

ISIS: AN ONLINE NEWS MEDIA ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL
RECRUITMENT

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department
of Sociology
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

By
Joshua R. Lowry
August, 2016

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ABSTRACT

Beginning in the summer of 2014 through the summer of 2016, ISIS and the ISIS conflict in Iraq and Syria have frequented the headlines of mainstream news media in the Middle East and in the U.S. With consideration to the number of potential frameworks available to each news organizations, the objective of this paper is to identify the frameworks employed online by 2 U.S. mainstream news organizations and 2 Middle Eastern mainstream news organizations. A total of 189 articles were selected for the study based on key words associated with ISIS and their recruitment efforts. Overall, 7-parent codes and 14-child codes were identified, totaling 2537 excerpts and 6241 unique coding applications. The 7-parent codes identified in the study were *victim, villain, so-called, religious influence, economic influence, political influence, and social influence*. The 14-child codes included a breakdown of the parent code for victim (*oppressed, defensive, guilty by association, conscious deception*), villain (*radicalized, enemy other, sympathizer, oppressor, aggressor*), economic influence (*revenue, impoverishment, anti-capitalism, and western impact*), and religious influence (*Western-centric view*). The paper concludes with an analysis and discussion of results followed by recommendations for future research in the area.

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INTRODUCTION

Mass media coverage of ISIS and the ISIS conflict in Iraq and Syria has greatly fluctuated since the capture of Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, over the summer of 2014 (Thompson 2014). This may be due, in part, to any number of political or ideological influences affecting facts, either presented or not presented, by any given news source (Norris 2011; Ceron 2015). In this regard, previous studies have also indicated, “media outlets tend to favor the topics and interpretations of officials...thereby supporting the status quo” (Ceron 2015:489). For example, in August of 2014 the *Associated Press* (2014) reported approximately 900 French citizens traveled to Iraq and Syria, many of which defected to join ISIS. A month later, *CNN* reported 30 more French civilians joined ISIS’s ranks, in addition to approximately 3000 Tunisians, 2500 Saudi Arabians, 1500 Moroccans, and over 800 Russians (Thompson 2014). These events were covered extensively in the United States, emphasizing the swelling ranks and increasing threat of ISIS on a global scale. Furthermore, the British Broadcasting Company (*BBC*) reported the deaths of 322 members of a single Iraqi Sunni tribe at the hands of ISIS in November of 2014. In this report, additional emphasis was placed on 10 women and children who were killed in the tribe, eliciting a greater sense of tragedy and concern from their readers. Additionally, the details reported in this and similar tragedies allowed the Shia-dominated Iraqi government to use this event to create a moment of solidarity with Sunni tribal leaders in the region and garner greater support in the fight against ISIS (Staff Writer 2014).

Bearing in mind these biases exist within all news organizations and that there are an increasing number of news sources now covering events related to ISIS, I want to

understand the affect mainstream news media frameworks has on the language of journalists reporting about ISIS. More specifically, I will focus my research on the language used in journalists' online reports about ISIS and their recruitment of young Westerners. Does variability exist by region in the description of ISIS or the recruitment of Westerners? If regional variability does exist, is it primarily framed in a religious or political context? How is this context determined? If political or religious influences exist in the framing of ISIS or their Western recruits, is one influence more salient than the other? If a political or religious influence is determined to be more salient, is this true of all reports made online mainstream news organizations or does the salience depend on the political orientation of the media source? Finally, how do variations in framing among American mainstream news organizations online compare to those found in the Middle East?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Orientalism

Orientalism as described by Said (1978), is a conceptual framework referring to the way the West (particularly Western Europe and the United States) essentializes and patronizes Middle Eastern, Asian, and North African people and societies. According to this framework, the presentation of an entire region is manipulated and viewed to be something other than the hegemonic norms of Western societies. Specifically, Said argued that the East is characterized as irrational, antimodern, passive, and subservient in comparison to the West (Said 1978). From that standpoint, the *Other* is described as single or multiple entities (depending on the intentions of the party talking) holding a

subordinate social and economic status. Since the East was defined as the Other, the *Us* represented the West, and was considered superior to the Other in every regard (Edward Said 1978; Riopelle 2013).

Said (1978) discussed this concept in terms of imperialism, with the Occidental ruler or ruling class presiding over a subjugated Oriental society, identified as “Asia or the East, geographically, morally, [and] culturally” (p. 31). The people of this society were passive and relied on the superior intellect of the West for governance and civility. By conceiving the rest of the world through the lens of Orientalism, one Westerner could easily converse with another about a person, place, or thing as having an Oriental personality, atmosphere, tale, despotism, or mode of production (Said 1978). In this regard, Orientalism is described as an accessible library of knowledge used by Westerners to garner a greater understanding of the Orient’s essential characteristics. Furthermore, this framework ultimately affected “Oriental” and Western societies in its disregard to the concepts of agency and self-determination (Goffman 1974; Said 1978).

Triandafyllidou’s research on *significant Others* (1998) expanded on Said’s work and emphasized the significance of nation states and national identity when discussing the Other. Anthony Smith (1981) touched on this conceptualization as well in discussing ethnicity. He explained variations in ethnic communities were dependent upon the degree to which those communities shared cultural or past territorial heritage. Furthermore, it is this shared heritage that positions the Other in opposition of the dominant members of society (Triandafyllidou 1998; Smith 1981; Merelman 1986). Rather than discussing Orientalism from the framework of Western dominance (Said 1978), Triandafyllidou interprets the Other as being in opposition of societal norms. Significant Others are

thereby considered to be in opposition of normative cultural values and can be used in constructing a positive in-group identity. (Triandafyllidou 1998; Merelman 1986).

Brown (2014) expands on this concept with her research on the assimilation of Muslim immigrants into German society. In her study she identified Islam to be in opposition to Germany's liberal national identity. Muslims were significant to Germany's national identity both externally and internally and were framed as facing the greatest difficulty in understanding the values of democracy (Brown 2014; Triandafyllidou 1998). Muslims are the significant Others to German society, viewed as threats to national identity, and identified as either an internal or external threat based on citizen or group membership status. This status becomes more salient during times of social, political, or economic disruption, when significant Others are often singled out to be the cause of disruption and used as a catalyst for creating and solidifying a new national identity (Triandafyllidou 1998). Even in cases in which national identities are based on liberal ideologies, nations may still rely on Otherizing outsiders to articulate a sense of self (Brown 2014).

From that standpoint, Islam has come to be framed as an external threat to the democratic values of the West (Emmanuel 2015) with ISIS held up as the most extreme expression thereof. The West can identify ISIS as the significant Other, embodying counter-cultural traits and oppositional characteristics that are non-representative of Western society. This aids in the establishment of a sense of nationalism and pride in the United States based on Western values. Furthermore, any cultural values associated with ISIS are viewed to be adversarial (Triandafyllidou 1998; Gamson 1995).

Framing the Other

The ease, access, and source of new knowledge can influence individual values, judgments, and ultimately contribute to an individual's perception of reality (Goffman 1974). For this reason, it is important to consider the impact framing has on disseminating new knowledge. When discussing frameworks, Goffman (1974) identified *primary frameworks* to be the principal boundaries maintained by individuals in their attempt to make sense of the world around them. He further classified them to be either *natural* or *social*, with social frameworks incorporating “the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being the human being” (Goffman 1974:22). Entman (1993) elaborated on this concept by stating that by framing, a person selects something perceived to be real and makes it appear more salient so others will perceive it to have a greater significance. This is accomplished at both the macro and micro level of society (Scheufele 2007). In other words, by an author effectively framing an event, they are inviting others to share in their perception of reality.

In this regard, a news organization may be inclined to cover an event within a particular framework based on their political, social, economic, or religious values. This does not necessarily infer a nefarious intention by the organization, but rather is often due to (1) an attempt at breaking down the complexities of a story to accommodate an audience's understanding of the situation, (2) having holes in the information received, or (3) having a short amount of time to communicate a message to the audience (Scheufele 2007). This is similar to the active component of framing addressed by Benford and Snow's (2000) discourse on collective action frames.

In their discussion, collective action frames are described as ideological extensions, in which the ideology is the primary resource for maintaining the frame's perceptual boundaries (Snow 2000). In other words, collective action frames are ideological derivatives used to conceptualize an individual's perception of the world around them so that they do not go against the ideology from which their perception derives. If a person were to go outside of the boundaries of a collective action frame, they would no longer be aligned with the ideological view in which the frame originated. This concept draws parallels to Goffman's view on primary frameworks in that collective action frames use an ideology as the basis for all subsidiary frameworks (Goffman 1974). Framing is therefore an "active, processual phenomenon implying agency and contention at the level of reality construction" (Benford 2000:614); an action that is constantly evolving and is agentic in that it is driven by persons or organizations (Benford 2000). In this regard, mass media has a powerful affect over people due to the pervasive and consistent stream of messaging it provides (Scheufele 2007).

From that standpoint, Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) discuss mass media as it pertains to the concepts of *priming* and *agenda setting* and their relationship with framing. *Priming* is used by mass media and described as a "tool" or extension of agenda setting, suggesting what audiences should use as a benchmark when measuring the importance, success, or failure of something being reported. They refer to *Agenda setting* as "the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis mass media places on certain issues" and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (Scheufele 2007:11). Since Middle Eastern affairs make up 35 percent of American foreign news coverage (Evans 2010), many political agendas are primed and set according to the

activities taking place in that region. As a result, the Middle East plays a more significant role in the immediate lives of American mainstream newsreaders than any other region of the world (Evans 2010; Entman 1993; Goffman 1974). This means, the Middle East has become more salient and significant to American audiences in the way the people and cultures are contrasted with the United States, reinforcing a sense of national and cultural identity.

Framing: Proximity and Distance

Matt Evans (2010) found similar frameworks used by journalists when reporting on two distinct and unrelated conflicts in the Middle East that took place within close regional proximity of one another. These conflicts took place at different times and each involved scenarios in which a group of militant Palestinians were defending a Palestinian city from a foreign invader. Although Evans (2010) discussed multiple ways each conflict could have been perceived and reported in the news, he identified *framing of proximity* and *framing of distance* as the primary frameworks used by each source.

From that standpoint, Evans (2010) referred to the media's ability to make the public feel closer to either the location of the conflict or to one side based on the shared cultural practices of the fighters and the media consumers as framing of proximity. He identified a framing of proximity bias whenever a journalist had similar cultural practices as the people on either side of the conflict. In contrast, framing of distance can be found in situations where one or more sides of the conflict have cultural practices that differ from the journalist's. Framing of distance is often more abstract and entails the reporter discussing the complexities of the conflict or creating a feeling of distance between the conflict and the target audience (Evans 2010).

I believe the mainstream news media's usage of framing of proximity and framing of distance to have significant affects on the lives of Middle Easterners and Muslim-Arab-Middle Eastern immigrants living abroad. In the same way Muslim immigrants into German society were assumed to be carriers of a problematic culture that had to be renounced before they could be fully trusted (Brown 2014), a Muslim-Arab-Middle Eastern immigrant in the United States is only considered "Good" to the extent they are willing to be assimilated into Western society. In doing so, they must assert a preference of America values and reject the "backward" cultural norms of their homelands. Even at this, Middle Eastern Muslims who have traveled to the West for the promise of a better life will remain a significant Other to many Westerners (Said 1978; Hartelius 2013). This conception is also translatable to Snow and Benford's (2000) discussion on core framing tasks and their relationship to generalizations.

In their discussion, the core framing tasks are identified as *diagnostic framing*, *prognostic framing*, and *motivational framing* and are explained to address the issues of "consensus mobilization" (fostering agreement) and "action mobilization" (fostering action) among individuals (Benford 2000:615). From that standpoint, diagnostic framing tries to identify the cause of an issue and foster both consensus and mobilization in people. In doing so, controversies often emerge. For example, Emmanuel (2015) identified a decline in Western Catholicism as a major contributing factor in the rise of Islamophobia and xenophobia in France since the 1960s. This diagnosis can also be associated with what recent theorists have identified as *boundary framing* (Hunt et al 1994; Silver 1997) and *adversarial framing* (Gamson 1995). In each, an attempt is made to delineate the boundaries of "good" and "evil" by constructing the situation around

protagonists and antagonists. Boundary framing is thereby associated with collective action framing while sharing similarities with Goffman's (1974) concept of primary frameworks. Adversarial framing on the other hand, shares many similarities with the concept of significant Other, in that it compares and contrasts specific characteristics of in-groups and out-groups in an effort to create a more favorable view of in-groups (Benford 2000; Triandafyllidou 1998).

From that standpoint, prognostic framing attempts to frame a solution plan of attack, or strategy to resolve an issue. In this regard, it can be associated with the concepts of priming and agenda setting (Snow 2000). Regarding ISIS, the United States can develop either a prognosis for military intervention or regional diplomacy based on their diagnosis of the situation. By using prior knowledge and reducing the complexities of the situation, mass media can increase the Islamic State's salience in the West by priming audiences with the political agendas of the United States. Use of this tactic, in conjunction with declining Christianity in the West, can also be correlated to a rise in Islamophobia and xenophobia (Hartelius 2013; Emmanuel 2015).

Once diagnosis and prognosis frames have been applied, motivational framing can be used to create a "call to arms" requiring "agency." Priming often assists motivational framing by facilitating motivations into actions and ultimately creating a *master frame*. "Hypothetically, the more inclusive and flexible collective action frames are, the more likely they are to function or evolve into master frames" (Benford 2000:618). Emmanuel (2015) provided a recommended course of action for addressing national issues regarding racial, religious, and ethnic minorities, which attributed to the creation of a master frame. His motivational framing of the situation included France

exiting the Euro and taking steps to assimilate Islam into part of their national identity. In doing so, he argued French people of all origins would be able to live together free and equally (Emmanuel 2015) under the master frame of French identity. Once achieved, a collective action frame would continue to outline the boundaries of French nationalism and be more closely associated with the ideology the frame was based on (Emmanuel 2015; Hunt et al 1994). Unfortunately, frames are often applied to out-groups in society. For this reason, it is important to consider consequences of making generalizations about any group based on a specific framework, as this contributes to erroneous preconceptions. In this regard, immigrants are often incorrectly assumed to have a particular set of traits or characteristics based on their immigration status, race, ethnicity, or nationality.

Hartelius (2013) identified these traits or characteristics along the lines of three *tropes of address*, which are often assigned to Muslim-Arab-Middle Eastern immigrants in the United States: *assimilated newcomer*, *patriot*, and *victim*. She argued that according to this understanding, the most positive status a Muslim-Arab-Middle Easterner could ever hope to achieve was that of the *assimilated newcomer*. Race and ethnicity were barriers that must be overcome by immigrants if they wished to ever achieve a native or non-immigrant status. They must attempt in every way to assimilate into American culture and must work harder to attain true belonging in the West due to the negative framings placed on them by Western society (Hartelius 2013).

Government, Political, and Organizational Framing

In the post World War II period, the West turned toward a neoliberal ethos in which governments, organizations, and individuals primarily viewed citizens as consumers and used mass media to target them (Miller 2007). In this regard, a consumer

was a “good citizen,” indoctrinated into the consumer culture and considered to have a higher citizenship status (Cohen 2003). This framing of consumers identified them as “the classless, raceless, sexless, ageless, unprincipled, magical agent of social value in a multitude of discourses and institutions” (Miller 2007:100).

From that standpoint, a culture based on the principals of capitalism was successfully pioneered in the United States and is evident among corporations, organizations, and government agencies (McChesney 1997). Even military conflict was shaped by this ethos. For example, Kellnar (1995) argued the 1993 Gulf War was “a spectacle constructed for the media to prove the superiority of U.S. weapons systems and to promote their sales by the military-technological complex” (p. 105). In this regard, Kalb (2007) framed the media as a “weapon” of modern warfare, in which it is possible for different audiences to be watching different wars depending on the news source. Governments, organizations, and individuals are able to simplify the language, build on prior consumer knowledge, and deliver messages in ways that persuade and allow for easier consumption (Dhaouadi 2008; Wakefield 2013).

From that standpoint, corporations have managed to achieve unprecedented influence over US domestic and foreign policies in 2015. They drive consumerism with their influence while lobbyists work to influence foreign policies, frame corporate interests, and garner public support for their interests (McChesney 1997). In the same way corporations are able to influence viewing citizens through the frame of consumerism, foreign news coverage can frame events to be in the best interests of any particular political party, nation-state, or non-government entity (McMillin 2007; Miller 2007). Based on this understanding, corporations are now “an integrated oligopoly, with

a handful of firms dominating all forms of U.S. media, from radio, television, music and film to newspapers, magazines, and book publishing,” (McChesney 1997:17) therefore it is important to acknowledge the relationships of citizens, consumers, governments, and media organizations within a particular region during times of political and economic unrest.

When a society is experiencing political and economic unrest, they tend to place more emphasis on significant Others in relation to the nation-state and to develop a new sense of national identity (Triandafyllidou 1998). An example of this can be seen following the events of September 11, 2001. After the fall of the World Trade Center, the American public began identifying Islam and the Middle East as the significant Other to their national identity. Mainstream news media recognized this shift and began efficiently packaging any news related to Islam and the Middle East to be consumed by those embodying American values and beliefs and considered themselves to be patriots (Bail 2012). Mainstream news media in the United States identified Middle Eastern society as “backward,” with significantly different (lesser) values and beliefs when compared to those of the United States (Malik 2014; Said 1978; Triandafyllidou 1998). This framing, in conjunction with the substantial role mainstream news media plays in mass communication, meant considerable consequences to the understanding of Islam, Muslims, Middle Easterners, and the Middle East in general. Furthermore, this framework created greater significance to their Otherization when the United States began experiencing a period of social and economic uncertainty (Bail 2012; Riopelle 2013; Triandafyllidou 1998). With Islam and the Middle East receiving the designation of significant Other one can see how a skewed view has permeated the United States

regarding Islam and Muslims (Bail 2012; Triandafyllidou 1998; Evans 2010; Staff Writer 2015).

Unfortunately, adherence to these practices not only makes it easier for journalists to recognize and persuade audiences of the significance of an event (Entman 1993), but also contributes to the spread of misinformation (Bail 2012; Wakefield 2013). A situation that took place in Iran in 1989 pertaining to the term *Fatwa* is a primary example of how this can occur. During a public address, Iran's revolutionary leader used the term *Fatwa* while issuing a death sentence to the people who wrote, or were associated with writing, *The Satanic Verses*. This novel was viewed as an obscenity to the Iranian government for its mockery of the Prophet Muhammad. Following the announcement, mainstream news media in the United States incorrectly interpreted *Fatwa* as a death sentence. In actuality, it is used only in a very specific context, by a competent and qualified religious authority, and in response to a question pertaining to a particular point of Islamic Law (Vultee 2006). By viewing this event through the framework of Orientalism, mainstream news media misinterpreted the event and managed to influence American vernacular by creating a perception of Iran, Islam, and the Middle East without a cultural context (Bail 2013; Said 1978; Vultee 2006; Dhaouadi 2008).

With the above understanding in mind, Fred Vultee (2006) later conducted research that analyzed mainstream news reports in the United States from 1989 through 2001 using the word *Fatwa*. The usage of the term was categorized based on the article's definition. In his research, he identified five categories: *death sentence*, *call to arms*, *opinion or neutrally defined*, *no definition*, and *other*. He found most of the time when a definition was provided, it was explained as being synonymous to a death sentence. He

also noted as time went on that there was an increased usage of the word without a definition. This suggested the meaning of the word had evolved and became accepted into mainstream vernacular according the erroneous definitions provided in the preceding articles (Vultee 2006). In this example, Vultee looked at how a word with cultural significance to a significant Other (Iran) was misinterpreted by the media and evolved into part of America's national identity (Triandafyllidou 1998).

Although this study was based on an erroneous misinterpretation, misinformation can also be spread by the mainstream news media intentionally. This is especially true during periods of social, political, or economic uncertainty. For example, the rationale behind the initial bombings of the 1993 Gulf War in Iraq was not questioned when they began. Later, when the UN finally ruled them to be illegitimate, mainstream news media only reported on this fact briefly. Additionally, early media reports described dramatic Iraqi "incursions" or "raids" that were later explained to have only been Iraqi civilians following UN orders to retrieve their equipment (Kellner 1995). Through the lens of adversarial framing, a narrative for Western readers was constructed from the beginning, which legitimized military involvement by the United States in the region (Bail 2012; Gamson 1995; Riopelle 2013).

The 2006 war between the Hezbollah party and the Israeli army provided another example of the use of framing techniques during wartime. Throughout the war, news organizations framed events based on multiple factors, including "newsroom processes, professional norms, and wider social and political factors" (Kalb 2007; Melki 2014:167). In terms of "wider social and political factors," only two Arabic newspapers published in London were distributed in the Middle East. Al-awsat was one of them and chose to run

24 photographs of the war on their front page from July to August of that year. Of these photographs, 22 showed the death and destruction Israeli forces caused to Lebanon and only 1 demonstrated the same death and destruction Hezbollah caused to Israel. Kalb and Saivetz argued this inequitable reporting was due to al-Awsat attempting to play on “the prejudices of its readers, who felt sympathy for their Arab brethren under Israeli fire” (Kalb 2007:11).

During wartime, insurgencies, counter-insurgencies, and other groups with vested interests also recognize the role media can play in legitimizing their positions (Bernard 2012). Mainstream mass media tends to play into the safe hands of consensus in this regard, reflecting the dominant hegemonic interests of its audience (McMillin 2007). For this reason, it does not matter whether diagnostic or prognostic claims are actually valid or factual, but rather if they can be perceived as *real* representations of world events. “The more culturally believable the claimed evidence, the more credible and broader the appeal” (Benford 2000:620). For this reason, what Bernard called “narrative IEDs” can prove to be quite effective when they are grounded in a proper framework.

Similar to the improvised explosive devices (IEDs) used by insurgents against the United States during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, Narrative IEDs are rumors “constructed of bits and pieces of narrative systems lying unseen to the diplomat, outreach coordinator, or business strategist” until exploding and destroying “expensive and highly sophisticated communications campaigns” (Bernardi 2012:4). A Narrative IED could therefore be part of an existing strategic communication framework intended to advocate for a specific government or non-government organization. Although the term originated during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, it can be applied to other sources

of conflict and media propagation as well. For example, the ISIS self-published magazine *Dabiq* encourages the use of deceptive tactics when confronting the enemies of Allah (Muhajir 2015). In a headline entitled, “Advice for the Leaders of the Islamic State,” the use of spies and spread of misinformation is encouraged. Overall, *Dabiq* provides a blueprint for ISIS members to conduct ‘business’ in preparation of attack to assure the enemy is not aware of their presence until they are ready to attack (Muhajir 2015).

Regarding non-government organizations, some strategies and agendas receive corporate sponsorship, infiltrating mainstream news organizations and effecting United States foreign policies. Some critics, such as Carl Boggs and the *St. Petersburg Times*, have argued that the 1993 Gulf War in Iraq was simply a TV war staged by the United States mainstream news media (Kellnar 1995). Furthermore, McMillin (2007) felt viewing the war through the lenses of corporate influence and media propagation made it easier for Western academics to neatly rationalize the role of mainstream media in a globalized economy. The application of multiple frameworks, including social frameworks, agenda setting, and priming techniques by the media may have led to embellishments in the information reported to accommodate the beliefs and expectations of their targeted audience.

Although there have been previous studies in which a content analysis was conducted on mass media, mainstream news media, and regional media frames of foreign conflicts, there has yet to be an examination of mainstream online news media framing of ISIS and their recruitment of young Westerners. Considering our current economic status, increasing political polarization, and the rise in the number of younger readers turning to online news sources (Bergstrom 2012), I believe a further investigation is warranted into

the way online mainstream news media frames world events. Furthermore, the reporting of events associated with ISIS has undeterminable geopolitical implications for the Middle East and the United States, as well as the lives of Muslim, Arab, and Middle Eastern immigrants around the world. Many mainstream news organizations have covered ISIS's active recruitment of young Westerners and Westerners defection to join them. The most dramatic account of which centered on a video released by ISIS of several young French nationals professing their commitment to the group while burning their passports (Malik 2014). For this reason, I believe this research will aid in understanding how the media mainstream portrays non-Westerners to American news consumers online.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES

This study seeks to examine reports made by mainstream online news sources regarding ISIS's recruitment of young Westerners by answering three questions: (1) how do mainstream online news sources in the United States and Middle East frame ISIS's recruitment, (2) does regional variability affect the framework employed by each mainstream news source, and (3) what factors influence the frameworks used online by each mainstream news source?

- RQ1: How do mainstream online news sources in the United States and Middle East frame the foreign recruitment by ISIS?
 - RQ1a: Do journalists use the language of victim or villain, oppressor or oppressed, or aggressor or defensive in their representations of ISIS or their recruits?

- RQ1b: What primary framework does each journalist use when reporting on ISIS or their recruits? Is a secondary framework employed?
- RQ2: What regional frameworks are used by mainstream news media when reporting on ISIS or ISIS's recruits?
 - RQ2a: Do similar primary frameworks exist within the United States and within the Middle East?
 - RQ2b: Do primary frameworks used in the United States differ from those used in the Middle East?
 - RQ2c: Do secondary frameworks exist in the United States and the Middle East?
 - RQ2d: Do the secondary frameworks used in the United States differ from those used the Middle East?
- RQ3: What factors influence the frameworks used by each news source online?
 - RQ3a: Can political, social, religious, or economic influences be identified in the language of each news organization?
 - RQ3b: How do these influences vary?

Using these research questions, my hypotheses are as follows:

- H1: Journalists from news organizations based in the United States and Middle East will vilify ISIS and use victim language in reference to foreign recruits.
- H2: Journalists from news organizations based in the United States will identify Islam as the primary framework (religious influence) and the secondary framework will be based in cultural differences or regional instability (social or economic influence).

- H3: Journalists from Middle Eastern news organizations will use regional politics (political influence) or Western intervention (social influence) as the primary framework based on their political views toward the United States. Their secondary framework will be based on Middle Eastern or national politics (political influence) with either little or no reference to the West or framed almost entirely around the consequences of Western Intervention (social influence). Religious influence will be identified as the least influential factor. Once again, the hierarchy of framing will depend on their political views toward the United States.

METHODS

Overview

For this study, I conducted a content analysis of two American mainstream news media websites and two Middle Eastern mainstream news media websites reporting on the international recruitment of ISIS. I defined my unit of analysis as any news article published on the website of one of the four news sources selected for my study. Each article had to make reference to foreign recruitment (or defection) of people in relation to ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh. Particular emphasis was placed on any article making reference to Western recruits or defectors and I initially focused on article titles, since it was my belief that article titles with keywords such as, “Western recruits,” “defectors,” “ISIS,” “ISIL,” or “Daesh” placed greater emphasis on the focus of my study. More specific terminology, such as “United States,” “France,” and “European” was also used when initial search failed to yield an adequate sample size. Acronyms such as “U.S.” and “U.K.” (with and

without punctuation) were also used. ISIL, Daesh, or Islamic State, was used interchangeably with ISIS on all search engines, since each source used all four acronyms to identify the same organization. Anytime a search returned an article with a keyword, but the subject matter was unrelated to ISIS, it was excluded.

Data was initially collected according to a more rigorous set of requirements, later determined to be overly stringent. These requirements were then relaxed based on the assumption that loosening them would allow for an increase in sample size without compromising the integrity of the research. For example, after screening numerous articles from Fox News it was determined “terrorist” was used interchangeably with ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh. Additionally, the foreign recruitment of ISIS was discussed in several articles that did not include my keywords in the title. This realization required additional screening, but provided greater insight into the news source’s specific coded language.

Articles were initially coded based on their presentation of group or group members as victims, villains, oppressors, oppressed, aggressive, or defensive, as well as for political, economic, social, or religious influences. After further review, codes entitled “traitor,” “radicalized,” “so-called,” “guilty by association,” and “conscious deception” were added to my codebook based on specific framings identified within each article. Each of these codes are believed to be associated with one of the primary frames described previously based on their application and context. Examples of application and context include the article’s source, the journalist’s proximity (both physically and culturally), prior knowledge of the event, and access. For example, journalists from the United States employ distance framing in their negative or subordinate presentations of Islamic influence on foreign recruits. From that standpoint, framing of proximity is

evident in the way Middle Eastern news sources correct inconsistencies in ISIS's depiction of Islam. Similarly, Middle Eastern news sources viewing Western intervention negatively use adversarial framing to describe the ISIS conflict. For these reason, all codes, coded terms, and associated frames are identified in the codebook located in the appendix. Only vocabulary directly related to the depiction of ISIS, ISIS members, ISIS recruits, conflicts involving ISIS, or with emphasis on religious, political, economic, or social influence will be used in the study.

Sample Selection

A total of 40 articles from Fox News, 50 articles from MSNBC, 42 articles from al Manar, and 57 from al Jazeera were selected from the search engine of each source based on key words associated with ISIS's foreign recruitment or the defection of international citizens to join ISIS. Samples were randomly selected from website search engines of four mainstream news sources. All articles had to be published on or after April 1st, 2014 since this date corresponded with the capture of Mosul and an increase in interest by Western news media. Additionally, preference was given to lengthier articles since these articles provided increased opportunity for coding.

Due to the difficulty associated with assessing the neutrality of a news source, especially considering my focus is on framing bias, each source used in this study was selected based on predetermined oppositional ideology qualifiers. Al-Jazeera and al-Manar were chosen to represent online Muslim/Middle Eastern mainstream news sources based on regional locality and their oppositional views of Western intervention (Amayreh 2006; Mintz 2004; U.S. Department of State 2005). Additionally, since Middle Eastern news organizations are sanctioned or state-run, their views on Western intervention are

assumed to be heavily influenced or directly determined by their state governments. In this regard, al-Jazeera represents the pan-Arab region and is considered to be pro-Western. This is based on al-Jazeera International (AJI) relying “heavily on the three main western news agencies, namely Reuters, Associated Press (AP), and Agence France Presse (AFP) in transmitting news and views from across the Arab world” (Amayreh 2006). Al -Manar on the other hand, is a Lebanese news organization based in Beirut, with an estimated viewership of ten million people worldwide, and more consistently anti-Western views. Consequentially, the United States Department of State has identified them as a terrorist organization and placed on the Terrorist Exclusion List (TEL) for their association with Hizballah and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (U.S. Department of State 2005). They were also banned from broadcasting in France (Mintz 2004; U.S. Department of State 2005). Since my research question postulates Western intervention to have significant role in Middle Eastern news media’s framing, their views on Western intervention (primarily the intervention of the United States) are the best dichotomy for understanding regional frameworks of ISIS and their recruits.

In the United States, Middle Eastern intervention is often based on political discourse of conservative or liberal ideologies. For this reason, Fox news and MSNBC were determined to have similar polar oppositions as my Middle Eastern news sources. Fox news is a mainstream news organization proclaiming itself to be representative of conservative values within the United States, whereas MSNBC is well known for having a liberal bias (Irvine 2013; Stanley 2012).

Although the political frameworks of Fox News and MSNBC differ based on political agendas, both news sources demonstrated, to a greater or lesser extent, examples

of Orientalism, distance framing, adversarial framing, priming and agenda setting, and a sense of national identity when discussing ISIS and ISIS's recruitment. Furthermore, political or religious influences between the United States and the Middle East were evident in the ideological differences expressed in the context of each article. Islam, the Middle East, and Middle Eastern culture were presented as significant others to U.S. national identity, demonstrating regional biases within the framing of each source.

Coding Process

I began by conducting multiple preliminary searches using paired terms such as, "young westerners join ISIS," "ISIS western recruits," "ISIS western defectors," and "ISIS recruits social media," on each news source's website, noting the number of articles found with each search. The acronym "ISIS," "ISIL," or the term "Daesh" were used interchangeably and articles with either of them referencing "recruitment" or another keyword associated with recruitment were identified at first. Once complete, I conducted additional searches using terminology such as "French," "United States," "U.S.," or "U.K" in an attempt to quickly identify articles discussing foreign recruitment by ISIS. Duplicates and non-news items were excluded. When it became evident that keywords found in titles alone would not produce an adequate sample size for my research, I began screening articles for content. Any articles meeting contextual requirements without meeting the title requirements were kept. Additionally, since the majority of al-Manar's articles failed to meet my initial requirement of 500 words or more, I allowed the inclusion of shorter articles with the understanding that longer articles would take priority. All samples used were the results of conducting a keyword

search on each of their respective search engines and were dated between April 1st, 2014 and February 5th, 2015.

With my sample selection complete, I began reviewing each article for themes related to my research. Any language associated with one of my research questions or with one of the frames described above was highlighted and coded in Dedoose. Dedoose was used to maintain records of all articles, codes, excerpts, and analyses as well as to provide easier access to committee members for further review. I began by applying the following codes: “victim,” “villain,” “oppressor,” “oppressed,” “aggressor,” “defensive,” “political influence,” “religious influence,” “economic influence,” and “social influence.” Additionally, I was able to identify several other themes within the context of each source during my initial review of each article. These themes lead to the creation and application of the following codes: “sympathizer,” “radicalized,” “so-called,” “guilty by association,” “enemy other,” and “conscious deception.”

RESULTS

Overview

My search resulted in a total sample size of 189 online news articles, of which 40 came from Fox News, 50 came from MSNBC, 57 came from al Jazeera, and 42 came from al Manar. Each article in the sample met the research criteria by focusing on either ISIS’s active recruitment of foreign fighters, foreigners defecting from their country of origin to join ISIS, or in the actions or behaviors of foreign fighters recruited by or in the name of ISIS. Based on these criteria, it is notable that al Jazeera had both the largest sample size and average word count per article. Al Manar on the other hand, had both the

smallest average word count and the shortest article of the entire sample. Additionally, several search results for Fox News and MSNBC resulted in video files, which were excluded from the study. The purpose of this exclusion was to maintain the focus of this research on text-based news only. From that standpoint, any video transcripts posted online were not excluded from this study since they met the criteria of text-based online news media.

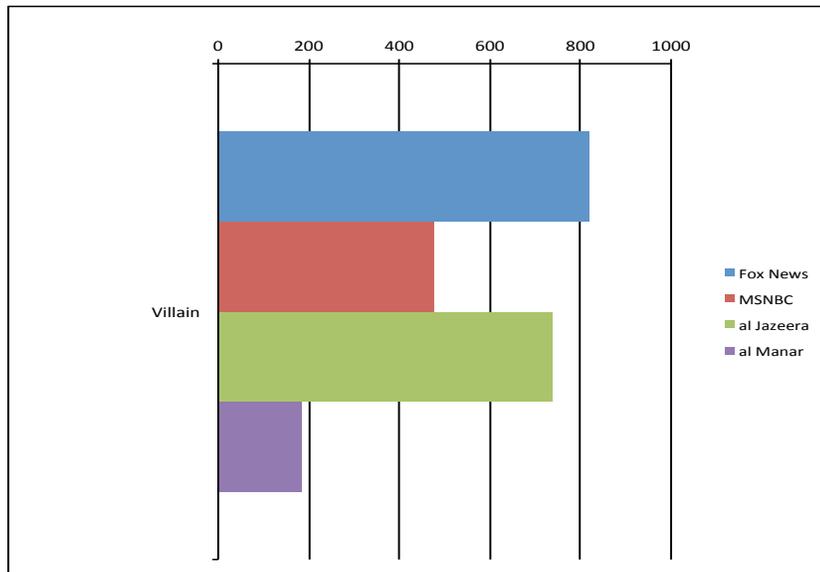
Overall, 7-parent codes and 14-child codes were applied throughout the sample, for a total of 2537 excerpts containing coded language and 6241 unique coding applications. The 7-parent codes identified in the study were as follows: *victim*, *villain*, *so-called*, *religious influence*, *economic influence*, *political influence*, and *social influence*. The 14-child codes included a breakdown of the codes for victim (*oppressed*, *defensive*, *guilty by association*, *conscious deception*), villain (*radicalized*, *enemy other*, *sympathizer*, *oppressor*, *aggressor*), and economic influence (*revenue*, *impoverishment*, *anti-capitalism*, and *western impact*), along with a specific indication for the usage of the code for religious influence (*western view*). The top three codes applied (listed in descending order) were *aggressor*, *sympathizer*, and *religious influence*. The three codes applied least often (listed in ascending order) were *guilty by association* and *anti-capitalism* (tied) followed by *religious influence with a Western-centric view*. Each code was applied based on the context of the article with justifications for each application outlined and explained in greater detail below. Additionally, excerpts identified in my sample were presented as if they were *the voice* of each respective news source and direct quotes were only coded if they reinforced that voice. Oppositional voices very rarely appeared in the context of the article and served only to make the article's main point

appear objective. For this reason, oppositional voices were not included in the coding process.

Coding

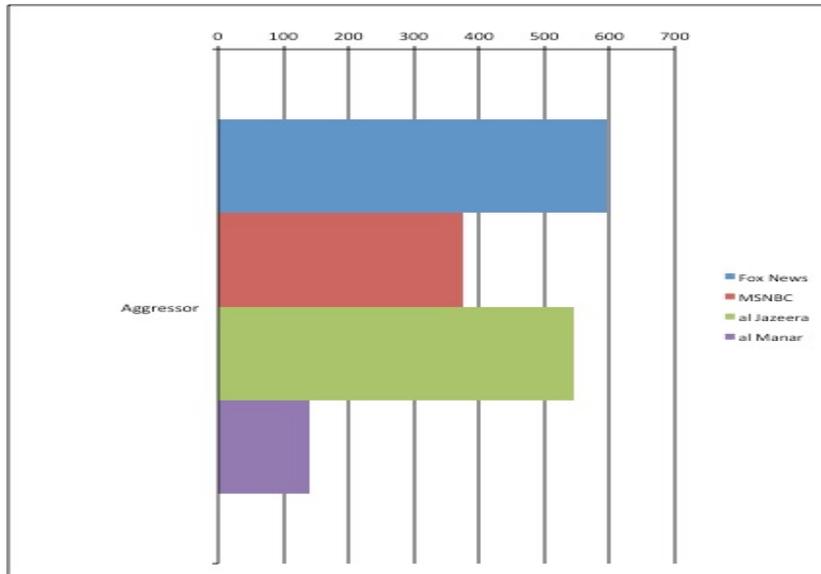
Villain – 3870 Applications (*broken down into five child codes*)

The code for villain refers to any situation in which ISIS or its members are described as a common enemy or threat to the West, initiating an act of aggression on an individual or small group of individuals, religiously predisposed to be in opposition to Western values, oppressing a large group or entire population, or sympathetic to the causes of any person or persons meeting one of the above stated criteria. The application of this code is not intended to imply a particular stance one way or another about ISIS, but rather to infer that the news source has described them in such a way that they are easily identifiable as the villain. From that standpoint, villain was by far the most common code applied to ISIS or their supporters throughout the sample. Since there wasn't anything particularly remarkable about this finding, the parent code villain was broken down into five separate child codes (*enemy other, aggressor, radicalized, oppressor, and sympathizer*) to better identify the ways in which ISIS, ISIS members, or ISIS supporters were described as villains. Please see below for a definition of each child code.



Aggressor – 1652 Applications

The child code aggressor was applied to any situation in which ISIS initiated, called for, or was otherwise depicted as acting aggressively without explicit provocation. This meant for an act to be coded as aggressor, the action could not be portrayed as defensive or combative from a military standpoint, as one might expect to find on a battlefield or during a time of war. From that standpoint, Fox News demonstrated the greatest usage of the aggressor code in framing ISIS as the villain. They chose to report on acts of villainy through the lens of the aggressor more often than any other news source, followed closely by al Jazeera. Furthermore, the frequency of this code’s usage by al Jazeera illustrates that reporting on ISIS’s acts of aggression is not just a U.S. or Western framing of ISIS, but rather one that is equally offensive within the Middle East. Please see below for a diagram depicting the distribution of the aggressor code by news source followed by examples.



Fox News (539 Applications):

The following excerpts are taken from a Fox News television dialogue, which was later transcribed and printed in an online article entitled, “Are We Fighting a New War on Terror?” In this article, we have Miller, D’Amato, Bartiromo, and Rollins discussing ISIS, the rise of Islamic extremism, and President Obama’s response. Although many frames and codes overlap throughout their dialogue, for the purposes of this example I will focus specifically on their framing of ISIS as the aggressor.

BARTIROMO: And should the focus and the emphasis from this team [Obama administration] be economic or foreign policy? What do you think?

D’AMATO: Foreign policy, by far. The threat -- and I know we're going to talk about it -- of the Islamic extremists is absolutely there. It's alive, well and thriving. And Obama should, just on that, giving it up, living in a false world, after spending billions of our treasury and the lives of our young men and women

and allowing Maliki in Iraq to do what he did, to fracture this place and never step in and do anything, we have a real war on our hands. We better realize it. Tell the American people, now, you're not going to beat them just with drones. You're going to have to put boots on the ground (Sunday Morning Futures 2015).

Here, D'Amato is referring to ISIS as "the Islamic extremists." This is evident based on his reference to Maliki in Iraq, who is often credited for increasing sectarianism in Iraq and allowing ISIS to capture Mosul. His argument for boots on the ground is further evidence that he is referring to ISIS, since Islamic extremism in a more general sense would make it difficult to imply the necessity of a military response. From that standpoint, the conversation turns toward the president's response to the attack on Charlie Hebdo, radicalization within the Muslim community, and a need to identify Islamic extremists within that community:

MILLER: Yeah, his administration actually criticized that magazine [Charlie Hebdo], the magazine whose editors and cartoonists are now dead.

MILLER: He criticized them. And he said as late as last week that he does not believe that Islamic extremism is an existential threat to this country. That's his belief. I disagree, but that's what he thinks, so he's acting according to that principle.

D'AMATO: And it's a very real threat that is growing. We're not winning that war. Don't kid yourself.

MILLER: Absolutely.

D'AMATO: We may keep them from taking over Kobani, or drive them out of there, a little town, but the fact of the matter is that the extremists are winning, and no one is standing up to them. Nigeria, where they come in and take 300 young girls -- what are we doing?

BARTIROMO: You've got to believe our allies are just shaking in their boots. For Ukraine, we're sending them, you know, blankets, and then, after the Paris attacks, we miss the -- we miss the walk, and then we bring James Taylor out.

ROLLINS: And part of this is his legacy. Part of this is he pulled out of two wars prematurely. He made campaign promises before he knew the issues. He pulled troops out of both Afghanistan and Iraq. And both of those countries are going to turn bad in the next couple years again, and it's going to be the fundamentalists that are going to do that. And I - - so we're basically saying, "It's all over; we did all we can do, and just pretend they're never going to come here again."

It's, sort of, like, we pretended when 9/11 occurred that the people on the planes were not Saudi Arabians; terrorism wasn't sponsored there. So...

BARTIROMO: Right (Sunday Morning Futures 2015).

In this excerpt, Miller, D'Amato, Bartiromo, and Rollins are criticizing President Obama's foreign policy and response to terrorism, while using Islamic extremism and ISIS interchangeably. Additionally, they begin discussing ISIS from a military standpoint, before later describing them as behaving similarly to the terrorists who attacked the United States on September 11th, 2001. In this regard, both the 9/11 terrorists and ISIS are believed to be initiating unprovoked acts of aggression against civilian

populations – outside the realm of traditional warfare. Although several applications of coding can be applied throughout the course of this conversation, the comparison to ISIS and the 9/11 terrorists warranted a code for aggression. Once again, this finding was not remarkable in and of itself, as articles from Fox News exhibited multiple examples of overlapping villainy codes.

When compared with other news sources however, it proved to be much more interesting. Initially I expected to find greater similarity in villainy coding between news sources from the same region and greater differences between news sources from different regions. I believed U.S. news sources would use the code for aggressor more often, due to the simplicity of understanding an act of aggression is wrong if unprovoked and the relationship between simple understandings, distance framing, and Orientalism. This was not the case however, as Al Jazeera was identified as using aggressor language more so than MSNBC.

Al Jazeera (432 Applications):

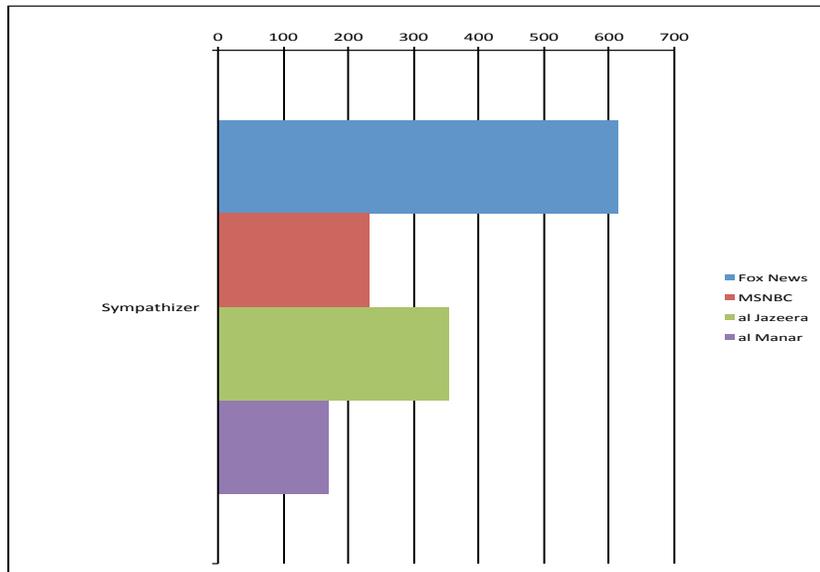
Perhaps more urgently, however, anti-refugee hysteria can distract from important policy debates that are critical to staving off more attacks, said Janice Gross Stein, founding director of the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto and a panelist at HISF. Noting that the attackers in Paris were mostly European-born, she argued that the violence says more about France's domestic challenges integrating its Muslim minority than it does about war refugees. "This is fundamentally a story about Europeans attacking Europeans, with very minimal logistical and financial support," Stein said (Pizzi 2015).

Here, we see al Jazeera rebuking the Oriental narrative often attributed to the Middle East by Western media. Furthermore, they go on to turn the Oriental narrative on the West by attributing the aggressive acts taking place in France as being a European problem. In either case (the Western narrative or the rebuttal used by al Jazeera), an act of aggression perpetrated by those claiming loyalty to ISIS is identified, as the reason for public fears of the recent influx of Middle Eastern refugees.

With the above understanding in mind, 327 applications of aggressor were identified in MSNBC, and 99 in al Manar. MSNBC used similar strategies as Fox New, by layering multiple child codes for villainy via distance framing and Orientalism. The key factor here is that they did not do it as often as al Jazeera. Al Manar on the other hand, opted to go more often with a bare bones approach to journalism. Biases in their reporting were identified most often through their usage of the “so-called” code (described later) or by selecting only excerpts from interviews that fit the narrative of the article.

Sympathizer – 1371 Applications

The code for sympathizer was applied to any situation in which a person living outside of Iraq or Syria was described as a defector, traitor, sympathizer, recruit, or terrorist who chose to support the goals of ISIS despite ISIS being considered a terrorist organization. For this reason, arguments are often made by the journalist or by the people they interview for these people to be incarcerated or to have their citizenships revoked. Please see below for examples of this code’s application.



Fox News (596 Applications):

Here again, I found Fox News leading the pack with the most usage of language requiring the sympathizer code. Al Jazeera, MSNBC, and Al Manar followed respectively, in a similar fashion as the code for aggressor. Sympathizer language was actually used more frequently than the aggressor code and shared a high correlation, since reports of sympathizer activities often focus on acts of homegrown terrorism. An example of sympathizer coding and the correlation with the aggressor code can be cited in the previous Fox News excerpt:

MILLER: Yeah, his administration actually criticized that magazine [Charlie Hebdo], the magazine whose editors and cartoonists are now dead.

MILLER: He criticized them. And he said as late as last week that he does not believe that Islamic extremism is an existential threat to this country. That's his

belief. I disagree, but that's what he thinks, so he's acting according to that principle (Sunday Morning Futures 2015).

In this example, the article is referencing an attack on the news magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, in which French nationals killed several employees over an article making fun of the prophet Muhammad. Although these terrorists were not directly associated with ISIS, Miller equates them to ISIS and Islamic extremists in an attempt to essentialize ISIS, Islam, and terrorism as being one in of the same – with the same goals. Another example of this type of Orientalism with a spin on proximity framing can be found in the following excerpt:

In some ways, these 751 areas designated by the French government -- officially called zones urbaines sensibles (sensitive urban zones), or ZUS, for short, but referred to as “no-go” zones by some observers -- resemble poor sections of America’s cities where gangs rule, crime and drugs are rampant and police only enter with significant backup. But in the wake of last week’s massacre at Charlie Hebdo and the fact that hundreds of radicalized Muslims who went to train or fight in Syria and Iraq could return, some experts fear the next terror attack will be launched from inside one of France's no-go zones (De Vries 2015).

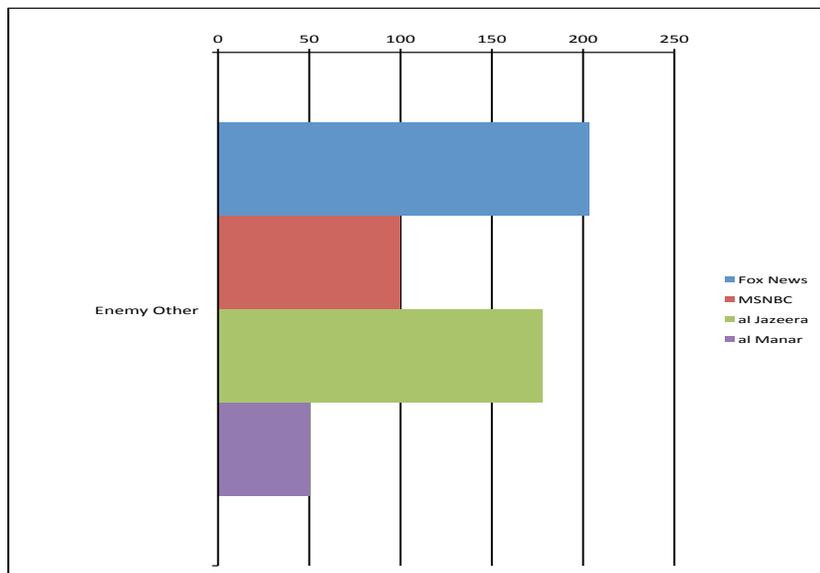
Here again, an overlap of coded language occurs, blurring the lines between ISIS, Islam, and acts of homegrown terrorism. The article goes a step further however, by comparing France’s “no-go” zones to neighborhoods in the U.S. with high levels of gang,

crime, and/or drug activity. By using proximity framing in this way, the story is made to feel more real to an American reader, while implying a need for similar concerns.

Furthermore, a connection is implied to exist between ISIS, the terrorists who attacked Charlie Hebdo, and French nationals who happen to be Muslim.

Enemy Other – 531 Applications

The code for enemy other was applied any time ISIS, ISIS’s actions, or the actions of someone believed to be associated with ISIS were depicted as villainous, but not in a way that would fit the definition of an aggressor, sympathizer, oppressor, or radicalization code. This was generally explained in such a way that it was assumed ISIS is the enemy. Please see below for example excerpts of this code.



Fox News (203 Applications):

The following excerpt is from the same article cited above. In this excerpt, Miller discusses the way President Obama describes issues of terrorism (primarily ISIS) and his belief that Obama is refusing to identify our true enemy out of fear that by doing so, he will make enemies with all Muslims.

MILLER: He will not say it because it is a policy issue. This is not a mistake.

This is not something he didn't -- he forgot to include. He believes that it is crazy to make enemies out of 1.6 billion Muslims on the planet, that that's a war America cannot win. So he will not use that word, even though I and others have argued, many, many experts say you cannot fight something effectively that you cannot identify (Sunday Morning Futures 2015).

Within the context of the article, Miller is making an argument on the grounds of what he believes to be an ongoing war between the United States and Islam. From his perspective, he has identified the Muslim population as the significant Other to the U.S. national identity and positioned Islam in opposition to his and his viewers' cultural values. Bartiromo challenges this idea, before D'Amato steps in to defend his colleague with an incriminating argument against the Saudis (a U.S. ally) and political correctness:

BARTIROMO: But talking about extremists is not talking about all Muslims, Senator?

D'AMATO: That's – that's absolutely correct...but what you see is people backing away from it. Here, even in New York City, the NYPD has got to make -- they can't use the words "Islamic extremist." And they're going through this contortion to settle a suit. This is nonsense. You know what's happening today? We're becoming so politically correct -- I think that's what it is -- we're afraid to say the facts and put them out there. Poor Joe Biden, when he criticized Saudi Arabia and Turkey for not doing their part, they made him apologize. Well, he was right. Who do you think has been funding these extremists groups for years? The Saudis. They give \$2 billion a year for education in these sharia schools, et cetera. And what they say is, basically, "You leave us alone in Saudi Arabia and we give you this money." And so he has to apologize? Turkey, you think they really helped us up until recently (Sunday Morning Futures 2015)?

In the following example from al Jazeera (178 Applications), ISIL and the Assad regime are identified as enemies to the United States and Turkey. Additionally, the “goal of creating an “ISIL-free zone” is described in such a way that a reader can easily ascertain that an area with ISIL in it is a bad thing. Evidence of boundary and adversarial framing can also be identified in the way the Free Syrian Army (FSA) are provided aid from Washington and Ankara to combat ISIL and Assad – the implied adversaries of each government. It should also be noted that al Jazeera once again had the second highest frequency of applications for a villain child code:

Dubbed the "moderate" rebels by Washington, the Free Syrian Army is the Obama administration's favored faction in Syria in the fight against ISIL and the Assad regime. But a trickle of U.S. aid to the group has been inadequate to make a difference on the ground, and some analysts argue that pumping the rebels with arms will only prolong the country's war. The FSA may have the most to gain from Turkey's goal of creating an "ISIL-free zone" in northern Syria. Ankara, which is aligned with Washington in opposition to Assad, has long called for more aid to the FSA and argued that the zone would provide a safe haven for training and arming FSA factions. Some of the group's fighters have already received training from the U.S., though it has been reported that fewer than 100 men were involved in those programs (Zahriyeh 2015).

Al Manar on the other hand, had only 50 applications of the enemy other code, significantly fewer than any other source. This was mostly due to their tendency to provide a very short, to the point, bare bones style of journalism. They used similar language to describe ISIS (i.e. "terrorist"), but did so in a more formal, less unifying way in comparison to their counterparts. For example, here, ISIS is referred to as only *one* of the "terrorist groups" supplying Syrian oil to Turkey:

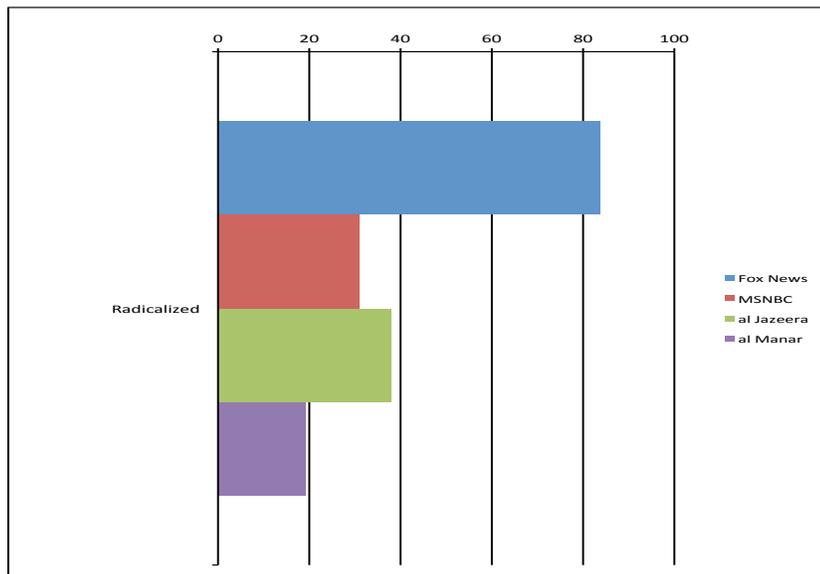
Turkey backstabbed Russia by downing the Russian warplane and acted as accomplices of the terrorists, Russian President Vladimir Putin said. . . . Russia has for a long time been aware of oil going from Syria under the control of terrorists to Turkey, Putin said. The money finances terrorist groups. "ISIL has big money,

hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars, from selling oil. In addition they are protected by the military of an entire nation. One can understand why they are acting so boldly and blatantly. Why they kill people in such atrocious ways. Why they commit terrorist acts across the world, including in the heart of Europe,” the Russian leader said. The downing of the Russian warplane happened despite Russia signing an agreement with the US to prevent such incidents in Syria, Putin stressed. Turkey claims to be part of the US-led coalition fighting against ISIL in Syria, he added (Al Manar 2015).

First, it is important to note that al-Manar is Hizbollah’s media and Hizbollah is a Shi’a paramilitary/political organization that is very involved in Syria as part of the Assad-Iranian-Russian alliance. They hold a deep mistrust of salafi/Wahhabi groups, which are closely associated with ISIS’s interpretation of Islam, and have no pretense to start a Caliphate, as this is not a Shi’a goal (Contractor 2016). From that standpoint, direct quotes from Vladimir Putin are used consistently throughout the article to imply a relationship between ISIS and the Turkish government. Al Manar goes with a bare bones approach to journalism, which serves to separate them from ISIS and the conflict (distance framing). This is evident in their critical approach to describing any connections between ISIS and Islam or in the way ISIS’s territorial claims are described in relation to the creation of a Caliphate.

Radicalized – 172 Applications

I applied the code radicalized to any instance in which the article described someone as going or having gone through a transformative process in which they started out socially adept, before becoming a reclusive member of ISIS or an ISIS sympathizer. This process implies that at some point a radicalized person adopted a set of values in opposition to those celebrated in their home country. In terms of ISIS, this is often associated with Islam and a loss of agency. Please see below for examples of the application of this code.



Fox News (72 Applications):

Ibsen said stateside handlers help steer recruits to Africa once they have been radicalized (Tilsley 2016).

In this example, the article explicitly describes radicalization as a process, in which recruits started out in one state (normal), before becoming something different

(radical). It is also important to note that identifying Islam as playing a key role in the radicalization process frames the entire religion of Islam as the significant Other in relation to *normal* Western culture. Although this code followed a similar pattern as prior villain codes, with Fox News having the most applications, followed by al Jazeera, MSNBC, and al Manar respectively, the number of applications identified in Fox News articles was significantly greater than any of the other news sources.

Al Jazeera (38 Applications):

One day she disappeared and wound up in Syria. “It is psychological kidnapping,” said Sahra’s mom, Severine Mehenni. “I don’t know for how long Sahra was indoctrinated. She was spending a lot of time on the Internet. But they must have told her various things and brainwashed her to make her reach this point (Inside Story Team 2014).

In this excerpt we have Sahra’s mom describing the indoctrination of her daughter into ISIS. She describes the organization as a cult who brainwashed her daughter into believing their religious views. By contextualizing it as a “psychological kidnapping,” she maintains the vilification of ISIS, while defending her daughter’s loss of agency. From that standpoint:

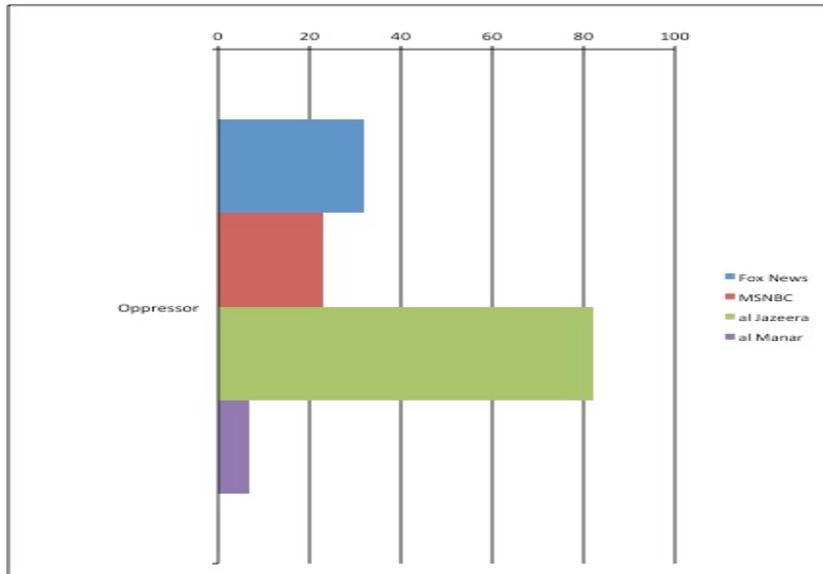
Some experts on radicalization argue that law enforcement officers should also work to prevent radicalization, rather than waiting until a suspect crosses a line and amassing incriminatory evidence in the process. “If there are enough

indications to send an undercover officer to a person we're losing [to extremism], then I ask myself the question, what could we have done to make sure the subject doesn't further lose itself on the path of violence?" said Jessika Soors, anti-radicalization officer in Vilvoorde, a town in Belgium, a country that has the highest number of ISIL recruits per capita of all Western European nations (De Bode 2015).

Once again, radicalization is described as a process related to extremism, which eventually leads a person down the path of violence. Since it is commonly understood that violence is not a path we want anyone to go down, it is understandable that we should want to prevent radicalization from occurring. By framing it this way, a relationship is established between radicalization, extremism, violence, and ISIS. Furthermore, since violence is oppositional to our own values (and associated with radicalization and ISIS), the article successfully frames ISIS as a villain without creating a direct link to Islam.

Oppressor – 144 Applications

The code of oppressor was applied any time an article described ISIS's actions as oppressing an entire population or group of people. This code is distinct from the code of aggressor, in that an act of physical aggression is not always present. Additionally, oppressive acts can usually be associated with a position of governmental authority. Please see below for examples of this code's application.



Al Jazeera (82 Applications):

With this above understanding in mind, this particular villain code is the first and only instance in which al Jazeera demonstrated a greater frequency of villainy than Fox News. This is important since it relates distinctly to acts perpetrated on *a people* and from *a position of authority* and do not necessarily require violence. Although previously identified acts of aggression included multiple people, they were not perpetrated from a position of authority on people for being a member of a specific group, as demonstrated in the following example:

Al-Khanssaa Brigade...says women should leave the house only to practice medicine, teach or study religion or if it has been ruled that she must participate in a “jihad.” The ultimate purpose of a woman’s life...is to produce children. These ideas, originally written in Arabic, stand in stark contrast to much of ISIL’s rhetoric in English. Many European women fighting with the group have emphasized the more “adventurous” aspects of joining its cause, according to

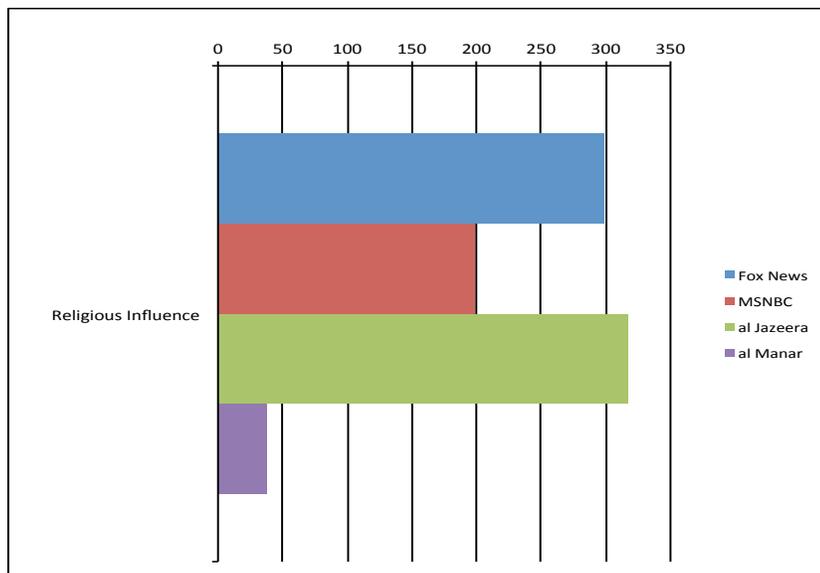
Katherine Brown, a defense studies lecturer at King's College in London. "The [ISIL] narrative provides young women from North America and Europe with a meaningful purpose of their lives that they don't necessarily have in the West," she said. The guide's sober picture of what is expected of Muslim women exposes as fabrications the social media accounts posted by many Western female ISIL fighters, said the Quilliam Foundation, which translated the document into English. "Just as they have sexed up what it is to be a woman living in the so-called [ISIL] caliphate, this document dresses it down [for the women of the Arabian Peninsula]. Women, it is unambiguously stated, are homemakers and mothers," the foundation said in concluding remarks to its translation....In couching its message in religious terms borrowed from the Wahhabist branch of Islam, Brown said, the group may be pushing its political goal of opposing the ruling powers of Saudi Arabia. "By saying, 'We're more Muslim than you in a way, we're going to appeal to your citizens and demonstrate that we're more Islamic than you are,'" Brown said, "they set themselves apart as a challenge to the monarchy of the Gulf."...There was no mention of the thousands of women who have reportedly been raped and enslaved by ISIL fighters since they launched their brutal campaign across Syria and Iraq (De Bode 2015).

Here we have an example of oppression in which violence is not just implied, but enacted. This excerpt describes the different messages ISIS uses to recruit women from different regions of the world. They attempt to use proximity framing to sell themselves to the women of each region, by offering adventure to Westerners and describing

themselves as being more religiously devout to the women of the Arabian Peninsula. Furthermore, the sanctioned practice of their members raping and enslaving women goes well beyond simple acts of aggression and is more so indicative of a culture of rape and enslavement.

Religious Influence – 852 Applications (*excluding the child code for western view*)

The code for religious influence was applied any time an article described the actions of ISIS to be religiously motivated. Since the purpose of this code is to detect religious motivation beyond a cosmetic exterior, their name (full or acronym) was excluded from the coding criteria. Furthermore, language will be coded to indicate religious influence to determine the extent to which religion is identified as a primary motivation. Please see below for an example of this code’s usage.



Al Jazeera (317 Applications):

In my sample, al Jazeera identified religious influence more frequently than any other news source. This was interesting considering my initial hypothesis was that Middle Eastern news sources would demonstrate political or social influences as primary factors behind the rise of ISIS with religion having a lesser influence. From that standpoint, it would be too simplistic to say religion alone influences ISIS however, but its inspiration cannot be denied. The following excerpt from an article written by David Johnston (2015), provides an example of how ISIS uses religion to influence recruits, and some of the issues that accompany this framing:

ISIL is riven by problems we can exploit, especially its self-declared role as enforcer of Islamic theological purity based on perverse interpretations of the Quran. In this, ISIL follows other religious extremists, such as ultra-Orthodox Jews and fundamentalist Christians and Hindus, in its selective interpretations of religious texts and its insistence that others yield to its beliefs or die (Johnston 2015).

From there, Johnston goes on to describe a final battle between Muslims and Christians along with justification for killing other Muslims:

ISIL teaches that the end of the world will soon begin, after an epic battle in which Muslims defeat Christians. Such apocalyptic fantasies help explain why

ISIL killed Muslims in Beirut. The Iranian-backed Hezbollah is, to ISIL, composed of Shia apostates who must be destroyed (Johnston 2015).

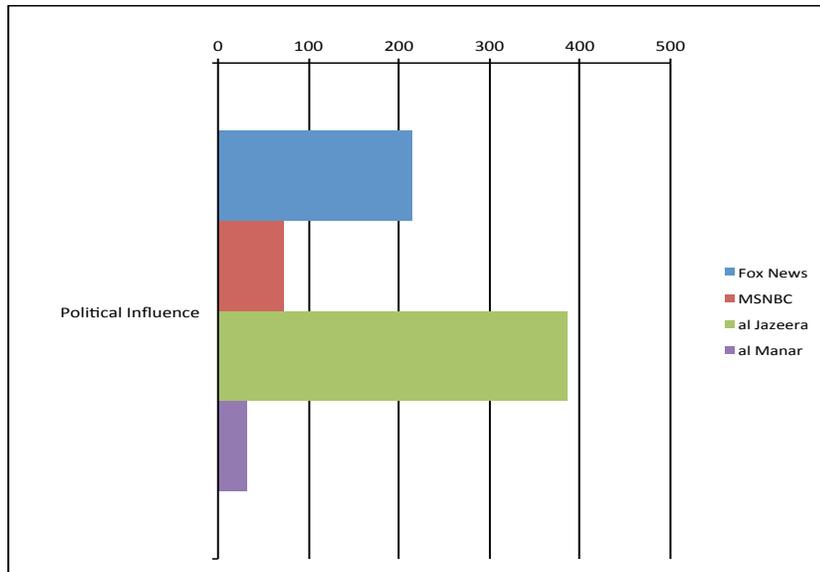
In this example, implications are made that ISIS is and their supporters are compelled by religious influences. Furthermore, Christians and Muslims are framed as adversaries who will face in a final holy war, in which ISIS will be victorious. By identifying Islam in opposition to Christianity and against the “Shia apostates”, ISIS is able to frame Christianity as the significant Other to Islam, create a distance frame between Islam and the West, a proximity frame for all Sunni Muslims to view ISIS from, and posit all Shiites as adversaries that must be destroyed.

Political Influence – 710 Applications

The code for political influence was applied any time an article described ISIS’s actions to be politically motivated. This meant their actions were either specifically identified as political or occurred in response to government forces (foreign or domestic). It is important to note that religion and politics go hand in hand in many nations, Middle Eastern or otherwise. As a result, it can become difficult to distinguish where to draw the line between Church and State. For instance, the concept of a Caliphate derives from the earliest Islamic period (Contractor 2016), but has all of the implications of a governing body (Vick 2014). For this reason, references to the Caliphate, or anything associated with law or the governing of people within a region, were identified as having a political influence. In terms of the Caliphate, it can be associated with 2 separate, but interrelated primary influences. The concept derives from Islam (religious influence), but has

functions, which can be compared to that of a state government (political influence).

Please see below for application examples of this code from each news source.



Al Jazeera (387 Applications):

As stated in the definition for political influence, although some influences are unmistakably religious or political, a lot of overlap still exists. For instance, in the excerpt provided as an example for religious influence, political influences are also evident.

Besides Tunisia, other countries in the top five include Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Jordan, each of which were accused of turning a blind eye in the early days of Syria's uprising as their nationals streamed into Syria to fight their regional rival, President Bashar al-Assad. To Soufan, this concentration underlines that ISIL, at its core, remains "essentially a local and regional phenomenon" (Pizzi 2015).

Here we have the governments of Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Jordan, and Syria all cited as having a political influence on the rise of ISIL. Additionally, social influences are evident in their use of social media and in their statement that ISIL is, “at its core...essentially a local and regional phenomenon.” In this regard, al Jazeera created a proximity frame around the issue, which may have served to mitigate or counterbalance competing narratives of Western influence. Examples of these narratives include those framing ISIS sympathies as being motivated by the Western rejection of Muslim migrants (p. 31) or that frame ISIS as a response to U.S. foreign policies (p.28).

Another example of the blur between political and religious influence can be found in the political and religious propaganda magazine *Dabiq*, as reported by al Jazeera in the article entitled, “Behind the Barbarism: Misreading Online Militant Magazines”:

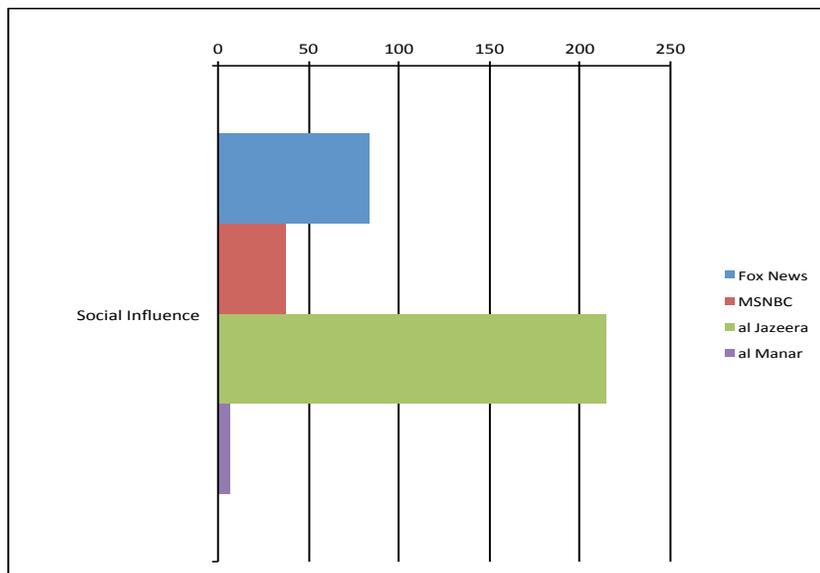
The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) recently released the fourth issue of its slick online magazine, *Dabiq*. The latest issue offers a mix of photo essays, reports on ISIL’s activities, political propaganda and strategic imperatives. The editors say their mission is to offer a forum for discussions on theological concepts such as hijrah (migration), jihad (holy war) and tawhid (monotheism).... Beyond their aesthetics, however, the magazines emphasize the groups’ political rather than theological motivations to justify their actions as response to Western transgressions (Zakaria 2014).

From the above excerpts, ISIL is framed as disseminating political propaganda under the guise of religious theology – further blurring the lines between religious and

political influences. In this regard, it should also be noted that al Jazeera had the highest number of codes for religious and political influence.

Social Influence – 343 Applications

The code for social influence was applied any time the article described ISIS to be socially motivated, meaning their motivations are based on cultural or social views, social movements, social media, community, or regional locality. Although social influences can exist outside of religious or political influence, they are not exclusive. For this reason, it is possible for an action to be considered indicative of social influence, social and religious influence, or social, religious, and political influence, if the primary elements of all three influences are present (i.e. religion, government, community). Please see below for applications of this code.



Al Jazeera (215 Applications):

Regarding social influence, al Jazeera once again has the highest number of applications throughout the sample. This is somewhat in line with my original hypothesis in that it was expected for social influences to be identified more so by the Middle Eastern news sources in my sample than those from the United States. What was not expected was that al Jazeera would focus more on all of the greater underlying influences (religious, political, social) than any other news source in the sample. In this regard, they tended to frame the actions of ISIS from both a distance and within proximity, demonstrating a greater and more complex understanding of their theological, political, and social motivations:

ISIL's real or imagined attractions respond to every need in the life of a Muslim living in poverty, vulnerability and hopelessness in autocratic states. The promise of spiritual, political, personal, communitarian, material, psychological, national, social and cosmic fulfillment cannot be eradicated by military action, let alone digital media strategies. Recruits to ISIL who suffer profound deficiencies or vulnerabilities in their lives and join the Islamic State instantly shed their troubles and start a whole new life, often including taking on a new name. ISIL promises heaven on earth, power, equity, material comforts and credits for the next life. What it delivers may be very different, but their recruits are already living in societies that have failed to deliver (Khouri 2015).

In this excerpt, each major influence identified in this study (religious, political, social) comes into play and proximity framing is used to humanize the conditions of recruits prior to recruitment. To prevent readers from confusing this explanation with a pro-ISIL stance however, critical language is used at the beginning and end to express the belief that ISIL is not being completely honest or forthright with recruits.

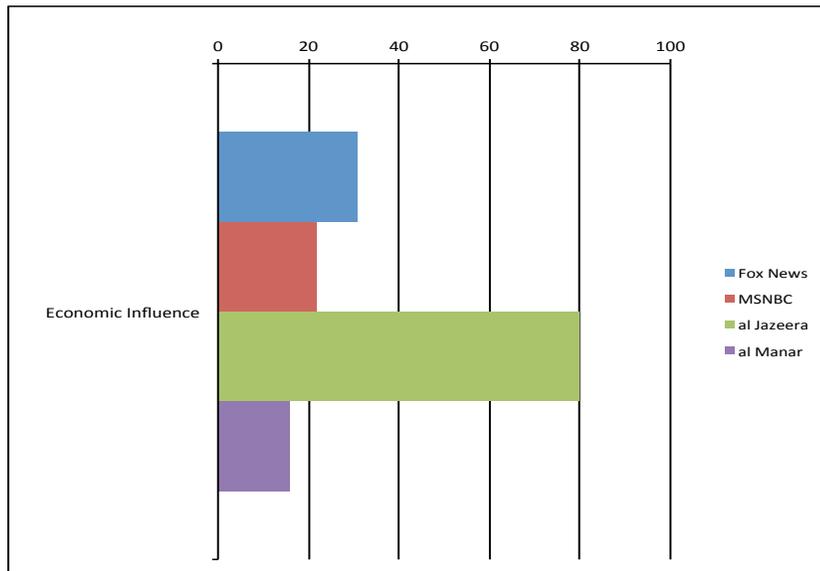
Fox News, although having fewer applications than al Jazeera (84), demonstrated the second highest number of codes for social influence. Since they were expected to focus primarily on fear-based motivations (aggressor, oppressor, radicalized, sympathizer, etc.), which are more relatable to Oriental, adversarial, or distance framing, it was interesting to see an emphasis on social influences. From that standpoint, their depictions of social factors were often convoluted by other influences or served to frame Muslims, immigrants, or other European nations in a poor light. A good example of this framing is evident in the following article:

Meanwhile, immigrants, particularly those from northern Africa, have difficulty landing good jobs or climbing in French society. A Newsweek correspondent estimated in August that 40 percent of young French Muslims from immigrant backgrounds are unemployed, and a 2010 Stanford University study found that a Christian of African heritage was two and a half times more likely to get called for a job interview in France than an equally qualified Muslim with the same ethnic background (De Vries 2015).

Furthermore, al Manar gave much less consideration to social influences. This can be attributed to their bare bones style of reporting, which focused primarily on events as they happened. In the end, they provided little to no analysis, with more vague or sparsely critical language left to communicate any underlying messages.

Economic Influence – 182 Applications (*broken down into four child codes*)

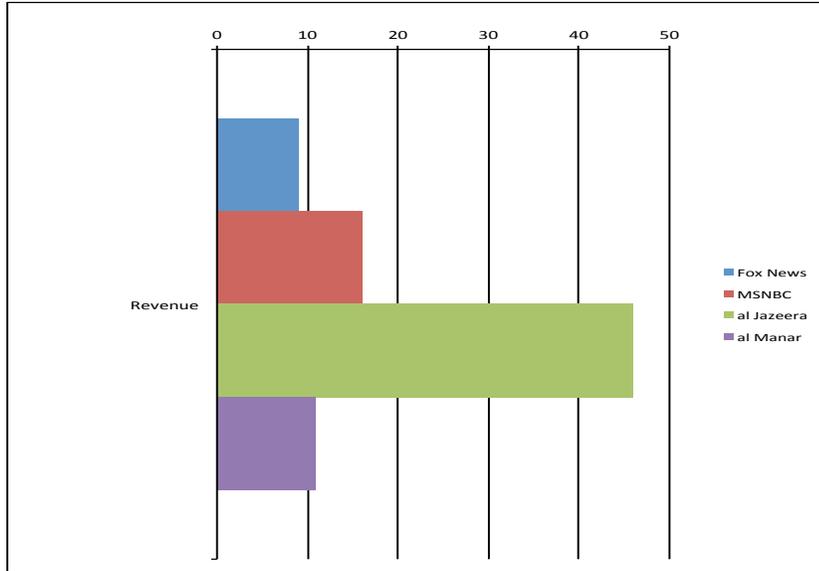
The code of economic influence was initially applied any time an article described economic factors in reference to ISIS. Since this was a very broad definition, the code was later broken down into four child codes to better identify specific economic factors related to ISIS influence (*Revenue, Impoverishment, Anti-Capitalism, Western Impact*). Please see below for a definition of each child code followed by excerpt example(s).



Revenue – 81 Applications

This code was applied anytime the article made reference to funding ISIS. This was usually derived from kidnapping, slavery, and illegal oil sales to outside

governments, or by contributions received from outside sources in support of the Caliphate.



Al Jazeera (46 Applications):

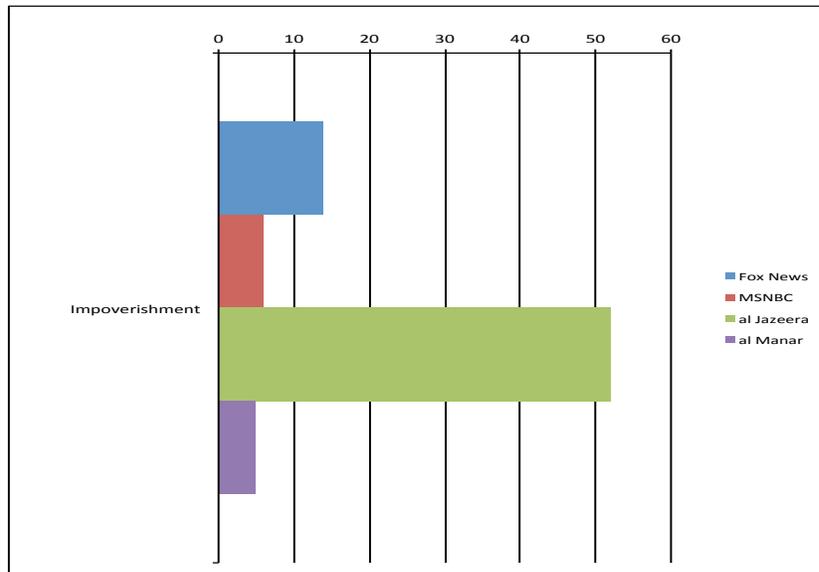
ISIL's ascent is partly a product of the group's ability to fund itself through proceeds from captured oil fields, which generate up to \$2 million from 50,000 barrels per day, while weapons, supplies and recruits pass easily across the border with Turkey. "Thomas Sanderson at the Center for Strategic and International Studies said financing sources include "refining, shipment, trade, granaries and sales of government equipment." He added that revenue also comes from "kidnap for ransom, theft of antiquities, extortion from truckers and taxation of [6 million] local people." "The CIA estimates that ISIL fields more than 30,000 fighters, of whom about half are foreign, including at least 2,000 who hold Western passports. " With a \$2 billion war chest, the group pays fighters \$400 per month

— twice what other similar groups offer. ISIL is considered powerful and self-sufficient, hardly vulnerable to sanctions (Piven 2014).

Here, ISIL is described as an organization capable of generating revenue of up to \$2 million a day, of which they use to pay for weapons and recruits. This is an important influence on the organization when you consider that many of their recruits live in poverty (*see impoverishment*). Since this revenue allows ISIS to avoid sanctions and pay fighters twice what they could receive elsewhere, it is a major influence on their ability to attract and maintain membership. From that standpoint, al Jazeera identified revenue to be a significantly greater influence on their ability to recruit than MSNBC (16 applications), al Manar (12 applications), or Fox News (9 applications).

Impoverishment – 77 Applications

The code for impoverishment was applied anytime an article stated or implied that the impoverishment of recruits prior to joining ISIS was a factor in their decision to join. Please see below for an example of this code's application.



Al Jazeera (52 Applications):

In the U.S., “you don’t have those hotbeds that you see in Europe — neighborhoods or communities where peer-to-peer recruitment takes place,” said Ali Soufan, the CEO of the Soufan Group, a consultancy based in New York City. With a few exceptions, ISIL “hasn’t been able to find fertile grounds in American Muslim communities,” he said. This is, he explained, partly because U.S. Muslim communities are very diverse ethnically and in terms of religious sect, which inclines them towards integration. They’re also among the wealthiest and most educated Muslim communities in the world, he said (Pizzi 2015).

In this example, the CEO of the Soufan Group is attempting to explain why ISIS has had greater success in recruiting from Western Europe than the United States. He identifies several factors, including ethnic and religious

diversity, wealth, and education, as having an impact on their inability to attract a large number of U.S. based recruits. By identifying the wealth of the people in the United States as a factor, the CEO (and therefore the article) implies that a lack of wealth (among other factors) is part of the issue in Western Europe. This important issue does not go unnoticed by other news sources, as stated in the following excerpt from Fox News:

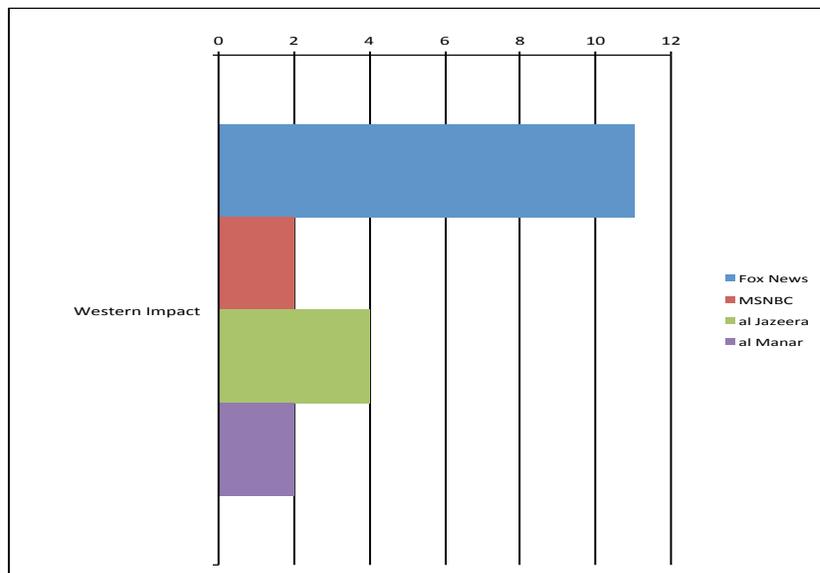
“You see these disenfranchised people, and it’s a very good recruitment pool,” said Scott Stewart, the vice president of tactical analysis of Stratfor Global Intelligence. “(Jihadists) are looking for angry, underemployed guys. It’s a good target audience for them” (De Vries 2015).

In this excerpt, a similar connection is made between impoverished Muslim communities and ISIS recruitment. “Angry, underemployed guys” from a community of “disenfranchised people” are identified as a “good target” for ISIS recruitment, because they already do not feel like they are part of Western society. Furthermore, a lack of income and available resources allows ISIS to capitalize on the inadequacies of Western society. They offer an alternative that is more inclusive of ethnic and religious identities, with the opportunity to achieve greater equality. As noted by MSNBC, “Foreign fighters, who are the highest paid recruits in the ISIS ranks, earn as much as a \$1,000 a month, two Syrian sources said,” we gather that \$1,000 a month is a substantial income for ISIS fighters to earn living in Syria (Miklaszewski and Siemaszko 2016). By converting to USD, readers in the West garner a better understanding of the financial reality Syrians

face and how lucrative joining ISIS can be. In the end, 65.5 percent of al Jazeera articles provided an economic analysis compared to 18.2 percent of those from Fox News, 7.8 percent from MSNBC, and 6.5 percent from al Manar, proving to have a more economically grounded approach to understanding their rise to power.

Western Impact – 19 Applications

This code was applied anytime ISIS was described as having an impact on Western economies. Although the information garnered from this code did not prove to be particularly remarkable and stepped outside of the realm of indicating a direct influence on ISIS, I felt it was important since it demonstrated a unique twist on their economic impact on the West. Please see below for excerpts and examples of the application of this code.



Fox News (11 Applications):

Language meeting the qualifications of this code was used very few times, however the majority of the time it was used was by Fox News. In this regard, Fox News demonstrated a greater concern about the impact ISIS would have on the West and how that impact would translate to a negative impact on the rest of the world (except ISIS), a focus that might be attributable to Fox's traditional business constituency and strongly pro-Capitalist leanings. An example of this can be found in a conversation between Rothkopf, Bartiromo, and Moran posted in Fox News:

ROTHKOPF: ...if Europe is thrown into unrest or if European nationalists produce backlash to the terrorism, which is a -- a kind of natural reaction, but one that we have to be careful of, and that produces political unrest and division in Europe, which is financially at risk, where you have Greece on the verge of an exit, where you have Russia in a very precarious position. Then you could actually see some of these terrorist acts having a consequence in the -- in terms of George-economic terms, as well as the political terms that we've seen so far.

BARTIROMO: And we'll see, because we are, in fact, beginning a new week, which is a big week in business, with fourth quarter earnings coming out. And yet the markets have real momentum, so far not getting impacted by any of this.

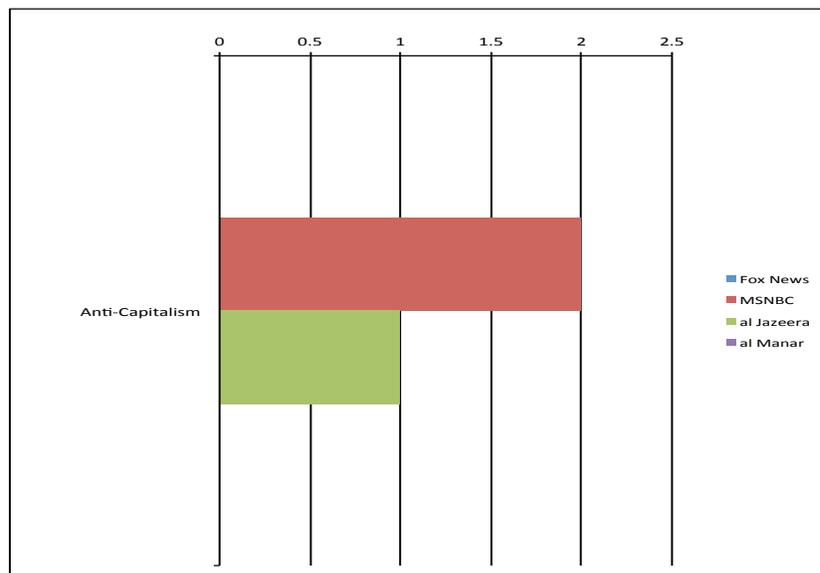
ROTHKOPF: That's right. I think the markets have learned to hedge their way around problems in the Middle East. They've seen them a long time. They found new sources of energy. This region is producing a lot of headlines, but I think gradually growing less and less relevant to the rest of the world because the rest of the world is finding a way to isolate itself from the madness that's dictated trends in this region for the past number of years.

MORAN: We think of that as a national security issue because we're not dependent upon foreign oil coming from the Middle East, which is in such turmoil, but also think about less revenues going to terrorists and those who fund terrorists from oil profits the lower the price is. If we can take care of ourselves, we can improve our economy and we also can reduce the money that flows to terrorists around the globe (Sunday Morning Futures 2015).

In this example, we see excerpts from a conversation between Rothkopf, Bartiromo, and Moran on the economic relationship the U.S. has with the Middle East. Moran states that breaking U.S. dependency on foreign oil will have a positive impact on national security and reduce funding to terrorists or those countries supporting terrorism. In doing so, he discusses both the impact ISIS has on the West and the reciprocating affect the West could have on ISIS if it were to become self-sufficient. From that standpoint, this code was only identified 4 times in al Jazeera and 2 times in both MSNBC and al Manar.

Anti-Capitalism – 3 Applications

Another economically influenced child code that was applied with very few applications was the child code for anti-capitalism. This code was applied anytime the article framed ISIS as being wholly or partially anti-capitalist. This was initially coded because, due to ISIS’s adamant disdain toward the United States, and the U.S.’s economy being so heavily vested in capitalism, I believed anti-capitalism would be identified more often than it was as an influence on ISIS. In the end, there were only three applications of this code identified – 2 in MSNBC and 1 in al Jazeera. Please see below for an example of this code accompanied by a short explanation of its usage.

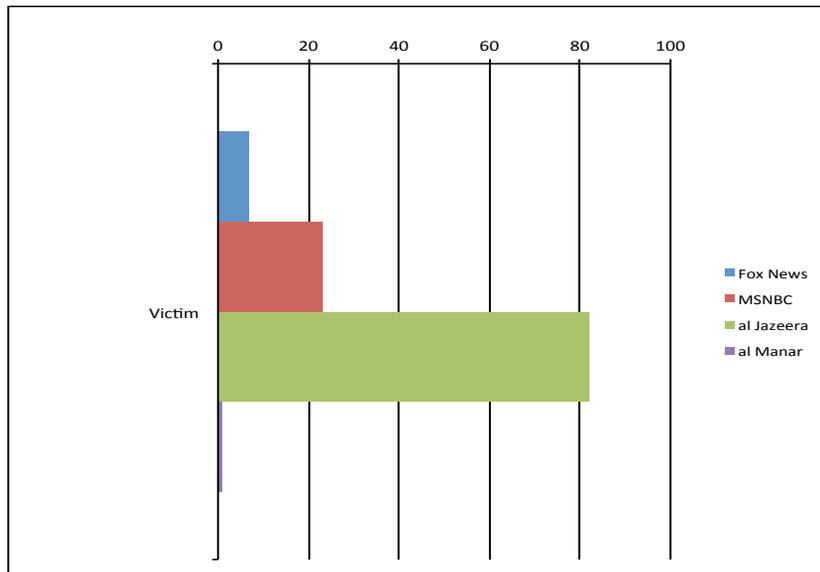


Dan O’Shea (2014) stated in an article published by MSNBC, that “ISIS fighters” were “not wearing ‘Lakers jerseys’ and reject[ed] western capitalism and materialism.” By describing ISIS fighters in this way, O’Shea creates the plausibility of an “us” vs. “them” scenario between ISIS fighters and the West,

akin to a significant Other or adversarial framework. For this interpretation to work however, the media source would need to be going for this particular angle. That being said, MSNBC and al Jazeera are both identified as left leaning news organizations, which tend to apply a more liberal framework to news reports. Based on that assessment, and the fact that only three examples of this type of language were found throughout the 189 articles in the sample, it can be determined that this code has very little to contribute to understanding framings of ISIS.

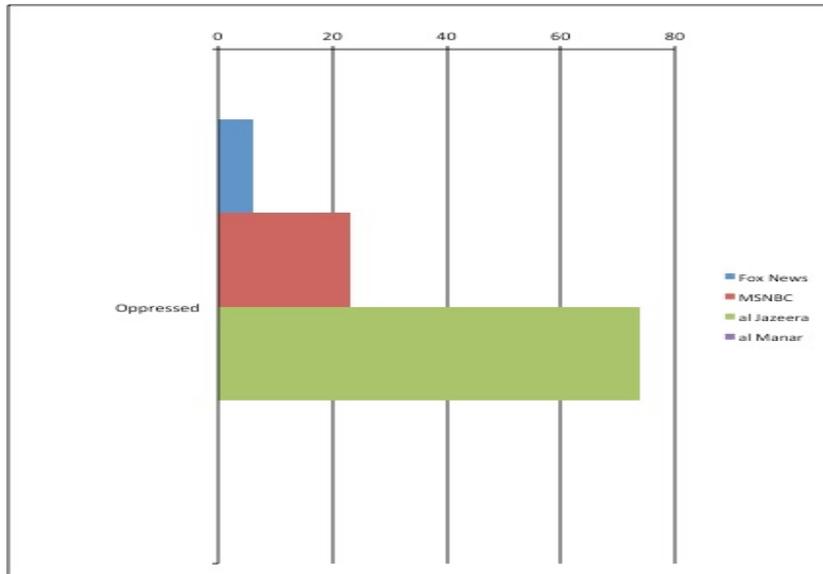
Victim – 206 Applications (*broken down into four child codes*)

The parent code victim was applied any time an article described ISIS or its members as victims of circumstance or Western imperialism, misunderstood, unfairly persecuted, or if one of its members felt it joined the organization under false pretenses. From that standpoint, excerpts initially received the parent code victim before later receiving one of the victim child codes (*defensive, oppressed, guilty by association, and conscious deception*). Please see below for a more specific definition of each code followed by examples of their application.



Oppressed – 103 Applications

The oppressed code was applied any time an article described ISIS as being oppressed by government forces. ISIS or its members may state in their own words that they feel oppressed, or the article itself may state that they are experiencing oppression. In either case, if oppression or the feeling of oppression is cited as a possible influence on ISIS or ISSI recruits, the code will be applied. Please see below for an example of this found as one of the top reasons people in Islamic societies join ISIS, according to al Jazeera.

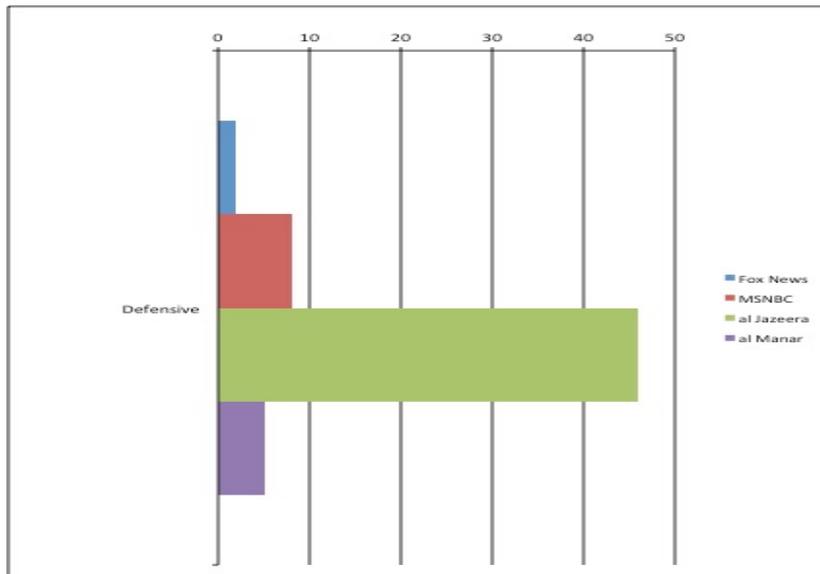


Al Jazeera (70 Applications):

In a list of eight reasons why people across Islamic societies join or support ISIL, al Jazeera identified “overcoming(ing) Sunni Victimhood and the perception that Shia and foreign [government] powers now dominate the Middle East” as number one (Khouri 2015). This ties to a common narrative about an ongoing Shia and Sunni conflict, which was further exasperated by the war in Iraq and the defeat of Saddam Hussein. In this regard, ISIS and its members (mostly made up of members of Takfiri and other extreme sects of Sunni Islam), are responding to oppression by the U.S. and Iraqi governments.

Defensive – 60 Applications

The code of defensive was applied any time an article described ISIS as acting defensively to a military attack. The implication here is that they are not initiating the fight, but rather responding to outside aggression. Please see below for examples of this code as it is applied.



Al Jazeera (45 Applications):

“It’s possible American strikes could breed a phenomenon of allegiance to ISIL,” said the activist in Raqqa, though he believed only those “ignorant about religion” could be so swayed. “Since ISIL claims to rule under the pretext that all the world is fighting us, they’ll say these raids are targeting the Syrian people and not ISIL or other extremist groups.” Lund gave the example of the U.S. operations against Al-Qaeda’s core in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which has killed tens of thousands of people — both combatants and noncombatants — over more than a decade, according to the Costs of War project. “It’s quite useful to drive a knife into their

leaders, and I'm sure they've degraded Al-Qaeda's central leadership in these countries," he said. "But on the other hand, if you've pushed relatives of victims into the arms of insurgencies, are you really helping" (Pizzi 2014).

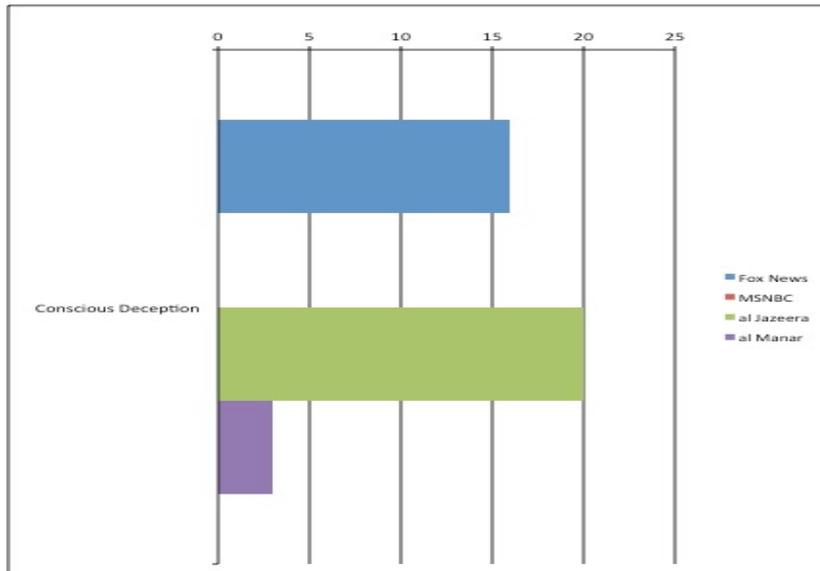
In this excerpt, ISIL takes a defensive stance by stating, "all of the world is fighting us." This is very different than stating the reverse (we are fighting all of the world), in that it attempts to invoke a sense of sympathy. By presenting themselves on the world stage as fighting to defend Islam from "all of the world," they maintain a defensive religious framework and employ a proximity frame to attract recruits. Furthermore, as the article states, they can frame raids and attacks on them as attacks on "the Syrian people" and garner additional sympathy to influence membership. Once again, ISIS employs an adversarial framework, contributing to the "us" and "them" narrative between Islam and the West.

From that standpoint, significantly more examples of defensive language were identified in al Jazeera than in any of the other news sources in the sample. MSNBC came in second with 8 applications, followed by al Manar with 5 applications and Fox News with 2. Based on the number of applications identified throughout each article, al Jazeera once again came in first, demonstrating an ability to take a stance on both sides of the issue or at least a willingness to present military solutions to ISIL in more critical terms. Fox News had the least number of applications of the defensive code, indicating their lack of interest in acknowledging anything they do or say as defensive or possibly, a

general disinterest in discussing the potential consequences of engaging with them militarily.

Conscious Deception – 39 Applications

The code of conscious deception was applied any time an article attempted to rationalize the problematic outcomes of ISIS recruits in an attempt to avoid the consequences of their actions. Language coded as conscious deception can be seen as an attempt to humanize individual recruits, by distinguishing the difference between the individual fighter who believes he/she was tricked or misled into joining ISIS and ISIS – the organization. Please see below for an example of this code’s application.



Al Jazeera (19 Applications):

“When they went over there, they were young and stupid,” Yehya El-Kholed, an Australian humanitarian worker who has traveled regularly to Syria and is in

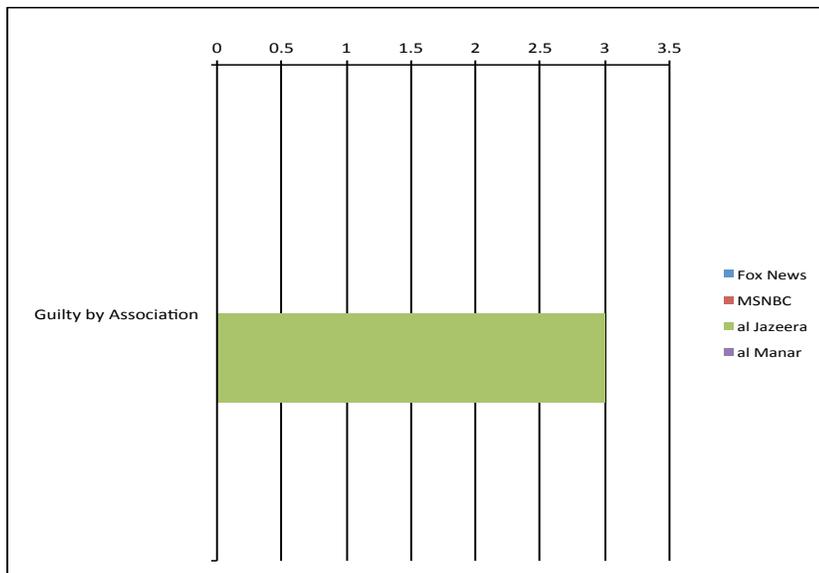
contact with one of the men, told the Australian newspaper. Now, he said, they are “accidental terrorists” (Pizzi 2014).

In this excerpt, we see a humanitarian worker acknowledging the conscious decisions of young foreigners leaving their home countries to join ISIS, however he feels this should be overlooked based on their age and ignorance. Furthermore, he elaborates on their current situation by referring to them as “accidental terrorists.” In doing so, he recognizes they are participating in terrorism, of which they consciously decided to join and participate in, but did not intend to end up on the wrong side of the conflict. This reflects their conscious decisions to join ISIS as well as their feelings of deceit regarding what they believed they would get from joining the organization.

From that standpoint, al Jazeera once again had the highest usage of coded language of ISIS as the victim, followed closely by Fox News with 16 applications, and al Manar with only 2. MSNBC on the other hand, did not demonstrate any usage of language associated with conscious deception. At no point in the MSNBC samples did they identify a single instance of recruits being misled, changing their mind, or being unhappy with their conditions under ISIS. I was however, able to identify nuances in the language, which could be further broken down to identify which media outlets portrayed recruits as brainwashed victims versus radicals and what accounts for the difference. Due to time constraints however, I was not able to do so and will recommend this for future research.

Guilt by Association – 3 Applications

The code of guilt by association was applied any time an individual in an ISIS controlled region (for reasons other than joining ISIS) was believed to be a member of ISIS. Initially, it was believed that this code would be applied with greater frequency, however only 3 applications were found, all of which were in al Jazeera. Please see below for an example of this code’s application from the previous article.

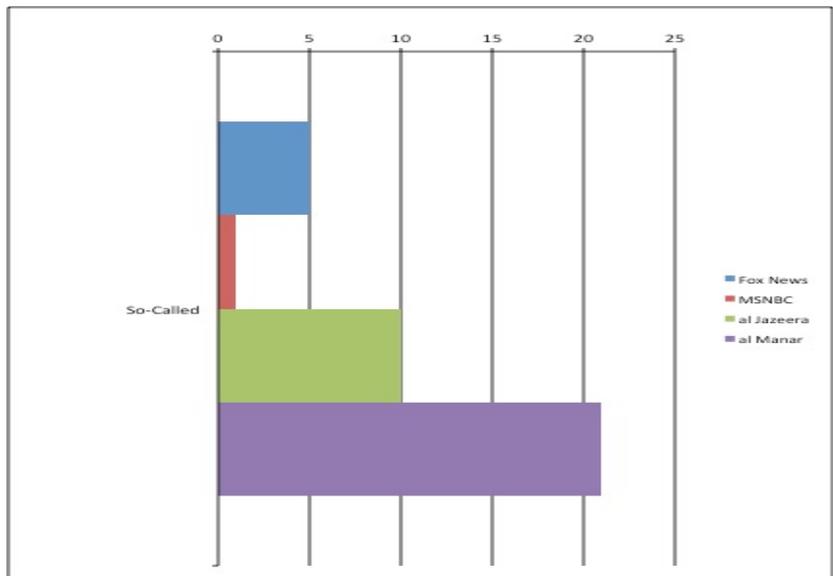


“Some of the guys I met in Belmarsh had gone to Syria to help in a humanitarian defensive role, stayed for a few weeks and, crucially, didn’t want to get involved with the infighting between rebel groups, yet the British government imprisoned them,” he told The Guardian. “If you come back because of the infighting, it means that you are not ideologically attached to groups like [ISIL]” (Pizzi 2014).

In all three applications of this code, the people involved were either refugees believed to be ISIS members or were simply “in the wrong place at the wrong time.” Although this code is not particularly relevant to the motivations of ISIS or their members, I found it interesting to code for since it is an example of a dire situation with potential religious, social, and political ramifications that may be underreported at this time. For this reason, I will include a recommendation for future research into this area as part of my conclusion.

So – Called – 37 Applications

The code for so-called was applied any time the article described ISIS as if the name, definition, or explanation of the group was not appropriate. This could usually be identified very easily by the leading phrase “so-called” or “self-proclaimed.” Ultimately, this code served to delegitimize ISIS as either a nation state or representative of Islam. Please see below for examples from the top 3 news sources.



Al Manar (21 Applications):

He pointed out that the so-called 'Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant' (ISIL) takfiri group "is no longer a threat to the region but to the whole world as well, and the recent incident in France is the best proof of that (Al Manar 2015).

Here we see where the article attempts to disparage the name of the organization by leading into their name with “so-called.” This language was predominately used by al Manar in an attempt to distance the religion from ISIS. Once identified, I went back and applied it to the other news sources where applicable. It is notable that none of the other three news sources relied as heavily on this technique to distinguish ISIS from Islam.

Al Jazeera (10 Applications):

In the Syrian capital of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant’s self- declared caliphate, Raqqa, the group’s extreme interpretation of Sharia law is enforced through extraordinary punishments, including death (Williams 2015).

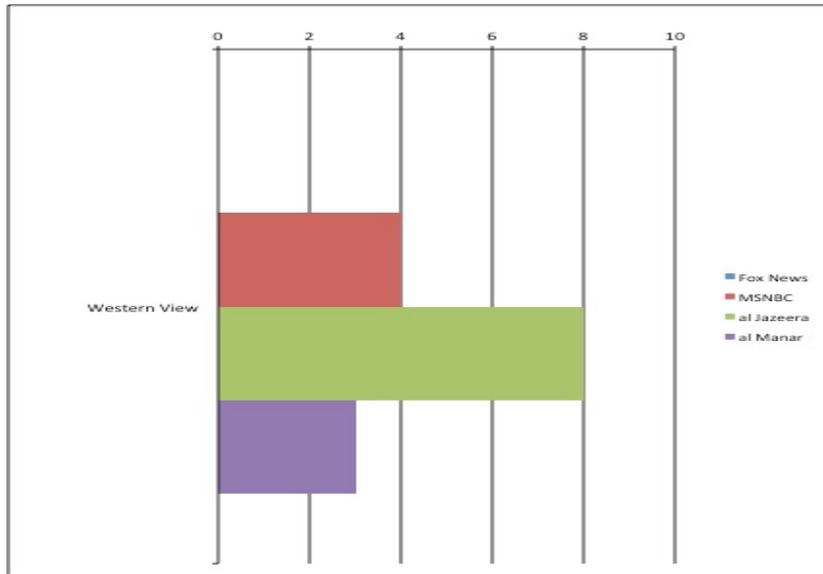
In this example, we see where al Jazeera describes the caliphate as being “self-declared,” meaning that no other nation-state officially recognizes it. Similar to the usage of the phrase “so-called” in the excerpt from al Manar, “self-declared” is used in an attempt to slander the Islamic State’s conception of a nation-state. In other words, only ISIS considers itself to have a caliphate with a capital city. All other nations in the region look at it simply as territory located in Iraq and Syria that is currently under the control of ISIS. Here, we see an example of Fox News (5 applications) using similar language:

Separately, a U.S. official said three drones — two U.S. and one British — targeted the vehicle in which Emwazi was believed to be traveling in Raqqa, the capital of the Islamic State's self-proclaimed caliphate in northern Syria. The official said the U.S. drone fired a Hellfire missile that struck the vehicle (Associated Press 2016).

In this excerpt, we again see the practice of using “self-proclaimed” to reference ISIS’s caliphate. The context and intent are the same as in the last example, except here we find it in Western news. Additionally, MSNBC demonstrated this type of language only once and in a similar fashion as Fox News.

Western-centric View of Religious Influence – 17 Applications

This code was identified by the parent code of religious influence and the child (sub) code of western view. This was the only child code applied to the religious perspective and was used any time the article described ISIS’s actions as appearing to be religiously motivated, as perceived by the West. This implied that the article did not believe their actions were religiously motivated, but occurred anytime it attempted to provide a meta-analysis on the circumstances according to a Western view of Islam.



Al Jazeera (8 Applications):

In the following article, al Jazeera is comparing Mexican drug cartels with ISIL and makes the case that the cartels are much worse than ISIL. From that standpoint, they argue that the Otherization of ISIL based on their religious beliefs has the U.S. military making poor combat decisions:

Unfortunately, the U.S. government cannot formulate an effective response to these much more severe threats because the American public is far too busy disparaging Islam while the U.S. military kills Arabs and Muslims abroad. One thing is certain: America's obsession with ISIL is fueled by Islamophobia rather than any empirical realities (Al-Gharbi 2014).

In this example, the article implies the fear and ignorance of the American public has them and the U.S. military focused on ISIL when there are greater threats at home.

“In short, the cartels’ ideological disposition is no less pronounced than ISIL’s, if not worse,” is an attempt by the journalist to direct the attention of the American public toward a real threat, rather than one fueled by fear that is not based in “empirical realities.” In short, a Western-centric view of religious influence has clouded the judgment of U.S. military responders and potentially contributed (via the victimization of innocent civilians) to the rise of ISIS.

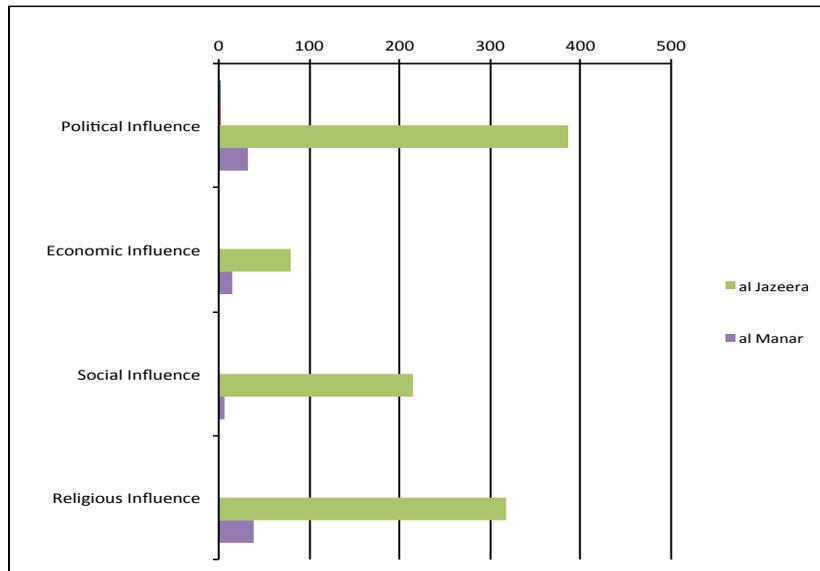
In addition to al Jazeera, MSNBC exhibited 4 examples of a Western-centric view of religious influence with al Manar having 3. Fox New however, did not demonstrate any examples, which not surprising, considering the most common frameworks they employed were adversarial, distance framing, and Orientalism. Additionally, Fox identified Islam as a significant other to the West and chose to use the codes of radicalized, sympathizer, enemy other, and aggressor more frequently to identify them as a villain.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of my content analysis, I was able to find partial support for my initial hypothesis. As expected, I was able to identify similar frameworks within the U.S. (Fox News and MSNBC) and Middle East (al Manar and al Jazeera), with U.S. based news organizations describing ISIS and their recruits as villains, traitors, aggressors, oppressors, and radicalized. Each source also indicated religion as the primary influence, followed by political, social, and economic influences, respectively.

In the Middle East, religion and politics were identified as primary influences, however al Jazeera and al Manar did not agree on their order of significance. With al

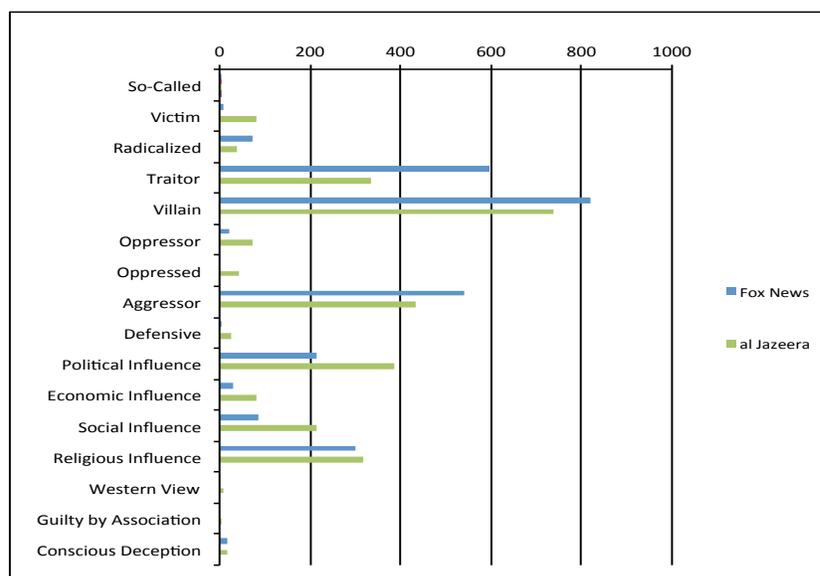
Jazeera, political influences had greater frequency, whereas al Manar found religion to be more relevant. Al Jazeera and al Manar also disagreed on economic and social influence's order of significance. Based on the type and frequency of language used, it was evident that al Jazeera placed greater emphasis on social factors.



Overall, al Jazeera demonstrated a much higher frequency of coded language when compared to al Manar. This may be due to the individualistic nature of al Jazeera, whereas authors were able to report based on their own interpretation of events. This would have allowed for a greater usage of proximity or distance framing. Where al Manar tended to report events monolithically, void of individual writing credit, al Jazeera provided the names of individual authors. Since their authors are from all over the world with a variety of different backgrounds (Contractor 2016), it is possible individual framing biases (proximity or distance) contribute to the greater diversity and frequency of coded language. This may also have contributed to al Jazeera and Fox News

demonstrating more in common with one another than news sources within the same region. Each used the language of religious, social, political, and economic influence as well as language identifying ISIS and their recruits as radicalized, sympathizers, villains, oppressors, aggressors, and consciously deceived with similar frequencies. Perhaps this tells us something about how Others must, by necessity, learn to “talk back” to those discourses by adopting the same frames and language. In doing so, they can systematically refute claims which cast them as monolithic, fanatical, or villainous. The so-called frame might be one example of this, where the author is reminding the reader that ISIS and Islam are not synonymous.

Finally, it is important to note that al Jazeera had a much higher frequency of language coded as victim (specifically defensive) than Fox News. They also identified ISIS or their recruits as oppressed, being judged based on a Western view of Islam, or simply as being guilty by association, all of which were frames that Fox News did not use to describe ISIS. Since these frames were generally found in the same articles, it would be interesting to research the background of the author and see if any correlations exist.



With the above understanding in mind, I was able to identify the existence of primary and secondary frameworks within each region along with similarities and discrepancies within and between regions. This leads me to the conclusion that regionally specific differences could not be easily identified based on this research. Although it was hypothesized that social, religious, or corporate influences would be identified within each news organization, it is difficult to confirm or deny their influences from this study. Based on my analysis, I can only infer a correlation between each news organization's belief that religious and political influences are important factors regarding the frameworks employed by ISIS and their recruits. I cannot however, conclude corporate influence as a factor.

CONCLUSION

With the above understanding in mind, I would like to offer a few suggestions for future research pertaining to mainstream online media framing of ISIS and their recruits. First, to address the lack of support for corporate influence, I would recommend reviewing the literature already available regarding corporate financing, mainstream news organizations ownership, and government foreign policy. This may help identify existing correlations between these organizations, their corporate financiers, and government foreign policies. I would then consider conducting a comparative analysis using the available research on each of these issues with consideration to the frameworks used to describe ISIS from this study.

Second, each Middle Eastern based news organization offers an English and Arabic version of their website with different news articles available based on language

source. Based on the articles from my sample, the English language website tended to assume an Islam-naïve population and seem to target a Western audience. In this regard, I would expect to find differences in the content between each version of the same news organization's website. From that standpoint, how would the results of a similar study between the English and Arabic versions of each website differ for the same news organization? How would they be similar? What inferences could be made about the viewers of each version of the website for the same news organization if a significant difference in framing was found?

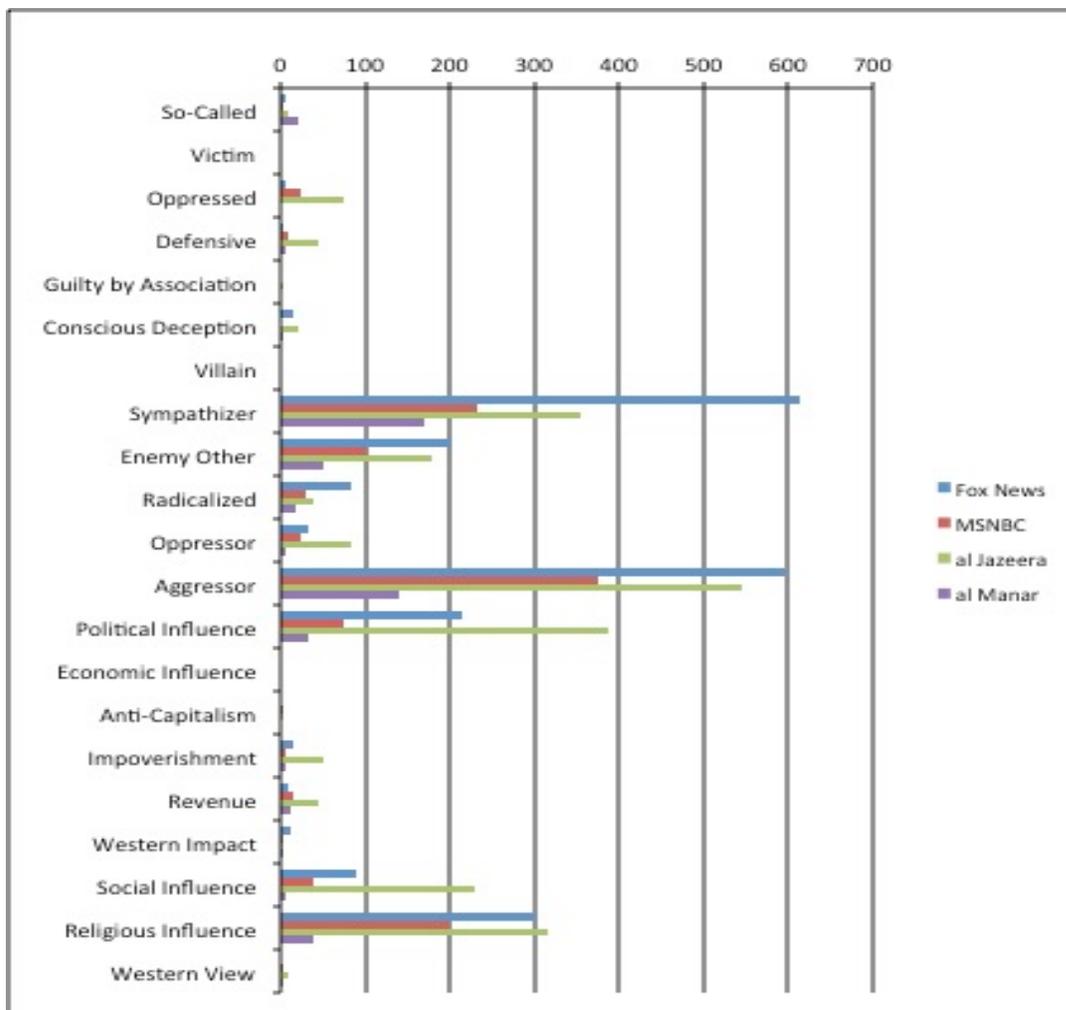
Finally, I would recommend future research focusing on the nuances in recruit framing identified in the samples coded for conscious deception. Could this code be expanded to talk about differences in how recruits are framed? Which media outlets portray them as brainwashed victims? Which portray them as scary radicals? What accounts for the differences between the two framings? By conducting additional research emphasizing news media framing in this respect, one could ascertain a greater understanding of how mainstream online media affects and is affected by their readership.

Appendix

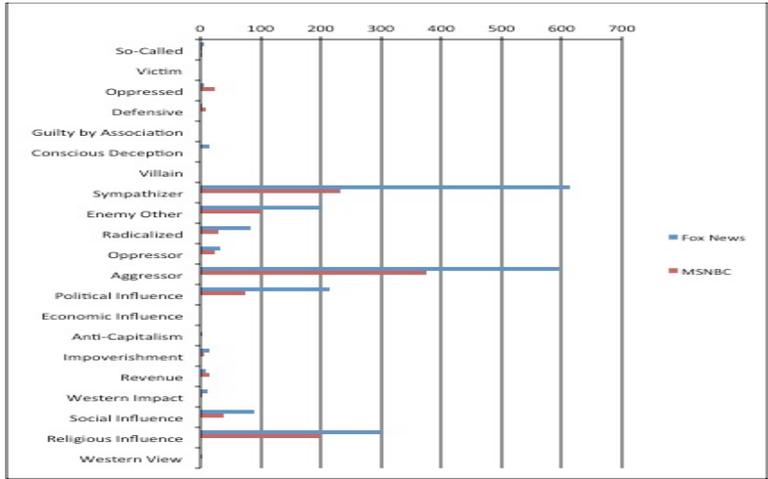
HUMAN SUBJECTS

This research contains no risks to human subjects or data derived from them. All research data was accessed online and a content analysis was conducted using articles available for review in the public domain.

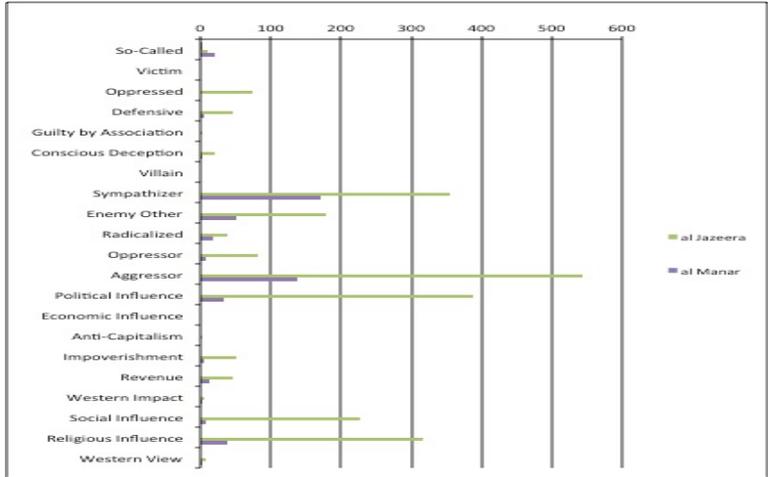
Distribution of Coded Language



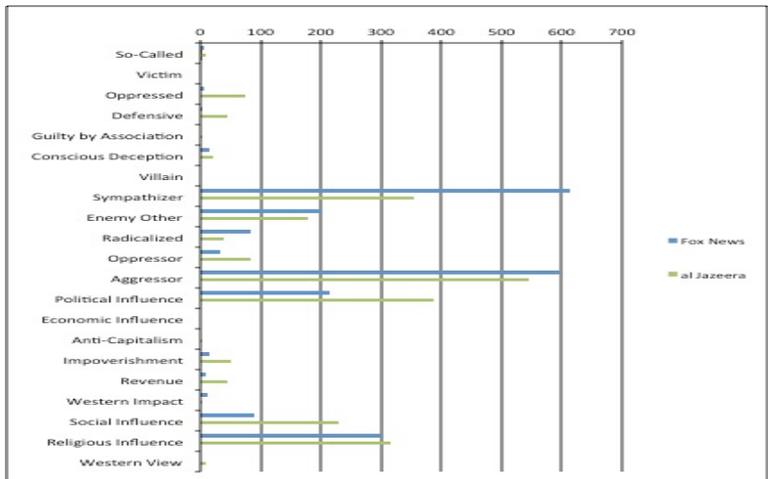
Distribution of Coded Language (U.S.)



Distribution of Coded Language (M.E.)



Fox News vs al Jazeera



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