

The Hegemony of the Neoliberal Narrative: Right Wing Discourses of ‘Common Sense’, the Weaponization of the Term ‘Liberal’, and the Shifting of the Political Spectrum

by

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Abstract

Among the most notable trends of the last several decades in the United States have been the rise of corporate power, the entrenchment of neoliberalism, the rise in inequality, along with discussions regarding the ‘culture wars’ and the phenomenon of polarization. The onset of the neoliberal era has been accompanied and facilitated by a decades-long marketing campaign propagating the consistent narrative of individualism over the collective, that government is the problem rather than a solution to problems, while associating freedom exclusively with the market. This thesis project draws on critical theory, Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic power, discourse, narrative and communications theory, along with some insights from social psychology to examine the discursive shifting of the political spectrum that has occurred over the last four decades and has helped to entrench market fundamentalism as a hegemonic common sense. The thesis pays particular attention to the weaponization of the word ‘liberal’ and how this strategy has affected the understanding of the political spectrum and how the centre is currently framed. The research design I use to interrogate this entails a qualitative content analysis of various media sources noting how ‘common sense’ populist discourse, such as terms like ‘liberal’, are utilized by Republican operatives and conservative commentators, as well as by the mainstream media and the general public. Using a multi-disciplinary theoretical approach and a methodological framework provided by Stone and Parker, I deconstruct and analyze the narrative that has been built up around neoliberalism and how it can serve to reinforce neoliberalism as a little-questioned hegemonic paradigm, often by-passing cognition. Neoliberal logics reject the political in terms of participatory democracy, while still requiring a strong state to stabilize the economic order. The resulting erosion of democracy augurs the possibility of right-wing authoritarianism, exacerbates inequality, and promotes a growth model that is unsustainable ecologically.

Keywords: liberal/liberalism, neoliberalism, corporate power, political spectrum, narratives, populism, anti-reflexivity, affect, system justification, polarization

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"The masquerade is over; it's time to . . . use the dreaded 'L' word, to say the policies of our opposition . . . are liberal, liberal, liberal."

- Ronald Reagan. Republican National Convention, 1988 (in Nunberg, 2003: par. 1).

"In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem, government IS the problem."

- Ronald Reagan. Inaugural Address, 1981 (Wikisource.org, par: 9).

Introduction

The Ronald Reagan presidency (1980-1988) is often seen as marking a shift away from the post-war Keynesian consensus in the United States toward the ascendancy of neoliberalism as a ruling paradigm. A key locus of this change centered on the role of government in society, which went from being seen as offering possible solutions to problems, to being seen as a problem. Republicans and conservatives have generally viewed those who supported the former sentiment as misguided liberals, who were causing the problem and needed to be stopped. This not only launched the era of market fundamentalism, it also initiated the regular use of populist 'common-sense' discourses by the nascent New Right movement, particularly the weaponizing of the term 'liberal'¹ as a political weapon to denounce and dismiss those who opposed neoliberalism (evidenced in the quotes above).

These debates remain relevant today as we continue to grapple with concerns about global pandemics. The ongoing anxiety over the Covid-19 outbreak brings into sharp relief two issues that have been central to political and sociological debates since the dawn of the Reagan era: the debate over the role of government, and the role of reasoned discourse and evidence-based claims in a 'post-truth' world. These issues will be central to this thesis project as it investigates: how the political spectrum has shifted to the right since the 1980s as neoliberalism has become hegemonic, the role that the mass circulation of discourses, narratives, general

¹ The term liberal will be used without quotation marks when being used in the traditional manner of political theory and in quotes when used in the manner of the New Right movement, or as an unclear, contested term.

rhetoric and sloganeering (which I will consider propaganda) by the New Right movement has played in this shift, and the manner in which corporate power has contributed to these phenomena (see Davis, 1981; Carey, 1997).

The specific research design I use to analyze this phenomenon is to undertake a qualitative content analysis of the populist discourses of ‘common sense’ used by the New Right in the US, and their weaponization of the term ‘liberal’ or ‘liberal elite’. I also compare this with how these and other terms are used by the mainstream media (an institution often called ‘liberal’ by conservative critics) as a heuristic to gauge the extent of dominant discourses circulating in the public sphere. (Details regarding the methods are discussed below.)

The content analysis of the media texts consists of a narrative analysis, supplemented by elements borrowed from discourse analysis. I will make use of Stone’s (1989) framework of narrative policy analysis and Jones and MacBeth’s (2010) narrative policy framework (NPF) – by mapping out the plot through archetypal characters of villains, victims, and heroes (and the device of signifying a moral to the story as a resolution). Examining the story from the perspective of the storytellers is an effective way to better understand how the narrative of neoliberalism became the common sense ‘new normal’.

Although these are often separate analytical procedures, this synthetic approach is justified for several reasons. Narrative analysis allows for a consideration of the importance that storytelling has in the way people perceive issues and phenomena, as well as providing an understanding of how a story is constructed. Discourse analysis foregrounds considerations of the effects that power dynamics play in influencing how the public understands these issues and phenomena. This is particularly useful to explore imprecise and contested concepts such as the political spectrum (as their ‘floating’ signification facilitates alterations). For the discourse

analysis I will draw on procedures provided by Parker (2004), which bring attention to dominant and subjugated language (which has gained particular importance in the Trumpian era of ‘alternative facts’) – and is reminiscent of Bourdieu’s concept of the symbolic power of language that will play a part in the theoretical base of this thesis and will be discussed below. The different levels and perspectives provided by such triangulation allows for a deeper, more detailed understanding of the phenomena under examination.

Just as an integrated approach will enhance the data analysis, the best way to explicate an issue that is not only complex due to its abstract nature but is often neglected in mainstream sociology is, I believe, to bring in theoretical insights from multiple theories and disciplines (discussed below). Therefore, to this work of critical political sociology, I will add research from the fields of political science, affect, propaganda and communications studies, social and political psychology, and linguistics. This research project focusses predominantly on developments in the US (as the issues are most pronounced there), although the discussion is applicable to other settings.

I will begin by examining the (macro) development of a corporate-funded organized network that facilitates the dissemination of market fundamentalism (Carroll, 2010, Goss, 2016) and the related theory of hegemony developed by Gramsci. To address the critique of ‘economic reductionism’, I will add Bourdieu’s theory to incorporate the importance of micro-level embodied practices as a means of perpetuating social orders. However, to understand the social change (that has happened within the maintenance of the broader social order) of the neoliberal era, it is important to take into consideration the meso level of persuasion and manipulation coming from communications networks that can serve to naturalize ‘common-sense’ discourses over the long term and trigger support through affect in the short term, a different, more subtle

process than that often described as ‘false consciousness’. This allows for a connection between the macro-structural (corporate power), the meso of media and communications, and the micro level of the individual dispositions and opinion formation.

Along with the concerns stated at the outset, other related questions that have informed my interest in this project are as follows. How have parties of the right attracted increasing support from voters from lower socio-economic demographics? (Or simply: How did Trump get elected?) And how – as has been often observed (see George, 2013: 7) – has American society since the 1960s seemingly become more liberal socio-culturally while, paradoxically, at the same time becoming more conservative politically-economically, particularly on the governmental level? The specific research questions explored in this thesis are: How do populist ‘common sense’ narratives and general discourses contribute to the framing of the political spectrum in the US, and facilitate support for the New Right movement and market fundamentalism? How is the term ‘liberal’ used by the right, how does this compare to the way it is used by the mainstream media, how do these uses contribute to the reframing of the political spectrum, and the entrenchment of neoliberalism? In analyzing these questions, this study will contribute to the understanding of the political spectrum, liberalism and liberal-democracy, neoliberalism and corporate power, and the importance that communications, storytelling, and affect play in their articulation.

The data demonstrates that neoliberal narrative is ubiquitous and the term ‘liberal’ has become a commonly-used meme, with its general meaning not dissimilar to that used by the right as a weapon. It also reveals the nature of right-wing discourses as working through populism, anti-reflexive discourses, and affect which works by referencing meanings that have been established over the long term through repetition and reinforcement and can be activated (often

by triggering intolerance and resentment) in the moment through slogans and catchphrases. New Right discourses rely heavily on the terms/concepts of 'freedom', 'law and order', and nationalism. 'Liberals' are set up as villains in opposition (see Findings).

Chapter One: Locating Historical Context

1.1 Note on the Political-Ideological Spectrum & Terminology

It may be necessary, as I will be examining the New Right as a social movement, to establish some definitions and parameters around it. I will be working within a framework that sees conservatism as a political movement growing as a reaction to forces of resistance that arose, particularly following the French Revolution, to challenge the existing hierarchical social structures (see Wolfe, 1981). The political designations ‘left’ and ‘right’, in fact, have their roots in the French parliament of this revolutionary era (with those aligning with the *ancien regime* sitting on the right and those opposed to it sitting on the left of the French legislative chamber). Following this period, as Wolfe (1981) notes, Western societies moved predominantly and progressively to the left.

Social movements arose in protest against an existing order, and, in the process of shattering that order, moved history forward, in the sense that the forces unleashed by each revolutionary transformation incorporated into political consciousness groups that were once excluded from the public realm. Such transformations inevitably aroused opposition, giving birth to modern conservatism. But the point needs to be emphasized that without the emergence of the left, there can be no right. If social change had been frozen at the high point of feudalism, there would not be much of a basis for conservative protest in the modern world. (Wolfe, 1981: 4.)

From this perspective, liberalism can be seen as a foundational part of the revolutionary and evolutionary moves against the traditional social order (of church and monarchical authority) and central to that process of ‘moving history forward’ – towards democracy. Arising out of the Enlightenment, liberalism as political philosophy is based in a Cartesian emancipation from metaphysical dogma (namely religious faith) and as promoting reason that has been seen as elemental to Western democracy and modernity (Russell, 2004). Classical liberalism will be discussed below, along with the limitations of the liberal paradigm (particularly as it is based on the assumption of human rationality and the universalizing of Western reason). This paper will

not be necessarily arguing for the idealization of liberalism, but rather noting its fundamental role in establishing deliberative democracy and providing the starting point from which to debate and explore democratic possibilities².

It is within this ‘revolution and reaction’ paradigm that I will be referring to the modern New Right as a ‘conservative’ movement: i.e., a reactionary movement (predominantly from ‘above’) motivated to push back against reforms that instigated the expansion of democracy (from ‘below’). This position is summed up aptly by William F Buckley Jr.’s first ‘publisher’s statement’ that his publication *National Review* “stands athwart history, yelling Stop” (cited in Smith, 2007: 1). Of course, there are degrees and variants of conservative (economic, social, religious, with Buckley associated more with the latter two), but these have coalesced into the modern New Right movement, as will be discussed below.

Some political scientists (see Carmines, et al. 2012; Klar, 2014) have proposed that measuring political-ideological preferences on the unidimensional horizontal axis should be replaced with two crisscrossing axes (one horizontal and one vertical) to account for people who are socially conservative but economically liberal (‘communitarians’) and those who are socially liberal but economically conservative (‘libertarians’). However, despite economic changes, demographic nuances, and intersectionalities, there is evidence to suggest the lingering utility of conceptualizing the political spectrum along a unidimensional continuum. To start with, most lower income voters in the US still favour the Democratic Party and most high-income voters support the Republicans (Inglehart, 2014; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2006). Recent research by Azevedo, Jost, Rothmund, and Sterling (2019) finds that public opinion maintains its coherence across both social and economic dimensions and these attitudes can be correlated with

² This includes creating what Galbraith (1952) termed ‘countervailing power’: citizens (workers, consumers, etc.) organizing collectively to counter the power of large business interests and organized wealth in general.

ideological self-placement on the traditional left-right spectrum. Moreover, the authors point out that a multitude of policy issues (including taxation, social programs, public education, affirmative action, first nations relations, welfare and other redistribution policies, abortion, law and order, and military budgets) “involve *both* economic priorities and social concerns pertaining to race, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, gender, and sexual orientation” (Azevedo, et al. 2019: 15; see also Jost, 2006).

In short, these insights suggest that the social and economic axes of the US political-ideological spectrum can be validly plotted along the same singular horizontal axis, while allowing for some complexity. This thesis will adopt this standpoint, with three fundamental variables indicating either left of centre (commonly labelled as ‘liberal’) or right of centre (commonly labelled ‘conservative’) – along with their varying degrees and exceptions. These fundamental variables are: 1. a desire for change versus a desire for the maintenance of the social order (whether class, race or gender), 2. a desire for equality versus an acceptance of inequality (in all the same areas), 3. open minded tolerance for difference (race, lifestyle, religion, or sexual orientation) versus closed-minded intolerance of difference. The extent to which they are dispersed along this continuum and how they are discussed (or manifest) in particular circumstances, of course, remains fluid and difficult to generalize. A final note is that the US electoral system does not offer an authentic party of the left like other mature democracies (see Hartz, 1955; Davis, 1986), which can confuse the discussion about the American political spectrum and the related ‘polarization’ phenomenon.

In terms of being Republican, while it is not perfectly synonymous with being conservative, there is certainly a strong tendency toward being so among both political candidates and their voters (see Lelkes, 2016; Inglehart, 2014; see also Schwadel, 2017: 241 on

how being Republican is highly associated with being religious and supportive of military spending). Likewise, being ‘right-wing’ may not perfectly overlap with voting Republican, but most Republican candidates running for office are normally to the right (in all senses) of most Democrats (see Fischer and Mattson, 2009; Hacker and Pierson, 2005, 2016). This has been exacerbated by the primary process, where organized partisans – often with corporate sponsorship – form legislative watchdog groups to monitor elected officials and carry out takeovers of local nomination committees to replace incumbent Republican candidates who have not toed the line on traditional conservative issues, thus ensuring a continual pull to the right (see Mayer, 2016; Skocpol and Williams, 2016; MacLean, 2018).

While the neoliberal project is normally associated with concern for a free market (supported and funded as it is by large business interests), and many libertarians do not identify as social conservatives, neoliberal theorists like Hayek (1944, 1960) position both markets and traditional morality (including religion) as ‘organic, spontaneous’ orders that provide the social cohesion for a society to function and thus in need of protection from interventionist social policies.

It is for this reason that I will also use the term neoliberalism to describe the New Right movement, while acknowledging that both are subject to complexity, and indeed contradictory elements (Brown, 2019: 2); this in fact accounts for much of its strength (as I will discuss below). Further complexity results from the fact that the Democratic Party has come to predominantly embrace neoliberalism as a ruling paradigm (though are generally less fundamentalist), and some Republicans (such as Trump) are not strictly orthodox libertarians, though still avow commitments to markets and morality. The confluence of contemporary evangelical Christianity and capitalist culture in the US has been described as consisting of

“energized complexities of mutual imbrication, and interinvolvement, in which heretofore unconnected or loosely associated elements fold, bend, blend, emulsify and resolve incompletely into each other, forging a qualitative assemblage resistant to classical modes of explanation” (Connolly, 2008: 39-40).

For the above reasons this thesis paper will use the term conservative, right-wing, and Republican relatively interchangeably (unless noted), as this appears to be common in media and the general public sphere, among partisans and neutrals alike (Lelkes, 2016; see Hall (2017) for a similar account of coherence between economic and socio-cultural issues in the coalescence of the New Right). Similarly, despite the subtle distinctions between libertarian and neoliberal – (with the latter being more associated with ‘familialization’ (see Brown, 2019 below)) – the terms will be used synonymously, as Hayek is associated with both terms (advocating for both markets and traditional morals), and the terms (along with ‘market fundamentalism’) are used interchangeably throughout the literature.

A final brief note on my use of neoliberalism is also worthwhile. While I recognize that there are different variants and manifestations of neoliberalism, I am primarily discussing how it has developed in the United States over the last four decades or so. It is also possible to distinguish between different modalities of neoliberalism. First, there is the libertarian ideal type (of an extreme minimalist state, with social provisioning limited strictly to security forces – police and military – and full privatization). There is the actual form in which it is functioning as a de facto regime, which inevitably includes compromises demanded by political and electoral realities (ie. the politics of the possible). Finally, there is neoliberalism as a narrative; in other words, how it is being sold to the general public at various times, which may or not be consistent with the first two. It is important to keep in mind that it is the combination of neoliberal

economic rhetoric combined with socio-cultural rhetoric that has given the broader New Right movement its potency and durability – which facilitates the implementation of neoliberal policies.

In sum, while the conservative movement has many disparate manifestations and layers, and neoliberalism has become a hegemonic paradigm that has bled beyond conservative and Republican circles, it is fair to say that these various components have coalesced into what can be termed a broader New Right movement that is at its core reactionary against the progressive turns that have occurred in society over the last century or so. I will also use the term the ‘radical right’ to describe this movement, but will reserve the term ‘extreme right’ to describe neo-Nazi, White supremacist, anti-feminist hate groups, which, while not unconnected, will be considered somewhat outside the bounds of this research project.

The term ‘propaganda’, which I will use in its most basic and original form, can be traced etymologically “to the Latin *propagare* (to propagate, to sow matters of faith), and its meaning has been associated with the ideological management of society ever since” (Sussman, 2011: 2). To this I will add Stanley’s (2015) view of negative propaganda as political rhetoric which “exploits and strengthens flawed ideology”, which allows for the distinction between that which advances democracy, and that which works to undermine it (5)³. Following Moloney (2006) and Xifra (2020), I will use the terms propaganda and public relations interchangeably, as “public relations is (a form of) political communication. Indeed, strategic communication spreads and propagates capitalist ideology, the ideology of consumption” (Xifra, 2020: 8).

1.2 Classical Liberalism as a Philosophical Concept

³ An example of the effective, as well as positive, use of propaganda, is the campaign against cigarette smoking. An example of an effective harmful use of propaganda was the successful campaign, created by PR pioneer Bernays (discussed below), to market cigarettes to women in the 1920s as “Torches of Freedom” (Ewen, 1996: 4).

As this thesis will be concerned with closely scrutinizing the use of the term ‘liberal’, I will briefly outline the origins of liberalism as political theory. Although this original concept may not be prominent in current common usage, and much of the discussion lies outside the bounds of this paper, because liberalism is intrinsically linked to democracy (and is often used synonymously as liberal-democracy), briefly exploring its parameters can assist in establishing a baseline for a better understanding of the general political spectrum in the Western political tradition. Most important to note is the polysemic nature of the term ‘liberal’ (this ambiguity imbues the term with much of its force), and that it is subject to critique from the left and the right and can be used to describe positions on the right, left, or centre (depending on context).

The broad nature of liberalism may grow from its roots in both the social contract and utilitarian traditions and the attempt to reconcile the ideas of liberty and equality. Liberalism’s dual roots accounts for its variants of social liberalism (that spawned the Keynesian welfare state) and economic liberalism (that spawned Hayekian libertarianism). As mentioned above, liberalism’s roots in the Enlightenment suggests a deliberative process, freedom of speech, and a fundamental skepticism (Mill, 1991 [1859]: 62-64). (The logical extension of the latter being what McCright and Dunlap (2010) call ‘reflexive modernity’, which will be discussed below).

The ‘liberty’ or freedom element of liberalism, often associated with Locke’s (1689) idea of the social contract, is the one emphasized by libertarians, in particular economic freedom. However, Rousseau’s (1765) view of the social contract extended the concept of liberty, in that “being free in the sense of being self-governing is perfectly compatible with being subject to the coercive will of others, as long as that will is your real or true will manifested in the General Will (in which case it does not count as coercion)” (Kelly, 2005: 55). Laws against drinking and driving, are examples of such ‘positive liberty’, where “one may feel constrained by certain laws

while those laws are, at the same time, constitutive of one's liberty" (Kelly, 55-56). The social contract would, as Rawls (1971) later argued, model a "set of civil rights, constitutional protections and entitlements to economic resources that underpin a just political order" (in Kelly, 2005: 36; see MacPherson's (1962) argument prioritizing equality over liberty).

The utilitarian tradition, first articulated by Bentham (1789) and JS Mill (1859), is often associated with a free market and self-interest. However, utilitarianism, ultimately concerned with maximizing the greatest good/happiness for the greatest number, is also embedded in a normative foundation. "Whereas Locke and Kant give an account of private property rights that constrains state actions to bring about a more equal distribution of resources, utilitarians are more amenable to the idea that the distribution of resources and economic power should be constructed (and if necessary reconstructed) to maximize happiness or welfare" (Kelly, 2005: 30). While this position recognizes government's role in facilitating the common good, there is no suggestion of it owning the means of production (as in socialism) as the market remains central.

Criticism from the left, in fact, often views attempts at Keynesian social liberalism – government intervention into business practices (worker rights and safety, consumer safety, collective bargaining, environmental protections) and the establishment of the welfare state – as intended to "save capitalism from itself" (Dumenil and Levy, 2011:12; see Eaton, 1951; Keynes, 1936) and view liberals as "corporate power's little helpers" (Cromwell and Edwards, 2013). Kolko (1963) maintains that early efforts at social reform from Bismarck's Germany and progressive era America purposely preserved the "basic social and economic relations essential to a capitalist society" (2) in order to protect it from collapse or revolution. Marxian critique maintains that the state has been fundamental in securing the conditions for corporate domination

(see Jessop, 2016; Harvey, 2005). Davis (1981) suggests that the rise of the New Right in the 1980s may have been due to the “reflux of the bankruptcy of liberalism and of a persistent political vacuum on the left” (54).

It is also worth at least referring to valid critiques of philosophical liberalism as being based upon White patriarchal logics (see Said, 1993; Bhaba, 1994; Coulthard, 2014; Benhabib, 2002; Ashendon, 2005). Post-colonial critique problematizes liberalism’s assumptions of Western reason as universal or superior – the logical extension of which can be seen in what could be described as the (somewhat arrogant) teleological assumptions of Fukuyama’s (1989) end of history thesis. Automatically positioning Western society as the un-marked norm, requires “an ‘Other’ to not be the center” (Ashendon, 2005: 205). These implicit attitudes can serve to reinforce the dominance of the West over the rest (and majority) of the world. The danger of the universalization of Western world views and practices carries with it the danger of assimilation and co-option, particularly considering the power imbalance of the relationships (see Coulthard, 2014). Emulating Western modes of consumption and production has not only accelerated the well-documented environmental destruction, but it has also resulted in the less documented loss of cultures, languages, and ancient wisdoms, or “the erosion of what might be termed the ethnosphere” (Davis, 2012: 5). This topic cannot be properly dealt with for reasons of space but is worthy of keeping in mind.

Criticism of liberalism from the right also comes as a critique of the reforms of social liberalism, but through an emphasis on the ‘liberty’ aspect. Libertarian theorists Hayek (1944) and Friedman (1962) – drawing on Adam Smith (1776) and the belief that rational self-interest and competition engenders prosperity – reject the equality component and the merits of ‘positive liberty’, stressing the need for only ‘negative liberty’, which is defined as the absence of

coercion in terms of both restraints (prevention of actions) and constraints (compulsion of actions) (see Nozick, 1974). While liberalism is intrinsically linked to democracy, its economic roots are just as clear as are its concern with freedom from state tyranny. As the attempt to seek equality and social justice requires the state to infringe on the rights of individuals and involves coercion – such as the requirement to pay taxes to redistribute wealth which can be seen as a form of forced labor – then these goals are incompatible with freedom, which Hayek (1960) sees simply as “independence of the arbitrary will of another” (59). Economic freedom becomes the priority as “the recognition of property” (as a pre-political right) is “the first step in delimiting the private sphere protecting us against coercion,” (Hayek, 1960: 207; see also Skinner, 1998; Newey, 2001).

Hayek (1944, 1960) criticizes government intervention using a version of utilitarianism, but one which rejects the notion of a ‘common will’ or ‘collective good’ in favor of unregulated markets and private property – as these are seen by neoliberals as the most constructive and efficient way of organizing society in the long run. Attempts at social regulation spurred by collective efforts, proponents of economic liberty argue, will inevitably further increase the coercive power of an institutionalized bureaucratic apparatus, resulting not only in excessive rules and regulations, but in inefficiencies.

A lesser known, but equally important, economic theorist in terms of the rise of the New Right movement in the US is James Buchanan (1962, 1975), who like Hayek and Friedman, won the Nobel Prize and was a consultant to the authoritarian Pinochet regime in Chile. Buchanan used the discourses of government overreach and coercion infringing on liberty in support of states’ rights and in opposition to civil rights and desegregation measures starting in the 1950s (MacLean, 2018). An ardent proponent of economic liberty, Buchanan not only supported the

dismantling of the state, but also argued for shielding governance from popular and majoritarian interventions or participation in order to protect that priority. Buchanan, Hayek, and Friedman similarly make their arguments in support of the maintenance of the traditional social order that they see as arising organically and serving to create societal cohesion, a form of functionalism.

In short, what came to be known as ‘neoliberalism’ is seen as emphasizing markets as a place of choice and therefore freedom, and the political (manifested as a bloated bureaucracy-laden government) is seen as a place of constraint, regulation, and therefore a limitation on freedom. Brown (2019) defines neoliberalism today as “a bundle of policies privatizing public ownership and services, radically reducing the social state, leashing labor, de-regulating capital, and producing a tax-and-tariff-friendly climate to direct foreign investors” (18). This new paradigm, writes Brown (2018), “replaces a model of society based on the justice-producing social contract with society conceived and organized as markets and with states oriented by market requirements” (62). Brown also sees individuals themselves being constituted in a similar way: produced and formed to follow the logics of market competition.

While neoliberal logics are common in the media today, classical liberalism, as a melding of equality and freedom, does not appear to be a large part of the contemporary usage of the term ‘liberal’. As will be seen in the Findings and Discussion sections, the contemporary general usage of the term ‘liberal’ by the media and general public is as a direct contrast to the positions put forth by proponents of neoliberalism. Suffice to say that the general meaning has come to be understood as being interested in acknowledging and addressing inequalities and historical injustices and using the collective power of governments and public monies to do so. At the same time, the meaning of liberalism, has also, as Brown (2005) notes, trended “in the direction

of *liberality* rather than *liberty*” (39). In other words, as the research confirms, it has assumed a tone of disparagement, implying misguided idealism, over-indulgence, and wastefulness.

Regardless of the current contested nature of ‘liberalism’ as a concept, it has in political theory traditionally been used as relatively synonymous with democracy (as in ‘liberal-democracy’), even by those who uncritically accept market logics. A perfect indicator of the use of the term ‘liberal’ as a proxy for democracy can be seen in Fukuyama’s (1989) usage of the term to describe the political system in the Western world that he contends is the apotheosis of governance (i.e. ‘the end of history’). Coming as it does from research produced in the conservative think tank/public policy network⁴ it is clear this usage does not imply leftist or socialist. This usage can also be seen in the well-regarded and pro-market publication *The Economist* referring to views that are “(f)or classical liberals, like this newspaper” (2019: 9). It is this meaning that will be used as a baseline comparison for its current usage in popular parlance.

⁴ Fukuyama has worked for Rand Corporation, Olin Foundation, and Project for the New American Century.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this thesis is constructed from a number of related theories and disciplines. I draw on critical theory, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power, discourse, narrative and communications theory, along with some insights from social psychology. These are discussed below.

2.1 Critical Theory

As this research project will analyze the shifting of the political spectrum discursively, it will be informed by narrative, discourse, and general communications theory. However, I will also be drawing on critical theory – a sociological approach that is rooted in the idea that the social construction of reality will tend to favor the interests of the wealthy and powerful – as a foundational base.

Gramsci's (1971) hegemony theory is particularly informative as it holds that dominant groups maintain their positions not primarily through force or coercion, but through achieving consent from subaltern classes, and that this consent is engendered through civil society institutions that foster and disseminate culture (like school, church, the workplace, the family, media, and forms of popular culture) (see Boggs, 1984:160). Ruling elites, Gramsci argued, "sought to justify their power, wealth, and status" by "securing general popular acceptance of the dominant position as something 'natural', part of an eternal social order, and thus unchallengeable" (Boggs, 1984:161). The key to doing so was contingent on to what extent values, beliefs and ways of living became "embedded in the fabric of social relations and national traditions" (Boggs, 1984: 161). Thus internalized by enough people, they come to be seen as "common sense", which Gramsci (1971) termed the "folklore of philosophy" (630). This

can literally be seen in the current use of the term ‘common sense’ (often mixed with nationalist and neoliberal discourses) coming from the right.

Hegemonic power, in the modern era, can be seen manifested most prominently in the form of corporate power, which is able to hold enormous influence over the state (influencing public policy) and civil society (influencing public opinion) (see Carroll, 2010; Carroll and Greeno, 2013). Much of this power derives from the ability of corporate elites to be cohesive and organized (Carroll, et al. 2018: 446), with the “network of interlocking corporate directorships” providing the “infrastructure for such cohesiveness” (Carroll and Sapinski, 2018: 100; see also Goss, 2016; Domhoff, 2002). Perhaps most importantly is the ability for these cohesive and organized corporate networks to use their ‘allocative power’ to fund think tanks and advocacy groups and reach from the economic into the political and cultural realms. By directing not only money but “also their time, ideas, and political leverage toward influencing public policy”, “philanthropic plutocrats” have become so influential that they are now not only accepted, but “even expected” to “take part in and even lead efforts to solve big problems” (Goss, 2016: 442). Due to superior resources (both in terms of finances and the kind of artful strategies and strategists that wealth can buy), the corporate-funded New Right movement has been able to play “the long game of cultivating a pro-business political and popular culture” (Carroll, et al. 2018: 426). Details of this long game will be central to this study (see literature review), but these developments are succinctly summarized by Carey (1997): “The twentieth century has been characterized by three developments of great political importance: the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate power, and the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power from democracy” (18).

One of the primary means that the political spectrum is deliberated in both the US media and scholarship is through discussions of public opinion as well as the increasingly common narrative of polarization. These research areas raise the related, but often neglected, issue of government responsiveness and elite influence on the general public. Analysis that relies on the assumption that the electorate drives political change, as Jacobs and Shapiro (2002) point out, often fails to fully consider “the impact of partisan policy goals on political strategy and on attempts to manipulate public opinion” (Jacobs and Shapiro, 2002: 72; see Gilens, 2005). One of the most important strategies that parties and politicians use to simulate responsiveness is through the use of “crafted talk” (Jacobs and Shapiro, 2002: 63) in which polls and focus groups are used to discover the best way to sell (an already decided) policy direction to the general public. This allows politicians to, as Jacobs and Shapiro (2002) write, “obscure their true policy goals and to appear responsive to centrist opinion through their language and symbolic actions” (63).

An example of this can be seen in health care policy reform of the Clinton era where public preferences were generally “in favor of expanding access to health insurance, regulating private insurers to ensure reliable coverage, and increasing certain taxes to pay for these programs” (Shapiro and Jacobs, 2010: 7). These public preferences were met, however, with intense political resistance that included an extensive marketing campaign that “misled or alarmed the public” with slogans like “death panels” and “government takeover” that served to then turn many against the plan for health reform they initially supported (Shapiro and Jacobs, 2010: 8). Much of this PR campaign was sponsored by corporate interests, such as the tobacco industry (see Fallin, et al. 2014; Apollonio and Bero, 2007).

Other than in certain circumstance as in when an election is approaching (Jacobs and Shapiro, 2002), or for “hot button” social issues (Domhoff, 2002), “public opinion has little or no independent influence on foreign, defense, or economic policymaking. Instead, these policies are the province of a power elite” (Domhoff, 2002: 124). Domhoff’s (2002) critical examination of the policy-planning network demonstrates how the wealthy and powerful attempt to influence public opinion “before proposals become visible in the political arena” (128). This network research reveals an “elaborate opinion-shaping process that centers around many of the same foundations, think tanks, and policy discussion groups that operate in the policy- planning network”, except supplemented “by public relations firms and the public affairs departments” of large corporations (Domhoff, 2002: 128). “These core organizations are connected to a large dissemination network that includes local advertising agencies, corporate-financed advertising councils, and special communities to influence single issues. Many polling organizations are also part of this process; their role is to monitor the success of corporations and policy discussion groups in shaping public opinion” (Domhoff, 2002: 128-129). Moreover, the framing and “rigid, structured nature of polling may narrow the range of public discourse by defining the boundaries for public debate, and by influencing the ways that journalists report on politics” (Herbst, 1993: 166).

2.2 Pierre Bourdieu: Practice, Symbolic Power, Doxa

Bourdieu’s critical theory, which provides important insights into understanding knowledge production, the constitution of the subject, and social reproduction, also helps illuminate this research project. Bourdieu (1991) is, however, critical of “the combination of scientific realism and economism” (133) in the Marxist tradition, particularly as “by reducing the social world to the economic field alone, it is condemned to define social position with

reference solely to the position within the relations of economic production” (244). This echoes critiques elsewhere concerned that Marxist thought is unable to adequately account for the importance of issues such as ‘family values’ and resistance to civil rights in the rise of the New Right (see Wolfe, 1981; Petchesky, 1981), nor deal with neoliberal subject production (Brown, 2018).

Bourdieu’s logic of practice theory allows us to see how social structures become internalized and embodied as dispositions through everyday practices, which, in turn, reproduce those social structures (1977, 1990). It is “closer to a class unconscious than to a ‘class consciousness’” (Bourdieu, 1990: 235). Bourdieu’s (1990) concept of ‘habitus’ sees individuals’ dispositions and subjectivities resulting from their social experiences and backgrounds (53). In other words, people’s identities, habits, and tastes are formed by their socio-economic setting, becoming reproduced automatically through muscle memory and passed on intergenerationally (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1996).

What Bourdieu (1991) calls “*le sens pratique*” (where, for example, a virtuoso tennis player can instantly recall during a match moves it took years to master) creates discomfort with the unfamiliar (13). This works, Bourdieu (1990) believes, as a “defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information” (Bourdieu, 1990: 60-61). This aversion to the unfamiliar along with the distaste that the working classes have for effete aesthetic preferences is informative in explaining the effectiveness of the campaign to denigrate urbane progressives as ‘liberal elites’, often presented in right-wing discourse in contrast to the ‘common sense’ of ‘the common man’.

Perhaps the key insight provided by Bourdieu to this thesis is his concept of symbolic power (or as he later called it: ‘symbolic violence’). As Bourdieu believes political struggle is about “the power to impose the legitimate vision of the social world” (2000: 185), symbolic power, as the power to name and define, becomes a crucial aspect of that, a means to install “itself as a universal viewpoint” (174) – echoing Gramsci. This power of naming is applicable to the way the New Right weaponizes discourses of common sense. Labels and classifications (particularly from positions of power) – by disparaging opponents as ‘liberals’, or ‘socialists’ (and conflating the two) – can serve to limit political possibilities and reconfigure the understanding of ‘the left’ and thus ‘the centre’, in other words the acceptable limits of governance. This is part of what Bourdieu terms the ‘doxa’, which is “the universe of possible discourse” (1977: 167), beyond which remains unconsidered. Corporate communications strategies and counter-claims – “permeated by the simplicity and transparency of common sense” (Bourdieu, 1991: 131) – can be seen as reinforcing this doxa.

While Bourdieu’s work clarifies social reproduction, it is less helpful in explaining the active shifts in public policy and public opinion that have occurred since the neoliberal era began to take hold in the 1980s. This is perhaps due to his dismissal of the effects of ideology and propaganda (Bourdieu: 2000: 172, 268). Much of Bourdieu’s aversion to these factors has to do with his assertion that there is an implication that they work through cognition. As he emphasizes embodied practices, Bourdieu (2000) dislikes “when people describe resistance to domination in the language of consciousness” (172).

Another reason that Bourdieu minimizes the importance of ideology is that he is reacting against its over-emphasis during the 1960s, in particular Althusser’s use of it to posit the ‘scientific’ status of Marxism. This view, Bourdieu believes, attempted to separate “true

knowledge – the possessor of science – and false consciousness”, which he considered a “very aristocratic” position (Eagleton and Bourdieu, 1992: 113; Foucault (1980: 118) makes a similar argument). However, this may be an overcorrection, as even though there may be no singular absolute truth, it is still possible to distinguish between claims (or discourses) that are closer to the truth than others, or to recognize outright lies (particularly relevant with the Trump administration). Eagleton’s point about the dispersion of power is equally applicable to the concept of truth. “It is perfectly possible to agree with Nietzsche and Foucault that power is everywhere, while wanting for certain practical purposes to distinguish between more and less central instances of it” (Eagleton, 2007: 8).

Bourdieu (2000) rejects the concepts of ‘false consciousness’ or ‘mystification’ that are often put forth by some proponents of ideology (168, 177). However, while there might in some cases be a good deal of distortion and concealment involved in a ruling ideology, this does not necessarily have to be the case. As Eagleton (2007) points out, there does not have to be an “inherent connection between the falsity of the belief and its functionality for an oppressive power” (25). There may be a good deal of untruth, but it does not mean that this is not undergirded by much truth. That being said, even when there is truth, there is also a general falsehood in the “implicit denial that anything better could be conceived” (Eagleton, 2007: 27).

2.3 Social Psychology, Communications-Propaganda, Affect

Despite Bourdieu’s reservations, ideology and propaganda, and the work of political communications that will be discussed in this thesis, function more through affect than through logic and cognition. As such, Chaput’s (2016, 2018) work on affect theory, intersected with propaganda theory, is an ideal analytical tool to add to this theoretical framework in order to better comprehend how neoliberal rationality has come to be widely accepted.

Particularly informative in this regard is Chaput's reconciliation between embodied subjectivities and the effect language can have on them. Language, she points out, can trigger nonlinguistic effects, which can produce "a bodily thinking wherein truth is felt rather than logically deduced" (Chaput, 2018: 196; see also Brennan, 2004; Massumi, 2015). Propaganda theory serves to explain for Chaput (2016) the "ideological power of language (its epistemological function), and affect theory explains the sociobiological power of language (its ontological function). Both are needed to fully grasp the role of language as propaganda" (166). Affective energy can spread through discursive communities (social media and blog networks) as well as gathered crowds (rallies and protests). This energy, writes Chaput (2016), can trigger "particular synaptic pathways in our brains, and makes us more or less open to particular arguments" (161).

The widespread dissemination of neoliberal discourse articulated as popular economics functions on such a basis. Chaput (2016) argues that the extension of neoliberal logics (as cost-benefit analyses) to cover every aspect of life – as exemplified by the popular *Freakonomics* (Levitt and Dubner, 2006) phenomenon – "habituates the public such that our internalized responses align with neoliberal tenets, even though we may have never studied them. This bodily response comes to us through the psychological and physical work of discourse" (Chaput, 2016: 176). Clearly this goes beyond simply ideology, it is felt viscerally through "affect, physical sensation, and emotion as they relate to discourse" (Chaput, 2016: 176).

Ideas, then, become embodied as material forces and circulate through communities, even when they have little basis in fact. Trump's 'Trumponomics' are a case in point. "Trump's incoherent economic policies," Chaput (2018: 196) explains, "fade into the background as the production of his economic brand occupies the foreground." Even though Trump is "[e]xplicitly

indifferent to truth”, his populist communication style is such that it “outpaces evidence-based models” (Chaput (2018: 206). Much of the reason for this is due to the emotional/affective charge that this rhetorical style can activate, as much “a politics of belonging” (Massumi, 2015: 18) as a politics of identity. While Massumi insists on the distinction between affect and emotion, the former can trigger the latter, which can be tactically weaponized by communications professionals and party operatives as political capital.

In a similar vein, Jamieson (2018) uses a communications theory that draws on affect to argue for the relevance of political communications in both persuading and demobilizing voters, particularly the undecided. Repeated exposure to messaging (or “the immense preparatory work” as Bourdieu (2000:168) phrases it), sets the stage for priming, which “occurs when exposure to a stimulus produces an effect on memory and subsequent responses” (Jamieson, 2018: 40). Priming, Jamieson (2018) notes, involves both agenda setting, which is a media effect that “focuses our attention on some topics rather than others” and framing, which is a message effect that tells us “how to make sense of them” (44).

This assessment echoes assertions by affect theorist Massumi (2002) who writes that information, stimuli, or experiences can leave an imprint in individuals – a “never-to-be-conscious autonomic remainder” (25). Reminiscent of Bourdieu’s notion of embodied ‘*le sens pratique*’, this insight is also confirmed by work in social psychology that suggests individuals are subject to ‘motivated reasoning’ when exposed to political rhetoric. In what Lodge and Taber (2005) call “the automaticity of affect”, sociopolitical concepts that people have previously evaluated “are affectively charged and that this affective charge is automatically activated within milliseconds” of hearing them again, before conscious appraisal can begin (455). This serves to link together “affect and cognition in long-term memory and brings them automatically to mind

in the judgment process” (Lodge and Taber, 2005: 456). This process can inform our understanding of how the long running communications strategies of the New Right movement to market neoliberal rationality can work in tandem with common-sense discourses and catchphrases that denounce liberals (positioned as villains).

2.4 System Justification

A related theory that offers insight into belief and opinion formation also comes from (social and political) psychology. System justification theory (Jost, 2003a, 2003c, 2017, 2018) describes how epistemic (the desire for certainty, structure, and control), existential (the desire for safety and security), and relational (the desire to be connected to community) needs serve to influence people not only to take their social reality for granted, but into defending the established social order and oppose views that threaten to undermine it.

These insights are based in Festinger’s (1957) cognitive dissonance theory, which contends that people are more likely to accept information that is congruent with accepted or inherited beliefs. These “ego-defensive tendencies”, as Jacquet, Dietrich, and Jost (2014) argue, help preserve “the individual’s self-esteem” because it is easier to maintain common assumptions than to challenge them (3). This can also be seen as a form of identity protection where it is difficult for many to accept information that undermines fundamental aspects of their worldview. Insightful here are studies indicating that White males (who tend to be more invested in the status quo) are most likely to be averse to challenges to “cultural-identity-protective cognition” (Kahan, 2007: 465) and skeptical of climate change (McCright and Dunlap, 2011).

Not only do these “ego-defensive tendencies” happen at the individual level, but also with regard to one’s broader society and religion that provide the foundation to people’s personal identities. “According to system justification theory, people are not only motivated to defend and

bolster the interests and esteem of their personal self-concept and the social groups to which they belong; they are also motivated to defend and bolster aspects of the social, economic, and political systems on which they depend” (Jost, 2017: 3). This perspective is useful in understanding working class attraction to conservative parties that are so often at odds with their own economic interests – as evidenced in the surprising amount of support Trump received from lower income voters in the 2016 election, including “22 million people earning less than \$50,000/year” (Jost, 2017: 73).

While motivated reasoning and identity protection are common across political identities, Jost, et al. (2003c) reports that conservatives are particularly susceptible to system justification due to being more resistant to change, more risk averse, having greater “epistemic needs to achieve order, structure, and closure” (383), and being more “motivated by the management of uncertainty and threat” (390). These insights serve to illuminate the discussions below about the conservative penchant for anti-reflexive discourse and affective responses (spurred by a sense of threat to the social order and by extension identity).

Massumi’s insights about affect triggering a sense of belonging, rather than strictly a sense of identity is relevant here as feeling part of an in-group can inspire a reflexive defensiveness concerning any critique of that group, a ‘circling of the wagons’ as it were, protecting ‘us’ from outside threats. This can even be felt by those in a subaltern role in the group. Although it is fair to say that identity and belonging are intrinsically interlinked. Identity arises from the groups one belongs to and belonging helps to form one’s identity. Ultimately both play a role in the instinct to justify broader systems one is imbedded in and to avoid cognitive dissonance.

These interventions that consider psychological aspects (of disposition, belief, and opinion formation) serve to expand our understanding of public opinion formation beyond Bourdieu's theory of embodied practices and also consider empirical evidence (see literature review). Ideology can be disseminated by those who embrace it (particularly by those with power, wealth, and organization) through long-running propaganda strategies that lay ontological and epistemological foundations. This information may work cognitively (with varying degrees of efficacy) but more importantly can be activated affectively through slogans or familiar narratives.

Fortunately, Bourdieu's work itself provides a means to expand his framework. Along with bridging the gap between material and cultural analysis, Bourdieu provides an accord between individual agency and the social conditioning of structures, which provides a space for the differences in individual effects of exposure to right wing populist discourses. Furthermore, while Bourdieu is mostly associated with social reproduction, he does mention that it is possible (through 'struggles' or 'subversion') to create incremental modifications in the habitus over time (2000: 187-189; see also Bourdieu and Passeron, 1996; Warin, et al. 2016). Gradual change can allow for expansion of democratic rights (as occurred throughout most of the 20th century), as well as reaction against that expansion which has occurred over the last four decades.

2.5 Narrative & Discourse

In order to provide a theoretical foundation for the communications efforts of the corporate-funded New Right movement, it is useful to draw on narrative and discourse theory. These analytic tools will aid in providing an understanding of the importance of storytelling in selling policy directions and influencing public opinion by deconstructing the narratives into their constituent parts and noting continuities and discrepancies.

The power of narratives to influence social life has long been recognized (Riessman, 1993; Ewick and Silbey, 1995; Frank, 2010). Jones and McBeth (2010) point to substantial empirical evidence across disciplines suggesting narrative is “a primary means by which individuals organize, process, and convey information” and that it plays a crucial role “in shaping beliefs and actions” (330). They call this model *homo narrans*: humans as storytelling creatures (McBeth, Jones, and Shanahan, 2014: 230). Also relevant here is the work on socio-narratology done by Frank (2010), which sees stories as fundamental in “creating the social” (15) through both memory-work and boundary-work. The idea of memory-work is similar to the idea of ‘autonomic remainders’ from affect theory wherein stories serve to not only reinforce what is remembered from the past, but to actively interpret that past. ‘Popular memory’ becomes common sense. Boundary-work speaks to how frames are fundamental to storytelling, selectively representing events and experiences, giving shape to ideas and emotions by making distinctions: good from bad, us and them. This is increasingly manifested today with online alt-right communities drawing “cultural borders” or “transitional spaces of intercultural interaction that come into being at the limits of social or virtual networks” (Hodge and Hallgrimsdottir, 2020: 566). Helping to define these borders are labels such as ‘liberals’, ‘cuckservatives’ or ‘RINOs’ – conservatives in name only, i.e. those who are not sufficiently committed to the radical right cause (see MacLean, 2018: xxix).

There has also been a substantial body of research (Fischer, 2003; Hajer, 1995; Roe, 1994; Stone, 2012) on how narratives or stories influence public policy. “In politics,” writes Stone (2012), “narrative stories are the principal means for defining and contesting policy problems” (158). The author believes that “most definitions of policy problems have a narrative structure, however subtle” (2012: 158). Like archetypal stories (from *The Odyssey* to *Batman*),

they have a beginning, middle, and end, involve “some change and transformation”, include heroes, villains and innocent victims, while pitting evil forces against good (Stone, 2012: 158). Narratives are effective in articulating policy directions as they “offer the promise of resolution for scary problems” (Stone, 2012: 158). A key to successful political narratives, Stone (1989) believes, is converting issues into problems that can attribute cause to human actions, thus necessitating political interventions (such as addressing threats to the environment or building border walls). Causal stories, Stone (1989) writes, “move situations intellectually from the realm of fate to the realm of human agency” (283). (Details of this application to this study will be elaborated in the Methods section.)

The most successful policymaking, then, is that which is accompanied by compelling narratives that justify government action (or inaction) while at the same time becoming dominant with the public (Fischer, 2003). Once dominant or widespread, policy narratives can endure even in “the presence of contradicting empirical data, because they continue to underwrite and stabilize the assumptions for decision making in the face of high uncertainty, complexity, and polarization” (Roe, 1994: 2). Applying this narrative framework to the use of ‘liberal’ can help to reveal the consistent constituent parts of the broader neoliberal narrative, and how it works to frame the political spectrum.

Narrative analysis, then, by clarifying how policy directions are being articulated can assist in assessing how they might be resonating with the general public and influencing public opinion. At the same time, taking note of the power dynamics of certain narratives can help address the question of the relativism of competing narratives⁵. Because of the power imbalances in terms of resources, visibility, and access, it is useful to incorporate a related theory that is

⁵ Narrative will be considered a type of discourse formulated in story form, regardless of whether it is entirely coherent. In this case the focus is on the general narrative of neoliberalism.

sensitive to those imbalances – discourse theory – to apply a more critical interrogation of the textual data gathered.

Discourse theory, according to Fischer (2003), is founded on the assumption that social meaning is shaped by “the social and political struggles” of particular historical eras (73).

Discourses are not only socially constructed, but they are also the product of “specific systems of power and social practices that produce and reproduce them” (Fischer, 2003: 73).

Communications resulting from positions of power serve to limit the “range of subjects and objects through which people experience the world” and “specify the views that can be legitimately accepted” (Fischer, 2003: 73) (as Gramsci and Bourdieu allude to above). As such, discourse analysis brings into relief that those who have the greatest ability to circulate their knowledge claims will tend to supersede competing or counter-narratives, resulting in many individuals interpreting their worlds in an unreflective taken for granted manner.

It is with this in mind that Parker (2004) emphasizes the importance of paying close attention to the role of institutions, power, and ideology in the study of political storytelling. Being attentive to these power dynamics, and what Bourdieu (1991) describes as ‘the power of naming’, can contribute insight not only into how the social order can be maintained, but also how it can be altered, by, for example, shifting the centre of the political spectrum discursively by making neoliberalism as the accepted ‘common sense’ centre.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1 The Roots of Corporate Networks & Free Market PR

To fully comprehend the shift to the hegemony of neoliberalism it is necessary to go beyond bottom-up considerations of public opinion and take into account the efforts, funded by corporate interests, to market free market fundamentalism – particularly the ‘common sense’ association of it with freedom and patriotism. The marketing of ‘free enterprise’ is arguably the most important public relations campaign undertaken by the business community, as it not only lays the groundwork for consumerism, but for the market system that creates and fosters it. These campaigns go back around a century with roots in the propaganda efforts by the US government (in the form of the Committee on Public Information) to sell World War I to the American public and are intrinsically tied to the birth of public relations as an industry (Ewen, 1996). Edward Bernays (1923, 1928, 1947), who headed a branch of the aforementioned committee, distrusted the general public and believed that the “conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses” (1928, 9-10) was essential for the ruling classes to govern effectively. Bernays soon turned his efforts (rooted in the psychology of his uncle Sigmund Freud) to assisting corporations in selling not only their products, but the attributes of big business itself. Perhaps Bernays’ most effective marketing campaign was rebranding propaganda as ‘public relations’ (Ewen, 1996; Tye, 1988; Miller and Dinan, 2008).

The ongoing propaganda campaign, as Beder (2006) outlines, by American big business to counter widespread public antipathy to large corporations (interpreted as ‘economic illiteracy’), began in earnest in the 1930s with the National Association of Manufacturers’ attempt to foster opposition to the New Deal, and accelerated during the ‘Red Scare’. This decades-long endeavour at ‘economic education’ took the form not only of public service

announcements across media platforms, but also directly in schools and universities. One of the most effective and recurring narratives, according to Carey (1997), was associating the American free enterprise system with “social harmony, freedom, democracy, the family, the church, and patriotism”, while “all government regulation of the affairs of business, and all liberals who supported such ‘interference’” were equated with “communism and subversion” (18).

The turbulence created by the social protest movements of the 1960s – a ‘counter-hegemony’ that posed an existential threat to vested interests – prompted a reinvigoration and acceleration of reaction by corporate power, which can be attested to in several documents from the 1970s. The first was the confidential memorandum sent by (soon to be Supreme Court Justice) Lewis Powell to the American Chamber of Commerce, warning of an “attack on the American Free Enterprise System” (Powell, 1971). To counteract this threat Powell encouraged corporate America to unite in a counter campaign that included targeting colleges and secondary schools, along with the general public through “staff personnel who are thoroughly familiar with the media, and how most effectively to communicate with the public”, while also keeping the mass media and textbooks “under constant surveillance” (Powell, 1971; see also Giroux, 2009).

The second document was “The Crisis of Democracy”, which arose out of the international Tri-Lateral Commission of 1975. It declared that “the vitality of democracy in the 1960s raised questions about the governability of democracy in the 1970s” (Crozier, Huntington, Watanuki, 1975: 64). Democratic involvement was leading to the “delegitimation of authority” (16) and a “generalized breakdown of traditional means of social control” (8) and needed to be forestalled (see also Fisher, 2013; Robinson, 1998; Morgan, 2010).

Another treatise laying out counterinsurgency plans is former Secretary of the Treasury William Simon's (1978) call for the creation of a "counterintelligentsia"⁶ as a bulwark against the critical voices rising in opposition to conservative and business interests (324). Corporate America, he argued, had to direct its wealth only "to media which are either pro-freedom or, if not necessarily 'pro-business', at least professionally capable of a fair and accurate treatment of pro-capitalist ideas, values and arguments. The judgment of this fairness is to be made by businessmen alone – it is their money that they are investing" (Simon, 1978: 234).

The desire to propagate conservative and pro-business perspectives was often justified by a desire to simply expand the "spectrum of commentary" (Efron, 1971: 211). Asen (2009) deconstructs Simon's narrative strategy in calling for a widening of the public debate. In his call to have more business viewpoints, Asen (2009) believes, Simon neglects to leave "discursive space" (Asen, 2009: 266) for a diversity of other voices. Simon is claiming marginalization while coming from a "patrician" position of privilege (Asen, 2009: 282). After leaving government, Simon became president of the Olin Foundation "an influential source of funding for conservative institutions and ideas", as well as serving on the "boards of corporations such as Xerox, Citibank, and Halliburton, and think tanks like the Heritage Foundation and the Hoover Institution" (Asen, 2009: 264). In other words, "by many measures, Simon enjoyed considerable access and influence in business, social, and political circles" (Asen, 2009: 264). "Counter-public" theory, Asen (2009) writes, needs to be mindful of "how counterpublicity may be invoked cynically to marginalize others" (Asen, 2009: 272) and that "attempts to silence others diminish the democratic quality of a public sphere" (271).

⁶ Public choice theorist Buchanan made a similar argument around this time, carrying it out at the university level, much of it funded by corporate donors, including the Koch brothers (cited in MacLean, 2017: 119).

The precise impact that these collective efforts had is of course not entirely knowable. However, in the wake of these calls for mobilization, corporate interests began to organize their extensive resources into networks of advocacy groups and public policy institutes (think tanks), bolstered ties to educational facilities (*Wiener*, 1990; particularly law faculties, see *Teles*, 2008) and political parties, and formed philanthropic foundations to fund them. Notable organizations included the Business Roundtable (formed in 1972 to allow big business to act in concert across sectors), and the Heritage Foundation, started with major donations from the Coors family in 1973 (and provided the manifesto “Mandate for Leadership” that would be used as a policy blueprint by the Reagan administration) (*Mayer*, 2016: 90). Into this burgeoning conservative infrastructure, came oil industry money from the Mellon Scaife family, chemical industry money from the Olin foundation, manufacturing money from the Lynde and Harry Bradley foundation, pharmaceutical money from Smith Richardson foundation, and (perhaps most importantly) energy money from the Koch family (who sponsored the Cato Institute, Citizens for a Sound Economy, Americans For Prosperity and countless other organizations dedicated to promoting libertarianism) (*Beder*, 2006: 110; see also *Cowie*, 2010: 231; *Mayer*, 2016: 90).

Charles Koch was clear in his ambition to influence the educated classes so they could then go on and influence public opinion, law, and legislators. In a speech in 1974, he stated that the “most important strategic considerations to keep in mind is that any program adopted should be highly leveraged so that we reach those whose influence on others produces a multiplier effect. That is why educational programs are superior to political action” (cited in *Hacker and Pierson*, 2016: 232). President of Cato Edward Crane, speaking to *The Washington Times* in 1987, summarized the intentions of this strategy to shift public opinion to the right: “as we grow,

I don't want us to shift toward the mainstream. I want the mainstream to shift towards us and that's our challenge" (quoted in Brock, 2004: 46).

Such attempts at shifting public opinion through discourse are now known as extending the 'Overton Window': moving the range of politically acceptable positions to the right (see Lehman, 2014; Suresh and Jeffrey, 2017). Named after Joseph Overton who developed the idea while working at the libertarian think tank Mackinac Center for Public Policy⁷, the Overton Window is defined as the range of politically acceptable positions that a politician can support and still maintain electoral viability (see Suresh and Jeffrey, 2017). The organization defines the strategy as "a model for understanding how ideas in society change over time and influence politics" (Mackinac.org). This speaks to the purpose of organizations like think tanks: making currently unpopular ideas come into the range of acceptability through consistent and persistent advocacy. Even though the Overton Window is intended to coax public opinion which then allows politicians to move "to be in accordance with it" (Mackinac CEO Lehman quoted in Robertson, 2018), empirical evidence shows that political parties and politicians also take part in it. A case in point is the narrative of building a border wall with Mexico, which went from an outlandish notion (its farcical nature signified by its appearance as a plot line on a 2013 episode of the sitcom *Arrested Development*) to being part of the policy platform of the successful presidential candidate in 2016. The level of intolerant rhetoric emitted by President Trump and the normalizing of White supremacy is also an example that discourse can be used to make extreme positions the new normal or at least the valid 'other side' of the debate.

⁷ This organization was also funded and staffed by the Koch brothers and is what MacLean (2017) calls "a 'think and do' tank", affiliated with the State Policy Network which is a member of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) that creates ready-made model neoliberal legislation to be introduced by Republican legislators at the state level (214-215).

Many of these public relations strategies were created with the explicit purpose of working through stealth (or the “crafted talk” noted by Jacobs and Shapiro, 2002), as it was evident to many of its supporters that an agenda that was intended to favor the wealthy and powerful was not going to be embraced easily by most citizens (Brown, 2005; MacLean, 2018). This is illustrated in Charles Koch’s statement: “Since we are greatly outnumbered, the failure to use our superior technology ensures failure” (quoted in MacLean, 2018: 195). Besides influencing law and legislation, these technologies (either a euphemism for money or the strategies that it can buy) included tactical choices in terms of phrasing. As MacLean’s (2018) archival research shows, noted ‘public choice’ theorist Buchanan, who later partnered with Koch, chose his words carefully when communicating his views on ‘economic liberty’. Buchanan named his center at the University of Virginia the Thomas Jefferson Center for Studies in Political Economy and Social Philosophy, while “noting privately in his precis to the president that the venture needed an innocuous name that would not draw attention to its members ‘extreme views... no matter how relevant they might be to the real purpose of the program’” (MacLean, 2018: 48). MacLean (2018) goes on to demonstrate how Buchanan “displayed the same canniness” in the language he used to describe elements of his theory. For example, “his analysis of how the rules of government might be altered so officials could not act on the will of the majority became ‘constitutional economics’. The enemy became ‘the collective order’, a code for organized social and political groups that looked to government” (MacLean, 2018: xxv).

The development of corporations sponsoring institutions and organizations – or “philanthrocapitalism” (Bishop and Green 2015) – provided much of the direction and impetus for the rise of the New Right, not only increasing corporate reach into government and the economy but also forging pathways into civil society through their communications and cultural

networks (see Carroll et al. 2018: 426; Gramsci, 1971). Various conservative media monitoring groups that produce “flak” (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: 26) against any critique of the corporate or conservative agenda arose (the Center for Media and Public Affairs, Media Research Center, for example), while a large infrastructure of conservative media outlets (from Regnery Publishing to News Corporation/Fox News to the Clear Channel network of right-wing talk show programs) were able to flourish as a result of the deregulation of the Telecommunications industry and the elimination of the Fairness Doctrine (McChesney, 2004; Jamieson and Cappela, 2008; Mayer, 2016; Skocpol and Williams, 2016; Hemmer, 2018). The ability for these networks of “policy plutocrats” (Goss, 2016) to disseminate their discourses was again extended by recent court rulings, particularly Citizens United in 2010. This case eased restrictions on campaign financing, allowing for the creation of Super PACs (Political Action Committees) that can raise and spend unlimited (and anonymous) funds (or ‘dark money’) to influence elections (and for other political advertising), which again advantaged corporate interests and by extension the Republicans (see Krumholz, 2013; Mayer, 2016).

Today, the power and reach of the conservative communications machine, bolstered by internet ‘alt-right’ websites, is evident from how it can generate and spread storylines, even ‘fake-news’. Former Republican operative Brock (2004) gives an insider’s perspective: “The American media as a whole has become a powerful conveyor belt for conservative-generated ‘news’, commentary, story lines, jargon, and spin. It is now possible to watch a lie move from a disreputable right-wing Web site onto the afternoon talk radio shows, to several cable chat shows through the evening, and into the next morning’s Washington Post – all in twenty-four hours” (Brock, 2004: 11).

3.2 The Weaponization of the Term ‘Liberal’

Crucial to the campaign to market neoliberalism and denigrate collective efforts to have government act in the general public interest is the use of the term ‘liberal’ (and its variations) as a political weapon. This particular example of what Republican pollster Luntz (2017) calls the ‘war of words’ is one of the most common, effective, and perhaps earliest uses of New Right populist ‘common sense’ discourses. The successful use of this strategy in politics can be traced back to the noted suspicion that the Nixon administration had towards the press, who they frequently dismissed as ‘East Coast liberal elites’ (Cimaglio, 2016). This tactic served to undermine media criticism and popular protests over issues such as the Vietnam War. The parroting of progressive discourses (along with priming cultural wedge issues) also served to build an alliance with the White working class in a ‘New Majority’, which succeeded in breaking the Democrats’ hold on that demographic, particularly in the South (see Cowie, 2002, 2010; Cimaglio, 2016). Vice President Spiro Agnew was particularly notable in establishing a derogatory use of the term ‘liberal media’, and as Cimaglio (2016) notes, began the modern Republican Party’s early foray into populist narratives “that identified liberal journalists with privilege and power and conservatives with the people” (1)⁸. This populist counter-narrative of denouncing ‘liberals’ has since become a staple of Republican politicians (never more so than with President Trump’s habitual use of it to dismiss media critique) and right-wing media.

The development that has seen the Democratic Party lose much of its blue-collar base (compounded by de-industrialization and ‘offshoring’) has certainly complicated the alignment of the public’s ideological self-identifications into the categories of ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ – and research shows that poorer demographics do not identify as liberal in high numbers (Dettrey and Campbell, 2013: 1069). The conservative movement’s rhetorical framing strategy of the

⁸ Agnew famously referred to the press as “a tiny and closed fraternity of privileged men” (Cimaglio, 2016:1).

term ‘liberal’, though, may help explain findings by Ellis and Stimson (2009: 401) that although more Americans self-identify as conservative than liberal⁹ (see also Klar, 2014), Americans hold views that would be considered ‘liberal’ in terms of practical policy preferences. This suggests an aversion to the label.

As Ellis and Stimson (2009) point out, even Democratic politicians, when trying to sell policy initiatives, are reluctant to use the term ‘liberal’, as it has come to have “connotations of intrusiveness, recklessness, and more recently, elitism,” (Ellis and Stimson, 2009: 401). This narrative messaging has become common in the Republican and broader New Right communications network, exemplified by this 2004 TV attack ad sponsored by the conservative group Club for Growth: “I think Howard Dean should take his tax-hiking, government-expanding, latte-drinking, sushi-eating, Volvo-driving, New York Times-reading, body-piercing, Hollywood-loving left-wing freak show back to Vermont where it belongs” (cited in DellaPosta et al., 2015: 1473). By discursively uniting economic and social issues, conservative political operatives have managed to denigrate a wide swath of activities, beliefs, and practices that come under the rubric of ‘liberal’. Such tactics also work to reinforce for many the notion of a unidimensional political-ideological spectrum, creating cultural borders based on cultural resentments (Frank, 2004), and undermining traditional conflicts between the powerful and the people (Nunberg, 2006: 51).

The long, purposeful campaign of negatively “branding” the term (Nunberg, 2003) has changed the meaning of liberal in popular understanding, not only from ‘liberty’ to *‘liberality’* (as Brown, 2005 suggests), but it now also insinuates “social pretension, condescension or effete sentimentality”, while normally omitting working class and immigrant demographics, despite

⁹ Current research confirms this with Gallup reporting a 37% to 24% split in favour of Americans identifying as conservative over liberal (Saad, 2020), although there are indications this has been lessening recently (Saad, 2019).

their voting preferences (Nunberg, 2003, par. 8). “There was a time,” Nunberg (2006) writes, “when liberal and leftist were contrasting terms; now the right tends to use them interchangeably” (46-47).

Changes in the meanings of terms can have wide-ranging effects over time. The power of “deliberate change in language”, argues George (2013), “while having its own immediate effects, can change the language of those not sharing the views of those who precipitated the changes” (3). Among the other examples of language change emerging from the New Right communications architecture is the shift toward describing the government as ‘intervening’ rather than ‘acting’ (George, 2013: 8). These changes can be seen as exercises in ‘symbolic power’ (Bourdieu) that will serve to trigger affective ‘autonomic remainders’ (Massumi), reinforcing ‘us’ versus ‘them’ demarcations (or cultural borders).

The long-running rhetorical tactics “articulated and solidified in the conservative counter-sphere” may also account for the widespread notion that the media has a liberal bias (Major, 2015: 484). Many of these bias claims (see Groseclose and Milyo, 2005, Lowry and Shidler’s 1995, Brent Bozell’s Media Research Center, 2002) are based on the belief that major US media outlets tend to label ‘conservative’ politicians more than ‘liberal’ ones. Other studies, however, find evidence that the repeated negative usage of ‘liberal’ over time has filtered into the mainstream media, revealing “the demonstrated role that elite framing of ideological terms” can have (Ellis & Stimson, 2012: 72). In their study of the use of the terms ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ in the *New York Times* and *USA Today*, Ellis and Stimson (2012) found a predominant “negative slant applied to the term ‘liberal’” (165). Overall, they reported more than twice as many negative “political mentions” of ‘liberal’ as ‘conservative’ (165). The researchers conclude that ‘liberal’ has become a “pejorative term, and political coverage in the mass media

seems to transmit this usage in its coverage of politics” (165). Similarly, Eisinger et al. (2007) found no discernible difference between labelling of liberal and conservative in mainstream media. If and when there is a greater use of the latter, the authors believe it can be explained by the increase in conservative politicians, “the political pejorativization of the word *liberal*, and the increased conservative ideological tenor of the Congress” (Eisinger et al., 2007: 17).

Because of its pejorative connotations, most Democrats’ abandon the term ‘liberal’ (often in favor of the less tainted ‘progressive’). This, Nunberg argues, has ceded the framing ground of the term to Republicans, resulting in its marginalization. As the term is used predominantly by the right, it is they who shape its meaning.

Americans seem to have a lot more misgivings about the liberal label than about liberal ideas. The real shift to the right has been among the Republican leadership and party activists, who have moved much further to the right of the American mainstream than the Democrats have moved left. And they’ve dragged political discourse along with them. (Nunberg, 2006: 44.)

3.3 Populism, Counterclaims, Common Sense & Anti-reflexivity

The discourse coming from the New Right relies heavily on the affective force of populist ‘common sense’, and this ‘common sense’ utilizes a good degree of anti-reflexivity. This can be observed in former Conservative Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s decision to eliminate the long-form census in Canada. The decision was justified with appeals to libertarian anti-government populism, as Ramp and Harrison (2012) note, with Harper claiming to be defending people’s privacy against ‘elites’: government, bureaucracy, intellectuals, and academic researchers. The authors see this as an attempt to redefine “what counts as valid argumentation and a legitimate basis for making knowledge claims” (Ramp and Harrison, 2012: 273), dangerously challenging the “grounds of observational knowledge itself” (278) and undermining the basis for critical reasoning. The penchant for right-wing populists to claim the

right to hold and assert not only opinions but their own facts anticipates Trump's rhetorical style. This anti-reflexive "thorough-going epistemological populism," they write, "begins *and ends* with one's own experience and with taken-for-granted generalizations", which frame the world "in a narcissistic and moralized way not open to critical dialogue, qualification, or self-reflection, insulated instead by association with like-minded sovereign individuals, united by suspicion of professional or institutional knowledge production" (Ramp and Harrison, 2012: 279).

Perhaps the best example of the confluence of populist 'common sense' discourses, anti-reflexivity, and affect can be seen in the efforts of the tobacco and fossil fuel industries to not only simulate grassroots support, but to trigger affect and by-pass reason to influence public policy and public opinion. The counterclaims of climate skepticism, sponsored by energy interests, write McCright and Dunlap (2010), are part of the attempt to reverse gains by progressive social movements and are in direct opposition to what they term 'reflexive modernity', which is "a form of critical self-evaluation" (103). This form of modernity arose in response to problems posed by the 'simple modernity' of trusting science and technology as an unproblematic bringer of progress. By ignoring and undermining the widely accepted evidence of climate science, the conservative movement is a "force of 'anti-reflexivity' attempting to protect the industrial capitalist order" (McCright and Dunlap, 2010: 101; see Hacker and Pierson, 2016: 323-327 for details on political interference with scientific research). This, McCright and Dunlap (2010) argue, takes the form of "nondecision-making techniques", which arise "via the familiar practices of misrepresenting and manipulating evidence, intimidating or ignoring agency personnel, and creating new procedures to divert public attention from the major issue" (125). The use of terms like 'sound science' and 'junk science' as part of these techniques can be seen

as an exercise in symbolic power. That power derives its force from neoliberal discourses of ‘choice’ and ‘epistemological populist’ anti-elitist ‘common-sense’ rhetoric.

The fossil fuel industry built its strategy of fomenting skepticism and disinformation on the ‘immense preparatory work’ (in the words of Bourdieu) carried out by the tobacco industry, which is illustrative as the strategy (along with extensive internal company documentation) has been made public following their lawsuit prosecuted by the US Food and Drug Administration. Research into these documents has revealed how Big Tobacco created front groups – such as the National Smokers Alliance and Get Government Off Our Backs – in order to advance their anti-regulatory free market agenda (Apollonio, 2007; see also Tesler and Malone, 2010). This allowed the industry to create “the appearance of broad opposition to tobacco control policies”, selling it “under a unified theme of freedom, choice, and less government”, while hiding their self-interest (and low credibility) (Fallin, 2014: 325).

Other corporate sponsors like the Koch brothers were also involved in creating these third-party groups. In particular Citizens for a Sound Economy, the predecessor of Americans For Prosperity and FreedomWorks, was central in these efforts to create the appearance of a grassroots movement through ‘astro-turfing’: building movements from the top down using their enormous wealth. In fact, this corporate funding and organizing, writes Fallin (2014), was key to the development of the Tea Party, perhaps the epitome of what is seen as a populist anti-government libertarian mass movement. Fallin (2014) notes that the use of references to the Boston Tea Party has been a key component of the tobacco industry’s anti-tax rhetoric since the 1980s, and plans to form the group go back to well before it was purportedly created spontaneously in the aftermath of the Obama election (Fallin, 2014: 324, 332). Skocpol and Williams (2016: 12), likewise contend the Tea Party movement would never have gained such

prominence were it not for the funding and organizational aid received from corporate-sponsored foundations or the support from the conservative media network.

These organized efforts by corporations speak to Bourdieu's point about how maintaining the doxa of the habitus is "not possible without the intervention of professional practitioners... who may make themselves the spokesperson of the dominated on the basis of partial solidarities" (2000: 188). The counter movements and attempts to disguise vested interests under the appearance of having broad based popular appeal is also indicative of his point that even though a social order has "forms of resistance", they remain "open to symbolic highjacking" (Bourdieu, 2000:182).

3.4 Right-wing Populist Economic Rhetoric

While the American New Right has undoubtedly used socio-cultural wedge issues as ammunition as part of its 'culture war' offensives, they have also taken advantage of their networks to use 'moral' or social issues to motivate, prime, and win over those in lower socio-economic status groups to vote Republican, often 'against their own economic interests' as has been noted (see Frank, 2004). However, the conservative movement, as Smith (2007) asserts, has just as often used economic rhetoric in order to win converts to the Republican side and libertarian cause. Rather than "concealing their economic plans for fear of voters' disapproval, Republicans repeatedly highlighted that angle on the expectation that a 'jobs-and-growth' message would resonate with the electorate" (Smith, 2007: 15). To this insight, it needs to be added that the message is massaged with 'crafted talk'.

Smith (2007: 130) charts the steady increase of economic rhetoric from post-war Republican presidential candidates in their campaign speeches. Despite frequent comparisons between Reagan and Goldwater (in 1964) as stridently conservative Republican candidates, there

is a remarkable difference in terms of their allusions to a minimalist state and the economy in general. Smith's (2007) research shows that it was with Reagan's 1980 campaign that anti-government free market references started to increase as part of the Republican rhetorical arsenal. Interestingly, Smith's study also found that, possibly as a result of this escalating emphasis on economic issues, the American electorate trusts the Republicans more to "improve the economy" – despite evidence suggesting that the economy has actually done better during Democratic regimes (Smith, 2007: 179-181). This speaks to the power of rhetoric and persistent repetition in selling political ideas. Democrats use rhetorical strategies as well of course, but they are much less consistent, not as well-organized nor well-funded, and therefore less effective (Smith, 2007; see also Beder, 2006).

The Republican Party and the conservative movement more generally use both socio-cultural rhetoric as well as economic rhetoric to target working class voters. The difference is that while often delivering on socio-cultural promises (like attempting to reverse abortion and same-sex marriage rights), economic rhetoric is used by Republicans primarily for political effect and their job creating rhetoric often does not result in improving the lives of the working class economically, but rather tends to increase inequality (see Gilens, 2005; Cowie, 2010; Litonjua, 2015; Stiglitz, 2015; Saez and Zucman, 2016). Nevertheless, this fusion has proved to be a very successful rhetorical maneuver that has been fundamental in uniting and strengthening the New Right movement.

3.5 New Right Strategies in the Digital Age

While 'astro-turf' movements (such as those organized by Big Tobacco) are still used, a much more effective way to gain popular mass support for the neoliberal policies favored by corporations, Walker (2009, 2014) argues, is through the creation of 'subsidized publics'. This

work is done through ‘public affairs consultants’ who work on behalf of corporate clients to directly target natural or potential allies in the general public in order to mobilize them in support of a particular corporate cause. These “grassroots for hire” (Walker, 2014), are particularly useful in countering boycott efforts or pressure from protest groups and social movements, as evidenced in the Canadian petroleum industry’s creation of the social media campaign *Canada’s Energy Citizens* to “become vocal industry advocates” to help oppose the environmental lobby (Gunster, et al. 2020: par. 10). While these counter-campaigns link up with real people, writes Walker (2009), they can also serve to restrict “the development of social capital and civic skills while augmenting the voice of private interests in public and legislative discourse” (83).

The New Right movement, in both its corporate and political wings, are now increasingly using internet technology to microtarget individuals in order to influence public opinion and promote and propel the neoliberal agenda. This can be seen in the Cambridge Analytica affair surrounding the 2016 US election. The company, which works exclusively for conservative causes and in this case Republican operatives, used algorithms and personal information covertly extracted from social media accounts such as Facebook to locate eligible voters who were deemed to be uncommitted or independent in order to manipulate them by flooding them with disinformation and fake news discrediting the Democratic candidate (see Woolley and Howard, 2018; Brym and Todosijevic, 2018). This was done to millions of unsuspecting people, particularly in swing states, where the margin of victory was slim, and may have contributed to the election being won by Trump. These kinds of machinations, ever more sophisticated in the digital age, are a compelling retort to those who would dismiss the effectiveness of propaganda or political communications.

Jamieson's (2018) study of the Russian cyberwarfare of the 2016 election suggests that communications, either stolen or created and circulated by hackers, trolls, and 'bots' (a "pseudo-public", see Haewood, 2018) elicited affective responses that assisted Trump by "shaping the agenda and framing of the news media; reweighting the message environment in news and social media; priming and reinforcing anti-Clinton content; capitalizing on timing consistent with the short term effects; and relating and creating content designed to mobilize and demobilize key constituencies" (39). Despite skepticism about the impact of persuasive political communications, Jamieson (2018) believes that there is much research showing that this sort of propaganda dissemination can be quite effective in persuading voters. This is particularly so when it is strategically targeted to 'swing' electoral districts and states, the undecided, and when sophisticated technologies are used to gear messages to "blaming the anxieties plaguing the target audience on cultural and economic changes" (38).

The above strategies (which can be seen as exercises in symbolic power, while also revealing the propaganda effects and the organizational networks that disseminate them) lend key insights into how the New Right has taken its populist discourses (in terms of socio-cultural issues following Nixon) and extended them to selling its economic program of libertarianism (following Reagan). This not only reveals how these two areas overlap as a movement, but also how by priming antipathy towards anything that can be associated with 'liberals', the conservative movement (so often funded and organized by corporate wealth) can increase support from many (who might not be natural allies) in working-class and middle-class demographics, which is crucial in gaining consent, and election votes.

In sum, the long running marketing of neoliberal rationality, along with the accompanying 'censorship through noise' communications campaigns, can be seen as the

foundations that internalize the overall narrative, subconsciously (with cognition involved in many cases) over the long term, while the slogans and catchphrases serve to trigger affect and emotion in the short term (particularly important at election time and in ‘battleground’ areas).

3.6 ‘Actually Existing’ Neoliberalism: Populism, Precarity, & (Anti-)Democracy

As modern neoliberals emphasize economic liberty, the value and efficiency of competitive market economies, and the primacy of private property, neoliberalism is often associated with a ‘laissez-faire’ attitude to government. This is reflected in Hayek’s (1960) arguments for economic liberty from government coercion. However, despite Hayek and Friedman’s references to the apolitical or pre-political nature of the free market (Rodrigues, 2018: 2), Hayek (2006 [1944]) also insists on the need for a “wide and unquestioned field for state activity” (40). In fact, neoliberalism requires the state to take an active role in creating and maintaining preconditions for markets and to ensure the smooth running of the economy in general (Connolly, 2013; see also Bruff, 2016).

Nevertheless, this reality does not erase the importance that the persistent populist narrative of ‘small government’ plays for the New Right in their attempts to sell neoliberal regimes to a mass audience. This contradiction between rhetoric and reality in fact lends support to the importance that shrewd and powerful narratives can play in selling policy directions, often neglected in arguments emphasizing embodied power and biopolitical production. The neoliberal narrative of limiting government can be seen as less about decreasing state power *per se* than about using it to hamper the public’s access to the state to exercise democratic oversight and redress social grievances (as suggested in the ‘Crisis of Democracy’ document). Such reactionary radicalism relies on a redefinition of the concept of ‘liberty’, which as Brown (2018) writes, when “submitted to market meanings” becomes “stripped of the political valences that

attach it to popular sovereignty and thus to democracy” (62). This “depoliticization through economization” (Madra and Adaman, 2018; see Bourdieu, 2002) attempts to naturalize market mechanisms (as allegedly pre-political), which then “cannot be rendered subject to political deliberation, disagreement and contestation” as the technicalities “are often deemed too complex for ordinary citizens (or even professional politicians) to comprehend or judge” (Swyngedouw, 2018:5). This erects further barriers to democratic input, where “governing activities are recast as nonpolitical and nonideological problems that need technical solutions” (Ong, 2006: 3).

As libertarian ideology is “exclusionary... and hierarchical”, it has a tendency, ironically, towards being authoritarian (Brown, 2018: 66). The indifference of neoliberalism to democratic principles is indicated by Hayek’s complicity with Pinochet’s authoritarian regime and his belief that transitional dictatorship might help in reigning in the “abuses of democracy” (Hayek, 1962, cited in Farrant, et al. 2012: 516).

The importance of disseminating neoliberal ideas and the disinterest in democracy can also be seen in Friedman’s statement: “what I believe in is not a democracy but in individual freedom” (cited in Nik-Khan and Van Horn, 2016: 33) and his penchant for populist mass communication. Nik-Khan and Van Horn (2016) point out that although Friedman’s “conception of freedom did not hinge on discussion” (33), he spent a great deal of time popularizing his views (through bestselling books, a television series, and a magazine column). Friedman was interested in encouraging “the public to accept neoliberal ideas, not empower its members to participate in robust public discussion” or contribute to the policy-making process (Nik-Khan and Van Horn, 2016: 33).

As the “social and the public are not only *economized* but *familialized* by neoliberalism: together these challenge the principles of equality, secularism, pluralism, and inclusion at the

heart of modern democratic society, allowing them to be replaced by what Hayek termed the “traditional moral values” of the “personal, protected sphere” (Brown, 2018: 65). This speaks again to the cross-over of neoliberalism with the religious right. Because hetero-patriarchal, Christian family values become so closely intertwined with the neoliberal version of ‘freedom’, they are then viewed as areas in need of protection. Securing and protecting these values, Brown (2018) writes, requires “increasingly robust statism in the form of law, policing, and defense” (66). Authoritarianism, then, becomes “authorized by the need to secure this vast expanse of personal, de-regulated freedom” (Brown, 2018: 68). In essence, the erosion of democracy and rise of authoritarianism become justified in the name of freedom itself (see Jost, et al. (2003b, 2003c), Azevedo, et al. (2019), and Altemeyer (1981) for evidence of the association between libertarianism and authoritarianism). It may be fair to say, though, that in many ways Friedman and Hayek failed to anticipate some of the extremism unleashed by neoliberalism, which Brown (2019) terms a ‘Frankenstein’ – often cohering as it does with far-right extremist elements.

It might also be of interest to note how neoliberalism has come to serve as a mechanism of auto-perpetuation. While globalized neoliberalism has (purposefully) imposed ‘precarity’ as a means of disciplining labor (Hardt and Negri, 2009), ironically, the economic dislocation that has resulted has played into the hands of Republican politicians (and the conservative movement more broadly) that promote them. Brown (2018) explains that the “displacement suffered by Whites, especially White men, is not mainly experienced as an economic decline, but as lost entitlement” (69). This is reinforced by the neoliberal narrative that turns the anger at the economic dislocations and rise in inequality caused by neoliberalism towards liberal policies such as political correctness, diversity, social justice, and the regulatory state that are held responsible for their displacement. The market fundamentalist “assault on egalitarianism, social

provision, social justice, politics, and democracy” (Brown, 2018: 67) – compounded by “trade, tax, and tariff policies that both undermine nation-state sovereignty and produce a global race to the bottom in wages and public revenues” (Brown, 2018: 68) – legitimates this rage, and in turn helps give credence to common New Right discourses of a loss of liberty and status resulting from equalization, regulatory state, and social justice objectives.

This creates the victimization aspect of the neoliberal narrative. Thus “the brutal volatility of globalized markets,” as Heath and Stacey (2002) write, can serve to generate “nostalgia for security that many associate with ‘traditional family values’” (667). The sense of lost status may explain why the nostalgic populist slogan ‘Make America Great Again’ resonates with so many working-class White men – it evokes both jingoistic bluster and victimhood.

These insights suggest a symbiotic relationship, then, between the economic dislocation resulting from neoliberal policies and support for the radical right from many of those who are suffering from that dislocation. The position of secure working-class employment and nation-state sovereignty, Brown (2018) argues, is a condition that “cannot be reversed but can be politically instrumentalized” (69). This situation can help to explain the desire by the New Right movement to market neoliberalism widely as an ideology (in opposition to ‘liberalism’). Wealthy and powerful interests can use the economic dislocation and precarity their policies create to build support to continue those policies. This is more than collateral damage then, it actively strengthens the neoliberal agenda.

Also part of this strategy to demean government are the actions of Republicans in Congress, which have become increasingly uncompromising, ideological, and obstructionist in terms of undermining even the basic functioning of everyday democratic governance¹⁰ (Mann

¹⁰ This non-cooperation includes filibusters on routine and trivial matters, as Hacker and Pierson (2016) note, even on issues or appointments that “Republicans ultimately planned to support” (263).

and Ornstein, 2016). These tactics, during the Obama administration, both produced “an atmosphere of gridlock and dysfunction” and “chewed up the Senate calendar, restricting the range of issues on which Democrats could progress” (Hacker and Pierson (2016: 263). The resulting “dysfunctional politics” and the cynicism and pessimism that it inspires works to the advantage of Republicans and neoliberals in general as it allows them to promote both that government is the problem and “innocence with respect to the market” (Connolly, 2013: 41).

Making the situation more complicated is the fact that ‘market-based solutions’ are also accepted by the Democratic Party – despite the common rhetoric about ‘polarization’. The last three Democratic presidents have each contributed to the entrenchment of the neoliberal agenda, despite each having a majority in both houses at one time. For example, Carter chose to not support the pro-labor Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Bill (Cowie, 2010: 217). The Bill Clinton presidency saw a war declared on ‘welfare as we know it’, as well as the replacement of the Glass-Steagall Act with the Commodities Futures Modernization Act, thus easing regulations on financial and commodity trading activities (particularly derivatives) that resulted in several financial meltdowns, including the ‘Great Recession’ of 2008 (see Hacker and Pierson, 2010b, Cowie, 2010). The Obama administration, elected with a mandate for reform, had former investment bankers as three of the first four chiefs of staff, continued the bank bailouts, and generally soft-pedalled financial regulation. In general, Obama seemed to be on “common ground with Republicans over a bipartisan austerity agenda that would entail significant cuts in Medicare, Social Security, and public spending on education, infrastructure, family support, and the environment” (Pollin, 2013: 749; see also Stiglitz, 2010; Pedwell, 2012; Litonjua, 2015).

Besides the power of wealthy interests to influence elections through campaign financing, lobbying, and organizing takeovers of the nomination process, there is also the pressure from

what is known as the “virtual senate” (Chomsky, 2010). This pressure derives from the ability of powerful corporate and financial interests – in the age of free trade and globalization – to sanction national governments who stray from free market fundamentalist policies by, among other things, disinvestment, offshoring production, and attacks on currency.

In short, neoliberal economics are embraced by both US parties in what is known as the “Washington consensus” (Hacker and Pierson, 2010: 123). Neoliberalism is now hegemonic – their main premises uncontested and accepted as ‘common-sense’ solutions (see Gramsci, 1971; Carroll and Greeno, 2013), even if the Democrats are a little less dogmatic about it.

Chapter Four: Methods & Methodology

4.1 Narrative Policy Framework & Qualitative Research

This research project examines how right wing common sense discourses, particularly the term ‘liberal’ is used in common parlance, as reflected in media and social media. To this end I undertook a qualitative content analysis of 360 articles from various American media sources (from 2000-2020) in order to analyze how the term ‘liberal’ is being used, how this fits in with the broader narrative of marketing neoliberalism to the general public, and what the implications are for policy processes, the political spectrum, and liberal-democracy. The method of data analysis for this study follows the tenets of narrative content analysis, as modelled by Stone (2002, 1989) and discourse analysis (Parker, 2004, which will be discussed below). Stone’s framework is based on noting how policy preferences are laid out like a story that seeks to identify villains, victims, and heroes from the perspective of the tellers. To this structure I have added Jones and McBeth’s (2010) contribution in their narrative policy framework (NPF) of being attentive to the setting or context, the plot line, and the moral of the story (the policy outcomes being sought to solve the problem).

The framework for narrative analysis developed by Jones, McBeth, and Shanahan (2014) avers the post-structural contention that narrative meaning is strictly relative and interpretive (Derrida, 1981, for example). While acknowledging that meaning can vary, the authors note that “research in belief systems has found that variation in meaning can often be systematic—which means while meaning is relative, it is usually not random” (Jones, et al. 2014: 7).

As Jones and McBeth (2010) provide a quantitative model, I will follow Gray and Jones’ (2016) adaptation of the NPF to use it for qualitative research. The aim of qualitative content analysis, as Schreier (2012) writes, is to “describe the meaning of your material” (3) in a manner

that is systematic, flexible, and reduces data. Following inductive qualitative procedures, the findings and conclusions of my analysis are admittedly reflexive and interpretive: the data is seen and assessed through my personal perspective, but done in a systematic, replicable way.

As such, this follows the criteria of achieving ‘transferability’ (being able to extrapolate from one setting to another) and ‘dependability’ (consistency in the research process to make it repeatable). Along with ‘confirmability’ (the extent to which findings can be confirmed by other researchers) and ‘credibility’ (decided by the participants who are being studied), these are part of the measures created by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 43) to establish rigor in qualitative research that they term ‘trustworthiness’. Rather than attempting (as in quantitative research) to achieve validity, reliability and generalizability, the goal in qualitative studies is “to provide a rich contextualized understanding of some aspect of human experience to the intensive study of particular cases” (Polit and Beck, 2010: 1451). The key for the researcher is to be as transparent as possible, and to clearly describe the context and the procedures being followed (see also Elo, 2014).

4.2 Sampling Procedures

The media articles that were selected for the study were selected using mixed purposeful sampling methods based on Patton’s (2002) suggestions for designing qualitative studies, targeting “information-rich cases strategically and purposefully” (243). This facilitates triangulation and flexibility and allows for yielding “insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations” (230). These sampling techniques are as follows:

1. Maximum variation sampling consists of seeking out a wide range of cases in order to get a variety of viewpoints and different dimensions about the phenomenon of interest. “[I]dentifying diverse characteristics or criteria” (235) helped me to target not only mainstream

media (identified as long-established publications such as the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* that take traditional approaches of attempting to achieve ‘objective journalism’), but particular groups that may not be regularly represented in the mainstream media, such as right wing media and blogs, and conservative foundations (like AEI or Cato who self-identify as advocates of libertarianism), and conservative advocacy group websites (like Accuracy in Media, Media Research Center, whose stated claim is to critique mainstream media). It is important to include points of view from conservative groups unfiltered by the mainstream media outlets that they so frequently denounce.

2. Snowball or chain sampling – an approach “for locating information-rich key informants or critical cases” (237) – was utilized as a cross-referencing method. I sought out articles or topics that I noticed being mentioned in the articles that I had previously read, if they seemed particularly germane.

3. I also utilized opportunistic or emergent sampling, which Patton (2002) describes as “following leads during fieldwork; taking advantage of the unexpected; flexibility” (243). Concepts and terms found during the research process were used for further searches. This method is also useful in circumstances where related articles appear on search results alongside those that I am specifically searching for (as mentioned above), or if a story is trending and ‘pops up’ on various web pages and apps (for example when Trump denounces the mainstream media in a tweet). Although this is a form of convenience sample, it can be justified in that it reflects what the general public experiences and is exposed to during regular interaction with conventional and social media online.

4. Finally, I utilized the iterative procedure used in qualitative methods that is known as theoretical sampling. This entails noticing specific gaps in the data set or emergent themes that

need further exploration after some initial data has been collected and analyzed, and then returning to seek samples targeting those gaps and themes.

4.3 Search Engine Terms

To understand the issue in context, I started with a Google search using some basic search terms or keyword strings. As the term ‘liberal’ on its own is somewhat too general, I combined it with common collocations such as: “liberal elites”, “liberal media”, “liberal media bias”, as well as terms that the preliminary results show to be commonly associated with the term ‘liberal’ (eg. Trump, taxation, etc.). From here I took note of topics, events, and news items that were either referenced in the preliminary research, are known to be associated with the main theme, that occurred as news stories during the research itself (such as responses to the Covid pandemic), or that emerged from the theory.

Following this initial search, I used the Advanced search engine on the University of Victoria Library’s website, NexisUni (formerly Nexis Lexis Academic), as well as the ProQuest search engines to also target the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, as these tend to provide examples of the most prominent perspectives, are hallmarks of the mainstream media, and are considered to be ‘liberal’ by many critics on the right. I also used general Google searches for trending topics and other prominent, well-covered issues or events. Search time frames are from the years 2000 to 2020, and also broken down into 2000-2005 and 2005-2010 to raise the representation of older material. I limited my search to either the first three pages or the top 30 (if it scrolled) results, with a maximum of ten articles per search item¹¹. I believe this simulates the typical experience of general internet searches.

¹¹ Some links found in the search results would not open for whatever reason.

As I proceeded through the data gathering process, I kept a log noting the specific terms and time frames I included in each search, and what articles resulted from them, as well as the dates those searches were accessed. I catalogued texts by whether they take a specific conservative stance or a non-conservative (neutral or ‘liberal’) stance, the latter being predominantly from mainstream media. Tables of the specific terms, sites, and procedures are included in Appendix B and C. These searches, conducted between April and September 2020, resulted in 187 articles from a conservative perspective and 173 that were neutral, ‘liberal’, or non-conservative, for a total of 360. This number was culled down from 437 articles originally gathered due to time limitations, but a supplementary data set (discussed below) was added for an overall total of 422 texts.

Table 1. Time Frame of Texts Used in Primary Data Set

Time Frame	Conservative	Non-Conservative	Total
2016 - 2020	103	112	213
2011-2015	39	17	56
2006 - 2010	25	26	51
2000 - 2005	15	17	32
No Dateline	4	1	5
Total	187	173	360

Of the 187 conservative texts in the primary data set, 57 came from what could be considered traditional mainstream press (or ‘legacy print media’), if seen as daily or weekly major market periodicals. In contrast, 71 of the 173 non-conservative articles are opinion rather than news pieces (and presumably taking what conservatives would consider ‘liberal’ or non-conservative stances), while the rest are ‘neutral’-style news articles.

The rationale for the multi-step data gathering process is that it prioritizes content *relevant* to the purposes of the research: how the term ‘liberal’ and other common-sense discourses are utilized in various mainstream media, how it compares with conservative or right-

wing narratives, and how this could contribute to the public’s understanding of the political spectrum. Gathering a wide range of cases to get a broad perspective (maximum variation sampling), locating information-rich, or key, scenarios (snowball sampling), following leads during the research process and being flexible and open to the unexpected (emergent sampling), and noticing gaps in the data set or emergent themes in need of investigation as the research process unfolds (theoretical sampling’) are fundamental to this goal. These procedures, I believe, facilitate finding appropriate material and add to a fuller, richer data set from which to examine the phenomenon of interest. The overall goal is to get a wide range of topics that are reflective of conservative positions, with a focus on ‘common sense’ discourses coming from the right, particularly how the term ‘liberal’ is used, and how these fit into and help to frame discussions of prominent issues, concepts and news events – particularly how they contribute to understanding neoliberalism and the political spectrum.

Table 2. General Breakdown of Text Sources Used in Primary Data Set

Source	Conservative	Non-Conservative	Total
New York Times	8	59	67
Washington Post	8	32	40
Other Major Dailies	36	37	73
Small Newspaper	15	13	28
Magazine	4	9	13
Broadcaster Website	18	13	31
Online News & Commentary Site/Blog/ News Service/ Social Media	65	9	74
Think Tanks/Foundations/ Media Watchdog Groups	24	1	25
Business/Finance	9	0	9
Total	187	173	360

4.4 Data Coding & Analysis

Once the data was collected, the process of analysis was done in the following way. First, the articles were carefully read and coded. Coding is defined by Saldaña (2013) as attaching “a

word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (3). This is done for “later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, theory building” (4). This heuristic technique emphasizes taking note of significant or repetitive themes, constantly comparing them (helped by periodic memo writing) until reaching “theoretical saturation” (nothing new is being derived). The goal, Saldaña (2013) writes, is to identify concepts in order to get to higher levels of abstraction (13). Two questions, suggested by Saldaña, should be kept in mind throughout the coding process: “What assumptions are they making?” and “What do I see going on here?” (Saldaña, 2013: 21).

My specific coding method, using the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti, was done as follows. I began with some deductive coding as a general framework as I have used the basic narrative analysis elements (from Stone, 2002 and Jones and McBeth, 2010) of documenting the plot, the characters (the villains, victims, and heroes), and the moral of the story. However, I also undertook inductive coding during the analysis and coding process to discover broader themes. First, while reading each article I applied open coding where appropriate, being attentive to recurring themes and concepts. Next, I carried out axial coding, which notes connections between concepts to form general categories. Finally, I utilized focused coding to condense, combine and winnow out data, to create core categories for description. The final total of the content analysis resulted in 31 core categories or themes. These appear in the Coding Manual included in Appendix F.

4.5 Critical Discourse Analysis

Once themes and concepts became substantially clarified, I began applying aspects of the discourse analysis procedures recommended by Parker (2004). As discourses create frameworks

for “one-way of talking about reality over other ways” (252), his suggestion of considering the role of institutions, power and ideology (252) is particularly cogent. It allows researchers to go beyond the level of description (that the NPF model provides) to deeper levels of analysis. Some of Parker’s (2004) main criteria for discourse analysis that I found particularly useful are:

- a process of “exploring connotations, allusions, implications” (253)
- making reference to the language that “brings into being phenomena” (253) to see it as constructed
- noting how a discourse refers to, reinforces, and is reinforced by other discourses.

Most important for the purposes of this content analysis are Parker’s three auxiliary criteria. The first is being aware of how discourses support or subvert institutions. The second involves being attentive, following the idea that discourses reproduce power relations, to noting what individuals and groups gain or lose from the use of the discourse under investigation (Parker, 2004: 259).

The third is that discourses have ideological effects. Seeing ideology “as a description of *relationships* and *effects*... at a particular place and historical period”, allows the analyst to show “how a discourse connects with other discourses which sanction oppression” (Parker, 2004: 260). The advantage of discourse analysis, as Parker (2004) states, “is that it reframes the object and allows us to treat it not as truth, but as one ‘truth’ held in place by language and power” (261).

4.6 Additional Data Set

To this new data set, I utilized parts of a previous data set that was gathered between October and December 2017 for a research project I carried out for a graduate seminar course at the University of Victoria. That paper examined the idea of liberal bias in the media, if public broadcasting is particularly susceptible to it, and whether government funding should continue to

support public broadcasting in the United States. The focus of the study was to see how different narratives are used to advance these opposing policy positions, while the mode of analysis was done strictly through a qualitative NPF based on news media articles supporting both sides of the debate, using the basic elements of the NPF discussed above. After removing those texts that were not from US-based media or fell outside of the stated time frame, this auxiliary data set has a total of 61 additional articles, with 35 supporting the liberal media bias/anti-PBS policy narrative and 27 either not supporting this or taking a neutral perspective (see Appendix D and E, Tables 5 and 6). (This brings the overall total to 422 texts, see Table 3). This data set was gathered and coded in much the same way – except it was much more narrowly focussed on the NPF format and lacked a critical discourse analysis component – and much of it is directly transferable to the topic at hand and will allow for an expansion of material from the first decade of this century, which was somewhat under-represented in the current search results.

Table 3. Position and Totals from Primary & Supplementary Data Set Texts

Position	Conservative	Non-Conservative	Total
Primary	187	173	360
Supplementary	35	27	62
Total	222	200	422

Chapter Five: Findings of the New Right Anti-Liberal Narrative

The following is a breakdown of the findings from the qualitative content analysis based on the careful examination of texts illustrative of the conservative perspective. These come from either conservative media sources, conservative voices within mainstream media, or mainstream media articles that reflect, quote or predominantly discuss conservative positions. The narrative policy framework (NPF) format (following the Stone (1989) and Jones and McBeth (2010) models) serves to break down preferred policy directions into story lines, or plots. The elements in this narrative are laid out below: setting and plot, characters (villains, victims, and heroes), and moral of the story or policy solution advocated by their supporters. The narrative is briefly outlined in Table 4, and then each element is summarized, with supporting example quotations contained in Tables 7-10 in Appendix A. Tables laying out views on liberal media bias and liberal hypocrisy/censorship are included in the Table 12 and 13¹², respectively. I will synopsise the central arguments as a general New Right narrative, even though not all themes are necessarily embraced by all supporters of the movement¹³. Following the narrative analysis, I will deconstruct the arguments and themes put forth by the New Right using critical discourse analysis.

Table 4. Outline of the Anti-Liberal Pro-Neoliberal Common Sense Narrative

Element	Conservative View
Context/	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• America is being undermined by Liberals, and has been since the 1960s• Mainstream media, Hollywood, and universities are biased in favor of liberal views

¹² Tables 5 through 23 appear in Appendix A.

¹³ These tensions, or complexities, within the conservative coalition are discussed in the Introduction. To reiterate, right-wing, conservative, Republican, neoliberal, and libertarian will be used as fairly synonymously. While acknowledging there can be distinctions in certain circumstances, there is a coalescence in the broader New Right movement. This is confirmed by the usage in the data set, as well as in most of the academic literature.

Plot Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government has expanded to dangerous levels, which is harmful to individual freedom, and could lead to socialism • The free market along with traditional values are being threatened by these forces from the left
Victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurs/the Free Market • Taxpayers (who must pay for the unproductive) • Individual Americans (whose freedom is threatened by government coercion and regulation) • The religious and conservatives in general (who fail to get their opinions heard or cannot make their own choices)
Villains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberals and Socialists • Government: bureaucracy, the public sector, the deep state • The Democratic Party • Liberal elites and intellectuals • The mainstream liberal media • Unions • Social justice warriors, environmentalists, protesters and those who disrespect the flag and police/military • Illegal aliens, criminals, terrorists
Heroes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative politicians who support fiscal responsibility and the free market • Media outlets and pundits that balance the predominance of liberal bias by providing right-wing views • Entrepreneurs and hard-working Americans • The Republican Party (eg. Reagan, Trump) • The Founding Fathers • Those who uphold traditional values
Moral of Story (Policy Goals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • America needs to be protected from liberals and socialists • Government, a source of coercion, should be minimized, the public sector privatized, and market-based solutions implemented • Free enterprise, incentives, competition, and personal responsibility need to be encouraged – with low taxes, minimum regulation, welfare cuts, consumer choice, and rights of workers to work without union interference • Traditional family values should be protected and reinforced • Freedom and security (from criminals, vandals, illegal aliens, and terrorists) should be paramount • Media should include more conservative perspectives for the sake of balance.

5.1 Narrative Policy Framework Setting/Context of New Right Policy Positions

The setting for the New Right coalition’s narrative is the commonly-held view that contemporary American society is caught in the grips of a culture war¹⁴ (see Table 7 a, f; Table 8

¹⁴ This term received 595 million results on Google, while ‘political polarization’ received 34.6 million.

I, m; Table 11 h). This ‘polarization’ of views and values is often said to be between red states (primarily interior, central and southern states, and more rural areas) and blue states (primarily north-east and west coastal states, with large urban areas and more diverse populations), or conservatives and liberals. This was borne out across the data set, both directly and indirectly. Conservatives are generally patriotic, religious, for border security, supportive of military abroad and law and order at home, believe in traditional family values, and disapprove of welfare programs while championing those who are able to thrive, or at least fend for themselves, through the dint of diligence, enterprise, and hard work (see Table 7). Liberals are associated with being overly sympathetic to minorities and social justice issues, and thus not only wasteful of public funds, but in favor of government involvement in the economy and the personal lives of individuals and thus a threat to basic liberties such as the First and Second Amendments (see Table 8 c j h; Table 13). Liberals are also often seen as whiny, indecisive, obsessed with identity politics, condescending, unpatriotic, atheistic, elitist, disrespectful of authority (military and police) and traditional values, and soft on crime, terrorism, and border security (see Table 8; Table 9; Table 11 a, f, h).

The plot of the conservative narrative has its roots in the vision laid out by the Founding Fathers in the US constitution: a vision based on individual freedom and limited government (see Table 7 a; Table 8 e). This vision went astray with socialistic policies of the New Deal in the 1930s and the Great Society policies of the 1960s (see Table 7a, b). The New Right movement began in large part as a reaction to post-1960s American society trending towards having more liberal social attitudes. The growth of civil rights, and gay and women’s liberation, brought with it an expansion of government programs (and spending) and an over-indulgence to special interests and the unproductive (see Table 7 c, d). These developments are seen by conservatives

as a threat to undermine the core values of American society, which is founded on rugged individualism, entrepreneurship, military might, and Western Christian family values (see Table 7 a, b). It also threatens freedom (taxation, regulation, the First Amendment rights of free speech and freedom of religion, and the Second Amendment right to bear arms) (see Table 7 e, f, g; Table 9 k; Table 10 j). This liberal direction is seen as a slippery slope to socialism, which is wasteful, a threat to liberty, and un-American (see Table 7 c; Table 8 a; Table 10 a). The new liberal direction has also alienated hard-working (and often economically challenged) Americans, particularly Whites and those in the South who are unhappy about being taxed to support the unproductive (see Table 7 d; Table 8 d, j). The rise of Reagan and the New Right movement in the 1980s was seen as a response to the liberal drift and a promise to Make America Great Again (a slogan first used by Republicans in the 1980 presidential campaign) by renewing traditional American values (Table 7 b). This mission has to be vigilantly continued against the liberal and socialist forces – and has been under subsequent Republican regimes, including Trump who has borrowed Reagan’s populist appeal along with his slogan (Table 7 g).

5.2 Victims

The primary victim is the (‘heart and soul’ of the) nation itself, as set out by the Founding Fathers in the Constitution, and by extension individual Americans whose freedom is threatened by the inevitable coercion that results from government over-reach (see Table 8 a). Another prominent victim is the Free Market (as a meritocracy), and entrepreneurs and hard-working people in general who have earned the fruits of their labor (see Table 7 g; Table 8 c, d; Table 11, f). Government interference in the economy will create bloated, unresponsive bureaucracies, needless regulations and red tape, and will take away incentives to hard work by giving money

away to the unproductive (see Table 8 c, d). Taxpayers are also victims, as they are the ones who must bear the burden of government spending to pay for the underserving (see Table 8 b).

President Trump is a regular victim – unfairly criticized by the liberal media and persecuted by the ‘deep state’ with unnecessary investigations over alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election and impeachment hearings about ‘quid pro quos’ with Ukraine officials for which he was absolved (see Table 8, f, k, l).

Those who are religious and subscribe to traditional values are also being disrespected as their choices and views are being ignored (see Table 8 h, i). The traditional family, the cornerstone of morality and indeed the country, is also undermined by those who support same-sex marriage and abortion (Table 8 i). White Americans, in particular White men, are victims of reverse-racism, and are unable to publicly declare pride in their race (see Table 8 j).

Finally, conservatives in general are victims, as their views are rarely heard in mainstream media, on mainstream online platforms, and in many educational institutions (see Table 8, f; Table 12 h, i, j). Conservatives are often subject to censorship and political correctness when they do speak (see Table 9 j, l; Table 13).

5.3 Villains

The primary villains in the conservative narrative seem to be liberals in general (see Table 9 a, d, e, j). Liberals are seen by many on the right as trying to change or undermine American values (Tables 7 a, e; Table 9 d, n). They are also commonly seen as condescending and prone to censoring free speech, and guilty of being not only self-righteous, but often hypocritical (see Table 13). Particularly to blame are liberal elites who sanction and perpetuate these attitudes; these elites include university instructors (and higher education in general), celebrities who are activists, mainstream media which has a liberal bias, and members of the

Democratic Party (see Table 9 a, b, c, d). Socialists are considered even greater villains, often a logical extension of, and increasingly synonymous with, liberals; in fact, many on the right view Democrats increasingly as “radical left socialists” (see Table 7 c; Table 9, b, e).

Also cast as villains are leftist protesters and those who disrespect the flag, the military, and/or the police (see Table 9 e). The disruptive and often unruly behavior of social justice warriors is seen as a threat to law and order, private property, and authority (see Table 9 n). Anti-war protesters are seen as disloyal, unpatriotic, and borderline treasonous for failing to support the troops (see Table 9 e). Often overlapping with this same group are those who are unproductive and drain resources from hard-working taxpayers, such as welfare recipients and cheats (see Table 9 m).

Another major villain is the mainstream media, who are known to have a liberal bias (Table 9 i). By ignoring conservative perspectives, they are indoctrinating the nation with liberal views (see Table 9 f; Table 12). They treat Republican politicians unfairly, particularly President Trump, who often describes the liberal media as “fake news”, “lamestream media”, and “the enemy of the people” (see Table 9 i).

Perhaps the ultimate villain in the narrative is government, which is the source of coercion, threats to individual liberty, and excessive bureaucracy and red-tape (Table 9 d, h). For example, government is a threat to take guns from law abiding people and takeover their health care (Table 8 c; Table 9 k). It is also the vehicle used by liberals (and the unsuccessful) to empower themselves by redistributing taxpayer resources (Table 7 c; Table 11a, c). As Washington is full of self-serving special interests, corruption, and ‘deep state’ operatives, conservative values are being undermined, making it is necessary to ‘drain the swamp’ (Table 9 f; Table 10).

While there is a suggestion that those who are doing harm are doing so out of misguided motives to try and help, there is also the belief that the problem is systemic, that ‘liberal’ bias is inherent to government and media and education. The biggest motivating factor behind the conservative view of liberal villains would appear to be that it is being done intentionally: there is a purposeful attempt to alter and undermine the country’s values.

5.4 Heroes

The original heroes in the conservative narrative are the Founding Fathers, and then conservative politicians who are committed to abiding by their original intent (see Table 10 a). The Republican Party in general – standing strong to fend off liberals and socialists, and government coercion – are cast as heroes (see Table 10 m). The Party is fiscally responsible and sound managers of the economy (see Table 10 b, e; Table 11 a). Republicans are also more committed to protecting traditional family (and American) values, which is essential to many in the New Right movement (Table 10 g, i, k).

Former President Reagan holds a particularly high status among the pantheon of heroes, as he is seen as the first Republican president to begin to dismantle the welfare state and take a strong military stance that led to the fall of the Soviet Union, the communist threat, and to America winning the Cold War (see Table 10 b, o). Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (whose truculent, combative style and ‘Contract with America’ set the stage for the movement’s direction) and modern day Republicans are also heroes (including men of faith and conviction like Mike Pence and William Barr). Current President Trump – who tells it like it is, understands the common man, and is determined to Make America Great Again – is also a prominent hero (see Table 7 a; see Table 10 e l m). Republicans are heroes as they will also stand strong against terrorism and for border security (see Table 11 g k).

Along with these politicians, other advocates for the conservative cause such as talk show pundits like Rush Limbaugh (recipient of the Medal of Freedom) and Glenn Beck, and right-wing media networks, such as Fox News, that provide voices to circulate these views – in the face of liberal media domination – are also heroes (see Table 10 c g; Table 12 e). Other heroes include entrepreneurs who have become successful through the force of will, effort, and ingenuity, and hard-working regular Americans who are responsible, work for a living to raise a family and pay the bills, while not being a drain on others (see Table 10 d; Table 11 a; Table 12 m, o).

Finally, the military, who are risking their lives to protect the freedoms of Americans, and the police, who protect private property and maintain law and order are also prominent heroes (see Table 10 f h). Those exercising their rights to free speech and possession of firearms and those who protest against overly stringent quarantine orders that prevent people from working and living freely are also seen as heroic (see Table 10 m; Table 11 l). The NRA are heroes for standing up for the Second Amendment, bringing together freedom and security (Table 7 g; see Table 10 j).

5.5 Moral of the Story (Policy Goals)

The central moral of this story is two-fold. One is that liberals need to be prevented from undermining America (see Table 7 e; Table 8 a, c, e, g, h, j; Table 9 c, d, g, h, j, k, m; Table 10 a; Table 11 d, f, g, h, i, m). Two, the principle mechanism for such undermining – government – needs to be limited in order to help preserve individual freedoms and allow the free market to operate as efficiently and successfully as possible (see Table 7g, Table 8 c, d, f; Table 9 b, d; Table 11 a, c, h). The public sector should be privatized as government should not interfere with the economy (see Table 10 a, d, Table 11 a, b, m, n). Market-based policies allow for the best,

most efficient way to provide prosperity, with the least coercion. Social services and the welfare state should be minimized as they create a reliance on entitlements and are a disincentive to work (Table 9 l, Table 11 a, f). Likewise, consumers should be given choices including where to send their children to school and buy health care (see Table 8 c, 11 n).

For many conservatives, traditional values need to be reinforced, and same-sex marriage and abortion restricted (see Table 7 a Table 8 h, i, Table 10 a, g, j, Table 11 i, m, n). As such, religion needs to be a part of the education system in order to buttress these values, considering the US was founded as a Christian nation and freedom of religion is protected by the First Amendment (see Table 10 j, 11 n). Another First Amendment right that needs to be protected is freedom of speech, as it is being threatened by overly sensitive ‘snowflakes’ and social justice warriors (see Table 8 h, 9 j; 10 c; 11 e; Table 13 for examples of liberal censorship). As media has a liberal bias, it is necessary to broaden the spectrum of opinion to include more conservative views in the interest of balance (see Table 9 i; Table 10 c; Table 12). If necessary, media outlets should be compelled to do so, particularly if they are publicly funded (see Table 12 u).

Another freedom that needs to be protected in the Second Amendment that allows Americans to legally bear arms (see Table 7 e; Table 9 k; Table 10 j). This also speaks to the need for security, such as law enforcement, border security, and a strong military to ward off the ever-looming threat of illegal aliens, terrorism and crime (see Table 7 d; Table 8 e; Table 9 g; Table 10 f, h, l).

A key policy to pursue for many supporters on the right is to limit budgets and deficit spending (see Table 11 h). This would facilitate other related policies such as tax cuts, prevent the government take-over of health care (see Table 8c), and encourage privatization (including Social Security and education), all of which would encourage personal responsibility and

entrepreneurship (see Table 11 a). Taxation should be decreased and directed primarily to funding law and order and the military (see Table 7c; Table 8 b, e; Table 9 g; Table 10 f, h, l; Table 11 a, c, j). In short, neoconservative and neoliberal policies need to be implemented for the long term good of the nation – the “heart and soul of America is at stake” (see Table 7 e, g, 8 a, c, I; 9 b, d, g. m; 10 d; 11 a, f, g, h, m, o).

5.6 Non-Conservative/Neutral Articles

Compared to conservative discourses, discourses coming from non-conservative perspectives do not form as consistent a narrative, particularly those coming from the generic ‘neutral’ journalism style. A main distinction of this style compared to that coming from conservatives is that there is an acknowledgment of the existence and significance of historical wrongs, expressed as a sensitivity to sexism and racism and an acceptance of governmental initiatives as a legitimate means to attempt to address them. Direct advocacy of specific policy directions, however, is only seen in critical opinion pieces. Criticism of President Trump, particularly his frequent disregard for facts and lack of decorum, is distinctly present in non-conservative texts. However, there is not a distinct and consistent denigration of the Republican Party as a whole. Both parties are subject to critique and, moreover, mainstream media carries opinion pieces from both conservative and non-conservative perspectives.

Although non-conservative mainstream media is generally categorized as ‘liberal’, there is a lack of work defending the term or the position specifically. The term ‘liberal’ in the mainstream media is not necessarily used in such a derogatory manner (other than by conservative commentators), as it is in conservative media. However, its usage seems to mirror that used in the conservative media in several ways. ‘Liberal’ is used as a direct opposite to either socially or economically conservative without commentary. It is also frequently used

synonymously and interchangeably with ‘left’ and ‘Democrat’. Its frequent use appears to have made ‘liberal’ a meme, instantly comprehended as a direct contrast to conservative (of traditional values and free market economics). Moreover, I came across no discussion in the data set that the term ‘liberal’ can be considered centrist, little discussion of the roots of the word in classical liberalism, nor mention that the US has no real left-wing political party.

Other than Nancy Pelosi being quoted that the Democrats are a pro-capitalist party, there is no mention that liberalism embraces free market capitalism, and distinguishing it from socialism (see Table 14 i). Liberals and Democrats are positioned, as the articles in this data set suggest, as the left in the US political spectrum. Liberal, left, and Democrat are often used interchangeably by conservative and non-conservative commentators, though only the former use it regularly and interchangeably with socialist (see Table 7 c; Table 9 b, n). Democratic politicians and mainstream media, on the other hand, do not use the same accusatory language towards Republicans (as being fascist and dictatorial)¹⁵.

There is only one mention of the term ‘neoliberal’ in the data set (see Table 7 h), which only references its state as a consensus model for both parties. (‘Market’ appears often, collocated with ‘free’, ‘friendly’, ‘solutions’, ‘oriented’, or ‘incentives’, and once by the Cato institute with ‘liberalism’). There is no questioning of capitalism as a political economy, other than opinion pieces expressing support for tempering its sharper edges with programs such as health care and other social services, and no advocacy for socialism. Mainstream media news coverage of prominent politicians such as Bernie Sanders (who is an Independent, not a Democrat) and a few junior Democratic congressional representatives (such as Alexandria

¹⁵ There seems to be an aversion to comparing anyone to Nazis or Hitler out of respect for the victims of the Holocaust, while the same is not the case with referencing Stalin or Soviet Communism, despite the fact that the death of millions of Ukrainians is also considered by many as a genocide (see Graziosi, 2004–2005).

Ocasio-Cortez) refers to the fact that they self-identify as social-democratic, but do not label them socialists. Discussions of proposals for a Green New Deal include suggestions of the possibility of a left-ward move by the Democrats. While the labeling of Democrats as ‘socialists’ does not appear in the mainstream media news articles, they do report the accusations, as well as phrases like ‘liberal elites’, and ‘liberal media’. Even if it is often in quotations, it increases public exposure to the suggestions.

Although the use of such labels by Republican politicians is not contested in news stories, there are several opinion pieces in the data set that touch on it. Perhaps the best example (granted coming from citing an academic) of the mainstream media’s contestation of the Republican and broader conservative labelling of Democrats and liberals as ‘socialist’ appears in an article entitled “Fact-Checking Trump’s Claims That Democrats Are Radical Socialists” from the New York Times, July 20, 2019:

Most Democrats are not socialists. Of the 24 candidates for president, only Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont identifies himself as a democratic socialist. (Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, one of the four House members the president has taken to trashing, rose to fame after running on a democratic socialist platform.) Even Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, who is the most ideologically aligned with Mr. Sanders among the 2020 contenders, says she is not a socialist. When she is asked about the difference between her and Mr. Sanders, her stock answer has been that she is “a capitalist to my bones.” The slew of programs many Democratic candidates have supported – universal health care, affordable child care and higher education, and a higher minimum wage – are more accurately labeled proposals of social democrats rather than socialists, said Peter Dreier, a professor at Occidental College and scholar of the left. But “nobody has a plan to take government ownership of the means of production,” he said, referring to the dictionary definition of socialism. “Nobody’s talking about the government taking over Microsoft or Walmart or Wells Fargo or Disney.”

Chapter Six: Discussion

6.1 Populism & the Discourses of Common Sense

Now that the parameters of the neoliberal narrative are clarified, I will turn to critically analyzing some of the narrative elements and main themes that emerged from the data set. Using critical discourse analysis, this discussion will, following the suggestions of Parker (2004), foreground considerations of institutions (corporations, think tanks), power (access to the political system, judiciary, education system, and media that money allows), and ideology (neoliberalism), as were laid-out in the Theory and Literature Review sections. The main themes, alongside the narrative elements laid out above, that emerged out of coding the data set are: freedom, security, nationalism, traditional values, populism, polarization, anti-reflexivity, ego defensiveness, rhetorical strategies (the Overton window and conflation specifically), false equivalency, and anti-government/anti-democratic tendencies.

The discourses coming from the New Right can be summarized as ‘traditional American values’: (religious) morals, the free market, and nationalism. Other central recurring themes are security and freedom. Security is referenced in terms of law and order, protected borders, and support for the military (see table 10 h; 11g; Table 10 f). Freedom is referenced in terms of each of the ‘traditional American values’. Freedom (from government coercion and tyranny) is connected to American democracy, the birth of the nation and the constitution, to free enterprise, and to the freedom of speech and religion granted by the First Amendment (see Table 15a; Table 12 v; Table 8 h; Table 13 j). Security also manifests often as fear of ‘others’: both xenophobia (illegal aliens, terrorists) and radical ‘social justice warriors’ (who threaten “our beautiful and successful suburbs”), liberals, and socialists who represent ‘un-American’ values (see Table 16 j, l, m, n; Table 11 m, o; Table 15 d). These groups also pose an existential threat to working-class

White America: jobs go to immigrants or racial quotas or are offshored, hard-earned income is taxed to support the unproductive (see Table 8 m; Table 15 e; 9 m, Table 16 m, n). Globalization as a threat to the American working class is sometimes referenced, though discussions of neoliberalism's role and the corporate strategy of disciplining labor is not (Table 17 h, I; Table 16 o). Xenophobia and insecurity are regularly weaponized by the New Right, often as racist 'dog whistles' (triggering intolerance and animosity), to help gain support among this demographic (see Table 15e; 16 j, l, m, n). (This will be discussed further below.) These issues and concepts fortify the neoliberal narrative and serve as key source material for affective priming.

6.2 Co-Opting Progressive & Radical Left Discourses

Taking pride in and being rewarded for hard work is seemingly natural, but can be co-opted by right wing populist discourses for conditioning behavior and creating resentment against those who, for whatever reason, are not sufficiently productive (the lived practices, or conditioned 'habitus', of the working class likely comes into play here). What often goes unmentioned, however, is the contradiction that many of the most ardent supporters and funders of the neoliberal cause (and its ethic of enterprise will be rewarded), in fact, inherited their fortunes¹⁶. This adds to the need to recruit surrogate spokespeople and supporters among the middle and working classes – “spokespersons of the dominated” as Bourdieu (2000: 182) puts it – explaining the need for populist discourses.

One of the most notable aspects of New Right communications strategies are 'common-sense' discourses: the use of populist language, particularly that appropriated from progressive

¹⁶ This includes the Kochs, the Coors, the Mellon Scaifes, the Olins, the Smith Richardsons, many of Trump's supporters such as Ronald Cameron of Mountaire meat processing, the DeVos family of the Amway fortune, the Johnson brothers of the Johnson & Johnson conglomerate to name just a few. (Trump can be included in this list, despite his lack of an orthodox or coherent economic policy.)

and radical rhetoric (see Table 16 b, d, f; Table 14 g). ‘Freedom’ (and its offshoots) is perhaps the most common and effective of these, as it tends to invoke both nationalist and populist sentiments, evoking the end of slavery, independence from Imperial British rule, and wild west frontier mythologies. The repeated references to free speech also takes a page out of the progressive playbook. Throughout the 20th century, the First Amendment was “important in protecting expressions by vulnerable minorities and political dissenters”, as well as “by labor, the press, entertainers, atheists, and other opposing hegemonic norms and concentrated power” (Brown, 2019: 123). In recent years, however, the First Amendment has been “wielded to enhance the economic, social, and political powers of capital, ownership, Christians, and traditional morality” (Brown, 2019). This is evident in the data set, both in terms of freedom of speech and general consumer choice (school vouchers for religious schools and electing not to wear masks while attending church despite advisories from health experts) (see Table 10 c; Table 11 n; Table 7f). The freedom of speech argument is one of the most prominent and also one of the most convincing, although it often elides the distinctions for ‘hate speech’ (see Table 13 i, j; Table 18 e, f).

Arguments in favor of removing limitations from corporate campaign spending have also been framed as protecting free speech First Amendment rights, as the Citizens United case attests (see Table 18 g). Even theoretical arguments supporting libertarianism make use of the language of discrimination and civil liberties to make their case that the wealthy are treated unfairly and advocating for the protection of ‘minority rights’ (the wealthy who pay more to support social services) by an oppressive majority (see Buchanan, 1975; Friedman, 1962; Hayek, 1962). This is paradoxical, as Buchanan, Friedman, and Hayek all dismiss any interest in the rights of marginalized people such as non-White and other vulnerable minority communities who

disproportionately lose out in the winner-take-all mentality of neoliberal economics (being in worse starting positions to begin with). These reversed claims of discrimination can be seen as part of the victimization trope, much as the term ‘class warfare’ is used against critiques of the inequality caused by neoliberal policies (see Table 12 m; Table 18 c; Table 23).

Other examples of adopting populist, progressive, and/or radical left discourses can be seen in the data set, including references to ‘reform’ (Table 16 e), ‘elites’ (see Table 10 e), ‘government takeovers’ (see Table 8c); ‘right to work’ (Table 18 h), ‘job creation’ (see Table 10 d), and other pithy slogans intended to build support for neoliberalism and disparage ‘liberal’ government programs: the estate tax on the ultra-wealthy becomes a ‘death tax’ and health care legislation includes ‘death panels’ (see Table 11 j; Table 18 j). In general these discourses play on the inherent apprehension towards authority, a positing of the government as the classic oppressor, rather than a place that provides a means to address public grievances. A case in point is the quote referencing ‘Tax Freedom Day’. (“This is your last week working for the man.” See Table 16 f.) This use of the slang term ‘the man’ shifts the normal usage from referring to one’s employer or boss to the government. Following neoliberal precepts, it is the government that is typically responsible for coercion and oppression of the ‘common man’ (see Table 16g), rather than wealthy and powerful individuals or big business.

The widespread use and familiarity of such slogans speaks to the immense efforts put forth by those supporting the New Right movement to market neoliberalism; it also speaks to the importance of propaganda and well-crafted long-running narratives in selling ideas. While these ideas are commonly contested in mainstream media opinion pieces, the public relations efforts involved in their circulation appear to be generally ignored. Marketing ideas at the elite level – to businesspeople, potential legislators and judges – is crucial to mobilizing interested parties,

legitimizing neoliberal ideology intellectually, and getting libertarian policies put into place. However, it is also crucial to sell these ideas to the mass populace, in order to acquire enough political support to get politicians committed to free market fundamentalism elected by an electorate who will predominantly not benefit from those policies (see Carrol, 2010; Hacker and Pierson, 2010b; Saez and Zucman, 2016; MacLean, 2018; Brown, 2019). The appropriation of populist and progressive rhetoric speaks to Bourdieu's (2000) point about how forms of resistance can be symbolically highjacked (182). Some of this rhetoric, as can be seen in the data set, are euphemisms ('death tax'), others reverse common critiques of conservative positions back at the accusers ('special interests' or 'fake news', see Table 12g; Table 12 f; Table 23), but most are part of "causal stories" (Stone), intended, like the PR strategies of the tobacco industry, to frame the idea that getting 'government off our backs' will result in choice¹⁷ and freedom (Fallin, et al, 2004).

6.3 Anti-Reflexive Discourses & Counter-claims

One of the prominent themes evident in the data set is anti-reflexive discourses that manifest regularly across right-wing communications. One of the latest phrases exemplifying this, as well as the appropriation of radical leftist critique and the right's distaste for government, is 'the deep state' (Table 9 f). The term was introduced to essentially describe what used to be called the 'military-industrial complex'. The author (and former Republican US Congressional aide) who coined the term, Mike Lofgren (2014) was referring to "the nexus of corporations, banks, and defence contractors that had gained so much financial and political control – sources of Washington's corruption" (Packer, 2020: par. 36). The radical right, in an example of epistemological populism, has changed that meaning to take the position that it is they who are

¹⁷ Though not with respect to abortion rights.

fighting against corruption and the undermining of democracy undertaken by a bureaucratic conspiracy (see Table 14 j; Table 17 I, k).

This term ‘deep state’ is also reflective of the conservative tactic of reversing critiques back at opponents, irrespective of veracity, which can serve as a red herring to obscure the issue. The history of conservative coalitions – intersections between security forces (police/military/FBI/CIA/State Department) and monied interests – attempting to quell insurgencies anywhere on the left or centre, if they threaten established social orders (domestically and abroad, legally and illegally) – is well-established, long, and disturbing¹⁸. Evidence of amalgamation between these same institutions and leftist or even popular democratic movements, on the other hand, is scant¹⁹. It is the simple daily bureaucratic administration – i.e. democratic governance – that is being attacked in this narrative.

Other examples of anti-reflexive or anti-reason tendencies in New Right discourses found in the data set include the rumor, spread by Republicans including the president, that the 75-year old man pushed over by police at a Black Lives Matter protest was trying to “scan police communications in order to black out the equipment”, and a man entering a restaurant to “self-investigate” an online conspiracy theory that it was home to a child sex ring involving Hilary Clinton (see Table 17 b, d). Even the logic of ‘White lives matter’ and ‘blue lives matter’ is subject to faulty and selective reasoning. The instinctive defense of the police force in cases of brutality carried out by individual police officers is indicative of an affective response that

¹⁸ Examples of such covert programs include Operation Paperclip and the Ratlines to help Nazis escape post-WWII Europe (Loftus, 2010), Project MKUltra mind control experiments (Marks, 1979), CIA infiltration of the National Student Association (Piaget, 2015) and the Congress for Cultural Freedom (Saunders, 2013), the CIA’s domestic espionage Operation Chaos (O’Neill, 2020) and the FBI’s Counter Intelligence Program or COINTELPRO (Morgan, 2010) to undermine the sixties counter culture and anti-war dissent, the Phoenix program that included using funds from heroin sales to support counterinsurgency in southeast Asia (McCoy, 2003), Operation Condor (McSherry, 2005) and the School for Americas (Gill, 2004) to prop up military dictatorships in Latin America, and the ‘dark alliance’ of CIA assistance to cocaine smugglers to help fund the contras (Webb, 1998).

¹⁹ In fact, the differences in how right wing versus leftist protesters are treated by police is revealing.

refuses to take contextual information or historical patterns into consideration, a ‘circling of the wagons’ mentality that suggests a certain amount of system justification.

Disinformation – from the tobacco industry hiding its knowledge of smoking being addictive and causing cancer to alt-right conspiracies such as QAnon and the deep state (see Table 17 i) – seems to be a consistent part of the communication strategies of the New Right. Perhaps the best current example of anti-reflexive discourses coming from the right is the circulation of climate change skepticism (Table 8 g; 11 e; 19 g, h). This also provides good indicators of the efficacy of corporate discourses in influencing public opinion. Climate change skepticism brings together two common tropes from the right: anti-government and anti-science. It also makes use, like Covid skepticism, of economic discourses (‘jobs and growth’) that are targeted to the working classes (see Table 10 n; 16 o).

The number of Americans, as MacLean (2018) reports, who believed that “the continued burning of fossil fuels would alter the climate” dropped from 71 percent in 2007 to 44 percent in 2011 (218). MacLean’s (2018) citing of figures that by 2014, “only 8 of 278 Republicans in Congress were willing to acknowledge that man-made climate change is real” (217) speaks to the power of corporations to recruit and mold political candidates to the cause of market fundamentalism. It also speaks to the common usage and effectiveness of anti-reflexive ‘counter-claims’ (McCright and Dunlap, 2000) delivered as engaging narratives.

The anti-science/anti-intellectual aspects of right-wing discourse is perhaps the most disconcerting. It is apparent in the data set as pandemic skepticism and anti-vaxer discourses, with these having links to distrust of government and institutional knowledge producers embedded in neoliberal thought. Facts, no matter how evidence-based, become ‘fake news’, while loyalty serves to suspend disbelief in a new post-truth reality. Such discourses also appear

not only in the communications and lobbying efforts of the tobacco and energy industries mentioned above, but they also impact funding for scientific research (Table 17 f, e). Here political interests blend with distaste for government and a reluctance to allocate public funds for collective public interest. The threats to health research posed by groups such as the Traditional Values Coalition speaks to an anti-Enlightenment mode of reasoning where evidence-based research is seen as suspect or threatening when it conflicts with faith (see Table 17 e; Table 22).

There is a parallel here with the arguments put forth by the Conservative government in Canada for canceling the long-form census, cutting off an important source of information for policy formation. This anti-intellectual move, as Ramp and Harrison (2012) note, was based on “neoliberal concepts of privacy and private property, individualism, and the role of the state” and brings into the fore the entwinement of power and knowledge (274). Similar conversations about the invasive nature of the census occur on the American right as well (see Table 16 k).

Neoliberal reasoning, also based on an ideological faith in ‘market-based solutions’, seems to shy away from knowledge production that contradicts its commitment to limit government involvement and spending. “The libertarian populist delegitimation of *any* rigorous form of social inquiry, whether statistical or not, which happens to contradict individualized personal experience or opinion or the political priorities of neoliberal governments, holds potentially deadly consequences for intellectual culture, for informed public policy, and for the ethical conduct of reasoned public debate about the future of social life” (Ramp and Harrison, 2012: 288). These tendencies to reject facts that contradict inherited beliefs is indicative of motivated reasoning, affective reactions that over-rule reasoning, and ego defensiveness in general (see Table 20; Table 10 f). The ‘epistemological populism’ behind much of the discourse of the New Right, is based on affective triggering that by-passes reason and clings to the

certainty of faith in ideology (religion and neoliberalism, or markets and morals). Key to this triggering are phrases or terms that instantly connect to, or prime, broader narratives (in this case, the neoliberal narrative and its constituent elements).

6.4 Rhetorical Strategies: The Weaponization of the term ‘liberal’

Moving specifically to the use of the term ‘liberal’ in American media, the data set suggests the discourse accompanying it is part of the discussions surrounding the phenomenon of polarization (or ‘the culture wars’) – either directly or implicitly (see Table 7; Table 8 h, i, m; Table 10 d, e). Both concepts are rooted in another problematic unexamined assumption: that of the political spectrum and the attempt to establish an abstract centre. The tensions between liberty and equality inherent in liberal democracy discussed in the Theory section are not directly mentioned, but are present by proxy. The positions of liberal and conservative and left and right are substitutes. With the amount of discussion surrounding these issues, there is surprisingly little scrutiny concerning how these by-now proverbial dichotomies are being articulated (and by extension how the ‘centre’ is then delineated)²⁰.

This lack of scrutiny is particularly apparent in terms of the common trope of the media having a liberal bias; the answer hinges on how the polymorphic term ‘liberal’ is defined. Is ‘liberal’ meant as seeking to be open-minded, empirical, and centrist (the standard goal of traditional American news media)? Or is it meant as left-wing bias (as far to the left as ‘alt-right’ media is to the right)? The issue is little interrogated in the data set, (other than one commentator asking: “liberal by whose definition?”, see Table 19 h). Accusations of the mainstream media having a liberal bias have become so ubiquitous that many of them are made in passing. The

²⁰ It might be worthwhile here to mention not only liberalism’s fundamental link to democracy, but to reiterate that the move against the established social order of monarchy, aristocracy, and church towards democracy was a move to the left, whereas the reaction against this was what defined the conservative right (see Wolfe, 1981:4).

phrase liberal media appears 106 times in the data set in total (157 if combined with the supplementary data set, while ‘liberal bias’ appears 50 times in both data sets combined). Conservative commentators and politicians regularly reference liberal bias that it seems to be assumed (Table 10 c, e; Table 12 a, d, e). While there are opinion pieces in the mainstream media contesting this depiction (see Table 14 k, l), news articles often report the accusations unproblematically and often use the term without quotes or contestation (see Table 14 a). These questions and issues will be discussed below after looking more closely at some rhetorical maneuvers utilized by the New Right to establish market fundamentalism as a hegemonic centre while at the same time framing liberalism as the extreme left.

6.5 The Right’s Double Rhetorical Move: The Overton Window

The Republican Party and the broader New Right movement, as discussed in the Literature Review, have shown a determination to establish neoliberalism as a hegemonic paradigm, both systemically and discursively. Communications efforts have been pervasive and have to be seen as pivotal to re-defining common understandings of the American political spectrum. Central to this redefinition has been through the use of a rhetorical double maneuver. As outlined above, since the 1980s, Republicans have gone increasingly to the radical right, while obscuring this (with the help and/or negligence of various media) by repeatedly referencing that these new positions are just ‘the other side’ that is worthy of equal consideration (see Table 9 i; 14 i). This expansion of the acceptability of public policies through persistent repetition is known as extending the Overton Window.

The constant deluge of liberal media bias allegations is a form of this tactic. Communications scholar McChesney (2004) cites a quote from the then chair of the Republican party confirming the relentless allegations of liberal media bias are intended as a strategy to

“work the refs” (McChesney, 2004: 110), hoping for more favorable appraisals in the future. This strategy is cited in the data set (see Table 18 b), along with a comment in a letter to the editor about this same strategy being used in terms of scholarly research (see Table 18 a).

This expansion of acceptable viewpoints is also evident in how conservatives often put forth arguments denying climate change (McCright and Dunlap, 2000; Roper, Ganesh, and Zorn, 2016), as well as in support of teaching ‘intelligent design’ in schools (Plutynski, 2010) as simply providing another perspective, despite the scientific consensus against them (see Table 18 g; 17 g, h; 21 c).

It is also evident that Trump’s tenure in office has emboldened White supremacists; a case in point being former KKK leader David Duke citing him as an inspiration (see Table 15 e). Trump’s description of the White nationalists and neo-Nazis in Virginia attacking (and in one case killing) anti-racism protesters as there were “very fine people on both sides” (see Table 16 m) serves to bring back into the mainstream ideas that have been long considered extremist.

Other examples of Overton window tactics can be seen in the continued calls to privatize Social Security (see Table 11 b, m). While privatization remains unpopular, it has now become an option that is discussed in Social Security reform debates (MacLaren, 2018).

6.6 The Right’s Double Rhetorical Move: Conflation Strategy

The right’s second maneuver has been the effort to conflate the far left with the centre (facilitated by the polysemic nature of the word ‘liberal’ itself). It seems that anything to the left of the fundamentalist views of the modern Republican Party is labelled by conservatives as ‘liberal’, ‘socialist’, or ‘communist’ (see Table 19). The anti-collectivist sentiments of neoliberal theorists are echoed on a populist level by obscure right wing bloggers as well as well-known right wing pundits and politicians, though in a cruder, more polemic form. The Democrats are

regularly described as “radical socialists” by Fox host Sean Hannity (See Table 9b), by Trump as “radical liberal socialism” that will destroy “the American Dream” (Table 9 o), by a conservative Christian radio host as the “socialist-Marxist-BLM-communist Democratic Party” (see Table 17 a), and perhaps in the best example of conflation and reduction of the entire left half of the spectrum, by a right-wing blogger as: “Left/Liberals/Socialists/Communists” (see Table 19 f).

However, in any evaluation that takes historical and international circumstances and developments into consideration, it is fair to say that the United States (in terms of voting choices) does not have an actual ‘left’ in its political spectrum (see Hacker and Pierson, 2005, 2016; Davis, 1980). As mentioned above, the Democrats have moved to the right of centre economically and are, at most, somewhat left of centre in terms of socio-cultural issues (although evidence suggests many of the issues – abortion, same-sex marriage, cannabis legalization – have become centrist and supported by a majority) (see Fiorina, 2011, 2014; Hacker and Pierson, 2005, 2016; Pew, 2014, 2018).

The notion that the Democrats are leftist or socialist is challenged by some commentators in mainstream media opinion pieces. There are two in the data set that do so: “Where is the center of gravity in the Democratic Party?” (See Table 19 b) explores the issue, while “Fact-Checking Trump’s Claims That Democrats Are Radical” (Table 9 o) contests it.

Nevertheless, the persistent positioning of liberals and the Democratic Party as far left, and its repetition (even just as reportage), serves to discursively cut off the left of the political-ideological spectrum in the US even more than it already is. With repetition and over time, this notion seeps into general common parlance, and takes on a veneer of truth. This is seen in the unreflective use of the term liberal as left (see Table 14 d, f; Table 19 c). This is present, for example, in a news article that discusses “both sides of the the partisan divide”, “liberal media”

is unreflexively positioned as “left” (see Table 14 a). Even in the quote meant to dismiss conservative critique of ‘liberal bias’ in education, there is an unintentional equating of “liberal” and “left-wing” (see Table 14 e). The conflation of leftist and liberal serves to throw off the coordinates of the political spectrum for the American mass public.

The only comment in all of the texts that I came across while gathering the data set that broached the topic of a skewed political spectrum in the US was in a piece that I ended up not including as it was not representative of mainstream media, but rather from an online newsletter that self-identifies as radical and could be legitimately said to be from the actual left. The author states that the American penchant for viewing politics through a left/right axis is flawed due to a misunderstanding of what ‘the left’ exactly is.

On a daily basis media outlets, politicians, pundits, thinkers, and commentators – and thus, by virtue of information consumption, the general public – fall into an all too common trap of political misperception, myopia, or willful misappropriation when it comes to the concept of ‘the left’ in American politics. In their narratives, liberals and Democrats are commonly seen and referred to monolithically as ‘the left’... this is a fundamentally false equivalence... There really is no tangible ‘left’ in America’s political mainstream today ... there hasn’t been one since (Eugene V.) Debs. (Heidtman, 2018: par. 2).

The weaponization of ‘liberal’ and ‘liberal elites’ have been particularly persuasive as slogans, since they combine socio-cultural and economic allusions, frame the issue as a binary of us and them (establishing or strengthening cultural borders), instantly prime emotions against villains, while dismissing fact-based reasoning. This tactic helps to unite disparate parts of the New Right movement. It also frequently deals with cognitive dissonance by shooting the messenger.

6.7 False Equivalency & the ‘Ideological Divide’

The fact that Americans have neither a major political party nor a major media outlet from the true left has to be seen as a factor in why so many default to embracing market

fundamentalism as an accepted norm. It also has to be seen as contributing to the misunderstanding of what political ‘liberalism’ is. These issues are discussed in the academic literature, but were not mentioned in the mainstream news media articles collected in the data set analyzed here. This indicates the extent to which the parameters of the debate have been established by operatives and commentators on the right. Opponents are painted as “radicals”, “un-American”, and a “threat to our values” (See Table 19 i). This state of affairs helps explain the point about how the ‘liberal’ label has come to have pejorative associations in the American collective consciousness (as the examples discussed above show; see Nunberg, 2006; Eisinger et al., 2007). Liberalism is the most undiscussed major theme in the data set; there are denials that liberal media bias exists (see Table 12), but there is no defense of ‘liberalism’ itself, which does not help in redefining or rehabilitating the concept.

The negative associations of ‘liberal’ also has much to do with false equivalency (or false dichotomies). The phrase “Hundreds of far-right and liberal protesters squared off” (see Table 14 c), seems to subtly equate the ‘liberal’ side with those on the far right that is associated with White supremacy and responsible for vehicular homicide. This is also apparent in Trump’s statement of there being “very fine people on both sides” (see Table 16m) as well as in the White or blue lives matter (see Table 10 h) conversation. The two sides (Black vs. White or blue) are positioned as equivalent opposites, disregarding the power imbalances between a hegemonic force and a subaltern community. The movement in support of conservative free speech can be seen along similar lines: the power imbalances are not taken into consideration (see Table 8 g, 15 f; 18 g; MacLaren, 2018). This is particularly true in the Citizens United case further empowering corporations (see Table 14 o; 18 g).

The discourse of considering ‘both sides’ equally (see Table 14 a; 19 l) amounts to another example of the mainstream media’s penchant for false equivalency inherent in its attempt to achieve objective balance²¹. This results in the media often positioning the inaccurate, unpopular, and/or extreme as simply a legitimate ‘opposing view’. This has proven especially problematic, as Boykoff and Boykoff (2004) point out, in the climate change debate, where skeptics have so often been given an equal say, misleading the public as to scientific consensus (see also McCright and Dunlap, 2000; Table 17 j, l; 21 c). A critique of this commitment to balance appears in an article in the data set as the practice often “means presenting fiction on par with fact” (see Table 14 l).

The passage that most accurately identifies and summarizes the problematic of false equivalency appears in an article entitled “Does nonpartisan journalism have a future?” (January 5, 2017; see Table 14h). It is worth quoting at length:

Is there a way for the neutral press to point out when Trump lies and not have that information get discounted as partisan bias? The basic problem is that the norms that have guided the nonpartisan press are built around the assumption that the parties are mirror images of each other. They may disagree on policy, but they abide by the same rules. The nonpartisan press as we know it, then, cannot function when one party systematically stops abiding those norms. The 2016 campaign was an example of what happens when the parties are out of balance. Trump simply lied far more than Clinton, but the nonpartisan press was unable to convey that information to the public because even trying to point that out violates the ‘both sides do it’ journalistic norm, thereby signaling bias to a weakly informed but rational audience, which invalidates the criticism.

The term ‘non-partisan’ media is a good way to describe the difference between mainstream media and much conservative media: there is more of an *attempt* at objectivity, balance, and evidence-based facts. (Notwithstanding post-empirical notions of the elasticity of

²¹ This phenomenon occurs as well in mainstream academia where corporate sponsorship in marketing neoliberalism and the right’s interest in eroding democracy are rarely broached in discussions of public opinion, the US political spectrum, and polarization.

‘objective truth’, it is fair to say there are degrees of it and obvious examples of indifference to facts and purposeful misrepresentation.)

The above quote brings into question the practice of regularly treating liberal and conservative as simply two equally valid ways of looking at things, regardless of relevant evidence at hand (see Table 14 a, h). Closer scrutiny is needed of the distinctions in the styles of argumentation and overall logic and legitimacy of the content in the discussions. Drawing on the supplementary data set and research into the ‘liberal media bias’ debate the following distinction may be made (see Table 22). Those who reject the allegations that the media has a liberal bias (while avowing a desire for free speech) seem to be generally interested in creating a forum where all ideas can be debated in an open-minded process²². Arguments tend to be based on the rational assessment of facts and context, scientific and democratic consensus, along with a willingness to compromise, reckon with past mistakes, and recalibrate based on results (i.e. open to the possibility of being wrong as in science).

In contrast, those promoting the narrative that the media has a liberal bias (while also avowing a desire for free speech) seem more concerned with ensuring the widest dissemination of their opinions and beliefs without necessarily wanting to evaluate contrary evidence nor the merit or popularity of their views. Conservative arguments appear to be based on a more ideologically rigid, consistent moral conviction, with a reluctance for compromise or admission of past mistakes – not dissimilar to a faith-based fundamentalism (see Table 7 a, e, f; 8d, g, k, l, m; 9 i, k,n; 10 a, b, f, g, h, k, n; Table 11 I, l, m, n; Table 14 c; Table 15 e, f; Table 16 j, l; Table 20 b, c, d, e). Argumentation styles also tend to be more emotionally and affectively charged (not

²² There are exceptions to this by some progressives in terms of hate speech or perceived slights, which conservatives have critiqued as discussed above. This will be touched on further in the conclusion.

to mention intolerant of opposing views), as evident in Fox News pundit Tucker Carlson’s “go fuck yourself” outburst (see Table 17 n).

This can be attested to in several letters to the editor from the data set. The first (see Table 17g) discusses the noted trend in academics changing their party affiliation from Republican to Democrat over the years: “the real reason is lack of reason: How can any academician belong to a party in which its leaders deny science (evolution and climate change) and pander to religious extremists who wish to define and control personal morality (abortion and same-sex marriage)?” The second example (see Table 19 h) describes the purpose of a liberal education as being to “help students think freely and well for themselves, seeing through the dogmatism of others.” What seems to be denigrated as ‘liberal’ is journalism or scholarship attempting to pursue evidence-based knowledge production that takes historical context and social injustice into consideration, even if it contradicts commonly held precepts (following the Enlightenment model of open inquiry). Information that contradicts accepted dogmas or orthodoxies about the social and political order, as Bourdieu asserts, is rejected. Ego defensive and system justification reflexes are undoubtedly at play here (see Jost; Table 20; Table 10 8; Table 14 i; Table 17 b).

The fundamental differences between liberal and conservative (or in this case specifically neoliberal) standpoints can be seen in the mission statements of two prominent, and officially nonpartisan, think tanks. The mission statement of the Brookings Institute, often labelled as ‘liberal’, professes to being “a nonprofit organization devoted to independent, in-depth research that leads to pragmatic and innovative ideas on how to solve problems facing society. Brookings’s commitment to institutional independence is rooted in the individual independence of its scholars. Therefore, the Institution does not take positions on issues” (Brookings.edu).

Conservative and neoliberal think tanks also make claims to being non-partisan. The Heritage Foundation's mission statement, though, as Hacker and Pierson (2010b) point out, reads more like "a manifesto" (124). Its website states: the "Heritage Foundation is a research and educational institute - a think tank - whose mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense" (Heritage.org). Likewise the American Enterprise Institute, which is dedicated to: "limited government, private enterprise, individual liberty and responsibility, vigilant and effective defense and foreign policies" (cited on Wikipedia).

The difference in the perspectives is indicative of the contrasting approaches taken by the two sides: the first is dedicated to (at least an attempt at) scholarly objective policy advice, while the former is determined to pursue research that supports a particular (pre-conceived), uncompromising ideological position, following neoliberal doctrine and positions set forth by its funders (see also: Mayer, 2016; Skocpol, 2016; Stahl, 2016). These think tanks, most of them started or funded by wealthy conservative families and corporations (as discussed in the Literature Review), "explicitly saw their mission as shifting public opinion and policy in a conservative direction, to persuade rather than investigate" (Hacker and Pierson, 2010b: 123). Heritage, in particular, saw their "goal as supporting the activities of a particular party, the GOP" (124).

A final example of false equivalency appears in discussions about the polarization of the two political parties. The conversation normally takes place with a taken for granted assumption that it is happening equally in both directions (see Table 14 p). As Hacker and Pierson (2016) write, the framing of polarization in the media makes it appear that many centrist voters have

moved to the right or that the Democrats have moved far to the left, which is inaccurate (240). Polarization of the parties, they assert, has been an asymmetrical phenomenon, with the Republicans being the ones responsible for having “moved much further right”, while the middle of the electorate, “but not...its rightmost tail” has remained mostly the same (Hacker and Pierson, 2016: 240; see Nunberg, 2006; Mann and Ornstein, 2012; see Table 14 q). Hacker and Pierson (2016) illustrate this asymmetry by citing the fact that when Richard Lugar became a senator in 1978, “he was on the conservative end of the party” (Hacker and Pierson, 2016: 240). By the time he was defeated in a primary by a Tea Party candidate in 2013, however, he was “at the moderate end” of the Republican Party (Hacker and Pierson, 2016: 240). This was not due, Hacker and Pierson (2016) note, to any change in the senator’s position, however. “The depiction of him as a moderate is akin to that strange sensation – scientists call itvection – you can experience when sitting in a train at a station. When another train pulls in, you feel as though your train is moving in the opposite direction, even though you are staying put” (Hacker and Pierson (2016: 240). Such a sensation is what the ‘Overton Window’ strategy is designed to activate. A similar situation appears in the data set with a comment about the death of a former Republican senator, Arlen Specter, who is said to have ended up on the moderate periphery of the party but is described as “centrist” (see Table 14b).

False equivalency is again apparent in the coverage of the political gridlock that occurs so frequently in Washington because of said ‘polarization’. It is reported in media as the Democrats and the Republicans being equally responsible for the gridlock in Congress, as opposites of the same coin (the term appears several times in the data set in such an unremarked fashion, see Table 21 f); however, such a positioning, as Mann and Ornstein (2012: xxiv) explain, is problematic:

(H)owever awkward it may be for the traditional press and nonpartisan analyst to acknowledge, one of the two major parties, the Republican Party, has become an insurgent outlier – ideologically extreme; contemptuous of the inherited social and economic policy regime; scornful of compromise; unpersuaded by conventional understanding of facts, evidence, and science; and dismissive of the legitimacy of its political opposition. When one party moves this far from the center of American politics, it is extremely difficult to enact policies responsive to the country’s most pressing challenges.

6.8 The Discourse Of ‘Small Government’: Democracy, Freedom, & Equality

The anti-government rhetoric coming from the right that accompanies the Republican attempt to undermine basic democratic governance is the perfect example of a populist discourse. It takes legitimate grievances and resentment from those who have traditionally been distant from the centres of power and authority (and possibly victimized by it) and turns them toward government as a form of popular representation and a means to address injustice: participatory democracy²³. Rhetoric about inefficiencies, waste, red-tape, over-regulation, Washington as a ‘swamp’ of corruption and compromisers builds and sustains the overall narrative that government represents something negative while the market is the space of freedom, choice, competition, and meritocracy (see Table 7 c; 8 a, b, c; Table 9 d; Table 10 d, j, m, n; Table 11 a, c, h, j, l, p; Table 12 i, k, q, v). Coupled with actions in Congress by Republicans that are purposely meant to sabotage regular governance and administrative processes (Ornstein and Mann, 2012), resentment towards government as incompetent, indolent, and wasteful increases. It can also serve to further alienate citizens from the political process.

This disregard for the political, then, can also be interpreted as a disregard for democracy. Democracy, as Brown (2019) reminds, requires “explicit efforts to bring into being a people capable of engaging in modest self-rule” (27). It requires a robust society and it requires

²³ This tactic is akin to a bullfighter directing an angry bull at one target (himself), but at the last moment redirecting it to a preferred target (the cape).

education to maintain that – recalling Thomas Jefferson’s dictum that: “An enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic” (cited in Coates 1999: 25). Democracy also requires, Brown (2019) adds, “a robust cultivation of society as the place where we experience a linked fate across our differences and separateness” (27)²⁴. Central to this cultivation includes addressing how social and economic inequalities can compromise equality (27).

It is not a coincidence that nations with greater political freedoms and participation are nations that have greater socio-economic equality (and vice-versa) (MacLean, 2018). Democracy trends toward equality, while a dearth of democracy increases inequality. From the point of view of those involved in the New Right, the precarity that results from neoliberalism generates another virtuous circle. Cutting off public access to democratic participation creates less ability to create social programs that will redistribute economic wealth and decrease inequality and poverty. On the other hand, economic redistribution and less inequality extends education and stimulates interest in and knowledge of participating in the democratic political process, which increases opportunities to expand social programs that will help society as a whole and lessen inequality even further. (This is perceptively noted by a right-wing blogger, see Table 7 c). Prioritizing the former outcome over the latter has to be seen as a primary motivation behind the efforts of wealthy and powerful interests – as suggested in documents such as the Crisis of Democracy, the Powell Memorandum and the writings of Buchanan and Simon – to install free market fundamentalist programs and disseminate this ideology widely, particularly to the working and middle classes who make up the majority (see Beder, 2006; Fisher, 2013): both

²⁴ Seen through this lens, Margaret Thatcher’s statement that there is no such thing as society sheds light on the neoliberal agenda.

economic interests and political objectives are served. This is more than collateral damage; precarity, inequality and ignorance actively serve to strengthen the neoliberal project.

With democracy thus demeaned and diminished, the exercise of political power, while not disappearing, is increasingly deprived of modulation by informed deliberation, compromise, accountability, and legitimation by the will of the people. Realpolitik, with the result that raw maneuvering, deal making, branding, spinning, and indifference to facts, argument, and truth all further discredit the political and further disorient populations about the meaning or value of democracy. (Brown, 2019: 87.)

This is what appears to be happening in the New Right's propagandistic use of 'liberal' as a weapon: it is a veiled attack on liberal democracy; an attack on the general democratic centre disguised as an attack on 'liberalism' (set up as 'the left'). Properly understood 'liberalism', as in 'liberal-democracy', is an Enlightenment model of knowing and reasoning based on the best available facts (arrived at by deliberation and either scientific or democratic consensus) and critical thinking that is open to reassessment and the possibility of being wrong (see Habermas, 1984) - essentially straddling the centre. By rejecting the 'equality' portion of liberal-democracy in favor of solely pursuing 'freedom' through markets (as Friedman has stated clearly above), *the very nature of liberal-democracy is inherently undermined.*

The current brand of Republican conservatism (markets and morals neoliberalism), in contrast to the liberal consensus model, appears to be rooted in non-reflective and inflexible fundamentalist faith in the market, the unquestioned 'exceptionalism' of the US nation and military, and (Judeo-Christian) religious beliefs and traditional values. Framing based on faith and emotion (often triggered by affect) accounts for much of the 'post-truth' discourses coming from the right. These aspects, however, are usually neglected in discussions of 'the two sides'. The lack of education that accompanies precarity also comes into play as ignorance works against becoming familiar with historical contexts.

By removing citizen access to the state and dismissing social justice claims, libertarians are removing any means to “ameliorate historically produced social powers and stratification” as “white and male superordination are easily tucked into the neoliberal markets-and-morals project” (Brown, 2019: 13). With equality removed from liberalism (other than formal legal equality), freedom, disarticulated from the social, takes on uncivil and anti-social aspects. As such, “(w)hen the claim ‘society does not exist’ becomes common sense, it renders invisible the social norms and inequalities generated by legacies of slavery, colonialism, and patriarchy” (Brown, 2019: 42).

Distaste for majoritarian rule and the need to develop strategic means to overcome it (influencing legislation, jurisprudence, along with the general public) has been expressly stated by both major donors (Koch) and theorists (Buchanan). Well aware that in representative democracy based on universal suffrage, as MacLean (2018) puts it, “large capitalist nation states will inevitably be controlled by the numerically largest class, making social democracy” the likely eventual outcome (63; see Hacker and Pierson (2016: 362) for indicators that Americans still support Medicare and other social services neoliberals are committed to extinguishing). This is alluded to in the data set by one commentator lamenting how liberal majorities can “overpower their opponents by the sheer force of their numbers at the ballot box” to implement social policies (see Table 7c), not to mention Trump’s antagonism to counting all the ballots (see Table 17 h). The need to overcome the numerical majority (to protect capitalism from democracy) creates the need for stealth, public relations, and strong narratives²⁵ to remove “the

²⁵ One example is the desire of both Koch and Buchanan to end Social Security by privatizing it. Their elaborate propaganda campaign to undermine support for it outlined by MacLean (2018: 179-180) – including a divide and conquer strategy (creating villains) against each of the various demographics that support it – is a perfect example. While still popular, the idea of privatization has, since the 1980s, become increasingly part of the mainstream debate about Social Security (see Table 11 a).

sacrosanct status assigned to majority rule” (Buchanan quoted in MacLean, 2018: 184), and to forestall what they interpreted as a slippery slope towards totalitarian government.

6.9 Repercussions: Freedom & Authoritarianism

The negative repercussions of neoliberal logics are well chronicled: erosion of democracy (Brown, 2015), rise in inequality (Saez and Zucman, 2016), and destruction of the environment resulting from the blind adherence to the perpetual growth model (Magdoff and Foster, 2011). Moreover, there is ample evidence, ironically, that the primary justification for the project – the ideal of a free market – has proven to be somewhat of a mirage. “Actually existing neoliberalism,” as Brown (2019) states, “feature states dominated by every kind of major economic interest” (85). The power of the financial sector has also undermined the notion of the ‘invisible hand’ or ‘night watchman’ overseeing a competitive global order (Brown, 2019: 16). Many of these policies, moreover, have not occurred ‘naturally’ but through ‘statism’ – public policies enacted as a result of corporate policies (many of them pre-written, as seen with ALEC). Anti-bureaucratic rhetoric does not seem to extend to the war on drugs and expansive security and surveillance apparatuses that grow exponentially, redirecting public funds to private contractors, and depleting already constrained budgets (Robinson: 2013).

Moreover, the notion that markets and morals sustain social cohesion due to their ‘organic’ nature has proven highly questionable. The level of acrimony, hostility, hate crimes, cyber-bullying, and polarization that exists in the current culture, and evident in the data, seems unprecedented – and the technological means to spread them have increased exponentially. Traditional values, when weaponized, as Brown (2019) points out, lose their integrative function. “Politicized as ‘freedoms’, they lose what Hayek affirmed as their noncoercive constraint on freedom, apart from limiting practices they oppose. Weaponized as individual and corporate

prerogatives against equality and antidiscrimination laws, they become a means to attack and disrupt rather than foster social bonds and integration” (Brown, 2019: 119).

This is Brown’s (2017) point about neoliberalism creating a Frankenstein, it takes a shape that was likely unforeseen by its creators: unpredictable, hostile, and dangerous. Freedom, social cohesion, along with equality and democracy wither, invariably replaced by the randomness of authoritarianism and cult of personality. In this sense, neoliberalism is not dissimilar to extremist versions of Marxism. They are both based on idealistic, teleological beliefs. They are both based on ideologically rigid dogma that cannot be questioned²⁶. They are prone to authoritarianism in the name of the cause as they are separated from democratic accountability and input, and are easily corruptible by charismatic, powerful leaders. Moreover, as Brown (2019) adds, both fail “to reckon deeply with the political” and “both conflate the deconstructive and normative critique of political powers (in excess of the administrative ones they want to make use of) with the practical withering away of these powers ‘after the revolution’” (85).

The right-wing populism and cynicism towards democratic governance that accompanies the promotion of neoliberalism bodes ill for a slide further into ‘soft-democracy’ or ‘illiberal democracy’ models such as those in many Global South countries, or the potential to devolve into right wing dictatorship: a form of ‘ur-fascism’ (Eco, 1995) or ‘polyarchy’ (Robinson, 1998). The penchant for the right, including libertarians, to disregard democracy in order to prop up capitalism is made crystal clear in Buchanan’s (1975) statement that “despotism may be the only organizational alternative to the political structure that we observe” (220-221, cited in MacLean, 2018: 151). In fact, all three institutions associated with the conservative cause – the military, the church, the corporation – are hierarchical, undemocratic, and sources of conformity (not

²⁶ Though it can be adjusted in accordance with the changing interests of leadership.

freedom). Such extremist movements and political parties that use a similar (and typical of the arbitrariness of authoritarians often inconsistent) mix of economic, nationalistic, and religious populism can be seen currently in many countries across Europe (France, Italy, Austria) and in some ruling regimes as well (Hungary, Poland, Belarus, Turkey).

6.10 Reversing Reflexive Modernity?

Questionable logic as well as anti-democratic tendencies runs through the well-regarded work of libertarian theorists²⁷. Hayek's notion that markets and morals both rise 'organically' or 'spontaneously' and form a 'natural order' without relying on state coercion is dubious at best²⁸. It ignores the fact that those in power created the laws, social structures, and economic rules by which society operates – uncoincidentally in their own interests – which are then presented, as Gramsci points out, as the natural order of things. Neoliberal theorists' dismissals of the existence of coercive power outside government brazenly ignores the fact that corporations and monied interests *actively use* their allocative powers to influence and mold governments to their liking. Jim Crow laws, preventing women from voting until the third decade of the 20th century, and the Citizens United ruling are prime examples, before even beginning to consider the opportunities that privilege and connections provide. What neoliberal theorists seem to be describing as 'organic' is a social order similar to the medieval European notion of the 'Great Chain of Being', with its God-given hierarchies and privileges.

The discourse of the right, confirmed in this data set, indicates that the neoliberal project is in many ways an anti-Enlightenment project (a 'return to God's law', see Table 7 a), including

²⁷ Beginning with the fact that Nobel prize-winning Buchanan fashioned his theories without conducting any actual empirical research (MacLean, 2017: 79).

²⁸ This is particularly so in the Global South, where "the 'invisible hand' of the global free market is increasingly clenched into the 'visible fist' of the US military" (Springer, 2016: 153).

its proclivity to reverse secularization and support a retrenchment of religion (Brown, 2019: 102; see Hayek, 1960). “Tradition secured by religion,” Brown (2019) notes, “acquires the mantle of incontestability and symbolic truth at the same time that it serves as a limit on the political.” A cursory glance at history (feudalism) and geo-politics (the theocracies in places such as Saudi Arabia) reveals the logical extension of such sensibilities. Ironically, “liberty” has been central to “the religious right-wing strategy to re-Christianize the public sphere since the early 1990s” (Brown, 2019: 110).

The anti-reflexive tendencies of many on the right are evident in their attacks on the credibility of the media, academics, and science. The penchant to reject historical contexts and scientific explanations and to silence any critique or debate of anything that might contradict pre-conceived assumptions is an indicator of the rigid ideological stances (and epistemological populism) taken by so many in the New Right movement. It is also an example of affect at work, where information is felt (and immediately accepted or excluded) rather than being cognitively processed (Chaput, 2018), as well as confirmation that consistent compelling narratives can persist even in the face of contradictory empirical evidence (Roe, 1994). It further speaks to the problem that propaganda poses for “the epistemic conception of democracy, because propaganda bypasses rational deliberation” (Stanley, 2015: 12).

6.11 Applying a Theoretical Lens

All of these New Right discourses in the data set discussed above are sub-plots in the greater narrative of neoliberalism. The long game of the corporate-sponsored propaganda campaign to market neoliberalism has established it as a common-sense narrative, helping entrench market fundamentalism as a practice and belief system. Being subject to the lived experience of workaday reality in a capitalist society over years, as Bourdieu describes the

habitus, also plays a part in creating malleable dispositions: preparing the ground for messages to take root. But neoliberalism was not a movement to merely perpetuate the status quo; it was a radical, revolutionary movement to change the post-war consensus of social democratic capitalism. And it is in this that the long-term communications strategies played a role.

The neoliberal narrative is exceedingly evident in the data set, not only used by its adherents, but by ‘neutral’ depictions that use its language, as well as by opponents who are obliged to respond to it. Narrative, as has been argued, is the most effective way of conveying information, as it captures the imagination in a coherent and memorable manner (Stone, 2002; Jones and McBeth, 2010). It also provides a means to attribute human agency to the problems (carried out by villains) and the solutions (carried out by heroes). The by-now long-running neoliberal narrative, reinforced by everyday practices, has created ‘autonomic reminders’ that can be easily activated, often through mere slogans (which might be termed ‘autonomic reminders’). The causality has become ingrained: problems caused by government and liberals (villains) need to be solved by free enterprise (heroes).

Bourdieu (2000) describes this process similarly, where it happens “as if by magic” – though “the magic works only on the basis of previously constituted dispositions, which it ‘triggers’ like springs” (168). Such triggering is assisted, by “the immense preparatory work” (Bourdieu, 2000: 168) that I argue is the result of careful strategizing, immense funding, and clever communications campaigns across many fields.

The use of ‘liberal’ or ‘liberal elites’ – as evidenced in the data set – not only instantly activates long standing resentments (memory work), but delineates ‘them’ from ‘us’ (boundary work). Neoliberal logics, once internalized as a universal viewpoint, build up symbolic power; they become the commonly accepted worldview, anything that contradicts or lies outside of this

‘doxa’ – such as anti-capitalist critique, even social democratic interventions – becomes instantly rejected (Bourdieu, 1977, 2000).

The commonly used phrase ‘liberal elites’ is a perfect example of symbolic power as it is especially effective at instantly crafting villains. It combines a distaste for those who are irresponsible, libertines, overly indulgent, indolent, with, at the same time, the sense of being privileged, superior, pretentious, and patronizing. This targets directly what Bourdieu describes when he discusses ‘le sens pratique’ – a distaste for the practices of groups in other classes. For the working class, it combines a dislike for effete lifestyles with a resentment of their privileged status. Its use is doubly impressive and effective in that there is a bit of a bait and switch occurring. The label of ‘elites’ manages somehow to avoid many true upper elites – such as wealthy industrialists who back and fund the neoliberal movement (the Kochs and Trump for example). It is rather reserved for middle class and upper middle-class individuals, usually with an education and/or sympathetic dispositions towards factual historical wrongs (to groups and the environment). Although, wealthy supporters of ‘liberal’ causes like George Soros or Bill Gates – even though they are also very much supporters of the capitalist system (unmentioned) – also get tarred with this brush if they are not explicitly right wing on all levels.

Bourdieu insists that symbolic power is not about mystified consciousnesses, but “dispositions attuned to the structure of domination of which they are the product” (Bourdieu, 2001: 41). However, neoliberal public relations strategies work much more subtly than that, slowly, subliminally, usually non-consciously. Over time, there is a gradual change of attitude towards it as the message is heard repeatedly until it is at least accepted as a legitimate alternative. Dispositions do not need to be “attuned to the structure of domination”, though they may be; it is more likely that these structures are not noted or are seen as inevitable.

Bourdieu (1989) also argues that the “legitimation of the social world is not ... the product of a deliberate and purposive action of propaganda” (21). This statement, like much social theory, entirely ignores the immense effort put out by the network of wealthy and powerful individuals (and groups) interested in influencing the political system in their favor – barely sketched in this paper. To assume it has no effect is unfair at best. It also sets up the argument in a bit of a straw man fashion, as if these efforts will entirely ‘brainwash’ everybody. The point is not to fool everybody all the time, but enough people at the right times – particularly near election time, taking advantage of the “short term effects” of successful priming to mobilize and demobilize key constituencies (Jamieson 2018). Hegemony theory accounts for the rest, in the sense that only consent is then needed once in power. Practices and embodied power are indeed relevant; however, they are only part of the story. The practice of standing for the national anthem can create a reverence for it and deep patriotic connections to that anthem and the flag, but it takes propaganda sold as a narrative to associate it so closely, almost exclusively, in the US with the military (making it a force for reaction), rather than say, participatory democracy, universal health care, or paying your taxes.

Mystified consciousnesses are not necessarily needed, as the power of New Right propaganda is that it does not have to work through cognitive processes. Much of right-wing discourse is not necessarily logical, as is evident in the data set (see Table 17). Much of it seems to be purposely non-rational. However, as it is so imbedded subconsciously it does not need reason to work; in fact, it is often better without it as it is easier to convey meaning through a slogan that hints at a broader narrative and is understood instinctively, as much through feeling as thought. The power of affect can be seen in the chants at Trump rallies, such as “lock her up”, “send them back”, “fill that seat”. ‘Truth’ is felt instantly and viscerally, without the need for

lengthy explanations (Chaput, 2018). This speaks to the power of language to trigger non-linguistic effects, the epistemology of propaganda building on the ontology of socio-biology, creating “a bodily-thinking” (Chaput, 2018: 196). In many ways it works like religion; and neoliberalism, much like religion, is built on faith and mythology. It is also built on fear (also like religion). This can be seen in many of the neoliberal discourses, although it is often veiled. Trump’s comments about protesters coming and ‘destroying the suburbs’²⁹ are intended to (affectively) trigger support from affluent White communities – and is a continuation of euphemisms like ‘states’ rights’ (see Table 16 l).

The consistent discourse of combining neoliberal economic rhetoric with socio-cultural issues (pioneered by Reagan) can be seen along these lines (see Table 20 e, 11 m, n). Even though these two axes do not necessarily have to go together – indeed the material self-indulgence of consumerism and religious piety would seem contradictory – the persistent discourse conflating them helps build a complete narrative and have it widely accepted as ‘common sense’. Such efforts assist in creating a sense of in-group solidarity against ‘others’. As Bourdieu writes, “Groups are not found ready-made in reality. And even when they present themselves with this air of eternity that is the hallmark of naturalized history, they are always the product of a complex historical work of construction.” (1987: 8-9). Economic and socio-cultural issues coalesce perfectly in the term ‘liberal’ – as evidenced in the Club for Growth’s attack ad on Democratic presidential candidate Dean quoted above. This discourse is part of the “stealth” tactics of the New Right Movement to help convince lower economic groups to support them despite the fact that market fundamentalism is likely to affect them adversely (MacLean, 2018; Brown, 2015, 2019). By emphasizing differences (cultural borders fueling cultural wars), it

²⁹ This is a continuance of the right’s fear mongering against ‘terrorists’, ‘communists’, and ‘illegal aliens’.

becomes a divide and conquer tactic, which has worked well, as evidenced by the proliferation of polarization discussions.

Lower socio-economic groups, writes Brown (2019), “can be tricked with appeals to other lines of privileged power, such as whiteness or masculinity, especially since liberty, rather than equality reproduces and secures those powers” (63). Such language is apparent in the data set, from elites as well as non-elites (see Table 8 d, h, i, l, m; Table 16 i, j, l, m). These discourses are combined with influencing the political system to create, maintain and expand market and corporate friendly policies. Majorities can be also “disenfranchised through voter suppression³⁰, gerrymandering, bought elections and legislation, and other ways of insulating legislative power from democratic will or accountability” (Brown, 2019: 63).

While New Right discourses trigger reflexive reactions, it is safe to say, despite Massumi’s argument that delineates affect from emotion, that emotion also plays its part. The (reactionary) reactions from conservative supporters to ‘social justice warriors’, protesters, ‘liberals’, and ‘snowflakes’ – particularly on alt-right extremist sites, indicates abundant emotional reactions (see Table 9 e). The sight of a White supremacist plowing into a crowd of peaceful demonstrators, as occurred in Virginia, speaks volumes in this regard. To the emotion of fear, triggered by the narrative element of victimization, we can add the emotion of hate, triggered by the narrative element of villains doing harm and wanting to be a hero to prevent or lash out at it (see Table 9bn; Table 10 j, l, n).

These visceral reactions against demonstrators can be understood as ego defensive, protecting against the cognitive dissonance of pre-conceived beliefs that anchor one’s sense of self, as system justification theory suggests (Jost, 2018: 19). Protesting against America,

³⁰ Research indicates that a higher percentage of wealthy Americans vote compared to lower income groups and that voter restriction laws are “highly partisan, strategic, and racialized affairs” (see Hacker and Pierson, 2016: 346).

authority, and traditional values is felt as threatening as these things are the axes of many people's lives and understandings of the world (particularly those of a conservative disposition). American mythology of 'exceptionalism', 'the land of opportunity', and 'freedom' provide a powerful part of people's identity; when this is attacked and threatened, many feel themselves also attacked and threatened. Exposing mythologies, or 'orthodoxies' as Bourdieu would phrase it, (whether religious or political) poses an epistemological and existential threat. It is not surprising that it often engenders violent reactions. It is most interesting that it happens also in groups that are from the lower end of the socio-economic scale. This is likely due, as Jost (2017) suggests, to the fact that as these groups are already facing precarity, clinging to certainty takes on added importance. The 'sense of belonging' that Massumi mentions creates an instinct to defend what one belongs to, particularly if one identifies with it strongly (see Table 20).

Faith in the system can also be reinforced by the hope of eventually attaining success for yourself or your children, particularly in the US with the persistence of the 'American Dream' rags to riches narrative (noted in the data set, one example appearing in Table 9 o). There is also an indication that many in the underclass justify their status as deserved, due, presumably, to their strong belief in the system (sustained by culture, education, and mythology – or propaganda). Jost (2017) cites findings from the 2016 election indicating that working class voters who supported Clinton "questioned the legitimacy of economic inequality under capitalism" but working-class supporters of Trump did not (76).

Members of the working class are especially likely to confront aversive levels of uncertainty, insecurity, and social exclusion and to develop a strong 'desire for long-term stability and security' that is consonant with conservative values of 'thrift' and self-reliance [1], as well as 'law and order.' Thus, for psychological — as well as institutional — reasons, 'parties of the Right and Centre have a built-in advantage over the parties of the Left in a capitalist society... This advantage is by no means confined to the working class, but it is extended to it. (Jost, 2017: 74.)

It is much easier existentially to believe; there is a tendency, perhaps a default setting, of wanting to suspend disbelief (like religion), as there is an intrinsically positive feeling being part of a society, being part of a group (or ‘tribe’). People are also vested in law and order, no matter how unfair that order is. Stability is reassuring; revolution, anarchy, and violence are threatening and frightening. Dissidents who seek to destroy the system are seen as disreputable, malcontents, subversives. (And there is also a certain amount of inertia – not to mention fatalism – at play.) This is not a brainwashing, there is a pre-disposition to support one’s society (This undoubtedly explains much of the motivation to oppose BLM and social justice.) As most people do not have the time, education, or inclination to dig deeply into complex historical, political, and philosophical issues, the persistent, consistent, affective, and effective propaganda campaigns that they are exposed to, serve to help *reinforce the general tendency to have faith in the system* (absorbing the critique that cannot be deflected to scapegoated villains).

What is often missing in traditional analyses is that people, being part of a society or system, *like it*, are pre-disposed to like it, and want to believe in its virtue. There is a tendency to overlook flaws along with a motivation to not believe the possibility of systemic corruption³¹. While ‘le sens pratique’, ‘symbolic power’, priming, or affective ‘autonomic remainders’ as sub-conscious forces are in play, these are also reinforced by ‘cultural-identity-protective cognition’, or ‘system justification’, which brings into play *desire* – a wishful thinking, although it is as much feeling as thinking. Regardless of how it is phrased, there is a pre-cognitive reaction that triggers people reflexively (as a reflex) to defend or reject views or events, depending on whether they confirm or deny inherited beliefs, values, behaviors, and mores. Needless to say, this affects

³¹ A similar defensive reflex can be seen in the reactions by many believers to the pedophile scandals in the Catholic church; the desire to believe in the inherent goodness of the institution can lead to downplaying, rationalizing, or ignoring the deeply ingrained pattern of criminal misconduct.

people to different degrees, but these processes can come into play enough to make a difference (or to help create the consent for hegemony).

In sum, corporate power (on a macro level) is using its significant resources and ability to produce knowledge to create long-standing communications campaigns to market the free market (meso), and influence the individual dispositions and subject formation, often through affective triggering (micro). The discourse around the term 'liberal' is a consistent and prominent tool being used to entrench the narrative of neoliberalism as a hegemonic 'common sense'. This speaks to how ideas, particularly when told in a succinct, seemingly coherent narrative with causality and common sense resolutions (Stone; Jones and McBeth) can be embodied as material forces and 'truth' can be felt (and delay-triggered) viscerally rather than cognitively (Chaput), particularly when it serves to justify the society or system one is part of (Jost). Moreover, it is safe to assume that corporations, with the sort of resources and expertise at their disposal, are aware of these things. It is also safe to assume that corporations, obsessed with profit margin, would not be spending billions of dollars on these campaigns, after all, if they were not useful and effective.

Conclusion

7.1 The Role of Government & the Public Good

The Covid-19 global pandemic brings to light quite well many of the issues being debated in the ‘liberal’ versus neoliberal conflict discussed in this research project. First, it reflects the penchant for neoliberal economic populist rhetoric to bleed over into almost every issue. It also brings into question the presumed superiority of self-interest over public interest made so frequently by libertarian theorists. It furthermore brings to the fore the importance of the role of government in coordinating matters of public safety, highlighted by the successful containment of the virus in countries that took immediate nation-wide measures to implement safety protocols (South Korea, Germany) in contrast to countries that did not (the US, Brazil) (Rupar, 2020).

Hacker and Pierson (2016) make this very argument, pre-pandemic, about the importance of collective responses, pointing out that it was the “emergence of effective government action” in the early 20th century that allowed for the improvement of the health and economic well-being of American citizens (46). This included creating public safety standards for water, food, and medicine, developing antibiotics, vaccines and infrastructure (including the internet) – areas in which the private sector had no incentive to invest in as they did not show the proper potential for profit. It was only through government interventions through various social services, as Hacker and Pierson (2016) argue, that the middle class was created in the post-war period. In stark contrast, the neoliberal era has seen funding in healthcare and education (as well as for infrastructure) drop precipitously, with the US ranking below most Western nations, and some in the Global South, on many indicators³² (Hacker and Pierson, 2016: 30-37).

³² The US has also, since the onset of neoliberalism, returned to levels of income and wealth inequality not seen since before the stock market crash of 1929 (see Saez and Zucman, 2016).

7.2 Key Insights from the Research

i) Anti-collectivism, Polarization, Coalition Building

Skepticism about public institutions among certain conservative segments of the American public mirrors the anti-government discourses coming from neoliberal theory, which speaks to the success of the public relations framing efforts to market neoliberalism³³ over the last four decades. Attitudes towards Covid safety protocols have, unsurprisingly, broken down along the lines of the culture wars, with the decision to wear a mask or not having become an emblem of this polarization³⁴.

This attitude not only highlights the tension between individualism and collectivism (and freedom and equality), but helps to unite the right. As the data set illustrates, the pandemic skeptics and quarantine protesters bring together the socio-cultural and economic rhetoric disseminated by New Right networks (and pioneered by Reagan). On the one hand, those who wear masks are likely to be ‘liberals’ and ‘snowflakes’ coercing unwilling individuals and condescendingly lecturing those who want to exercise their individual rights and personal choices. On the other hand, there is the populist discourse of loss of jobs, which while carrying much legitimacy, again serves as an affective trigger to shutting down dialogue and fanning stubborn resistance. These views do not have to be necessarily conjoined conceptually, but the fact that, as the data set shows, they are so frequently linked discursively aids in creating a coherent New Right coalition (see Table 7 f; 11 l; 18 k), despite inherent internal distinctions and

³³ To reiterate, the term neoliberalism is being used in this thesis in reference to its development in the US, while recognizing that there are other models. It is also important to note that the way neoliberalism is marketed may differ from how it is actually manifested. Moreover, the particular way neoliberalism is currently being applied differs from the ideal type of full privatization and virtually no government involvement in the economy outside law and order and border security (the goal of many orthodox neoliberals).

³⁴ The anti-collectivist (and/or anti-reflexive) sentiment is such that those who espouse choice and individual freedom are seemingly not only rejecting general altruism, but not recognizing the idea of ‘enlightened self-interest’ whereby one would personally benefit as well by preventing the epidemic from spreading generally.

contradictions³⁵. This is a key insight that emerges from this content analysis that suggests the possibility of further research into how frequently these views coalesce (or do not coalesce) – at both the elite level (Republican politicians and conservative pundits), and among conservatives in the mass public on social media.

ii) The Architecture and Efficacy of Right Wing Discourse

What is apparent from the above conceptual linkage is the effectiveness of the framing and priming of New Right discourses. The neoliberal narrative works to foster a belief in meritocracy (with a patriotic tinge as ‘American Free Enterprise’), intolerance for those who fail to thrive in it, and distaste for outsiders/‘others’ threatening (or often even wanting to enter) it. What is less apparent from the data set, but still needs to be considered, is the history of corporate funding and organization in the creation and circulation of the neoliberal narrative as propaganda. Elements of the neoliberal narrative do appear in media and the broader public discourses though. Corporate influence is mentioned in a few critical opinion pieces in the data set, but not in regular news media articles. A major conclusion based on insight from this research project is that discussing public opinion, polarization, the political spectrum, or the neoliberal turn without taking into consideration the long-running campaigns to market and naturalize neoliberalism (along with the skewed American political spectrum), is short sighted and flawed. Corporations, who fund and help organize many of these PR efforts, are in the business of selling: goods as well as ideas through marketing, and this expertise, along with the ability to hire the best talent, provides the neoliberal right with a good (and advantageous) mastery of the art of persuasion and communications to start with.

³⁵ The argument for a multidimensional plotting of political preferences is further undermined by the fact that in the US political system, once voters get to the voting booths, the choice is a strict binary with only two political parties.

The efficacy of right wing discourse, apparent in the data set, can be seen in the use of succinct language and sloganeering, and the ability to mine traditional American mythologies and values that draw on affect and emotion. Advantage also accrues to conservatives as it is easier to attract support for maintaining a well-entrenched social system than to criticize and try to replace it (see Jost, 2017). While non-conservatives can come off as subversive dissidents for trying to address historical injustices, conservatives and Republicans manage to better convey a sense of American patriotism, as it is celebrated uncritically, or at least mythically. (This leads to the related insight that the right, more prone to being authoritarian and hierarchical, appear more unified, with a stronger sense of certitude. Liberals (on the left or centre), on the other hand, with their tolerance for differences of opinion and comfort with ambiguity, are open to accusations of being indecisive or ‘flip-flopping’ (see Table 8 e).)

Another key insight, reflected in the research, is that the New Right movement has not only adopted much populist rhetoric to attract working class demographics (away from the Democratic Party), but have done so by co-opting much of it from progressive and left radical movements, while taking over a good portion of the language and spirit of righteous anger and rebellion against the system that was associated with the left in the 1960s and 1970s. It is telling and ironic that populism has become so associated with the right.

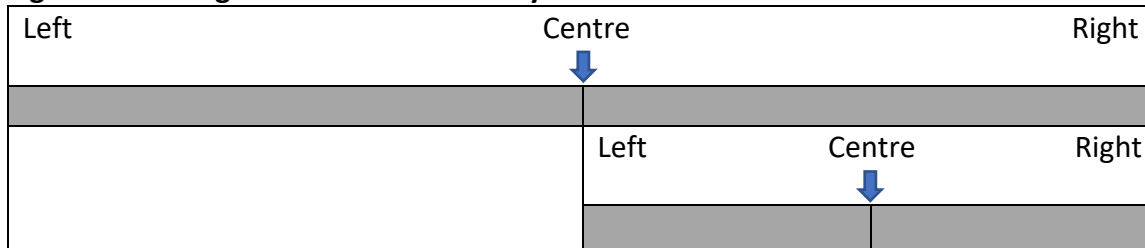
Right wing discourse retains its effectiveness despite the fact that it often contains contradictions, faulty logic, fake news, and anti-reflexive tendencies. Indeed, these tendencies may well be a strength rather than a weakness. As noted above, neoliberal narratives are effectual as they tend to by-pass cognition, and target emotion and affect, and hence lend themselves well to quickly triggering, or priming, affective autonomic remainders (such as references to security fears and nationalism do). This serves to inoculate neoliberal discourses

from dialogue and critique, while framing them as ‘common sense’ (liberals as villains being a prime example).

Perhaps the largest contribution, and most unique aspect, of this thesis is the attention brought to the New Right tactic of using the term ‘liberal’ as a weapon. As evidenced in the data set, conservatives, Republicans, and neoliberals (whether intersected or not), put the term to heavy duty. ‘Liberal’ is used in various guises and is often misunderstood and misused, with its polysemic nature facilitating leveraging it for political gain. The re-branding of liberalism has helped to normalize neoliberalism to the general public, to denigrate social democracy and social justice, while often dismissing evidence-based knowledge production (journalism, scholarship, science) when it contradicts conservative dogma. As the data set suggests, ‘liberal’ has become a meme and seems to be used now by mainstream media and the public sphere alike with similar connotations to ‘leftist’ or ‘socialist’. Even when not used pejoratively, this has still helped to discursively shift the centre of the political spectrum to the right. As what used to be considered the centre is positioned as the left (or extreme left of acceptability) and far-right extremism is positioned as its opposite, neoliberalism then takes its place as the widely accepted centre (see Figure 1 below). The ubiquitousness of the neoliberal narrative and the misuse³⁶ and negative connotation of the term ‘liberal’ speak to the success of its marketing campaign. As the Overton Window strategy predicts, neoliberalism has gone from outside the purview of acceptable debate (once considered extremist, greedy, and anti-social) to the hegemonic ‘common sense’.

³⁶ The Democratic Party, the media, and universities can, in fact, be described as ‘liberal’, though not in the way the right is using it. The Democrats are quintessentially liberal in the sense of embracing the free market as a categorical positive, while, like some classical liberals, being willing to consider state interventions and regulations in pursuit of the public good (although less so perhaps than non-conservative parties elsewhere). The media and academia can be considered liberal in the sense that they tend to take into consideration historical facts, contexts, scientific evidence, contemporary community standards, and majoritarian opinion. It is also fair to say that conservative thought is evident in all three institutions as well.

Figure 1. Shifting the Centre Discursively



iii) Responding to the New Right

Based on the insights from the research, the primary recommendation for those who are interested in opposing the entrenchment of neoliberal hegemony is to fully comprehend the kinds of tactics they are up against, and the central role that well-crafted narratives play in its establishment (and the forming and altering of public opinion) – “language matters” in the words of Gingrich³⁷ (1990). To this end, not only media outlets but sociology as a discipline needs to move away from neglecting or rejecting examinations of the communications efforts of corporate-sponsored networks in considerations of public opinion and subject formation, public policy, and media and public discourse. Scholars would do well to begin to critically re-examine the ‘power is everywhere’ paradigm, and to recognize how this plays into the interests of the corporate-sponsored coalitions on the right trying to obfuscate their backstage machinations. The importance of language in framing understandings of the world over the long term, while manipulating emotions and influencing decisions in the short term should not be dismissed.

Comprehending this leads to another major insight from this thesis: in order to get a full understanding of social reproduction it is necessary to expand traditional sociological inquiries to incorporate cross-disciplinary theories. This should include not only affect theory, but also propaganda theory and insights from linguistics, and in particular system justification theory

³⁷ This was part of the memo Gingrich distributed to his GOPAC organization called “Language: A Key Mechanism of Control” intended to train colleagues in using polemic confrontation and scorched earth tactics to fan divisiveness and gain notoriety – anticipating Trump.

which allows for a broader understanding of motivations and influences in forming dispositions and opinions on social and political issues. These theoretical perspectives are a valuable and necessary addition to the insights provided by critical theory and theories of practices: they foreground the enormous amounts of communications that individuals are immersed in as part of our everyday reality in the digital age³⁸, while taking into consideration the sub-conscious psychological factors at play in forming opinions and subjectivities.

Most importantly, it is crucial for journalists and academics alike to engage with debates over the ‘ideological divide’ (liberal-conservative, right-left, Republican-Democrat) in a manner that resists being pulled into the false equivalency position³⁹ of ‘both sides’⁴⁰. Issues such as power imbalances, the logic of the argumentation, repercussions of policy directions, and the level of narrow-minded dogma involved need to be included in the debate when discussing these ‘two sides’. This raises another key insight of this thesis. While being wary of extremist positions on either end of the political spectrum is sound, seeing the Democrats as part of that extremism is not. The radical left in US politics is practically non-existent, and if and where it exists it is bereft of power as there is no political party to represent it. In stark contrast, the radical right has become increasingly mainstream, colonizing much of the Republican Party. In fact, there are many people from the radical right, both religious and economic⁴¹, in power at this moment in the US, including in the White House.

³⁸ Indeed, continued research is needed into how the extensive online architecture of trolling, hacking, and micro-targeting can influence and manipulate the political opinions and choices made by the general public. This ‘computational propaganda’ (Woolley and Howard, 2018) needs to be traced and mapped to monitor exactly where it is coming from, who is funding it, and to what extent they create pseudo-publics and viral fake news.

³⁹ In fact, one of the flaws of the traditional version of the NPF is that it has this potential as well. Subjecting the NPF to critical discourse analysis, as this project does, is a useful contribution to address issues of false dichotomies.

⁴⁰ Much of this phenomenon arises as a result of the common conflation of liberal with left.

⁴¹ This is particularly so, if one considers neoliberalism to be a radical movement (as many of its adherents have).

A related point that emerges from the research concerns false dichotomies. While ‘liberal and conservative’ and Democrat and Republican are normally framed as two opposite but equal sides of the same coin, it seems, not only in their discourse but also their actions, that the Republican Party (along with many in the New Right) breaks the mold of the Enlightenment model that is based on reasoned debate and compromise. Both segments of the neoliberal movement and the current Republican party can be seen as committed to a faith-based fundamentalism: religious and market. This staunch allegiance to an ideology serves to undermine open-minded inquiry and democratic governance⁴².

Opponents of neoliberalism, then, must not only understand the tactics of the New Right, but also fashion their own narratives using similar tactics. This could include efforts to take back the discourses about the constitution and the ‘founding fathers’, ‘freedom’, redefining traditional values (to include common decency, altruism, cooperation), and patriotism (differently than strictly via the military). Instead of the current “spiral of silence” (Hacker and Pierson, 2016: 198), there needs to be a defense of the necessity for government and collective responses to common problems, along with efforts to defend liberalism and its intrinsic link to democracy, the free market, and liberty, as well as the courage to question the ‘common sense’ of market fundamentalism. There also has to be an awareness that compared to the more consistent, simple, and affective discourses coming from the right, the discourse of non-conservatives – as they consider complexity and nuance – is more prone to using intellectualized rhetoric and overly-expansive circumlocution that can alienate a mass audience and play into accusations of ‘elitism’. Democrats, liberals, and leftists must become generally more cognizant of their

⁴² This may also speak to the limitations in the liberal-democratic ideal: it is susceptible to Machiavellian power plays by those not interested in playing by the rules (the perfect manifestation of such being the 45th president) and can be undermined also by by-passing reason with affective appeals and triggers.

communication style, in particular: to be aware that truth can be felt, of the importance of emotion and affect and the importance of narratives in forming and evoking them, rather than relying solely on the verbiage of reasoned discourse and intellectualism.

iv) Limitations of Liberalism

It might also be necessary, in a world of worsening ecological destruction and wealth inequality, to be aware of the limitations of liberalism and western reason generally, with its hypertrophied left-brain-centred rationalism, an instrumental rationality of mechanized industrialism that Weber warned would create an ‘iron cage’ or ‘steel casing’ – a rigid bureaucratic mentality both within government and capitalism (cited in Sayers, 2001: 144). Instead of universalizing Western world views and practices, it may be worthwhile looking also to non-western traditions for alternative models (see Said, 1993; Alfred, 1999; Benhabib, 2002; Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2017).

Although valid critiques from feminist or critical race theory point out that noble Enlightenment sentiments about the ‘inalienable rights of man’ were limited to White, propertied males, these new views provided the philosophical and political basis from which to gradually widen the franchise and the field of civil and human rights. Likewise, while post-empirical critiques point to the difficulty in achieving ‘objective truth’, the liberal paradigm does provide for a process of questioning, reconsideration and adjustment, however imprecise and fraught with conflict and the machinations of power as that is. Even though in a sense we are trapped within our western reason, it is also true that it is the tool we have at our disposal, and through it we can use western reason to criticize western reason, in the sense that Derrida describes the attempt to win a game against a “formidable Master, whom we might think certain to win at a game” in which he has created the rules (cited in Descombes, 2001: 138-139). Through these

means, we can, using reflexive modernity, notice inherent flaws and find new pathways forward that encompass other ways of thinking and being.

In many ways, there are no lack of possible solutions to the current problems and dilemmas in the US political system. Unfortunately, it is just that the solutions are exactly the ones that the organized New Right movement (with their tendency to being non-compromising dogmatists contemptuous of rational dialogue) are sure to actively oppose. Hacker and Pierson (2016) summarize the situation succinctly: “The sad reality is that all the reform suggested here – for a weakening of obstruction, for increased participation by ordinary citizens, for improved public demonstrations, for a reduction in the sway of big-money, and for renewed commitment among economic elites to ensuring the long-term preconditions of shared prosperity – are sure to face tenacious opposition from today’s GOP” (359). (To this could be added the further complication of the uncertainty of the Democratic Party’s level of commitment to moving away from neoliberalism.)

The final important insight that the data set suggests is also one that liberals and the left have to be cognizant of as it appears to be one of the major issues being critiqued by the New Right. Despite the significant amount of hypocrisy (noted in the data set), exaggeration, and the lack of properly distinguishing between power distributions, conservatives are getting a lot of mileage out of accusations of liberal censorship (see Table 13). In the spirit of the compromise at the heart of liberalism – that between freedom and equality – liberals (with or without air quotes) will have to be mindful of finding a resolution between censorship and free speech, historical injustice and allowances for post-modern humor (in particular distinguishing between words and intentions). Despite the fact that these critiques from the right are often frivolous, there needs to be greater awareness of how excessive reactions of ‘political correctness’ and ‘cancel culture’

without due process can create a witch hunt mentality that will alienate moderates, serve to fortify the arguments coming from the right about government and ‘liberal’ coercion, play into the right’s divide and conquer tactics, and weaken support for liberalism in the long run. This raises larger questions that require further inquiry and a need for a closer examination of the ‘free speech vs. censorship’ debate (with the NPF providing a suitable analytical tool in which to do so).

In closing, it may be worthwhile to consider a historical anecdote about another global pandemic – the ‘Spanish Flu’ of 1918-1920 – that perfectly illustrates the enduring power of naming (and of propaganda) to frame understanding. The epidemic was first noticed in American military training facilities during WWI, but news of its devastating effects and contagiousness was censored under the Espionage and Sedition Acts of 1917⁴³ due to its potential to undermine the war effort (Ewen, 1996; Ross, 2009). It was only the press in Spain (which was not in the war) that was reporting on its spread, thus the initial moniker (Crosby, 2004). Nevertheless, this original designation – with its vaguely prejudicial connotations primed by Anglo-American history – survives to this day as a testament to symbolic power.

⁴³ This was part of the same infrastructure that included the Committee on Public Information and the surreptitious pioneering hero behind the success of selling the business agenda to America: PR/propaganda pioneer Bernays.

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Appendix A:

Table 5. Breakdown of Time Frame of Text Sources Used in Supplementary Data Set

Time Frame	Liberal Media Bias/ Anti-PBS	Not Anti- Liberal/PBS	Total
2016- 2017	17	11	28
2008- 2015	10	17	27
2004-2006	8	9	17
Total	35	27	62

Table 6. General Breakdown of Text Sources Used in Supplementary Data Set

Source	Liberal Media Bias/ Anti-PBS	Not Anti- Liberal/PBS	Total
New York Times	0	2	2
Washington Post	1	6	7
Other Major Daily	9	11	20
Smaller Newspaper	2	1	3
Magazine	3	4	7
Broadcaster Website	2	1	3
Online News & Commentary Site/Blog/ News Service	6	2	8
Conservative-Funded Foundations & Media Watchdog Groups	8	0	8
Business/Finance	4	0	4
Total	35	27	62

Table 7. Examples of the Anti-Liberal Pro-Neoliberal Narrative: Setting/Context of Plot

Element	Source	Excerpt
a) Culture War rooted in the 1960s.	“The President Is Winning His War on American Institutions.” George Packer, The Atlantic. March 2, 2020.	“Barr attended Columbia University at the height of the anti-war movement, and he drew a lesson from those years that shaped many other religious conservatives as well: The challenge to traditional values and authority in the 1960s sent the country into a long-term moral decline.... He called for a return to ‘God’s law’ as the basis for moral renewal. ... “We are locked in a historic struggle between two fundamentally different systems of values,” he wrote. “In a way, this is the end product of the Enlightenment.” The secularists’

		main weapon in their war on religion, Barr continued, is the law. Traditionalists would have to fight back the same way.”
b)Rise of New Right movement	“Crusader attorney continues publicizing traditional values.” Mike Nixon, Daily Record (St. Louis, MO). July 25, 2005.	““We were the 'silent majority' for a long time, but we aren't silent anymore. I think conservatism is now mainstream America. We've gotten the message out, [but] this has been helped by the failure of liberalism and socialism all over the world," Schlafly said.”
c)Conservatives threatened by social democracy.	“America's Socialist Government.” J.D. Longstreet, Western Front America. Dec. 5, 2013.	“Today, America has a Socialist/Marxist/Communist President. ... It is, today, ruled by semi-literate inhabitants of a sub-culture bought and paid for – by the socialists – to overpower their opponents by the sheer force of their numbers at the ballot box. How did this happen? Free stuff, that's how. Redistribution of the wealth. ... The government takes taxpayer money from productive citizens and gives it to the unproductive 'wards of the government' to buy their votes at election time. Redistribution of the wealth is the foundation of socialism.”
d)Alienation of the white, working ‘common man’/ threats to law and order.	“Who is the ‘Forgotten Man’?” Beverly Gage, New York Times. Nov. 9, 2016.	“As Mr. Schrag noted, all of that name-calling was part of the problem, a refusal on the part of liberal elites to recognize the real grievances and desires of what had once been a bedrock Democratic constituency. In the 1968 campaign, Nixon capitalized on this resentment with calls for ‘law and order,’ a phrase that evoked not only fears of crime, but also anger at protesters and rioters and the college-campus liberals who tolerated them. Mr. Trump put that phrase back into political circulation in 2016, a gesture of solidarity with the old ways of thinking about the ‘silent majority’

		— and the ‘forgotten American.’ ... Mr. Trump’s campaign mobilized around the same image that once animated the Roosevelt coalition: the ‘forgotten’ white working-class man.”
e)Freedom, second-amendment rights	“More Americans Stand by The NRA as Liberal Elites Try to Foist Their Values on Everyone.” Wayne Lapiere, NRA: America’s 1st Freedom. Nov. 22, 2017.	“The heart and soul of America is at stake. We have an epic battle on our hands, a titanic struggle over not just our Second Amendment-protected freedom, but for all of the freedoms and values that define our great country.”
f)Religion, values, (and masks) as key elements in the polarization of America	“Trump's Phoenix megachurch rally proves how much faith and masks are now political.” Nbc.com. June 24, 2020.	“Is the recalcitrance of Christians – and, predominantly evangelical Christians – to wearing masks and limiting their churchgoing killing their neighbors? ... For many, their religious activities are not just about their faith, it is also about their politics. And since a simple face covering has become the focus of the new political culture war – going without a mask is standing for freedom, according to those who don’t want to wear one because they are following the president...”
g)Rise of nanny state and bureaucracy	“Mitt Romney Delivers Speech on Freedom at NRA.” Targeted News Service. April 13, 2012.	“If we continue along this path, we’ll spend our lives filling out forms, complying with excessive regulations and pleading with political appointees for waivers, subsidies and permission. That path erodes freedom. It deadens the entrepreneurial spirit. And it hurts the very people it's supposed to help.”
h)Markets and individuals over the collective good post-Reagan	“Here Come the Death Panels.” Michelle Goldberg, New York Times. March 24, 2020.	“Since the election of Ronald Reagan, America has tended to value individual market choice over collective welfare. Even Democratic administrations have had to operate within what's often called the neoliberal consensus.”

Table 8. Examples of the Anti-Liberal Pro-Neoliberal Narrative: Victims

Element	Source	Excerpt
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a)Victims: America/ Americans	“America's Socialist Government.” J.D. Longstreet, Western Front America. Dec. 5, 2013.	“Look around America today. She is hardly recognizable as the country she used to be, a country dedicated to a constitution that defends liberty, defends freedom for the individual, and limits government intrusion into the lives of its citizens. That's all gone now. Today's America is but a shell of its former self.”
b)Victims: Taxpayers	“In line with big government.” Washington Times, Aug. 28, 2003.	“The Kansas League of Women Voters has also issued a call for increased taxes. The Kansas LWV justifies advocacy of more revenues by claiming that "the state has not provided adequate funding for education" – this despite the fact that Kansas educational spending is at an all-time high. The Kansas LWV has been pushing for higher sales taxes, personal income taxes and corporate income taxes. But the higher taxes aren't for budget balancing, they're for more spending, which the Kansas LWV promotes through participation in groups such as the Public Assistance Coalition of Kansas.”
c)Victims: American consumers/ Choice	Republican Congressman John Shadegg in: “Liberal Washington Democrats Continue To Push Big Government Health Care Takeover.” States News Service. Sept. 23, 2009.	“Washington liberals have brushed aside the concerns of Americans and are pushing forward with their government takeover of health care. The American people do not want the heavy hand of government telling us what kind of care we can have. They do not want government micromanaging every aspect of our health care system. They do not want a government mandate forcing them to buy insurance.”
d)Victims: Hard working (White) Americans	“Why I'm Loving This.” Maureen Sullivan, New York Times. Nov. 9, 2016.	“She put half of Trump’s supporters in that “basket of deplorables.”... People I know were angry. They were tired of being told they were racist and bigoted as they went about the business of mowing their lawns, writing college tuition checks and working their jobs as cops, secretaries and teachers’ aides. They kept being told they needed to look inward, examine their sins and judge themselves guilty.”
e)Victims: The safety of law-abiding Americans/ Law and Order	“Biden Flip-Flops.” Joe Borelli on Ingraham Angle, Fox News Network. Dec. 30, 2019.	“And this bail reform is going into full effect in just 26 hours, and New Yorkers should be concerned. We are talking about hate crimes. This weekend also a woman was released from custody after assaulting three Jewish women, only to be released in the next day, assault more Jewish women. This is the state of play in New York City, and this should be a warning to all the viewers around the country that this is the type of government

		they'll get if you elect progressive Democrats. Be forewarned, frankly.”
f)Victims: Conservative voices/ Trump	“Rigged' Google draws ire of Trump; Aide: New regulations are being considered.” John Fritze, USA Today. Aug. 29, 2018.	“Pressed by reporters at the White House on Tuesday about a tweet the president wrote criticizing Google's search engine as "rigged," the director of Trump's National Economic Council said the administration is "taking a look" at federal regulations for the company. "We'll let you know," he said.... Earlier, Trump expressed frustration on Twitter that when Americans type "Trump News" into the search engine, it generates mostly negative news about him while conservative media is 'shut out'.”
g)Victims: Climate science skeptics/ balance/ free speech	“The State of Climate Science: No Justification for Extreme Policies.” David Kreutzer, Heritage Foundation. April 22, 2016.	“The U.S. is not insulated from the political biasing of climate science; in fact, it actively contributes to it. U.S. taxpayers help fund the IPCC, having contributed \$10 million in 2015, in addition to the \$22 billion spent within federal agencies. Rather than fostering scientific discovery in a field that is a mere few decades old, the U.S. government instead appears to express bias in funding science that supports federal climate policies.... More broadly, differing hypotheses and healthy scientific debate are shut down or discounted on the pretext that further scientific exploration and debate are dangerous, because our children and the future allegedly are at stake.”
h)Victim: Americans' religious liberties	“After 25 years on the culture war's front lines, this prominent pastor-activist thinks liberals are winning.” Michelle Boorstein, The Washington Post. Nov. 27, 2017.	“The Supreme Court next week will hear a major case weighing equal rights with religious liberty. A Colorado baker says creating wedding cakes for same-sex couples violates his religious beliefs, and the Justice Department earlier this fall said his First Amendment rights were "invaded". ... (or) someone like Kim Davis, the Kentucky county clerk who became famous in 2015 when she bucked a court order to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples, saying she was acting "under God's authority".”
i)Victim: Those protecting traditional values	“The Culture Wars, Part II.” Robin Toner, New York Times. Feb. 29, 2004.	“Michael Novak, a theologian at the American Enterprise Institute, said, "Many of those who are alarmed by the claiming of the title of marriage by homosexuals feel the issue is being thrust upon them. They feel on the defensive. They see themselves as getting pushed around.””
j)Victim: White Americans from reverse racism	“Stop Shaming Trump Supporters.” Michael Lerner,	“Instead of challenging this ideology of shame, the left has buttressed it by blaming white people as a whole for slavery, genocide of the Native Americans and a host of other sins, as though whiteness itself was something about which people ought to be ashamed. The rage

	New York Times. Nov. 9, 2016.	many white working-class people feel in response is rooted in the sense that once again, as has happened to them throughout their lives, they are being misunderstood.”
k)Victim: Trump	“Trump responds to Mueller report: 'No collusion, no obstruction'.” Christina Wilkie, CNBC.cm. April 18, 2019.	““No collusion, no obstruction,” Trump continued. “There never was, by the way, and there never will be. ... This hoax. It should never happen to another president again.””
l)Victim: Trump	“The Senate Impeachment Trial of Donald Trump.” Ingraham Angle, Fox News Network. Jan. 31, 2020.	“Look, even if you assume that President Trump, for the sake of argument, wanted a quid pro quo to investigate the Biden's, it's still not an impeachable offense because the President had a legitimate public interest reason to ask Ukraine to look into the Biden's conduct and anybody seriously arguing that Joe and Hunter Biden's conduct here isn't objectively suspicious and warranted an investigation by any reasonable standard. It did.”
m)Victim: Regular (white) Americans	“The divisive case for giving Rush Limbaugh the Medal of Freedom.” Brian Rosenwald, Washington Post. Feb. 6, 2020.	“Limbaugh provided it by tapping into the culture wars that left many conservatives angry and alienated. Since the 1960s, white men and conservative white women had watched civil rights movements challenge existing social hierarchies and the ‘traditional’ nuclear family by demanding equal rights for women, as well as racial and sexual minorities. They felt as though their values were under siege everywhere: in the classroom, in entertainment, in universities and in newsrooms. Conservatives wanted someone to fight back and counter liberal condescension, someone who could say what they were thinking but felt like they couldn’t say without charges of bigotry.”

Table 9. Examples of the Anti-Liberal Pro-Neoliberal Narrative: Villains

Element	Source	Excerpt
a)Villains: Liberal elites	“Liberal Elites Blame Donald Trump for Coronavirus.” Trish Regan Primetime, Fox Business Network. March 6, 2020.	“You see they all live in a different reality out there in Tinseltown, a reality that is a long way away from the reality of hardworking Americans. And I think a reality that is totally divorced from well, reality... Joe Biden has something in common with them. I mean hey, he hobnobbed with these people, with these Hollywood dictators. He went straight to Hollywood to raise money of course with the likes of Leonardo DiCaprio, big with studio executives and even the mayor of Los Angeles.”

b)Villains: Democrats/Socialists	“The Real Winner of Democratic Debate: President Trump.” Hannity, Fox News Network. June 27, 2019.	“Moderates in the Democratic Party, well, they are extinct. They no longer exist. ... The radical socialists, they have completely and totally taken over, and last night, they were just obsessed with vilifying private enterprise.”
c)Villains: Universities	“Yes! Liberalism Must Be Defeated.” Rush Limbaugh Show. May 7, 2018.	“You're paying \$20,000, \$40,000, \$60,000 a year to send your kids away to actually become members all of a cult, which is what I think higher education is today. Your kids are being indoctrinated into cults of left-wing radicalism.”
d)Villains: Government/Environmentalists	“Liberal Confusion on Evolution and Creation.” Dave King, Conservative Daily News. Dec. 11, 2015.	“Knowing liberals as I've come to know them, I'm very suspicious that the Endangered Species Act is just an attempt to grow government in order to control the private lives of Americans and control land development and land use throughout the nation, because it has nothing to do with any principled belief concerning evolving animal or plant life.”
e)Villains: Anti-War Protesters	“Anti-war protesters were outnumbered.” Alan M. Mullis. News & Record (Greensboro, NC). April 4, 2007.	“The so called anti-war protesters were made up of communists, socialist and anti-American groups. This anti-war protest was an anti-United States, anti-military protest. These ‘pro-terrorist’ groups are attempting to recruit liberals and young people to follow their treasonous propaganda to defeat. Go to their Web sites and see for yourself. These people don't protest genocide in any part of the world. They don't protest the killing of Americans anytime, anywhere. They think that Sept. 11 was a plot of the U.S. government to start a war with the peace-loving Muslim citizens of the Middle East.”
f)Villains: Deep State	“When the Deep State Was So Deep that it Reached to Russia.” Breitbart.com. Nov. 17, 2019	“Indeed, in the nearly three years since, we’ve seen a steady procession of leaks and rumors emanating from the shadowy ‘permanent government,’ mostly aimed at discrediting—and now, destroying—the Trump administration.”
g)Villains: Illegal aliens/criminals	“Liberal Media Bias... Trump Slams Fake News.” Donald Trump on Intelligence Report, Fox	“We have people coming into the country, or trying to come in – and we're stopping a lot of them – but we're taking people out of the country. You wouldn't believe how bad these people are. These aren't people. These are animals. And we're taking them out of the country at a level and at a rate that's never happened before.”

	Business Network. May 18, 2018.	
h)Villains: Bureaucratic red tape	“It’s time to sideline the FDA.” Freedom Works. May 1, 2020.	“...data shows that the U.S. is dealing with a number of drug shortages. This is in no small part due to the absurd web of regulations the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) makes manufacturers jump through to get a drug or vaccine to market. One has to wonder how many thousands (or potentially millions) of people died preventable deaths while the FDA spent almost a decade making sure every ‘t’ was crossed and every ‘i’ was dotted on a potential cure.”
i)Villains: Liberal media	“Police Target Journalists as Trump Blames ‘Lamestream Media’ for Protests.” Marc Tracy and Rachel Abrams, New York Times. June 2, 2020.	“Many reporters, photographers and press advocates said the treatment of journalists by police officers in recent days reflected an erosion of trust in the news media that has seeped into law enforcement under President Trump, who has deemed critical coverage of his administration “fake news” and has frequently labeled some news organizations and journalists with variants of the phrase “enemies of the people.”...On Sunday, Mr. Trump blamed the “Lamestream Media” for the protests in a tweet, calling journalists “truly bad people with a sick agenda”.”
j)Villains: Liberal snowflakes	“Liberal Snowflakes.” Collection by Howard Tateishi, Pinterest. 2020.	“The Millennial Generation: Everything offends me, make them stop...Mommy.” ... “Just Because you are offended, doesn’t mean you are right...stop the whining and complaining.” ... “Just because I don’t agree with you does not make me a Hater! It just means you can’t deal with the diversity like you say you can.”
k)Villains: Anti- gun lobby	“More Americans Stand by The NRA As Liberal Elites Try to Foist Their Values on Everyone.” Wayne Lapierre, NRA: America’s 1st Freedom. Nov. 22, 2017.	“The anti-freedom elites are coming after us with everything they’ve got – all the billions of dollars and anti-gun media and Hollywood celebrities they can muster. But they don’t know you. They don’t know the heart of a freedom-loving NRA member. They don’t know how much the majority of Americans love their country and their freedom.”
l)Villains: Social justice warriors	“If they really want progress, social justice warriors must do the one thing they hate: the other	“From transactivists to #blacklivesmatter, social justice groups have taken a serious shellacking over the past 10 days. And despite years of indulgence by a pliant left, the election of Donald Trump suggests that the current era of identity politics is rapidly reaching its expiration date. ... Shaming skeptics and

	side.” David Kaufman, New York Post. Nov. 20, 2016.	silencing critics, they railed against microaggressions and demanded safe spaces. But along the way, the social justice crowd forgot one key thing - no space is ever safer than the American ballot box.”
m)Villains: welfare recipients/ the unproductive	“Only Racist if White.” Collection by Scott, Pinterest. June 27, 2020.	“Lazy Welfare Mothers. All your hard earned money is going to lazy bastards that won’t work.”
n)Villains: Protesters/ Rioters	“Who Gets to Vote in Florida?” Dexter Filkins, The Atlantic. Aug. 31, 2020.	“One such commentator is the Reverend Gene A. Youngblood, the pastor of the First Conservative Baptist Church in Jacksonville, who hosts a radio show called “Let’s Face the Issues.” In a recent broadcast, Youngblood warned of a country besieged by the forces of Marxism, state control, and anarchy. The summer’s protests against police brutality, he said, had brought a flood of chaos and crime. “We’ve seen blocks and blocks and blocks of our major cities burned and destroyed by vandals and thugs of Black Lives Matter,” he said. “Ladies and gentlemen, it is like a cancer—it is spreading across the whole body that we call the United States of America.”
o)Villains: Democrats/ socialists (Victim: America/ the American Dream)	“Fact-Checking Trump’s Claims That Democrats Are Radical Socialists.” Reid J. Epstein and Linda Qiu, New York Times. July 20, 2019.	“What Mr. Trump said: “A vote for any Democrat in 2020 is a vote for the rise of radical socialism and the destruction of the American dream.””

Table 10. Examples of the Anti-Liberal Pro-Neoliberal Narrative: Heroes

Element	Source	Excerpt
a)Heroes: Founding Fathers	“Putting Faith in the Founding Fathers.” Stephen Goode, Insight on the News, Washington Times. March 4, 2003.	“Above all, he wants Americans to recognize that their nation’s greatness depends on moral and responsible citizens who live according to the laws and commandments of the Judeo-Christian tradition, something he believes has been forgotten ...Farah argues that his agenda isn't new. It's based on the vision the Founding Fathers had for this country when they brought it into being more than 200 years ago.”
b)Heroes: Those	“How One Conservative Think	“Feulner saw something in Reagan long before he became president. “We had met with him when he

committed to free market policies/ Reagan	Tank Is Stocking Trump's Government." Jonathan Mahler, New York Times. June 20, 2018.	was governor in California; we had visited his ranch and seen copies of Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek with marginal notes in the book," Feulner told me. "So we knew that he was one of us." In the run-up to the 1980 election, Heritage spent \$250,000 to assemble a comprehensive guidebook for conservative rule that it called "Mandate for Leadership" and aggressively marketed it to members of Reagan's transition team, in particular Edwin Meese, who was Reagan's chief of staff in California and later became his attorney general in Washington. The big gamble paid off: Meese told me that Reagan asked that the 1,093-page document be distributed at his first cabinet meeting. Reagan also turned to Heritage and Feulner to help staff and organize his administration. An enduring, mutually beneficial friendship was born."
c)Heroes: Those who provide alternatives to liberal media	"Trump Touts Importance of Social Media in Face of Biased Liberal Media." Newbusters.org. Jan. 8, 2020.	"At least one person on the conservative side appears to understand the importance of free speech on social media. President Donald Trump touted the critical importance of social media in the face of a biased liberal media. Trump praised nationally syndicated radio talk show host of 'The Rush Limbaugh Show,' Rush Limbaugh on Jan. 6, 2020 as one of many sources of truth that break through liberal media gatekeepers and noted the importance of social media."
d)Heroes: Entrepreneurs / Private enterprise	"America's new culture war: Free enterprise vs. government control." Arthur C Brooks, Washington Post. May 23, 2010.	"Scott Brown won the late Ted Kennedy's Senate seat from Massachusetts in January by declaring himself not an apparatchik Republican but a moral enthusiast for markets. "What made America great?" he asked. "Free markets, free enterprise, manufacturing, job creation. That's how we're gonna do it, not by enlarging government.""
e)Heroes: President Trump as job creator	"Liberal Elites Blame Donald Trump for Coronavirus." Trish Regan, Fox Business Network, March 6, 2020.	"Jobs, jobs. We are creating tons of them. It's great news. This new data out tonight proves it. But you know all Hollywood dictators, the Left and liberal media can actually do is complain, complain, complain. It's an extraordinary example really of the divide between the elites and mainstream Americans. The elites who only want to complain about a President they just don't like, while his policies continue to generate more jobs than we have seen in modern history."
f)Heroes: Military	"Drew Brees finds support amid backlash	"Brees likened standing for the national anthem to saluting the military. "I envision my two

	<p>over stance on kneeling during national anthem.” Ryan Gaydos, FoxNews.com. June 4, 2020.</p>	<p>grandfathers, who fought for this country during World War II, one in the Army and one in the Marine Corps. Both risking their lives to protect our country and to try to make our country and this world a better place. So every time I stand with my hand over my heart looking at that flag and singing the national anthem, that’s what I think about," he said.”</p>
<p>g)Heroes: Conservative supporters of Christian traditional values</p>	<p>“Thousands hear call for traditional values.” Lucas Sullivan, Dayton Daily News (Ohio). Aug. 29, 2010.</p>	<p>“...conservative commentator Glenn Beck ... and Tea Party champion Sarah Palin appealed Saturday, Aug. 28, to the crowd on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to help restore what they called traditional American values. The rally was billed as nonpolitical but supported by conservative activists from around the nation. "Something that is beyond man is happening," said Beck, a commentator and radio host for Fox News. "America today begins to turn back to God."”</p>
<p>h)Heroes: Police officers protecting law and order</p>	<p>“Morton Hosts 'Blue Lives Matter Rally' While Rumors Swirl Online of Antifa Coming to Town.” Jackson Gardner, The Chronicle (Centralia, WA). Aug. 17, 2020.</p>	<p>“About 150 people were in Morton Sunday afternoon voicing their support for law enforcement and, for a certain crowd, their opposition to the Black Lives Matter movement at what was dubbed the ‘Blue Lives Matter Rally’. “Our focus today is we are here to show support for law enforcement nationwide," said Jennifer Hedge, the rally's organizer. "Law enforcement needs our support. There is so much publicity in Black Lives Matter, there is so much publicity in Antifa, my feeling is all lives matter ... every single person's life matters and right now we need to support law enforcement."”</p>
<p>i)Heroes: Those protecting traditional values</p>	<p>“Crusader attorney continues publicizing traditional values.” Mike Nixon, Daily Record (St. Louis, MO). July 25, 2005.</p>	<p>“While some feminists were dictating their view of a woman's place in the world and promoting a liberal interpretation of law, others held firm to more conventional positions regarding the management of government and individual lives...During her career, Schlafly has authored 20 books, became a national figure in opposition to the weaknesses she saw in the Equal Rights Amendment and opposed federal funding of abortions. ... With no immediate signs of stopping, Schlafly continued to proclaim her support of traditional values while working to keep her message pertinent to contemporary conditions. She runs the Eagle Forum, a conservative think tank which she founded in 1972.”</p>
<p>j)Heroes: NRA as protectors of</p>	<p>“Georgia welcomes NRA, stands with its ideals for</p>	<p>“(I)t is an honor to welcome the members of the National Rifle Association to Atlanta for their 146th annual celebration of our Second Amendment</p>

Second Amendment freedoms	freedom.” Vernon Jones, Atlanta Journal Constitution. April 30, 2017.	freedoms. The 5 million members of the NRA are dedicated to promoting, preserving, and protecting our freedom. All across the country, lawmakers at every level of government – from state houses to the halls of Congress – are passing new laws giving law-abiding citizens greater ability to protect and defend themselves.”
k)Heroes: Religious leaders/promoters of traditional values	“Could Trump End the Culture Wars?” Daniel K. Williams, New York Times. Nov. 9, 2016.	“National legislation has long been the goal of the religious right. When the movement emerged in the late 1970s, evangelical leaders such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson sought federal constitutional amendments to ban abortion and restore school prayer, because they wanted to reverse what liberal rights activists had done at the national level through the Supreme Court. In the early 21st century, leaders such as James Dobson continued this trend by persuading President George W. Bush to endorse a constitutional amendment proposal to define marriage as exclusively heterosexual. In recent years, evangelicals have become so concerned about protecting their own religious liberty against federal mandates or court decisions that they have given less attention to imposing a moral agenda on the rest of the nation.”
l)Heroes: Leaders promoting law and order	“Policy solutions: Trump says 'learn from history' instead of removing statues.” Darlene Superville, Associated Press International. June 23, 2020.	“Trump said he wants the maximum punishment available under federal law – up to a decade in prison – for those who destroy or tamper with statues on public property that commemorate anyone who served in the U.S. military. He said the executive order would “reinforce” existing law. “We are looking at long-term jail sentences for these vandals and these hoodlums and these anarchists and agitators,” Trump said.”
m)Heroes: Republicans willing to deal with Washington corruption	“Trump to Meet With Mitt Romney.” Lou Dobbs Tonight, Fox Business Network. Nov. 17, 2016.	“And I think that one of the things that I love about Donald Trump's communications style -- and there are many things. But one of them is that he often punctuates his points with symbolic gestures. So it's not enough for him just to say, I'm going to drain the swamp and I'm going to get special interests out, he actually is putting actions behind it.”
n)Heroes: Those protesting having freedom curtailed and	“Coronavirus Anti Lockdown Protests: Stop threatening, telling Americans how to live during pandemic.”	“Anti-Lockdown protests occurred in New Jersey and California over the weekend ... They're protesting against the local government's tyranny that's taken over Constitutional freedoms slowly but surely since this coronavirus pandemic began. Governors and local politicians are telling Americans

jobs lost by quarantines	glennbeck.com. April 20, 2020.	exactly how to live their everyday lives in quarantine...”
o)Heroes: Tough minded Republican leaders/ Reagan	“Bush's Reagan moment.” Mike Pintek, Pittsburgh Tribune Review. Aug. 17, 2006.	“When Ronaldus Magnus, as Rush Limbaugh likes to call President Reagan, referred to the Soviet Union as the "Evil Empire," the Left was apoplectic. ... But the clear-eyed Reagan knew exactly what he was doing. He recognized, as most ordinary Americans do, that words matter, that there was a moral difference between the United States and the Soviets, and that America, for all its shortcomings then and now, represents humanity's best hope for peace and freedom. The Soviet Union was indeed "evil," and Reagan's rhetorical assault signaled the beginning of the end of her empire.”

Table 11. Examples of the Anti-Liberal Pro-Neoliberal Narrative: Morals/Policy Solutions

Element	Source	Excerpt
a)Moral/ Policy Solution: Cut taxes and government spending	“Liberal Ideology v. Conservative Ideology.” (sic) Newsninja2012. Oct. 21, 2013	“On the other hand, Republicans tend to favor a limited role for government in society and believe that such reliance on the private sector (businesses and individuals) – be it avoiding unnecessary environmental regulations or heavy-handed anti-discrimination laws – can improve economic productivity and help achieve the larger goals of freedom and self-reliance. ... Another example is the food stamps program. ... Republicans argue that there is a lot of fraud in the program that is wasting taxpayer dollars. They also want to institute clauses that force beneficiaries of the program to take more personal responsibility through measures such as mandatory drug testing, and looking for a job.”
b)Moral/ Policy Solution: Privatization	“Bush Renews call for Privatization of Social Security.” Sept. 3, 2004. USA Today.	“We must strengthen Social Security by allowing younger workers to save some of their taxes in a personal account – a nest egg you can call your own, and government can never take away. ...In all these proposals, we seek to provide . . . more freedom and more control over your own life.”
c)Moral/ Policy Solution: Tax cuts	“Is this class warfare?” Cal Thomas, USA Today. April 16, 2009.	“I wonder how many Americans – millions who no doubt finished filing their taxes late last night – think they're being taxed too little. I sure don't see many hands going up out there. It's worth recalling, though, that government doesn't create prosperity. Individuals do. The power of the individual, not the power of government, should be supreme. That's the best way to reach a cease-fire in the class war.”

<p>d)Moral/ Policy Solution: Freedom and security.</p>	<p>“More Americans Stand by the NRA as Liberal Elites Try to Foist their Values on Everyone.” Wayne LaPierre, NRA: America’s 1st Freedom. Nov. 22, 2017.</p>	<p>“... the time has come for Congress to enact Right-to-Carry reciprocity and for the president to immediately sign the bill. People want and deserve the ability to protect themselves from the monsters and menaces lurking among us. ... That is the freedom we all fight for, and we must stand together and fight harder than ever to keep our freedom and save our nation. That is why every gun owner and patriot of freedom should join us. ... The anti-freedom elites are coming after us with everything they’ve got—all the billions of dollars and anti-gun media and Hollywood celebrities they can muster.”</p>
<p>e)Moral/ Policy Solution: Right to work freedoms</p>	<p>“Post-'Janus', Unions Continue Undermining Public Workers' First Amendment Rights.” Trey Kovacs, Competitive Enterprise Institute. June 24, 2019.</p>	<p>“A union may only take dues from a worker who affirmatively consents and voluntarily and knowingly waives their First Amendment right to not financially support a union.Otherwise, a government employer cannot siphon dues from their paycheck.”</p>
<p>f)Moral/ Policy Solution: Fiscal and personal responsibility and market- based incentives</p>	<p>“Obama Pushes Liberal, Big-Government Vision.” Lawrence Kudlow, Human Events. March 3, 2008.</p>	<p>“Obama wants you to believe that America is in trouble, and that it can be cured only with a big lurch to the left. Take from the rich and give to the non-rich. Redistribute income and wealth. It's an age-old recipe for economic disaster. It completely ignores incentives for entrepreneurs, small family-owned businesses and investors.”</p>
<p>g)Moral/ Policy Solution: Increased security against terrorism</p>	<p>“Held Hostage by the U.S. Government and the Lame Stream Media.” Greg Holt, American Clarion. Oct. 17, 2016.</p>	<p>“If Bill and Hillary Clinton regain the White House – the damage they will do to this country may well be un-repairable. Many more Islamic terrorists will slip into this country, more Muslims loyal to the Muslim Brotherhood will be allowed into powerful positions in this country. More jobs will be lost, our borders will become more open, allowing for many more illegals to come in. Our military will continue to be decimated.”</p>
<p>h)Moral/ Policy Solution: Balance budgets and</p>	<p>“America's new culture war: Free enterprise vs. government control.”</p>	<p>“The statist narrative also held that only massive deficit spending could restore economic growth. ... This proposition is as expensive as it is false. Recessions can and do end without the kind of stimulus we experienced, and attempts to shore up the economy with huge public spending often do little to improve</p>

stop deficit spending	Arthur C Brooks, Washington Post. May 23, 2010.	matters and instead chain future generations with debt.”
i)Moral/Policy Solution: Maintain traditional family values	“The Culture Wars, Part II.” Robin Toner, New York Times. Feb. 29, 2004.	“The courts have been pushing the envelope on issues like gay rights, just as they did on abortion. Social and religious conservatives feel under siege, furious over what they see as judicial tyranny that is removing traditional values, one by one, from the public square. “I have not seen any issue that mobilizes my constituency like same sex marriage, not even the abortion issue," said Dr. Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. "Once you start redefining marriage, where do you stop? I'm still waiting for someone to give me that answer.””
j)Moral/Policy Solution: Eliminate the death tax	“Time to Repeal Federal Death Taxes.” Heritage Foundation Reports. April 4, 2001.	“By majorities consistently above 60 percent since the last presidential campaign began, support for death tax repeal among voters is strong, even among those who know they never will have to pay estate, gift, or generation-skipping taxes. ... wealth taxation remains inconsistent with the principle of limited government.”
k)Moral/Policy Solution: Border security	“Trump ushers in an optimistic era.” David N. Bossie, USA Today. April 28, 2017.	“He took major steps to secure the border and prioritize the removal of criminal aliens, resulting in an incredible 64% drop in illegal immigration since last year.”
l)Moral/Policy Solution: Personal choice over government coercion	“Texas anti-vaxxers say COVID-19 contact tracing is government surveillance.” Todd Ackerman, Houston Chronicle. June 4, 2020.	““The government should stop thinking its job is to keep everyone healthy and instead focus on protecting our rights, "says a post on the organization’s website. "We here at TFVC will remain vigilant as our government expands greatly and the threats to our members grow. Texans for vaccine choice. ””
m)Moral/Policy Solution: Markets and morals	“Putting Faith in the Founding Fathers.” Stephen Goode, Insight on the News, Washington Times. March 4, 2003.	“Joseph Farah ... author of a new book, Taking America Back, the subtitle of which is, A Radical Plan to Revive Freedom, Morality and Justice ... advocates repealing all national gun laws and doing away with the minimum wage ... and the privatization of Social Security and Medicare. He would end all limits on federal campaign spending... Above all, he wants Americans to recognize that their nation’s greatness depends on moral and responsible citizens who live according to the laws and commandments of the Judeo-

		Christian tradition, something he believes has been forgotten...”
n)Moral/Policy Solution: School choice, religion in education	“Trump picks billionaire Betsy DeVos, school voucher advocate, as Education Secretary.” Emma Brown, Washington Post. Nov. 23, 2016.	“President-elect Donald Trump intends to name Betsy DeVos, a conservative activist and billionaire philanthropist who has pushed forcefully for private school voucher programs nationwide, as his nominee for Education Secretary, according to a person close to DeVos. Trump's pick underlines his promises on the campaign trail to put ‘school choice’ – the expansion of taxpayer-funded charter schools and vouchers for private and religious schools – at the center of his efforts on education.”
o)Moral/Policy Solution: Freedom over Socialism	“Pence swipes at Democrats for embracing 'far-left agenda', impeachment.” Morgan Chalfant, The hill.com. Oct. 22, 2019.	“It was freedom, not socialism, that gave us the strongest and most prosperous nation in the history of this world,” Pence said. “It was freedom, not socialism, that ended slavery, won two world wars, and stands today as a beacon of hope for all the world. ... The moment that America becomes a socialist country is the day that America ceases to be America.”
p) Moral/Policy Solution: Free Markets = liberty	“Corporations are cracking down on free speech inside the office - and out.” Fredrik DeBoer, Washington Post. Aug. 11, 2017.	“Right-wing theorists have always insisted that free-market economics is the best guarantor of individual liberty. Friedrich Hayek, the economist and philosopher who did so much to create modern economic conservatism, insisted that only societies with free markets could ensure free people. ... arguing against social programs that protect the poor and unlucky, programs that he insisted throughout his long career would lead inevitably toward authoritarianism. The libertarian movement embraces Hayek's view, insisting that personal freedom must include the freedom to act in a market economy unencumbered by government regulation.”

Table 12. Examples of the Anti-Liberal Media/PBS Narrative (Supplementary Data Set)

Element	Sources	Excerpt
a)Villain: Liberal Media	“Liberal Media Unrelenting in Their Bias Against President Trump.” Dan Backer, Orlando Sentinel. Sept. 26, 2017.	“The liberal media perpetuate political bias so forcefully and unrelentingly, it’s gone from subtle background noise to the entirety of their narrative. Is it any wonder Americans have record-high distrust for the mainstream media?”
b)Villain: Liberal Media	Donald Trump, Twitter, cited in “NBC Nuclear	“Fake @NBCNEWS made up a story that I wanted a "tenfold" increase in our U.S. nuclear arsenal. Pure fiction, made up to demean. NBC = CNN.”

	Arsenal Story Prompts a Threat by Trump.” Peter Baker and Cecilia Kang, New York Times. Oct. 12, 2017.	
c)Villain: Liberal Media	Rush Limbaugh cited in “Rush: Media Want to Destroy Trump.” Newsmax.com, June 29, 2017.	“Rather than being objective and balanced, Limbaugh said the "media are now running the operations of the American left. "It is Fake Media," Limbaugh explained. "The New York Times, the Washington Post are using made-up stuff from synonymous (<i>sic</i>) sources and they've been pursuing nothing for a full year."”
d)Villain: Liberal Media	“Liberal media unrelenting in their bias against President Trump.” Dan Backer, Orlando Sentinel. Sept. 26, 2017.	“At the same time, the liberal media not-so-subtly frames stories to reinforce their “#HateTrump” narrative. Consider two recent Harvey-related headlines. ABC News headlined: “Trump thanks Texas officials for hurricane response, barely addresses victims.” CNN followed suit: “Trump wins praise in Texas, but keeps empathy at bay.” In both cases, there was no need for a qualifier — President Obama wouldn’t have received one. But those few words, in headlines and sprinkled throughout a story, reinforce the negative bias journalists wish to convey.”
e)Villain: Public Broadcasters	“PBS Epitomized Liberal Bias.” Mike Gonzalez, US News & World Report. Oct. 11, 2012.	“Moyers is not alone. Many other journalists at PBS and NPR equally epitomize an aloof liberal elite that has squandered half the nation's trust in the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.”
f)Villain: Mainstream media/ Journalism	Donald J. Trump, (@realDonaldTrump) Oct. 11, 2017; Oct. 12, 2017.	“With all of the Fake News coming out of NBC and the Networks, at what point is it appropriate to challenge their License? Bad for country! ... “Network news has become so partisan, distorted and fake that licenses must be challenged and, if appropriate, revoked. Not fair to public!”
g)Villain: Mainstream media/ Journalism	“Trump’s Plan to Eliminate Public Broadcasting Would Hurt Listeners in Trump Country.” John Nichols, The Nation. March 16, 2017.	“Trump’s attacks on journalism often target national cable networks, newspapers and other commercial media outlets that chronicle and investigate his abuses of office. One of his favorite arguments is that "much of the media in Washington, DC, along with New York, Los Angeles, in particular, speaks not for the people but for the special interests and for those profiting off a very, very obviously broken system".”
h)Villain: media and	“Five Reasons why Trump is right to cut	“NPR is biased in favor of liberals and against conservatives. NPR’s political coverage is

public broadcasters; Victim: conservatives	NPR, PBS.” Joel Pollack, Breitbart. March 19, 2017.	consistently slanted against Republicans and conservatives, and in favor of liberals. The network also takes aim at conservative rivals: last week, for example, it accused Breitbart News, falsely, of producing “fake news.” It also churns out such fare as <i>Code Switch</i> , which often reinforces racial identity. Using taxpayer funds to support one-sided news coverage is an abuse of taxpayer money.”
i)Villain: media Victim: Conservative and their views	“The Conservative War on Liberal Media Has a Long History.” Nicole Hemmer, The Atlantic. Jan. 17, 2014	“Conservatives saw the media landscape differently. They viewed objectivity as a mask concealing entrenched liberal bias, hiding the slanted reporting that dominated American media. Because of this, the right believed fairness did not require a response to conservative broadcasts; conservative broadcasts <i>were</i> the response. Unable to bring the FCC around to their position, conservatives increasingly saw the commission as a powerful government agency dedicated to maintaining media’s liberal tilt.”
j)Victim: conservatives and their views	“‘Alleged’ Tilt at PBS.” Media Research Centre. 2005.	“For Moyers, it is a great night of taxpayer-funded broadcasting when the conservatives get no chance to rebut his personal attacks.”
k)Victim: Taxpayers	“Ending Taxpayer Funding for Public Broadcasting.” David Boaz, Cato Institute. July 11, 2005.	“When government brings us the news – with all the inevitable bias and spin – the government is putting its thumb on the scales of democracy. Journalists should not work for the government. Taxpayers should not be forced to subsidize news and public-affairs programming.”
l)Victim: entrepreneurs/business	“PBS Airs A Hit-Piece On Wal-Mart.” Bruce Bartlett, New York Sun. Nov. 19, 2004.	“...the Public Broadcasting Service ran a scathing attack on Wal-Mart, the world’s largest retailer, on its “Frontline” series. The title of the program was, “Is Wal-Mart Good for America?” Although never stated explicitly, it is clear from the overwhelmingly negative portrayal of the company that the answer clearly is ‘no’.”
m)Victim: entrepreneurs/business	“Blaming Park Ave.: Ch.13’s Rich-Bash.” Ira Stoll, New York Post. Nov. 10, 2012.	“Stephen Schwarzman, who gave \$100 million to the New York Public Library and who built a firm, Blackstone, that directly employs 1,700 people, is described as “the poster child of capitalistic greed in the last 10 years.”... But “Park Avenue” is so over-the-top in its ham-handed oversimplifications, its crude class-warfare and its hard left spin... We’re now at the point where our public-television system and some of our largest charitable foundations are pushing the myth that the cause of poverty is the mere existence of rich people.”

n)Victims: Americans who subscribe to traditional family values	“Defunding Public Broadcasting: Conservative Goal Gains Audience.” Thomas B. Edsall, Washington Post, April 15, 1995	“Robert H. Knight, director of cultural studies at the Family Research Council ... "Much of commercial television is trash, and does undermine respect for sexual morality," Knight said. "But in the case of public TV (and radio) there is an academic gloss to portrayals of homosexuality and nontraditional lifestyles that serves to validate it in a pseudoscientific sense."
o)Heroes: right wing pundits/Fox	“The Conservative War on Liberal Media Has a Long History.” Nicole Hemmer, The Atlantic. Jan. 17, 2014.	“In his new book <i>The Loudest Voice in the Room</i> , Gabriel Sherman portrays Roger Ailes as “the quintessential man behind the curtain,” a great-and- powerful Oz who has remade American politics and journalism. Sherman shows how Ailes transformed the Nixon Administration’s calls for balanced news into the platform of his cable channel, Fox News. Fox News, Sherman argues, used “entertainment techniques to shape a political narrative that was presented as unbiased news,” something that makes Ailes "a unique American auteur".”
p)Heroes: Right-leaning news sources; Trump	“President Trump Is Right: The Media Escape Accountability.” Shaun McCutcheon, Investor’s Business Daily. Oct. 23, 2017.	“The emergence of right-leaning websites like the Daily Caller, Independent Journal Review, and Washington Free Beacon provides Americans with more news sources than ever before. Not only do these new alternatives challenge left-leaning reporting with more factual narratives, but they also hold the long-standing media monopoly accountable to the American people... And until then, President Trump will keep calling out journalists for fake news. He should. That's the sort of real news Americans can count on.”
q)Heroes: Republican leaders cutting public broadcasting funding	“Is PBS Still Necessary?” Charles McGrath, New York Times. Feb. 17, 2008.	“For the eighth straight year the Bush administration has ritually proposed taking a hefty whack out of the federal subsidy for public broadcasting. The cuts would in effect slice in half the money that public television and public radio get from the government.”
r)Heroes: Entrepreneurs and the free- market	“Defunding Public Broadcasting: Conservative Goal Gains Audience.” Thomas B. Edsall, The Washington Post. April 15, 1995.	“"Let them go into the marketplace," countered Kate O'Beirne, vice president for government relations at the Heritage Foundation.”
s)Morals of the Story:	“America’s tradition of media bias: Unlike as in the past, most	“Knowing that, the question is what if anything should be done about it? In very real terms, unless and until the existing imbalance is corrected, the

more right wing voices	journalists now lean left.” Thomas G. Del Beccaro, Washington Times. Oct. 18, 2016.	outcome of the political issues of the day and our elections will continue to tilt in the same way the media is titling now – to the left. The only realistic way to change it, is for the right to become far more prominent in the major media, social media and beyond.”
t)Morals of the Story: balanced coverage	“Left-wing PBS bias? Ask Bill Moyers.” Editorial, Sentinel Enterprise. May 27, 2005.	“Provide balanced programming or stop expecting subsidies from the U.S. taxpayer.”
u)Morals of the Story: balanced coverage	“Public Broadcasting Has Outlived its Mandate.” Howard Husock, The Washington Post. March 3, 2017.	“...the president should use his appointment prerogative for the CPB’s three open board seats to steer public media in a different direction. That will continue to be my mission as a board member – encouraging public media to adapt to a new environment. Public media must demonstrate that it can serve truly diverse audiences in ways the private market can’t. Otherwise, the system’s budget will deserve to be zeroed out.”
v)Morals of the Story: privatize public media	“Ending Taxpayer Funding for Public Broadcasting.” David Boaz, CATO Institute. July 11, 2005.	“We do not need a government news and opinion network. More importantly, we should not require taxpayers to pay for broadcasting that will inevitably reflect a particular perspective on politics and culture. The marketplace of democracy should be a free market, in which the voices of citizens are heard, with no unfair advantage granted by government to one participant.”

Table 13. Villains in the Conservative Narrative: Liberal Hypocrisy & Censorship

Source	Excerpt
a)“Only Racist if White.” Pinterest, Collection by Scott. June 27, 2020.	“Ever notice that the people opposed to profiling, profile all white people as racists.... White People: the only race you can legally discriminate against!”
b)“Partisan divide propelled coronavirus in US.” Daily Targum: Rutgers University. April 16, 2020.	“The first denials came in late January and early February. With an air of moral and intellectual superiority, articles from the Left in the Washington Post and the New York Times minimized the threat posed by the virus... The source for this nonchalance was largely ideological. The Left seemed to be more concerned with political correctness and opposing President Donald J. Trump rather than acknowledging the coming pandemic. Fearful of talking about COVID-19 as an

	external threat, which Conservatives would more likely focus on, they warned instead that the 'real danger' was paranoia and racism, not the virus itself. Banning foreign travel would be considered 'racist' against Asians."
c) "Chris Cuomo's Wife is a Very Privileged Liberal 'Wellness' Snob." WayneDupree.com. April 26, 2020.	"Cristina Cuomo runs a very snooty wellness magazine called Purist. Purist is all about exotic natural products that no average person could ever afford, luxury vacations to places based solely on their 'energy' and 'vibe,' and far-out doctors who charge a fortune just to realign your 'chi.' Cristina Cuomo is an elitist wellness snob with a mansion in the Hamptons where she takes her bleach baths, another sprawling mansion in Aspen where she does her yoga, and a list of vacation spots that 'heal her energy.' She dines at those really trendy Miami vegan joints with one-word names like 'Plant,' and when her family is sick, she calls in the most elite woo-woo docs to realign everyone's ju-ju."
d) "Liberal Snowflakes." Pinterest, collection by Howard Tateishi. 2020.	"Statues are being torn down, movies are being edited or removed, TV shows are being cancelled ... how do you like Communism so far?" ... "Modern Education: Creating People smart enough to repeat what they're told & follow orders, and dumb enough to think this makes them smarter than everyone else."
e) "The Real Winner of Dem Debate: President Trump." Hannity, Fox News Network. June 27, 2019.	"Last night, four of the candidates onstage said that climate change was the biggest threat to our nation, one said Donald Trump. And I assume they all flew in a plane to last night's debate. I highly doubt that they took a Prius from the airport either."
f) "The dangerous double-standard of liberal 'social justice warriors'." Matt Rozsa, The Daily Dot. Dec. 9, 2014.	"Because so many Tumblr users are progressive, Goldenberg has experienced this kind of backlash before, albeit not at this level. 'A lot of people don't like me by virtue of me being a right-wing individual [on Tumblr],' she explained. 'And, increasingly, doxing has become a tool used to try to silence people who dissent.' One commenter cited her conservative views as 'the reason people hate white people,' while another called her a 'racist capitalist pig' and insisted she 'deserves to be punched in the face.' ... Goldenberg may be the most recent

	conservative to experience mass online harassment, but she isn't the only one. Milo Yiannopoulos of Breitbart reported receiving a syringe in the mail, presumably in response to his articles supporting Gamergate.”
g)“Thank you for ‘Condescending’.” Kwame Anthony Appiah. New York Times Magazine. Aug. 28, 2018.	““Democrats are a party of condescension, not hope,” a MarketWatch headline warns. Josh Barro, in Business Insider, says, “They have become smug and condescending toward anyone who does not match the personal lifestyle choices of liberal elites.””
h)“Hollywood, Hypocrisy, and Why Obamacare is About More Than Healthcare.” Joshua Gilder, U.S. News & World Report. April 6, 2012.	“Thus we have Barbara Streisand warning about a "Global Warming Emergency" and hectoring us to "make a difference" by cutting back on the conveniences in our own lives, while her contracts demand that she be supplied with "120 bath-sized towels”.” immediately upon arrival" when on tour. Wouldn't 100 towels be enough? Or there is avid Obama supporter and advocate of higher taxes on the rich, Bruce Springsteen exploiting a tax loophole to avoid paying millions in taxes on his New Jersey estate. Then there are eco-warriors like Sting, George Clooney, Leonardo Del Caprio (<i>sic</i>), Harrison Ford, and Al Gore and their addiction to private jets. The examples, as they say, could fill a book, and have.”
i)“Change they can't believe in If they really want progress, social justice warriors must do the one thing they hate: Listen to the other side.” David Kaufman, New York Post. Nov. 20, 2016.	“Fueled by a mix of intolerance and entitlement, the left has cultivated a culture of closed-mindedness that's left little room for individual thinking and intelligent discourse. Shaming skeptics and silencing critics, they railed against microaggressions and demanded safe spaces.”
j)“Lawyer: stop using censorship to ‘protect’ free speech.” Samantha Harris, Washington Post Blogs. April 27, 2017.	“Under this view, some enlightened group of people, claiming a monopoly on the truth, decide which viewpoints are permissible and which must be shut out because they "invalidate the humanity" of others. ... What about, for example, the lived experiences of genuine dissenters from marginalized groups - people like Ayaan Hirsi Ali, whose arguments about the treatment of women in Islam have been the frequent target of calls for censorship because of their perceived insensitivity to

	Muslims, though Hirsi Ali was herself raised as a Muslim and subjected to female genital mutilation? Would Baer and others like him consider her criticism of Islam's treatment of women to be a legitimate personal narrative, or is it one of those topics that should be off-limits because reckoning with Hirsi Ali's argument might force other Muslims to defend their humanity? Or is it both? And if it is both, how do we decide – and who decides – which aspect should prevail?”
k) “Corporations are cracking down on free speech inside the office – and out.” Fredrik DeBoer, Washington Post. Aug. 11, 2017.	“Progressives who are pleased when businesses discipline workers' illiberal speech have lost this essential thread of leftism, arguing that if the government isn't the one enforcing speech codes, then there are no threats to free speech. This is clearly wrong.”
l) “7 famous comedians who said political correctness is killing comedy.” Luis Gomez, San Diego Union-Tribune. Sep. 22, 2017.	“"Echoing Gottfried, Miller penned an opinion piece for the Independent Journal Review in 2015 that railed against the “Me-Me-Mea Culpa Generation,” as he called it. “The main problem with the present day inquisition squad is that many of our ‘open-minded’ watch guards are among our most close-minded citizens," Miller wrote.”

Table 14. Examples from Non-Conservative Articles

Issue	Source	Excerpt
a) Liberal as direct contrast to conservative	“Partisan divide propelled coronavirus in US.” Daily Targum (New Brunswick, NJ). April 16, 2020.	“While both sides of the partisan divide have accepted the brutal onslaught of COVID-19, the Left and the Right have taken different stances. Liberal media is rightfully focusing on the Trump administration's bungled attempts to handle the pandemic and the rising death toll, while Conservative media is busy shifting blame to China's deceptive attempts to manage COVID-19, as well as focusing on the potential economic depression created in the pandemic's wake.”
b) Parties as opposites: right, left, and centre	“Specter could enrage ‘both ends of the political spectrum’.” The Morning Call, (Allentown, PA). Oct. 17, 2012.	“Specter, the five-term ex-senator who died Sunday, occupied a space in the Senate that no longer fits the current political environment: raging centrist. From the day he was first sworn in – in January 1981 – Specter spent his career finding ways to enrage both ends of the ideological spectrum, throwing his always sharp elbows at liberals one month only to do the same to conservatives the next month.”

c)Opposite positions: equivalence	“White Nationalist Protest Leads to Deadly Violence.” Sheryl Stolberg and Brian Rosenthal, New York Times. Aug. 13, 2017.	“In New Orleans, tempers flared this spring when four Confederate-era monuments were taken down. Hundreds of far-right and liberal protesters squared off, with occasional bouts of violence, under another statue of Robert E. Lee. There were fisticuffs and a lot of shouting, but nothing like the violence seen in Charlottesville.”
d)Liberal as left	“Gauging Degree of City’s Left Turn.” Michael Powell, New York Times. Nov. 7, 2013.	“New York’s veer to the left extends well beyond the mayor’s office. Christine C. Quinn, the departing City Council speaker, lost badly in the Democratic primary for mayor. Her reputation was that of a centrist, all too willing to mediate disputes and align herself with the mayor. Her successor will probably not share those traits: Unabashed liberals with full policy agendas will vie to re-place Ms. Quinn.”
e)Liberal as left	“Academia’s tilt to the left.” New York Times Letter to the Editor. July 10, 2016.	“What, exactly, does liberal physics look like? Left-wing geology? Marxist math?”
f)Liberal as left	“Democrats seek spot in political spectrum.” John Ellis, The Fresno Bee (CA). July 27, 2004.	“Four years ago, the moderate wing of the Democratic Party was in heaven. The party’s presidential ticket of Vice President Al Gore and his running mate, Connecticut Sen. Joseph Lieberman, were ‘New Democrats’ – pro-business, centrist Democrats who fervently believed the party needed to shed its ‘liberal’ label and move to the political center. Now Democrats – and most certainly, Republicans – are questioning whether the party still is trying to stake out the center ground.”
g)Liberal elite	“A budget blueprint Reflecting Resentments Against the Poor.” Eduardo Porter, New York Times. March 8, 2017.	“...struggling workers resent not only the poor beneficiaries of the government’s largess but also the liberal policy makers who seem to believe that only the poor are deserving of help. And they bristle at the perceived condescension of a liberal elite that seems to blame them for their failure to acquire the necessary skills to rise to the professional class.”
h)Questioning Equivalence	“Does nonpartisan journalism have a future?” Justin Buchler, The Daily Cardinal (Madison, WI). Jan. 5, 2017.	“The basic problem is that the norms that have guided the nonpartisan press are built around the assumption that the parties are mirror images of each other. They may disagree on policy, but they abide by the same rules. The nonpartisan press as we know it, then, cannot function when one party systematically stops abiding those norms. The 2016 campaign was an

		example of what happens when the parties are out of balance. Trump simply lied far more than Clinton, but the nonpartisan press was unable to convey that information to the public because even trying to point that out violates the ‘both sides do it’ journalistic norm, thereby signaling bias to a weakly informed but rational audience, which invalidates the criticism.”
i) Nancy Pelosi: Democratic Party, socialism and capitalism	“Sibling Rivalry.” Jeet Heer, The New Republic. Nov. 1, 2017.	“So why, he asked Pelosi, couldn't they move left on economic issues? Could she see Democrats embracing a "more populist message – the way the alt-right has sort of captured this populist strain on the right wing?" After politely thanking Hill for his question, Pelosi was quick to shoot down any talk of left-wing populism. "We're capitalist," she told him firmly, "and that's just the way it is." To be sure, Pelosi acknowledged, there are serious flaws in the system: CEOs are making too much money, and the social safety net has worn thin. But Pelosi assured Hill that Democrats, aided by enlightened capitalists, can solve such problems. The alternative –introducing socialist-oriented policies such as universal health care or free college education for all – is unthinkable. "I don't think we have to change from capitalism," Pelosi concluded. "We're a capitalist system.””
j) Appropriating critical language of the left	“The President Is Winning His War on American Institutions” George Packer, The Atlantic, March 2, 2020.	“Like <i>fake news</i> and <i>corruption</i> , Trump reverse-engineered <i>deep state</i> into a weapon against his enemies, real or perceived.”
k) Media as a check on power, crucial for democracy	“Public Broadcasting Cut Would Be Latest Misstep.” Palm Beach Post (FA). June 22, 2005.	“Republicans who see liberal bias in any news coverage that doesn't glorify their party are trying again.”
l) Media as a check on power, crucial for democracy	“The Distorting Reality of False Balance in the Media.” Katrina vanden Heuvel, Washington Post. July 15, 2014.	“Unfortunately, too much of the media has become increasingly fixated on finding ‘balance’, even if it means presenting fiction on par with fact.”
m) Media and education as	“In Defense of PBS.” Paula	“This access to ideas was at the heart of our founders' vision of democracy: a country founded for the people,

crucial for democracy	Kerger, USA Today. Nov. 5, 2012.	and by the people, where every citizen had the opportunity to be informed, and have a voice in the future of our country. ... Our country will succeed or fail based on our ability to educate and engage the next generation of leaders.”
n)Countering conservative claims to ‘Founding Fathers’	“The Tea Party, Our Founding Fathers, and the Fight Over Government.” Mike Lux, Huffington Post. May 4, 2014.	“In fact, any kind of a closer look at Jefferson’s overall writings and policies, his close alliance with Paine, and Paine’s writings, should put to rest any claim on Jefferson and Paine’s alliance with modern day tea partiers. ... Jefferson proudly distributed Paine’s controversial book The Rights of Man, which argued against elitism and aristocracy and for more democracy for poor and working class people, during his election campaign in 1800. In Paine’s other writings, he argued for a Social Security-style system of publicly funded old age pensions, for a safety net for the poor, for taxing the wealthy much more progressively, and for paying more to working class laborers. As for Jefferson’s policies as President, he invested heavily in roads and bridges, supported increased voting rights for the poor and working class, championed public education, and expanded the federal government’s power in a variety of ways including the Louisiana Purchase.”
o)Roots of corporate power	“Corporations keep claiming ‘We the People’ rights. And they’re winning.” Adam Winkler, Los Angeles Times. March 2, 2018.	“An important turning point came in 1978: In a 5-4 decision, the court held that corporations had the same free speech right as individuals to spend money on ballot-measure campaigns. ... The majority opinion was written by Justice Lewis Powell Jr., who only months before joining the court in 1971 had written an influential memorandum for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce outlining a strategy for the political mobilization of corporate America ... Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission. Holding that corporations have the same free speech right as individuals to spend their money to influence candidate elections, the Supreme Court’s controversial 2010 decision was the logical result of Powell’s 1978 decision.”
p)Polarization	“Partisan polarization, political paralysis.” Brent Larkin, Cleveland	“Proposition 14 is designed to drag public policy and politics back to the center, to empower those independents and moderates who now have little say in the process of governing. No one knows if it will work, but its passage was an unmistakable signal that voters have tired of the polarization that has infected

	Plain Dealer. June 20, 2010.	the political process in Congress and state legislatures across the country.”
q)Partisan Polarization	“Democrats' Best Way Forward.” Jacob T. Levy, New York Times. Dec. 13, 2018	“In Michigan and Wisconsin, lame duck Republican-majority legislatures are enacting laws to limit the powers of incoming Democratic governors. ... Democrats are exploring the possibility of legal challenges to those maneuvers. ... Should they go tit-for-tat and escalate procedural shenanigans, rules-stretching and rules-breaking? ... Retaliating in kind could aggravate already deep polarization and wreck what's left of our political norms. Restraint, on the other hand, would establish new norms that establish electoral disadvantages for Democrats and embolden Republicans.”

Table 15. New Right Themes: Freedom & Security

Source	Excerpt
a)“Mitt Romney Delivers Speech on Freedom at NRA.” Targeted News Service. April 13, 2012.	“My course restores and protects our freedoms. As President, the Constitution would be my guide, and the Declaration of Independence my compass. Today, I want to talk about this administration's assault on our freedoms – our economic freedom, our religious freedom, and our personal freedom.”
b)“From 'Build the Wall' to 'Law and Order'.” Steve Peoples and Zeke Miller, Tampa Bay Times. Sept. 5, 2020.	“But for now, Trump is betting his political future on law and order. The people of Kenosha, he said Tuesday, "want people that are going to keep them safe, where their houses aren't broken into, where they're not raped and murdered." Trump added: "They want law and order.””
c)“More Americans Stand By The NRA As Liberal Elites Try To Foist Their Values On Everyone.” Wayne Lapiere, NRA-ILA Standing Guard. Nov. 22, 2017.	“It is a battle between good and evil, and the NRA and the Second Amendment stand on the side of the good guys ... and most Americans stand with us. Facing 25,000 violent crimes committed per week in this country, and outraged by a catch-and-release criminal justice system that fails to arrest, prosecute and imprison repeat violent offenders, Americans have come to realize the hard truth that government has abdicated its responsibility to protect us. Worse, the anti-Second Amendment elites are working hard to strip away our freedom ... to deny our very right to survive the violence they have failed to prevent.”
d)“Does National Security Mean Anything To Deep-State Leakers Sabotaging Trump?” Douglas MacKinnon,	“Leaving aside the utopian socialist-leaning world many liberals and leakers would like to create – but never for themselves and only for the unwashed masses – the fact of the matter is that we are living in increasingly dangerous times. Unhinged dictators and barbaric terrorists have proved time and again that they are willing to kill millions of innocent people for their own purposes. ... For as these ‘leakers’ attempt to enhance their ideological worldview to the

Investor's Business Daily. Sept. 18, 2017	detriment of our national security, these barbarians continue to plan, infiltrate and advance.”
e)“White Nationalist Protest Leads to Deadly Violence.” Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Brian M. Rosenthal, New York Times. Aug. 13, 2017.	“The planned rally was promoted as "Unite the Right" and both its organizers and critics said they expected it to be one of the largest gathering of white nationalists in recent times, attracting groups like the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis and movement leaders like David Duke and Richard Spencer. ... “We're going to fulfill the promises of Donald Trump" to "take our country back," said Mr. Duke, a former imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. Many of the white nationalist protesters carried campaign signs for Mr. Trump.”
f)“The Right Now Loves Free Speech.” Andrew R. Lewis, New York Times. June 27, 2018.	“Conservative Christians have significantly altered the way in which they engage in many culture war issues. The most current Supreme Court term epitomizes this fundamental shift: More and more often, conservative Christians are pitching arguments built on liberal legal doctrines – especially First Amendment precedents that emphasize broad individual rights. ... Justice Kennedy's rationale situates conservative Christianity in the minority, with the ability to use religious freedom as a defense.”

Table 16. New Right Themes: Right Wing Populism

Source	Excerpt
a)“The Founding Fathers Versus the Tea Party.” Ron Chernow, New York Times; Sept. 23, 2010.	“Many Tea Party candidates and activists have tried to seize the moral high ground by explicitly identifying with the founders. Sharron Angle, who is mounting a spirited run against Harry Reid for a Senate seat from Nevada with Tea Party support, bristled at Mr. Reid’s contention that she is overly conservative. “I’m sure that they probably said that about Thomas Jefferson and George Washington and Benjamin Franklin,” she protested. “And, truly, when you look at the Constitution and our founding fathers and their writings ... you might draw those conclusions: That they were conservative. They were fiscally conservative and socially conservative.””
b)“COVID-19 Protesters Just Like 'Rosa Parks,' Says White House Adviser Stephen Moore.” Mary Papenfuss. The Huffington Post, April 18, 2020.	Stephen Moore: “I call these people modern-day Rosa Parks. They are protesting against injustice and a loss of liberties ... It's interesting to me that the right has become more the Rosa Parks of the world than the left is.”
c)“Breakthrough for the Tea Party as Paladino Routs Lazio Amid Disgust at Albany.” New	“New York Governor Carl Paladino "We are mad as hell... New Yorkers are fed up. Tonight the ruling class knows. They have seen it now. There is a people’s revolution. The people have had enough.””

York Times. Sept. 15, 2010.	
d)“Conservative Spotlight: FreedomWorks.” Christopher A. Guzman, Human Events. March 2010.	“To promote the organization's conservative ideas, the founders created a grass-roots arm. a method modeled after the left's grassroots approach to political change. 'We've always borrowed our tactics after the left. Today I believe our approach is better than what the left has to offer.' said Matt Kibbe, current president and CEO of Freedom Works.”
e)“Chris Christie on Tax Reform.” On the issues.com. 2016.	“Over the course of six years now, I have been governor of New Jersey, and what we have done is stood up for the people in New Jersey who needed to be stood up for.”
f)“How much taxation is enough?” Jonah Goldberg, USA Today. April 6, 2010.	“Congratulations! This is your last week working for the man – at least for this year. The Tax Foundation calculates that Tax Freedom Day for 2010 is April 9.”
g)“Democrats Who Voted For Donald Trump.” Speak Elizabeth Dias, Time. Nov. 2020.	“She wasn’t only voting against Clinton; she was voting for Trump. “I liked that he wasn’t involved in Washington, he wasn’t a politician. I liked that he was shooting from the hip. I felt like he was going to champion the common people even though he’s a billionaire – I get that. But he’s not part of the bureaucracy. He doesn’t owe anyone anything,” she says.”
h)“Clinton: ‘Deplorables’ comment was ‘grossly generalistic’.” The Associated Press. Sept. 10, 2016	“Trump noted that Schlafly rooted for the underdog, and “the idea that so-called little people, or the little person that she loved so much, could beat the system – often times, the rigged system”.”
i)“The Democrats' Deadly Error.” Sarah Jaffe, New York Times. Nov. 9, 2016.	“For white Americans anxiously looking at their disappearing stability, Mr. Trump was a bomb they were willing to throw at a system they felt was failing them. He emotionally echoed their outrage and gave them a place to direct their anger, the age-old right-wing populist trick of refracting it both upward at elites and downward at minorities.”
j)“Giving White Nationalists An Unequivocal Boost.” Glenn Thrush, New York Times. Aug. 16, 2017.	“Since the 1960s, Republican politicians have made muscular appeals to white voters, especially those in the South, on broad cultural grounds. Trump's candidacy excited many white nationalists, who were thrilled to hear Trump mock the Black Lives Matter movement on the campaign trail and declare that "all lives matter". They rallied behind his promises to build a wall on the southern border, reduce the number of foreigners allowed into the country and pressure everyone in the country to speak English and say ‘Merry Christmas’.”
k)“Census officials fear a backlash.” Haya El Nasser, USA Today.	“The outcry over the Census 2000 long form has reached such a pitch ... Reacting to criticism by conservative Republicans in Congress, Prewitt held a news briefing to defend the need for the 53-question forms that go to one in six households. The information is essential to

March 31, 2000.	determine how local services are provided, he said. Some legislators, including Senate Republican leader Trent Lott, urged people this week not to answer questions that they find too intrusive.”
l)“How white supremacy infected Christianity and the Republican Party.” Jennifer Rubin, Washington Post. Aug. 3, 2020.	“It’s important to note that the Republican Party has a decades-long history of deploying, in various degrees, what has been dubbed “the Southern Strategy,” a racist dog-whistle politics that fuels white grievances and exploits racial divisions to win elections. ... Paul Manafort, for example, was also the Southern political coordinator for Ronald Reagan’s 1980 campaign, which symbolically was launched with a speech lauding ‘states’ rights’, the mantra of segregationists ...”
m)“How white supremacy infected Christianity and the Republican Party.” Jennifer Rubin, Washington Post. Aug. 3, 2020.	“Trump waited 48 hours to issue any statement, and when he did, he equivocated, stating there were “very fine people on both sides.” And I was stunned that Trump’s inability to flatly condemn neo-Nazis — who were chanting “Blood and soil!” and “Jews will not replace us” and who murdered a person protesting that hatred — had no discernible impact on his White Christian support. PRRI’s fall American Values Survey, conducted just a few weeks after these remarks, for example, found his favorability among White evangelical Protestants remained remarkably high, at 72 percent.”
n)“Conservative media helps Trump perform ‘law and order’ in Portland.” Isaac Stanley-Becker, Washington Post. July 22, 2020	“Recently, the president has portrayed his opponent as a vessel for rules intended to combat housing discrimination, which Trump asserted would “abolish our beautiful and successful suburbs”.”
o) “Leader Cantor On CNBC: If You Want Jobs And Growth, You Shouldn’t Raise Taxes.” States News Service. Aug. 2, 2012.	“House Majority Leader Eric Cantor: “It comes down to the question, if you want to put a priority on economic recovery, jobs and growth, you ought not to raise taxes. You either want higher taxes or higher growth. That’s the bottom line. ... For me and most of us on the Republican side of the aisle, the priority is jobs. We have to win the war on jobs globally and we have to get people back to work here at home. We saw that Ernst and Young put out a study a couple of weeks ago that said the President’s plan, the one that Steny Hoyer supports, will cost the economy over 700,000 jobs.”

Table 17. Anti-reflexive Tendencies of New Right Discourses

a)“Who Gets to Vote in Florida?” Dexter Filkins, The Atlantic. Aug. 31, 2020.	“Youngblood’s darkest vision was of the coronavirus, which the “socialist-Marxist-B.L.M.-communist Democratic Party” had used to “bring in fear and anxiety in America as never before.” The purpose, he maintained, was to impose forced vaccinations, which Bill Gates and the government would use to implant a chip that allowed them to control citizens. Youngblood said that it was imperative for Christians to vote in November. If they failed to turn out, he said, “we will lose the battle, and we will have a socialist, communist, dictatorship form of government in America”.”
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<p>b)“Pres Donald Trump tweets ‘antifa’ conspiracy theory that originated on anonymous blog.” Ben Collins, Nbcnews.com. June 9, 2020.</p>	<p>““Buffalo protester shoved by Police could be an ANTIFA provocateur. 75-year-old Martin Gugino was pushed away after appearing to scan police communications in order to black out the equipment. @OANN I watched, he fell harder than was pushed. Was aiming scanner. Could be a set up?” the president tweeted. ... False rumors of buses full of antifa members marauding through towns have, however, flooded community groups on Facebook, police tip lines and group text messages throughout the country.”</p>
<p>c)“The Senate Impeachment Trial of Donald Trump.” Ingraham Angle, Fox News Network. Jan. 31, 2020.</p>	<p>“And Trump is the one interfering with the elections? No, Chuck, it's you and Schiff and the entire Democrat gang, who are putting your fingers on the scale for the Democrat establishment. Good luck. But the American people see right through you. And that's the Angle.”</p>
<p>d)“Why conservatives might be more likely to fall for fake news.” Christopher Ingraham, Washington Post Blogs. Dec. 7, 2016.</p>	<p>“This week, a North Carolina man took an AR-15 rifle into DC's Comet Ping Pong pizza restaurant to ‘self-investigate’ a fake internet conspiracy theory involving Hillary Clinton, John Podesta and a child sex ring. It's the latest example of the impact that ‘fake news’ – untrue or wildly misleading stories masquerading as fact, usually to appeal to a particular worldview – is having on the real world.”</p>
<p>e)“The Big Chill at The Lab.” Bob Herbert, New York Times. Nov. 3, 2003.</p>	<p>“The Web site of the Traditional Values Coalition is bizarrely fixated on sexual matters. ... For a right-wing coalition to be hung up on these matters is one thing. But the coalition's list, which includes some of the most respected scientists and institutions in the country, is circulating among members of Congress and was forwarded to the National Institutes of Health, which is responsible for awarding the crucially important grants. "It has a lot of people very nervous," said Dr. Thomas Coates, a professor in the division of infectious diseases at the David Geffen School of Medicine at U.C.L.A. "People who have made a career out of this kind of research – well, when you see your name on a list you wonder what's going to happen to your funding.””</p>
<p>f)“Was the White House office for global pandemics eliminated?” Glenn Kessler and Meg Kelly, Washington Post Blogs. March 20, 2020.</p>	<p>“Asked at a congressional hearing on March 11 whether it was a mistake to eliminate the office, Anthony S. Fauci, who runs the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, diplomatically said: "I wouldn't necessarily characterize it as a mistake. I would say we worked very well with that office. It would be nice if the office was still there." ... One former administration official dismissed the debate over the NSC office as a relic of another type of presidency. "There isn't any organizational chart in the U.S. government that makes any difference in the Trump administration," the official said. "Trump is more likely to say to Jared [Kushner], 'What do you think we should do?' That's the big problem.””</p>

<p>g)“Disaffected Republicans.” New York Times Letters to the Editor. Jan. 19, 2014.</p>	<p>“When I was a student in the late 1950s and early 1960s, many, if not most, of my professors were Republicans. Today, a professor myself, I find that few of my colleagues are Republicans or vote Republican. Conservatives blame this change on the 1960s cultural revolution and decry the "liberal bias" in academia. But the real reason is lack of reason: How can any academician belong to a party in which its leaders deny science (evolution and climate change) and pander to religious extremists who wish to define and control personal morality (abortion and same-sex marriage)? William P. Mitchell West Long Branch”</p>
<p>h)“Goodbye to the Climate.” Robert N. Stavins, New York Times. Nov. 9, 2016.</p>	<p>“Donald J. Trump once tweeted that “the concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing noncompetitive.” Twitter messages may not be clear signs of likely public policies, but Mr. Trump followed up during the campaign with his “America First Energy Plan,” which would rescind all of President Obama’s actions on climate change.”</p>
<p>i)“The mystery of ‘Q’: How an anonymous conspiracy-monger launched a movement (if the person exists).” Marc Fisher, Washington Post. Aug. 1, 2018.</p>	<p>“From somewhere in the vast and mysterious ‘deep state’, a dissident agent rises up to give the people cryptic clues about how their heroic president will push back the forces of evil and make America great again. The renegade informant is known only as ‘Q’, and if such a person actually exists, it’s not in a movie, but somewhere in the Washington bureaucracy.”</p>
<p>j)“Here Come the Death Panels.” Michelle Goldberg, New York Times. March 24, 2020.</p>	<p>“Obamacare didn't lead to rationing. The mismanagement of the coronavirus will. We were told that if America passed Obamacare, it would result in death panels. ... This lie was invented by Sarah Palin in 2009, during the fight for what would become the Affordable Care Act. It was the hysterical version of the common conservative critique that universal health care means government rationing. ... This argument was always specious, but it looks especially absurd in light of the coronavirus tearing through the world. America's inadequate health care system, far from increasing liberty, is poised to make death panels more likely.”</p>
<p>h)“Tracing Trump's Postal Service obsession - from 'loser' to 'scam' to 'rigged election'.” Philip Rucker, Josh Dawsey and Ashley Parker, Washington Post. Aug. 15, 2020.</p>	<p>“Allies coddled Trump by telling him the reason he lost the popular vote to Hillary Clinton in 2016 was widespread mail-in balloting fraud – a conspiracy theory for which there is no evidence – and the president's postal outrage coarsened further. ... Trump has predicted – without supporting evidence – that mail-in balloting could produce "the greatest rigged election in history," as he put it at a Wednesday news conference. Voting rights advocates say the Trump administration's actions with the Postal Service could result in widespread delays and voter disenfranchisement, and jeopardize the nation's ability to administer the election.”</p>

<p>i) "Trump ratchets up 'rigged' complaints." David Jackson and Susan Page, USA Today. Oct. 17, 2016.</p>	<p>"This election absolutely is being rigged by the dishonest and distorted media pushing Crooked Hillary – but also at many polling places – SAD." Trump is arguing that the results are being rigged even before Election Day has been held. ... "This election will determine whether we are a free nation or whether we have only the illusion of democracy, but are in fact controlled by a small handful of global special interests rigging the system, and our system is rigged," he told a rally in West Palm Beach last week."</p>
<p>j) "Clouds' Effect on Climate Change Is Last Bastion for Dissenters." Justin Gillis, New York Times. April 30, 2012.</p>	<p>"Dr. Lindzen published a paper in 2009 offering more support for his case that the earth's sensitivity to greenhouse gases is low ... Last year, he tried offering more evidence for his case, but after reviewers for a prestigious American journal criticized the paper, Dr. Lindzen published it in a little-known Korean journal. Dr. Lindzen blames groupthink among climate scientists for his publication difficulties, saying the majority is determined to suppress any dissenting views." ... When he appears at conferences of the Heartland Institute, the primary American organization pushing climate change skepticism, he is greeted by thunderous applause. While the scientific majority acknowledges that the lingering uncertainty about clouds plays into the hands of skeptics like Dr. Lindzen, they say that he has gone beyond any reasonable reading of the evidence to provide a dangerous alibi for inaction."</p>
<p>k) "Covid-19 Reality Has a Liberal Bias." Paul Krugman, New York Times. May 14, 2020.</p>	<p>"As many people have pointed out, the emerging right-wing strategy for dealing with this pandemic — or, more accurately, not dealing with it — closely follows the Republican Party's longstanding approach to climate change: It's not happening, it's a hoax perpetrated by liberal scientists, and besides, doing anything about it would destroy the economy. Indeed, the antilockdown demonstrations of recent weeks appear to have been organized in part by the same people and groups that have spent decades denying climate change. Virus trutherism is also reminiscent of the various kinds of trutherism that ran rampant during the Obama years. Inflation truthers insisted that the government was hiding the truth about rampant inflation; unemployment truthers, including a guy named Donald Trump, insisted that the steadily improving job numbers were fake."</p>
<p>l) "So who is Right in Debate on Role of Global Warming? Time Will Tell." Andrew C. Revkin, New York Times. Sept. 24, 2005.</p>	<p>"The issue has been addressed from starkly different vantage points. For example, former Vice President Al Gore has conducted a continuing speaking tour on the need to cut heat-trapping pollution, while Senator James M. Inhofe, Republican of Oklahoma, has accused environmental campaigners of fomenting unfounded fears about human-driven warming."</p>
<p>m) "In Ancient Fossils, Seed of New Debate on Warming." William</p>	<p>"At issue is whether the findings back or undermine the prevailing view on global warming. One side foresees a looming crisis of planetary heating; the other, temperature increases that would be more nuisance than catastrophe."</p>

J. Broad, New York Times. Nov. 7, 2006.	
n)“The roots of Tucker Carlson's rage.” Dan Hannan, Washington Examiner. Feb. 22, 2019.	“Carlson, who expects to be the one asking the questions, is at first almost too stunned to speak. When he does recover his voice, it is to rage at the young Dutch leftist: "Why don't you go fuck yourself, you tiny brain. You're a moron. I tried to give you a hearing but you were too fucking annoying."”

Table 18. Rhetorical Strategies: Overton Window

Source	Excerpt
a)“Academia’s Tilt to the Left.” New York Times Letter to the Editor. July 10, 2006.	“I consider the noise about left-leaning academics to be just that. Conservative pundits don’t seek an ideologically balanced higher education; they want a higher education that reflects their conservative views. JOHN A. MAZ”
b)“Priming is potentially perilous when used politically.” Joseph Cramer, M.D. Deseret News. Jan. 17, 2009.	“Psychologists call it priming. It is when football coaches ‘work’ the refs. Running up and down the sidelines yelling, "75 is holding!" until sure enough, 10 plays later that big tackle is called for holding.”
c)“A fair way to shrink the wealth gap.” Dmitri Iglitzin and Steven Hill, Christian Science Monitor. Jan. 24, 2007.	“No doubt Democrats would agree. Oddly, however, in this country that was founded at least in part on the principle of equality for all, economic disparity has become a third rail of American politics. Democrats don't dare touch the issue for fear of being labeled "tax-and-spend" liberals or being blamed for igniting class warfare. America needs to get over these rhetorical rigidities.”
d)“Trump to Meet with Mitt Romney.” Lou Dobbs Tonight, Fox Business Network. Nov. 17, 2016	“And at the same time, the national left-wing media continue – New York Times, Washington Post continue their carping and attacks. It's some of the – I thought they were ignorant during the campaign ... They've risen to a level of ignorance and abhorrence of the basic precepts of journalism that I never imagined they could reach even two weeks ago.”
e)“Limbaugh sees furor over comments cool.” Paul Farhi, Washington Post. March 29, 2012.	“The dark clouds hanging over Rush Limbaugh appear to be lifting. Exactly one month after the conservative radio host sparked outrage by calling Georgetown law school student Sandra Fluke "a slut" and "a prostitute" in a three-day diatribe, stations are standing by him, advertisers are trickling back to his program and the news media have moved on.”
f)“Here Are All the Times Donald Trump Insulted Mexico.” Katie	“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. ... They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re

Reilly, Time Magazine. Aug. 31, 2016.	bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."
g) "When free speech is no longer protected - Senate Democrats plot to dethrone the First Amendment." David A. Keene, Washington Times. June 3, 2014.	"Liberal progressives decided in the wake of recent Supreme Court decisions that the First Amendment free-speech guarantees that their more purely liberal predecessors once championed have become a roadblock on the way to fundamentally changing the United States. ... They begin by suggesting that recent Supreme Court decisions are faulty, particularly those in the 2010 case involving Citizens United, which found that corporations, like individuals, have the right to speak freely. This decision has been denounced and derided by folks such as Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, but it is, in fact, consistent with at least a couple of dozen previous Supreme Court cases. ... it interferes with the progressive desire to deny or limit the free-speech rights of the wealthy people they don't like."
h) "The inevitable spread of 'right to work'." John A. Tatom, St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Aug. 7, 2018.	"The 'right to work' issue is much simpler than its opponents would have us believe. Right to work is about more and better jobs, more job flexibility, productivity and upward mobility, and better take-home wages. Most of all, it is about freedom, the freedom to refuse to pay for union representation and political actions with which one disagrees."

Table 19. Rhetorical Strategies: Conflation

a) "Limbaugh Slams 2012 Debate Moderators as Far Left-Wing Liberal Democrats." Mediaite. Aug. 13, 2012.	"The first presidential debate, taking place October 3rd in Denver, will feature PBS's Jim Lehrer as the moderator. Far, far left-wing liberal Democrat, Limbaugh said of the veteran journalist who has been nicknamed the Dean of Moderators, having hosted eleven debates."
b) "Where is the center of gravity in the Democratic Party?" Dan Balz, Washington Post. Feb. 2, 2019.	"Republicans have been quick to pounce, seeking to paint the Democrats as a party that has moved from center-left to radical-left, asserting that this adds up to socialism-in-the-making that would threaten to bankrupt the country."
c) "Democrats seek spot in political spectrum." John Ellis, The Bee (Fresno, CA). July 27, 2004.	"The party's presidential ticket of Vice President Al Gore and his running mate, Connecticut Sen. Joseph Lieberman, were 'New Democrats' – pro-business, centrist Democrats who fervently believed the party needed to shed its 'liberal' label and move to the political center."
d) "Pence swipes at Democrats for embracing 'far-left	"In remarks at the Heritage Foundation's Honors Gala in Washington, Pence recalled watching the recent Democratic primary debate. "I didn't really want to," Pence said, drawing chuckles from the crowd. "I figure there's a vice presidential nominee in there somewhere. Those

agenda,' impeachment.” Morgan Chalfant, The Hill.com. Dec. 22, 2019.	people were standing so far on the left of that stage I thought it was going to tip over. ””
e)“American Bolsheviks' Marxist Conquest of the Democratic Party.” Trevor Loudon, The New American (John Birch Society). May 20, 2019.	“The Democratic Party is well on the way to a complete socialist transformation — expertly driven by a dedicated Marxist army totally committed to a socialist America... It is a great opportunity for patriots to forcefully point out that the Democratic Party is now the party of Karl Marx and V.I. Lenin. The party is now largely run by people loyal to China, Cuba, and the communist parties of Europe rather than the country that birthed and raised them.”
f)“America's Socialist Government.” J.D. Longstreet, Western Front America. Dec. 5, 2013.	“Today, America has a Socialist/Marxist/Communist President. One half of the Congress, the Senate, is controlled by Socialist/Marxist/Communists. Arguably, the US Supreme Court has already been compromised by the 'New' Left/Liberals/ Socialists/ Communists.”
g)“Specter could enrage 'both ends of the political spectrum'.” The Morning Call, (Allentown, PA). Oct. 17, 2012.	“Specter lost that day to a two-term liberal congressman who would lose in the general election, ending the career of Pennsylvania's longest-serving U.S. senator. Specter's defeat, and now his death 21 months after leaving office, signaled the demise of the tough-minded centrist of either party, willing to tell party leadership to take a hike.”
h)“Academia’s tilt to the left.” New York Times Letter to the editor. July 10, 2016.	“That is the purpose of a liberal arts education. Not to make students politically liberal but to help students think freely and well for themselves, seeing through the dogmatism of others. ... ‘Liberal’ by whose definition?”
i)“If Democrats don't rebrand themselves, they'll be stuck with Trump's ‘socialists' label in 2020.” Jon Healey, Miami Herald. March 8, 2019.	“Trump wants his opponents to be seen as extreme, even un-American. The ‘socialist’ tag conveys the message that these people are not just unlike us, they're a threat to our values. Trump has been assisted on this front by risible proposals like the Green New Deal resolution introduced by Ocasio-Cortez and Sen. Edward Markey, which reads more like a liberal wish list than a piece of legislation. ... Note how a recurring theme for Trump since the election is that the Democratic Party has been taken over by ‘radical’ elements on the left.”

Table 20. Ego Defensive Tendencies: Identity Protection/System Justification

a)“Donald Trump’s racial ignorance.” New York Times. Dec. 18, 2016.	“Identity has always been at the heart of American culture. We must confront a truth that we have assiduously avoided: The most protected, cherished and nurtured identity of all has been white identity. After all, the needs of the black and brown working classes, which are not exclusively urban, are again, even in progressive quarters, all but forgotten.”
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<p>b)“Why conservatives might be more likely to fall for fake news.” Washington Post Blogs. Dec. 7, 2016.</p>	<p>“In other words, in Pfattheicher's reading, conservatives may be perfectly able to do the kind of critical thinking and cognitive exploration that would lead them to be more skeptical of nonsense and fake news – they just choose not to, preferring instead to seek out information that allows them to make quick decisions that reinforce their existing views.”</p>
<p>c)“Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton Says Slavery Was A Necessary Evil, Cites Founding Fathers.”Forbes.com, Nicholas Reimann. July 26, 2020 .</p>	<p>“A spokesman for his office told Forbes that Cotton was citing the Founding Fathers and doesn’t personally believe that slavery was a necessary evil. Cotton is strongly opposed to curriculum based on the 1619 Project, which largely focuses on American history based around slavery, and his bill, called the Saving American History Act of 2020, could cut federal funding from school districts that adopt the curriculum.”</p>
<p>d)“Liberals Hate you, and they’re not keen on America either.” Unitedliberty.org. Nov. 19, 2015.</p>	<p>“Despite the lies of the Black Lives Matter racists, Blacks in this country today are better off in America than in any other country on Earth. 'Puter doesn't want to hear idiotic claims about how Black on Black slaughter is caused by poverty or America's 'inherent racism'. 'Puter wants the Black community to take a little darned responsibility for its own plight instead of going full Obama and blaming anyone and everyone else for its self-inflicted damage.”</p>
<p>e)“Liberals Hate you, and they’re not keen on America either.” Unitedliberty.org. Nov. 19, 2015.</p>	<p>“America is the greatest country in the world despite the concerted efforts of the drug-addled, STD- afflicted, reality denying Boomers and their doppelganger, the coddled Precious Snowflake Millennials to ruin it. 'Puter's sick of liberals bashing America. 'Puter's even sicker of liberals' harebrained, big government schemes making life in America worse.”</p>

Table 21: Erosion of Democracy

<p>a)“Autocrats Across Globe Echo Trump’s ‘Fake News’ Swipes.” Steven Erlanger, New York Times. Dec. 13, 2017.</p>	<p>“The fake-news narrative also complicates the work of democracy advocates in countries where democracy is already under assault. Kenneth Roth, the executive director of Human Rights Watch, said that “the sad irony is that Trump’s greatest harm to human rights may not be his infatuation with abusive strongmen but his undermining of the fact-based discourse that is essential for reining them in”.”</p>
<p>b)“You elected them to write new laws. They’re letting corporations do it instead.” Rob O’Dell and Nick Penzenstadler, USA Today. April 3, 2019.</p>	<p>“Each year, state lawmakers across the U.S. introduce thousands of bills dreamed up and written by corporations, industry groups and think tanks. Disguised as the work of lawmakers, these so-called “model” bills get copied in one state Capitol after another, quietly advancing the agenda of the people who write them. Models are drafted with deceptive titles and descriptions to disguise their true intent. The Asbestos Transparency Act didn’t help people exposed to asbestos. It was written by corporations who wanted to make it harder for victims to recoup money. The “HOPE Act,” introduced in nine states, was written by a conservative advocacy group to make it more</p>

	difficult for people to get food stamps. ... Bills copied from model legislation have been used to override the will of local voters and their elected leaders.”
c)“Republican politicians discuss market-based solutions for climate change.” The Daily Orange. Sept. 23, 2017.	“Perkins' proposal for moderate cooperation was a key focus point of the evening, as former Congressman Hanna was quick to point out the negative effects of gerrymandering, which he claimed is 'messing up our democracy.' He credited this as the reason for the difficulty of Republicans to support climate change, saying that it pressured politicians on both sides of the aisle to stay within their party's lines.”
d)“The Dangerous Ideas of Bill Barr.” Adam Serwer, The Atlantic. May 2, 2019.	“Barr not only defended his decision to clear the president of obstruction despite the fact that the public watched the president fire the FBI director over the Russia investigation, dangle pardons before suspects, and intimidate witnesses, but insisted that the president could not have obstructed justice simply by shutting down the investigation, because “the president does not have to sit there constitutionally and allow it to run its course. The president could terminate the proceeding and it would not be a corrupt intent because he was being falsely accused.” The logic here is breathtaking: The president can end an investigation on the basis that he is “falsely accused.” The entire point of an investigation is to determine culpability; if the president can end an investigation into himself or any of his allies simply by asserting his own innocence, then he is effectively above the law. Under this standard, President Richard Nixon was perfectly within his rights when he attempted to end the investigation into the break-in of Democratic headquarters at the Watergate, which implicated several of his campaign operatives and ultimately led to his resignation. ... it is an ideological strain that has run through nearly every Republican administration since Nixon. Barr’s involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal helps illuminate his conduct today.”
e)“A fair way to shrink the wealth gap.” Dmitri Iglitzin and Steven Hill, Christian Science Monitor. Jan. 24, 2007.	“Currently the top 10 percent of income earners in the US own 70 percent of the wealth, and the wealthiest 5 percent own more than the bottom 95 percent, according to a Federal Reserve Study. The ratio of average CEO pay to worker pay in the US shot up from a mere 301-to-1 in 2003 to 431-to-1 in 2004. ... We used to call this by another name: the Gilded Age. ... Alan Greenspan, has said that disparate income distribution is "not helpful for a democratic society".”
f)“Gates, receiving Liberty Medal in Philadelphia, criticizes.” Tom Infield, Philadelphia Inquirer. Sept. 23, 2011.	“Gates ... criticizes political gridlock... to excoriate an American political system that he said had become dysfunctional and paralyzed. "We have lost the ability to execute even the basic functions of government, much less the most difficult and divisive problems facing this country"...”

Table 22. Summary of the Positions in the ‘Ideological Divide’ & Their Prime Associations

Conservatism	Liberalism
Prone to intolerance; reluctant to change; accepting of inequality	Prone to tolerance; accepting of change; desire to address inequality
Little confusion in defining, despite different segments; endogenously embraced	Defined broadly by opponents: as anything non-conservative (‘infidels’)
Liberty, traditional values, market economy.	Equality, social justice, democracy.
Religion as fundamental.	Freedom of religion, but separation of church and state.
More concerned with ensuring the widest dissemination of their opinions and beliefs without necessarily wanting to evaluate contrary evidence nor the merit or popularity of their views.	Generally interested in creating a forum where ideas can be debated in an open-minded process. Can be intolerant of intolerance, hate speech, and ‘reverse racism’.
Arguments appear to be based on a more ideologically rigid, consistent moral conviction, with a reluctance for compromise or admission of past mistakes – not dissimilar to a faith-based fundamentalism.	Arguments tend to be based on the rational assessment of facts and context, scientific and democratic consensus, along with a willingness to compromise, reckon with past mistakes, and recalibrate based on results (i.e. open to the possibility of being wrong as in science).
Assumes a western-centric perspective, dismissive of other perspectives.	Assumes a western-centric perspective, though at least nominally tolerant of other views, provides tools for reflexive modernity, accepting of possibility of being wrong.
Simple, direct, consistent argumentation style. Comfortable with contradiction, often unburdened by facts.	More verbose, complex argumentation and circumlocution. Comfortable with deliberation, equivocation; open to uncertainty and recalibration.
Disinformation campaigns (‘birthers’, Antifa, hydroxychloroquine, Project Veritas) that prime emotions and trigger affect.	Seen as prone to lecturing, and being didactic and often condescending to rural, working class, and/or the uneducated.
Procedural democracy, by technocrats; guide/protect the market; individual interests.	Substantive democracy: representative and participatory; collective public good.
Prone to censor information that contradicts positions, or frames the military, police, or religion (Christianity) in a bad light.	Prone to censor information that reinforces stereotypes and historical injustices; often overly sensitive due to the latter.

Table 23. Elements in the New Right Strategy of Reverse Accusations

Issue/Term	Narrative Framing
Special Interests	Framed as: collective efforts by unworthy (whether minority or majority) groups (‘countervailing powers’) to use the state to pursue their advancement. Rather than: the vast network of wealthy and powerful individuals and groups using their

	superior resources to influence the political and legal system to further their advantages.
Fake News	Framed as: anything that contradicts conservative positions or policies; Rather than: false information or beliefs circulating online.
Deep State	Framed as: government functionaries conspiring to undermine the Republican/Trump administration (with extremist versions including involvement in a satanic pedophile ring). Rather than: the confluence of private industries and the security (military, police, prison system, border security) infrastructure that results in consistently depleting public funds from thinning government budgets.
Censorship/Political Correctness/freedom of speech	Framed as: corporations, Christians, and other right wing groups (including NRA suing San Francisco for slander); evoking their freedom of speech rights. Rather than: suppressing the opposite perspectives.
Democrats as Extremists	Framed as: the Democrats becoming increasingly extreme, and therefore labelled as socialists. Rather than: the Republicans being taken over by dogmatists who are reluctant to compromise or co-operate in democratic governance.
Government: Freedom & Coercion	Framed as: 'liberals' and Democrats representing government coercion (even when expressions of majority popular will). Threat to freedom and slippery slope to tyranny. Rather than: the right's penchant for being authoritarian and in alignment with security forces to suppress dissent (from progressive movements at least).
Balance/Views Ignored	Framed as: conservative views being ignored. Rather than: conservative views having substantial outlets, including dominating talk radio, appearing regularly in mainstream media, having a major TV network (Fox) as an ardent partisan advocate; and the hegemony of neoliberalism as a rarely questioned economic policy.

<p>'Liberal' Mainstream Media</p>	<p>Framed as: the mainstream media being biased in favor of liberal or left-wing views. Rather than: the mainstream media being uncritical of capitalism and being run and funded by corporate interests, with issues like military interventions often going unquestioned.</p>
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Appendix B: Articles used in Primary Data Set: Conservative Media Texts

Search Menu Procedures from the University of Victoria library search page:

1-Advanced Search - Content Type-Magazine & Newspaper Articles & search terms - exclude from search: (Book Reviews & Dissertations)

2-Search Options – Databases - NexisUni - Advanced Search-Date Range: After 2000 - Narrow by: Location: United States

3-Search Options – Databases - Newspapers - Pro Quest Historical Newspaper: New York Times - Advanced Search – in: Anywhere - Specific Date Range (January 2000- July 2020)- Document Type: (Article, Editorial, Letter to editor)

4-Search Options - Databases – Newspapers - Pro Quest Historical Newspaper: Washington Post - Advanced Search - in: Anywhere - Specific Date Range (January 2000 - July 2020) - Document Type: (Article, Editorial, Letter to editor)

5. Google - open search

Date Found	Search Engine	Search term	Article Found	Source	Date published	Position (Opinion/ News)
April, 27 1)	1	"liberal" OR "liberal media" AND "Trump"	Trump's message to liberal media: you're fired!	Accuracy In Media	Nov. 9, 2016	O
2)			Trump is right about the liberal media	Kansas City Star	Nov. 26, 2018	O
3)			The liberal media don't know how good they have it with Trump	Kansas City Star	Nov. 27, 2018	O
4)			Liberal media rails against trump's first 100 days as president	Accuracy In Media	April 28, 2017	O
5)			'This is why voters elected Trump'	USA Today	Dec. 2, 2016	O

6)	2	“liberal media” AND “Trump”	Donald Trump, Jill Abramson, The VA, and The Liberal Media Narrative	Media Research Center Newsbusters	May 26, 2014	O
7)			Trump ushers in an optimistic era	USA Today	April 28, 2017	O
8)			Hydroxychloroquine: A New Low for the Liberal Media	iOTWreport.com	April 17, 2020	O
9)			The Senate Impeachment Trial of Donald Trump	Fox News Network-Ingraham Angle	Jan. 31, 2020	O
10)			The Liberal Media's Latest Corona Attack on Trump	Media Research Center Newsbusters	April 25, 2020	O
11)			Liberal Media Bias... Trump Slams Fake News (23 pages)	Fox Business Network, from: Intelligence Report	May 18, 2018	O
12)			Ted Cruz Calls Out Liberal Media for Trump Bias on 'Meet the Press'	Media Research Center Newsbusters	May 1, 2016	O
13)			Trump SLAMS Liberal Media for Purposely 'Creating Fear,' 'Panic'; 'So Bad for' America	Media Research Center Newsbusters	April 4, 2020	O
14)			Trump Touts Importance of Social Media in Face of Biased Liberal Media	Media Research Center Newsbusters	Jan 8, 2020	O
April, 28 15)	2	“liberal elites”	This Celebrity Is Angered And Rips Trump: 'Hollywood Liberal Elites Are Not the Enemy'	Right Wing News	June 23, 2017	O

16)			Chris Cuomo's Wife is a Very Privileged Liberal 'Wellness' Snob	Waynedupree.com	April 26, 2020	O
17)			Liberal Elites Blame Donald Trump for Coronavirus	Trish Regan PrimeTime, Fox Business Network	March 6, 2020	O
18)			Note to you liberal weenies	Los Angeles Times	May 15, 2005	O
19)	5	“liberal” AND “left wing”	Facebook Set to Use Left-wing Snopes, PolitiFact, and FactCheck.Org to Quash Conservative News Sites	Publius’ Forum	Dec. 20, 2016	O
20)			Limbaugh Slams 2012 Debate Moderators As Far Left-Wing Liberal Democrats	Mediaite	Aug. 13, 2012	O
21)			Liberals were at their worst after tragedy	Star Tribune, Minneapolis	Jan. 16, 2011	O
22)		“liberal” AND “left wing” (2000 - 20005)	The Mendacity of the Liberal Press	New York Sun	Dec. 15, 2006	O
23)	4		...And a veer to the left	Washington Post	May 25, 2001	O
24)			Liberal bias is Real	Washington Post	Jan. 22, 2002	O
25)	5	“Pence” AND “Democrats” AND “Far Left”	Pence: Democrats have gone so far left the debate 'stage is probably about to turn over'	Washington Examiner	Sept. 12, 2019	O
26)			Pence swipes at Democrats for	The hill.com	Oct. 22, 2019	O

			embracing 'far-left agenda,' impeachment			
27)	1	“Pence” AND “Democrats” AND “Far Left”	Vice President Mike Pence Slams Michigan Dem Gov Candidate Gretchen Whitmer's Far-Left Record	Targeted News service	Aug. 10, 2018	O
28)		“Liberal” AND “political spectrum” AND “far left” AND “Democrats”	Left flaps its wing at Pelosi, Obama - Conference attendees complain Democrats not liberal enough	Washington Times	June 9, 2010	O
29)	2		Around the Airwaves Is Talk Radio Dominated by Conservatives?	Fox News Network FOX Hannity & Colmes	April 27, 2001	O
30)			Liberal Ideology vs Conservative Ideology - Where do your actual values really fall, you might be surprised! (<i>sic</i>)	Newsninja2012.com	Oct. 21, 2013	O
31)		“Hannity” AND “Trump” AND “Liberal”	Real Winner of Dem Debate: President Trump	Fox News Network Hannity	June 27, 2019	O
32)	1	“liberal” AND “deep state”	The 'deep state' is real. The 'alt right' is fake	Washington Post	Feb. 22, 2017	O

33)		“liberal” AND “deep state” AND “Trump”	Does National Security Mean Anything to Deep-State Leakers Sabotaging Trump?	Investors Business	July 18, 2017	O
34)			New York Times Columnist Admits Deep State Exists...To Protect Us From Trump	Newsbusters.org	Oct. 7, 2019	O
35)	5	“liberal” AND “deep state” AND “Breitbart”	Virgil: When the Deep State Was So Deep that It Reached to Russia	Breitbart.com	Nov. 17, 2019	O
April, 30 36)	1	“Liberal” AND “Big Government ”	Obama Pushes Liberal, Big- Government Vision	Human Events	March 3, 2008	O
37)			Liberal Washington Democrats continue to push big government health care takeover	States News Service	Sept. 23, 2009	O
38)			In line with big government- League of women voters pushes liberal agenda	Washington Times	Aug. 28, 2003	O
June 10 39)	2	“Class warfare”	Wealthy Democrats stir class warfare	Chicago Daily Herald	Sept. 10, 2014	O
40)			Class warfare kills American Dream; Top earners help expand the middle class, not shrink it	Charleston Gazette- Mail (WV)	Aug. 20, 2015	O

41)			Preserve the American way	Pittsburgh Tribune Review	March 28, 2014	O
42)			Trump & GOP: The earthquake and the aftermath	Lowell Sun (MA)	May 7, 2016	O
May 1 43)	2	“Covid” OR “corona” AND “Quarantine Protest” OR “Lockdown Backlash” OR “Operation Gridlock” (Feb -May 2020)	Operation Gridlock jams Lansing	The Center Square: Michigan	April 15, 2020	O
44)	5		Limbaugh: Coronavirus Lockdown Isn't Sustainable, "We Cannot Go On Like This For Months	Realclearpolitics.com	April 1, 2020	O
45)		“Glenn Beck on lockdown”	Coronavirus Anti Lockdown Protests: Stop threatening, telling Americans How to Live during pandemic	Glenn beck.com	April 20, 2020	O
46)		Trump tweets on lockdown protest	Liberate Michigan	Twitter: DonaldJ.Trump@realDonaldTrump	April 2020	O
47)		Michigan freedom fund	Politics over Public Health	Michigan freedom fund.com	April 24, 2020	O
48)	1	Freedom works	Conservative Spotlight: Freedom Works	Human Events	March 2010	O
49)	5		It's Time to Sideline the FDA	Freedom Works.org	May 1, 2020	O

50)			FreedomWorks Launches “Socialist Scale 2020” to Rank Democratic Presidential Candidates on Support for Big Government	Freedom Works.org	Nov. 19, 2020	O
51)		Freedom ? Works” AND “Class Warfare”	How Hillary Clinton Plays the Class Warfare Card	Freedom Works.org	Oct. 02, 2016	O
52)		American Enterprise Institute mission statement	AEI’s organization and purposes	American Enterprise Institute www.aei.org/about/	Feb. 12, 2009	O
53)		Cato institute	Cato’s mission	Cato.org	N/A	O
54)			The roots of Tucker Carlson's rage	Washington Examiner	Feb. 22, 2019	O
55)		Heritage Foundation	Heritage Mission statement	Heritage.org	N/A	O
56)		Heritage Foundation AND “Climate change”	The state of climate science: no justification for extreme policies	Heritage.org	April 22, 2016	O
57)		“Climate change debate” (2000-2010)	Jury is Still Out on Global Warming	News & Record (Greensboro, NC)	June 18, 2001	O
58)		Hoover Institute	Mission/history	Hoover.org	N/A	O
June 8 59)	1	Free enterprise AND culture war AND big government (2005-2010)	America's new culture war: Free enterprise vs. government control	Washington Post	May 23, 2010	O
June 13 60)	2	“liberal tyranny” AND	Biden flip-flops on senate	Fox News Network Ingraham Angle	Dec. 30, 2019	O

		“Trump” newspapers, united states	impeachment subpoena			
61)			RINO heart attacks and slit wrists over Ted Cruz	State Capital Newsfeed, American Clarion.com	Dec. 8, 2015	O
62)			The virtue signaling left thinks US is a horrible place that everyone should be allowed to immigrate to	Prairie Pundit	June 15, 2018	O
June 13 63)	5	“Milo Yiannopoulos” AND “Breitbart”	‘Cuckservative’ Is a Gloriously Effective Insult That Should Not Be Slurred, Demonised, or Ridiculed	Breitbart.com	July 28, 2015	O
64)	1	“Liberal Tyranny”	Marketplace Of Ideas Would Free Universities From Liberal Tyranny	Investor's Business Daily	Nov. 2, 2004	O
65)	1	“Trump” AND “Floyd”	Read Trump's exact response when he was asked what people protesting George Floyd's death want	BusinessInsider.com	June 12, 2020	O
June 20 66)	5	“Brees original comments on anti-kneeling”	Trump says Drew Brees shouldn't have retracted statement on kneeling in protest	Thehill.com	June 5, 2020	O
67)		“support for Brees comments on anti-kneeling”	Drew Brees finds support amid backlash over stance on kneeling during national anthem	FoxNews.com	June 3, 2020	N

June 8 68)	5	“Conservative” AND “Tea party”	Advice from an old conservative for the tea party	Washington Post	May 2, 2010	O
June 27 69)	5	‘confederate flag’ and ‘white lives matter’ and ‘liberal’	It’s only racist if it’s white	Pinterest	June 15, 2020	O
70)	5	‘confederate flag’ AND ‘white lives matter’ AND ‘liberal hypocrisy’	Black Lives Matter protests are blatant hypocrisy	Fresno Bee	N/A	O
71)		"Defund antifa" AND "project veritas"	Criminals are Now Destroying our Country	Dr Rich Swier.com	June 27, 2020	O
72)	5	‘Trump’ AND ‘lamestream media’	Donald J Trump @realDonaldTrump	Twitter	May 31, 2020	O
73)	1		Held Hostage by the U.S. Government and the Lame Stream Media	American Clarion	Oct. 17, 2016	O
June 28 74)	5	“Take a Knee” AND “Military” AND “disrespecting flag”	Cruz Delivers Knockout Blow to Opponent Who Said Nothing Is ‘More American’ Than Anthem Kneeling	Conservativefighters.org	Aug. 26, 2018	O
75)	1	“mask” AND “political statement” AND “trump”	If you want a mask at a Trump rally, just go ahead and become a Democrat, you weenie	Miami Herald	June 12, 2020	O
76)	5	"mask" AND "liberal"	Mass protests ‘ripped the mask off’ liberal media’s	Fox News.com	June 1, 2020	O

		AND "covid"	politicized coronavirus coverage, critics say			
July 4 77)	5	"snowflake" AND "liberal" AND "big government"	Liberal Snowflakes	Pinterest.com	2020	O
78)	2		'Puter Rants: Liberals Hate you, and they're not keen on America either	Unitedliberty.org	Nov. 19, 2015	O
79)			President Trump versus the Resistance	Fox News Network FOX Hannity	July 3, 2017	O
80)			Minnesota GOP: Washington Walz Sides with Liberal Special Interests	Targeted news service	June 20, 2008	O
81)			Hatch hammers 'tax-and-spend' White House	The Salt Lake Tribune	June 1, 2010	O
82)		"liberal" AND "censorship" AND "free speech"	Abandoned? The Liberal Flight from the First Amendment	Concurring Opinions	May 9, 2018	O
83)			The free speech tyranny of the snowflake	Newstex blogs	April 25, 2017	O
84)			Lawyer: stop using censorship to 'protect' free speech	Washington Post blogs	April 27, 2017	O
85)		"free speech" OR "freedom of speech" OR "first amendment" AND "corporation s"	A scythe against free speech	Washington Post	May 05, 2012	O

86)			Group challenges Paradise Valley college's free speech policy	The Arizona Capitol Times	Jan. 7, 2016	O
87)			When free speech is no longer protected - Senate Democrats plot to dethrone the First Amendment.	Washington Times	June 3, 2014	O
88)			Worrywarts Target Free Speech	Wisconsin State Journal (Madison, WI)	Jan. 14, 2014	O
89)	1	"social justice warrior" AND "liberal"	If they really want progress, social justice warriors must do the one thing they hate: Listen to the other side	New York Post	Nov. 21, 2016	O
90)	2		The dangerous double-standard of liberal 'social justice warriors'	The Daily Dot	Dec. 9, 2014	O
91)	3	"Liberal" AND "Big Government"	When Obamatons Respond	New York Times	March 6, 2009	O
92)			Small isn't beautiful	New York Times	Dec 8, 2008	O
93)	2		Cover Oregon Scandal Illustrates the Arrogance and Audacity of Failed Big Government	Human Events	July 30, 2015	O
94)			Liberal Confusion On Evolution And Creation	Conservative Daily News	Dec. 11, 2015	O
95)			The era of big government	Washington Times	Jan. 22, 2013	O
96)	1	"liberal" AND	How much taxation is enough?; 'Tea	USA Today	April 6, 2010	O

		“taxes” OR “taxation”	Partiers' understand the link between taxes and freedom. Somehow, liberals just don't get it.			
97)			Liberals' wealth tax would ripple through US economy, GOP economist says	Washington Post	Jan. 10, 2020	O
98)	2		Liberal senator Bill Nelson endorses Alvin Brown and is record of tax hikes	States News Service	April 1, 2015	O
99)			Time to repeal federal death taxes: the nightmare of the American dream	The Heritage Foundation	April 4, 2001	O
100)	3		Abolish all taxes	New York Times	April 15, 2008	O
101)	5	“liberal” AND “taxes” OR “taxation” AND “Breitbart”	Producer: Hollywood is Liberal Because Stars Don't See How Much They Pay in Taxes	Breitbart.com	Mar 29, 2015	O
102)		“liberal” AND “taxes” OR “taxation” AND “Tea Party”	Online efforts boost Tax Day 'tea parties'	Washington Times	April 16, 2009	O
103)		“Common Sense” AND “Conservative”	A common-sense conservative	Idaho State Journal	May 30, 2012	O

104)			Common sense Courtesy of Ben Carson, offering a best-selling, compelling, conservative vision for America	New York Post	June 15, 2014	O
105)	2	“common sense” AND “economic policy”	Common Sense Environmental Policy	States News Service	July 3, 2012	O
106)			Chris Christie’s Economic Agenda Is Just Common Sense How can a plain pro-growth recipe be controversial?	Schirach Report	May 13, 2015	O
107)			Catharsis, Then Common Sense	RealClear Politics.com	Sept. 26, 2008	O
108)		“Jobs and growth”	Day One Of Newt's Jobs And Growth Bus Tour	States News Service	Dec.28, 2011	O
109)			Job Creators Caucus Applauds GOP's Jobs And Growth	States News Service	May 26, 2011	O
110)			Leader Cantor On CNBC: If You Want Jobs And Growth, You Shouldn't Raise Taxes	States News Service	Aug. 2, 2012	O
111)	5	"Rush Limbaugh" on liberals	It’s a Myth That Liberals Care About People	Rush Limbaugh.com	Apr 5, 2018	O
112)			Yes! Liberalism Must Be Defeated	News.iheart.com	May 7, 2018	O
113)			Harvard’s ‘Fake News’ Folly	New York Post	March 15, 2017	O

Aug. 11 114)	2	“socialist” OR “Marxist” OR “communist” ” AND “Democratic Party”	American Bolsheviks' Marxist Conquest of the Democratic Party	The New American (The John Birch Society)	May 20, 2019	O
115)			America's Socialist Government	Western Front America	Dec. 5, 2013	O
116)			Chuck Schumer lously Mea Culpa after inciting violence	Trish Regan Primetime	March 5, 2020	O
117)			Obama's socialist climate czar	glennbeck.com	Jan. 12, 2009	O
118)			Maryland's Nanny State Targets Foam Cups and Containers	Competitive Enterprise institute	March 19, 2019	O
119)			Congress Should Rein in Free Speech Violations with Budget Cuts	Competitive Enterprise Institute	March 3, 2017	O
120)			You Don't Have to Be a Climate Skeptic to Oppose a Carbon Tax	Competitive Enterprise Institute	March 4, 2003	O
121)			TSA Praises Itself After Year of Security Lapses; Obama Administration Backs TSA Unionization at Public Expense	Competitive Enterprise institute	Dec. 31, 2009	O
122)			Post-'Janus', Unions Continue Undermining Public Workers' First Amendment Rights	Competitive Enterprise Institute	June 24, 2019	O

123)			Why George Washington Shouldn't Be Canceled	Competitive Enterprise institute	June 26, 2020,	O
124)			George Washington's Fight (and Ours) against Regulation without Representation	Competitive Enterprise institute	June 29, 2020	O
125)			The Indoctrination of the American Youth by the Public School System	Conservative Daily News	Jan. 20, 2019	O
126)		"Unions" AND "right to work"	The inevitable spread of 'right to work'	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	Aug. 7, 2018	O
Aug. 12 127)	5	"get government off our backs" AND "tax relief"	Republicans' Rhetoric: Practice What's Preached	theledger.com	Dec. 7, 2014	O
128)		"get government off our backs" AND "tax relief"	Chris Christie on Tax Reform	ontheissues.org	2016	O
129)	2	"Tax and spend Democrats" AND "liberal"	Disaffected Republicans	New York Times	Jan. 19, 2014	O
130)			Trump to Meet With Mitt Romney; Sanctuary Cities Clash With Trump; Draining the Swamp; Obama Meets with Merkel in Germany; Left Wing Media Bias	Lou Dobbs Tonight, Fox Business Network	Nov. 17, 2016	O

131)			Spinning the Defeat of Nonpartisan Elections	New York Sun	Nov. 7, 2003	O
132)		“Statue” AND “founding fathers” AND “liberals”	White House aide Peter Navarro said the 'Lord and Founding Fathers created executive orders' so Trump can push orders over 'partisan bickering'	The Business Insider	Aug. 9, 2020	O
133)			The Founding Fathers: Were they heroes or villains?	Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City, UT)	July 5, 2020	O
134)			Not Our founding fathers' America!	Blogspot.com delivered by Newstex	July 27, 2020	O
135)			Trump says 'learn from history' instead of removing statues	Associated Press International	June 23, 2020	N
136)			Washington D.C. Calls For Review Of Names Of Statues Possibly Related To U.S. History Of Slavery And Racism	Fox Special Report With Bret Baier Fox News Network	Sept. 2, 2020	O
137)			Putting Faith in the Founding Fathers	Washington Times	March 4, 2003	O
138)			Founding Fathers Resurrected in New Book; 'Founding Fathers – Uncommon Heroes' Brings History to Life, Builds Appreciation for Men Who Shaped United States	Business Wire	June 20, 2003,	O

139)			Yes for Trump, no for Democrats	The Pantagraph (Bloomington, IL)	Oct. 31, 2020	O
140)			Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton Says Slavery Was A Necessary Evil, Cites Founding Fathers	Forbes.com	July 26, 2020	O
141)	5	“Limbaugh and Reagan”	The era of Limbaugh	American Enterprise Institute	Feb. 7, 2020	O
142)		“Reagan” AND “Limbaugh” AND “Ronaldus Magnus”	Bush's Reagan moment	Pittsburgh Tribune Review	Aug. 17, 2006	O
143)	2	“Special interests” AND "Liberal" AND "Limbaugh”	Media Matters Launches New Ad Campaign Slamming Rush Limbaugh	Business Insider	March 22, 2012,	O
144)			The NRA Can't Even Compete with Democrat Special Interest Money	rush-limbaugh; news.iheart.com	March 1, 2018	O
145)		“Special interests” AND “Breitbart”	Dunleavy takes recall defense national with appearances on Fox News, Breitbart and other outlets	State Capital Newsfeed Alaska Dispatch	Oct. 24, 2019	O
146)			Eddie Rispone on Leftist Democrat John Bel Edwards: 'We Need Someone Who's Not Beholden to Special Interests'	iOTWreport	Nov.10, 2019	O
147)			Sen. Sessions says Trump's immigration plan	Prairie Pundit	Aug. 17, 2015	O

			put the interest of Americans ahead of special interests			
148)		“Clinton” AND “lock her up”	Liar. Lucifer. Lock her up. GOP denounces Clinton	Newstex	July 20, 2016	O
149)		“Tucker Carlson” AND “Ukraine” AND “election”	Tucker Carlson: Ukraine story shows Dems are so obsessed with Trump, they're destroying themselves - and Biden	Foxnews.com	Sept. 26, 2019	O
150)	1	“phone call” AND “Ukraine” AND “Trump”	Trump tweets in all caps that he 'JUST GOT IMPEACHED FOR MAKING A PERFECT PHONE CALL!'	Business Insider.com	Jan. 16, 2020	O
Aug. 16 151)	1	“Traditional values” AND “liberal” OR “left”	Crusader attorney continues publicizing traditional values	St. Louis Daily Record	July 25, 2005	O
152)		“Traditional values” AND “conservative” (2000-2010)	Thousands hear call for traditional values	Dayton Daily News	Aug. 29, 2010	O
153)		“Christian” AND “Republicans” (2000-2010)	Q & A: 'Joe the Plumber'	Christianity Today.com	May 4, 2009	O
154)			Q & A: Newt Gingrich	Christianity Today.com	April 17, 2009	O
155)		“deplorables” AND “Clinton”	Stop Shaming Trump Supporters	New York Times	Nov. 9, 2016	O

		AND "Liberal"				
156)			Why I'm Loving This	New York Times	Nov. 9, 2016	O
157)			The Democrats' Deadly Error	New York Times	Nov. 9, 2016	O
158)			Clinton Calls Millions Of Voters Who Back Trump 'Basket of Deplorables, Irredeemable bigots'	Newsninja2012	Sept. 10, 2016	O
Aug. 17 159)	1	"polarization" OR "culture wars" AND "Liberal"	Are Democrats ready to embrace the center in the Culture War?	Salt Lake Tribune	Aug. 17, 2020	O
160)			Liberals are culture war aggressors	USA Today	Aug. 17, 2020	O
161)			How to reignite the culture wars	New York Times	Sept. 7, 2003	O
162)		"Liberal" OR "left" AND "cancel culture"	Column: One wrong 'like' will get you canceled by cancel culture	Chicago Tribune	June 26, 2020	O
163)			Welcome to America, the 'cancel culture'; Left and right just get whiny and offended	USA Today	Aug. 21, 2019	O
164)	2	"Cancel culture" AND "me too"	Due Process in the #MeToo Era	Rockland County Times	Oct. 11, 2018	O
165)			Black Male Student Athlete At Brown University Who Was Deprived Of Justice When He Complained About A White	Fox News Network The Story With Martha MacCallum	Aug. 29, 2018	O

			Woman Who Bit, Choked And Pinned Him, Is Now Suing The University			
166)			Readers React: #MeToo is mob justice, not social justice	Los Angeles Times	Sept. 26, 2018	O
167)		“conservative” AND “law and order”	The Rise of the Metro Republicans; How McCain, Romney, and Giuliani may Redraw the red-blue map	The Weekly Standard	Feb 19, 2007	O
Aug. 18 168)	1	“War protesters” AND “Liberals” (2000-2015)	Anti-war protesters were outnumbered	News & Record (Greensboro, NC)	April 4, 2007	O
169)			War protesters fail integrity test	USA Today	March 05, 2003	O
170)		“Eco-warriors” AND “liberals” (2000-2015)	Hollywood, Hypocrisy, and Why Obamacare Is About More Than Healthcare	U.S. News & World Report	April 6, 2012	O
171)			Morton Hosts 'Blue Lives Matter Rally' While Rumors Swirl Online of Antifa Coming to Town	The Chronicle (Centralia, Washington)	Aug. 17, 2020	N
Aug 30 172)	5	“Trump” AND “Socialist” AND “Democrat”	Official Trump vs Democrat Poll	donaldJtrump.com	June 2019	O
173)		“Steve Bannon” AND “deconstruct	Steve Bannon Says Trump’s Cabinet Picks Are Intended to	Fortune.com	Feb. 25, 2017	O

		ion of the regulatory state”	‘Deconstruct’ Regulation and Agencies			
174)	2	“Tobacco” AND “choice” (2000-2015)	Tobacco use all about choices	St. Joseph News - Press (MO)	July 17, 2011	O
175)			Preserving our freedom of choice on 'No Tobacco Day'	Las Vegas Review-Journal	May 24, 2012	O
Sept. 3 176)	1	“Obamacare” AND “government takeover”	President Obama To America We're Sticking With Our Fundamentally-Flawed Government Takeover Of Health Care	States News Service	March 2, 2010	O
177)			As President Obama Signs Trillion Dollar Government Takeover Of Health Care Into Law	States News Service	March 23, 2010	O
178)	2	“health care” AND “market solutions”	Finding market-based solutions to health care	Arizona Capitol Times	Aug. 19, 2020	O
179)			Congress Should Focus On Market-Based Solutions Not Crippling Mandates To Protect Environment	States News Service	Feb. 26, 2019	O
180)		"social security" AND "privatization" AND "liberal" OR	Burr: Privatizing Medicare and Voting to Cut Social Security Is 'Common Sense'	Targeted News Service	July 14, 2016	O

		"common sense"				
181)			Change Medicare, Social Security? - Privatization would help but liberals resist changes	Sun Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL)	July 19, 2013	O
182)		"NRA" AND "freedom" AND "government" OR "liberal"	NRA Welcomes Freedom Defender	States News Service	Feb. 5, 2013	O
183)			Georgia welcomes NRA, stands with its ideals for freedom	The Atlanta Journal Constitution	April 30, 2017	O
184)			Mitt Romney Delivers Speech on Freedom at NRA	Targeted News Service	April 13, 2012	O
185)			More Americans Stand By The NRA As Liberal Elites Try To Foist Values On Everyone	NRA: America's 1st Freedom	Nov. 2017, 2017	O
Sept. 7 186)	2	"build the wall" AND "Trump"	Pence announces official 'Build the Wall' petition	Conservative Daily News	March 16, 2018	O
187)	5	"Plandemic" OR "scam-demic"	Mail-in voting is part of a COVID-19 'scam-demic'	Richmond Free Press	Aug. 27, 2020	O

Appendix C: Articles used in Data Set: Non-Conservative Media Texts

Date Found	Search Engine	Search term	Article Found	Source	Date published	Position (Opinion/News)
1) April 27	1	“liberal” OR “liberal media” AND “Trump”	Cambridge Analytica's Alexander Nix says he's a victim of Trump haters and liberal media.	Washington Post	June 6, 2018	N
2)	2	“liberal media” AND “Trump”	A Suburban tide could sink Trump	USA Today	Sept. 13, 2016	N
3)		“liberal media” AND “Trump”	Cruz says 'big tech' needs regulation;	USA Today	April 11, 2019	N
4)		“liberal media” AND “Trump”	Does nonpartisan journalism have a future?	The Daily Cardinal, (Madison WI)	Jan. 5, 2017	O
5)			Partisan divide propelled coronavirus in US	Daily Targum: Rutgers University	April 16, 2020	O
6)			'Rigged' Google draws ire of Trump; Aide: New regulations are being considered	USA Today	Aug. 29, 2018	N
7)			The 411 Douchebag of the Week: Donald Trump and the 'Liberal Media'	Flickr.com	June 2018	O
8)			White House Rhetoric On Liberal Media Creates Dangerous Echo Chamber	Arkansas Traveler: University of Arkansas	March 7, 2017	O

9)	3	“liberal elites”	Autocrats Across Globe Echo Trump’s ‘Fake News’ Swipes	New York Times International	Dec 13, 2017	N
10)			Donald Trump’s Racial Ignorance	New York Times	Dec. 18, 2016	O
11)			The President Betrays the Bards of Hard Work	New York Times	Feb. 18, 2018	O
12)			A Budget Blueprint Reflecting Resentments Against the Poor	New York Times	March 8, 2017	O
13)			How the GOP Can Court the Working Class	New York Times	Nov. 16, 2014	O
14)			In Campaign Ads, Democratic Candidates Play Down Their Label	New York Times	Oct. 5, 2010	N
15)			Thank you for ‘Condescending’	New York Times Magazine	Aug. 28, 2018	O
16)			GOP Newcomer, in Jolt, Wisconsin Governors Primary; Breakthrough for the Tea Party as Paladino Routs Lazio Amid Disgust at Albany	New York Times	Sept. 15, 2010	N
17)		“liberal elites”	The Fighting Democrat	New York Times	Nov. 5, 2006	O
18)			Conservatives on campus	New York Times	April 12, 2005	O

April 28 19)	3	“liberal” AND “left wing”	Academia’s tilt to the left	New York Times	July 10, 2016	O
20)			Gauging Degree of city’s left turn	New York Times	Nov. 7, 2013	O
21)	4		Harvard celebrates Angela Merkel as a liberal hero; many liberal Germans disagree	Washington Post	May 31, 2019	N
22)	5	“Brookings Institute”	About Us	https://www.brookings.edu/about-us	N/A	N
23)		“liberal” AND “left wing”	In a Mentor, Kagan's Critics See Liberal Agenda	New York Times	June 26, 2010	N
24)	4	“liberal media” AND “bias”	Where is the center of gravity in the Democratic Party?	Washington Post	Feb. 2, 2019	N
25)	3	“Democratic Party” AND “liberals” 2000-2010	Liberal Revolt on Health Care Stings White House	New York Times	Dec 8, 2009	N
26)	5	“Pence” AND “Democrats” AND “Far Left”	Pence bashes ‘far left’ Democrats while campaigning in New Hampshire	Boston Herald	Nov. 7, 2019	N
27)	1		Pence: Trump may speak out on chants	USA Today	July 22, 2019	N
April 29 28)	1	“Liberal” AND “political spectrum” AND “Democrats”	Democrats seek spot in political spectrum	Fresno Bee	July 27, 2004	N

29)	4	“Liberal” AND “political spectrum” AND “Democrats” AND “far left” OR ‘left wing’	As I see the Democratic Party today, it is really more around identity politics than around ideas	Washington Post	Jan. 7, 2018	N
30)	1		Specter could enrage 'both ends of the political spectrum'	The Morning Call, Allentown, PA	Oct. 27, 2012	N
31)			In Iowa, 2 towns worlds apart Opposite sides of state bookend U.S. political spectrum	Sun-Sentinel, Fort Lauderdale, Fla	Jan. 31, 2016	N
32)			Sibling Rivalry	The New Republic	Nov. 1, 2017	N
33)			Group Plans Campaign Against GOP Donors	New York Times	Aug. 8, 2008	N
34)			Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean	National Public Radio (NPR)	Sept. 29, 2003	N
35)			The mystery of 'Q': How an anonymous conspiracy- monger launched a movement (if the person exists)	Washington Post	Aug. 01, 2018	N
36)	5	‘Deep state’ AND ‘Mike Lofgren’	The Man Who Popularized The 'Deep State' Doesn't	NPR.org	Nov. 6, 2019	N

			Like The Way It's Used			
37)			The President is Winning his War on American Institutions	The Atlantic	March 2, 2020	N/O
38)	1	“Big government” And “liberal”	Analysis: Millions of Americans think of the federal government as their ‘enemy’	Washington Post	Jan. 5, 2016	O
39)	3		A liberal translation	New York Times	Jan 25, 2009	O
40)			More moderate than liberal	New York Times	Sept. 18, 2009	O
41)			Gay Ruling Shows City Is Less Liberal Than It (and the U.S.) Thinks	New York Times	July 10, 2006	N
42)			Long Division: Has American politics been sundered by extremism of both stripes?	New York Times	Oct 21, 2001	N
43)	1	“liberal” AND “taxes” OR “taxation”	Threat of Arizona tax measure brings together liberals, Koch brothers	Washington Post	Nov 6, 2018	O
44)			Liberals launch 'Not One Penny' campaign in effort to stop Trump tax cuts	Washington Post	Aug. 3, 2017	N
45)			Is this class warfare?	USA Today	April 16, 2009	O/ Debate
46)			Who's playing class warfare	Washington Post	Jan 7, 2003	O

April 30 47)	1	“liberal” AND “Fake news”	Why conservatives might be more likely to fall for fake news	Washington Post blogs	Dec 7, 2016	N
48)	2	“Covid” OR “corona” AND “Quarantine Protest” OR “Operation Gridlock”	COVID-19 Protesters Just Like 'Rosa Parks,' Says White House Adviser Stephen Moore	Huff Post	April 18, 2020	N/O
49)	5	“New York Times” AND “operation gridlock” AND “Stephen Moore”	The Quiet Hand of Conservative Groups in the Anti-Lockdown Protests	New York Times	April 21, 2020	N
50)			Who’s Organizing the Lockdown Protests?	New York Times The Daily podcast transcript	April 22, 2020	N/O
51)		“Heritage Foundation”	How One Conservative Think Tank Is Stocking Trump’s Government	New York Times	June 20, 2018	N
52)		“Hoover Institute” AND “climate change”	Big oil and global warming	Dayton Daily News	March 12, 2015	O
53)			Natural Perspectives	Los Angeles Times	Feb. 11, 2009	O
54)	2	“climate change” AND “market”	Republican politicians discuss market-based solutions for climate change at Syracuse University	The Daily Orange (Syracuse, NY)	Sept. 23, 2017	N
55)		“climate change debate”	Clouds’ Effect on Climate Change Is Last	New York Times	April 30, 2012	N

		(2000-2015)	Bastion for Dissenters			
56)			So who is Right in Debate on Role of Global Warming? Time will tell	New York Times	Sept. 24, 2005	N
57)			In Ancient Fossils, Seed of New Debate on Warming	New York Times	Nov. 7, 2006	N
58)	3	“Cato institute”	Health law gets a new wave of challenges	New York Times	Dec. 3, 2013	N
59)		“Competitive Enterprise Institute”	Following the Money That Undermines Climate Science	New York Times	June 10, 2019	O
60)	1	“Koch” AND “Freedom” AND “New York Times”	Koch Group Forms 'Super PAC' as 2014 Races Near	New York Times	June 18, 2014	N
61)			G.O.P. Embraced Koch Vision, Until Trump Tossed It All Aside	New York Times	Aug. 24, 2019	N
62)			Tax Filings Hint at Extent of Koch Brothers' Reach	New York Times	Sept. 13, 2013	N
63)			Koch Brothers Move to Shape A New G.O.P.: Classroom Training in Free Market Values	New York Times	Sept. 07, 2016	N
64)		“American Enterprise Institute” And “Freedom”	Philosophic Clash Over Government's Role	New York Times	July 19, 2012	N

		AND "New York Times"	Highlights Parties' Divide			
June 8 (65)	1	"lamestream media"	Sarah Palin's lamestream thinking	Washington Post	May 26, 2010	O
66)			Police Target Journalists as Trump Blames 'Lamestream Media' for Protests	New York Times	June 2, 2020	N
67)		"class warfare"	When the Rich Get Richer	New York Times	March 26, 2017	O
68)			Questioning GOP policies not same as class warfare	The Atlanta Journal and Constitution	Aug. 31, 2000	O
69)			It's Not Just About Bad Choices	New York Times	June 14, 2015	O
70)			For Richer	New York Times	Oct. 20, 2002	O
71)			Bush Shows Class in Favoring Rich	New York Observer	April 2, 2001	O
72)			Priming is potentially perilous when used politically	Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)	Jan. 17, 2009	O
73)			A fair way to shrink the wealth gap	Christian Science Monitor	Jan. 24, 2007	O
74)			Making it right with Americans	The Bismarck Tribune (ND)	Dec. 5, 2010	O
June 13 (75)	2,	"Corona" or "Covid" AND "Trump" AND "preparation" or "prepare" AND "Bolton" (May 1- May 31, 2020)	Was the White house office for global pandemics eliminated	Washington Post	May 20, 2020	N

June 13 76)	5		Why weren't we ready for the coronavirus?	New Yorker	May 4, 2020	N
77)	2	"liberal tyranny" AND "Trump"	How Milo Yiannopoulos' s Berkeley 'free speech week' Fell Apart	Atlantic Online	Sept. 22, 2017	O
June 8 78)	5	"Trump" AND "Floyd" AND "Antifa"	What is Antifa?	CNN.com	May 31, 2020	N
June 17 79)	5	"Trump" AND "Floyd"	'It's a great day for him': Donald Trump invokes George Floyd after strong U.S. jobs numbers	Bloomberg News	June 5, 2020	N
80)			Trump Says He's a 'Big Fan' of Drew Brees, QB Shouldn't Have Apologized	Sports Illustrated	June 5, 2020	N
81)			Drew Brees apologizes on Instagram for flag kneeling remarks	Instagram	June 4, 2020	O
June 20 82)	5	"Brees responds to trump tweet"	Drew Brees responds to Donald Trump after president insists that no one should protest the American flag	CBSsports.com	June 6, 2020	N
June 27 83)	5	"Trump" AND "Antifa"	Trump is spreading a dangerous conspiracy	Washington Post	June 10, 2020	N

			theory about antifa			
84)			President Donald Trump tweets 'antifa' conspiracy theory that originated on anonymous blog	NBC.com	June 9, 2020	N
June 28 85)	5	"freedom" AND "anti-vaccine" AND "choice" AND "corona virus" OR "covid"	Antivaccination Activists Are Growing Force at Virus Protests	New York Times	May 4, 2020	N
86)			Texas anti-vaxxers say COVID-19 contact tracing is government surveillance	Houston Chronicle	June 4, 2020	N
July 1 87)	5	"mask" AND "political statement" AND "trump"	Despite new mandatory mask rules, Trump insists it's everyone's 'personal choice'	ABC news.com	June 29, 2020	N
88)			Covid-19 Reality Has a Liberal Bias	New York Times	May 14, 2020	O
89)			Unmasking partisanship, and why Trump can still win; Protective gear has increasingly become a touchstone for political identity	LA Times	May 20, 2020	N

90)			Trump's Phoenix megachurch rally proves how much faith and masks are now political	NBC News.com	June 24, 2020	O
July 5 91)	5	“Special interests” AND “liberal”	You elected them to write new laws. They’re letting corporations do it instead.	USA Today	April 3, 2019	O
Aug. 11 92)	2	“Tax and spend Democrats” AND “liberal”	Liberal group takes cue from Gingrich; Organizers hope methods work for them	The Atlanta Journal-Constitution	Aug. 8, 2004	N
93)		“Special Interests” AND “Liberal” AND “Limbaugh”	Limbaugh sees furor over comments cool	Washington Post	March 29, 2020	N
Aug. 11 94)	5	“Limbaugh” AND “medal of freedom”	The divisive case for giving Rush Limbaugh the Medal of Freedom	Washington Post	Feb. 6, 2020	O
95)		“Trump” AND “Reagan” AND “Make America Great Again”	Donald Trump, a true Reagan Republican	Los Angeles Times	July 19, 2020	O
96)	2	“Clinton” AND ‘lock her up’	Republican convention chant about Clinton: 'Lock her up'; Trump campaign hopes it can attract independents.	Dayton Daily News (Ohio)	July 21, 2016	N

97)	5	“Send her back”	Trump attacks freshman Democrats including Ocasio-Cortez	ABCNews.com	July 19, 2019	N
98)		“Ukraine” AND “election”	Fox News Judge Cites 'Newly Acquired Evidence' In Trump-Ukraine Scandal as Reason House Democrats Should 'Reopen the Impeachment' Inquiry	Newsweek	Jan. 6, 2020	N
99)		“Ukraine” AND “phone call”	Trump focuses on 'perfect' Ukraine call despite allegations of broader pressure campaign	CNN.com	Nov. 4, 2019	N
100)	5		Trump responds to Mueller report: 'No collusion, no obstruction'	CNBC.com	April 18, 2019	N
Aug. 16 101)	1	“Traditional values” AND “liberal” OR “left”	Fewer in U.S. Want Government to Promote Traditional Values	Gallup Poll News Service	Sept. 30, 2015	N/Poll
102)		“Traditional values” AND “conservative”	The Big Chill at The Lab	New York Times	Nov. 3, 2003	O
103)		“Christian” AND “Republicans” (2000-2010)	In an Unlikely Part of the Country, a Tiny Huckabee	New York Times	Jan. 6, 2008	N

			Movement Is Born			
104)		Christian Coalition (2000-2010)	Pastor Chosen to Lead Christian Coalition Steps Down in Dispute Over Agenda	New York Times	Nov. 28, 2006	N
105)	5	“deplorables” AND “Clinton” AND “Liberal”	Democrats Who Voted For Donald Trump Speak	Time.com	Nov. 2020	N
106)			Clinton: ‘Deplorables’ comment was ‘grossly generalistic’	Associated Press	Sept. 10, 2016	N
107)	1		Could Trump End the Culture Wars?	New York Times	Nov. 9, 2016	O
108)			What Trump owes ‘Duck Dynasty’	New York Times	Nov. 9, 2016	O
109)			Who is the ‘Forgotten Man’	New York Times	Nov. 9, 2016	O
110)			Goodbye to the Climate	New York Times	Nov. 9, 2016	O
111)	2	“birther movement”	Trump stokes birtherism conspiracy theory about Harris	Washington Post	Aug. 13, 2020	N
112)			Donald Trump's Pants On Fire Claim That He 'Finished' The Obama Birther Talk	Tampa Bay Times	Sept. 16, 2016	O
Aug. 17 113)	1	“polarization” OR “culture	After 25 years on the culture war's front	Washington Post	Nov. 27, 2017	N

		wars” AND “Liberal”	lines, this prominent pastor-activist thinks liberals are winning			
114)			Culture Wars Reach the Pews, and Empty Them.	New York Times	June 21, 2020	N
115)			Day care culture war	Washington Post	April 27, 2001	O
116)			The Culture Wars, Part II."	New York Times	Feb. 29, 2004	
117)		“polarization” AND “US political parties”	7 ways to reduce political polarization	USA Today	July 24, 2020	O
118)			Democrats' Best Way Forward.	New York Times	Dec. 13, 2018	O
119)			Would Stronger Parties Mean Less Polarization?	New York Times	Oct. 22, 2014.	O
120)			Partisan polarization, political paralysis.	Cleveland Plain Dealer	June 20, 2010.	O
121)			Gates, receiving Liberty Medal in Philadelphia, criticizes political gridlock	Philadelphia Inquirer	Sept. 23, 2011	N
122)			Political gridlock and the crisis at the border	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	June 16, 2014	O
123)		“Liberal” OR “left” AND “cancel culture”	Conservatives have a 'cancel culture' of their own	Washington Post	July 10, 2020	O

124)	5		Al Franken speaks out about his resignation after #MeToo accusations: I deserved due process	Foxnews.com	Sept. 27, 2019	N
125)			The #MeToo movement's due-process problem	The Denver Post	March 9, 2018	O
126)			7 famous comedians who said political correctness is killing comedy	San Diego Union-Tribune	Sept. 22, 2017	N
127)		"Cancel culture" AND "politically correct"	Fox News talks about 'cancel culture' and political correctness a lot more than its competitors	Washington Post	Jan. 14, 2020	O
128)			War on political correctness expands past social media	Daily Illini (Urbana-Champaign, IL)	April 25, 2016	O
129)			Rebuttal: political correctness doesn't infringe on people's right to free speech	The Albany Student Press (NY)	May 4, 2018	O
130)		'rigged election AND trump	Trump ratchets up 'rigged' complaints - Unprecedented rhetoric could spark violence, historians warn	USA Today	Oct. 17, 2016	N

131)			Tracing Trump's Postal Service obsession - from 'loser' to 'scam' to 'rigged election'	Washington Post	Aug. 15, 2020	N
132)			The GOP paved Trump's ugly path	Washington Post	Oct. 19, 2016	O
133)	1	“conservative” AND “law and order”	The bully pulpit: Trump pushes Washington, but virus resists	Associated Press International	Aug. 22, 2020	N
134)			Law-and-order issues top Supreme Court docket	CNN.com	Sept. 30, 2007	N
135)			Conservative media helps Trump perform ‘law and order’ in Portland, with risks for November	Washington Post	July 22, 2020	N
Aug. 18 136)	1	“War protesters” AND “Liberals”	Readers defend, assail war protesters	Deseret News, The (Salt Lake City, UT)	March 27, 2003	O
Aug. 30 137)	5	“Trump” AND “socialist” AND “Democrats” OR “Democratic party”	How Trump Runs Against Socialism Without a Socialist Opponent	Washington Post	Aug. 28, 2020	O
138)			Fact-Checking Trump’s Claims That Democrats Are Radical Socialists	New York Times	July 20, 2019	N

139)			If Democrats don't rebrand themselves, they'll be stuck with Trump's 'socialists' label in 2020	Miami Herald	March 8, 2019	O
140)		"Steve Bannon" AND "deconstruction of the regulatory state"	Bannon vows a daily fight for 'deconstruction of the administrative state'	Washington Post	Feb. 23, 2017	N
141)	1	"Obamacare" AND "government takeover"	The GOP's bogus health bogeyman	Star Tribune Minneapolis, MN	Feb. 28, 2010	O
142)			Doing the math on the "government takeover" of health care.	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	March 24, 2010	O
Sept. 3 143)	1	"75-year-old Buffalo man pushed by police" AND "protest"	Buffalo man opens up about incident - 75-year-old was shoved by police at Floyd protest	USA Today	Sept. 2, 2020	N
144)		"social security" AND "privatization" AND "liberal" OR "common sense"	Common Sense Vs. 'Facts' - Weigh The Candidates' Arguments; Their Facts Are Fungible	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	Oct. 18, 2012	O
145)			Bush renews call for privatization of Social Security	USA Today	Sept. 3, 2004	N
146)		"NRA" AND "freedom" AND	San Francisco branded the NRA a 'domestic	Washington Post	Sept. 10, 2019	N

		"government" OR "liberal"	terrorist organization.' The gun-rights lobby is suing			
147)			Why mass shootings rarely change the paralyzed politics of guns	Washington Post	Oct. 4, 2017	O
148)		"school voucher" AND "choice"	Trump picks billionaire Betsy DeVos, school voucher advocate, as Education Secretary	Washington Post	Nov. 23, 2016	N
149)			Lawmakers OK expansion to school voucher programs	Miami Herald	May 5, 2017	N
150)		"Trump" AND "Virginia protest" AND "white nationalist" AND "protest" AND "both sides"	Giving White Nationalists An Unequivocal Boost	New York Times	Aug. 16, 2017	N/O
151)			Trump condemns Charlottesville violence but doesn't single out white nationalists for blame	Washington Post	Aug. 12, 2017	N
152)			White Nationalist Protest Leads to Deadly Violence	New York Times	Aug. 13, 2017	N
153)			How white supremacy	Washington Post	Aug. 3, 2020	O

			infected Christianity and the Republican Party			
154)	2	“Founding Fathers” AND “the Tea Party”	The Tea Party, Our Founding Fathers, and the Fight Over Government	Huffington Post	May 04, 2014	O
155)			The Founding Fathers Versus the Tea Party	New York Times	Sept. 23, 2010	O
156)			Our Founding Fathers were liberals	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	Jan. 13, 2016	O
Sept. 7 157)	5	“build the wall” AND “trump”	From 'Build the Wall' to 'Law and Order': Trump's 2020 mantra channels Nixon, Wallace	Tampa Bay Times	Sept. 5, 2020	N
158)		“Who Gets to Vote in Florida?”	Who Gets to Vote in Florida? With the election hanging in the balance, Republican leaders continue a long fight over voting rights.	The Atlantic	Aug. 31, 2020	N/O
Sept. 9 159)	5	“Fauci” AND “Trump”	Trump knew the coronavirus was 'deadly stuff' but chose to downplay it, according to recordings revealed in new Woodward book	USA Today	Sept. 9, 2020	N

160)			Fauci Supports Birx's Coronavirus Assessment After Trump Criticizes Her	New York Times	Aug. 20, 2020	N
161)			Twitter removes tweet highlighted by Trump falsely claiming COVID-19 'cure'	Nbcnews.com	July 28, 2020	N
162)	1	"census" AND "privacy" (2000-2010)	Census officials fear a backlash.	USA Today	March 31, 2000	N
163)			Seeking Answers, Census Is Stirring Privacy Questions	New York Times	April 1, 2000	N
164)			After the census, new battle begins	Houston Chronicle	Sept. 28, 2009	N
165)		"death panels"	Here Come the Death Panels	New York Times.	March 24, 2020	O
166)		"Government take over" AND "health care"	Romney calls Obama's health care law a government takeover	PoliFact, The Poynter Institute	May 13, 2011	N
167)	5	"Trump" And "Mexico" AND "Border"	Here Are All the Times Donald Trump Insulted Mexico	Time Magazine	Aug. 31, 2016	N
168)		"freedom of speech" AND "corporations"	Corporations keep claiming 'We the People' rights. And they're winning -	Los Angeles Times	March 2, 2018	O
169)			How Free Speech Was	New York Times	July 1, 2018	O

			Weaponized By Conservatives			
170)			Corporations are cracking down on free speech inside the office - and out	Washington Post	Aug. 11, 2017	O
171)		"Censorship" AND "college" OR "campus" AND "free speech"	The Right Now Loves Free Speech	New York Times	June 27, 2018	O
172)			Trump praises First Amendment a day after attacking 'phony' press	Washington Post	March 21, 2019	N
173)			The A.C.L.U. Needs to Rethink Free Speech	New York Times	Aug. 17, 2017	O

Appendix D: Supplementary Data Set: Liberal Media Bias/ Anti-PBS Policy Narrative

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Appendix E: Supplementary Data Set: No Liberal Media Bias/Pro-PBS Policy Narrative

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Appendix F

Coding Manual for Conservative use of Liberal/Common Sense Narratives

Concept	Coding Definition	Code
Victims	Those facing harm from the opposing policy direction.	1-AA-Victims AA-Victim-Freedom AA-Victim-Values AA-Victim-Security AA-Victim-Tax Payers AA-Victim-Conservative views
Villains	Those causing harm by promoting their policy positions.	2-AB-Villains AB-Villain Liberals/Socialists AB-Villain MLB* AB-Villain Government AB-Villain Protesters/‘Others’ (*MLB= <i>mainstream liberal media</i>)
Heroes	Those preventing the harm caused by the opposing policy direction.	3-AC-Heroes AC-Hero-Entrepreneurs/Choice AC-Hero-ConservPoliticians AC-Hero-ConservMedia AC-Hero-Hard working Americans
Plot	Context and background that informs preferred policy direction.	4-AD-Plot points
Moral of the Story	The policy solution promoted by the policy narrative.	1-A-Moral-PolicySolutions
Common Sense PR Strategies	Intentional use of communications strategies to persuade and gain support for conservative policies.	B1-PR/Propaganda
Role of corporations	Examining role that corporate power plays in policy directions and in generating popular narratives that promote them.	B2-Corp power/influence
Hegemony	The accepted and unquestioned role of neoliberalism as a socio-economic system in society.	B3- Neolib hegemonic
Post-Truth	The use of priming, affective triggering and other strategies to dismiss fact-based reasoning.	B4-Anti-reflexive
Populism	The use of American mythology, nationalism, and other populist	B5-Populism

	discourses in order to win over working class demographics.	
System justification/Identity protection	The use of rationalizations to defend a system that one is part of and identifies with.	B6- Ego-defensive
Xenophobia	The role of the fear/dislike of those who are outside what is perceived as the inner group of white, nativist, straight, Christian, in-group.	B7-Xenophobia/othering
Democracy Eroding	The phenomenon of democracy being undermined and the specter of authoritarianism.	B8-Anti gov/demos
Rhetorical strategy: Overton window	The strategy of familiarizing the public with a currently unpopular policy direction in order to gain acceptance.	B9-overton window
Rhetorical strategy: conflation	The strategy of rhetorically blurring the distinction between the left side of the political spectrum.	B10-Conflation
Traditional values	The use of traditional values/religion to gain support for conservative policies.	B11- Trad values/relig
Complexity	Concepts, themes, and phenomena that are nuanced and complicate simple categorizing.	B12-Complexity