



TOP 5 CONSPIRACY THEORIES

ABOUT COVID-19

- 1 A FORCED VACCINATION WILL INJECT **NANO CHIPS**
- 2 **BILL GATES** WANTS TO INTRODUCE MANDATORY VACCINATION TO CONTROL THE WORLD
- 3 COVID-19 MIGHT BE AN ACT OF **ANGLO-SAXON** REVENGE
- 4 A CANADIAN REPORT INDICTS THE **US** FOR SPREADING THE CORONAVIRUS
- 5 COVID-19 EPIDEMIC IS MANUFACTURED BY THE **MEDIA**

COVID-19 IN THE AGE OF DISINFORMATION

Philip Merrill College of Journalism

University of Maryland, College Park

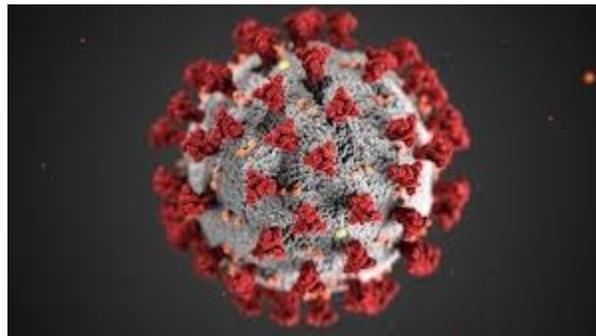
Prof. Sarah Oates

soates@umd.edu

www.media-politics.com

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Corona + chaos = great environment for propaganda



Understanding corona coverage through the crisis model of the media

Crisis coverage stage 1:

News dissemination escalates, audience figures multiply (especially on 24-hour news outlets). Crisis-related news and interviews replace regular programs. News bulletins issue throughout the day on radio and TV. With little new to report, media rehash. Very rapid pace. Loss of attention to other stories. Media are major source of information, including for public officials. Number of dead, injured, often inflated. No time to confirm accuracy. Temptation to interview unreliable sources. Difficult to present a coherent story. Speculation about cause of disaster.

Crisis coverage stage 2

Media try to correct past errors, put situation into perspective. By this time, chief dimensions of crisis have usually emerged. Repairs and reconstruction plans are in place. Data rather than guesses available for loss and damage estimates. Print does coherency better. Government, critics now try to shape political fallout or capital from event.

Crisis coverage stage 3

Overlaps with first 2 stages, but now journalists attempt to place crisis into larger, long-range perspective and prepare people to cope with aftermath. Coverage of how victims are coping, healing ceremonies (such as memorial services). 'Resilience' frame.

Note that the model does not specifically deal with social media ...

Source: Doris A. Graber and Johanna Dunaway. 2015. Mass Media and American Politics. 9th Edition. CQ Press.

How are Russians and Republicans using COVID-19 to boost their own narratives about democracy and Democrats?



Russia has an ongoing information war with the United States, with key themes including the West is out to get Russia, Democracy is failing, Russia is a world power

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) represents all that Russia dislikes about the world order. Russian English-language propaganda outlets (RT and Sputnik) use corona as a way to talk about the failures of Western states AND as a way to seed propaganda.

For example, as part of their ongoing narrative that NATO is inefficient, unfair, and failing, Russian English-language propaganda promotes the idea that NATO carried on with drills despite corona and that it was Russia that stepped in to help NATO member Italy.

More on tracking Russian narratives here in a paper I co-wrote with John Gray for the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting in 2019:

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3445180

FOX News on Coronavirus: Blaming the Media and the Democrats



This is from a study by Provalis Research, which is here: <https://provalisresearch.com/blog/fox-news-coronavirus/>.

The study used text analytics to compare coverage across five major networks. It highlights how FOX linked the virus to the Democrats.

A very detailed discussion of rightwing media and Trump is *Network Propaganda* by Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts from Oxford University Press, you can read it here (for free): <https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190923624.001.0001/oso-9780190923624>

Figure 2. Use of the word "democrat" with coronavirus by network (rate per 10,000 words)

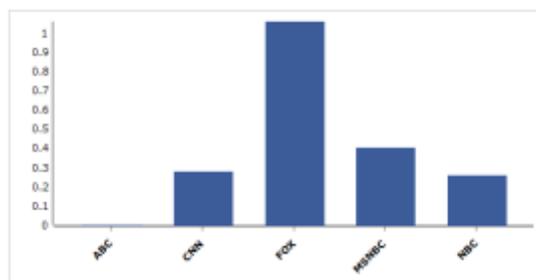
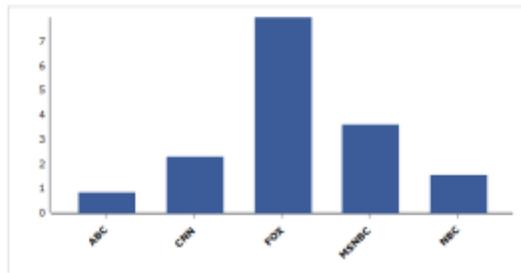


Figure 3 Use of the word "media" with the word coronavirus by network (rate per 10,000 words)



When we look at the instances where those words appear we note that in January and February, Fox News network, and many of its hosts, blamed the media and the Democrats (often allegedly seen to be working together) for creating panic or exaggerating the threat of the coronavirus.

"All right, so the **media** mob, **Democrats** are weaponizing, politicizing the coronavirus outbreak. But will it come back to bite them?"

"President Trump firing back at **Democrats** in the **media** for trying to stoke this mass panic over the coronavirus."

Fox often drew comparisons with the Flu virus and death rates creating the impression or obfuscating which was more dangerous.

"Right now, more than 5,600 people are infected, 213 have died and for context, the flu, which is very active in the United States is a much bigger threat than coronavirus. Each year in the U.S., the flu kills anywhere from 12,000 to 61,000 people."

Figure 4. Use of the expressions "Chinese Coronavirus" and "Wuhan Coronavirus" by network

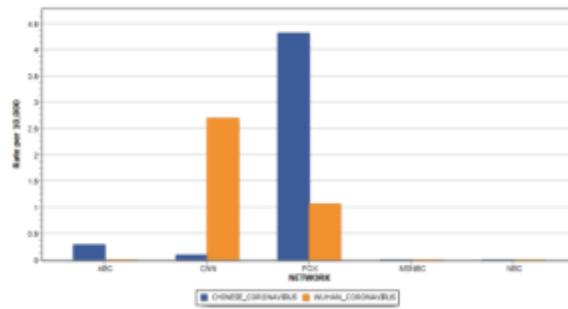
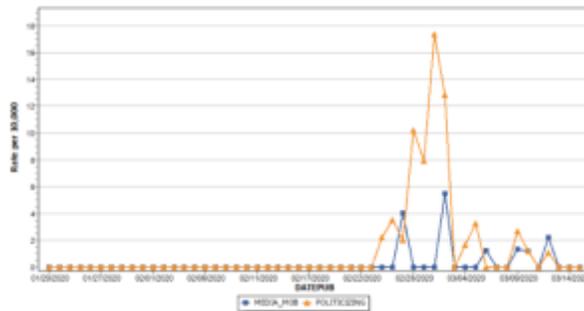


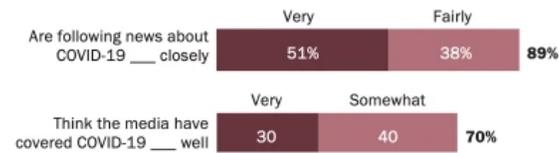
Figure 5. Use of "Media Mob" and "Politicizing" idioms by Fox News over time



Ending on a positive note ...

Americans are following COVID-19 news very closely and think media are covering it very or somewhat well

% of U.S. adults who ...



<https://www.journalism.org/2020/03/18/americans-immersed-in-covid-19-news-most-think-media-are-doing-fairly-well-covering-it/>

Download this presentation here: <https://www.media-politics.com/news-and-events>