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DISCURSIVE INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE

A Thesis

Presented By

David Posman

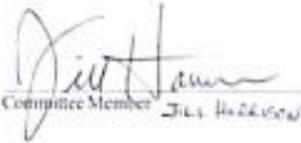
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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for a Master's Degree in
the Program of Justice Studies in the Department of Sociology

Discursive Incitement to Violence

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2021

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Abstract

This study strengthens evidence of the association between discourse and violence, an association often downplayed in existing literature. To address that shortcoming, comparative-historical methods provide an overview of language manipulation which circumstances suggest were impetus for violent actions in the past. Descriptive content analyses of *foxnews.com*'s headlines, 2008/2009 and 2016/2017, are compared to one another as well as an analysis of the social media sites *Gab*, *8chan*, and *4chan* (Zannettou *et al.* 2019). All datasets are related to FBI hate crime statistics. These analyses examine the relationships between language manipulation and violence during 2008/2009 as hate crimes decreased by 15.1% and 2016/2017 as hate crimes increased by 17.2%. Increases in anti-immigrant rhetoric from Candidate/President Donald J. Trump and *foxnews.com* paralleled anti-Jewish slurs on the aforementioned social media sites, and both data sets associate with a rise in anti-Hispanic and anti-Jewish hate crimes. The implication is that social barriers to 'anti-other' discourse are declining, and hate contagion and violence are rising.

Keywords: hate crimes; dog whistles; malicious discursive techniques; binary argumentation; discursive opportunities; comparative-historical; content analysis.

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Introduction

While hate crimes rose by 17.2% in 2017, two seemingly unrelated events occurred: 1. A special counsel was appointed to investigate Russian involvement in the 2016 election and contacts with the Trump campaign. 2. Fox News' anti-immigrant rhetoric, rising throughout 2016, rose to yet higher levels. As the special counsel's look at Trump began, note the *foxnews.com* headlines which comingled with anti-immigrant rhetoric: "Hannity: Stand and Fight for What You Voted for in November"; "Gingrich: Surrender or Fight – Our Country is at Stake"; "Roger Ailes was a Warrior Who Fought Hard for the Causes He Believed In." Those headlines appeared on one day: 5/19/17. Then, after news broke that Donald Trump Jr. *had* met with a Kremlin operative, note this 7/12/17 headline: "Heads Will Roll After Trump Jr. Leaks..." This study searches for a direct link between discourse of various types and violence, concluding that a causal connection is not found though the association is obvious and strong.

One type of problematic discourse is the dog whistle, described as "a coded message communicated through words or phrases commonly understood by a particular group of people, but not by others" (Merriam-Webster 2020). A sly variant of the dog whistle is the malicious discursive technique, best described as the "'machinery' of denial... [or] denials as regulated performances that have social currency as good argument, and as such, perform the ideological work of shoring up racial privilege" (Durrheim *et al.* 2005: 8). Binary, or us-versus-them techniques are also problematic. My

analyses show an association between all of the above, as utilized by *foxnews.com*¹, and hate crime, described by the FBI as crimes “reported to the FBI... motivated by biases based on race, gender, gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and ethnicity” (FBI UCR 2020).

The analyses described within this study are based on Koopmans and Olzak’s (2004) article on radical right violence in Germany. These researchers disclaim causal links between discursive opportunities and violence and yet assert that objective media focus on immigrants targets the immigrant community for violence and has other unintended consequences.² They do share an assumption with other scholars that discourse/violence relationships exist. My analyses show associations between politicized media incitement of grievances with acts of violence. Tobin Smith, a Fox News veteran, suggests that Fox News became “Trump TV in 2016” (2019: 30) even as Trump incited violence during his campaign rallies by promising legal support for those who attacked protesters (Keneally 2018). Trump’s method of rejecting criticism, however slight, with vitriol, attacking those who question his motives and inciting violence against his critics was refined under the tutelage of Roy Cohn, chief legal counsel for Senator Joseph McCarthy during the red-baiting Senate hearings of the 1950s (Brenner 2017). Trump gained the Republican presidential nomination the same day Roger Ailes was fired as president of Fox News. Stelter (2020) suggests, agreeing with Tobin (2019), that Trump

¹ For a pilot study which justifies the focus on *foxnews.com* and Fox News in general, see Appendix A.

² CNN, often considered liberal, has been accused of being “especially hooked on tracking Mr. Trump and... expecting record ratings and advertising revenue” from that coverage, meaning CNN, along with other news sources, shares a measure of responsibility for spreading Trump rhetoric (Flint & Ballhaus 2015: 1)

became the muse of Fox News even as Trump took talking points from Fox News hosts. It is vital to recognize the collateral damage of discourse as the 2020 election approaches. Dog whistles (DW) and malicious discursive techniques (MDT) are contributing factors to violence.

As Van Dijk (1991) asserts, it is wise to provide “concrete support” for “conceptual analysis” (31). The first part of the literature review is comparative-historical analysis of racist discourse which provides foundational evidence. Then the literature review analyzes the discursive techniques of Fox News, amplifiers of grievances according to Norton (2011). Summaries of *foxnews.com*’s discursive headline techniques and the analysis of *Gap*, *8chan*, and *4chan* are then considered in the context of social/economic control variables and a dependent variable, FBI hate crime statistics. It is plausible to consider Rupert Murdoch’s “corrective intervention” into the media market (Norton 2011: 320) as promoting political views, as Fox News founder Ailes intended (Sherman 2014; Stelter 2020). *Foxnews.com* is analyzed according to political business cycles theory (Nadel *et al.* 2017): shifting subjective policy (or story) initiatives related to cyclical election seasons. Norton (2011) describes these thematic patterns as short cycle themes which arise in the news, and long cycle themes of deep symbolic meanings. Thus, this study proceeds with the following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis #1: *Foxnews.com*’s use of DW and MDT in headlines is higher in presidential election years (2008/2016) compared to non-election years (2009/2017). The null is the lack of a significant difference, or the reverse of the hypothesis.

- Hypothesis #2: Upticks in DW and MDT on *foxnews.com* relate to upticks in racial epithets on the aforementioned social media sites; also, there are associations between all of the above and FBI hate crime statistics. The null is the lack of any significant relationships.

Durrheim *et al.* (2005) write that a sign of lingering racism is the use of MDTs which minimize past offenses. MDTs aid rationalization, according to Drakulich (2015), who writes that “biases persist under the guise of ideological principles like individualism” (392) as opposed to community responsibility. The use of DW and MDT by Fox News to support Trump; its most-watched cable news ranking (Norton 2011); the faith placed in Fox by its audience (Cillizza 2020); and its lack of trustworthiness (Huston 2010; Strasser 2013) may, as Khoo (2017) suggests with any use of coded discourse, undermine “reasonableness in democratic deliberations” (35). Studies of hate crime, as Green *et al.* (2001) point out, focus on attitudes. This study concerns behavioral manifestations. The results, small in number, may be unremarkable. This is consistent with Gilliam and Iyengar’s (2000) work which downplays the importance of variable coefficients, focusing on patterns that support their hypotheses. Perloff’s (2000) analysis of the role of newspapers in the lynching era is similar, disclaiming quantitative study in favor of historical review. A boost to the evidence linking DW and MDT with violence is relevant, timely, and possible.

Literature Review

Perry (2000) argues that DW and MDT are heard by willing audiences. Feagin *et al.* (2001) argue that white Americans, consciously or not, are informed by bigoted

stereotypes. Green *et al.* (2001) contend these ideologies construct hate targets, and Van Dijk (1991) views these beliefs as prompts for social action. My comparative-historical analysis asks whether Lopez (2014) is correct in beginning his survey of dog whistling with George Wallace in the 1950s. This decision minimizes precedent. Lopez downplays a relationship between dog whistles and violence because a majority who hear hateful rhetoric do not commit hate crimes. The violence he asserts is indirect, for instance the election of politicians who promote mass incarceration of Blacks, similar to the conclusions of Alexander (2010). Comparative-historical analysis provides a long view, relying “on the accumulated knowledge of specific cases” (Arthur 2011: 173). Using such a long view accents similarities and differences between eras: post-Reconstruction; the 1950s and 1960s; the 2008/2009 transition (the first Black president); and the 2016/2017 transition (Trump’s election). These analyses highlight variables and patterns which support suggestions of an association between discourse and violence.

With the Civil War’s end, freed slaves enjoyed a respite, codified in civil rights amendments (U.S. Senate 2020). However, in 1877 Republican President Rutherford B. Hayes removed federal troops from the South (DeSantis 1955). This initiated the lynching era, which the NAACP (2020) asserts lasted from 1882 to the 1960s. Hayes also nominated judges sympathetic to elite interests. Boldt and Boyd (2018) assert that even judges appointed for life, as agents of the principals who nominated and confirmed them, satisfy the desires of those principals. After Reconstruction, the president, as the nominator of federal judges, was a Republican for ten of fourteen terms. A Republican-led Senate controlled 23 of 28 legislative sessions (Brookings 2019). Democrats

controlled the race-baiting political machinery of the South where local Republican vote share reduced the chances of successful lynchings (Hagen *et al.* 2013), but it was Republican, elitist courts which set an implicitly racist agenda with legal discourse. Opposing parties inadvertently worked toward the same ends. The Republican political structure featured, besides economic crises, court opinions legalizing discrimination, especially *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896), the establishment of ‘separate but equal’ doctrine. *Plessy*’s use of MDT is the seemingly rational notion (at the time) that the railway regulations of Louisiana were just as prejudicial and onerous to whites as to Blacks since the white population was restricted to whites only railway cars. It was also noted, interestingly, that segregating Blacks was for their own good, as it protected them from violence (Kluger 1975).

Linking the judicial dog-whistling of Henry Billings Brown, *Plessy*’s author, to working-class white violence is difficult. The individuals who attacked the Black sharecroppers of the Progressive Farmers and Household Union (Woodruff 2019) were not legal scholars, but rather poor white farmers and rural law officers lacking higher education. If Billings Brown is considered a political actor, the term used by Koopmans and Olzak (2004) – a person providing license for supporters – then the need is to determine how other claim-makers diffused a racist judicial message to the public. It has been shown that some law officers in the South participated in lynchings (Olzak 1992; Blackmon 2008). Whether barbershop/saloon gossip or law enforcement encouragement, diffusion took place. Olzak (1992) emphasizes the role newspapers played in creating contagions of fear and anger. Van Dijk (1991) contends that elite racism, like that of the

19th century Supreme Court, produces and sustains a “white ethnic consensus” (43). Once beliefs are established, DW and MDT (code words) are increasingly effective (Khoo 2017). Kluger (1975) shows that the MDT rationale that segregation was the duty, but also for the benefit, of all, was employed by numerous defendants for fifty-eight years until the trial which reversed *Plessy: Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

Garland (2005) describes how, after *Plessy* in 1896, violence increased against Blacks. Billings Brown’s reasoning in *Plessy* is flawed, for instance citing eleven cases which did not reach the constitutional issue in *Plessy* (Kluger 1975), and yet encouraged the mechanisms of subjugation. Why, then, did violence increase? Hagen *et al.* (2013) ask the same question about Black disenfranchisement in the late 1890s, theorizing that lynching might have been viewed as too “costly” and “unnecessary” once Blacks lost their political power (767). Legal machinery in the South was controlled by Blue Dog Democrats and supported at the national level by elitist Republican courts. Plausibly the increase in violence was due to the economic panics of 1893, 1907, and 1929 which resulted from elitist economic policy by Republican political structures. Olzak (1992) argues for economic competition as a driving force but lends credence to historians who argue that anti-immigrant laws, a form of discourse, provided license for street level violence. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, for instance, provided impetus for increased violence against a population considered superfluous once the transcontinental railroads were built. For Blacks, lynching was a message defining their social boundaries. The message to whites was their superiority. Garland (2005) asserts that lynching was considered necessary because the judicial discourse of *Plessy*, enshrining Blacks’

subjugation, was viewed as inadequate. Lynching is thus compared to frontier justice – the ferocious community imposition of the death penalty when judicial authority was thought to be ineffective or illegitimate.

Legal language is discourse, legitimized in law books and the decisions of judges and politicians (Koopmans & Olzak 2004). Jim Crow laws were the legal language which provided additional control of Blacks. Blackmon (2008) describes vagrancy laws as an element of the legal discourse which allowed Southern law officers to arrest Black men without visible means of support and to sell them (via their unpaid fines) to the mines around Birmingham where they lived lives no better than that of slaves and often perished under harsh conditions. The mechanisms of dominance were then community violence, racist language codified into law by local political structures, and media collusion from most Southern newspapers. Supreme Court opinions such as *Plessy* legitimized the local structures and, as Perry (2000) suggests, elite discourse creates perception which stokes the rhetoric of hate groups.

During the 1950s, extra-judicial violence increased in relation to the threat to Jim Crow posed by *Brown v. Board of Education*: the statutory end of segregation. Olzak (1992) asserts violence increases against marginalized groups due to laws (discourse) that increase economic opportunities, such as the integration of U.S. military forces in 1948; educational possibilities such as university admission, as in *Sweatt v. Painter*, 339 U.S. 629 (1950); and political participation, as with the voting and civil rights acts of the 1960s. Minorities suffer from legal discourse designed both to hurt and to help them. It is plausible that hate crimes (for instance, the murders of Emmett Till, Medgar Evers, and

Martin Luther King, Jr.; white riots at Ole Miss and the University of Alabama) mirrored the violence which followed Reconstruction (Hampton 1987). Southern governors mobilized support through statements to newspapers which displayed their anger and unrepentant segregationist attitudes (see, for instance, Appendix B). Governor Talmadge of Georgia, in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision to allow a Black man to attend the University of Texas Law School, declared that "the threats... held over the head of the South... are now pointed like a dagger... [at] the very heart of Southern tradition" (*NYTimes*; *AP* 6/6/1950). This is an example of us-versus-them binary technique, but also the MDT of reverse racism which posits the racists as the victims. Note, too, the violent imagery of a dagger pointed at the heart, mobilizing the intended audience to defend itself. Lopez (2014) is thus correct to assert that DWs began as a conscious technique at that time if a DW is viewed as a deliberate call to action. He borrows from Carter's (1995) *Politics of Rage* the Wallace comment: "I started off talking about schools and highways and prisons and taxes – and I couldn't make [white voters] listen. Then I began talking about n-----, and they stomped the floor" (6).

There is sufficient historical evidence to suggest an association between discourse and violence. Prior research on this issue asserts that association but minimizes it with multiple control variables. This study views the control variables as a powder keg, the American zeitgeist of historical influences and precedents, and views discourse as the match which lights the fuse.

The previous eras, however, are not this study's focus. Rather, they are presented as circumstantial evidence to set the stage for a more contemporary picture. This analysis

now turns to hate crime associated with *foxnews.com* coverage of the presidential election and the first year in office of Barack Obama, 2008 and 2009, and the same for Donald J. Trump, 2016 and 2017. Consider that in a recent three-year span, 2016 to 2018, FBI statistics show an average of 8,421 hate crime victims. During that time period, the U.S. population ranged from 323 to 327 million (Census). Dividing 325 million people by 8,421 hate crime victims for an indicative number, a hate crime is committed against 1 of every 38,594 people per year. Imagine Shirley Jackson's short story "The Lottery" played out once a year in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Now divide 8,421 hate crime victims by 365 days and find 23.07 hate crime victims per day (one every 62.4 minutes). Also, consider Lilly *et al.*'s (2015) assertion that crime is underreported. More than 25,000 hate crime victims in three years, underreported, is noteworthy. Details that particularly stand out are the 17.2% overall increase in hate crimes in 2017 and a 152% increase in 2019 of hate crimes directed against the Jewish community. Setting aside the notable decrease in hate crimes in 2009 of 15.1%, Barack Obama's first year in office, the years 2010 – 2016 still averaged a decrease of 0.1% in hate crimes. Thus, 2017's overall increase and the early numbers from 2019 call for an investigation.

Perry (2000) asserts that most hate crime is committed by persons not connected to a hate group, though she emphasizes that Internet connectivity means that "even lone racists... feel they are part of a movement" (123). Hate crimes in the United States, for the most part, are not committed by groups with organizational structure. This is not to underestimate the danger of hate groups, and hate crime, whether individual or group related, is the dependent variable of interest. Online activity gathers individual hate into

group consciousness, a collective angry vibe created by individuals who post vicious, incendiary chats under anonymous pseudonyms. These common expressions of resentment, made possible by social media platforms which exploded around 2007, constitute what Snow *et al.* (1986) call “sentiment pools” (467) of grievance.

Resentments and grievances can then be exploited by framing devices like amplification, “the clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame” (469). Cable news today is a key locus of amplification, given the shift, as Norton (2011) sees it, away from reporting news to offering subjective views. He defines the binary formats featured on *The O’Reilly Factor*, Fox News’ top show for two decades: us-versus-them formats pitting individual rights against subjective persecution – a “stark, two-sided confrontation” (330). Many studies consider media influence on violence (Berkowitz 1963; Josephson 1987; Ging 2005), and yet questions remain about mechanistic connections. Smith (2019), a Fox News veteran, claims his role was hitting “the liberal... with... [a] rhetorical kill shot” (10). This seems hyperbole, yet Smith lived it for 14 years and is a trained researcher who remains a conservative. Roger Ailes’ sexual violence cast a threatening shadow over Fox’s newsroom culture (Sherman 2014), and Gertz (2017) contends that Ailes pulled conspiratorial content off fringe websites to be used on a variety of Fox broadcasts; this technique has increased during the Trump presidency (Stelter 2020). Consider the effect on an audience exposed to this aggrieved, abusive culture, and whether the conduit to hate opened by Ailes encouraged traffic to flow back to the source.

Norton (2011) relates that *The O'Reilly Factor* was Fox News' first big 'hit'; its influence was profound. Beyond any issue of the day, emphasis was placed on "the framing of the culture war" which represented "the world in terms of perpetual conflict" (330). This framing of hostile perspectives, bridged to a willing audience, begs certain questions. Does Fox News create frames of reference based upon the grievances of the white working class, the technique of problem identification framing? Smith (2019) confirms, describing the Fox audience as a white identity tribe. Then, does Fox News offer an "explanatory narrative about the causes of [a] problem" (Drakulich 2015: 395), the technique of attributional framing? Smith confirms again though he describes the narrative as a fictional construct. Finally, does Fox News amplify grievances with moral outrage, the technique of motivational framing? Smith confirms this as well, and Norton (2011) asserts that O'Reilly's practice was to hype specific grievances which resonated with his audience. Stelter (2020) even contends that any dip in Fox News' Nielsen ratings brought immediate management demands for more outrage manufactured by the hosts of every show, not just the commentary shows. It is thus plausible to consider the Fox News audience as "a group of people [which] has somehow come to *believe*... that some aspect of their social life needs to be altered" (Arthur 2009: 29; author's italics).

Outrage is vital to motivational framing: aggravations which are exaggerated into heightened injustices. Snow *et al.* (1986) suggest this is critical in mobilizing people, that the interpretation and diffusion of grievances are key, while Khoo (2017) implicates resentment as a motivator of racial prejudices. Norton (2011) describes the O'Reilly persona as a warrior defending the sacred, suggesting this persona, which the audience

related to in a para-social manner, was the center of a moral order structuring audience response to their grievances. O'Reilly used metonymy to link al Qaeda with the American Civil Liberties Union, transferring rage against terrorists to lawyers defending the Constitution. O'Reilly also said: "As you may know, the far left in America is on a jihad to smear Fox News" (340). These "charged situations [and] conflicts" (317) were templates for commentary shows at Fox.

Green *et al.* (2001) assert that hate rhetoric involves "themes of competition-bred grievance... and [the] normalization of violence against out-groups" (489). Hate crime perpetrators are mobilized by a cultural system "where facts, the news, and life itself [are framed by] the interpretive imperatives of a dominant meaning structure" (Norton 2011: 319). This may occur inadvertently as Koopmans and Olzak (2004) suggest, but often focuses on minority crimes (Gilliam & Iyengar 2000; Enns 2016). Norton, in contrast, suggests there is little inadvertent about Fox News which offers discourse (visibility for moral outrage) as well as resonance (sacred in agreement with outrage; profane in disagreement). Sacred, or consonant, resonance accrues legitimacy for opinion which poses as factual news. Nightly repetition creates an imperative to act. Grievances amplified by politicized media discourse may suggest "the [decreased] likelihood of... punishment of hate-motivated crimes" (Green *et al.* 2001: 488), especially, it is fair to suppose, if a network's favored candidate offers to cover legal expenses or suggests that the violent, radical right group the Proud Boys stand back and stand by awaiting a call to duty. Van Dijk (1991) suggests that public discourse offers opportunity for mobilizing prejudice, as does D. Johnson (2009) who argues that politicians and the media jointly

increase the emotionalism of the public. Hagen *et al.* (2013) show political context affecting the likelihood of mob formation turning violent.

Green *et al.* (2001) describe the electronic and print media's role in creating hate crime contagion even with objective reporting, asserting a trend acceleration if media formulates and legitimizes "stereotypes about potential target populations" (486; also, Schemer 2012). These researchers suggest hate crimes arise from social, economic, and political conditions, akin to Emile Durkheim's suicide study, setting aside personal circumstances. They encourage an "account of how politics engenders hate crime... [by separating] the cathartic effects of opportunity from the amplifying effects of elite encouragement" (489). However, if politicians legitimize resentful adherents through media sources offering concurring subjective judgments, distinctions between opportunity (political structure) and encouragement (media discourse) disappear. If political outrage flows through media sources to resentful adherents, creating public opinion (Van Dijk 1991), this reverses the relationship described by Enns (2016) where public opinion dominates. Cullen *et al.* (2000) insist that binary polls, outlining Machiavellian distinctions, show increases in public punitiveness. Norton (2011) and Smith (2019) concur on the us-versus-them message propagated by Fox News, pulling these threads together.

Sherman (2014) describes Roger Ailes' early career on *The Mike Douglas Show* and on Broadway, learning the art of audience manipulation. Smith (2019) believes Ailes was a conservative warrior, but he also, as Sherman (2014) does, argues that Fox News' format is entertainment, comparing it to the hero-versus-villain format of World

Wrestling Entertainment (another Fox offering). Donald Trump, interestingly, is in the WWE Hall of Fame. Ailes, according to Smith (2019), valued Trump's name recognition and the symbolism of Trump: wealth and glamour. Symbolic production is an elitist prerogative (Van Dijk 1991), and Marion and Oliver (2013) describe political speeches where an object of the speech represents something which the speaker prefers not to mention (or mention again). A Fox favorite in 2016/2017 was Trump's border wall. Davis and Baker (2020) contend the wall symbolizes Mexican 'rapists' – Trump's discourse. Martin and Oliver (2013) assert that political symbolism has exponential impact, combining emotion with psychology. The meaning of symbols need not be true but are effective because people believe them. Political symbolism is powerful enough to create panics: an "overwhelming fear, with or without cause, which produces hysterical or irrational behavior" (*Dictionary.com* 2020). Smith (2019) asserts that Fox News' message is that white society is threatened; furthermore, that Fox News exploits this fear to cement allegiance with its adherents. Snow *et al.* (1986) suggest this method results in "a kind of thoroughgoing conversion" (475).

For instance, a person viewing objective media might know that Guatemala suffers a climate change drought (Steffens 2020). This news consumer might consider Guatemalan refugees as victims of ecological blight, what Drakulich (2015) describes as a situational perspective. However, as is shown with content analysis, Fox News in 2016/2017 offered a dispositional view: refugees are criminals who broke U.S. laws. This is frame transformation, crucial in consideration of what P. Johnson (1994) asserts, that "ordinary people... become... hostile toward criminals" (10). Schemer (2012) shows

how these stereotypes are “activated by news stories” (741), dehumanizing impressions which are latent until media amplification.

Education produces lower levels of racism (Drakulich 2015). However, Cullen *et al.* (2000) point out that the public’s ignorance of politics and public life is significant, asserting as well that “complex opinions cannot be measured,” or even realized, one might argue, “if complex questions are not used in an opinion survey” (7). As an example, these researchers assert that the death penalty is a preference discerned from polls that ask simple, binary questions. Plausibly, news commentary which approaches issues in binary fashion, sacred or profane, is commentary with a punitive theme. Fox News viewers tend to watch Fox News only, and if they access other media, they trust Fox News most (Cillizza 2020). In stark contrast, people who watch various news sources find Fox News to be untrustworthy (Portero 2012). Fox News is also considered most likely to misinform (Huston 2010; Strasser 2013). If Fox News viewers are proffered binary views, and if those with binary views accept death as a proper penalty; if Fox News proxies for politicians who employ DW and MDT; if Fox News’ audience holds frames of reference amplified to believe the so-called far left endangers their loved ones; then, are those who hold these grievances more likely, at whatever small percentage, to commit hate crimes? Can an association be shown?

Prior research soft pedals the association between discourse and violence. Müller and Schwarz’s (2019) “Fanning the Flames of Hate: Social Media and Hate Crime,” mitigates its title by stating “We do not claim that social media itself causes crimes against refugees out of thin air” (5). But even if many factors set the stage for violence,

such as the control variables discussed below, violence starts with discourse as surely as fistfights are the result of arguments. Levine's (2020) search of criminal databases, for instance, shows 54 instances of Trump rhetoric-inspired violence since he announced his candidacy. This study adds to the literature a conjoining of comparative-historical methods, an analysis of adherent manipulation, and content analysis in attempting to confirm more concretely the connection between discourse and violence. The theoretical model employed in this study, then, is detailed in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: The reframing of unconscious anxiety into conscious hate.



*

Methodology

The search for data began by accessing the Internet Archive's quasi-random selection of *foxnews.com* webpages. Selections are made mechanically, by a 'random' web crawler at: https://web.archive.org/web/*/www.foxnews.com. Thelwall and Vaughn (2004) found unintentional biases in the selection of webpages, but only in the choice of language (English). Since *foxnews.com* is displayed in English, is part of the Fox Network of the United States, and the FBI collects U.S. hate crime statistics, the

weakness of this study's method in this regard would be the international contributions to the social media hate sites analyzed by Zannettou *et al.* (2019). However, the computer algorithm used by those researchers searched for English language racial epithets readily understood and used by U.S. viewers of those sites, so this is not a detriment to the findings displayed below.

I then selected from the Internet Archive selections in a quasi-random fashion explained in Appendix C. There are 336 day selections: 72 for both 2009 and 2017; 96 for both 2008 and 2016. Content analysis of these years is contrasted with material gathered by a computer algorithm searching 36 million chats on the social media sites *Gab*, *8chan* (now the QAnon site), and *4chan* (Zannettou *et al.* 2019). I compared those data sets for associations and similar patterns. The *foxnews.com* data set and the computer algorithm data set were then compared to FBI hate crime statistics from the relevant years, again to search for associations and similar patterns. Smith (2019) relates that with the 2008 onset of the Great Recession, the rise of social media, and the inauguration of a Black president in 2009, daily views of Fox material rose to one hundred million. This speaks to social influence. The years 2008/2009 were chosen for the anomalous 15.1% decrease in hate crimes; the years 2016/2017 were chosen for the anomalous 17.2% increase in hate crimes. Matching the discourse trends and patterns of these data sets to the violence trends and patterns indicated by FBI data sets is the most feasible way to draw conclusions about associations and possible linkages.

Content analysis of headlines is not intended to infer a direct causal connection between headline content and violence. Clearly, no one reads a headline and bolts out the

door to attack someone (if that has ever happened, it is surely a singular event). This analysis is about trends, discussed below, and the headlines are employed to investigate the semiotic/analytic structure of the *foxnews.com* presentation, and any subject matter focus during the years under consideration. The content analysis of headlines was organized by defining four basic variables, three of which are further subdivided; Drakulich (2015) refers to sets of “interrelated frames” such as these as an “interpretive package” (395).

DW which trigger previous mental constructions. These symbolize minorities or Democrats as agents of negative actions and are style registers of grievance and accusation, especially for the persecution of whites.

1a	Immigrants, immigrant crime, border wall, sanctuary cities, Dreamers. 4/22/17: “Justice Department <i>threatens</i> sanctuary cities in immigration <i>fight</i>.” Italics added.
1b	Welfare, socialism, big government, the Affordable Care Act, tax-and-spend Democrats. 7/15/09: “Socialized medicine is not a fundamental right.”
1c	Crime, terrorism, Iran, war, leniency of the courts – the dog whistle of fear (double value if sex-related). 1/7/16: “Federal prisons ‘breeding ground’ for terrorists, experts say.”
1d	Obama, his policies and top advisors, birthirism (the Affordable Care Act is counted here as well as under 1b). 12/30/16: “Is Obama Handcuffing the Trump Administration?”
1e	Hillary Clinton, emails, Benghazi, the Clinton Foundation. 10/18/16: “Hillary ‘contemptuous’ of security agents, put team at risk for photo, doc(ument)s say.”
1f	Bad Democrats, ‘the Deep State,’ international organizations. 4/28/17: “EPA Chief Pruitt: Paris climate agreement is a ‘bad business deal for this country.’”
1g	Gun rights, 2 nd Amendment, government overreach, Oliver North. 6/15/17: “‘This isn’t a gun issue’: Loesch rips McAuliffe for gun control rhetoric after (Scalise) shooting.”

MDTs are combined into one concept which symbolizes whites as innocent and/or passive victims of negative actions by minorities or Democrats and are style registers of denial and/or outrage, adapted from Durrheim *et al.* (2005).

2a	Benign and/or reverse racism, 'race card' accusations, affirmative action, quotas; special interests: women, homosexuals, Muslims, <i>et cetera</i> . 9/2/09: "Lawmaker Labels ObamaCare Foes Racist." 4/12/16: "Warning: White people singing Rihanna could cause microaggressions."
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Binary codes provide four concepts which position the Fox News audience in a combative stance, symbolizing whites as persecuted victims of negative actions by elites, minorities, and the so-called far left: style registers of conflict and self-pity, adapted from Norton (2011).

3a	Little guys/folks vs. the system/elites. 'Cultural Marxism.' 3/12/09: "Some Democrats Living Large." 1/7/16: "10-year-old girl's Capri Sun container leads to TSA pat-down."
3b	Brave/strong/American vs. Cowardly/weak/un-American; incentivizes courage and strength. 4/4/17: "Florida Governor Scott takes away 21 more murder cases from anti-death penalty prosecutor."
3c	Fairness vs. media bias; insulates the <i>foxnews.com</i> adherent from objective opinion. 4/28/17: "Sean Hannity: Ann Coulter just latest target of fascist media."
3d	Sacred vs. profane; mobilizes moral outrage. 1/7/16: "Alabama top justice tells judges not to issue gay marriage licenses."

In relation to Fox News' biases and dependability, codes 4a and 4b:

4a	Positive references of Trump. 4/12/16: "Bad boy preference: Trump backers want bold candidate."
4b	Proven wrong by time, or objectively absurd: 4/15/16: "'Not a scientist': Palin slams Bill Nye over global warming science." 5/12/16: "Here's why it's time for a narcissistic president." 9/30/16: "General Flynn: 'Trump should highlight Clinton's bad judgement.'"

To aid comparisons within an election year, and in comparing segments of one election year to another, 2008 and 2016 are divided into Segment 1 (pre-convention; January to June: 6 months multiplied by .667 = 4 months); Segment 2 (convention to election; July to October = 4 months); and Segment 3 (post-election; November and December: 2 months multiplied by 2 = 4 months). Non-election years are not adjusted in this fashion and are compared to unaltered election year results. In September of 2017,

both *foxnews.com* and the Internet Archive altered their formats. To compensate, various comparisons of *foxnews.com* or the Zannettou *et al.* (2019) material are necessary for accurate assessments; these comparisons include truncated periods of time that are similar in format.

Due to regular changes in display format, *foxnews.com*'s webpages were subjectively divided into three levels. Discerning distinctions between levels (A, B, C) requires subjective judgment. I assumed that levels with pictures and bold headlines garner more interest and cognition than lower levels, just as Koopmans and Olzak (2004) give greater weight to front page newspaper stories. Levels A, B, and C were separated as follows:

- A. The main story (focus of the day).
- B. Stories highlighted near the main story.
- C. Lists of headlines of lesser stories (stories that repeat for cognitive effect).

Despite the previous caution concerning a causal connection between headlines and violence, it should be noted that Van Dijk (1991) emphasizes headlines which attract attention and construct interpretations of text prior to reading. Once a subject's construct is formed, headlines may activate "personal memory representation[s]" which influence a reader's use of new information (50, 51). Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) refer to these subject constructs as scripts or ingrained heuristics, "a coherent sequence of events expected by the individual" which facilitate "comprehension by distilling experience and knowledge," allowing the reader "to make inferences" and "fill in the missing

information” (561). Khoo (2017) refers to these prompts as not-at-issue content, accepted information that is “not available for direct denial” (43).

Too often, news viewers scan only the headlines – an observation made by Van Dijk (1991) before the prominence of social media feeds with abridged, headline-focused news. Müller and Schwarz (2019) assert that a majority of Americans use social media to acquire some, and sometimes most, of their news, scanning the headlines and videos fed to them through RSS feeds (headlines and summaries) or posted on the Facebook pages of their similarly minded friends. Tristan Harris, former Google ethicist and President of the Center for Humane Technology, asserts there is no gatekeeper watching over social media; that attempts to provide one only drive the polarization of conservatives; that social media has destroyed our common ground by creating micro-realities, “three billion *Truman Shows*” (personal reality shows) where news consumers go for “affirmation feeds, not information feeds” (MSNBC 12/9/2020: n.p.). “Few people are prepared to effectively navigate [this] online information environment” according to Guess *et al.* (2020: n.p.), who assert that a major challenge for modern societies is the widespread use of, and confidence in, misinformation. Furthermore, these researchers found that “even under ideal conditions, most people struggle to reliably evaluate the quality of information they encounter online because they lack the skills and contextual knowledge required to effectively distinguish between high- and low-quality news content” (n.p.), relating this to levels of digital literacy which are exacerbated and stratified by differing levels of education. Finally, they cite recent Pew Center research which shows that fewer than one-fifth of Americans have the skills to effectively evaluate online news. This begs

the question of how mass media news, filtered through what Harris (MSNBC 12/9/2020) calls the “binoculars of social media” (n.p.), does harm.

Van Dijk (1991) targets mass media as producers of ideology, to a lesser or greater degree to the left or right of an hypothetical objective center. Topic selection, or the degree to the left or right of that hypothetical center, is influenced by “power relations” (41) – the political opportunity structure (POS). The Zannettou *et al.* (2019) researchers who looked at the social media sites *Gab*, *8chan*, and *4chan* assert that “mainstream platforms can sometimes push... individuals from an open community... into fringe environments... that foster acceptability of dangerous views” (n.p.), suggesting a conduit from *foxnews.com* to extreme websites. As shown above, Roger Ailes opened this conduit in the reverse direction, taking content from fringe websites for wide exposure on Fox News. Van Dijk (1991) places great emphasis on the effect of concept repetition and Zannettou *et al.* (2019) show how the social media websites considered by their study offer suggestions of violence, adherence to an online community subscribing to fears of white genocide, and repetitions of language around themes of persecution and grievance. The concepts tallied by content analysis herein are similar: accusation, outrage, denial, conflict, self-pity and persecution. My analysis totaled DW, MDT, binaries, and falsehoods – 1a through 4b – at each level of *foxnews.com* on the 336 webpages quasi-randomly selected, and assessed numerical and percentage changes over varying lengths of time. The development of this analysis was tempered by various control variables.

Koopmans and Olzak (2004) use crime statistics by year by German state as a dependent variable. My analysis employs FBI hate crime statistics as the dependent variable.

The first control variable is political opportunity structure (POS). Van Dijk (1991) asserts that “political structures... manifest in the meanings... of news reports,” analyzing Murdoch’s British tabloids, suggesting these “reports may... change [the] social cognition of the readers” (45). Koopmans and Olzak (2004) use political opportunity structure (POS) as a variable, employing a simple 1 to 6 scale based upon the make-up of German state governments. My analysis employs a 0 to 7 U.S. national scale, most conservative to most liberal, explained further in the analysis section. Olzak (1992) clarifies that POS not only provides license to act for certain groups but increases violence against groups with low political power outside the legitimating structure. Hagen *et al.* (2013) support that notion in regard to “the [un]willingness or [in]ability of the state to intervene on behalf of potential victims” (776). POS influence on which type of discourse dominates public debate makes it the most influential control variable.

A U.S. Supreme Court control variable might be useful given the Court’s influence in the racist opinions of the lynching era; defending justice for all under Earl Warren; and the decisions of the past decade. There is a problem though. As Scalia died (replaced by another conservative) and Kennedy retired (his swing vote became yet another conservative), some justices trended left, making the voice of the Court seem more liberal without any practical effect on a 5-4 conservative majority. It seems a stretch to assert that an angry attitude toward liberal judges might cause vigilante justice given

the conservative majority. Consider, however, President Trump's criticism of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals after it blocked immigration bans favored by his base, and this *foxnews.com* headline from 7/15/16: "Trump on Twitter: Calls on Ginsburg to quit." To make an assessment of a particular Court's right/left balance, median Martin-Quinn scores for nine justices were averaged for each relevant year.

Socioeconomic factors are plausible control variables, indicating conditions which "shift levels of competition among groups and therefore affect rates of ethnic and racial conflict" (Olzak 1992: 15). Koopmans and Olzak (2004) reference unemployment and GDP. My preference is to consider income inequality gap (IIG). The problem is that IIG is significant in the long view, 1980 to the present, but FBI hate crime statistics began to be collected in 1990, Fox News started in 1996, and social media took flight in 2007. Whatever the limitations, a variable for 2008/2009 and 2016/2017 was constructed using the method employed by Enns (2016) in his study of mass incarceration, explained in the analysis section below.

Low GDP indicates working-class anxiety, and yet high GDP with most new wealth streaming to the top 1% fails to reflect true levels of stress for poorer economic classes. Campbell (2014) supports this assertion, showing that California's "GDP grew markedly" while "violent crime increased sharply throughout the 1970s" (387). Then violent crime stabilized at a high rate while unemployment vacillated. With unemployment, the numbers may be low and not indicate who left the job market. Economic factors are doubly problematic in that the economy was in deep recession in 2009 when hate crimes decreased, but was especially strong in 2017 when hate crimes

increased. Olzak (1992) suggests that increased wealth and status for immigrants and minorities enflame the passions of the majority even in good times: Blacks and immigrants suffer violence no matter the state of the economy. Hagen *et al.* (2013) assert that economic explanations for racist violence are limited, and yet find that economic pressures lead to mob formation and that a dependence on cotton agriculture relates to the frequency of lynchings. Koopmans and Olzak (2004) use unemployment and ethnic competition as interaction terms, but I do not trust unemployment's variable effect and so cannot do the same. Basic GDP and unemployment numbers were accessed from government websites.

Ethnic competition is a control variable possibility in isolation. Koopmans and Olzak (2004) use yearly immigration to German states. Competition theory expressed by Olzak (1992) expects the necessity for immigrants and Blacks to labor at low wages to increase violence against them. The relevance problem is that 'illegal' immigration was low in 2017 when hate crimes increased dramatically; there simply was no increase in the *physical* presence of undocumented immigrants (or legal refugees) to relate to hate crimes apart from the 2016/2017 increase in discourse about immigration – *a cognitive, emotional presence*. Numbers of undocumented immigrants apprehended as well as those immigrants receiving permanent legal status were accessed from government websites.

An additional coder provided 14 hours of coding for comparison, finding 772 code hits over 26 randomly selected webpages, compared to my 852 code hits, a difference of 10.36%. Total cognitive impact aligned at an 89.64% level. Due to budget

constraints, the intercoder numbers are too few to provide a true reliability measure.³ Also, due to the pandemic, I was unable to work closely with the intercoder and a particular divergence in code recognition arose, likely because I am middle-aged, white, and male, while the intercoder is young, Black, and female. I also packed too many subjects under the 1c code, crime/terrorism/war/Iran – the fear code. Any complications of this nature are entirely my responsibility. A further discussion of the divergences between myself and the intercoder can be found in Appendix D, while the codebook used can be found in Appendix E. In defense of the analysis which follows, it should be emphasized that my coding showed trends which associate closely with the Zannettou *et al.* (2019) study which was conducted using a computer algorithm.

*

Analysis

Comparing and contrasting the gathered statistics begins with a consideration of anti-Obama and anti-government headlines in 2008 and 2009. Perry (2000) wrote of the danger of racist organizations joining forces with armed, anti-state militias (Late thesis addition: This was a prescient warning: twenty years later the insurrection staged at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021 featured that combination of aggrieved forces, as FBI Director Christopher Wray testified before Congress on March 2, 2021). The contrast seen in Table 1 confirms Stelter's (2020) assertion that Fox News adjusted its tone in a reactionary direction several times, most notably in 2009.

³ Excel coding tally sheets for the author and the outside coder are available upon request.

Table 1: 2009 increases over 2008; 1b (Welfare, etc.), 1d (Bad Obama), 1f (Bad Democrats)

Years (below) Codes (right)	Anti-welfare, “socialism”	Anti-Obama, policies.	Bad Democrats, bad int’l organizations
2008 All levels, 1 st 9 months.	23	205	196
2009 All levels, 1 st 9 months.	256	630	426
Increase in 2009	<u>+1013.04%</u>	<u>207.31%</u>	<u>+117.34%</u>

Foxnews.com's use of DW and MDT increased overall by 50.1% from 2008 to 2009 (2,090 code hits increasing to 3,139 code hits). This was led by statistics such as those in Table 1, which fail to support both hypotheses: 1. That DW and MDT are highest during an election year; and 2. That their use associates with an increase in hate crimes (which decreased in 2009). Content analysis shows that a relatively objective attitude towards Obama by *foxnews.com* in 2008 disappeared in 2009. Additionally, *foxnews.com* changed its format in 2009 to direct traffic to the us-versus-them commentary of Bill O'Reilly, and the debate show with conservative Sean Hannity and liberal Alan Colmes dropped Colmes and featured Hannity alone. The anti-Obama invective in 2009 is just as apparent in 2016, and yet hate crime percentage changes remained within a reasonable margin of error from 2009 through 2016 while Obama was president (FBI UCR 2020). The only increase in anti-Black hate crime outside a 3% margin of error was 2015 (7.6%: 1,621 anti-Black crimes in 2014 increasing to 1,745 in 2015). Possibly this is because the discourse was focused on one man, Obama, and three issues, health care, the economy, and Iran, which did not turn attention on minority populations in general. This is only speculation. However – and this is key – this does suggest that Fox News rhetoric alone

does not appear to create a hate crime contagion, though it is indicative of an omitted cause. If the media voice and the executive voice (POS) are both relevant, the executive voice appears preeminent. Obama, for instance, offered a calming discourse while in the White House, most notably during the beer summit with a white Boston police officer and a Black Harvard professor.

Of interest is the Zannettou *et al.* (2019) finding of a 2016/2017 *Gab* focus on three themes: Jews are responsible for immigration; immigration destroys the white race; the time for optics, or polite responses, is over, and violent measures are necessary. This speaks to crossover effect and suggests an explanation for the rise in anti-Jewish hate crimes. Besides Mel Gibson's drunken rhetoric, there appeared to be nothing targeting the Jewish community in major media sources prior to Trump's 2016 campaign. However, as *foxnews.com* followed and repeated Trump's rhetoric in regard to Latinx migrants (without blaming the Jewish community), could this immigration obsession have pushed Fox News viewers to investigate *4chan's* chat board */pol/* and *Gab* where that obsession was transformed into anti-Jewish hate? Going forward, the concepts considered will focus on the areas just described.

Trump began his campaign, June 16, 2015, referencing Mexicans as drug-dealing rapists. In February of 2016, Trump accused a judge overseeing the Trump University fraud case of prejudice against him due to the judge's Mexican heritage (Totenberg 2016). The following table displays 2016 anti-immigrant code hits. These include aggrieved Fox headlines on immigration, immigrants, the border wall, Mexico's

obligation to pay for the wall, immigrant crime, *et cetera*, and reportage of Trump's negative rhetoric on the same issues.

Table 2: Immigration DW; subdivided election year, 2016

2016 Code 1a	Segment 1: Before the convention	Segment 2: Convention to election	2016 S1 to S2 % +/-	Segment 3: After the election	2016 S2 to S3 % +/-		Anti-Hispanic hate crime. Trump launches campaign 6/16/2015 with racist, anti-Mexican remarks
Level A	3.34	1	-70%	22	+2100%		2016: 344 +15% from 2015
Level B	20.01	17	-15%	6	-64.7%		2017: 427 +24.1% from 2016
Level C	29.35	28	-4.6%	8	-71.4%		2018: 485 +13.6 % from 2017

In Segment 1, when Trump, Ted Cruz of Texas, and Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush of Florida, vied for the Republican nomination, it seems plausible that Trump would restrict his anti-Mexican, anti-immigrant rhetoric given the percentage of Hispanics living in those states. Anti-immigrant references do appear prior to the election on levels B and C, a regular drumbeat, though with decreasing frequency. Florida with its large Hispanic population was in play in the general election and might have swung to Hillary Clinton. Of interest here is that after Trump's November election (Segment 3), immigration references dominated Level A – bigger pictures and headlines. This relates to what Van Dijk (1991) writes about topic selection by power relations. The percentage increases are notable: 558.7% over pre-convention coverage, 2,100% over convention to election coverage. If 2016 is considered a lag year, the increases in anti-Hispanic hate

crimes in 2017 (24.1%) and 2018 (13.6%) are notable.⁴ Below is a look at the first nine months of 2016 and 2017 (Trump not elected, versus Trump elected), to note any trends in anti-immigrant DW. Anti-Jewish hate crime is considered as well.

Table 3: Immigration DW; 2017 percentage increase over 2016

2016/2017 Code 1a anti- immigrant references	<u>2016</u> (January – September) Trump pre- election	<u>2017</u> (January – September) Trump post- election	% +/- 2016 to 2017		Anti-Jewish hate crime	
Level A	6	48	+700%		2015: 664 +15% from 2014	Trump announced his campaign 6/16/2015
Level B	47	65	+38.3%		2016: 684 +3% from 2015	Trump campaigned in Florida & Texas
Level C	64	125	+95.3%		2017: 938 +37.1% from 2016	Trump in office; his rhetoric unfettered

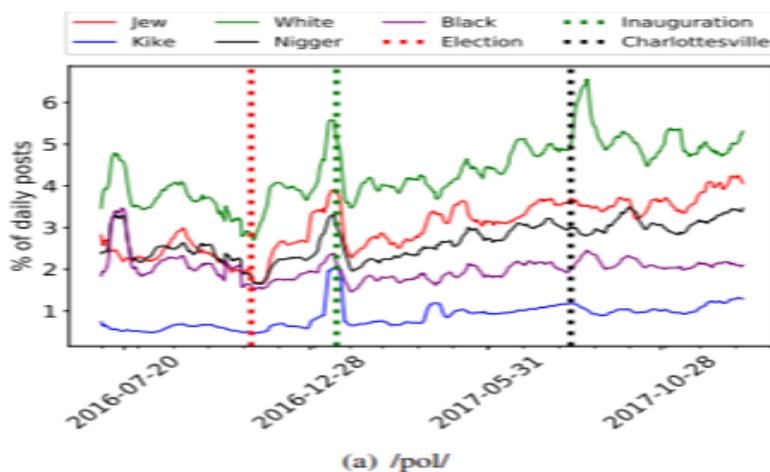
Anti-Jewish hate crime rose dramatically in 2019.⁵ FBI statistics are not yet available for 2019, but the Anti-Defamation League recorded 2,107 incidents (Walters 2020), an increase of 152% over the 835 incidents recorded by the FBI for 2018. Though the date comparisons between Figure 2 and Tables 2 and 3 is not exact, consider the increases in racial slurs on *Achan's* chat board related to the segment subdivisions

⁴ Anti-Hispanic hate crimes: 2016 (344); 2017 (427); 2018 (485). FBI UCR 2020.

⁵ The continued rise in anti-Jewish hate crimes in 2019 is significant contrasted with, or in relation to, the mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh in October of 2018, committed by a user of the *Gab.com* social media site where he announced his intentions beforehand (Stelter 2020). Anti-Jewish hate crimes: 2016 (684); 2017 (938); 2018 (835); FBI UCR 2020; 2019 (2,107): Walters 2020.

employed by this study. These numbers come from a computer algorithm which checked 36 million chats and suggest a measure of reliability for this study’s content analyses. Anti-immigrant DW on *foxnews.com*, top headline of the day, increased after Trump’s election by 817% when comparing January through October to just November and December, and by 1,066% if January of 2017 – through the inauguration – is added to the equation.⁶ In Figure 2, anti-Jewish slurs rose on *4chan*’s chat board during the same period (between the vertical red dots, election, and the vertical green dots, inauguration). The association between Figure 2’s computer analysis and this study’s content analysis is striking. Noticing a 1,066% increase in topic selection belies subjectivity. The hateful rhetoric in Figure 2 decreased after the inauguration but increased throughout 2017, similar to the 2017 *foxnews.com* increase in anti-immigrant DW in Table 3 (+103.4% for all levels combined, but +700% for Level A alone).

Figure 2. “Understanding Online Anti-Semitism” (Zannettou *et al.* 2019).



⁶ Anti-immigrant DW, Level A, 2016 (unadjusted #s): first 10 months (6); last 2 months (11); January 2017 (10).

The relationships are obvious. At the risk of belaboring the point, two seemingly unrelated events are associated: Trump's and *foxnews.com*'s anti-immigrant rhetoric, and white supremacist anti-Jewish rhetoric. Anti-Jewish hate crimes (Table 3) associate with the former as much as the latter. Recall that Koopmans and Olzak (2004) emphasize that objective reporting on immigrants targets them for hate crimes. What this study asserts is that grievance-oriented reporting on immigrants targets not just them but anyone who looks like them (Hispanic Americans), and anyone (the Jewish community) who supports minorities and immigrants. Hypothesis #2 proposes an association between discourse and violence. That did not occur in 2009, which I suggested was due to a calm executive voice. The findings for 2016/2017 are supportive of an (anti-immigrant) discourse/violence association, however, as well as the expected association between social media hate and the use of DW and MDT on *foxnews.com*.

What became apparent while analyzing *foxnews.com* in 2008/2009 (while hate crimes decreased) was that Senator John McCain, the Republican presidential candidate of 2008, and Fox News' coverage of him and his favorite topics, could be used as a null in comparison with 2016/2017, Fox News' coverage of Trump and his favorite topics (while hate crimes increased). The executive voices of McCain (2008) and Obama (2009) are the null to Trump (2016/2017), with Fox News in the role of co-conspirator. Khoo (2017) explains this co-dependent relationship by asserting that Trump's contradictions, his racism and denials of racism, invite "'bad faith' among his supporters [who are] invited to support him because of his racist views, but [who] also tell... others that's not why they support him" (39).

In 2008, Fox News was akin to a cable version of another Trump codependent, the *National Enquirer*, as these headlines, displayed alongside international crises like the Russian invasion of Georgia, attest: 4/8/08: “Bear Suits up for Ice Hockey”; 6/26/08: “Dogs Used in Porn Films to be Spared Death.” Fox News’ tabloid nature did not disappear by 2016: 10/12/16: “Bigfoot spotted in Michigan?”; 8/5/17: “UFO over St. Louis?” – though an outward appearance more in line with other news sources is evident. As noted, the 2008 heavily tabloid version of *foxnews.com* was occasionally objective about candidate Obama, at least in comparison to candidate Hillary Clinton: 1/9/08: “Why Obama is Hot and Clinton is Not.” There is a pro-Republican slant to *foxnews.com*’s 2008 reporting, but also objectivity and, importantly, a relative dearth of anti-immigrant rhetoric. This suggests that Fox News in 2008/2009 is a reasonable null to the 2016/2017 version.

Table 4: Immigration DW; election years, 2008 versus 2016.⁷

2008/2016 Code 1a	<u>2008</u> 12 months John McCain & <i>foxnews.com</i>	<u>2016</u> 12 months Donald Trump & <i>foxnews.com</i>	% +/- 2008 to 2016 anti-immigrant rhetoric (AIR)
Level A	3	17	<u>+466.7%</u>
Level B	10	50	<u>+400%</u>
Level C	23	76	<u>+230.4%</u>

In Table 5, an odd finding is the high number of anti-Hispanic/anti-Jewish hate crimes at the end of the W. Bush presidency despite the scarcity of anti-immigrant

⁷ These #s are not adjusted to reflect election year 4-month segments; they are total #s.

rhetoric in 2008. This rejects Hypothesis #2, that ‘anti’ rhetoric associates with hate crime, though in a reverse manner from 2009 when there *was* ‘anti’ rhetoric against Barack Obama but a *decrease* in hate crimes.

Table 5: Immigration statistics and immigration DW; 2008 (McCain)/2009 (Obama) versus 2016/2017 (Trump); plus anti-Hispanic and anti-Jewish hate crimes

YEAR	Persons obtaining lawful permanent status (POLPS) & Aliens apprehended (AA)	Anti-immigrant Rhetoric (AIR)	Anti-Hispanic Hate Crimes (AHHC)	Anti-Jewish Hate Crimes (AJHC)
2008 ; Senator John McCain of Arizona, Republican candidate for president. Outgoing President George W. Bush.	(POLPS): 1,107,126; 6.4% less than 2016; 1.8% less than 2017 (slightly less gaining legal status). (AA): 1,043,759; 96.8% MORE than 2016; 126% MORE than 2017 (many MORE undocumented aliens apprehended).	(AIR) on <i>foxnews.com</i> in 2008. See Table 4. Significantly less than 2016.	(AHHC): 561 at the end of the <u>W. Bush</u> era; 63.1% higher than 2016. Numbers decrease during <u>Obama</u> ’s presidency to 344 in 2016, then start to rise.	(AJHC): 1,013 at the end of the <u>W. Bush</u> era; 48.1% higher than 2016. Numbers decrease during <u>Obama</u> ’s presidency to 684 in 2016, then start to rise.
2009 ; President Barack Obama of Illinois; Democrat.	(POLPS): 1,130,818; 4.5% less than 2016; 0.3% less than 2017 (slightly less gaining legal status). (AA): 889,712; 67.8% MORE than 2016; 92.8% MORE than 2017 (many MORE undocumented aliens apprehended).	(AIR) on <i>foxnews</i> 2009. 32.3% more than 2008; but 297.2% LESS than 2016, and 480.5% LESS than 2017.	(AHHC): <u>Obama</u> : Anti-Hispanic hate crimes: ‘08: <u>W. Bush</u> : 561); ‘09: 483 ; ‘10: 534 ; ‘11: 405 ; ‘12: 384 ; ‘13: 331 ; ‘14: 299 ; ‘15: 299 ; ‘16: 344 .	(AJHC): <u>Obama</u> : Anti-Jewish hate crimes: ‘08: <u>W. Bush</u> : 1,013); ‘09: 931 ; ‘10: 887 ; ‘11: 771 ; ‘12: 674 ; ‘13: 625 ; ‘14: 609 ; ‘15: 664 ; ‘16: 684 .

<p>2016; Donald Trump of New York (border state with Canada); Republican candidate for president.</p>	<p>(POLPS): 1,183,505; 6.9% more than 2008; 4.7% more than 2009 (slightly more gaining legal status). (AA): 530,250; 49.2% LESS than 2008; 40.4% LESS than 2009 (many FEWER undocumented aliens apprehended).</p>	<p>(AIR) on <i>foxnews</i> 2016: Level A: 17 (+466.7% over 2008). Level B: 50 (+400% over 2008). Level C: 76 (+230% over 2008). Table 4.</p>	<p>(AHHC): <u>W. Bush</u>: '04: 475; '05: 522; '06: 576; '07: 595; '08: 561; first year of <u>Obama</u>: '09: 483. Last year of <u>Obama</u>: '16: 344. <u>Trump</u>: '17: 427; '18: 485.</p>	<p>(AJHC): <u>W. Bush</u>: '04: 954; '05: 848; '06: 967; '07: 969; '08: 1,013; first year of <u>Obama</u>: '09: 931. Last year of <u>Obama</u>: '16: 684. <u>Trump</u>: '17: 938; '18: 835.</p>
<p>2017; President Donald Trump.</p>	<p>(POLPS): 1,127,167; 1.8% more than 2008; 0.32% less than 2009 (no significant difference with either year). (AA): 461,540; 55.8% LESS than 2008; 48.1% LESS than 2009 (many FEWER undocumented aliens apprehended).</p>	<p>(AIR) on <i>foxnews</i>: 2017. Increase of +103.4% over even the high totals of 2016 (+700% on Level A): See Table 3.</p>	<p>(AHHC) #s are less than at the end of the <u>W. Bush</u> presidency, but rise under <u>Trump</u> after a decline under <u>Obama</u>.</p>	<p>(AJHC) #s are less than at the end of the <u>W. Bush</u> presidency, but rise under <u>Trump</u> after a decline under <u>Obama</u>.</p>

What instigated the rising hate crimes of the W. Bush era? Rhetoric which dominated public discourse included the Middle East wars, Iran, crime, and the collapsing economy – physical and economic fears. Those are possibilities. Similarly, comparing Republicans like Ronald Reagan, W. Bush, and Trump to the 1877 – 1932 era, one may note the juxtaposition of financial crashes and hate crimes, reinvigorating the economic control variable debate.

Further investigation of Table 5 shows generally equal totals of immigrants receiving legal status across the two transitional seasons, 2008/2009 and 2016/2017. This control variable cannot relate to both the 15.1% decrease in hate crimes in 2009 and the 17.2% increase in 2017. What also fails to associate is the early Obama era decrease in hate crimes against Hispanics and the immigrant-supportive Jewish community when large numbers of undocumented immigrants crossed the border and were apprehended. The increase in those hate crimes, anti-Hispanic and anti-Jewish, after steady declines during the Obama administration, occurred in 2016/2017 when many fewer undocumented immigrants crossed the border and were apprehended. There was no obvious physical threat in 2016/2017.⁸ What does relate is *foxnews.com*'s anti-immigrant rhetoric: relatively little during the 2008/2009 decrease in hate crimes, but nearly an obsession with immigration during the 2016/2017 increase in hate crimes (Table 3). Another oddity is that the 2008 Republican candidate, McCain, was from Arizona, bordering Mexico, while the 2016 Republican candidate, Trump, was from New York. If anyone might have hyped immigration concerns, it was McCain, yet immigration did not become a *foxnews.com* obsession in 2008.

However, Bill O'Reilly did do his best in 2008/2009 to ignite the immigration debate: 9/22/08: "Illegal Immigration Issue Explodes"; 11/19/08: "Immigration Chaos"; 2/5/09: "How the Far Left Plans to Change America by Using Illegal Immigrants";

⁸ Stelter (2020) reports that migrant caravans existed for many years, for safety and support reasons. Fox News began to highlight the caravans after Trump fired FBI Director James Comey for "the Russia thing," searched the blog-o-sphere for unverified conspiracy content and reported that hundreds of ISIS terrorists traveled within the caravans. Not true.

2/24/09: “Chandra (Levy) Murdered by Illegal?” *Foxnews.com*’s anti-immigrant headlines increased slightly in 2009 over 2008 but no executive voice picked up the hysterical rhetoric. An anti-immigrant obsession did not immediately take hold. During the next presidential election, 2012, with undocumented alien immigration still decreasing, Justice Antonin Scalia, a conservative on the U.S. Supreme Court, wrote, “Arizona bears the brunt of the country’s illegal immigration problem. Its citizens feel themselves under siege...” (*Arizona v. United States*, 567 U.S. 387). Drakulich (2015) explains how media attention to an issue – like immigration – develops into a moral panic when political actors – like Scalia or Trump in 2016 – stoke a “latent concern” about shifting racial group positions, symbolic boundaries – like a border wall – and manipulate “perceptions of the distinctions between groups as a way of rallying support for specific actors or causes” (393). Returning to the issues of framing and frame amplification, the process is clear:

1. Problem identification framing: McCain did not hype immigration in 2008, but O’Reilly raised a common political issue in need of rational solutions to the level of a serious problem with terminology (codes) like ‘explosion,’ ‘chaos,’ and ‘murder.’
2. Attributional framing: O’Reilly claimed the ‘far left’ was using illegal immigration for their own purposes. Above, it was shown that one of his favorite ‘far left’ targets was the ACLU, meaning liberal lawyers, easily translated in the fevered mind to Jewish

lawyers. If O'Reilly, or Trump, did not specifically emphasize the association between the Jewish community and immigrants, it was easy enough for their adherents to visit social media hate sites to make the connection themselves.

3. Motivational framing: the 'far left's' purpose in 'using' immigrants allegedly was to 'change America,' to shift racial group positions by flooding the country with 'aliens.'

Only DW and MDT stand out as exacerbating variables when comparing 2008/2009 hate crime to 2016/2017 hate crime. Economic numbers continue to cause confusion: financial sector disaster and rising unemployment early in the Obama administration (which he inherited) which co-occurred with decreasing hate crimes, and economic boom and record low unemployment during the Trump candidacy and presidency (which he inherited) which co-occurred with rising hate crimes. The independent variable related to hate crime is the leading politician's rhetoric – the executive discourse. Interestingly, as Trump increased his anti-immigrant DW in late 2016, a prominent headline directed *foxnews.com* adherents to a social media hate site, the reverse pathway mentioned above: 11/28/16: "As Twitter cracks down on alt-right, aggrieved members flee to 'Gab.'"

Social media hate in 2016/2017, Figure 2, was anti-Black as well as anti-Jewish. Anti-Black hate crime was stable while Obama was bashed by Fox News, 2009 to 2016. Then a rise of 15.8% in anti-Black hate crime occurred in 2017; this associates with Figure 2's rise in the use of the N-word and Trump's first year in office. In 2016, while

Trump campaigned, anti-Obama references on *foxnews.com* were high for a non-ballot politician. More than 700 negative references appeared in 2016⁹, making percentage changes irrelevant. It is suggestive that *foxnews.com*'s criticism of Obama rose after Trump's nomination even though Trump's opponent was Ms. Clinton. A fixation with a retiring Black president rose to Level A and increased by 100% *after* the election. These DW decreased in 2017 and yet the drumbeat of negativity surpassed 450 references. Obama's Affordable Care Act was eventually popular with a majority of Americans, and so it is plausible that the Trump/*foxnews.com* Obama focus in 2016/2017 was about race, not policy. The same can be said for the use of the N-word shown in Figure 2.

Table 6: Obama references (top) and Little guy/folks vs. system/elites (bottom); 2016

2016 anti-Obama 1d	Segment 1	Segment 2	2016 S1 to S2 % +/-	Segment 3	2016 S2 to S3 % +/-	Anti-Black hate crimes
Level A	10.67	5	-53.1%	10	+100.4%	2016: 1739 -0.3% decrease from 2015
Level B	19.34	30	+55.1%	6	-80%	2017: 2013 +15.8% increase from 2016
Level C	43.36	32	-26.2%	20	-37.5%	2018: 1943 -3.5% decrease from 2017
2016 Little guy/folks vs. System/elites: 3a	Segment 1	Segment 2	2016 S1 to S2 % +/-	Segment 3	2016 S2 to S3 % +/-	
Level A	2.67	1	-62.5%	6	+500%	
Level B	19.34	12	-38%	32	+166.7%	
Level C	52.69	53	+0.6%	78	+47.2%	

⁹ 195 anti-Obama code hits in 2016 (unadjusted #s) multiplied by 3.75 (a standard 30-day month was divided by 8 days of quasi-random content analysis to get the 3.75 multiplier).

Notably, Little guy/folks vs. System/elites, Code 3a, shows a similar though exaggerated trend. Percentage decreases prior to the election are less important than the repetition of combative content. This study's quasi-random selection was only once every 3.75 days. Imagine 950 us-versus-them headlines from a news network during an election year. What also stands out are the percentage increases post-election. As *foxnews.com* reported on Trump and his rhetoric, it is notable that immediately after his 2016 electoral victory, anti-Obama, 'little guy' binary rhetoric increased on the Fox Network's most sedate outlet. Nightly commentary from the likes of Tucker Carlson, with his white supremacist lead writer, was plausibly more strident (Witness Carlson's August 2020, 3d, sacred versus profane attack on Obama for mentioning voting rights at John Lewis' funeral). On-going anti-Obama rhetoric in 2016/2017 is remarkable given how intense it was previously; consider this 4/13/09 chat responding to the *foxnation.com* article "A Sin," which is not unusual on the Fox member site and mirrors *4chan*'s chat board slurs:

maybe [sic] hitlerobama's momma should have had a [sic]
 abortion then we would not be having this conversation.back [sic]
 in the day if they didnt (sic) want the burr head [sic] they
 smacked him against the wall and that was the end.

Interestingly, *Foxnews.com* was not uniformly kind to Trump during the 2016 primary season: 2/15/16: "Trump verges on tantrums"; 2/29/16: "Cruz hints Trump tied to mob biz..."; 2/29/16: "Rubio, Cruz... aim attacks at Trump following KKK endorsement"; 4/1/16: "Cops find man accused of pepper spraying girl at Trump rally." In fact, Stelter (2020) reports several Rupert Murdoch attempts to rein in Trump's rhetoric during the

2016 primaries. The change in *foxnews.com*'s tone toward Trump after the convention reflects a decision to drop critique in favor of defending Trump's rhetoric. Roger Ailes, president of Fox News since its inception, was banned from Fox by July of 2016 and then died in 2017. Trump's executive voice became the muse of Fox News, as Smith (2019) and Stelter (2020) assert, and praise of Trump rose in 2017. Stelter (2020) even describes a revolving door between Fox News and the Trump White House: a Fox News commentator becoming ambassador to Germany and then Director of National Intelligence; a Fox News executive becoming the White House Communications Director; and that Trump rewarded these Fox employees and others who praised and defended him, his words, and his policies no matter how inflammatory.

A final comparison of 2009 (Obama's first year in office; hate crime decrease) with 2017 (Trump's first year in office; hate crime increase) considers rhetoric which targets immigrants; claims sole possession of the truth while headlining information later shown to be false; and touts the need to protect gun rights. The combination indicates a troubling trend of focusing on minority populations, misguided and disturbed thought by *foxnews.com* adherents, and guns.

Table 7: *Foxnews.com* rhetoric; 1st year of Obama versus 1st year of Trump.

Obama vs. Trump	1a: Anti-immigrant references	1g: Gun rights references	3c: Media Bias	4b: Proven wrong, or just absurd	Hate Crimes
2009 <u>Obama</u> 1 st 9 months	41	18	60	55	15.1% <i>decrease</i> from 2008
2017 <u>Trump</u> 1 st 9 months	238	30	176	186	17.2% <i>increase</i> from 2016

% increase 2009 (Obama) to 2017 (Trump)	<u>+480.5%</u> Anti- immigrant	<u>+66.7%</u> Pro-gun	<u>+193.3%</u> Believe only Fox News	<u>+238.2%</u> Fox News blatant falsehoods	
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Under Trump, a nearly 500 percent increase is seen in anti-immigrant rhetoric. In assertions proven false over time, the increase is 238.2% despite significantly less time to assess the assertions. This measurement of falsehoods reflects Trump/*foxnews.com* in 2017 compared to *foxnews.com* alone in 2009. Trump was irrelevant in 2009 save for advice offered to the Obama administration on how to handle the H1N1 epidemic (4/30/09). There is also a nearly 200% increase in rhetoric encouraging the audience to believe only *foxnews.com* (or Trump himself). The *Washington Post* tally of Trump presidential falsehoods passed the 18,000 mark in April of 2020 (Kessler *et al.* 2020); thus, the numbers presented here may be understated. Rhetoric defending the right to bear arms in contest with alleged government overreach increased by two-thirds. These are increases in *foxnews.com* focus, 2009 (low) compared to 2017 (high), based upon an accommodation (Khoo 2017) with the change in executive voice.

The effect of control variables on this analysis is inconsistent. This study employs POS scores¹⁰, showing a combined executive/legislative branch score of ‘3’ for 2008, ‘7’ (most liberal) for 2009 (when hate crimes decreased by 15.1%), ‘2’ for 2016, and ‘0’ (most conservative, or reactionary) for 2017 (when hate crimes increased by 17.2%). This

¹⁰ Executive/legislative POS scores. A scale of ‘0–7’ is used, ‘7’ being most liberal, ‘0’ most conservative. ‘0’ is when the president is Republican (R), the Senate and House both (R). ‘1’ is the president and House (R), the Senate 50/50 with the vice-president (R). ‘2’ is two bodies (R) and one body Democrat (D). ‘3’ is president (R), House (D), the Senate 50/50 with the vice-president (R). ‘4’ is president (D), House (R), the Senate 50/50 with the vice-president (D). ‘5’ is two bodies (D) and one body (R). ‘6’ is president and House (D), the Senate 50/50 with the vice-president (D). ‘7’ is the president (D), and the Senate and House both (D).

displays a degree of relevance. Note that both houses of Congress were Republican controlled for 2016/2017 while presidential rhetoric switched from Obama to Trump. The executive voice change to Trump is the only POS factor which relates to 2017's increase in hate crimes. As well, note the decrease in hate crimes in the first year of Obama's presidency (2009). These associations seem more than coincidence.

The U.S. Supreme Court's influence was separated from the executive/legislative POS due to the extraordinary controversies surrounding the Court's decisions and the politicization of appointments in recent decades. The Court's right/left balance in 2008/2009 and 2016/2017 is estimated by averaging Martin-Quinn scores¹¹ for the nine relevant justices. In 2008/2009, the average scores were 0.254/0.210, positive numbers reflecting more conservatism. One might suggest this environment incentivized (or calmed) white genocide fear mongers. Hate crimes decreased by 15.1% in 2009. For 2016/2017, the average scores decreased to -0.301/-0.289, indicating, at least, increased liberality. Could this be why hate crimes increased by 17.2% in 2017? This seems unlikely as conservative control remained with a 5-4 majority. These numbers are too few to suggest any associations, are contradictory, and are prone to subjectivity.

¹¹ Martin Quinn Scores: U.S. Supreme Court, 2008 – 2009, and 2016 – 2017. 1. Kennedy. 2. Scalia 3. Thomas. 4. Kagan. 5. Roberts. 6. Gorsuch. 7. Ginsburg. 8. Alito. 9. Breyer. 10. Sotomayor. 11. Souter. 12. J.P. Stevens.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
2008	0.55	2.294	3.517	X	1.485	X	-1.741	1.792	-1.191	X	-1.582	-2.838
2009	0.514	2.28	3.373	X	1.364	X	-1.692	1.815	-1.326	-1.596	X	-2.848
2016	-0.055	X	3.151	-1.656	0.341	1.232	-2.814	1.745	-1.531	-3.12	X	X
2017	0.396	X	3.065	-1.724	0.409	1.191	-2.86	1.907	-1.711	-3.273	X	X

Yearly averages: 2008: +0.254. 2009: +0.210. 2016: -0.301. 2017: -0.289.

For an income inequality gap (IIG) indicator, I employed Enns' method (2016), the income of the top 5% divided by the income of the bottom 20%. Larger indicators imply larger IIG. Enns justifies his method with the power and privilege theory of Chambliss and Seidmen (1971), though it is his own formula.¹² Worth recognition is that IIG was less in 2008/2009 (8.690/8.801) when hate crimes decreased, and greater in 2016/2017 (9.385/9.727) when hate crimes increased, though the scarcity of numbers leaves their influence in doubt.

Unemployment and GDP¹³ are problematic as variables as stated above in the method section. Government websites were accessed for reliable figures, but with only four years' worth of statistics to consider, any possible effect is undetermined.

Ethnic tension is measured by net immigration to the U.S. and undocumented aliens apprehended.¹⁴ Government websites provide accurate statistics. These numbers are noteworthy considering that undocumented alien apprehension was up when hate

¹² Income inequality: U.S. Census. Historical Income Tables. Table H-1: "Income Limits for Each Fifth and Top 5 Percent of all Households." <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-income-inequality.html>.

Year	Lowest 5 th	Top 5 Percent	Income Inequality Gap
2008	\$20,712	\$180,000	8.690
2009	\$20,453	\$180,001	8.801
2016	\$24,002	\$225,251	9.385
2017	\$24,732.50	\$240,561	9.727

¹³ **Unemployment:** Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/bls/unemployment.htm>. 2008: 5.8. 2009: 9.3. 2016: 4.9. 2017: 4.4. **GDP:** Bureau of Economic Analysis: <https://www.bea.gov/data/gdp/gross-domestic-product>. 2008: -2.75%. 2009: 0.18%. 2016: 2.03%. 2017: 2.80%.

¹⁴ Immigration influx; economic and cultural competition: Department of Homeland Security: <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2018>. Persons Obtaining Lawful Permanent Status by Year: Table 1: 2008: 1,107,126. 2009: 1,130,818. 2016: 1,183,505. 2017: 1,127,167. Aliens Apprehended by Year: Table 33: 2008: 1,043,759. 2009: 889,212. 2016: 530,250. 2017: 461,540.

crimes were down (2009), and apprehensions were down when hate crimes were up (2017). These illogical non-associations and their possible meanings were discussed above.

This analysis relies on the assumption that *foxnews.com*, and Fox News in general, are substantially different than other *major* media sources in approach and philosophy. Norton (2011) asserts that Fox News is singular in its simple surface appearance which hides a complicated superstructure of predetermined conclusions and partisan ideology *which are applied to any story* which may arise. Networks like MSNBC and CNN give substantial effort in trying to *tweak meaning from* any particular story by considering multiple points of view and pointedly not twisting the story in order to slot it into a semiotic structure of predetermined outcomes. To simplify and clarify this comparison between Fox News and the likes of MSNBC and CNN, please consider the pilot study discussed in Appendix A.

Abjuring a direct causal connection, there is an association between the majority of hate crime perpetrators (next paragraph) and the majority of Fox News viewers – the white race. According to Public Opinion Strategies' polls, 74% of Fox News viewers are white, while only 10% are Black and 9% are Hispanic. It is also interesting, in consideration of Drakulich's (2015) assertion that education reduces racism, that 70% of Fox News viewers possess only a high school diploma or "some college" (POS 2020: 1). MSNBC's viewers are 11% more likely than Fox News viewers to hold a college degree. The connection between Trump and the Republican Party with Fox News is confirmed as well: 71% of Fox News viewers consider themselves to be conservatives or moderates,

while only 34% of MSNBC viewers hold the same views. It also seems relevant given Case and Deaton's (2020) analysis of the stressors facing the working-class white male and the detrimental effects of those stressors on the working-class white male *and others*, that Fox News viewers are 10% more likely than MSNBC viewers to be blue collar workers. Generally speaking, Fox News viewers are less educated, more conservative (reactionary), working-class, and white.

FBI statistics (as well as the literature review) demonstrate that a majority of hate crimes, if not all hate crimes, are committed by whites against minorities. This is confirmed by the National Crime Victims' Rights Week website, which reports that "according to the [FBI's] UCR, racially motivated hate crimes are the most frequent," and that "of racially motivated hate crime offenses... 48% were by white perpetrators, 24% by black perpetrators" (NCVRW 2018). The Koopmans and Olzak (2004) study asserted as well that the majority of German hate crime perpetrators were racially motivated, and though generally younger than American hate crime perpetrators, were also white. A similar conclusion comes from Wales, where the finding is that "the majority of hate crime offenders in the UK are white, male and under 25," though "hate crime offenders convicted of more serious and violent offences tend to be older" (Roberts *et al.* 2013: 3).

Finally, it is vital to emphasize that the conservative/liberal divide is a false divide. Briefly discussed above is the remarkable rise in national debt which began under the so-called conservative Ronald Reagan. Starting a war with, at best, magical thinking – as George W. Bush did – is not conservative. Trump's canceling of the Paris Climate

Accord, drilling for oil in wildlife preserves, canceling clean water and air regulations, and cutting down national forests are not actions particularly conservative in nature. In fact, it can be argued that dismissing the imminent climate crisis (which is mocked constantly by Fox News) is wildly radical. The supposedly liberal MSNBC, however, regularly features eight former federal prosecutors (not known for their liberality), and numerous former CIA, FBI, and DOJ officials. MSNBC employs show hosts like Joe Scarborough and Nicole Wallace who were, until recently, Republicans. The conservative/liberal comparison between Fox News and MSNBC/CNN is a false one. The comparison, as shown in Appendix A, is between Fox News' falsehoods, partisanship, and conspiracies (which are leveraged for financial advantage) with the relative objectivity employed by other major media outlets, regardless of their other faults.

*

Conclusion

This study does not establish a causal connection between discourse and violence, and yet I do claim an increase, however obvious as 2020 progresses, of the evidence of an association between the independent and dependent variables. This study finds that *foxnews.com* and the social media hate sites synced with one other in 2016/2017 in regard to anti-‘other’ focus (as shown in Figure 2, and Tables 2 and 3). Their mutual association with a rise in hate crimes is also obvious. Both elements of Hypothesis #2 are thus supported for anti-immigrant, anti-‘other’ DW in 2016/2017. Trump/*foxnews.com*

discourse surrounding alleged elite and ‘deep state’ bias against ‘little guys,’ Obama as a bad president, and anti-immigrant rhetoric associates with hate crimes. When hateful, *executive voice* rhetoric rises significantly, supported by sympathetic media, violence occurs in close association.

Hypothesis #1 – the greater use of DW and MDT in election years – was rejected for 2008/2009 (Table 1) in regard to anti-Obama, anti-‘socialism,’ anti-Democratic rhetoric, which exploded in 2009 with the health care reform debate. Hypothesis #1 is also rejected for 2016/2017 anti-immigrant rhetoric because the repetition of content grew steadily after the election and increased in the post-election year (Table 3). Partial support for Hypothesis #1 comes from Table 6 with anti-Obama/‘little guy’ binary numbers from 2016 higher than the following year (2017 not shown, but described). These contradictions are noted to assert that theories which support Hypothesis #1 seem too broad. A particular election’s topics should be viewed individually, as some topics create a large amount of discourse which soon subsides, while other topics create ongoing controversy and debate.

Control variables do matter and an expanded study with more years and more numbers to compare would be useful. It seems plausible that a mix of economic and ethnic tensions, judicial restraint or license, local laws, police protection or brutality, group norms and history all contribute to or restrain a charged atmosphere – the cultural zeitgeist which informs an entire society. The more certain association is that when an aggrieved population’s problems are targeted for commercial and political exploitation;

when those aggravations are heightened into injustices; when blame is assigned to targeted persons or populations and danger is signaled as impending; then the stage is set for a populist demagogue's discourse to initiate violence. This description also fits Weimar Germany of the late 1920s and early 1930s when Adolph Hitler was a narcissistic buffoon with criminal intent, a failed career, and an ugly mustache, though his secret agreement with Stalin to test weapons inside the Soviet Union seems a coincidence.

Further study, connecting the continuity of reactionary rhetoric from past to present, might consider U.S. Supreme Court opinions of the lynching era, 1877 – 1932¹⁵, codified for MDTs to consider associations between elite judicial discourse and violence endemic to the era. If bias is identified in the legal jargon, how was it transmitted to the public? Similar coding could be done with newspaper coverage from the 1950s and 1960s to see if DW and MDT came from the newspapers themselves or from the executive voice of Southern governors (See Appendix B for examples). Further study might also consider the strikingly similar graph curves of income inequality gap, national debt, and mass incarceration, all of which began exponential growth in 1981 during Reagan's reactionary counter-revolution (Republicans who abandoned Trump cling to

¹⁵ Supreme Court cases, the lynching era; gleaned from *Simple Justice* (Kluger 1975): *Slaughterhouse Cases*, 16 Wallace 36 (1873); *United States v. Cruikshank*, 92 U.S. 542 (1875); *United States v. Reese*, 92 U.S. 214 (1876); *Strauder v. West Virginia*, 100 U.S. 303 (1879); *Virginia v. Rives*, 100 U.S. 313 (1880); *United States v. Harris*, 106 U.S. 629 (1883); *Civil Rights Cases*, 109 U.S. 3 (1883); *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*, 118 U.S. 356 (1886); *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896); *Williams v. Mississippi*, 170 U.S. 213 (1898); *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education*, 175 U.S. 528 (1899); *Berea College v. Kentucky*, 211 U.S. 45 (1908); *Guinn v. United States*, 238 U.S. 347 (1915); *Buchanan v. Warley*, 245 U.S. 60 (1917); *Moore v. Dempsey*, 261 U.S. 86 (1923); *Corrigan v. Buckley*, 271 U.S. 323 (1926); *Gong Lum v. Rice*, 275 U.S. 78 (1927).

past heroes like Reagan and fail to recognize historical trends). Furthermore, Stelter (2020) writes about reactionary turns in Fox News rhetoric and topic selection which occurred in 2003 after George W. Bush's rationale for the war in Iraq was questioned, 2009 (covered above), and in October of 2018 as the midterm elections approached.¹⁶ Similar content analysis to that above could be done over the entire history of Fox News to search for less dramatic shifts in tone and what trends in hate crimes might associate with those shifts. As stated above, this thesis contends that comparisons of Hitler and Trump are reasonable (there is a difference of degree, but not of kind), and it would be interesting to track shifts of rhetoric in German newspapers, radio, and film from, say, 1925 to 1935, to determine when particular media lost their way. Was there a tipping point, a particular moment when media hate rhetoric shifted dramatically, when demagogue and media source came into close alignment?

Concerning the present moment, when 2020 hate crime statistics are released in the fall of 2021, one might return to the question of an economic control variable given the financial meltdown of 2020 related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, thirteen men have been arrested for conspiring to kidnap Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, a regular target of Trump tweet attacks. These suspects were from at least two different states, widely separated, and their activities apparently came to the attention of law enforcement officials through social media posts. What specific posts had they made?

¹⁶ In fact, Stelter (2020) reports that after the October 2018 increase in Fox News' anti-immigrant rhetoric and the soon-to-follow Tree of Life shooting, soon-to-retire Fox News anchor Shepard Smith admitted that Fox News' rhetoric was not helpful, and showcased a noted criminologist's opinion that the mass shooting, eleven dead, was probably not a coincidence.

Perhaps each of the thirteen, or similar disgruntled persons, could be subjected to Cat Scans to determine what sort of social media posts, what particular words, phrases, and combinations, cause activity in the aggressive parts of the brain. In particular, the effect of false content repetition could be studied, though that might be medically unethical. Also, consider that Barack Obama, our first Black president, precipitated, as shown above, a hard right turn by Fox News in 2009. Will Fox News make another reactionary turn in 2021 when faced with a Black/Indian American female in the Executive Office Building, one heartbeat away from the White House?

Future events might provide opportunities for enlightenment as well. As the 2024 presidential election approaches, will another demagogue arise and will Fox News, or One American News Network or Newsmax, attach to the political figure in a nonobjective manner and suffer a (further) loss of objectivity? What will be the effect of various lawsuits filed against these reactionary news sources by the voting machine technology companies, and how will the dog whistles, malicious discursive techniques, and binary argumentation be employed in a world of multi-billion dollar defamation lawsuits? A sign of the future: the telling attacks upon Neera Tanden, President Biden's nominee for OMB Director, a woman of color whose often humorous jibes at Republicans were given indignant priority on Fox News over Senator Ted "the vampire" Cruz's trip to Cancun while Texans froze, starved, and died of Covid-19.

From a purely theoretical viewpoint, further study might consider Ramirez's (2014) assertion that Blacks who lose faith in society and justice commit property crimes, while whites, as shown above with Garland's (2005) analysis, have been known to

commit atrocities such as castration, burning at the stake, and lynching. One might ask: 1. Do Blacks, knowing from cultural history that political structures do not support them (Soss & Weaver 2017), have less violent reactions to adult disappointments? 2. Conversely, are working-class whites disoriented to discover, as Black civil rights activist Dick Gregory asserted, that their economic position places them, regardless of a few perks, in the same social class as Blacks? (Leffler & Bond 2014).

This study has several limitations. The analysis employs a quasi-random selection method, lacks data collected over a long span of time, uses non-academic sources like the Smith (2019) and Stelter (2020) books, and is not generalizable, especially in regard to election year rhetoric. A measure of reliability does accrue from comparison with the Zannettou *et al.* (2019) material, but the outside coder statistics show generational, race, and gender disparities. Subjectivity was bound to influence the division of webpages into various levels as well as the recognition of code hits, especially during an emotional 2020 election season. Furthermore, *foxnews.com* was saved sporadically on the Internet Archive in 2008/2009, less consistently than in 2016/2017. This diminishes the opportunity to recognize and record certain discursive techniques. Also, any study using comparative-historical techniques may be criticized for selecting on the dependent variable, in this case hate crimes. I did choose the dependent variable that I was interested in studying “on the basis of the outcome” (Arthur 2011: 173). However, anomalous percentage changes in hate crimes indicated the specific years and “running records” (177) to be analyzed.

As well, the methods of this study raise endogeneity concerns, real but exaggerated by the misogynist tutorial of Antonakis (2011). His argument, a neat fit in the simplistic example he provides, is that the ‘X causes Y’ model is wrong if an omitted cause (U which causes X) and a disturbance term (E which causes Y) are unaccounted for. Both U and E may be caused by Z, thus Z causes X and Y and the proposed X/Y relationship is specious. Still, ignoring vetted history and concrete evidence by decrying their inability to find neat fits in labyrinthine formulas built on sketchy prejudices might also be labeled as specious. This study’s independent variable, Fox News’ discourse (X), is in fact affected by omitted causes (U), those being viewership adherence and sponsorship dollars. I could, then, define and admit U into the analysis as money. I accounted for this in the literature review: Fox News’ entertainment format and its obsession with ratings (Stelter 2020). The dependent variable, hate crimes (Y), is affected by disturbance terms, operationalized as social and economic stressors. I considered this as well, the American zeitgeist, in the literature review even if the variables have contradictory effect. What, then, might be the Z causing both the sponsorship dollars flowing into Fox News and the stressors affecting the white working-class? This factor resists observation, but for now I will suggest the sector of financial elites who support the deep meaning structure of Fox News and profit from the rising income inequality gap, mass incarceration, and national debt. There is a Z which affects U and E which affects X and Y respectively, and perhaps inclusive ‘Set Y,’ Fox News’ audience, feeds back through X (simultaneity) to further incentivize Z to provide U (\$) which supports X’s round-trip feeding of hyperbole back to the inclusive ‘Set Y.’ The relationships are

difficult to parse with exact coefficients, but that fails to deny an association between X's hyperbole and inclusive 'Set Y's' emotional state which may lead, at whatever coefficient, to a disturbed and misled 'Sub-set Y' committing hate crimes: 'Sub-sub-set Y.'

It is vital "to bridge the gap that still exists between scholarship and society" (Van Dijk 1991). The implication of this study is recognizing the damage caused when the white working-class is manipulated to fear and hate minorities. Reid (2019) argues that fear of the loss of racial superiority continues to exist. Working-class whites may intuit this fear as their life expectancy declines and approaches that of Blacks (Harper *et al.* 2012). Social antagonism stoked by the discourse of an elite class has contributed to hate crime since Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 (Rugemer 2013). During the rebellion, poor whites, white indentured servants, and Black slaves joined forces against the class warfare perpetrated by the financial elites of Virginia (at the expense of Native Americans, by the way: even the poorest of the poor may try to rise on the backs of others, as women know all too well). After Bacon's Rebellion, the elites of Virginia recognized the need to favor poor whites, however slightly, over the Black population. Perloff (2000) recognizes this trend, citing the brief urge of poor white and Black farmers to unite against tenant farming abuses of the 1890s. The elite reaction was to legally disenfranchise the Black vote, and to align "poor whites against Blacks through the propagation of extremist ideology and terror" (762). This sounds eerily familiar in 2020.

Paulo Freire (1970) wrote that "it is a rare peasant who, once 'promoted' to overseer, does not become more of a tyrant towards his former comrades than the owner

himself' (46). Freire's philosophy of pedagogy, which moves away from what he calls the banking model of education, might resolve some of the difficulties outlined above. Instead of 'depositing' relatively useless information into students to be memorized, reproduced on paper and then forgotten (see the Hapsburgs, Bourbons, Hohenzollerns, and slope of the line), Freire advocates a discussion between educators and students where each learns from the other and, most importantly, vital issues of the day are discussed to raise the critical consciousness of all involved. A person cannot understand what restricts and diminishes their life until they are able to comprehend *the constructed social system* (see below) in which they are subsumed and demeaned in their very humanity. This might be especially important for working-class white males who believe that minorities, women, and the LGBTQ community are conspiring to abscond with what little has been left to them by elitist economic policy.

Advances in civil rights for minorities (and others) often lead to a backlash. The end of slavery, Reconstruction, and the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments led to decades of the U.S. Supreme Court intentionally misinterpreting black letter law: malicious discursive technique. Earl Warren's Supreme Court and its democratic decisions led to white riots and terrorism against Blacks. Rosa Parks (Black woman), Betty Friedan (white woman), protesters against the Vietnam War (young students), and the protesters at the Stonewall Inn (homosexuals), are vital signposts in the arc of history. The counter-revolution, grasping onto past privileges, included Senator Joseph McCarthy (with Roy Cohn at his side), William F. Buckley and his *National Review*, George Wallace, Richard Nixon (with Roger Ailes at his side), Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush (also with

Roger Ailes at his side). Barack Obama, whatever his faults, brought a sense of hope and change, and the reaction was the hard right turn in 2009 by Fox News and the eventual replacement of Roger Ailes by Donald J. Trump as the muse of hysterical reaction.

An explanation for these types of reactions comes from Theda Skocpol who describes two stages of social revolution (Skocpol 1979). First, there is the crisis of the state, white male dominance in this instance, brought about by the social revolutions mentioned above and the Vietnam War (security concerns); the collapse of the Nixon presidency; and economic recession, oil embargoes, the destruction of unions, and stagnating wages (financial concerns). A sense of collective responsibility was lost as individual concerns came to the fore. Many U.S. citizens were tired of turmoil and did not understand, and feared, the need for social change. The second stage of social revolution was the reactionary counter-revolution against the social (community) advances of the 1960s. The income inequality gap which exploded under Reagan signaled the rise of a dominant, elite class of financial and political managers. This reaction aggrandized but a small percentage of the population, and since majority elections must be won to maintain control of power, it became necessary to manipulate the populace (and suppress the vote, one might note). The reality propagated by reactionary financial and political elites was one where individual rights were under assault by socialism: this was (and remains) a false social construction. Berger and Luckmann describe this process of distorting reality as habitualization (1967). Visibility for a false social construction was promoted and supported (invested in), repeated by trusted authorities (such as a house painter from Long Island like Sean Hannity), and

became ingrained in the American zeitgeist. The more an idea is granted consonant legitimacy, as shown in the content analysis above, the more it seems a proven fact. Society is, in fact, a habit, but not one we have constructed for ourselves, and not one to our own advantage, though, like Confederate soldiers, we can be manipulated to defend our own disadvantage.

Education and critical consciousness are keys to the future. Trump's attacks on higher education and support for suspect private universities like his own, predicted before his inauguration and as his own venture was called to account, are now part of his legacy (Williams 2016; Graham 2020). In 2020, however, it was women of all races with liberal educations who voted for the future. Generally speaking, it was white men with narrow mindsets, lacking in education, whether constrained in their worldview by Rush Limbaugh, Breitbart News (founded by Steve Bannon, indicted suspect who promotes beheading), the Drudge Report, social media hate sites, an originalist reading of flawed documents, or Fox News, who voted for four more years of Donald J. Trump. Seventy-four million Americans went to the polls in 2020 and said they wanted leadership from an impeached (soon to be twice impeached), tax-cheating, money-laundering dupe for Russian mobsters, traitorous, economy-and-environment-wrecking, serial lying, election-stealing, racist, raping, kidnapper and killer of children. These millions of bad choices, like Confederate flags, were based upon a false, socially constructed reality: unwarranted fear and anxiety, disinformation, and a misconstrued interpretation of individual rights versus community responsibility.

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Appendix A:

Pilot Study

This thesis does not deny the existence of multiple influences upon the American psyche: the American zeitgeist, or societal consciousness, as described above. Theoretically an individual might, for instance, commit a mass shooting after thirty years of para-social identification with *Dirty Harry*, Steven Seagal, Charles Bronson, Chuck Norris, and other violent film and television heroes. JSTOR lists more than 40,000 studies on that subject. Additionally, and sadly, there have been far too many killings and suicides related to troops returning from America's Thirty Year War in the Middle East. Rush Limbaugh's radio show, laced with bigoted and sexist commentary and a daily barrage of falsehoods, altered the American media landscape towards a hateful, aggrieved mindset, his Presidential Medal of Freedom notwithstanding. This thesis cannot consider every potential influence on the disturbed or distraught mind. I have chosen to consider cable news. The close relationship between President Trump and Fox News was as obvious as the relationship of the earth to the moon. The use of DW, MDT, and binary argumentation by Fox News, with 2008/2009 as the null to 2016/2017 (the influence of Trump on the use of rhetoric by Fox News), and any possible association with hate crimes, is the subject of this thesis. There is no other major subject which has been explored in depth. If that is seen as a weakness of this thesis, then so be it. The pilot study described below was added to justify the content analysis of *foxnews.com* as a major purveyor of reactionary, aggrieved, dishonest rhetoric, and to show the difference between Fox News and other major cable networks. To justify the use of CNN and MSNBC as the nulls to Fox News (though they are not the nulls of this thesis analysis), the following quotes must suffice:

“Fox News racked up its seventh straight year as the most-watched cable news channel, delivering an average prime-time viewership of 2.1 million, 40% more than 2007, according to data released Tuesday by Nielsen Media Research. CNN placed second with 1.3 million, up 69%, while MNSBC drew 920,000, a boost of 82%” (Matea Gold; *L.A. Times*; December 31, 2008; “For Cable News, A Dramatic Turn”).

“Fox News topped basic cable in both primetime and total-day viewing as the most-watched network among all of cable for the third quarter of 2016, while CNN beat rival MSNBC in most measurables. Fox News averaged 1.4 million total day viewers, compared to 787,000 for CNN and 676,000 for MSNBC. Among the key news demo of adults age 25-54, Fox News averaged 276,000 viewers while CNN's 240,000 beat MSNBC's 168,000” (Editors; *The Wrap*; September 27, 2016; “Cable News Ratings: Fox News Tops Third Quarter, CNN Beats MSNBC Among Demo”).

“In prime time, Fox News destroyed its competition, with an average total audience of 2.381 million viewers, compared to MSNBC's 1.384 million and CNN's 835,000. Among viewers 25-54, the group most coveted by advertisers, [Fox] shook off a challenge in recent months from MSNBC to claim a clear victory: 461,000 viewers, well ahead of MSNBC (329,000) and CNN (265,000)” (Mark Joyella; *Forbes*; May 30, 2018; “Fox News Steamrolls Cable News Competition With Big Win In May Ratings”).

“Fox News led the way with a whopping 4.9 million total viewers in prime time, the highest number in the history of cable news dating back 40 years. MSNBC was second with 2.7 million viewers, followed by CNN with 2.4 million” (Joe Concha; *The Hill*; October 27, 2020; “Cable news October ratings explode as Fox News hits historic highs”).

Pilot Study: From November 9 through November 13 (2020), and November 16 through November 20 (2020), *foxnews.com* was compared to MSNBC and CNN based upon the following codes: #1: Stories which seriously questioned the legitimacy of President-Elect Joe Biden's victory in the 2020

presidential election, or at least insinuated there might be a different result than the one Fox News itself announced on November 7; #2: Stories that gave straight-faced credence to the assertions of Trump's attorneys concerning allegations of widespread voter fraud, and/or the hopeful assertions of success in various courts; #3: Stories that took seriously, and related, the fears of individual Trump voters that the election was rigged, that 'Biden's Crime Team' had stolen the election, and/or that their personal vote had not been counted; #4: Stories that took seriously the comments of various U.S. Republican Senators and Representatives, and some Republican state officials, that Trump was within his rights to question the election results, that there might possibly be real instances of election fraud, and/or that they, as government officials, were reasonable in not recognizing Biden's victory.

The analysis was conducted using live webpages, not the Internet Archive, during the 10 business days listed above, during the hours of 12 – 2 pm (on a computer with Internet access), once the morning's headlines were generally stabilized, and/or from 6 – 8 pm (on a phone with Internet access), once the day's headlines were similarly stabilized.

Foxnews.com, for the 10 business days listed above, ran headlines/stories 51 times for Code #1; 32 times for Code #2; 33 times for Code #3; and 38 times for Code #4. The total number of stories run by *foxnews.com* casting doubt on the election (with a straight face) and inciting/justifying the fears of Trump voters/*foxnews.com* adherents, was 154. During the 10 business days listed above, MSNBC and CNN ran zero (0) stories casting serious doubt on the election (this is after the election was called on Saturday, November 7), and zero (0) stories which might justify the fears of Trump voters/*foxnews.com* adherents that the election was rigged. This comparison provides a stark contrast of *foxnews.com* supporting lies and conspiracy theories to the tune of 154 headlines/stories, while MSNBC and CNN did not provide straight-faced credence or substantiation to a single one of these stories/ideas/allegations/conspiracies. The contrast, the absolute singularity, of *foxnews.com* and Fox News in general *amongst all major media sources*, is clear and obvious.

The rise of *NewsMax* and *OANN* continues as facts, Republican defections, and lost corporate sponsorship force Fox News to represent a more realistic interpretation of reality. Specifically, Fox News' lawyers have stated that Tucker Carlson is in no way, shape, or form a presenter of the news, and multi-billion dollar lawsuits have been filed against Fox News by Dominion and Smartmatic, voting machine technology companies, asserting that Fox News' election claims defamed their companies.

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Appendix B:

Articles from the 1950s; examples from the *N.Y. Times* database

1. *N.Y. Times*. 6/6/1950. Dateline: Atlanta, GA; June 5 (AP). "Talmadge Defiant; Others Hail Court: Georgian Declares 'as Long as I Am Governor,' White Schools Will Bar Negroes." Page 19.
2. *N.Y. Times*. 5/28/51. Dateline: Charleston, SC; May 27. "South Acts to Keep Pupil Segregation: 'Resistance' Movements Being Formed – Test Case Opens Today in Charleston, SC." John N. Popham. Page 16.
3. *N.Y. Times*. 5/29/51. "Pupil Segregation Held Drag on U.S... Defense in South Carolina Case says, 'Local Conditions' Justify Dual System." John N. Popham. Page 25.
4. *N.Y. Times*. 6/26/51. Dateline: Columbia, SC; June 25 (AP). "Segregation Rule Praised by [Gov. James F.] Byrnes [of South Carolina]." Page 27.
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9. *N.Y. Times*. 1/12/1955. Special to The N.Y. Times. "Georgia Pledges No Mixed Schools: Griffin, New Governor, Says State Will Resist Courts..." Page 19.
10. *N.Y. Times*. 6/27/1955. Special to the N.Y. Times: Luther A. Huston. "Segregation Ban Defied in Virginia: Prince Edward County Found Never More Determined to Keep School Bias." Page 12.
11. *N.Y. Times*. 9/7/1955. Dateline: Atlanta, GA; Sept. 6 (UP): "Schools in South Stay Segregated." Page 27.
12. *N.Y. Times*. 2/26/1956. Dateline: Fort Oglethorpe, GA; Feb. 25 (AP): "Georgia Klan Parades: 75 Ride... Calling for Separate Schools." Page 87.

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Appendix C:

***Foxnews.com* content analysis. Excel sheets for 2008, 2009, 2016, and 2017: email daveposman@gmail.com. Intercoder sheets are available as well**

For 2008/2009, web crawler ‘day selections’ are scarce; thus, if there were eight ‘day selections’ for a month, they were all analyzed. For those years, there was usually one ‘clock selection’ per ‘day selection’ (S1); if there were multiple ‘clock selections’ (S2, S3...), selections were made consecutively. If there were eight plus ‘day selections’ for a month in 2008/2009, every other selection up to eight ‘day selections’ was analyzed, if possible; if not, eight ‘day selections’ were non-randomly-selected (out of say, 14) which provided the widest coverage of the month, beginning to end, spaced regularly. I compensated for 2008/2009 months short of 8 ‘day selections’ by over-selecting conjoining months. For 2016/2017, for the first round of coding, every sixth day was analyzed starting with a random day for the first selection of each year (roll of a die + 1). Then, web crawler ‘clock selections’ were chosen consecutively for each successive day until a ‘day selection’ did not have ample ‘clock selections’ and forced the analysis back to ‘clock selection’ number 1. That applied until June; afterwards, ‘clock selections’ started with the last web crawler ‘clock selection’ of the day, working backwards. The web crawler in 2016/2017 sometimes targeted a day 100 plus times with ‘clock selections,’ but saved webpages are consistent across the day except for a tragic event like a plane crash. If there were no webpages saved for a random day in 2016/2017, the previous day was used.

Eventually I realized that some years were over-analyzed and some were under-analyzed. Thus, a second round of coding was done, analyzing the years in reverse order. This adjusted the average of monthly ‘day selections’ to eight (8). Measures, as seen above, were applied at each stage of the analysis to ensure as much objectivity as possible. However, my subjectivity certainly produces different results than someone else might find. Still, reliability is suggested by the Zannettou *et al.* (2019) computer algorithm and the events of 2020. Condensing final results displayed the influence of a hectic 2020 summer. During the second round of coding, some ‘day selections’ were deleted so that all the months combined for a non-election year, and all the months combined for a segment of an election year, contained an average of 8 ‘day selections’ per month. Deletions were made by a random number generator. The ‘clock selections’ method for the 2nd round of coding was non-random, but was an attempt to fill gaps throughout the 24-hour news cycle as evenly as possible. There are 336 ‘day selections’: 72 for 2009 & 2017; 96 for 2008 & 2016.

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Appendix D:

Divergences between coders

The divergences between myself and the intercoder raise questions of how impact accrues to different genders, races, and generations, not answered by this study. Discrepancies arose in the area of anti-immigrant rhetoric, where I recognized more DW, and reverse racism/sexism, where the intercoder saw more use of MDTs. The divergent numbers of the reverse racism/sexism code were explained above by the age, race, and gender differences between me and the outside coder. The different number of anti-immigrant, 1a codes is difficult to explain and is a limitation of this study (though please note that the trend in my anti-immigrant code hits aligned with the computer algorithm analysis of the social media hate sites). I saw more 'Bad Obama' and 'Crime/Terrorism' DW, while the intercoder recognized more 4bs, the False/wrong code. With the first two, it is plausible that I packed too many sub-topics under each code; for instance, Obama advisors under 'Bad Obama' and crime/war/terrorism/Iran under 'Crime/Terrorism.' It is interesting, however, that the outside coder was more critical of *foxnews.com* with the false claims/absurd code, 4b, which suggests objectivity and fairness of analysis on my part – that I was less aware, or less picky, about each and every divergence of *foxnews.com* from reality.

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Appendix E:

Codebook: David Posman's Master's Thesis, Fall 2020

1. Google "Internet Archive" and/or "The Wayback Machine."
2. Type <https://foxnews.com> in search box; hit "enter."
3. Select the year required from the black "row" across the top of the page.
4. Select the day required.
5. From the pop-up box, select the blue "clock selection" required.

Coding remuneration: 15 hours, \$20 an hour, \$300 cash (handle your own taxes, please)

- ✓ 1 hour – study the codebook on your own.
- ✓ 4 hours coding turned over to me for checking (Payment due: \$100)
- ✓ 5 hours of coding turned over to me for checking (Payment due: \$100)
- ✓ 5 hours of coding turned over to me for checking (Payment due: \$100)
- ✓ A list of "days" to be coded will be provided; these "days" will be selected by a random number generator, 8 to 10 "days" for each of the four years, 2008/2009 and 2016/2017.

Code Book Examples

- ❖ Coding has been simplified to something more akin to "topic recognition."
- ❖ Topics may appear under more than one category (have multiple cognitive impacts).
- ❖ Topics (headlines) may be counted twice (or more) if actually appearing multiple times under the same or different levels (A, B, C).
- ❖ Skip "Entertainment," "Leisure," "Health," "SciTech," "Features and Faces," "Autos," "The Property Project," "Food & Drink," "Fox News Magazine," "Sports," "Travel," and "Style and Beauty." Each year has a different format. These categories generally appear each year and are to be ignored. Additional categories that are irrelevant to political news should be ignored as well.

DOG WHISTLES (Actual headlines below without dates or quotation marks)

Dog Whistle: "Figuratively, a 'dog whistle' is a coded message communicated through words or phrases commonly understood by a particular group of people, but not by others" (Merriam-Webster 2020).

Fox News is not subtle. Thus, we stick with the use of the term "dog whistles," but essentially we are counting topics. Particular topics have a certain slant on Fox News that never changes. For instance, if Fox News has run a story touting the positive benefits of immigration, I have not seen it. Thus, any story concerning immigration on Fox News is "1a," an immigration dog whistle. You may run across an objective headline about Barack Obama, for instance, in 2008. Do not count it. After 2008, Obama references, "1d," are always counted as they are always critical. We are counting topics, more so than trying to analyze.

SAMPLE HEADLINES BELOW

DOG WHISTLES

1a: Immigration

- Illegal immigrants having more kids in U.S.
- Chandra murdered by illegal?
- The O'Reilly Factor: How the far left plans to change America by using illegal immigrants
- Revised immigration plan limits officers' powers (appears first on Level B; same story appears below on Level C; this headline is coded twice, both times as a 1a code, but on different levels)
- Arrested Seattle 'dreamer' admits gang ties

1b: Socialism, welfare

- Who will pay for health care reform?
- The big squeeze: how much will health care reform cost small business owners?
- Socialized medicine is not a fundamental right
- Glenn Beck: Increasing the minimum wage is like hugging a polar bear
- Barack Obama a hostage of the radical left

1c: Crime; terrorism; Iran (fear and anxiety); count twice if a sex-related crime.

- Hit-and-run suspect tells cops infant son driving
- NYPD says Brooklyn day care used as drug haven
- Son of California porn mogul pleads not guilty to murder
- Police hunt robber who used underwear as mask
- Dramatic rise in police officers gunned down in line of duty in 2016 (Obviously a crime headline, 1c; might also be coded 2a, reverse racism, if placed near a headline criticizing Black Lives Matter, or placed near a story of police "brutality," with brutality in quotation marks)

1d: Obama bad

- Obama Muslim Odyssey
- Mitt Romney calls on President Obama to stop apologizing for America
- A shadow government is giving the Obama administration unprecedented power with virtually no oversight (also 1f, bad Democrats, bad "Deep State")
- Obama's honeymoon is over
- Bill O'Reilly: God, global warming, and President Obama (Code 2 times: 1d, bad Obama; 4b, Absurd. Anti-climate change rhetoric is always coded as absurd. You can be relatively certain that these are negative, not positive stories. O'Reilly tends to package grievances for exponential cognitive/grievance effect)
- The mad scientist at the White House (2009; Obama)
- Obama's to blame for the birther movement (also 4b, Absurd)

1e: Hillary Clinton bad

- Arms dealer said Obama administration made him scapegoat on Libya operation to ‘protect’ Clinton (also 1d, bad Obama)
- Republicans claim leaked emails show Dept. of Justice, Clinton campaign collusion
- Hillary stays home (The line between objectivity and subjectivity is thin; this headline, in context with other headlines, suggested that Hillary should butt out of a situation; might also be coded 2a, a sexist jab about a woman ‘staying home’)
- Hillary drinks the Kool-Aid (Accused of being a sell-out over some issue)
- Trump accuses (Loretta) Lynch of ‘illegal’ behavior in Clinton email case (also 4b, Proven Wrong Over Time or Absurd), as no criminal charges were ever brought. Fox News’ use of quotation marks has been noted by researchers as a way to ‘protect’ itself from charges of subjectivity while making a subjective accusation)

1f: Democrats (and International Organizations) are bad; the “deep state”; large, overbearing government; conspiracy theories tend to collect here; a favorite target is the United Nations.

- Military covering up fireballs from space
- ‘Cookies’ to federal websites: will privacy crumble?
- Left blames Holocaust museum attack on conservatives
- The O’Reilly Factor: Nancy Pelosi putting troops in even more danger
- A powerful Democrat does an about-face regarding a corruption investigation (Not a ‘powerful politician,’ as objective media might report – a ‘powerful Democrat’)
- Is Barney Frank ushering in a second housing crisis? (The question mark is always superfluous: Yes, yes, yes, Fox News believes Barney Frank is ushering in a second housing crisis)
- Did Sotomayor lie to senators? (Yes, yes, yes, Fox News believes she did)

1g: Gun Control

- ‘This isn’t a gun issue’: Loesch rips McAuliffe for gun control rhetoric after (Scalise) shooting
- Library of Congress agents ask for their guns back
- Pastor welcomes parishioners guns in church
- Fears of interstate handgun laws soon forgotten
- Any 2nd Amendment headline; also, watch for Oliver North references as he later becomes president of the National Rifle Association

MALICIOUS DISCURSIVE TECHNIQUES

Malicious Discursive Technique: “The ‘machinery’ of denial... denials as regulated performances that have social currency as good arguments, and as such, perform the ideological work of shoring up racial privilege” (Durrheim *et al.* 2005: 8).

2a: Reverse racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.; subtle racist/sexist jabs: almost a dog whistle, but not quite. These are a bit harder to spot. Good examples are the current headlines about the number of young Blacks killed in Chicago over a weekend appearing next to a headline critical of Black Lives Matter. The idea is to

demean Black Lives Matter by insinuating that Blacks don't care about Black lives. Black Lives Matter and Chicago shootings are two separate stories – conflating the two is a malicious discursive technique.

- NYC school principal in trouble over 'racist' survey (Note the quotation marks; they denote that the charge of racism was ridiculous)
- Why aren't more women's groups defending Palin in her war with Letterman? (The 'wink' here is that other complaints by women are not legitimate if all women do not rush to Palin's defense; this incident eludes my memory, and given that Letterman *was* a sexist pig, there might be a hint of legitimacy to this story. The point is, why not simply report the story instead of demeaning the legitimate complaints of women?)
- Uncle Sam out, Aunt Samantha in?
- Sessions curious if Sotomayor is too racially biased
- O'Reilly: 'evil white men' (Note the quotation marks. Appearing on Level B, it is certain to reappear on Level C, and will be coded twice for cognitive effect)
- Glenn Beck: Why President Obama wants you to pay attention to the beer summit (A white Boston cop roused a Black Harvard professor in his own house; the professor charged racism; President Obama sat down with the two for a beer and was mocked for how he handled the situation)
- In 2016 there was a story about a white Trump supporter attacked by some Black youths, and the headline, which I don't remember exactly, was something like "Where's Obama now?" This is 1d, bad Obama, and also 2c, reverse racism: charging that Obama hurried to intervene when the Black Harvard professor charged racism, but not when a white Trump voter was attacked
- The O'Reilly Factor: The Race Debate: Ann Coulter challenges liberals to find racial profiling case that isn't a hoax
- European groups to ban 'racist' everyday phrases (Note the quotation marks; the complaint here is that everyone is *so sensitive* now, *so politically correct*; that making an Aunt Jemima joke, for instance, is not a big deal)
- Police union outraged after NWA's 'F--- the Police' sung to dining officers
- Chicago pizzeria lambasted for 'racist' dress code that bans hoodies, baggy pants (The quotation marks, as always, should alert you to a mocking tone)
- LSU students accuse 'violent' Tiger mascot of being 'symbol of White oppression'
- City says you can't sell blueberries unless you affirm gay marriage
- Yale drops case against dishwasher who broke 'racist' stained window
- Watch for headline combos, two headlines placed side by side with purpose; for instance, 10/1/16: "March planned in memory of man shot by police in California," and "Armed man dies after struggle with police in California." (Headline 2 justifies and mitigates Headline 1. Possibly I'm reading too much into that, but it occurs regularly, a counterweight, as I see it, to Black Lives Matter protests)

BINARY CODES (US-VERSUS-THEM)

Fox News constantly tries to position its audience in a combative stance: Other media is no good. Only Fox News is telling the truth. I have eliminated all but one of these codes as the others did not have statistical relevance in my final analysis.

3c: Media bias

- Media giving Obama free pass? (also 1d, bad Obama)
- Editor calls Obama ‘sort of God’
- MSNBC Zombies: Is the media swallowing global warming propaganda hook, line, and sinker? (also 4b, Absurd)
- Palin 1, Pundits 0
- On the record with Greta: Blaming ‘Cable TV’: Why does the White House believe we're behind town hall anger?
- Mainstream media screams in pain as Trump becomes president
- It’s war between Trump and the press
- ‘Fake news’: Trump blasts Russia conspiracy (also 4b, Absurd)
- Neil Cavuto: Roger Ailes changed the way you think of media
- Hannity: There’s a credibility crisis at CNN
- CNN’s Acosta slammed for saying Trump held fake news conference
- Alt-left media wackier than anything Putin can come up with
- Is the press pushing Hillary’s argument that Trump is dangerous?
- Newspaper rejects ad over the word ‘Christian’

ABSURD CLAIMS

4b: Fox News claims proven wrong; attacks on climate science; also, headlines that appear ludicrous in retrospect

- Can the climate control zealots in Congress be stopped?
- Nurse charged with injecting 10 patients with bleach, killing 5
- Donald Trump’s casino group files for bankruptcy
- Story behind trooper choking video: Does a photo tell the whole story? (also 2a, a reverse racism charge; code the photo as well)
- Bush weighed sending troops into NY: Reported proposal to send forces on anti-terror mission in U.S. would’ve been unprecedented use of military power
- Natural factors could cause global warming
- Severe H1N1 warning: survival guide
- Giuliani to advise campaign of Ukrainian mayoral candidate

- Trump showed press he isn't Russia's 'poodle' (also 3c, media bias)
- Trump lets dictators know they aren't dealing with Clinton or Obama
- More indicators Intel assessment of Russian interference in election was rigged (In other words, rigged by the FBI, making it all a "hoax")
- Lawyer defends conspiracy theorist Alex Jones
- Alex Jones: Trump called to thank me
- Trump pivots to fixing America's broken immigration system (also 1a)
- Trump voter fraud commission: Here's what to know
- Rush Limbaugh on Russia coverage: 'I'm watching people lose their minds'
- Seattle Tax Revolt: GOP urges 'civil disobedience,' encourages rich to ignore new tax law
- Jay Sekulow: Why is Team Obama trying so hard to hide information from you?
- Any American who believes in the rule of law and fair play should be afraid (this is a comment on Obama and A.G. Holder)
- Something is rotten in Loretta Lynch's department
- Why Manafort no longer fit with the Trump campaign
- Eric Trump on the Manafort resignation
- Gingrich: Hillary's dishonest, deplorable strategy to shame and suppress Trump voters
- Media types hit panic button over CIA Russian assessment (also 3c, media bias)
- Lawmakers demand USPS fix delays before election (from 2016 when both the Senate and the House of Representatives were both Republican)

Thank you for your time and patience. Do the best you can. The drumbeat of negative and fake news can be depressing, so take a break when you need to and talk to a friend.

David R. Posman

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