of the search term." (71) Concordances illustrate the search term or object of discourse this way so that an analyst is able to interpret the context within which the object is found, while simultaneously collecting quantifiable data on the frequency of the object at hand and its collocates. This method is specifically useful when the object of analysis is itself a micro-object of discourse (a word or phrase within a text), instead of a macro-object (a genre, or text as a whole). Taking 'refugees' as the object of discourse under investigation, Baker intended to use concordance software and the data it collects to illustrate and conceptualize the attitudes, or semantic prosody surrounding the use of 'refugees' in a corpus of British newspapers published in 2003. Concordancing software, such as AntConc (**figure 3**), allows an analyst to search a certain keyword or phrase within a given corpus which is then retrieved and presented as a *keyword in*

*context* (KWIC). As Baker stated, the KWIC is made up of a few words to the left and right of the search term(s), illustrating the object's contextual field, allowing for a qualitative analysis based on the linguistic context. An example of the KWIC being used to gather data on the middle class is illustrated below:

**Figure 3.** *Screenshot from AntConc; search settings – concordance view*




In going about his critical analysis of the discourse in Britain surrounding 'refugees', Baker used a concordancing software similar to AntConc. Being an "interesting topic to analyze in terms of discourse because they consist of one of the most powerless groups in society," (73) determining the linguistic contexts refugees were most commonly found in was of primary interest to Baker. This concordance analysis led to multiple conclusions: it was found that they were commonly referred to as criminals/nuisances; used metaphorically to relate to natural disasters (a flood of refugees); often times tied to a negative movement across borders; and, defined as the unworthy

recipients of official aid from a government in which they did not belong. Baker was able to identify how the discourse surrounding refugees commonly referred to them, leading to a deeper understanding of the attitudes the definers of discourse had towards them. By incorporating the CL method of concordance analysis, Baker was able to go line-by-line through the corpus, examining every instance 'refugees' were mentioned, and tally the various attitudes and contexts they were being mentioned within. Retaining its critical focus on how this identity had been articulated in the corpus gathered, and how discussions surrounding the lexicon 'refugees' related to the ideological (re)production or resistance of their dominative position in a relation of power, Baker's research exemplified how traditional CL methods (concordances) could be used to provide insight and empirical evidence for CDS research. Though not entirely synonymous with the purpose of this thesis, Baker's methods highlight how to gather and analyze data, and interpret the linguistic contexts surrounding identities. For the purpose of this research on the middle class, Baker's work will be especially influential to the way in which I go about collecting and utilizing quantitative data to deduce qualitative observations on the ideological use of identity in discourse.

While the text analysis of the middle class that follows could be characterized as a concordance-focused approach to CDA, influenced and informed by Baker's work, I found it necessary to adapt this method to compensate for my object of analysis. My inquiry into the middle class necessitates an understanding of what, or whom, the middle class is meant to refer to. In other words, the middle class unlike Baker's object of analysis, is not explicitly defined, and is instead characterized and defined in a myriad of ways. From an income range to a consumption group, an occupational setting to an aspirational social standing, the middle class takes on various definitions depending on the context in which it is found. Bill Louw (1993) argues that an "area in which

corpus linguistics and CDS can be expected to have a mutual interest is that of semantic prosody," (222) and defines semantic prosody as "a consistent aura of meaning within which a form is imbued by its collocates." (157) By examining the concordances, or 'linguistic environment' the middle class exists in, the meaning behind the class and the characteristics which define it can be made apparent. For this reason, along with the ability concordances have in literally illustrating the contexts surrounding a given object, I have elected to utilize this corpus-based approach to explore what, or whom, the middle class is meant to encompass.

ii. *Text Analysis of the Middle Class*

Unlike the typical class dynamic grounded in material qualities and used to portray the relations of production in a capitalist state, the middle class represents the muddy terrain separating these definitive and antagonistic social strata. As a discursively constructed identity, the middle class exists primarily as an abstract social categorization that operates as an empty signifier unless definitive parameters outlining membership are stated. In other words, the middle class is an identity that needs specific membership criteria in order for an individual to associate with or from it. However, such criteria or parameters are often vague or absent when the middle class is used in everyday language; an assumption that everyone knows or should know what it refers to. For this reason, the objective of this text analysis is to determine how and with what parameters the middle class has been used. In order to conduct this research, I assigned variables for what I believe to be the four most commonly used specifications for characterizing the middle class: an *income group,* a *cultural consumption group,* an *occupational group* and *absent parameters*. By setting these variables, I was able to identify and quantify the various uses of the middle class. Since I cannot account for every set of criteria that could possibly be used to define the class in question, I also

considered the use of additional specification schemes during my analysis which I added to the data set as they presented themselves. For the most part, these parameters represented outliers, or rare occurrences of the middle class being used with a definition outside of the four main parameters analyzed.

To begin, it is important to express what each of the four variables have been meant to encompass. The first specification schema is the middle class as an *income group*. By income group, I am referring to those instances where the middle class was used as an economic identity in reference to an explicitly noted or assumed income range or tax bracket. As a social group characterized by individuals earning between *x* and *y* income, the middle class as income group encompasses the traditional liberal and economic understanding that class relations could be understood through set income ranges that provide requisite for membership in a given economic class. As Erik Olin Wright (1979) suggested, class is most readily defined in terms of income. Poor people constitute a lower class, middle income people a middle class, and rich people an upper class. The following is an example of this specification scheme found in the corpus:

> "Based on 2012 Statistics Canada numbers, this would make families earning between $53,775 and $107,550 part of the "middle class." In Alberta, which had the highest median after-tax income, the range would be from $69,225 to $138,450."
>
> *Middle Class, a coveted but vaguely defined category*
> **Globe and Mail**; 17 October 2015

As we can see, the middle class as income group may be the most explicit and straightforward use of this identity. When something similar to the quote above is used, listeners and readers can instantly recognize themselves as a member or non-member in relation to this identity. This way of defining classed relations can be understood as adhering to a gradational understanding of class, traditionally used to justify tax policy and gather data on the economy.

Second, the middle class as a *cultural consumption group* is meant to refer to all the uses of this identity where a certain aesthetic level of consumption and/or taste is used to categorize people within or outside this social class. Grounded in both Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of class as a socialization of preferences and Thorstein Veblen's conceptualization of conspicuous consumption, this definition of the middle class uses cultural capital to define membership. For Bourdieu (2000), class is acquired through socialization and is related to a person's tastes, and access to cultural capital:

> Tastes (i.e., manifested preferences) are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference … Aversion to different lifestyles is perhaps one of the strongest barriers between the classes … Objectively and subjectively aesthetic stances adopted in matters like cosmetics, clothing or home decoration are opportunities to experience or assert one's position in social space, as a rank to be upheld or a distance to be kept. (56-7)

In addition, Veblen's notion of conspicuous consumption could be made to represent a result of this process of socialization which includes those who are not brought up in a household or 'field' of elevated tastes, yet desire to consume the same goods. According to Veblen (2007), "the result is that members from each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum and bend their energies to live up to that ideal." (59) Through Veblen we begin to see how cultural goods that define the middle class are subject to an individual's perception of the group (a host of goods may qualify a consumer as middle class, however for the purpose of this thesis it suffices to remain at the understanding that the middle class as a cultural consumption group exists without digging too deeply into specific objective values of goods). An excerpt from an article published by *The Toronto Star* can help illustrate just how the cultural consumption specification is articulated discursively:

> "Cabanes had a managerial job and comfortable middle-class lifestyle in the Philippines" … "Middle class means people that can work 35 hours, just like me,

> but they get a higher salary. They can afford a house in Toronto and not an apartment. They have a car, they don't have to take the bus. They're a little bit more comfortable. They can take vacations."
>
> *Why do politicians love the middle class?*
> **The Toronto Star**; 15 October 2015

As a result of aesthetic preference being reflected in an individual's consumption of, or ability to consume, certain goods and services, the middle class could be identified and analyzed objectively through consumption habits and tastes. Similar to the middle class as an income group, the cultural consumption characterization creates an exclusive group; a group from which a person can identify with or from the middle class identity.

The third specification observed was the middle class as an *occupational group*. This scheme looked to define membership into the middle class as the results of one's employment or occupational position. According to Statistics Canada (2009: CANSIM Table 14-10-0062-01), middle class jobs include: management positions, professional occupations in health, business and finance, teachers, construction trades, public sector workers, the arts and sciences. This definition has commonly included workers whose occupations are more standardized in their ties to education, training and testing in the hiring process. Here's an example of this specification found in the corpus:

> "Moreover, resource-derived tax dollars fill up government coffers to support strong compensation in middle-class public sector jobs in nursing, education and transit."
>
> *Resource jobs are sustaining Canada's middle class. Period*
> **The Globe and Mail**; 17 April 2018

Similar to the previous two specification schemes, there is no explicit list from which everyone agrees which occupations (income ranges or consumer goods) have been explicitly stated to be

'middle class'. Nevertheless, this idea that the middle class as an economic and political identity can be characterized by occupation holds some weight in public discourse.

The middle class (un)defined by *absent parameters*, or in other words, lacking definition altogether, is the fourth and final scheme used to examine the use of the middle class in the discourse gathered. This specification scheme sought to account for those instances where the middle class was not defined by specific parameters and used regardless of the lack thereof. These include instances where the middle class was used alongside certain adjectives and descriptive nouns that do not possess quantitative characteristics, or when it was ambiguously used (lacking definition altogether). Here's an example:

> "Knowing that, we put together a plan to ensure that, in a changing world, Canada's middle class and those working hard to join it can – and will – succeed."
>
> Bill Morneau: *2017 Speech – Federal Budget*; 22 March 2017

While it seems as though in this example Morneau is referencing an explicitly stated specification of what defines the middle class, in the context of the document as a whole, there lacks a clear definition of what the middle class is, from which Morneau could refer. When used this way, identifying with or from the middle class is left up to the individual's subjective interpretation of the discourse.

These four specification schemes can be further categorized as either *hard* or *soft specifications*. The first three schemes outlined should be understood as *hard specifications*; those schemes that explicitly characterize membership in the middle class with parameters that are measurable, objective and therefore, observable. The middle class as an income group for example is obvious since it involves the outlining of precise income ranges from which association with or

from this group is made possible. What makes hard specifications 'hard', is not only this ability to outline strict defining parameters, but also their incompatibility with one another in their absolute forms. Take for example both the middle class as income group and cultural consumption group: while we could say that all persons who make between *x and y income* annually are considered middle class, this does not mean that these same people will all spend their income uniformly on the cultural goods deemed appropriate for the middle class as a consumer. Vice versa, not all middle class consumption is made by people who make between *x and y income* annually, since credit and debt may be utilized to consume the goods appropriate for the middle class consumer. The same is the case if we pose the middle class as a cultural group against the middle class as an occupational group. If we suppose that the middle class individual consumes a certain level (or aesthetic quality) of cultural goods, then we must imply that all teachers, or doctors, or whatever occupations are used in a given context to characterize the middle class, consume the same 'level' of products.

The fourth scheme outlined could be best described as a *soft specification*, representative of instances where the middle class was used ambiguously as an identity. Examples of such absent parameters evident include the middle class as a group of hard-working people, as victims in society and as an aspirational group. While it is improbable that all hard-working people, or those who feel as if they are societal victims are part of the middle class, the most interesting soft specification used in the corpus gathered was the middle class as an ambiguous social stratification. When the middle class was used ambiguously it lack any substantive parameters, and instead was used as an empty signifier. Assuming that the individual shares the same definition of the middle

class as the producer of discourse, the use of soft specifications seems rather opaque and represents a leap of recognition by the producers of discourse.

**Figure 4.** *Specifications of the middle Class Used in both Canadian Newspapers and Federal Budget Speeches and News Releases*

| Rank | Specification | Federal Doc Count | Newsprint Count | Total Count | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ambiguous Group | 77 | 461 | 538 | 50% |
| 2 | Income Group | 7 | 196 | 203 | 19% |
| 3 | Victim | 5 | 161 | 166 | 15% |
| 4 | Cultural Consumer | 0 | 55 | 55 | 5% |
| 5 | Hard Working | 9 | 33 | 42 | 4% |
| 6 | Political Actor | 0 | 39 | 39 | 3% |
| 7 | Aspirational group | 1 | 30 | 31 | 3% |
| 8 | Occupational group | 1 | 9 | 10 | 1% |

Considering the difference between hard and soft specifications, the data collected and presented in **figure 4** begins to paint a picture of how the middle class was used in the discourse produced by the Canadian government and the newspaper articles gathered. As a whole, the presence of the hard specifications defining the middle class represented nearly 25% of the total uses of this identity in the corpus. In contrast, the middle class was ambiguously used or lacked defining parameters three quarters of the time, placing the onus of associating with or from this identity on the consumer of discourse and their own subjective understanding of the middle class as an economic, cultural or political identity. When looking specifically at the documents released by the Canadian government, this trend is reaffirmed. The use of absent parameters defining the middle class represented 77% of the total uses of this identity; while absent parameters defined only 47% of the middle class hits in the newsprint sources. It could be argued that in comparison to the 'privately published' discourse, the use of the middle class by the government seems to rely on the consumer's understanding of the middle class more frequently than journalists, and mass media generally speaking.

When it comes to the middle class as a social stratum, there are either parameters or there are not. Without parameters to specifically guide and ground a person's ability to identify inside or outside of this group, it is up to the individual to make of it what they will and determine whether they identify with it or not. Such a decision is contingent on the individual's subjective interpretation and their choice of the defining characteristics of the class, as well as the attitudes that are portrayed toward the middle class in popular discourse by various 'definers of discourse'. In other words, the ambiguous nature of the middle class as a political identity presented itself as an 'Other' lacking any definitive parameters from which to judge association with or from it, allowing it to be interpreted in a myriad of ways. The consequence of this ambiguity rests on the fact that membership to this social class is dependent on the information available which defines it, and the infinite experiences one may have that influences their perception of it. An individual's subjectivity is therefore inherently determinant of their ability to attach with or from an identity. This process of associating with or from the middle class, and the implications the ambiguous use of the middle class has on this process will be the subject of the following section, the *processing analysis* or *interpretation* of the object's use in a given corpus.

**Processing Analysis: The Socio-Cognitive Approach**

Up and until this point, this thesis has exemplified through a text analysis, that the middle class has primarily been used ambiguously; that is, without clearly defined characteristics that outline its membership criteria. As a result, an individual's ability to associate with or from the primary identity guiding federal fiscal policy becomes subject to their own perception of what or whom this identity is meant to incorporate. While the ambiguity evident does tell us how the middle class has been defined, it is still unclear how both producers and consumers of discourse

interact with this identity. In an attempt to understand how the ambiguous middle class has been constructed and received, the second portion of this CDA will observe the linguistic contexts constructed around the ambiguous middle class and how these contexts influence the audience's interpretation. In order to do so, it is important to recall the second dimension of Fairclough's framework; the *processing analysis* or *interpretation*. Speaking to both the production and consumption of discourse, this dimension of analysis calls for the consideration of the human element in the social practice of language. The objective of this second analysis is, as Fairclough puts it (2001), to consider "what is in a text and what is 'in' the interpreter" (188), or in simpler terms, how discourse is produced and consumed by human subjects. In particular, with the focus on the ideological reproduction of power evident in CDS, this second dimension of CDA looks to illustrate the influence producers of discourse have on the interpretation of discourse by their consumers. While Hall's depiction of the 'definers of discourse' can be used to understand what this processing analysis seeks to explore, how such an analysis is conducted is still rather unclear.

In search of a methodological approach to examine the human element in the production and consumption of discourse, T.A. van Dijk (2008) developed the *socio-cognitive approach to CDA*. The socio-cognitive approach or 'SCA' is, "the study of the systematic abuse of discursive power by hiding the role of elite actors and the consequences of such discourse properties on the mental models of the recipients." (821) Reiterating Fairclough's second dimension of analysis, the SCA places greater investigatory significance on the psychological factors and processes at play during both the production and consumption of discourse. As van Dijk (2017) argues:

> [The Socio-Cognitive Approach] includes a cognitive interface between discourse and society. It claims that there is no direct link between such different structures as those of discourse and society,

> and that social or political structures can only affect text and talk through the minds of language users. (3)

In other words, this relationship between discourse and those who discourse engages with is subject to a *socio-cognitive interface,* understood as a hypothetical line which separates discourse from society, and vice-versa. Van Dijk's approach assumes the active role language users have in the production and consumption of discourse; a function not granted to them in more orthodox corpus linguistic methods. In the hopes of substantiating the qualitative claims possible through a CDA, this approach incorporates an examination of one or more cognitive processes, mental models, context models, memory, and so on, to represent how the relationship between discourse and society is mediated by human subjects. Echoing this claim that the audiences and producers of discourse are not passive actors in this relationship and therefore need to be considered in any analysis of discourse, McIlvenny (1996) states that meaning is created from the interaction between a discourse and its consumers. While the common meaning or definition of the middle class was determined in the previous section, the greater discursive meaning McIlvenny is speaking of goes beyond mere definition and requires an examination of the attitudes and topics that surround the use of the middle class in discourse.

To examine both the process of production and consumption of discourse or a discursive object like the middle class, Fairclough argues that it is imperative to consider how the object has been framed, along with the possible attitudes and greater meaning attached to it. To examine the attitudes and greater meaning imbued on the middle class, this processing analysis will focus on how this identity has been framed as an 'Other' by observing the contexts within which it has been used. Specifically, the notions of the 'Other' and of 'othering' will be used to provide a perspective from which to perceive the framing of the middle class in the corpus gathered. That being said,

this section will focus on the construction of the middle class as an 'Other' in federal fiscal policy documents, and how the rhetoric surrounding this Other relates to, and influences, the way in which the audience interprets it. As Jean-Paul Sartre (1965) explains, "the other [is] the indispensable mediator between myself and me … I need the other in order to realize fully all the structures of my being." (189-90) In other words, not only is the self a construct of the other, but it is only through the acknowledgment of the other that the self's identity can be realized. This idea of the self being realized through the other has been used to understand how identity is used in discourse, and how different contextual variables influence an individual's association with or from an identity, as well as their knowledge of, and attitude towards it more generally. Surveying the work in the field of CDS on the use of various identities in discourse, it will become apparent that the contexts that an 'Other' is found in tells us a lot about how it is being intended to be received by the audience. In particular, CDA scholarship typically ties the use of exclusionary rhetoric surrounding an 'Other' as an attempt to frame the identity as an external other, or an identity that is mildly or radically different from oneself. As opposed to this traditional focus in CDS to investigate exclusionary rhetoric, I will utilize the research conducted on the middle class to support the argument that the operationalization of identity in discourse should be understood as a process whereby exclusive and inclusive rhetoric can both be used to (re)produce relations of power and domination.

i. *The Socio-Cognitive Interface and the 'Other'*

By acknowledging the separation of discourse from society through a socio-cognitive interface, van Dijk's work has been reflected by the various perspectives practitioners within CDS have used when framing their research objectives. Most notable is the milieu of critical discourse

research utilizing this interface to explore how identities are portrayed as others in discourse and are attached to certain assumptions and biases the producers of discourse hold. For the purpose of this thesis, the notion of *othering* will be understood as a process inherent to the development of identity, or what has been termed 'imaginary identification'. Referencing work in the field of psychoanalysis, Lorenzo Chiesa (2007) writes:

> According to Lacan, imaginary identification occurs in the subject through the unconscious assumption of an external image in which he recognizes himself. Therefore, identification does not imply the mere influencing of the subject by an external image … on the contrary, the ego can first be created because the image irremediably traps the subject. (15)

It is important to understand that identity association occurs through this process of imaginary identification or *othering*, whereby an individual observes the other being framed and either associates with or from the defining characteristics of the given identity. Simply put, as individuals we observe the other and define ourselves through it or differentiate ourselves from it depending on what we believe to be our relation to it. Relating this notion to the realm of discourse and the use of identity in discourse, othering as defined by Fred Dervin (2016), is an interdisciplinary concept that refers to:

> Differentiating discourses that lead to moral and political judgment of superiority and inferiority between 'us' and 'them'. In this understanding of othering, power is always employed in representing other and self. The other is also often described through a deficit framework, a view that she is not as good or capable as 'we' are, that leads to stereotypes and other forms of representation. (46)

In other words, the notion of othering could also be assumed as the discursive process of creating differences and similarities; a process whose intended and unintended consequences critical discourse analysts seek to explore. As it has been described, the other can be defined as the process of identifying those thought to be different from the self, or as the process through which the self

is realized as a result of being defined as or from an external image of an identity. While exploring the theoretical plethora of discussions on this relationship between the other and the self, one important point must be made; the other, or the process of othering more specifically, is a dialectical process of exclusion and inclusion of an identity by the self. In realizing itself, the self undergoes a process of identification whereby exclusion and inclusion to certain group identities, or others, must be made to maintain the overarching self. In the way in which the self includes itself with one identity it necessary excludes itself from another other. When an identity is found in discourse however, this relationship between exclusion and inclusion becomes subject to relations of power that may influence how the self perceives the other, based on the way the definers of discourse frame said other.

In, *The Rhetoric of Othering* (1997), Stephen H. Riggins introduces a collection of research projects in the field of critical discourse studies which observe the use of others, or identities, in discourse. Tracing its roots to Plato's distinction of the observer and the observed, through to the post-modern turn and the other's sociological and psychological use in relation to the self (Lacan, 1977; Levinas, 1979; Sartre, 1965), Riggins develops a working definition for the other as it is found in discourse. For Riggins, othering should be considered as a range of subjective positions within a system of domination. (4) Like Dervin, Riggins deconstructs the other into two parts, the *external other* and the *internal other*; the former representative of the people who the self perceives as mildly or radically different, and the latter representing the role the other plays on subconscious desires and the construction of the self. Taking this notion of othering and putting it into the context of critical discourse scholarship, Riggins then offers a compilation of research projects that have utilized the socio-cognitive interface to explore how our perception and use the other in discourse

relates to the (re)production of relations of power and domination. Such research collected has been focused on *external others* in discourse, and how the language surrounding these external others contributes to the (re)production of their position in a relation of domination. In other words, the focus in his book is on how external others have been subjected to negative attitudes in discourse, or what I call *exclusionary rhetoric*.

Exclusionary rhetoric encompasses those instances in discourse where the language surrounding an identity (re)produces said identity's position in a relationship of power, or its marginalization, through the use of negative attitudes. To give an example, in his contribution to Riggins' collection titled *The Historical Resilience of Primary Stereotypes,* Karim H. Karim (1997) exemplifies how negative attitudes attached to the use of the Muslim identity in discourse have historically reproduced this identity's marginalization in the Western world. In this chapter, Karim attempts to trace the Eurocentric creation of the Muslim-other, arguing that the development of this external other is based on a specific set of topoi. These topoi, or primary stereotypes continuously constructed throughout the history of Europe, are argued to have been more recently used ideologically through political discourse to justify militant colonial expansion into Muslim societies. "Through the continual reinforcement of the notion that the Muslim-other was essentially a savage in need of civilization, it was possible to justify the control of his land or person." (154) Tracing the history of Europe's 'other *par excellence',* Karim works through discursive and symbolic examples of this (re)production of the Muslim-other, how its negative topoi have been adapted and enhanced through the cold war, and how the discursive use of the Muslim-other was attached to negative assumptions and biases, allowing it to take over the communist as the chief enemy of the west, through the historical ties of this other to terrorism and Jihadist groups.

While Karim's work on the Muslim-other offers a historical and qualitative example of how the other is used as a framework in discourse analysis, this investigatory focus on the construction of the external other through exclusionary rhetoric is typical of quantitative approaches in CDS research as well. As Koller and Mautner (2004) point out, "work in what could be called 'corpus-based critical discourse analysis' has [also] tended to focus on minority and/or marginalized discourses." (220) Such research tends to examine the discourse surrounding dominated groups in society, following the aims of CDS research attempting to explore how language is used in the (re)production of relations of power. Reiterating this claim and extending it to encompass the totality of CDS, Unvar and Rahimi (2012) state:

> Critical Discourse Analysis mainly focuses on the way certain ideologies are used and attitudes are produced, disseminated, inculcated and naturalized through discourse. One significant way of creation and neutralization of ideologies and personal opinions is through the dichotomous categorization of positive self-representation and negative other-representation. (12)

This 'negative other-representation' described above is reaffirmed by Baker's choice of research illustrated in the previous textual analysis. Baker (2006) writes, "in the media, refugees are rarely able to construct their own identities and discourse surrounding themselves, but instead have such identities and discourses constructed for them, by more powerful spokespeople." (73-4) Like the Muslim-other, the refugee-other examined by Baker was found to be constructed as an external other through the use of exclusionary rhetoric by powerful spokespeople (recall the use of natural disaster as a metaphor for refugees). As Unvar and Rahimi argued, this investigatory focus Koller and Mautner found in CB-CDA, also reflects CDS as a field more generally. Specifically, research focused on ethnic, racial and religious minorities (Krzyżanowski and Wodak, 2017; Wodak, 1997), as well as gendered and sexualized identities (Kahu and Morgan, 2007; Lazar, 2005) have all utilized the external other framework to explore the discursive reproduction of relations of power.

Implying a correlation between CDS and the focus on marginalized identities found in this research program, this review of how processing analyses have been framed in critical discourse scholarship has revealed the dominance of the other being prescribed in its 'external form', surrounded by exclusionary rhetoric. It seems as though the works reflecting this correlation have exhibited an unintended bias to investigate exclusionary rhetoric exclusively, ignoring the dominative and oppressive potential inclusionary rhetoric has; a potential that this thesis argues should be more readily examined in the plethora of critical discourse research. That is to say, there is a limited discussion on the use and role of the other discursively as an inclusive or positive process in the maintenance and change of social relations of power. Given the investigatory focus on the exclusionary rhetoric, my object of analysis does not at first glance seem to fit this mold of CDS research. While I hypothesize that the middle class has been used to (re)produce relationships of power and domination, I do not think that this is achieved through the use of exclusionary rhetoric around the middle class. That being said, I believe that the operationalization of identity in discourse should be understood as a process whereby exclusive and inclusive rhetoric could both be attached to an identity in discourse in the hopes of (re)producing relations of power and domination. The following processing analysis will exemplify this claim.

ii. *Processing Analysis of the Middle Class*

In an attempt to explore the production and consumption of the discourse surrounding the middle class, this processing analysis will assume that the middle class has been operationalized as an identity. As the previous section demonstrated, utilizing othering as the socio-cognitive process from which to examine a given identity in discourse provides an analyst with a framework from which to explore the attitudes the producers of discourse have towards an identity, and how

these attitudes may influence the consumption of discourse by its audience. As the works of both Baker and Karim have exemplified, the examination of the linguistic contexts or rhetoric surrounding a given identity illuminates the attitudes the producers have towards it. In Baker's case, the use of natural disaster metaphors surrounding 'refugees' exemplifies the negative attitudes producers of discourse had towards refugees, and how these attitudes could be naturalized by the audience. Karim's example on the other hand, shows how historical topoi are reinstated in contemporary discourse; a negative attitude towards the Muslim-other is then utilized by producers of discourse to help justify imperialist expansion and hatred towards Muslim states and people. While these research projects exemplify a focus on the creation of external others in discourse, the analysis that follows will not assume that the middle class is used as either an external or internal other. Instead, this processing analysis will assume that the middle class as a discursively constructed identity is neutral to the self by nature, and that it is only through the language which surrounds this identity that this neutrality is altered. In the hopes of determining whether exclusionary or inclusionary rhetoric has been paired with this identity, I will explore the linguistic contexts the middle class has been found in and observe the attitudes and topics that are evidently tied to these settings. By paying specific attention to the way in which this identity was framed, it will become easier to understand how it was produced as an 'Other', and how the exclusionary or inclusionary rhetoric surrounding it relates to its consumption, or how an audience interprets it.

As an identity, the middle class is grounded in an economic understanding of an individual's position in society. That being said, the middle class could be understood as an 'Other' that influences the construction of the 'economic self'; or in other words, an identity from which the self perceives its economic identity. The problem with the middle class operating as an 'Other'

however, is that it has been ambiguously defined, and used without explicitly stated parameters defining its membership. As a result, I have decided to explore the contextual settings it has been used in to better understand how the producers of the discourse have intended it to be interpreted by consumers. Contextual settings are important to a processing analysis because they allow the analyst to further understand what the attitudes towards the object under investigation are. Having such information helps the analyst identify the greater discursive themes, which is especially important when the object at hand is ambiguous and lacking definitive meaning. Observing these contextual settings will involve analyzing the same concordances as the previous text analysis, however this time with a focus on how the middle class was framed as an 'Other'. In particular, the focus will be on whether a positive or negative attitude was attached to this identity, and whether this was expressed through exclusionary or inclusionary rhetoric.

To determine whether a positive or negative attitude was attached to the middle class, and if either form of rhetoric was used in relation to the middle class, I observed each of the concordances in the corpus where the middle class was used. While doing so, I qualitatively discerned whether a positive, neutral, or negative attitude was placed on the identity. I also collected data on the contexts the middle class was found in and listed these contexts in order of their frequency in both federal fiscal policy documents and newspaper articles. **Figure 5** depicts the quantified data on the linguistic contexts the middle class was found in in the entire corpus, while **Figure 6** illustrates the five most common contexts surrounding the middle class when used ambiguously in both the newspaper articles and government documents collected. The purpose of splitting the contexts in the entire corpus from the contexts found when the middle class was used

ambiguously, was to determine whether ambiguity had any correlation to the attitudes evident; briefly put, it did not.

**Figure 5.** *Contextual settings the Middle-Class was most commonly found in, in both Canadian Newspaper Sources and Federal Budget Speeches and News Releases (2016-2018)*

Newspaper Article Data

| Rank | Contextual Setting | Count | Freq. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Political Tactics | 184 | 18% |
| 2 | Taxes | 161 | 16% |
| 3 | Contributing to *MC* | 148 | 15% |
| 4 | Economy | 98 | 10% |
| 5 | Canada | 75 | 7% |
| 6 | Income Inequality | 54 | 7% |
| 7 | Elections | 53 | 7% |

Federal Budget Speech & News Release Data

| Rank | Contextual Setting | Count | Freq. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Contributing to MC | 48 | 30% |
| 2 | Economy | 27 | 17% |
| 3 | Budget | 18 | 11% |
| 4 | Growing the MC | 14 | 9% |
| 5 | Canadian Family | 10 | 6% |
| 6 | Canada | 9 | 6% |
| 7 | Employment | 9 | 6% |

**Figure 6.** *The 5 most common contextual settings the Middle-Class is found in, when specified as an ambiguous group*

Newspaper Article Data

| Rank | Contextual Setting | Count | Freq. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Political Tactics | 143 | 24% |
| 2 | Contributing to *MC* | 103 | 18% |
| 3 | Taxes | 65 | 11% |
| 4 | Economy | 61 | 10% |
| 5 | Canada | 51 | 9% |

Federal Budget Speech & News Release Data

| Rank | Contextual Setting | Count | Freq. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Contributing to MC | 40 | 29% |
| 2 | Economy | 24 | 17% |
| 3 | Budget | 17 | 12% |
| 4 | Growing the MC | 14 | 10% |
| 5 | Canadian Family | 9 | 6% |

Speaking first to the government's use of the middle class, it is apparent that the contexts which surround the identity revolved around topics that attach a positive role and attitude towards this identity. In particular, we see these positive attitudes towards the middle class expressed through the continuous correlation between the identity and the well-being of Canada. These include contexts where the middle class is attached to the idea that a strong national economy relies on a strong middle class, and therefore, national fiscal policy should be interested in benefitting this social stratum. Here are a few examples from the corpus:

> "A strong economy starts with a strong middle class. That is why building an economy that works for Canadians and their families is the top priority of this government."
>
> Bill Morneau: *2016 News Release – Federal Budget*; 22 March 2016

> "Smart, ambitious investments in people, communities, and high-growth industries lead to opportunities. Opportunities lead to jobs. Jobs lead to a more confident and growing middle class. And a more confident, growing middle class is the only path to strong and sustained economic growth."
>
> Bill Morneau: *2017 Speech – Federal Budget*; 22 March 2017

> "With this budget, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing with our proven and successful plan of investing in the middle class. More than anything else, investing in the middle class means investing in people. That means taking steps to ensure that more Canadians can afford a place to live that is safe and secure a place they can be proud to call home."
>
> Bill Morneau: *2019 Speech – Federal Budget*; 19 March 2019

Each of these examples reflect at least two of the top four contexts outlined in **figures 5** and **6** respectively. In this regard, the 'middle class' can be seen as a position in society with a positive attitude attached to it by the government of Canada; this could be viewed as an ideological belief in the class, and a way in which for the producers of discourse to get people to support and identify with it regardless of the identity's defining parameters. Simply put, the official documents released by the government attach a positive attitude to the middle class while (as the previous text analysis illustrated) rarely expressing who exactly this class is meant to incorporate.

Unlike government documents, newspaper articles frequently utilized the middle class in discussions of political tactics, and tax implications. Most common was the implied opinion that Justin Trudeau had broken his promises to the middle class, and that the Government of Canada's choice to focus on the 'middle class' with their federal budgets was an error in judgement. Not only were these articles criticizing the 'undefined' use of the middle class by the government, but

also arguing that the use of the middle class was a scapegoat tactic for the government to avoid dealing with various identities in Canada.

> "When a tenured academic turned senior cabinet minister delivers a presentation on the middle class that (a) never defines the term "middle class"; (b) never depicts the effects of the government's actions to date on the plight of the middle class, however you want to define it; (c) offers no hint about future efforts to help the middle class - well, that's a fiasco."
>
> *Liberals Give Middle Class Cold Shoulder*
> **The Toronto Star**; 22 March 2017

> "The middle class is a buzzword on the campaign trail as federal leaders try to tap into fears that the 'Canadian Dream' is getting further out of reach."
>
> *How Campaigns Milk the Middle Class*
> **The Toronto Star**; 10 October 2015

Taking a skeptical, and negative attitude toward how the 'middle class' is being used by the government, the newspapers posit that the class itself is still generally not a negative stratification of society to be a part of. Compared to those that sought to criticize the government, the bulk of the remaining articles spoke of the middle class and the effects certain variables had on this social category, instead of explicitly speaking positively or negatively towards it. Here are a couple examples:

> "According to CANCEA, more than one-quarter of Ontario homeowners are facing 'significant pressure' to cover their housing costs. Combined, the numbers point to why middle-class homeowners in Toronto are feeling "squeezed" by the market."
>
> *It's crunch time for Toronto homeowners*
> **The Toronto Star**; 14 April 2016

> "The B.C. government waited too long to crack down on soaring home prices in Vancouver, and middle-class families can now no longer afford a detached house in the city, Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson says."
>
> *Government to blame for middle class being shut out of Vancouver home market*
> **The Globe and Mail**; 30 September 2016

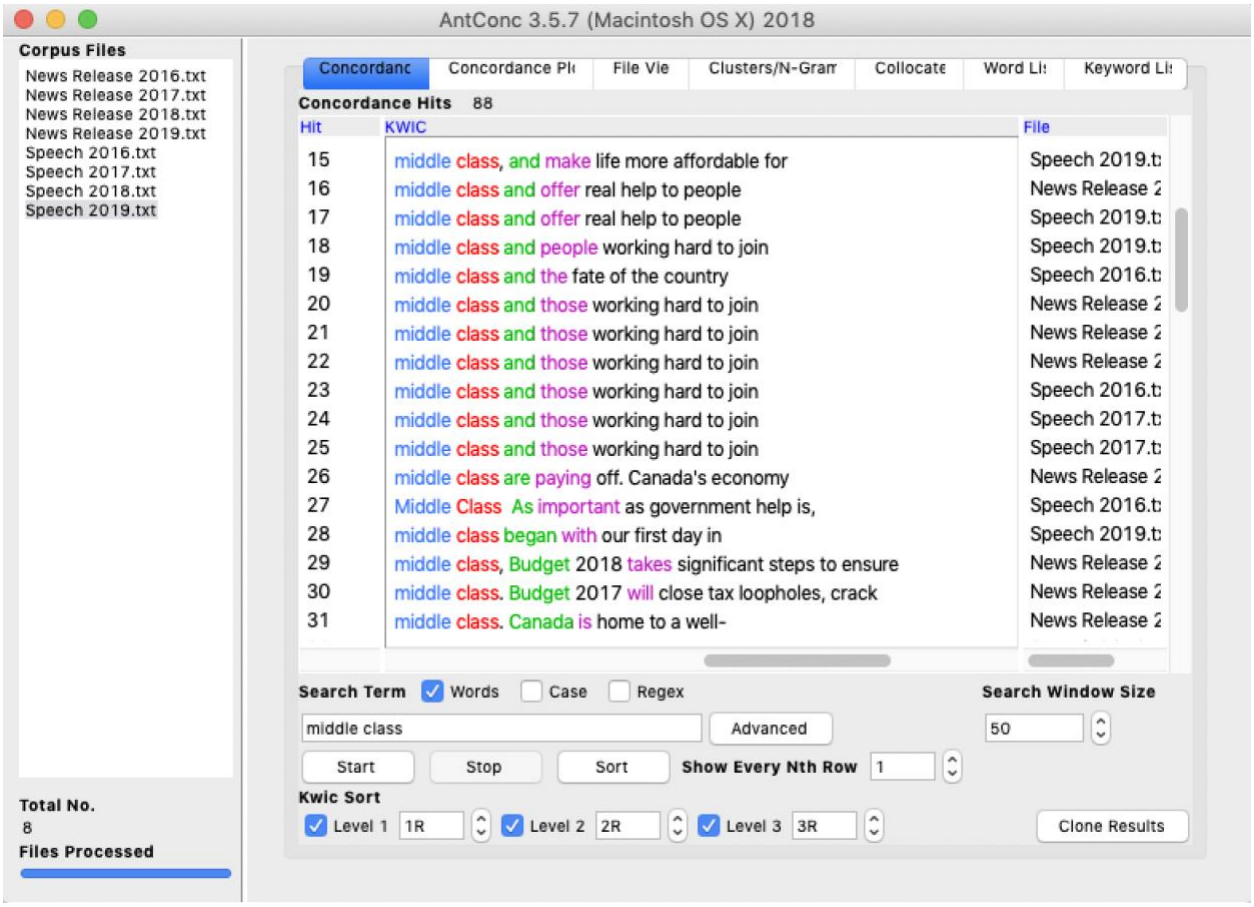
As the excerpts above point out, most articles on topics besides the political purposes behind the use of the middle class utilized the identity as a primary object of discussion in relation to the middle class' access to housing. In these instances, the middle class becomes the victim of certain economic, political and social policies. By espousing this image of the middle class as victims of society, the producers of such discourse are sympathizing with this identity in opposition to exercising a negative or even neutral attitude towards it.

In summary, this research on the contextual settings suggests that the producers of discourse consistently exercised a positive attitude when writing or speaking about the middle class. It became evident that middle class was rarely used as an *external other* in both the government and newsprint sources gathered; and, while the middle class was not generally portrayed as the external other, when it alluded to the middle class as a group which the consumer of discourse may not be part of, a positive attitude was consistently attributed to it. Unlike the discourse analyses on both refugees and the Muslim-other, both the newspaper articles and government documents rarely attempted to portray this identity as mildly or radically different than the self; even rarer was the presence of negative attitudes being constructed alongside it.

When it comes to whether the producers of discourse used inclusionary rhetoric to influence the consumer's interpretation, it's of importance to recall what makes rhetoric exclusionary or inclusionary. As it was stated in the overview portion of the introductory chapter, *inclusionary rhetoric* is defined as those instances where the language surrounding an identity attempts to coalition build with individuals who do not necessarily associate with or embody the commonly accepted characteristics of that identity. *Exclusionary rhetoric* on the other hand, is

used to describe those instances in discourse where the language surrounding an identity (re)produces said identity's position in a relation of power, or its marginalization more generally. While the lack of negative attitudes found in the corpus eliminates the potential use of exclusionary rhetoric, an interesting phrase does depict the use of inclusionary rhetoric, whereby the middle class is conceived of as possibly being different to the consumer of discourse and attached to positive attitudes in an attempt at coalition building. In **figure 7**, the most repeated phrase found in the corpus is illustrated; a phrase which was used multiple times in the various federal documents that seems to exemplify clearly the *inclusionary rhetoric*. Illustrated in lines 20-25 of **figure 7**, "the middle class and those working hard to join" is a key phrase found in documents.

**Figure 7.** *Screenshot from AntConc; News Releases and Speeches; inclusionary rhetoric*



As it suggests, this phrase intends to attribute a positive attitude towards the middle class with those who identify with it, along with those who believe their hard work will get them into this class. Speaking to the use of inclusionary rhetoric, this is a concrete example of language which attempts to coalition build with those who may not be part of the identity in question. Along with the tying of the middle class to a strong and prosperous Canada, such inclusionary rhetoric further explains how the producers of discourse view the middle class, and how the language they use around this identity can be operationalized to gather mass consent from the general public.

While this exploration into contextual settings has helped to determine the attitudes commonly held by the definers of discourse and the popular topics discussed alongside the middle class, the interpretation made by the consumers of such discourse is still subject to the individual consumer's subjective interpretation. It may not be possible to posit what exactly people believe about the middle class, whether they are a part of it, or whether they aspire to become part of it. What is possible however, is to claim that the dialogue of ambiguity that has been identified in the previous text analysis is used in conjunction with both positive and inclusionary rhetoric by the Government of Canada. Based on the ambiguous use of the middle class, and the propensity this creates for people who are not members of this social stratification to associate with it (those who fall outside of the scope of effect policies oriented towards the middle class), I argue that the middle class was attached to a positive attitude by the definers of discourse in an attempt to entice people into sympathizing and associating with this identity. In other words, this use of an ambiguous identity, coupled with inclusionary rhetoric could be viewed as hegemonic practice. By tracing the historical use and construction of national economic identity in federal fiscal policy and pairing this research with information on the social landscape in which the discourse gathered and

observed has been produced and consumed, the following social analysis will argue that the use of the middle class in these government documents is an example of hegemonic practice.

**Social Analysis: The Discourse-Historical Approach**

While the first two portions of this CDA sought to illuminate how the middle class had been used by observing the linguistic contexts this identity was found in, the final dimension of analysis, the *social analysis* or *interpretation*, will incorporate information on the social context that governed the production and consumption of said discourse. Simply put, a social analysis is the portion of a CDA that investigates the ideological utilization of discourse by integrating various levels of information on the extra-linguistic variables that influence the production and consumption of a given discourse. As it was determined in the previous sections, the middle class was produced and consumed as an 'Other', lacking definitive parameters outlining membership and surrounded linguistically by inclusionary rhetoric. As a result, the use of this identity in the federal fiscal policy documents observed could be viewed as the operationalization of an ambiguous national economic identity. Utilizing the *Discourse-Historical Approach to CDA* developed by Ruth Wodak (2001) and Reisigl and Wodak (2009), and the exploration of Thomas and Tufts (2016) into the socio-political landscape of Canada following the 2008 global financial crisis, this social analysis will attempt to demystify the hegemonic and ideological deployment of ambiguous national economic identity in federal fiscal policy.

As it was previously argued, language is necessarily a social practice, and as a social practice it becomes dependent on the social and historical landscape within which it is communicated. As Fairclough (2001) points out, the context discourse is embedded in is a

historical phenomenon, whereby previous linguistic and extra-linguistic struggles over meaning constitute the ways discourse is produced in the present. To explore the influence of such socio-historical factors, Fairclough argues that:

> The objective of the stage of explanation is to portray a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them … so explanation is a matter of seeing a discourse as part of processes of social struggle, within a matrix of relations of power. (135)

In this sense, discourse is temporal in nature, continuously defining and redefining itself and the content it encompasses. That is to say, today's discourse is inherently subject to the discourse of the past, while simultaneously contingent on current relations of power:

> On the one hand, we can see discourses as part of social struggles, and conceptualize them in terms of these broader struggles, and the effects of these struggles on structures. This puts emphasis on the social effects of discourse, on creativity, and on the future. On the other hand, we can show what power relationships determine discourses; these relationships are themselves the outcome of struggles and are established by those with power. This puts emphasis on the social determination of discourse, and on the past – on the results of past struggles. (136)

The 'social effects and determination of discourse' as Fairclough puts it, is the dialectic providing reasoning for his third dimension of analysis. In contrast to the 'micro-level' analysis of individual discourse users observed in the previous processing analysis, the social analysis is grounded in the assumption that certain 'macro-level' phenomena also influence the production and consumption of discourse, and therefore warrants critical inquiry. Examples of such phenomena include but are not limited to major historical events or policy changes that shape the societal landscape, along with previously produced discourse on a given topic or of a particular genre. By incorporating information or knowledge of these social and historical phenomena, Fairclough argues that it

becomes possible to observe how language use may (re)produce certain material consequences ideologically in society.

Similar to the previous two sections, I will look to the work of a practitioner in the field of CDS for guidance on conducting this final dimension of analysis. In particular, the significance placed by Fairclough on the consideration of socio-historic phenomena has been echoed by Ruth Wodak's development of the discourse-historical approach to CDA (henceforth, DHA). According to Wodak (2001), the DHA is committed to the purposes of CDS; adhering to the theoretical orientation of critical theory, while placing increased emphasis on the consideration of historical linguistic and social contexts surrounding a given topic:

> In investigating historical, organizational and political topics and texts, the discourse-historical approach attempts to integrate a large quantity of available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive 'events' are embedded. (65)

Not only does this approach emphasize the significance of considering the social context, it also emphasizes that the historical nature of social context that are relevant to a given object of investigation. The DHA has thus been described by Reisigl and Wodak (2009) as a context-dependent approach, based on a multi-dimensional conception of context which considers four 'levels of context':

> i. The immediate, language or text-internal co-text and co-discourse
> ii. The intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses
> iii. The extralinguistic social variables and institutional frames of a specific 'context of situation'
> iv. The broader socio-political and historical context, which discursive practices are embedded in and related to (93)

The first three of these levels of context reassert the focus of the previous two sections, providing repeated justification for both the corpus-based and socio-cognitive approaches to CDS. The final level of context, the 'broader socio-political and historical context' however, speaks directly to the social analysis conceived of by Fairclough. Of the three approaches discussed in this chapter, only the DHA explicitly prescribes vital empirical significance to the socio-historical contexts governing the production and consumption of discourse. For this reason, an example of CDA scholarship utilizing this approach will be surveyed to better understand how such information can be gathered and used to add investigatory rigor to the arguments made in this thesis. Specifically, the work of Wodak et al. (2009) will be surveyed, and their methodological tools utilized to observe the socio-historical phenomena influencing the discourse gathered, and better understand how the middle class has been constructed and operationalized as an ambiguous national identity in the corpus gathered.

i. *Exploring the Socio-Historic Context of Discourse*

Acknowledging the influential role of various social and historical occurrences and contexts governing the production and consumption of discourse, work in what has come to be known as the DHA has emphasized the empirical exploration of such variables. Serving as an example of such research, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* by Wodak et al. (2009) can be viewed as an attempt to develop various methodological tools for discourse analysts to investigate the social and historical variables shaping how identity is constructed in discourse. Simply put, their work sought to exemplify how discursive changes surrounding identity are influenced by the socio-political events that occur over time, and what implications such changes have meant for Austrian national identity in particular. By incorporating information on various

actors, institutions and examples of real world texts and speeches, their work illustrates the tools of a methodological approach whose goal it is to illuminate how language use is utilized ideologically for hegemonic aims, or the (re)production of relations of power and domination. Developing empirical tools for understanding shifts in Austrian national identity between the 'Austro-Fascist' period (1934-1938) to the Waldheim affair (1986), their research analyzed how concrete examples of historical socio-political change and discourse use attributed to the construction, maintenance and change of the Austrian national identity.

The authors state that, "it is the aim of this book to investigate the tension in Austria's attempt to both maintain and transform its national identity," and more specifically, "to conceptualize and identify [discursive] macro-strategies employed in the construction of national identity." (2-3) In doing so, the authors outlined four discursive macro-strategies that are determinant of national identity; each of which were used to observe the language and discourse surrounding the Austrian identity. These include *constructive, justificatory, transformative* and *destructive strategies*:

i. **Constructive Strategies:** attempt to construct and establish a certain national identity by promoting unification, identification and solidarity, as well as differentiation
ii. **Justificatory Strategies:** employed primarily in relation to problematic actions or events in the past which are important in the narrative creation of national history
iii. **Transformative Strategies:** aim to transform a relatively well-established national identity and its components into another identity
iv. **Destructive Strategies:** aim at dismantling or disparaging parts of an existing national identity construct, but usually cannot provide a new model to replace the old one (33)

In the context of this research, the four strategies of identity construction in discourse were used by the authors to exemplify the various manoeuvres made by government officials and media

outlets to shift and justify the changing attitude of the Austrian people and politicians, and their communal ideas of their national identity. While the specificities of the Austrian example and the history of the 'German question' have been extensively researched, making sense of the use of the various strategies can be achieved by briefly exploring two theses that generalize the more dominant shifts in Austrian national identity since WWII: (i) the *victim-thesis* and (ii) the *perpetrator-thesis.*

Termed the 'victim-thesis', Austrian identity immediately following WWII and the Nazi occupation of Austria, was based on the general sense in the country that they had been victims of the Third Reich. According to the logic of this thesis, being the first nation to be occupied by the Germans, the people of Austria had no choice but to follow the lead of their new 'masters'. Tied to questions of guilt and culpability, Wodak (1997) argues that the 'victim-thesis' grounded Austrian national identity up and until the Waldheim affair in 1986. (5) The Waldheim affair is the situation following Kurt Waldheim's campaign for Austrian presidency in 1986, when controversy arose concerning Waldheim's speeches, his past, as well as his possible affiliations with the Nazi party. Following this event, a shift from the victim-thesis to the 'perpetrator-thesis' occurred, whereby a greater deal of popular and public discourse began to question Austria's role in previous Nazi atrocities. Such discussion led to a rethinking of the role Austria as a people have in the post-WWII world. Due to these shifts in national identity, Wodak et al. outlined these four strategies of national identity use in discourse in the attempt to understand just how discourse shaped and was shaped by the socio-historical context which encompassed it.

Each of the four strategies were also tied to sub-strategies or 'micro-strategies'; representative of the discursive practices that are employed in language use to perpetuate these greater implications of the macro-strategies for identity construction, transformation and perpetuation. For example, the micro-strategies of transformative language surrounding national identity include the positive self-representation and presupposition of international difference, along with language of discontinuation or dissimilation. In the Austrian context, the former is representative of those instances where Austria is compared to other Eastern European nations and their attitudes towards a given topic or policy change, while the latter specifies a change from then to now, such as the shift from the Austrian as victim, to the Austrian as perpetrator. Given the questionable past of popular Austrian identity, and some of the shifts that have occurred in regard to it, Wodak et al. wanted to explore how identity construction, specifically Austrian national identity construction was performed by both the public, as well as those powerful actors in the country. Since the topics surrounding the two theses outlined above are extremely contested and emotionally charged, actors on both sides of the coin were consistently looking to change, develop or maintain the popular conception of the Austrian national identity they favoured. The authors argue that using one or more of these discursive macro- and micro-strategies, powerful spokespeople or the definers of discourse were able to influence national identity.

For the purpose of this thesis and the social analysis of the middle class which follows, I will briefly sketch the discursive constructive micro-strategies the authors have outlined in the hopes that such strategies could be observed and tied to the socio-historical and contemporary settings the discourse gathered was produced and consumed in. According to Wodak et al., there are seven constructive micro-strategies for identity use in discourse:

i. **Assimilation, Inclusion and Continuity:** emphasis on intra-national sameness/similarity; emphasis on positive political continuity, negation of discontinuity
ii. **Singularization:** presupposition of or emphasis on national (positive) uniqueness; reduction of supranational uniqueness to the national level
iii. **Autonomization:** presupposition of or emphasis on national autonomy and independence
iv. **Unification and Cohesivation:** emphasis on unifying common-features/shared sorrows or worries; a will to unify/cooperate/feel and show solidarity with various subnational units
v. **Dissimilation/Exclusion and Discontinuity:** emphasis on international differences; emphasis on differences between then and now
vi. **Strategy of Avoidance:** suppression of intra-national difference; ignoring extra-national heteronomy
vii. **Vitalization:** using personifications, anthropomorphisms and other metaphors to describe the identity in question (37-9)

Once outlined, these strategies (along with those micro-strategies of the other macro-strategies of justification, transformation and destruction) were used to observe the language employed by various political leaders, and broad ranging public discourses. Once a corpus of official speeches and transcripts from public focus groups had been gathered, the authors went through the texts and evaluated the use of the various strategies of discursive identity use. In each of the book's chapters, concrete examples were drawn from the corpus to illustrate how certain strategies were more common in certain contexts over others. Taking this hermeneutic abductive approach to analyzing certain speeches and focus group dialogues, this research led to multiple conclusions:

> In the linguistic identity constructs, attempts were made to create intra-national sameness and/or differences with other nations. In commemorative addresses, constructive strategies of assimilation and unification predominated, whereas in semi-public and private discourse there was also considerable emphasis on intra-national difference. In the discourses of national identity, it was not only the construction of a common past, present and future and a common territory, but also the construction of a common culture and a homo-Austriacus or a 'national character' which were perceived as essential. (188-9)

Not only were the methodological tools developed able to account for the various manoeuvres made by definers of discourse and the opinions of the general public, but they also allowed for a qualitative analysis of the social and historical circumstances that governed the construction, transformation and perpetuation of the Austrian identity. Not only were the methods developed by Wodak et al. able to consider the socio-historic variables governing the linguistic construction of Austrian national identity, they also help shed light on the fact that the linguistic constructions of national identity serve political purposes, such as inciting or justifying the spread of fascism. In this regard, it is important to note that these methods can be adapted to explore the discursive construction of the middle class and national economic more generally, as well as highlight how such construction may serve various political purposes or economic agendas.

Before I begin utilizing these constructive micro-strategies in the social analysis of the middle class, it must be stated that these strategies have been appropriated and developed for observing national identity in the Austrian context. That being said, certain focal points of these strategies seem to be based on assumptions of what the authors thought would be pertinent to the discourse surrounding Austrian identity. For example, the *strategy of avoidance* spoke almost explicitly to the external (German) force on Austrian decision making in the past. Assuming that this strategy would be a common topic in political dialogue, relating the specific effects of the force of German intervention to national identity in Austria seems like a tertiary project influencing the construction of identity long after it occurred. Also, the focus on the construction of a national identity in comparison to a 'national economic identity' (that I will attempt to observe), inherently incorporates certain supra-national and international considerations, which may seem unnecessary to my analysis. When considering the construction of a national identity, it is obvious that national

autonomy, independence and patriotism observed through the strategy of autonomization have major implications, whereas an exploration into national economic identity may not necessarily see these linguistic features as dominant traits of language use. Nevertheless, these strategies will be adopted to help determine how federal fiscal policy documents construct a national economic identity regardless of such minor specificities.

ii. *Social Analysis of the Middle Class*

In an attempt to demystify the ideological utilization of ambiguous national economic identity in federal fiscal policy, this social analysis will be conducted in two steps. In particular, I will (i) outline the socio-political landscape in Canada following the 2008 global financial crisis and (ii) compare the news releases and speeches already under investigation with their equivalent counterparts published between 2006 and 2009 by the Conservative government under PM Harper. Doing so will provide a comparative lens from which to understand how the social landscape has changed, as well as what is common or uncommon about how the current news releases and speeches utilized identity ideologically in discourse. First, I will use the work of Thomas and Tufts (2016) to portray the social-political landscape of Canada following the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC). Secondly, I will utilize the DHA methods surveyed earlier to analyze how government documents used to justify federal fiscal policy construct 'national economic identity'. Specifically, the constructive micro-strategies of unification and cohesivation, assimilation, inclusion and continuity, and the strategy of avoidance will highlight the dominant moves made in the discourse gathered to construct national economic identity. Pairing an analysis of how national economic identity is constructed in federal fiscal policy with information on the social landscape will provide this thesis with an understanding of how an ambiguous identity like the middle class may be

operationalized to garner consent for austerity and the neoliberal project. Such research will highlight how national economic identity has typically been constructed in this genre, and how such identity use can be viewed as a hegemonic operationalization of discourse. Since one of the objectives of this thesis is to explore the ideological underpinnings and possible consequences behind the seemingly benign use of the middle class, an investigation of the socio-historic variables influencing and being influenced by such discourse must be undertaken.

Resembling the way Wodak et al. framed their research, this social analysis will outline a shift in the Canadian socio-political landscape; specifically, the social landscape following the 2008 GFC. As Thomas and Tufts (2016) argue, in the aftermath of the most prominent global financial crisis since the Great Depression, neoliberal governments, including Canada's "embarked on austerity programs that include reducing public services, imposing public sector wage restraint, and reorganizing public sector working conditions and labour relations." (212) According to the authors, the seismic shifts of the socio-political landscape could be broken down into three processes: austerity, populism and the crisis of labour. Systematically examining the interplay among these processes, their research sought to illuminate the practice and politics of austerity, the role of right populist rhetoric and the implications such developments have on labour movement responses in Canada. While the interplay of austerity implementation and its justification through populist rhetoric warranted their examination, for the purpose of this thesis, their work on the crisis of labour and the concrete examples used to exemplify this crisis on the federal, provincial and municipal levels will be briefly outlined. Such information will illustrate how shifts in the social landscape have had negative implications for labour and the working class

identity more specifically, which will lend itself to a discussion of the use of the middle class as the primary nation economic identity guiding federal fiscal policy.

The *crisis of labour* is used by the authors to characterize the result of decades of labour market restructuring and the increasing reliance on both the global labour market and global supply chain dating back to the reorganization of capitalism on the global scale in the 1970's (see Gindin, 2012). According to Thomas and Tufts:

> Factors contributing to this crisis include the geographic fragmentation of production, which undercuts the power of industrial unions through deindustrialization and the relocation of manufacturing; the spread of neoliberal approaches to labour market regulation, which undermined forms of labour relations established in the post-WWII era; and the rapid growth of service economy workplaces, which create many new challenges to labour organizing and union representation. (216)

Such changes in the global supply chain have challenged the demand and form of labour in Canada's domestic market, and when paired with neoliberal market idealization, resulted in increased insecurity and precariousness for Canadian workers. Thomas and Tufts highlight three examples of austerity measures being undertaken in Canada that have led to the deepening of the crisis of labour domestically. At the federal level, between 2011 and 2012, the "government curtailed (or prevented) labour disruption and undermined the process of collective bargaining" (226) through the implementation of back-to-work legislation in both the Canada Post and Air Canada strikes. Provincially, the government of Ontario implemented a wage freeze bill for Ontario teachers in 2012, that also attempted to suspend the right of the various teachers' unions to strike for the following two years. Finally, on the Municipal level in Toronto, the late Mayor Rob Ford implemented the privatization of garbage collection, citing the previous 39-day strike of the former public service workers in 2009. In all three cases, "austerity measures were reinforced

through populist discourses that sought to scapegoat unionized workers and their unions in order to legitimate and popularize an austerity-influenced political agenda." (213) In observing these developments and the populist rhetoric which justified them, the research illuminated the austerity-populism-labour nexus and questioned the basis of support for right-populism; the ideological dimension whereby consent for such policy is said to be created and maintained.

While the ongoing project of neoliberalism and doubling down of austerity measures has been prominent over the past four decades, more contemporary observations may be drawn from the province of Ontario's most recent cuts to government expenditures. Led by Conservative leader and Premier Doug Ford, the government of Ontario slashed funding for various ministries (environment, health, education, research, social services and arts, culture and tourism). Citing popular right-populist rhetoric in justifying such cuts, the discourse of the current Ontario government reflects a larger movement occurring on the global scale. The increasing role of austerity evident since 2008 and the more recent right-wing populist insurrection of national leaders such as Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro and the like, suggest as the authors do, that justification for this project is increasingly supported and remains unchallenged:

> Unevenly constituted, the intersection of austerity and right populism continues to confront workers and unions in Canada in varied forms and at multiple scales. Reflecting the crisis of labour, resistance to these processes in the years following the financial crisis of 2008 has largely been defensive, and like austerity, populism has itself been highly uneven. Understanding the basis of support for right populism and how it may resonate through forms of popular consent is a strategic imperative. Failure to do so risks paving the way for the deepening of austerity throughout Canada's political economy, and beyond. (228)

As the authors recommend, understanding how popular consent for austerity is garnered by right-wing populism is necessary in limiting and negating the social implications such policy

manoeuvres have on the majority of working people and labour as a collective political identity. The purpose of this social analysis is therefore to determine the role national economic identity has on the perpetuation of neoliberal idealization and austerity implementation in policy change. Specifically, I will argue that the middle class could be operationalized hegemonically as the 'neoliberal other par excellence'; an identity whose ideological use negates discourse on classed politics, which may be a strong deterrent to the crisis of labour and right-wing populist discourse justifying neoliberal policy implementation more generally. To do so, I will examine the use of the micro-strategies of identity construction to explore how national economic identity has been used to garner consent in federal fiscal policy following the global financial crisis.

So, how is it that national economic identity is constructed, and what can this tell us about the role of such identities in gathering consent for policy change and implementation? In answering these questions, I have gathered the news releases and speeches from the federal budgets published a decade earlier (2006-2009). Offering a comparative lens from which to understand national economic identity construction, this analysis will observe whether certain constructive micro-strategies outlined by Wodak et al. were utilized in these documents. While the micro-strategies of national identity construction will be the methodological tools used for this analysis, I must clarify that this analysis is focused on the construction of national economic identity. As opposed to national identity, I define national economic identity as those identities that seek to create a cohesive mass encompassing a milieu of economic actors, or people in various economic positions in a given country. For this reason, I will gloss over the use of "Canadian(s)" in these documents since this identity implies a complex social, cultural and political process of construction and unification. That being said, the first objective of this inquiry into the historical and contemporary

construction of national economic identity is to determine whether certain sub-national identities were used more commonly than others in the documents released by Harper's Conservatives. Similar to the lexicon search conducted in the introduction to this thesis which provided insight into the common use of the middle class, the same search was conducted on the news releases and speeches of the federal budgets between 2006 and 2009.

**Figure 8.** *Lexical frequencies: the top 10 lexical terms from Federal Budget Speeches and News Releases (2006-2009)*

| Rank | Word | Count |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Canadian(s) | 311 |
| 2 | Canada | 262 |
| 3 | Government | 169 |
| 4 | Tax | 168 |
| 5 | Budget | 111 |
| 6 | Help | 107 |
| 7 | Mr. Speaker | 106 |
| 8 | Economic | 99 |
| 9 | Support | 87 |
| 10 | Families | 72 |

As **figure 8** suggests, the only other significant identity besides the cultural, economic, and political national identity 'Canadian(s)', is 'families'. Representative of a broad group of people, which may encompass members of various ethnic, cultural and religious groups, 'families' as an economic identity (or unit) was used rather frequently in the federal fiscal policies a decade ago. As is the case for the middle class, there are various ways of defining said groups as an economic category (are there certain characteristics that define a family; what is the typical family unit they are describing?). Unlike the middle class however, the use of the term 'families' in these documents was almost always tied to a secondary identity, or subnational identity:

> "The global recession has begun to make things difficult for many Canadian workers and their families."
>
> Jim Flaherty: *2009 Speech – Federal Budget*; 27 January 2009

> "Based on our Expert Panel's recommendations, we will invest $140 million over the next two years to establish a Registered Disability Savings Plan, similar to an RESP. Compassion and understanding for persons with disabilities, and their families."
>
> Jim Flaherty: *2007 Speech – Federal Budget*; 19 March 2007

> "Government is also delivering additional support for our brave men and women in the Canadian Forces and their families. In this budget, we are providing stable, predictable funding with annual increases in defence spending of 2 per cent starting in 2011–12."
>
> Jim Flaherty: *2008 Speech – Federal Budget*; 26 February 2008

This continuous coupling of 'families' and various sub-national identities (workers-, people with disabilities-, and, Canadian forces- and their families) provides insight to how these decade old budget documents also utilized a wide ranging identity to justify their policies. In terms of the constructive micro-strategies outlined, the process of identity association among and between various intra-national identities has been defined as the process of *unification and cohesivation*.

To recall, the strategy of unification and cohesivation represents instances in language use that promote the validity of a certain identity; usually achieved by unifying shared interests, sorrows and worries, and showing solidarity with the various identities facing such issues. When observing the official documents outlining and justifying economic policy on the national level it became apparent that language must be employed that attempts to unify the various and oppositional economic positions in the country. While the quotes from the previous era of federal fiscal policy clearly exemplify the use of the unification and cohesivation micro-strategy, the use of such strategies, and the tying of various identities to a broader ranging unifying identity like the middle class is evident in more recent budgets as well:

> "Mr. Speaker, I've shared some details about what Budget 2019 will mean for the middle class and people working hard to join it, for working Canadians, young Canadians, seniors, and Indigenous Peoples … We are investing in the middle class, and in their future. So that when young people graduate from school, they've already got the experience they need to get a good job. With student debt they can afford to pay down, and a real chance at owning their own home. So that when seniors retire, they can look forward to spending their time with family and friends, not worrying about how they'll pay their bills every month. So that every Canadian can feel good about what the future holds and be confident about their place in a changing world. And so that Canadian kids; like the ones I spent time with last week in Toronto, can grow up in a country where nothing holds them back. That's what's at stake, Mr. Speaker. And that's what we can accomplish together, when we invest in the middle class."
>
> Bill Morneau: *2019 Speech – Federal Budget*; 19 March 2019

In these excerpts from the 2019 federal budget speech, we see the justification for policy directed towards the middle class being tied to several sub-national identities. As a result, it may be argued that a successful national economic identity is one that is ambiguous and broad-ranging. Similar to a national identity, a national economic identity must then unify the distinct cultural, ethnic, gendered, religious, sexualized and economic identities found in a given country or context.

A problem arises however, when an 'economic' identity is used to encompass a mass of people with varied economic situations, mainly: which economic identity(s) will benefit from such policy, and which will be neglected? Avoiding this critique, the federal documents observed often utilize the constructive micro-strategy of *assimilation, inclusion and continuity* to answer this question. As it indicates, this discursive strategy characterizes those linguistic choices surrounding a national (economic) identity that attempt to emphasize intra-national similarity and positive political continuity. In other words, this strategy is used to tie the justification of policy that is directed towards an ambiguous identity to the wellbeing of the nation's economy, therein reflecting a benefit to all citizens. Those budgets released by Jim Flaherty help exemplify this idea:

> "This will put more money in the hands of Canadian families, to help them weather the current storm, and to help stimulate our economy."
>
> Jim Flaherty: *2009 Speech – Federal Budget*; 27 January 2009

> "Mr. Speaker, Canada is strong today, and we have a plan for an even better tomorrow! This budget is about helping families. It is also about achieving our country's full potential, and showing a modern, ambitious and energetic Canada to the world. Today, we reduce the tax burden on working families—again."
>
> Jim Flaherty: *2007 Speech – Federal Budget*; 19 March 2007

Using similar language, the budgets released by Trudeau and Morneau consistently used the strategy of assimilation, inclusion and continuity by simplifying the economically diverse population to a singular economic identity, which was then tied to continued political and economic prosperity for Canada as a whole.

> "The fate of the middle class and the fate of the country as a whole are one. Canada will not prosper if the middle class doesn't prosper."
>
> Bill Morneau: *2016 Speech – Federal Budget*; 22 March 2016

> "Opportunities lead to jobs. Jobs lead to a more confident and growing middle class. And a more confident, growing middle class is the only path to strong and sustained economic growth."
>
> Bill Morneau: *2017 Speech – Federal Budget*; 22 March 2017

Focusing on the positive and prosperous continuity of the Canadian economy, these budget documents rely heavily on the ambiguous national economic identity through which continued economic success for the entire population is theoretically guaranteed. In light of this double movement, creating an identity to amass an economic public for the public's economic sake, the real consequences of these decisions do not seem to agree with the logic of benefitting Canada for all Canadians. Still we see neoliberal policies and the use of austerity create a crisis of labour; leaders are elected on the premise of benefitting their constituents, but the results of the policies implemented have negative implications for those at the bottom of the nation's economic

hierarchy. Not only are those at the bottom of the economic sphere neglected, but the negative implications of cutting public expenditures, and increasing the nation's reliance on the global supply chain and labour market create pressures on domestic prices and employment are faced by many of those who fall under the elusive middle class economic identity. If the policies implemented and the discursive logic used to justify them is not in fact quite logical, how is it then that this occurs?

Exemplifying the strategy of avoidance outlined by Wodak et al., the use of an ambiguous national economic identity can be viewed as a reluctance to speak about specific economic identities. Regardless of whether these specific economic identities are grounded in an income-based, consumption-based, or materialist understanding of classed relations, it is evident that such distinctive language is to be avoided during the construction of such identity. By filling the discourse with 'unreliable' or ill-defined identities, real identities and the real struggles they are faced with begin to lack discursive space in political discourse. In other words, an enclosure of the discourse seems to occur whereby the economy of popular discourse renders real individual economic reality inconsequential and obsolete to modern political rhetoric. And while this reluctance to represent or speak on behalf of material economic identities is welcomed in popular culture, removing such examples of lived reality from public policy will inevitably result in negative implications that may reproduce the crisis of labour outlined earlier. Simply put, the federal fiscal policies under Harper and Trudeau both utilized an ambiguous national economic identity to unify Canadians from varied economic positions. Through their use of 'families' and the 'middle class' respectively, each government also sought to promote positive political and economic continuity in Canada. While these common traits of national economic identity are

seemingly common-sensical, in the social landscape of post-GFC Canada, the use of the middle class in recent years seems to have implications beyond mere electioneering. Referring back to the work of Thomas and Tufts, in the context of austerity, right-populism and the crisis of labour, the identities used in policy do not only entice voters, but they also serve as ideological tools for garnering consent and (re)producing the neoliberal project.

As an ambiguous national economic identity, the middle class is particularly interesting in that it expresses a class-based understanding of economic identity yet does not offer parameters or defining characteristics outlining membership to this class. As a result, the discourse is limiting in the way that it removes from discussion specific identities, in particular labour, and the working class more generally, whose neglect and deterioration have in discourse become commonplace under neoliberal regimes espoused by right-populist rhetoric. Through the utilization of the constructive micro-strategies of unification and assimilation, paired with a general avoidance to speak of labour relations and the material relations of production, the use of the middle class in recent federal fiscal policy could be viewed as an official attempt to change the common perception of class relations and economic individuality. In relation to the crisis of labour and socio-political landscape of post-GFC Canada, I argue that the use of the middle class has limiting implications on the ability of labour to effectively combat the ever increasing neoliberal project as a result; mainly, a lack of space in official, public and popular discourse from which their interests may be expressed. In short, this is the fundamental depoliticization of the working class, sought by neoliberal romanticism and achieved by the middle class identity in Canada.

# CHAPTER THREE

## THE MIDDLE CLASS AS AMBIGUOUS NATIONAL IDENTITY: CONCLUDING REMARKS

It has become apparent through the critical discourse analysis conducted that the middle class has been utilized as an ambiguous national economic identity. In addition, this identity was attached to inclusive rhetoric, in a social setting of increased economic deregulation or austerity. Based on the research conducted, one could argue that the hegemonic operationalization of an ambiguous national economic identity has various implications for Canadian society. The previous chapter concluded with the argument that such use of the middle class is a hinderance to the potential of federal fiscal policy to intervene in the economic woes faced by the majority of Canadians, which has been continuously intensified since the 2008 global financial crisis. Following the global financial crisis of 2008, governments around the world had implemented numerous policies to stimulate economic activity to avoid depression. In recent years however, cuts to public expenditures have become the status quo; governments routinely audit their operational costs and decrease funding for social programs that are vital for many people living in the West. This implementation of austerity has caused increased anxiety for many citizens living in Canada, and Ontario more recently. The latest cuts to public education, health, and environmental sectors have many people worried about their future, and that of future generations. Typically, we see such austerity measures justified by lowering costs so that debts could be paid off, or taxes could be lowered. The common token of right populist rhetoric of 'lowering taxes' is where the middle class seems to be most efficient as a political tool. Speaking to the Canadian context and tax policy in particular should help illuminate this reality. To provide a concrete

example of such structures of domination, I will briefly outline the first tax policy change made by the Trudeau government after their 2015 election win.

In an attempt to reduce the economic hardship of nine million Canadians, the Government of Canada enacted the *Middle Class Tax Cut* at the end of 2015, replacing the lost income from these taxes by increasing them on the highest earning 1% of Canadians. To be eligible for this tax cut, a citizen must be making between $45 to $90 thousand dollars annually. An apparent issue of such an approach to 'benefitting Canadians', especially those "middle class Canadians [who] have expressed concern that their hard work may not be enough to ensure success for themselves, and for their children" (Canada, 2018), is that this tax bracket does not include the majority of Canadians, nor does it consider the extra-economic social forces resulting in a person's marginalization, or position of inequity. First, when comparing the income data reported in the 2016 consensus, we find that just under 17 million Canadians (46% of the 2016 population) made $35 thousand or less, representing nearly twice the population size of the defined middle class who Prime Minister Trudeau and Finance Minister Bill Morneau sought to benefit. It should be noted that given the limited resources from Statistics Canada, I was unable to account for those Canadians who made between $35 and $45 thousand in 2016, a number that would only further support the inapplicability of the middle class and its tax cut to the majority of Canadians, especially those in the most precarious and marginalized positions. While the use of the ambiguous middle class sought to tie as many Canadians with different socio-economic circumstances to one national economic identity, the very real tax policy imposed does not seem to reflect the seemingly inclusive nature of this less than ideal social stratification.

The result of the middle class being operationalized as an 'other' discursively, as a psycho-ideological method for maintaining a neoliberal hegemony rhetorically, is encapsulated by what Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) call *symbolic violence*. According to David Schwartz (1998),

> Bourdieu understands ideology, or "symbolic violence," as the capacity to impose the means for comprehending and adapting to the social world by representing economic and political power in disguised, taken-for-granted forms … In using the term "symbolic violence" Bourdieu stresses how the dominated accept as legitimate their own condition of domination. But symbolic power is a legitimating power that elicits the consent of both the dominant and the dominated. (89)

Extending Gramsci's understanding of how consent operates hegemonically, symbolic violence for Bourdieu and Wacquant is "the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (167); in this case, the politician's or media's use of the middle class as a socio-political identity is a form of symbolic violence against the Canadian working class directly and other racialized, sexualized, or gendered identities in the periphery. Functioning as a constructed identity and operating through symbolic violence, the middle class could be seen (as it was shown in the brief analysis of tax policy above) as a subversion of real, material identities and their struggles; an overshadowing of socio-economic issues being replaced with an ambiguous category whose hypothetical struggles will dictate the necessity and direction of fiscal policy.

As a result of creating a dominant and ambiguous national economic identity discursively, the implications of the middle class as an inclusionary discursive construction involve maintaining systems of power and oppression; subverting real struggles and displacing their needs for fictitious ones. This should be viewed as a reluctance to attend to the real material struggles of those living in poverty, low income earners and marginalized groups, as well as an averseness to combat the structural phenomena that (re)produce these struggles (globalization, austerity, etc.). Instead a

trend has been made apparent where the Government of Canada proposes a national economic identity worthy of policy change in an attempt to avoid these economic struggles of what is the majority of Canadians. By deploying the middle class discursively, the Canadian government is attempting to redefine class politics, replacing the working class, and other marginalized identities with an ambiguous one who represents a minority of the population. By committing this act of symbolic violence, the hegemonic use of an ambiguous national economic identity is a hindrance to the potential of federal fiscal policy to address the economic woes faced by the majority of Canadians, which has consistently been intensified since the 2008 global financial crisis. Irrespective of intention, I believe that the devaluing of certain identities through the avoidance of using them in federal fiscal policy would have the same implications. My research hoped to invoke discussions of the use and efficiency of identity in policy, broader-ranging issues with representative democracy, and the ideological operationalization of identity in discourse; specifically, the use of inclusionary rhetoric in popular culture and populist discourse.

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