

## 4 Crybabies and Snowflakes

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When Barack Obama won the 2008 election, he attracted unprecedented venom from the American political right, not only on grounds of his political orientation and race, but also because of gender anxiety. Even in 2019, googling “Obama gay rumors” yields more than twenty-eight million hits – just one element of what Neal Gabler (2012) has identified as a persistent Republican pattern of hyper-masculine “posturing” against Democrats. The notion that Obama was “weak” and “wimpy” when it came to the military and national security was a recurrent trope. His detractors framed him as a “butt-kissing liberal” (Chapman 2018) wearing “mom jeans” (Bump 2014) – this, in spite of his dictator-toppling maneuvers, military escalations, and numerous ethically dubious drone strikes in the Middle East. Bound up with their military critiques, Republicans also saw Obama as encouraging a kind of verbal femininity by way of so-called “politically correct” (or PC) language. Over the last decade, the right has excoriated Democrats for stoking gender- and race-based grievances among “coastal elites” and on college campuses, where the so-called “speech police” enforce new norms of verbal sensitivity. These new norms see moral inferiority in what many consider ordinary designations. They also come across to their critics as problematically feminine and childishly sensitive (McQuillan 2017).

Donald Trump’s election on November 9, 2016 initiated one of the most dramatic campaigns of verbal backlash America has ever seen. While millions of Trump’s critics mobilized to march against him, conservative websites, meme creators, and public figures – Rudy Giuliani, *Fox News* host Sean Hannity, and political commentator Tomi Lahren, to name just a few – flooded the airwaves and Internet to lambast these protesters as “liberal crybabies” and “snowflakes.” Trump’s former Campaign Manager Kellyanne Conway was a particular fan of these insults. A few days after the election she appeared on Hannity’s show dismissing protesters and politicians who “whine and cry over Donald Trump’s election” (Lima 2016), and arguing that student demonstrations on university campuses were staged by “precious snowflakes” (Flood 2016). A couple of weeks later, Conway appeared on “Meet the Press” to pooh-poo the vote recounts Democrats had requested, saying Dems were

“interfering” like “a bunch of crybabies” (*NBC News* 2016). It wouldn’t be long before White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon would mock those protesting Trump’s travel ban against citizens of seven majority-Muslim countries, deeming them laughable “snowflakes” (Wolff 2018: 65).

The Google Trends website, which tracks “interest” (i.e. volume of web searches) over time, confirms that the phrases “liberal crybabies” and “liberal snowflakes” spiked sharply around the time of Trump’s election and inauguration (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Trump protesters, meanwhile, were sometimes bewildered by the mismatch between the right’s insults and their own understanding of what they were up to. Trump’s detractors shed tears, to be sure, but from law professors to workaday Americans alarmed by his bigotry, they were also mustering a wide array of stances and strategies: erudite argumentation about his politics, anger inflected by shades of wit, strategic mobilization in well-organized marches, and so forth. Why would the right converge again and again on words and phrases so implacable and so dramatically mismatched to the actions and experiences of the left? And just what were they trying to achieve with them?

The crybaby/snowflake discourse serves as a stark reminder of a linguistic-anthropological truism: people don’t just use language to communicate information about the world. In fact, sometimes language is of only incidental referential value. Language *does* things, and it can be mobilized to reshape

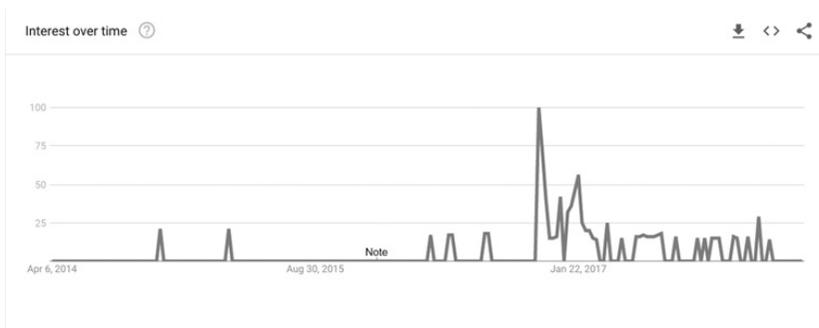


Figure 4.1 “Liberal crybabies.” Screenshot of google trends, showing “interest over time” in the phrase “liberal crybabies” from April 2014 to April 2018. The highest spike dates to November 6–November 12, 2016, the week after the election, when Trump’s detractors wrung their hands and his supporters went on the verbal attack. The second highest spike dates to January 22–January 28, 2017, the week after the inauguration. (Precise dates are only visible when the user interacts with the chart online.) Source: Google Trends, <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=2014-04-01%202018-04-01&geo=US&q=%22liberal%20crybabies%22>.

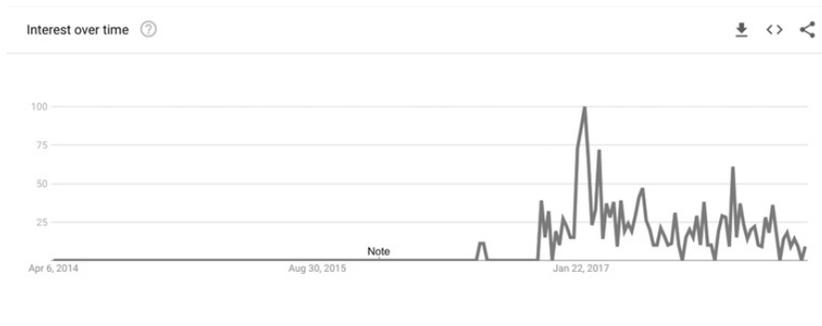


Figure 4.2 “Liberal snowflakes.” Screenshot of Google Trends, tracking “interest over time” of the phrase “liberal snowflakes” from April 2014 to April 2018. The flat line first shows signs of life on November 5, 2016, the eve of the election, followed immediately by a cluster of spikes, with the two highest points of interest taking place over a three-week window surrounding Trump’s inauguration. (The related phrase “special snowflake” also peaks in January 2017.) Source: Google Trends, <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=2014-04-01%202018-04-01&geo=US&q=%22liberal%20snowflakes%22>.

social relations. Understanding how words can have this world-shaping significance requires looking to broader context. The crybaby/snowflake discourse obtains some of its meaning through what linguistic anthropologists call “interdiscursive” (sometimes called “intertextual”) effects. When we talk about interdiscursivity, we mean that the significance of words and utterances doesn’t just come from inherent word meaning or the immediate situation, but also from a history of use and from relationships with speech events in other contexts (Agha 2005: 2). Put another way, words have a social life, and carry baggage with them from one context to another (Bakhtin 1983).

In the case of the crybaby and snowflake insults, for instance, their significance played on a long-standing cleavage in “language ideology” – that is, in value-laden ideas about language. The main ideological gap concerns PC language, a gap that widened during the Obama years. After conservatives’ electoral defeat to Obama, lashing out verbally against sensitive liberals who claimed to be on the moral high ground seemed like satisfying retribution. But in this chapter, I also suggest that with their linguistic grenades, the right has borrowed a semiotic weapon from a context where a regime of overt linguistic insensitivity has long flourished; namely, the United States military. Based on my recent fieldwork among Army and Marine Corps veterans and Marine Corps Drill Instructors (both active duty and retired), I suggest the most potent interdiscursive resonance for the right wing’s current crybaby/snowflake

discourse – and what pushes it in the direction of social action more than reference – can be found in the rites of passage that take place during basic training, or “boot camp.”

By looking at this interdiscursivity, we can see that the crybaby/snowflake discourse is more complex in its agenda than mere “trolling,” in the sense of “comment[ing] and debat[ing] for the sole purpose of agitation” (Smith 2019: 132). I suggest that once we grasp the loose resonance between pro-Trump insults and boot camp insults, we are better poised to understand why the crybaby/snowflake discourse has had such appeal to the right; what broader ideological visions it brings with it; and what, exactly, these utterances are supposed to *do* in the world, in terms of their social effects. I should be clear, too, that the interdiscursive resonance is not just a matter of similar words such as “crybaby” and “snowflake,” but also the similar *stances* that accompany those words. “Stance,” a concept in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics (Jaffe 2009), describes the relational attitude a speaker takes up, including the speaker’s relationship to their interlocutors and, sometimes, to their utterance itself. When we recognize the military cousins of the crybaby/snowflake discourse, it is easier to understand that the stance it carves out is hierarchical, gendered, and ritualistic (the ritual part will become clearer below), designed to rebuke and possibly even school the interlocutor.

Below, I discuss four kinds of social action implied by the crybaby/snowflake discourse. First, although right-wingers indulging in the crybaby/snowflake discourse probably wouldn’t imagine themselves to be staging a rite of passage, they adopt a stance with uncanny resemblance to the structural role of a Drill Instructor – or, in terms of ritual theory, a “ritual elder” who will school their interlocutor. Second, the crybaby/snowflake discourse tries to shut down the back-and-forth of standard conventions for political discussion, framing Trump’s detractors as callow neophytes whose protestations are unworthy of deliberative verbal exchange. Third, the discourse sends the message that the left’s empathy – the emotional root of some leftist policy preferences – is misplaced and that part of “growing up” means setting it aside. And finally, more subtly, the crybaby/snowflake discourse may be asserting a message (a *meta*-message, perhaps) that Trump’s critics are too sensitive to language itself. All of these effects, in military contexts and Trumpian ones, are tied to the ostensible goal of making the nation stronger and harder, in a pugilistic, zero-sum model of the political world.

#### 4.1 Crybabies and Semiotic Callousing in Boot Camp

So how does the crybaby/snowflake stance play out in military contexts? As many people know, basic military training – perhaps most famously in the Marine Corps, where most of my examples come from – consists of

a multi-week rite of passage that breaks down the recruit (roughly 90 percent of whom are male in the Marines, so I opt for male pronouns, here) and builds him back up in line with an ideal of military masculinity. Drill Instructors, or DIs, assume the role of the “ritual elder” and subjugate their initiates (recruits) to physical demands and psychological stress. Language is crucial to the process, by way of a dynamic I call “semiotic callousing.” In semiotic callousing, the DI deploys signs, especially terms of address, designed to berate and wound and, in so doing, to habituate the recruit to such wounding, dulling the recruit’s interpretive sensitivity. (One could say that the process involves numbing *by way of words*, but also numbing the interlocutor *to words*.)

Exactly how semiotic callousing shakes out varies from one branch and unit to the next. In the post-Vietnam era, for instance, the Recruit Training Order at Parris Island, SC (one of two Marine Corps Training Depots), has stated that DIs are not supposed to use profanity or disrespectful language, but my own interviews with post-9/11 veterans suggest this official dictum is variably applied. Plenty of DIs have a florid vocabulary of lacerating put-downs. Collecting these, I’ve come across “crybabies,” “snowflakes,” “whiners,” “weaklings,” “wusses,” “lazy bastards,” “maggots,” “hogs,” “crayon-eaters,” “clowns,” “retards,” “shit-bags,” “shit-birds,” and a raft of gender-troubled insults, including “ladies,” “little girls,” “faggots,” “pussies,” “pansies,” “but-tercups,” “cupcakes,” and “sweethearts.” One former Marine Corps Drill Instructor (in an unpublished interview; I withhold his name for confidentiality)<sup>1</sup> told me that during his service in the 1980s, he would first allow a seemingly level-headed DI to address recruits before he would “charge in, yelling and screaming, and spit’s foaming out of [my] mouth. Actually, I used to put an Alka-Seltzer tab in my mouth so that when I was yelling and screaming, the foam would come out.” This is not talk-as-usual. Initiates are startled as they realize that rationality, and certainly the possibility of a retort, have gone out the window. Already we might begin to see some similarities with the tidal wave of insults aimed at Trump’s detractors after the election, when conventional political discussion and debate seemed to be impossible.

Of course, the daunting insults listed above do not accurately describe groups of young people striving and sometimes struggling to meet the exhausting and bewildering demands made of them during boot camp, any more than the word “crybaby” neatly characterizes a legal scholar mobilizing an argument for a vote recount. Insults like these aren’t meant to function with referential accuracy. Rather, in the military context – and, just maybe, in the context of a shocking political turnaround – they function in the way that so many rites of passage do: in the words of anthropologist Victor Turner ([1969]2017: 95), they “[grind] down [the initiate] to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew.” In the case of the Marine Corps, the tender young person is being made into a Marine who will function well in a combat situation and obey orders at all cost. Drill

Instructors and veterans alike tell me that the berating of basic training helps accustom recruits to stress, while shucking off the self-centered quality they were raised with and habituating them to the notion that sensitivity is unwelcome in this hardened context. Complaints are not tolerated. When anyone feels upset or defeated, such soldiers or vets are often met with the military catchphrase, “Suck it up.”

Plenty of veterans vociferously defend this mode of training when it comes under attack, as it occasionally does when, for instance, recruits report being abused or even take their own life. A number of veterans have told me of the importance of learning to “let the words roll off you.”<sup>2</sup> In the comments section of an article about a recruit who complained about his treatment, one veteran likened (anti-PC) military language directly to the importance of strict parenting: “As a parent when raising kids I used a few words to my kids that perhaps were not politically correct and smacked them when the need was there and their little egos did not get damaged and they have gone on to become responsible adults. This little crybaby should be sent home to his Mama so she can cut his meat for him” (Dodd 2004). What Marines and service members from other branches learn over time is the fundamental military axiom that if you are going to be considered not merely a responsible adult, but what anthropologist Catherine Lutz (2002) calls a “super-citizen,” a person armed to save the very nation, your language ideology should align with the old maxim: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” If you can’t handle verbal slights, how can you handle the rigors of combat? Semiotic callousing is thus construed by military insiders as a positive moral act of salvation or re-education; it’s for the recruit’s own good, and in turn, good for the strength of the nation.

#### 4.2 Interdiscursive Influence: From Boot Camp to Trumpist Triumphalism

The notion that boot camp dynamics have some alignment with conservative attitudes toward left-leaning Americans may sound far-fetched, but occasionally one can witness the connections being drawn. Take my 2019 conversation with a retired Drill Instructor while we ate breakfast at a mess hall at the Parris Island Recruit Training Depot. He was griping that the current generation of young recruits are overly sensitive compared to those in generations past, and that the winds of change during the Obama era had pressured some DIs to be more careful with their insults. “What are they going to give these Marines at graduation,” he asked with a rhetorical flourish. “A dress? But then,” he went on, “It’s a whole generation of entitled liberal snowflakes.” Such words and concepts – snowflakes, crybabies, whiners, and any number of slurs depicting hapless childishness or femininity – circulate among DIs and Republicans

alike; a grab bag of signifiers that call up a raft of ideological assumptions about those who are problematically weak, be they recruits, sensitive young people, or liberals.

Some of the clearest interdiscursive bridges can be found in the internet memes that draw direct lines between Trump's rise, military authority, and the crybaby/snowflake discourse. Consider, for instance, one meme that appeared online shortly after the election, when Trump announced that he would nominate career Marine General James Mattis for Secretary of Defense. In the image (Figure 4.3), Mattis stares implacably in uniform, framed by words that would seem to address Obama's supporters or the left more broadly: "IT'S OVER SNOWFLAKES . . . THE ADULTS ARE BACK IN CHARGE."

Another meme (Figure 4.4) features R. Lee Ermey, the Parris Island Drill Instructor who was famously hired to play a Marine Corps Drill Instructor in Stanley Kubrick's 1987 film *Full Metal Jacket*. In the meme, Ermey confronts the viewer as if they were ambiguously suspended between being a Marine Corps recruit and a Trump critic. Some of the following phrases are lifted directly from his Drill Instructor lines in the film: "LISTEN HERE SNOWFLAKE . . . YOU BETTER FLUSH THAT LIBERAL SEPTIC TANK THAT SITS BETWEEN YOUR TWO SHOULDER BLADES. AND SAY TRUMP IS MY PRESIDENT, OR I WILL GOUGE OUT YOUR EYES AND SKULL FU\*K YOU!"



Figure 4.3 "IT'S OVER SNOWFLAKES." Digital Image. Twitter Page. February 7, 2017. <https://bit.ly/2qU8rVh>.



Figure 4.4 “LISTEN HERE SNOWFLAKE.” Digital Image. *Meme*. January 26, 2017. <https://bit.ly/2rLHG5a>.

Another ErmeY meme (Figure 4.5) features a different image of him pointing aggressively at the camera. It reads: “SUCK IT UP BUTTERCUP! IT’S TRUMP TIME AND WE DON’T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS!”

Consider, too, the connections drawn by an Air Force Veteran in his video response to the protests after Trump’s election. On November 14, 2016, *Fox News* posted his clip under the title “You Crybabies Are Why Donald Trump Won” (Fox News Insider 2016; the clip now has over twenty-four million views).<sup>3</sup> As the veteran faces the camera to address Trump’s detractors, he rants: “That’s the problem with this country. You can’t always get your way! Everybody wants to be politically correct! . . . We’re tired of you crybabies! . . . None of you put on a uniform, but you’re quick to disrespect the flag . . . you didn’t fight for anything, but you want it! . . . This ain’t your damn country! Leave!” Trump’s critics, he suggests, are “crybaby” military avoiders and PC-enthusiasts, who between their softness and failure to sacrifice haven’t earned the right to be full citizens.



Figure 4.5 “SUCK IT UP BUTTERCUP!” Digital image. Pinterest. n.d.  
[www.pinterest.com/pin/471118811012099164/](https://www.pinterest.com/pin/471118811012099164/).

### 4.3 Trumpist Insults as Social Action

To be sure, many Trump supporters who have used the crybaby/snowflake discourse may not be consciously aware of its interdiscursive resonance in the United States military. But in spite of any individual’s intentions, words circulate within and take their meaning from broader ideological fields that some speakers will recognize, however dimly; interdiscursivity often works through loose understanding and partial recognition. Of course, the aims of the crybaby/snowflake discourse in the military are rigidly goal-oriented, intended to bring the majority of recruits into the club (as it were) of combat-ready service members, while the discourse of Trump supporters is not as clear in its aims. Nevertheless, I suggest the overlap furnishes an instructive framework. The vaguely military stances of the crybaby/snowflake discourse steep these

communicative acts, these *kinds* of insults, in meaning, giving them more force as a kind of social action.

First, in both the military and the political cases, Victor Turner's ([1969] 2017) insights about the structure of rites of passage seem relevant, for the insulter adopts the role of masculinized ritual elder who is in a position to pummel and school the initiates through what I've called semiotic callousing. Surely being in a position to adopt such a role has been gratifying for the part of Trump's base that have framed themselves as long-silenced underdogs vis-à-vis the hypereducated "liberal elites" feared to be winning the "culture war." The crybaby/snowflake discourse allows the right to frame liberals as infantilized and spoiled, requiring maturation. After all, "crybabies" whine, fuss, and go into the fetal position when they don't get what they want, while "snowflakes" insist on their delicate uniqueness (a common complaint about leftists from the right), and shrivel and melt the instant things get heated. (The earliest documented appearance of the term "snowflake" as an insult – an origin that underscores its pugilism and nihilism – comes from Chuck Palahniuk's [2005-1996]: 134] novel *Fight Club*: "You are not special. You're not a beautiful and unique snowflake. You're the same decaying organic matter as everything else. We're all part of the same compost heap.") The stance of the doctrinaire ritual elder meshes well, incidentally, with what George Lakoff (1996) has long said about conservative politics; namely, that it is underpinned by what he calls a "strict father" model, emphasizing authoritarian masculinity, punitive discipline, and personal responsibility in contrast to a progressive "nurturant parent" model of the state. If those on the right have been feeling threatened, even fearful, of the influence of the left, they have their moment now in which to adopt a paternalist and punitive stance. It's worth noting that Trump himself lacks strong military masculine credentials – although he attended the New York Military Academy in his teens, he famously dodged the Vietnam draft by way of his supposed "bone spurs" – but even so, his supporters' insults seem to give them a grip on masculine power over Democrats.

Second, the stance adopted by the speaker (or yeller) – the proverbial ritual elder – is one of domination, denigration, and de-ratification that shuts down communication, in the sense that the recruit or the protester is not able to speak back or respond in any way. Protesters may mobilize a carefully reasoned objection to some aspect of Trump's political stances, but they are met with a semiotic punch. In her discussion of insulting speech acts, Judith Butler (1997: 4) notes how socially disorienting they can be: "[When] addressed injuriously," she writes, "one can be 'put in one's place' by such speech, but such a place may be no place." Injurious speech can strip the target of recognition, rendering them not an interlocutor so much as a non-entity. Accordingly, many of the right-wing "snowflake" memes concern the idea that the left has had difficulty accepting a world in which they "lost" and Trump

and supporters “won,” as if “losing” an election means losing a voice. Again, this stance makes sense if one considers that the repetitive cudgeling of the crybaby/snowflake discourse has no resemblance to a communicative exchange, but instead the whiff of rite-of-passage dynamics. Not only are Trump supporters in the role of ritual elder, but Trump’s detractors are placed into the role of what Victor Turner calls the “liminal” neophyte, who is often symbolically denigrated to the point of being a social non-entity, a person in-between their former social role and their future one. And when their objections are reduced to childish whining, they don’t deserve to be heard (they deserve to be spanked, in fact, if one goes with a retrograde model of the strict father). The crybaby/snowflake discourse thus clarifies the stance of the speakers toward their targets: *We are not in conversation, and unless and until you change you are not worth listening to.*

Third, like Drill Instructors’ insults, and arguably beyond typical internet trolling, the right-wing’s crybaby/snowflake discourse has a hint of a pedagogical dimension. In many rites of passage, when the initiates are at their most vulnerable, they are presented with teaching tools (Turner calls them *sacra*) that instruct neophytes explicitly or implicitly in what their new social role ought to be as they “grow up.” In military basic training, the semiotic callousing of insults functions simultaneously to grind down the recruits and, as *sacra*, to inculcate the vital lesson that military strength, “national security,” is contingent on attenuating both personal sensitivity and empathy for the vulnerable (cf. Cohn and Ruddick 2004). This is a lesson many Trump supporters would approve of; indeed, the United States is in the midst of a major ideological disagreement when it comes to the question of whether it is morally appropriate to extend empathic feeling far and wide. The “crybabies” at anti-Trump rallies have expressed their dismay on behalf of the many historically vulnerable groups Trump’s rise imperils. Yet, as part of their “anti-PC” stance, many Trump supporters feel that women’s rights and LGBTQ+ rights imperil a strong traditional patriarchy; that Muslims and immigrants threaten both national security (supposedly via terrorism and crime) and Christian hegemony; and that ethnic and racial minorities have weakened a strong economy by “cutting in line” for “handouts” (see Hochschild 2016 for ethnographic discussion of the political predecessors of this stance, the “tea partiers”). Blasting away at the hand-wringers who object to Trump, an unofficial campaign slogan started appearing on T-shirts at Trump rallies in 2015 reading: “TRUMP \*\*\*2016\*\*\* FUCK YOUR FEELINGS.”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps a hidden script in the “crybaby/snowflake” discourse is that the right wing wishes its own callousness could serve as a model of “growing up,” and the left would follow suit, hardening their own stance toward the huddled masses. If they did, the right seems to believe, the nation would be better off – no coddling or “hand-outs” for minorities, no sympathy for those locked out of the gates, no tears for

those who feel oppressed by Trump's patriarchal White nationalist agenda. Just "America" – narrowly defined, patently racialized, and patriarchally heteronormative – "first."

Finally, perhaps another element of the *sacra* in the verbal cudgeling from the right is the message that liberals shouldn't be so sensitive *about language itself*. We know Trump and many of his supporters have refused the liberal language ideology that sensitivity in word choice is morally right and good. After all, Trump was elected partly by dint of his identity as a "straight talker" who doesn't care who he offends – a gratifying stance for supporters who feel the "PC" language movement has gone too far. Many on the right have expressed their disgust at being told they are ignorant, immoral, or both for the way they use language. The stance adopted in their crybaby/snowflake discourse includes a relational attitude toward these very utterances, one that resonates with military insults. The attitude seems to be: If you can't handle an insult, if you're going to wither whenever someone hurts your feelings, how will you handle the harsh realities of the world, or get anything done in politics, for that matter? This message is an extension of the right's attack on political correctness. It cleverly turns the left's put-down ("you Republicans are ignorant and immoral in your verbal disregard for others") into something no one wanted to be associated with; namely, being pathetically sensitive to language, and out of touch as a result. The messaging further aggravates the split in politics between overly educated elites (Obama, Hillary Clinton, and beyond) with their painstaking parsing of word meaning, and the voters who see them as snobbish and distant compared to Republican candidates such as Trump who try to frame themselves as "straight shooters" and "everyday guys."

The discourse has also helped clear a path for a president who excels at insults, and exacerbates a political climate that, instead of being centered around democratic discussion and mutuality, divides the nation into winners and losers. Unlike military recruits, however, those on the left don't "learn to let the words roll off," accept their silencing, or curtail their empathy. What they've done, sometimes, is to try to flip the script against their would-be ritual elders, with protest signs and memes reading: "Damn right we're snowflakes. WINTER IS COMING" (which happens to be an interdiscursive reference to the popular 2011–2019 HBO series about succession wars, *Game of Thrones*). And in a proliferating discourse, many have decided to lob the crybaby discourse right back in the direction of the (ironically, notoriously) thin-skinned president himself. The Internet and news media are teeming with caricatures and memes of Trump in a onesie, Trump having a tantrum, Trump sucking on a binkie. The diapered "Trump blimp" has made appearances at demonstrations across the world, while broadcasters and journalists have taken to calling Trump "President Snowflake."<sup>5</sup> It's fun, a bit gratifying, but boom-eranging the right's insults back in their direction also smacks of the

schoolyard, when there are so many difficult but constructive political conversations that need to be had (and that indeed many of Trump's critics are striving for). In order to create a space for such conversation, we will need a national communicative framework that resists the temptation of the silencing maneuvers I have described.

### Notes

1. I engaged in personal conversation with retired and active duty Marine Corps Drill Instructors over the course of several months in 2018–2019, both remotely and in person. Due to the ethical requirement to protect the identities of those I spoke to, I do not furnish their names, and in some cases opt to withhold details of when or where a conversation took place. Some conversations took place on Parris Island, and others via Skype with far-flung respondents.
2. Over the course of 2018–2019 I interviewed several dozen American veterans who served in the Marine Corps or Army during the Vietnam War or the Global War on Terror. The particular statement quoted here, or variations of it, encapsulates a language-ideological stance I heard from at least ten veterans.
3. It is tempting to imagine that *Fox News* was capitalizing not only on the “crybabies” title, but also on the fact that the veteran is Black, a tokenism that they may have hoped gives support to the argument that Trump has legitimate appeal to minorities.
4. The sentiment has been echoed in various other memes, such as the bumper sticker I have seen around Massachusetts reading “TRUMP 2020: MAKE LIBERALS CRY AGAIN.”
5. In Van Jones' case, it was based on Trump's response to the FBI's Russia probe in May 2017 (CNN 2017; see also Schneider 2017).

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