

VILLAINS, VICTIMS AND THE VIRTUOUS IN BILL O'REILLY'S "NO-SPIN ZONE"

Revisiting world war propaganda techniques

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This study updates methods of communication analysis popular in the period between the world wars in an effort to analyze news commentator Bill O'Reilly's "Talking Points Memo" editorials. The results show that O'Reilly is a heavier and less nuanced user of the seven devices developed by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis in the late 1930s than the notorious radio commentator of that time, Father Charles Coughlin. O'Reilly also employs other propaganda techniques, identified by Lasswell, Berelson and Janowitz. This includes ample use of fear appeals and the construction of the battle between good and evil. The most evil villains in O'Reilly's world are illegal aliens, terrorists, and foreigners because they are apparently a physical and moral threat to the United States. Slightly less evil—but unambiguously bad—are groups (media, organizations, politicians) who share a political leaning to the left. On the other side, the virtuous flank emerged as an all-American crew made up of the military, criminal justice system, Bush administration, and ordinary US citizens.

KEYWORDS Bill O'Reilly; cable news; construction of good and bad; fear appeal; Fox News; framing; liberal and conservative politics; news and political bias; news narratives; political left and right; propaganda; *The O'Reilly Factor*

Introduction

In the spring of 2005, the Annenberg Public Policy Center polled Americans on 10 prominent media figures and asked if they thought each person was a journalist. Four out of 10 people (40 percent) responded that multimedia commentator Bill O'Reilly was a journalist. By comparison, former *Washington Post* and Watergate reporter Bob Woodward was identified as a journalist by only 30 percent of respondents. In the same study, journalists were asked how close the same 10 media figures came to *their* idea of a journalist. Only 1 percent of journalists thought O'Reilly was "very close," and another 10 percent thought he was "somewhat close." A majority of journalists (65 percent) felt O'Reilly was "not close at all." Kathleen Hall Jamieson of the Annenberg Public Policy Center said the poll results are "disturbing evidence" that the public and journalists have widely different definitions for the profession (Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2005; Kurtz, 2005).

Bill O'Reilly is unquestionably an important voice in American political discussion. He has the highest-rated news analysis program on Fox News Channel, which is the most popular 24-hour news channel in the country. His books are bestsellers and his work is disseminated around the world through television, radio, Internet and in print. There is no shortage of critiques and comments on his work. Websites and blogs criticize him,¹ books have been written about his methods (Franken, 2003; Hart, 2003), and count-

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less newspaper articles and columns analyze his popularity and style (Kurtz, 2004; Saunders, 2005; Shafer, 2005; Sohnen, 2003). American cable network Comedy Central even introduced a half-hour parody, *The Colbert Report*, which unabashedly pokes fun at *The O'Reilly Factor* (Ryan, 2005). But analyses of O'Reilly tend to devolve into arguments of political left versus right and name calling—the same types of charges that are leveled at O'Reilly himself.

A systematic and dispassionate approach that focuses on his rhetorical strategy and presentation of people and ideas is much needed. One promising area, propaganda analysis, dates back to the early years of the last century. Three major areas of focus enjoyed research attention in the period between the two world wars. In the 1930s, the Institute for Propaganda Analysis unveiled seven devices for detecting propaganda in speech. Moreover, Harold Lasswell (1971) as well as Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz (1953) identified the use of fear appeals as well as the three-prong construction of evil enemies, the virtuous “us,” and innocent victims as central themes running through propaganda messages of several nations. The study reported here employed these techniques in a content analysis of O'Reilly's communication strategies. Taking these old propaganda analysis tools to investigate O'Reilly might seem heavy-handed. At the same time, his rhetoric has been criticized severely for fueling hatred and promoting politically conservative ideals. Taking a snapshot of O'Reilly through the propaganda analysis lens provides historical comparison with what was designated as propaganda more than 70 years ago. This approach also provides a template for future content analysis studies, allowing for comparisons across media and programming genres.

Bill O'Reilly and the Fox News Channel

The O'Reilly Factor on the Fox News Channel has been the top-rated cable news show for five years, attracting more than two million viewers a night (Crupi, 2006; Gay, 2005). In addition, O'Reilly has a daily radio program on more than 400 stations, a newspaper column in hundreds of papers, websites that repurpose his content for online users, and he has written three best-selling books in the past decade (billoreilly.com, 2005; O'Reilly, 2003).

O'Reilly's presence extends beyond US shores because *The O'Reilly Factor* is offered in more than 30 countries (Fox News Channel, 2006). That reach is largely due to the network's corporate owner, Rupert Murdoch. Murdoch's satellite and direct broadcast TV outlets like Star TV, Foxnet and BSkyB carry Fox News programming—including *The O'Reilly Factor*—to places such as Asia, Australia and Great Britain (Gough, 2005). While some perceive Murdoch as a powerful ideologue, most observers seem to think Murdoch values savvy business dealings more than political considerations, citing his switch from Australian to US citizenship and his newspapers' support of liberal as well as conservative governments (*Economist*, 2003).

The Fox News Channel debuted in 1996, and by 2002 posted higher ratings than CNN, the network credited with pioneering the all-news channel concept more than a quarter century ago (Auletta, 2003). One study of towns that added the Fox News Channel to their cable systems between 1996 and 2000 estimated that the news network may have been responsible for convincing 3–8 percent of its viewers to vote Republican in the 2000 elections (DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2006).

Fox News, with its "Fair and Balanced" slogan, positioned itself not simply as another competitor, but as a brash, opinionated, and unashamedly patriotic channel and as a counterpoint to what some regard as a liberal bias among mainstream news outlets. Part of that plan included Bill O'Reilly, host of an interview program on Fox News Channel since its inception in 1996. In 1998, Fox News seemed to have struck a nerve with its coverage of the Monica Lewinsky scandal. That year, network head Roger Ailes—a former Republican media consultant—moved O'Reilly into primetime with *The O'Reilly Factor* to capitalize on this new audience (Auletta, 2003).

Billed as a mix of "news analysis (and) investigative reporting" (Fox News Channel, 2006), O'Reilly begins the program with a brief commentary, then engages guests in an interview-style format that can be described either as incisive or as combative, depending upon one's perspective.

Propaganda Analysis

Propaganda analysis became an important research area in the era between world wars in the United States. One group of scholars, the progressive propaganda critics, focused on the model of an informed public. Continuing the tradition of the muckraking journalists at the turn of the 20th century, these researchers worked on exposing techniques of propaganda in order to provide the public with the skills necessary to detect potentially misleading messages. In what follows we will discuss three areas of research, their uses in studies of contemporary media, and generate research questions for our study.

The Seven Devices of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis

One of the most influential groups studying media messages in this era was the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA), founded in 1937. The board of directors included some of the top names in communication research at the time, including Hadley Cantril (the first president of IPA), Leonard Doob, Robert Lynd, and Edgar Dale (Carey, 1989; IPA, 1937; Jowett, 1987; Lee and Lee, 1979; Sproule, 1997). The IPA became known for its seven propaganda devices (name calling, glittering generalities, transfer, testimonial, plain folks, card stacking, and band wagon), used in analyzing communicators.

At the time of the formation of the IPA, one of the most powerful voices in the United States belonged to a Catholic priest from suburban Detroit. Father Charles Coughlin's mix of religion and politics delivered with an authoritative broadcasting style had been one of the most popular programs on radio during the 1930s. But Coughlin's broadcasts became heavily anti-Semitic and he was one of the few apologists for Adolf Hitler and the reign of terror brought about by the Nazi party in Germany. By the late 1930s, three-and-a-half million people listened to Coughlin's radio broadcast each week, with 15 million listening occasionally (IPA, 1939; Ogles and Howard, 1984; Warren, 1996).

The IPA hired researchers Alfred McClung Lee and Elizabeth Briant Lee to analyze Coughlin's speeches, utilizing the seven propaganda devices. Their work, *The Fine Art of Propaganda*, was published in October 1939 and received considerable attention. The book was championed as an easy-to-understand approach to analyzing speech while critics called it a superficial gimmick (Lee and Lee, 1939, 1979; Vetter, 1940). Still, mention of the progressive propaganda analysis movement and the seven devices diffused to a

wide spectrum of academic disciplines including social psychology, sociology, political science, Philosophy, logic, public speaking, rhetoric, education, and other areas (Sproule, 2001; Lee and Lee, 1979).²

Today, the seven devices are mentioned as part of the lineage of propaganda study, but viewed as not rigorous enough for quantitative research and devoid of grand theory for qualitative work (Jowett, 1987; Severin and Tankard, 1997; Sproule, 1989, 1997). A few researchers have resurrected the seven propaganda devices to help explain language from today's news media. Severin and Tankard (1997) listed the seven devices with contemporary examples, such as the use of "terrorist" as a case of name calling, or using virtue words or phrases to help pass legislation, such as the "right to work" bill, as a glittering generality (Severin and Tankard, 1997, pp. 111–28). Allen used the devices to illustrate President George W. Bush's increased use of religious rhetoric after the attacks of September 11, 2001 (Allen, 2002).

Bill O'Reilly and Father Coughlin may be separated by generations but they have several common traits. Both are popular opinion leaders, with success in multiple formats. O'Reilly spreads his message through television, radio, and the Internet, while Coughlin focused on radio and print. Both men mix information with opinion and present their views as the true reality. But would those similarities extend to how they use the seven IPA propaganda techniques? Because Lee and Lee's *The Fine Art of Propaganda* includes both analysis of Coughlin's speeches and also extensive definitions and examples of the seven devices, they could be used as a method for comparing two powerful opinion leaders, separated by more than sixty years. This leads to the first research question:

RQ 1: How do Father Coughlin and Bill O'Reilly compare in terms of their use of the seven propaganda devices as identified by the IPA?

Using Fear Appeals

In addition to comparing O'Reilly to Coughlin in terms of the seven propaganda devices, the goal of this study is to gain insight into other identified narrative devices in propaganda messages. The fear appeal is a classical component of wartime propaganda (Lasswell, 1971; Madsen, 1973). In his study of World War I, Lasswell argued that support for the war was successfully garnered by instilling fear through detailed accounts of the enemy mutilating, raping, and otherwise brutalizing civilians: "These stories yield a crop of indignation against the fiendish perpetrators of these dark deeds, and satisfy certain powerful hidden impulses" (Lasswell, 1971, p. 82).

The threat of the enemy was also presented on a less physical level, through message content that portrayed the enemy's mission to destroy the dreams and ideals of the audience. Berelson and Janowitz (1953) supported this observation, claiming that all film-producing, war-making nations in the world shared the fueling of fear for the enemy through their propaganda films. It might be this perpetuation of fear through media content that contributed to the intensity of widespread panic during the broadcast of the 1938 radio drama *War of the Worlds*.

The impact and construction of fear has continued in research through the rest of the century. During the Cold War, the Truman administration attempted to alert Americans to the dangers of communism through a "propaganda of fear," which got the public's attention but inadvertently built up the power of the Soviet Union (Parry-Giles, 1994, p. 455). Other contemporary propaganda studies also point to the importance of

demonizing enemies and portraying them as dangerous to the public (Lowenthal and Guterman, 1970; Nohrstedt et al., 2000). Playing on a primary human emotion such as fear extends well beyond government propaganda. Glassner (1999) argued that contemporary television news survives on scare stories and for television news magazines, "no danger is too small to magnify into a national nightmare" (Glassner, 1999, p. xxi). Perhaps unlike propaganda, news workers tend to also include fear-soothing information in their news reports. Gans (1979) identified this as the restoration of order principle. While death, destruction, and other survival threats are popular news topics, heroism, bravery, and social cohesion are often the main themes embedded in coverage of crime, riots, war, and natural disasters. Even the agitators of the first half of the 20th century who promoted a "charade of doom" to their listeners almost always followed up with solutions to the world's problems (Lowenthal and Guterman, 1970, p. 33). To assess O'Reilly's particular communication strategy in this vein, two research questions were developed:

RQ 2: How often is fear a dominant frame in O'Reilly's discussion of an issue?

RQ 3: In cases where the fear frame is invoked, how often is the restoration of order principle present?

Role-players: Villains, Victims, and the Virtuous

The third area of 20th-century propaganda research that resonates to this day is the use of role-players to advance normative points of view. For Lasswell, an important tactic of wartime propaganda was separating sides into good and evil, or scapegoat and messiah:

The scapegoat is the person who got him into the mess and the messiah is the person who will get him out. History is the story of the struggle of devils and deliverers. This primitive pattern of thought leads to the interpretation of war as the struggle between a good and a bad collective person. Cleave to the good and punish the bad. (Lasswell, 1971, pp. 59–60)

Berelson and Janowitz (1953) also saw the construction of two sides as a common theme during wartime propaganda: on the one side stands the enemy as an unscrupulous and criminal entity with "us" on the other side as the force bringing about a better world by opposing the enemy.

The construction of good and evil is an archetypal narrative and its presence in wartime propaganda is therefore not surprising. In fact, sociologists have argued that this dichotomy has enabled societies to construct their moral blueprint, establish social cohesion, and exercise social control for centuries (Durkheim, 1915, 1933; Erikson, 1966, 1973; Mead, 1918). A number of contemporary scholars have used this theme in their analysis of media representations of groups, outside of the propaganda analysis realm.

In political speech, the "devil–angel interpretation" is employed to label the enemy as sinister and our government as open and trusting (Windt, 1987, p. 129). Journalists also use the good people and bad people scenario as a simple way to explain crime and terrorism. Instead of providing meaningful analysis, the stories simplify it as "good people (like us) are preyed upon by bad people (like criminals and terrorists) who just seem to want to destroy us" (Bennett, 1996, p. xv). Similarly, in presidential rhetoric, problems are often presented as caused by "outgroups" so that the public feels blameless in the situation (Hahn and Gustainis, 1987, p. 45). Another strategy is to redefine critics as bad or

as the enemy. Lyndon Johnson used this “strawman tactic” by asserting that once the President makes a decision, dissent on an issue is no longer acceptable or patriotic. This approach allows the speaker to marginalize people with other points of view (Hahn and Gustainis, 1987, pp. 51–2).

Good versus evil has also been defined as “us versus them.” Said (1994) used this platform in his classic work *Orientalism*, to explain how Europeans and Americans defined the rest of the world by their own terms, without letting people from other countries have a say in their own portrayal. Journalists use the “us versus them” theme as a form of racism. Van Dijk (1991) studied British press and found “us” stood for whites as “tolerant and peaceful, people who love freedom of speech and enterprise, love their country, respect authority (such as the police) and who are law-abiding and commonsensical.” In contrast, immigrants were portrayed as “them:” “aggressive, tyrannical, and intolerant” (van Dijk, 1991, p. 207).

Victims often initiate the struggle between good and bad. They allow good role players to become heroic in the course of avenging evil. Lule (2002) and Ettema and Glasser (1988) argue that the victim is a staple ingredient of narratives across cultures and time. This includes news narratives. The function of the victim is symbolically to represent society and its members. In this regard, Lule (2002) demonstrated how *The New York Times* readers were encouraged to see themselves as victims in post-9/11 coverage. Identifying with victims also increases the potential for hating the enemy.

O’Reilly makes reference to people and institutions in his “Talking Points Memo” segment. In this sense they serve as characters in his narrative. By documenting who these characters are, their relative importance in O’Reilly’s view comes to light and his normative stance on them surfaces. Based on the foregoing discussion of the construction of good and evil, the role players identified for this study are called villains, victims, and the virtuous. They are the focus of the last three research questions:

RQ 4: Who are the main role-players in O’Reilly’s rhetoric?

RQ 5: Who are the victims, villains, and the virtuous according to O’Reilly?

RQ 6: What makes an actor a victim, villain, or virtuous according to O’Reilly?

Method

Sampling Procedures

For the most direct comparison of O’Reilly and Coughlin’s broadcast rhetoric, the “Talking Points Memo” portion of *The O’Reilly Factor* was chosen for study. This is the first segment of the nightly television program and is also featured on the website, the radio show, and in newspaper columns (Fox News Channel, 2005). The segment runs approximately two minutes each night and features O’Reilly giving his opinion on the top issues of the day. This is the same format used by Father Coughlin during his hour-long radio broadcasts. Since the rest of O’Reilly’s program mainly involves guest interviews, which were not part of Coughlin’s program, the “Talking Points Memo” provided the best opportunity to compare the two men.

One hundred and five episodes of the “Talking Points Memo” were analyzed. A convenience census was drawn from the first week of January (January 6) to the last week of June (June 29), 2005. Ten cases were replaced with extra episodes recorded from July through November 2005. The random replacement was necessary because of re-runs, guest hosts, and recording errors during the census period. Coders primarily used the

recorded video accounts of the material but also relied on transcriptions of "Talking Points Memo," available on the Fox News Channel website, to make final coding decisions.

Coding Instrument

Two separate units of analyses were used in this study. First, individual "Talking Points Memo" segments were employed to produce answers to research questions 1, 2, and 3. Individual role-players presented in commentaries became the unit of analysis for research questions 4, 5, and 6. A role-player was defined as an individual, group, institution, country, or idea identified by Bill O'Reilly as a victim, or a bad, evil, good, or heroic force in the context of the issue he was addressing.

The IPA Propaganda Techniques

Lee and Lee identified all instances of the seven devices in a transcribed version of a Coughlin speech (26 February 1939). To answer research question 1, we used the data from this published analysis (Lee and Lee, 1939, pp. 112–31) to calculate the number of propaganda incidents for Coughlin. Recorded Coughlin speeches were used to determine the average number of words per minute. With that information, the number of propaganda devices used per minute could be determined. This same approach was used to identify incidents of propaganda devices used in O'Reilly's commentaries. The individual episode of the "Talking Points Memo" was the unit of analysis and the number of propaganda instances was recorded per category. The seven categories were defined as follows.

Name Calling gives a person or idea a bad label to make the audience reject them without examining the evidence. This is, by definition, a negative device. The terms conservative, liberal, left, right, progressive, traditional, or centrist were treated as name calling, if they were associated with a problem or social ill or if coupled with a derogatory term. For example, "kool-aid left" (O'Reilly, 6 May 2005) was counted as two cases of name calling. The term "left" is not a derogatory term in itself, but used with "kool-aid" (referring to the Jim Jones orchestrated mass suicide) raises "left" to the level of name calling. In some instances more than one word was used to deliver a single case of name calling. For example, the phrase "buried headline" (O'Reilly, 14 January 2005) was coded as one instance of name calling. Neither word, by itself, carries negative labeling. But used together, in reference to journalistic practice, constitutes a negative label because it suggests that intentional journalistic bias occurred. As these examples demonstrate, contextual uses of terms were considered to make coding decisions. These guidelines were followed for the other propaganda categories as well. *Glittering Generality* captured the use of virtue words that make the audience accept an idea or person without examining the evidence. It is a means of positive labeling, much like name calling constitutes negative labeling, by using virtue words such as patriotism, freedom, honest, fair, moral, hero. *Transfer* involves using prestige or authority of one idea or person and transferring that to another to make it acceptable or add stature to it. It can also work as a negative device. *Plain Folks* occurs when the host presented himself, another person, an institution, or idea as one of the people. In this way a person is presented as part of common folk, not elites. *Bandwagon* suggests that because everybody approves or disapproves of an idea or person, the audience should hold the same opinion.

This technique rests on the principles of the spiral of silence theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1991). *Testimonial* involves a respected (or disrespected) person endorsing or rejecting an idea or person. *Card Stacking* constitutes the selective use of facts, half-truths, and or lies to convince the audience to accept or reject an idea or person. This was the only one of the seven devices that was not conducive to counting incidents. Card stacking is constructed through multiple words, phrases or sentences. Therefore, this device fits better as a category with yes or no options for each segment, instead of a frequency count per segment.

Fear Appeals

Using a "Talking Points Memo" episode as the unit of analysis, coders recorded (1) the presence of a dominant fear appeal that is tempered with reassurance, resolution and restoration of order; (2) the presence of a fear appeal without reassurance, resolution and restoration of order; or (3) the absence of a dominant fear appeal. A fear appeal is defined as a prominent focus on danger, a threat to life, social order or the American way of life.

The Identity of Role-players and Reasons for Their Good, Bad, or Victim Status

A list of 22 identities was generated from analysis of open-ended recording of all role-players.³ After the 2004 presidential election, references to red and blue states became shorthand for politically conservative versus more liberal voting states (Muro and Berube, 2004; Pearlstein, 2005; Scheiber, 2004; Zeller, 2004). A number of role-player identities were collapsed into these two broad categories for some of the data analysis. To answer research questions 5 and 6, categories were designed to assign role-players to their described roles as victim, bad (or evil), and good (or hero). Here, the individual person, group, institution, country, or idea served as the unit of analysis. Coders were instructed to watch the full commentary before identifying role-players because their framing could shift across the content of the commentary. It was also possible to record a specific role-player in more than one represented role within an episode of "Talking Points Memo." For example, Lynndie England, a US soldier involved in prisoner abuse in Iraq, was presented as both a bad force and a victim (5 May 2005).

When a person, group, institution, country or idea (values, a way of life, ideals, or a sentiment) was presented as a casualty of the actions of a bad or evil force, they were coded as a victim. Victimization was recorded in a wide variety of ways. For example, Americans were presented as victims (12 January 2005) of misleading media reports because they were unable to make informed decisions; children were victims of media (28 February 2005) because they were sexualized and that diminished their innocence and childhood; the US military was a victim (1 March 2005) because it was paralyzed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

When a person, group, institution, country, or idea was criticized and presented as a bad force (representing social obstacles, nuisances, immorality, the reason for a problem) they were counted as "bad." "Evil" was defined as a supreme case of "bad" that was assigned if O'Reilly presented the role-player as a threat to life or social stability. Criminals and terrorists were consistently presented as evil in that they endanger human life, but evil was also achieved through moral violation. Here are a few examples: University of

Colorado professor Ward Churchill was described as following a Nazi philosophy, hating America, justifying murder, and as a traitor who comforts the enemy (1 February 2005, 7 February 2005, 2 March 2005). Illegal aliens were described as dangerous, out of control, causing chaos, and threatening the American way of life (7 April 2005, 25 April 2005, 26 April 2005).

When a person, group, institution, country, or idea was presented as the good force (efficient, doing the right thing, opposing what is wrong) in the classic struggle with evil, it was coded as a case of "good." A hero was defined as a supreme good force. If O'Reilly suggested a person, group, institution, or country should be admired, worshipped, or they are presented as responsible for exceptional deeds, they achieved the "hero" label. Labels like great leader, upstanding citizen, and honest politician or words like brave, hero, and champion were cues for putting a good force in the hero category. For example, Martin Luther King, Jr. was described (17 January 2005) as a hero because he had noble goals in opposing violence and correcting injustice. The late Pope is described as a "great man" for similar reasons (8 April 2005).

Research question 6 prompted an investigation into O'Reilly's implied or directly-stated reasons for why role-players were villains, victims, and virtuous. Eighteen options were developed from initial open-ended coding.⁴

Coders

Four investigators held meetings to test the original coding instrument and its codebook. These meetings prompted several refinements of the coding instrument. Two of the investigators were appointed as coders and trained to collect data. Coder reliability pre-tests were conducted on surplus episodes of "Talking Points Memo." The first two pre-tests produced unacceptably low scores (Krippendorff's alpha = 0.67 and 0.51). More coder training ensued. The third pretest had an acceptable alpha of 0.90 and marked the beginning of data collection. Cases were randomly assigned to the two coders. A post-test performed on 20 percent of the census (16 cases) produced unreliable scores (Krippendorff's alpha = 0.49). A closer look at the data revealed that one coder made decisions inconsistent with codebook definitions. A possible explanation for this situation is that after coder reliability was established in the pre-test, the coder took a 10-day break from coding while the other coder continued to collect data. This break in continuity might have resulted in the unreliable application of the coding instrument. The data collected by this coder (40 cases) were discarded. Another investigator coded the cases identified for the *post hoc* reliability test and the agreement with the remaining coder was at an acceptable level (Krippendorff's alpha = 0.98; minimum = 0.84, maximum = 1.00). This marked the beginning of recollecting data for 40 cases. The workload was randomly distributed between the two coders.

Findings

O'Reilly and the Propaganda Techniques

O'Reilly used all seven of the propaganda devices in his commentaries, but name calling is the backbone of his communication strategy (see Table 1). Results show O'Reilly employed name calling 8.88 times a minute, which is close to once every seven seconds. On average, O'Reilly used six of the propaganda devices 12.91 times a minute, which

TABLE 1

Comparison of Coughlin and O'Reilly on the frequency of using propaganda devices

Variable	Coughlin (duration 33.00 min)		O'Reilly (duration 248.65 min)	
	Sum	Incidents per min	Sum	Incidents per min
Name calling	113	3.42	2209	8.88
Glittering generality	94	2.85	737	2.96
Transfer	20	0.61	26	0.10
Plain folks	13	0.39	10	0.04
Bandwagon	21	0.64	167	0.67
Testimonial	3	0.09	61	0.25
Total	264	8.00	3210	12.91

means almost seven out of every 10 devices he employed was name calling. (As noted in the methods section, the seventh device, card stacking, was coded as either being present or absent for each segment.) Examples of O'Reilly name calling included calling academics who criticize the Bush war policy "anti-American voices" (8 February 2005), and referring to French President Jacques Chirac sarcastically as "our pal" who "dislikes America too much" to help in the war on terror (21 February 2006). In another commentary, O'Reilly labeled the estate tax, which Republicans were trying to eliminate, as the "death tax" and "un-American" (15 April 2005).

The second most popular propaganda device for O'Reilly was glittering generality, which he used 2.96 times per minute. Glittering generality is roughly the opposite of name calling. He referred to the coalition forces as the "good guys" after an Iraqi election (31 January 2005). He announced the "greater good" would be served if a brain-dead woman (Terri Schiavo) would be kept alive by artificial means even when her husband wanted the feeding tubes removed (23 March 2005). O'Reilly likened a movement to increase security on the Mexican border to a "non-partisan people's movement" (25 April 2005).

O'Reilly used the remaining four devices—bandwagon, testimonial, transfer, and plain folks—less than once a minute each. Bandwagon occurred 0.67 times a minute, such as when he announced "we are living in dangerous times, as you know" when discussing border security (28 April 2005) and when he concluded that "no fair person could possibly object" to privatizing the Social Security system.

The testimonial device showed up 0.25 times a minute. Testimonials include a quote from political strategist and former Clinton adviser Dick Morris calling Bush's inaugural speech "brilliant" (21 January 2005). O'Reilly also used "reverse" testimonials, in which comments from disrespected figures are intended to discredit an idea.

Transfer and plain folks occurred the least in O'Reilly's commentaries, 0.10 and 0.04 times a minute, respectively. An example of transfer involved comparing the September 11, 2001 attacks to the Iraq War (28 January 2005) or reminding viewers that French President Chirac had dealings with Saddam Hussein before the war. Plain folks included uses of phrases such as "as we know," "we Americans," and "your humble correspondent" (2 May 2005).

O'Reilly Versus Coughlin

Research question 1 prompted a comparison of Coughlin and O'Reilly on the number of propaganda devices per minute. From Table 1 it is clear that O'Reilly used the propaganda devices far more often than Coughlin. There were 12.91 incidents of propaganda use per minute in O'Reilly's monologue, whereas Coughlin used 8.00 per minute. A closer look at the distribution of counts across individual propaganda devices reveals that Coughlin was a more nuanced user of the propaganda devices than O'Reilly. This conclusion is based on more even distribution of counts across devices in Coughlin's than O'Reilly's rhetoric. In fact, it is fair to say that O'Reilly emerged as a name caller. He used this device three times as often as any other as well as more than twice as often as Coughlin. Almost all (98 percent) of "Talking Points Memo" episodes were coded as employing card stacking. This device was used at three incidents per minute in the Coughlin speech (Lee and Lee, 1939, pp. 112–31).

Fear

Research question 2 asked how often fear was a dominant frame in O'Reilly's discussion of issues. The answer is that O'Reilly used a fear frame in over half (52.4 percent) of the commentaries. Related to this is research question 3 that asked specifically about cases where the fear frame is invoked. Specifically, how often was the restoration of order principle present in fear frame cases? When O'Reilly invoked the fear frame, he offered resolution to the threat in only 1 percent of cases. One example was a commentary on the left-wing media unfairly criticizing Attorney General Alberto Gonzales for his role in the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal (7 January 2005). O'Reilly considered this an example of America "slowly losing freedom and core values." But he did not provide much hope for his viewers: "So what can be done? Unfortunately, not much." He added that most people did not want to take on the "smear machines" in the media. A frequent target of O'Reilly is the ACLU. In one commentary (1 March 2005) he called the ACLU "flat out dangerous. It panders to its far-left base by portraying the USA as a bad country, giving terrorists aid and comfort, as it holds America to an impossible standard." After listing what was wrong with the ACLU, O'Reilly ended the commentary with "Get the picture? It is awful." Thus in answer to research question 3, O'Reilly's rhetoric differs markedly from the restoration of order principle that Gans (1979) identified as an enduring news value in American journalism. In this sense, his rhetoric has potential to instill concern—perhaps even panic and fear—in the audience.

Role-players

Research question 4 asked who the main role-players in O'Reilly commentaries are. Table 2 was constructed to summarize the distribution of 493 role-players across 22 identities. From this table it is clear that media (combined right—e.g. Fox; left—e.g. *The New York Times*; or no political leaning mentioned), Americans (groups and individuals) and the politically blue (Democrats combined with other politically left organizations or individuals) were the most frequent role-players in "Talking Points Memo."

When subsections of identities were not combined, politically left, Americans as a group and media with no mention of political affiliation were the most frequent role-players in O'Reilly's rhetoric. Other role-players that broke the 5 percent mark include the

TABLE 2
The identity of role-players

Identity	Frequency	%	Rank
Red	36	7.30	
Bush and his administration	21	4.30	10
Republicans	10	2.00	14
Political right	5	1.00	19
Blue	63	12.78	
Democrats	27	5.50	8
Political left	36	7.30	4
Generic politician/government	17	3.40	12
US military	26	5.30	9
Criminal justice	33	6.70	5
Media	115	23.33	
Right	9	1.80	15
Left	64	13.00	1
No affiliation	42	8.50	3
Foreigners	28	5.70	7
Illegal aliens	20	4.10	11
Criminals	10	2.00	14
Terrorists	15	3.00	13
Academics	28	5.70	7
Celebrities	7	1.40	17
Christians	8	1.60	16
Non-Christians	6	1.20	18
Americans	75	15.21	
Individuals	32	6.50	6
As a group	43	8.70	2
Other	6	1.20	18
Total	493	100.00	

political left (excluding Democrats), the criminal justice system, individual Americans, academics, foreigners, Democrats, and the US military.

Villains, Victims, and the Virtuous

Research question 5 asked for an investigation into who O'Reilly presents as victims, villains, and the virtuous. Before answering this question, a few broad observations about the distribution of role players across these groups are worth mentioning. Victims made up 16 percent of all role-players and this frame was assigned across 15 identity categories. O'Reilly never presented the political left, politicians/government officials not associated with a political party, left-leaning media, illegal aliens, criminals, and terrorists as victims. Thus, politicians and media, particularly of the left-leaning persuasion, are in the company of illegal aliens, criminals, and terrorists—never vulnerable to villainous forces and undeserving of empathy. This finding has patterned support throughout the data set. The multiplicity of rhetorical avenues that lead to the same conclusion will become clear in successive discussions of results.

Most role-players were bad (58.2 percent). In fact, all of the 22 identities were described as bad at some point in this census of "Talking Points Memo" episodes. Left-leaning media made up the largest portion (21.6 percent) of bad role-players with media without a political leaning in second place (12.2 percent). When it comes to evil-doers (those who are supremely bad), illegal aliens (26.8 percent) and terrorists (21.4 percent) constituted the largest proportions.

Overall, there were few heroic and good role-players. In fact, only 1 percent (five role-players) was heroic while 13.40 percent were coded as good. A closer look at where these cases coalesce reveals that the role of hero was assigned only to right-leaning media, Christians, Republicans, the Bush administration, and Americans as a group. The frontrunners among good role-players were the US military (16.7 percent), Americans as a group (15.2 percent), the criminal justice system (13.6 percent), the Bush administration (10.6 percent), and right-leaning media (7.6 percent).

Table 3 offers a summary map for answering research question 5. This detailed look at individual identity categories makes the emerging pattern of molding particular individuals, groups, organizations, and ideas in consistent roles (victim, good, bad) apparent. While the Bush administration never achieved the evil status, O'Reilly did frame

TABLE 3
Victims, villains, and the virtuous (%)

Identity	Victim	Villain		Virtuous	
		Bad	Evil	Good	Hero
Red	22.2	47.2	0	25.0	5.6
Bush and his administration	28.6	33.3	0	33.3	4.8
Republicans	10.0	60.0	0	20.0	10.0
Political right	20.0	80.0	0	0	0
Blue	1.6	90.5	7.9	0	0
Democrats	3.7	96.3	0	0	0
Political left	0	86.1	13.9	0	0
Generic politician/government	0	70.6	11.8	17.6	0
US military	30.8	26.9	0	42.3	0
Criminal justice	12.1	54.5	6.1	27.3	0
Media	5.2	85.2	0	8.7	0.9
Right	22.2	11.1	0	55.6	11.1
Left	0	96.9	0	3.1	0
No affiliation	9.5	83.3	0	7.1	0
Foreigners	14.3	50.0	25.0	10.7	0
Illegal aliens	0	15.0	75.0	10.0	0
Criminals	0	50.0	50.0	0	0
Terrorists	0	20.0	80.0	0	0
Academics	7.1	71.4	17.9	3.6	0
Celebrities	28.6	57.1	0	14.3	0
Christians	25.0	25.0	0	37.5	12.5
Non-Christians	16.7	66.7	16.7	0	0
Americans	53.3	28.0	2.7	14.7	1.3
Individuals	62.5	28.1	6.3	3.1	0
As a group	46.5	27.9	0	23.3	2.3
Other	16.7	33.3	0	50.0	0

the administration as bad, while also pointing to the virtuousness and victimization of the President and his cabinet. The same is true for Republicans. In contrast, politically left-leaning organizations (such as the ACLU) were featured exclusively as bad or evil, while Democrats were—with the exception of one case—all bad.

Similar to Red politics, some social institutions were framed with nuance. The US military was framed as mostly a good force but O'Reilly also made some reference to them as bad or victims. The representation of the criminal justice system was also mixed. It was mostly villainous but also good and a victim.

Although the three media categories never achieved the evil status, O'Reilly cannot be described as particularly fond of media, especially those on the left. In fact, there is notable variance in how he framed media with different political inclinations. The nine cases of right-leaning media showed up most prominently as good or victims, with one instance of heroism and of badness. The 64 cases of left-leaning media were less scattered across roles. They were almost exclusively bad. Media without a clear political leaning were also overwhelmingly bad. Thus, from this breakdown, the only media that achieved substantive positive representation were right-leaning media, yet there were too few cases of this media group to conclude that this is a strong pattern. However, the framing of left-leaning media and media without a political leaning as villainous found strong support in this data set.

Foreigners, academics, and illegal aliens received comparable representation. They were villains most of the time. Foreigners were less often villainous than academics and they were also more often good than academics. Illegal aliens were never victims and they were presented in one of the strongest evil frames—only topped by terrorists.

O'Reilly's discontent for non-Christians became apparent in comparison with Christians. In fact, Christians were framed as good and heroic whereas non-Christians never achieved this status. Instead, non-Christians were most often bad or evil—compared to Christians who were bad about a quarter of the time.

Celebrities were bad more than half the time and victims less than a third of the time. They were also good, but not often. O'Reilly acknowledged the goodness of ordinary Americans far more often as a group than in individual reference. The group was never evil, whereas individuals were. Both groups and individuals emerged mostly as victims—more so than any other identity category. They were framed as bad with similar frequency.

When politically left politicians and groups (blue) are compared to politically right politicians and groups (red), O'Reilly's political leaning emerged with little ambiguity. Red politics never registered in the evil zone while blue politics was framed that way 7.9 percent of the time. Moreover, red politics achieved the good (25 percent) and hero (5.6 percent) status, while blue politics did not achieve either.

The Why Question

Research question 6 queried what makes a role-player a villain, victim, or virtuous according to O'Reilly. Cross tabulations of role-player identities, their role as villains, victim, or virtuous and the reasons for this role were used to answer this question. The analysis resulted in approximately 180 cells. This spreads the data thinly across variable intersections and limits meaningful and reliable conclusions. This portion of results therefore focuses on those identities with the most prominent visibility within roles.

Victims

There were 79 victims in this data set and four reasons for being in this role. According to O'Reilly, victims are those who were unfairly judged (40.5 percent), hurt physically (25.3 percent), undermined when there should be support (20.3 percent), and hurt by the moral violations of others (10.1 percent).

Americans (individuals and group), the US military, and the Bush administration were the top four victims in this data set, accounting for 68.3 percent of all victims. The reasons for their victimization warranted closer study (see Figure 1). Individual Americans were most prominently victims of physical harm while also being unsupported and unfairly judged. Victimization of Americans as a group resulted, according to O'Reilly, mostly from lack of support, but also from moral and physical harm as well as unfair judgment. From this it appears that Americans were neglected by social institutions that should support them, were unfairly criticized or judged, and physically and morally victimized by villainous forces. The US military was mostly a victim of unfair judgment but it was also a victim of lack of support. The Bush administration's representation mirrors this: unfairly judged and the support it deserved was not provided. It is important to note that the US military and the Bush administration were unscathed by physical or moral threats.

Bad Role-players

There were 287 identified cases of bad role-players in this data set and nine reasons for their framing as bad. Ineffectiveness or incompetence emerged as the most prominent reason for being bad (22.6 percent). Criticism of or lack of support for the Bush

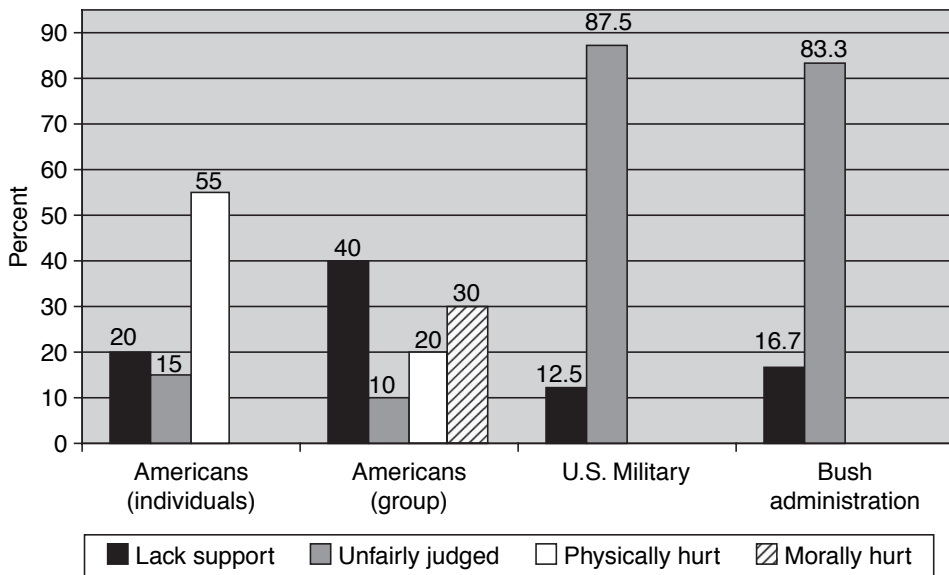


FIGURE 1
Prominent victims and reasons

administration was second (20.2 percent), followed by moral threat and anti-Americanism (13.2 percent each), violating the moral order (9.8 percent), affronting O'Reilly or Fox News Channel (7 percent), allowing or supporting terrorism (6.6 percent), acting hypocritically, selfishly, or greedily (4.2 percent), and posing a physical threat (2.4 percent).

Left-leaning media as well as media without an identified leaning, political organizations associated with the politically left, and Democrats were the four entities with the highest frequencies of being bad. Together they represented 53.7 percent of those framed as bad and were further scrutinized for reasons (see Figure 2). Left-leaning media were bad for an assortment of reasons: most prominently for criticizing the President (35.5 percent) and for their apparent anti-Americanism and affront to Fox News Channel or O'Reilly (17.7 percent each). They also posed a moral threat (11.3 percent), violated social norms, allowed/supported terrorism, were professionally incompetent (4.8 percent each), and behaved hypocritically/selfishly/greedily (3.2 percent). Similarly, media without identified political leaning were framed as bad mostly because they criticized the Bush administration (28.6 percent). They were also an affront to Fox or O'Reilly (20 percent), incompetent, a moral threat (17.1 percent each), anti-American (14.3 percent), and hypocritical/selfish/greedy (2.9 percent). Politically left-leaning organizations were bad mostly for criticizing the President (29 percent) and posing a moral threat (25.8 percent), but they also violated social norms (12.9 percent), were incompetent and hypocritical/selfish/greedy (9.7 percent each) and anti-American and supporters of terrorism

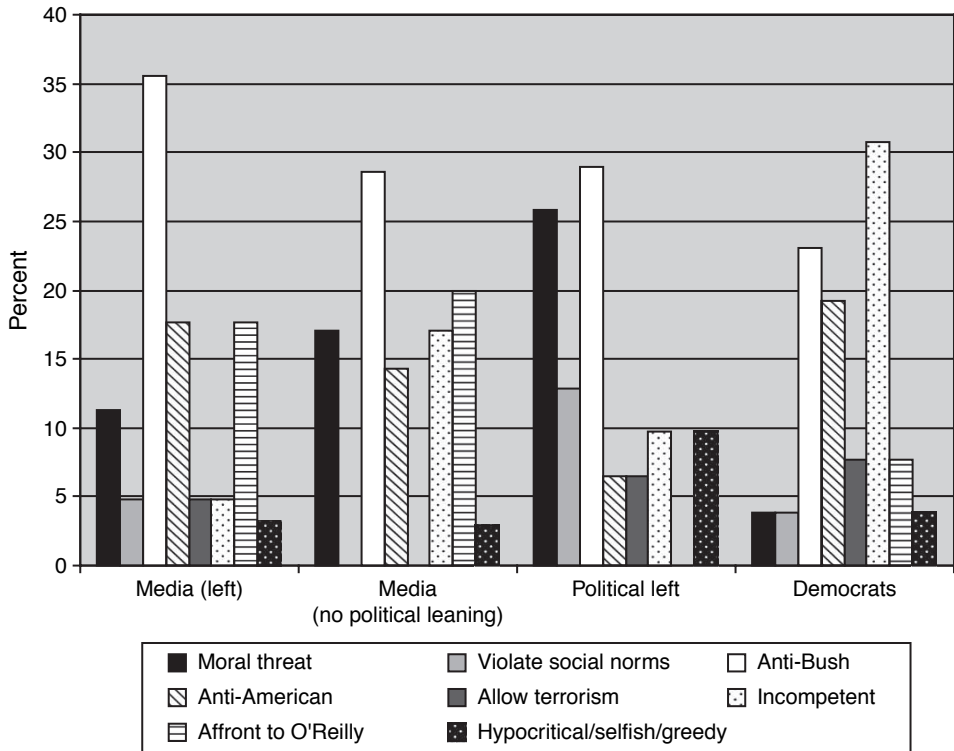


FIGURE 2
Prominent bad role-players and reasons

(6.5 percent each). The bad categorization of Democrats was derived mostly from incompetence (30.8 percent) and unpatriotic behavior by not supporting President Bush (23.1 percent) and anti-American (19.2 percent). They were bad, to a lesser extent, for supporting terrorism and being an affront to O'Reilly/Fox (7.7 percent each) and for posing a moral threat, violating social norms, and being hypocritical/selfish/greedy (3.8 percent each).

Evil Role-players

There were 56 cases of evil in this data set and six reasons. Posing a physical threat was clearly the most prominent reason (69.6 percent), followed by supporting terrorism (12.5 percent), posing a moral threat (7.1 percent), anti-Americanism (5.4 percent), incompetence (3.6 percent), and violating social norms (1.8 percent). Three role-player identities accounted for 60.7 percent of evil cases. The reasons for their evilness were further investigated. From Figure 3 it is clear that illegal aliens and terrorists were evil mostly because they pose a physical threat. Foreign governments and citizens were evil for a variety of reasons—mostly they posed a direct physical threat (42.9 percent). But they were also framed as allowing terrorism (28.6 percent), of being anti-American (14.3 percent), and of violating American norms (14.3 percent).

Good Role-players

There were 66 cases of good role-players and they achieved that status because of four reasons. Competence (37.9 percent) and upholding social norms (36.4 percent) were the most prominent reasons for being good, followed by fighting terrorism (24.2 percent), and supporting the Bush administration (1.5 percent). Four identity groups achieved prominent counts for being good. They made up 56.1 percent of those framed in a good

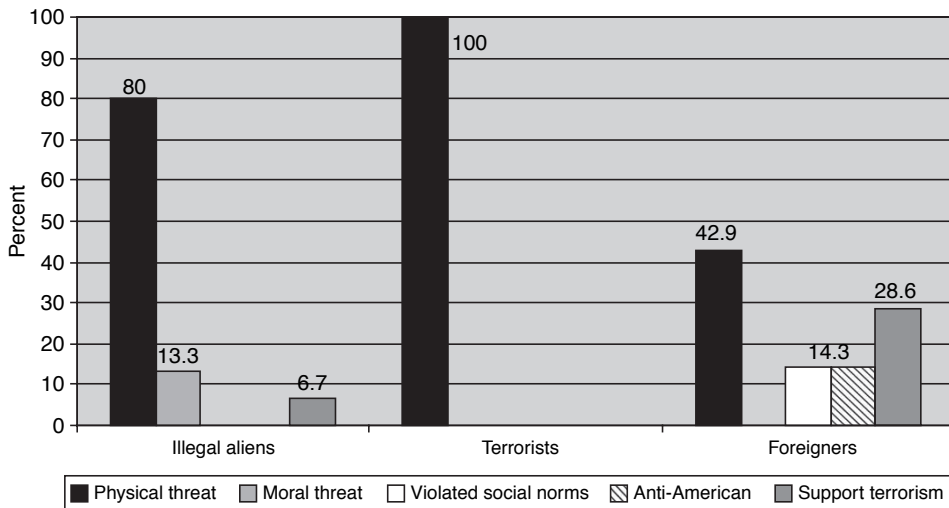


FIGURE 3
Prominent sources of evil and the reasons for being that

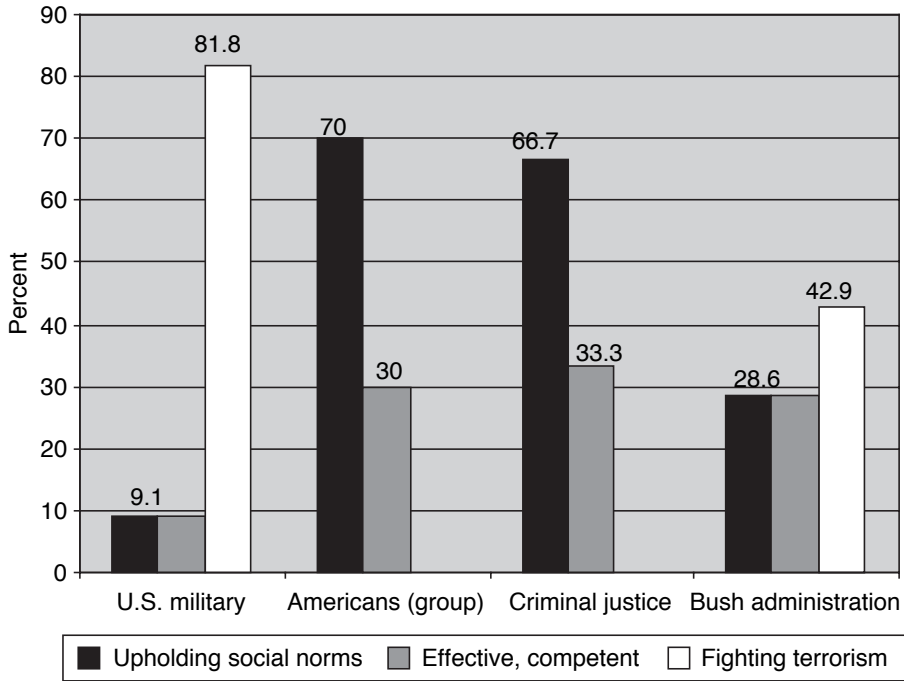


FIGURE 4
Prominent good role-players and reasons

light and were subjected to further analyses to uncover the reasons for their status as good (see Figure 4).

The best of all, the US military, achieved goodness through its battle against terrorism. Americans as a group were good mostly because they upheld social norms but also because they were competent citizens. The criminal justice system earned the good label by upholding social norms and being competent. The Bush administration achieved goodness through fighting terrorism, upholding social norms, and serving the American people with competence.

Heroes

There were only five heroes in this data set and three reasons why they achieved this status. Three (the Bush administration, Christians, and Republicans) were heroes for upholding praiseworthy social values whereas Americans as a group were heroic for their contribution to fighting terrorism. Right-leaning media were framed as heroic for their professional competence.

Conclusion

The cacophony of voices defending or criticizing Bill O’Reilly’s “No-Spin Zone” and his company’s claim of “Fair and Balanced” reporting are mostly grounded in old-school journalistic ideals. With the crumbling of the old journalism rock of objectivity, discussions

of liberal versus conservative media, fair versus biased coverage, or fact instead of opinion are becoming less relevant. This study was an attempt to rise above these views of journalistic nobility and conduct a systematic investigation of an important voice in American media and politics. Specifically, we set out to accomplish two major tasks with this study. One of those tasks was to lay out a methodological approach for quantitatively measuring propaganda techniques identified between the world wars in contemporary cable television news talk-show content. Applying these previously developed quantitative categories has the potential to allow for comparative analysis of mass communication messages from different eras and even across program formats. Our case study of *The O'Reilly Factor* enabled us to also gauge the efficacy of this tool.

Our second goal was to produce insights into Bill O'Reilly's strategies as a communicator. While American journalists might bristle at the comparison, many people in the United States consider O'Reilly and other news talk hosts as members of the profession (Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2005; Kurtz, 2005). With the continued blurring of the lines between journalism and infotainment, fact and opinion, journalists and bloggers, researchers have to reevaluate what counts as news. Given that context, this study pulled together previous research not only on news coverage, but also on political speech and persuasive rhetoric to build the template for analyzing the reality O'Reilly constructs through his "Talking Points Memo."

A key component of this template is the set of original propaganda devices developed by the IPA. The devices have been dismissed over the years as both a gimmick and as too imprecise for quantitative research methods (Jowett, 1987; Severin and Tankard, 1997; Sproule, 1989, 1997). But we found by closely following the original IPA definitions and employing rigorous coder training, six of the seven categories can be used in a systematic content analysis. The "card stacking" device was the only one that we found could not be reduced to individual cases within a larger message. The use of the propaganda devices allows researchers to follow Carey's (1989) urging to revisit the case study approach to message analysis, a framework that was swept aside with the emergence of quantitative research methods.

Testing for the use of propaganda devices enabled us to span the generations and directly compare O'Reilly to one of the most powerful orators of an earlier era, Father Charles Coughlin. There are differences in the program formats, and the IPA-coded Coughlin commentary represented only 33 minutes of actual airtime. However, calculating mean occurrences of the propaganda techniques per time unit (minute) permitted a comparison between the two men's rhetoric. In his day, Coughlin was considered blunt and heavy-handed. But as the data show, O'Reilly emerged as bolder and the less nuanced user of the propaganda devices, relying especially on name calling. The different formats of the two broadcasters could account for some of the variances. Coughlin's radio broadcasts normally lasted from 30 to 60 minutes, which allowed him time to build his arguments. By contrast, O'Reilly's "Talking Points Memo" runs roughly two minutes each night. O'Reilly may be jamming more propaganda devices into his broadcasts because of the time limitation.

As was the case during the world wars, O'Reilly injects fear into his commentaries. In sharp contrast to Gans' (1979) observation that the media focus on restoration of social order in their messages, O'Reilly almost never offered that hope, as tension remained unresolved in nearly all of his commentaries, promoting an undercurrent of fear. This frequent emphasis on fear and social disorder—coupled with his overriding lack of

resolution to that fear—not only puts O'Reilly at odds with traditional journalistic values, it also suggests a rhetorical strategy of playing on a primal human emotion to attract and maintain viewers.

Another area of focus in propaganda research in the first half of the 20th century is the construction of good versus evil through emphasis on the misery of victims. We pursued this area of investigation by identifying role-players, documenting how they were presented (villains, victims, or virtuous), and scrutinizing O'Reilly's logic for casting them in particular roles. What comes to the surface is that O'Reilly devotes more attention to left-leaning media, Americans as a group, media with no political affiliation, and left-leaning organizations than to other groups. And, overall, the light in which O'Reilly cast his role-players was a dark one: Villains (bad and evil) outnumbered the virtuous (good and heroic) by a ratio of 4.8 to 1.

Four groups emerged as the most prominent villains in O'Reilly's world. At the top of the list are the media—specifically those that O'Reilly framed as politically left but also outlets he referred to without mentioning political leaning. These media outlets comprised 28 percent of all villains, primarily because of their lack of support of President Bush and their disregard for O'Reilly himself. Second is the political left—including political organizations that O'Reilly labeled as left as well as Democrats and other politicians who were referred to in vague terms such as “politicians” or “Congress.” What earned them O'Reilly's contempt is their apparent moral corruption and incompetence while daring to criticize the President. Third is a collection of foreigners, including terrorists, illegal aliens, and the citizens and leaders of countries abroad who, according to O'Reilly, all pose a physical threat to Americans. In fourth place are members of the academe, who were framed as anti-American violators of social norms. Overall then, the political left was constructed as a shady bunch who is a nuisance to those in power. Yet, foreigners are those who should be feared for their direct physical threat to America. Academics, somewhat similar to the political left, were put in a frame of moral unsteadiness—but they were most clearly traitors to American ideals.

Virtuousness was most notably detected in three groups: the US Government (Bush, Republicans, and the military), Christians (the faith group closely associated with President Bush), and Americans as a group. They earned O'Reilly's approval for being diligent in upholding American ideals and protecting their country. In short, they exemplified who are referred to in the last two phrases of the country's national anthem (. . . land of the free and home of the brave).

Victimization also had an all-American face: the people, their government and their most dominant faith, Christianity, were most prominently cast in this light. “The people” were mostly victims of physical and moral threat or neglect. Their government's victimization was the result of unfair criticism and judgment from the political left. Together these narrative patterns construct a picture of a sometimes vulnerable nation headed by a virtuous but misunderstood leader.

These results provide a foothold to understanding a particular audience segment's attraction to *The O'Reilly Factor*, at an ideological level. For instance, O'Reilly cast Democrats and left-leaning organizations as predominantly bad, and the Bush administration among the most virtuous role-players. Survey data suggest that, in contrast to viewers of CNN and the major three US network newscasts, a distinct majority of Fox News Channel viewers identify themselves as Republican. Moreover, Fox News Channel viewers strongly expressed approval of President Bush at the same time viewers of the other

sources responded with distinct disapproval of the President (Survey and Policy Research Institute, 2006).

In a more subtle manner, casting people in the role of bad or evil nearly five times as often as in a positive light might be another insight into O'Reilly's popularity, especially among conservatives. In research on campaign advertising, Republicans found negative political advertising more persuasive than positive ones, while Democrats were influenced more by positive ads. Independents tended to ignore the advertising, unless it was negative (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1995). Concerning political journalism, during the last half of the 20th century, news coverage of politics tended to be less optimistic than the public and was generally negative across the years (Hart, 2000).

The results also point to O'Reilly's outreach to viewers. In O'Reilly's characterization, Americans as a group figured prominently among not only the virtuous but also among victims. This perspective would likely resonate with many Fox News viewers on the basis of the all-encompassing scope of "the American people." But at another level, the appeal is narrowly defined. The Fox News Channel's business model rests largely on viewers who consider themselves alienated by other news outlets. The network profits from a relatively narrow focus in large part because the traditional television news model—being all things to all people—is expensive by comparison (France, 2004). One way to target a segment of the cable audience is by painting the competition as out-of-touch. In this context, it is probably not a coincidence that left-leaning and "mainstream" media outlets led the list of villains in O'Reilly's commentaries.

The results presented here allowed us to go beyond criticizing or defending communicators based on selected exemplars. Indeed, our study provides systematic analysis of content over an extended period. For example, one of O'Reilly's common responses to charges of bias is to come up with one or two examples as proof he is fair to all groups (Hart, 2003). In October 2005, *The Dallas Morning News* columnist Macarena Hernandez accused O'Reilly of treating the southern border "as the birth of all American ills" (Hernandez, 2005). O'Reilly responded by showing a video clip in which he called Mexican workers "good people." He insisted this one example makes Hernandez "a liar" (O'Reilly, 2005a) and "proves I've been consistently sympathetic to the plight of poor migrants." O'Reilly also called for a boycott of *The Dallas Morning News* if the paper did not retract Hernandez's column (O'Reilly, 2005b). Our results show a consistent pattern of O'Reilly casting non-Americans in a negative light. Both "illegal aliens" and "foreigners" were constructed as physical threats to the public and never featured in the role of victim or hero.

O'Reilly's style of communication, along with the apparent success of Fox News Channel's positioning itself counter to other news outlets, has been the source of consternation for many in the journalism profession, who are unsure how to respond. These developments present a challenge to mass communication researchers as well: how to remain abreast of the constant changes within the complex nature of the media environment while gauging those changes with measures that are reliable and meaningful. We have devised the approach presented here with an eye towards this challenge.

As noted above, we feel this template has potential for mass communication scholars. There is a natural tendency to evaluate messages based on contemporary political and social contexts. But a fair degree of consistency is assured by the fact that the quantitative propaganda analysis method presented here rests on original measures developed more than 70 years ago. This opens the door to comparing the messages of

different speakers at different historical moments using a common means of measurement.

Additionally, by not relying on traditional journalistic conceptions of objectivity, researchers can potentially use this template to compare communicators active in different formats, whether standard newscasts or talk shows. The identity of role-players and the categorization of actors based on archetypal roles may even be suitable to studying a wide range of programming formats, from news to fictional and in between, such as reality TV.

While our study does heed Carey's suggestion of a return to case studies, concentrating on O'Reilly continues the IPA tendency of focusing on right-leaning communicators. Future studies should act upon another Carey (1989) suggestion to look at left-leaning communicators. In a post-modern media environment, every communication zone—from opinion to hard news—has a spin.

NOTES

1. www.oreilly-sucks.com and www.sweetjesusihatebilloreilly.com, both accessed 21 October 2005.
2. Propaganda analysis became a divisive political issue and fell into disfavor as the United States got involved in World War II (Institute for Propaganda analysis, 1942). Plus, top academic researchers in the United States started gravitating to more quantitative research methods and switched the emphasis from helping the receiver analyze the message to helping the communicator craft a more effective message (Lasswell et al., 1942; Lee and Lee, 1979; Sproule, 1989, 1997). Propaganda began to resurface as a research area in the United States during the late 1960s and 1970s when government deception was revealed in relation to the Vietnam War and Watergate. Instead of helping the government craft messages, researchers studied how the government advanced its agenda and how the media chose to frame those issues. For Combs and Nimmo (1993), the "new" propaganda is all-encompassing: "Propaganda is everywhere, is all pervasive and all penetrating. To live in contemporary times is to be showered with the seeds of suasive ideas, seeds encountered by chance, seeds planted in us, seeds scattered over us" (Combs and Nimmo, 1993, p. 15).
3. Role-players identified in O'Reilly's "Talking Points Memo" were as follows: (1) George W. Bush and his administration, including the President and members of his cabinet. (2) Republican elected officials in office at the time, currently running, or ones who held office in the past. (3) Politically right-leaning organizations including Pro-Life, Right to Life, or what O'Reilly refers to as "conservatives" (19 April 2005) or even "right-wing extremists" (29 March 2005), and "extreme right" (6 May 2005). Together the previous three categories were conceptually linked and called the political red. In the same way the following two categories were conceptually linked to represent the political blue: (4) Elected officials in the Democratic Party who held office in the past, currently running, or in office. (5) Politically left-leaning organizations were ones O'Reilly referred to as the "anti-Bush left faction" (25 January 2005), "the left wing" (7 April 2005), "the far left" (3 August 2005), etc. This also included the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) whom he routinely framed as left-leaning or radically liberal. (6) Politicians and government officials referred to in a generic way, without political affiliation or leaning. O'Reilly made generic references to politicians, or local, state, or the federal government without identifying

political leaning, for example "politicians" and "federal agents" (25 April 2005), "US government" (26 April 2005, 27 April 2005), "Congress" (22 March 2005), "ten states" (passing a law to punish child sex offenders harshly, 13 July 2005), etc. (7) US military officials or troops. (8) The criminal justice system, including the police, court officers, and corrections officers as well as specific laws. (9) Right-leaning media as identified by O'Reilly in his commentary. This includes Fox News Channel, "conservative radio" (28 February 2005), Rush Limbaugh (21 April 2005), etc. (10) Left-leaning media as identified by O'Reilly in his "Talking Points Memo." This included *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, "Hollywood liberals" (28 February 2005), "liberal media" (12 January 2005), left-wing media (13 April 2005), elite media (20 April 2005) in reference to *The New York Times*, etc. (11) Media with no identified political leaning or media institutions that O'Reilly did not consistently label in terms of left or right political stance. These included network news, CNN, the White House press corps, *The Houston Chronicle*, etc. Together the three media categories were also conceptually linked because of their obvious institutional similarity: they are the media. (12) Foreign countries, their leaders, and citizens. (13) Illegal aliens as per specific reference by O'Reilly. (14) Criminals included people who are suspected, arrested, charged, prosecuted, or sentenced. This category therefore included people who have been associated with crime but have not necessarily been found guilty through criminal justice procedures. (15) Terrorists as per specific reference by O'Reilly. (16) Academics included institutions as well as administrative, research, and teaching faculty. (17) Celebrities refer to famous actors, musicians, and athletes. (18) Christians included all institutions and people associated with this faith group. (19) Non-Christians included all role-players presented in association with non-Christian faith. This includes Muslims, Jews, secularists, atheists, etc. (20) Individual Americans were counted when they were identified by name to represent an ordinary citizen. This included references to, for example, Terri Schiavo's family (28 March 2005) because they were identified through her name. Terri Schiavo's medical and family circumstances and legal battles fueled intense media attention. She was diagnosed as being in a persistent vegetative state and in 1998, when it became legal to do so, her husband petitioned the courts to remove her gastric feeding tube while her parents opposed it. After a long and public legal battle her feeding tube was removed a third and final time on 18 March 2005. She died 13 days later. (21) Americans as a group was used to record role-players when references were made in broad terms without name identification, for example 9/11 families, Americans, children in Florida, Minutemen, the poor, etc. The previous two categories were conceptually linked in that they both represent ordinary American citizens without reference to their occupational, religious, legal, or political status. (22) The "other" category captured identities that were used infrequently but did not fit any of the others. This included a business, The Ayn Rand Institute, legal immigrants (not citizens yet), and the US Constitution.

4. The following categories were developed to capture specific reasons why role-players were villains, victims, or virtuous were as follows: (1) Posing a physical threat. This included described acts of violence or promise of physical danger. (2) Hurt by a physical threat. The victims of option 1, if identified, were recorded here. (3) Posing a moral threat. The presented danger or damage is to the moral core of America and to this country's suggested dearly held values including liberty, democracy, safety, family, patriotism, etc. (4) Violating social norms. This option is closely tied to the previous one. The difference lies in the description of threat: violating a moral value is void of threat. (5) Upholding

social norms. Here a role-player defended, upheld, or personified core moral values. (6) Hurt by moral transgression. This option absorbed the victims, if any, of options 3 and 4. (7) Anti-Bush. This included role assignment based on criticism of or opposition to the Bush administration on all levels (political, economic, military, etc.). (8) Supporting the Bush administration. When role-players were described as being a victim, villain, or virtuous because of their support of or loyalty to the President, this option was used. (9) Anti-American. Here criticism of or opposition to America was included—on social, economic, and political levels. Important, though, is that here America is the target of criticism, not the Bush administration. (10) Allowing or supporting terrorism. This option accommodated role-players described as aiding, harboring, or supporting terrorism without actively participating in the act of terrorism. (11) Fighting terrorism. This included role assignment based on active engagement in the war on terror through military operations or civic action. (12) Effective or competent. This option was used when role-players were described in terms of their ability to accomplish goals, for being hard working, diligent, and effective at what they do. (13) Ineffective or incompetent. Here role assignment based on the opposite of option 12 was recorded. (14) Hypocritical/selfish/greedy. These misbehaviors were initially coded separately as reasons for role assignments and collapsed *post hoc*. (15) Unfairly judged. This option recorded mostly the role assignments of victims who were misunderstood, unfairly criticized, or wrongly judged. (16) Affront to Fox News Channel or O'Reilly. Here role assignments rested on the role-player's offense or criticism of Fox News or O'Reilly personally. (17) Lack of support that should be there. This option was mostly used as a reason for victimization. It encapsulated those who had been failed, left behind, ignored, or neglected. (18) Other. This option captured all that did not fit into the above options and made the why category exhaustive.

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