




The content of their coverage: contrasting racially conservative and liberal elite rhetoric

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ABSTRACT

Theoretical and empirical evidence suggest that how elites talk about race may shape mass racial attitudes. But current work limits understanding this possibility by not systematically characterizing elite rhetoric on race. To shed light on the nature of racially liberal and conservative elite rhetoric, and therefore the potential for elites to shape mass racial attitudes, I analyze transcripts from two partisan news shows: *The Rachel Maddow Show* and *The O'Reilly Factor*. Pairing a case study with text-as-data methods, I provide insight into themes constituting racially liberal and conservative elite discourse. Racial liberals like Maddow emphasize that race matters—racial bias and discrimination still shape nonwhites' life chances. In contrast, racial conservatives like O'Reilly contend that race does not shape life chances and serves only as an attention-seeking device. Identifying these divides helps shed light on the origins and dynamics of mass racial attitudes.

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Persistent racial inequity profoundly characterizes American politics. To try to understand this phenomenon, scholars have devoted substantial attention to studying the dynamics of mass racial attitudes (Myrdal 1962; Hutchings and Valentino 2004). While evidence persuasively indicates these attitudes are early-learned and persistent (Sears and Brown 2013), evidence also suggests beliefs may respond to the social and political context (Schuman et al. 1997). Critically, elite behavior helps define these contexts. Some mass attitude scholars, for instance, claim that elite cues helped replace Jim Crow racism with culturally or symbolically racist beliefs (Kinder and Sanders 1996). Mass racial attitudes may look the way they do because individuals' tendency to divide the world into kinds (Hirschfeld 1996) intersects with information from elites on how these kinds should be understood. This thinking extends conventional models of elite-driven public opinion formation (e.g., Zaller 1992) to argue that elites may influence core predispositions (e.g., Engelhardt, forthcoming), the very things these models propose as guiding the reception and incorporation of other considerations.

But despite these insights, scholars have devoted surprisingly little systematic attention to elite rhetoric on race (cf., Gillion 2016). Prior investigations addressing elite racial cues either focus on limited domains like campaign appeals (e.g., Kinder and Sanders 1996;

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Mendelberg 2001), party platforms (e.g., Carmines and Stimson 1989) or social movements (e.g., Corrigan 2017; Banks 2018); specific issues like welfare (e.g., Gilens 1999), crime (e.g., Gilliam, Iyengar, and Simon 1996), and immigration (e.g., Pérez 2016); or individual events like Barack Obama's inauguration (e.g., Hoerl 2012), the Jena Six (e.g., Holt and Major 2010), or school shootings (e.g., Park, Holody, and Zhang 2012).

This is a substantial oversight when striving to understand the nature and origins of mass racial attitudes. First, if elites do matter then scholars must assume the elite information environment on race has a specific flavor. Scholars holding that mass racial attitudes have persisted in a consistent guise for decades (e.g., Tesler 2016) must assume either a stable stream of information from elites or that these attitudes develop and persist without elite influence. Second, it forces scholars to assume a unified signal that may not exist. An expansion of media options could produce distinct information environments (Prior 2007). This is particularly important in light of partisan media that provide specific perspectives on the day's news and the relationship between people's political views and preferred news sources (Pew Research Center 2014).

Third, not investigating how elites discuss race blinds scholars to possible explanations for mass attitude patterns. Elites could influence predispositions by shaping which ones people use to understand race and potentially race-related events. Tesler (2016) demonstrates that racially liberal and conservative attitudes increasingly explain whites' political views. This chronic accessibility implies strengthened attitudes, a potential byproduct of elites consistently adopting perspectives reinforcing mass beliefs (Howe and Krosnick 2017). Likewise, how topics like racial progress and diversity are presented can lead whites to change their racial attitudes (e.g., Knowles et al. 2009; Craig and Richeson 2014; Wilkins and Kaiser 2014), providing another avenue for elite influence. But no existing evidence systematically addresses whether elites adopt these potentially attitude-changing perspectives, which limits understanding whether, and to what degree, racial attitudes may shift in ways extant evidence suggests.

Finally, studying elite rhetoric can speak to disagreements among public opinion scholars regarding the nature of certain racial attitudes. Some claim that racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996) conflates principled conservatism and racial animus (Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Huddy and Feldman 2009). Although presented partly as measurement critiques, this position also implies that racial animus and principles are separable concerns with respect to racial politics; values convey no information about race when related to political judgments. But elite rhetoric can racialize non-racial views (Gilens 1999; Tesler 2016), combining principles and group evaluations into racial resentment (Kam and Burge 2018).

To engage with the broad literature on mass racial attitudes I analyze elite rhetoric to identify racially conservative and liberal themes. Racial conservatism incorporates a commitment to race-neutral governing and belief that individual characteristics, not structural barriers, explain group-based disparities. Racial liberalism emphasizes structural barriers to advancement and racial diversity's benefits. I develop these themes further in the following section.

To identify discrete racially liberal and conservative themes I analyze partisan television. MSNBC and Fox News are an ideal place to identify racially liberal and conservative rhetoric because these outlets devote themselves to providing consistently liberal and conservative perspectives of the day's news (Levendusky 2013). By hosting aligned politicians

and activists these outlets provide an important place for elites to communicate with the mass public (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016). Consequently, identifying whether and how race manifests here can speak to how political elites more generally understand race and what rhetoric the public may hear (cf., King and Smith 2014).

I identify racially liberal and conservative themes using transcripts from flagship talk-shows on MSNBC and Fox: The Rachel Maddow Show and The O'Reilly Factor.¹ Maddow endorses race's relevance by emphasizing its social reality and centrality to understanding issues communities of color face. O'Reilly, in contrast, holds that race is irrelevant and those claiming it matters simply want attention. Shedding light on the *types* of racially liberal and conservative rhetoric the mass public may hear helps us understand if elite views may have attitudinal implications. I conclude by discussing extant work and panel data results to identify mass attitude patterns consistent with the possibility that such rhetoric may shape predispositions.

Stylized accounts of racial conservatism and liberalism

Research suggests mass racial attitudes can be characterized broadly as racial conservatism and racial liberalism. To understand whether elite rhetoric may relate to these views, I conceptualize elite rhetoric similarly. These positions incorporate beliefs about race's social and political relevance – explanations for how it does or does not matter. While I use these themes as a framework for interpreting my later results, I do not see them as definitive. I instead proceed inductively to identify specific content and perspective differences that racially conservative and liberal elites provide.

Racial conservatism includes colorblind or race-neutral views alongside a racially resentful perspective. It builds from conservative intellectuals articulating positions for decades distancing themselves from considering race in the policymaking process (Lowndes 2008; King and Smith 2014). It incorporates liberal ideals like equal opportunity, choice, and individualism, and minimizes discrimination, as explanations for potentially race-related matters (Knowles et al. 2009; Hoerl 2012; Bonilla-Silva 2014; Banks 2018). Racial conservatism also includes a view that given the Civil Rights Movement's successes, society reflects meritocratic ideals. Consequently, preferential treatment of any kind is unwarranted, especially if special attention is group-based. It instead holds that the best, most qualified people end up with the good things in life. Thus, if processes violate meritocratic norms, as in instances of affirmative action, racial conservatism sees this as constituting reverse discrimination. By deeming skin color irrelevant, racial conservatives are unlikely to ascribe importance to race when addressing social problems (see also Hoerl 2012; Corrigan 2017).

Racial conservatism also incorporates explanations for minorities' social and economic status. For instance, it holds that blacks do poorly because they created a culture promoting unhealthy values and bad habits (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Tarman and Sears 2005; Kam and Burge 2018). It denies that discrimination and prejudice threaten nonwhites' life chances and instead sees hard work as sufficient to overcome disadvantages. By relying on individual rather than structural status explanations, racial conservatism includes resenting any perceived demands from minority groups for special attention and improvements to their station (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Tarman and Sears 2005; see also Banks 2018).

Racial liberalism, in contrast, more directly engages with group-based inequalities and the different lived experiences of people of color. It challenges the idea that race no longer shapes individuals' life chances, evidenced by liberal activists championing policies to help nonwhites (King and Smith 2014). Whereas racial conservatism opposes black Americans and other nonwhites receiving special attention, the racially liberal view embraces this position. It acknowledges prejudice and discrimination, both past and present instantiations (see generally Holt and Major 2010), and views individual effort alone as insufficient for group advancement (Kam and Burge 2018). By taking a structural perspective, racial liberalism echoes in part former Supreme Court justice Harry Blackmun's position in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* that "In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race." Group-based inequalities persist and thus require attention and, potentially group-based, solutions.

Racial liberalism further emphasizes the unique experiences of people of color by affirming all groups' unique backgrounds and experiences as well as the contributions they make to society (Citrin and Sears 2014). Emphasizing equal group worth encourages seeing racial affairs as *racial* rather than as race-blind because ignoring race may homogenize potentially disparate group experiences (see also Banks 2018). By drawing positive attention to otherwise marginalized communities, racial liberalism endorses race's political and social relevance.

To identify specific racially liberal and conservative frames I focus on partisan elites. Given the close connection between race and party in the present political context (Tesler 2016), rhetoric should vary in part with elites' political proclivities. Since conventional wisdom suggests talking about race calls attention to problems identified as racial (Gillion 2016), rhetoric from Democrats and liberals sheds light on racially liberal themes. In contrast, Republicans' and conservatives' remarks speak to racially conservative views. I am not showing that partisan elites speak differently about race; I focus on them because I expect they should. Instead, I systematically identify these rhetorical differences. In doing so, this investigation helps shed light on mass attitudes when paired with insights from elite-driven public opinion models (Zaller 1992) and investigations into sources of racial attitude change (e.g., Richeson and Nussbaum 2004; Knowles et al. 2009; Wilkins and Kaiser 2014).

Measuring racially conservative and liberal rhetoric

Drawing on existing conceptualizations, I define racial rhetoric as references to a racial group, racialized policy or experience, prominent minority individuals, or some other racial association (Mendelberg 2001; Gillion 2016). This attempts to capture explicit and implicit racial references regardless of content and degree of emphasis within a conversation.²

I focus on race in relation to racial minority groups. Whereas studies of race often emphasize the black–white divide, a diversifying country necessitates expanding conceptualizations to account for additional groups. A broader view of race matters for understanding how political elites understand race even as black Americans remain at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. This approach is especially important because whites often view racial minorities in a similar light (Kinder and Kam 2009), so information on one group may shape views about all.³

To identify racially conservative and liberal elite rhetoric I use transcripts from flagship weekday evening talkshows on Fox News and MSNBC: *The O'Reilly Factor* and *The Rachel Maddow Show*.⁴ Because Maddow premiered after O'Reilly, I focus on the September 8, 2008, and December 31, 2016, period when the shows aired simultaneously.⁵ Although I do not argue that these shows are necessarily representative of elite discourse more broadly, by hosting aligned politicians and activists they provide consistently conservative and liberal accounts of the day's news, variation that can speak to some differences in what racially conservative and liberal themes elites offer (for related approaches, see Levendusky 2013; King and Smith 2014). Although limited temporally, the 2008–2016 period allows for comparing shows in the same news environment to identify perspective differences.

Partisan television is advantageous because of the likely consistency of cues on race and its audience size. First, Fox and MSNBC have taken deliberate steps to provide conservative and liberal interpretations of the news by hosting aligned politicians and activists (Levendusky 2013; Grossmann and Hopkins 2016). That these outlets allow political elites to communicate with the mass public allows them to shed light on the nature of racially conservative and liberal elite discourse. Second, while other partisan media could reveal these perspectives, partisan television allows for identifying themes that reach more people than news magazines like *The Nation* or *The National Review* or blogs like *Daily Kos* or *Breitbart* (Pew Research Center 2014). Indeed, some see partisan television as an important part of party organizations (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016). Partisan television's deliberate perspective-taking and audience size help make it an excellent place to identify racially conservative and liberal themes.

I use a multi-method approach to connect partisan racial discourse with racial liberalism and conservatism. I begin with a case study focusing on the first week of coverage following the shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. This case has several advantages. First, using a nationally important event I address expectations that partisan media only cover news benefitting their side (Levendusky 2013). Because outlets cannot ignore an event like Ferguson, I can contrast how O'Reilly and Maddow cover the same story. Second, as noted above, racial conservatism and liberalism likely view racial discrimination and the role race plays in structuring lived experience differently. An officer-involved shooting offers an opportunity to address this expectation. Commentators can offer views addressing whether or not race played a role in Michael Brown's death and how it may have mattered (cf., Park, Holody, and Zhang 2012). They can also link Ferguson to prior instances of police brutality and/or focus on other event characteristics. Finally, using a negative rather than a positive event (e.g., Barack Obama's election) allows me to assess problem definition (cf., Soroka 2006; Boydston 2013).⁶ What social problem(s) does the event relate to? Are these important and requiring political solutions? Ferguson thus allows for comparing how Maddow and O'Reilly cover the same story, facilitating identification of the dimensions they see as important for understanding a potentially race-related event and the importance they place on race relative to other potential public problems.

I then systematically address each show's attention to race through two text-as-data methods. I first use an algorithm to categorize transcripts as mentioning race or not. This procedure recovers the set of documents about race with which I address the racially conservative and liberal perspectives each outlet provides. I follow prior work and segment

transcripts by speaker-turn and then divide these comments into sections resembling paragraphs (Gillion 2016). This attempts to capture speakers' approximately complete thoughts, providing a richer characterization of racial discourse. I then apply the classifier to this set of speaker-turn documents.

This method seeks to replicate human coding procedures but over a larger set of documents. I first hand-coded a 200-document sample for each month between September 2008 and December 2016 and used these to train the algorithm to classify the remaining documents. My conceptualization of race as it relates to the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities, informed by extant work (e.g., Mendelberg 2001; Gillion 2016), motivated my coding decisions. I coded documents as about race if they mentioned (1) racial groups (e.g., Latinos), (2) racialized or race-targeted policy areas (e.g., welfare, stop-and-frisk, affirmative action), (3) prominent minority figures, either political or not (e.g., Al Sharpton, Oprah),⁷ (4) immigration, (5) the Civil Rights Movement and related legislation, or (6) race-based experiences (e.g., discrimination, segregation). After running the algorithm, I reviewed texts classified as mentioning race to correct false positives.⁸

The second approach addresses racial conservatism and liberalism by capturing thematic and content differences by show. I apply a structural topic model to the documents the first algorithm classified as discussing race (Roberts et al. 2014; Lucas et al. 2015). This technique sorts texts according to their substance by recovering common terms between documents that reflect different content featured in racial discourse, differences offering information on racially liberal and conservative themes. Importantly, and in contrast to related methods, this approach can incorporate covariates to uncover relationships between documents. I include an indicator for whether the document came from Maddow or O'Reilly and a flexible time trend. Again, I seek to characterize racially conservative and liberal perspectives and content by uncovering how The Factor differs from Maddow, rather than the discrete topics employed.⁹

Divided racially liberal and conservative views on policing in Ferguson

I begin my investigation with the August 9, 2014, killing of Michael Brown, a black teenager, by Darren Wilson, a white police officer, in Ferguson, Missouri. This event provides initial insight into which factors Maddow and O'Reilly view as important for understanding a potentially race-related story (cf., Park, Holody, and Zhang 2012).

Maddow introduced Ferguson by comparing the pending FBI investigation to the Rodney King beating in 1991. In doing so she drew attention to federal efforts at addressing police brutality in the years since King, asking, "More than 20 years later, how much have things really changed since the 1990s? And what has the federal government done to try to address this problem in a systemic way?" By linking Ferguson with a well-known incident of police brutality Maddow suggests to her viewers that they should see Ferguson as another instance of institutional discrimination and bias.

Maddow and her guests also emphasized systemic issues in law enforcement. One guest, for example, noted that the ensuing federal investigation was important because:

[I]t sends a message to the whole country as well as all the police departments that there has to be a change. If not, then it just gets pushed under the rug and the next thing you know,

there's another incident. And they're isolated as opposed to having a general stance, pattern and practice that could be changed by police policies nationwide.

Maddow similarly highlighted St. Louis police seeking to “specifically arrest black people. That [police officers] should specifically target black people for arrest in specific shopping areas in southern St. Louis County.” She also discussed data from Missouri on racial disparities in traffic stops, emphasizing the disproportionate attention police gave to blacks in cities like Ferguson. Maddow perhaps most clearly described racial inequities by noting representation gaps between Ferguson's police force and the local community.

The community where 18-year-old Michael Brown was shot and killed by a police officer this weekend has a population that is 2/3 black. Of its 53 police officers, three of them are black. Two black women and one black man, out of 53 officers.

These comments and data references reveal a pattern of attention emphasizing the systemic nature of police behavior, contextualizing the Ferguson shooting and ensuing protests. Further, by using racial profiling and its potentially deadly consequences to demonstrate that racial discrimination still shapes nonwhites' lived experiences, Maddow's coverage could promote, or reinforce, racially liberal views (Richeson and Nussbaum 2004; Apfelbaum et al. 2010).

Finally, Maddow focused on a perceived lackluster police response. She and her guests wondered whether the Ferguson police force would hold Darren Wilson accountable. After asking a guest if the community had any concerns beyond “numerical diversity” affecting a fair investigation, viewers learned about the local prosecutor's history of removing black Americans from juries, suggesting a potentially biased investigation. For Maddow, because communities of color face systemic policing and local governance issues, the police force needed a transparent process for presenting and evaluating evidence.

O'Reilly's coverage stands in stark contrast. Instead of comparing Ferguson to other instances of police brutality, O'Reilly introduced the shooting by focusing on the ensuing protests, specifically looting and violence targeting police officers. Doing so focuses on the protests' consequences instead of their impetus. O'Reilly, for instance, editorialized one protestor's comment “He ain't got no gun in hands. Why you kill him,” with “That man, apparently, justifying the looting,” placing the focus not on the circumstances of Michael Brown's death but rather on the subsequent events. Similarly, he questioned whether the protestors were actually from Ferguson, and thus in his view holding some legitimate grievance, or if they were outsiders taking advantage of the situation. According to O'Reilly, Al Sharpton, for example, had come to Missouri “demanding this and that, agitating the situation,” even “stoking the racial fire” as a guest commented. By describing possible material or symbolic gain instead of legitimate outrage, O'Reilly's comments suggest a deep distrust, even resentment, of the protestors' motives, rhetoric potentially contributing to racially conservative mass attitudes (Knowles et al. 2009). While O'Reilly did describe Brown's death as a “terrible situation,” his coverage was well-removed from Maddow's which connected the shooting to similar events or discussed its potential causes.

O'Reilly also trusted the criminal justice system to provide a fair account. O'Reilly asked guest Ben Carson one evening, “So, obviously, we have to wait and see how the system handles the situation. You would agree with that, the justice system?” and Carson

agreed. Carson noted that while empathizing with the pain in the black community was important, it was even more important to recognize “that police are individuals, too ... And we need to hear from this police officer.” The Factor’s coverage emphasized an impartial system where racial considerations should not, and would not, matter.

Commentators on The Factor also worried about Ferguson becoming a “spectacle” like other “racially-charged cases,” namely the Trayvon Martin shooting. On another episode, commentator Howard Kurtz followed O’Reilly by questioning Al Sharpton’s potential attention-seeking desire. Guest host Laura Ingraham agreed, noting Ferguson seemed like “one big satellite dish. I mean it’s bring the satellite dishes in and you think the situation is going to get calmer?” Ferguson wasn’t about highlighting racial bias, but about using race to get media attention. In fact, on another episode O’Reilly called police shootings an “infinitesimal situation” relative to the number of yearly arrests, and therefore unimportant.

It doesn’t happen and those people who run in to Ferguson or any other city and say the police are hunting down young black men are lying and they’re grossly insulting law enforcement across the country because this stat shows it all, this tells it all.

For O’Reilly, police disproportionately killing black Americans is sensible “in proportion to the crimes committed [by the group].” Instead, the real problem is “black-on-black crime.” The Factor’s coverage emphasized the event’s rarity, with violence in the black community and grandstanding for national media attention bigger stories. Little coverage included community concerns with racial profiling and the shooting’s connection to these fears. Instead, coverage emphasized group pathologies, delegitimized calls to see race’s connection to social and political affairs, and ignored potential discrimination.

Ferguson provides initial evidence into what differentiates racially liberal and conservative elite rhetoric and how this speech may contribute to mass attitudes. Racially liberal commentators like Maddow highlight the unequal experiences communities of color have with law enforcement. O’Reilly’s argument that emphasizing race is self-serving, with disparate police experiences coming from not cooperating, speaks to the nature of racially conservative elite rhetoric. Race either shapes people’s lived experiences or is used to get undeserved attention.

These insights could, however, be anomalous and case specific. That Maddow and O’Reilly talk about race here does not indicate how much attention they devote to race overall.¹⁰ More importantly, the insights into racial liberalism and conservatism the case offers could also be unique. Event characteristics may motivate the perspectives I highlight. To address these limitations I use the text-as-data approaches.¹¹

Racially liberal and conservative themes in partisan media

I use the structural topic modeling results to contrast how Maddow and O’Reilly cover race. Again, this method sorts the transcript excerpts classified as mentioning race into similar thematic areas, or topics. After considering several models I focus on one identifying 35 topics. I do not claim that this perfectly captures content variation; rather, a combination of statistical information and substantive interpretability suggest it can help shed light on racially liberal and conservative views (Roberts et al. 2014; Lucas et al. 2015).

Figure 1 directly addresses my expectation that contrasting Maddow and O'Reilly can speak to racially liberal and conservative coverage differences. It plots the difference in the proportion of texts classified in a topic based on them coming from Maddow or O'Reilly. Positive numbers indicate that Maddow favors the topic. Negative values indicate O'Reilly features it more. If Maddow and O'Reilly devote equal attention, the points center on 0. Such variation matters because topic avoidance is as important as topic attention for

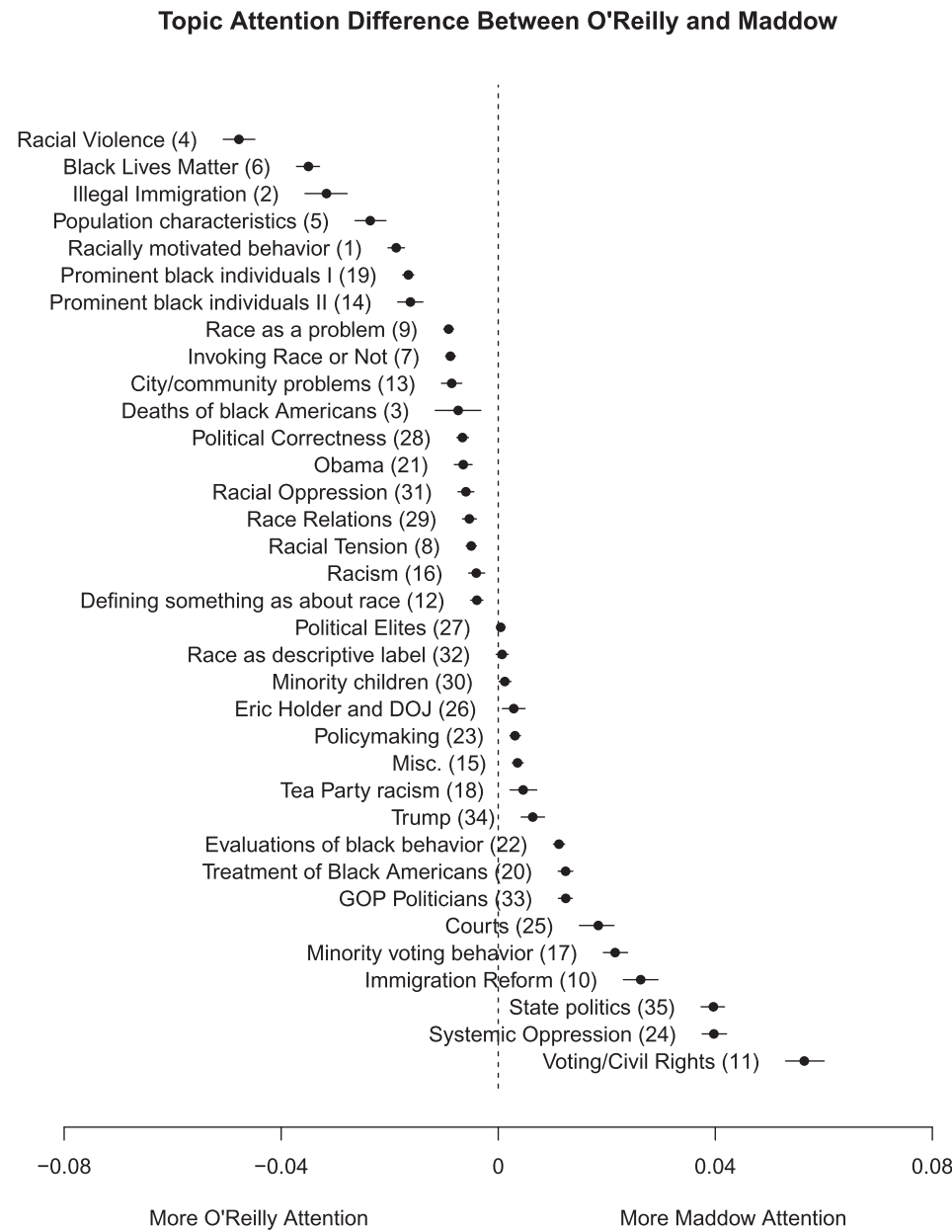


Figure 1. Estimated difference in topic attention by Maddow and O'Reilly with precision estimates. Numbers in parentheses denote overall prevalence rank among all topics.

understanding mass attitudes (e.g., Holt and Major 2010; Hoerl 2012; Corrigan 2017; Banks 2018).

Figure 1 shows how racially conservative and liberal coverage varies.¹² These differences may relate to mass racial attitudes and also suggest that partisanship, by shaping information-seeking, may affect what people hear about race. O'Reilly covers whether race is a problem more than Maddow. He also emphasizes illegal immigration, what behaviors may be racially motivated, city/community problems, population characteristics, and prominent black Americans like Jesse Jackson and Rev. Jeremiah Wright. In contrast, Maddow features immigration reform, civil and voting rights issues, Tea Party racism, and discrimination. These differences showcase racially conservative and liberal differences.

Figure 1 indicates that racially conservative and liberal elite rhetoric addresses what race is and how it may matter. O'Reilly's fairly consistent attention to illegal immigration may generate increasingly negative racial attitudes (Craig and Richeson 2014). Similarly, how he discusses if race is a problem could reinforce racially conservative beliefs that minority group culture prevents nonwhites from getting ahead, rather than pointing to race itself as an obstacle (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Bonilla-Silva 2014). Similarly, topics like whether to invoke race to explain social phenomena and political correctness suggest racially conservative concerns about race's social and political relevance and if people use race to get attention. Maddow, in contrast, emphasizes issues where nonwhites face continued discrimination like civil and voting rights, racial biases among Republican politicians and supporters, and areas presenting minority groups in at least a neutral light like immigration reform. Such coverage suggests that race matters given its relevance to policymaking and nonwhites' different lived experiences, epitomizing racially liberal themes.

Figure 2 provides further insight by visualizing the correlation between topics as a network based on the likelihood topics co-occur in a text (Lucas et al. 2015). I scale the nodes and ties according to topic prevalence and correlation strength respectively, and create separate networks for O'Reilly and Maddow.

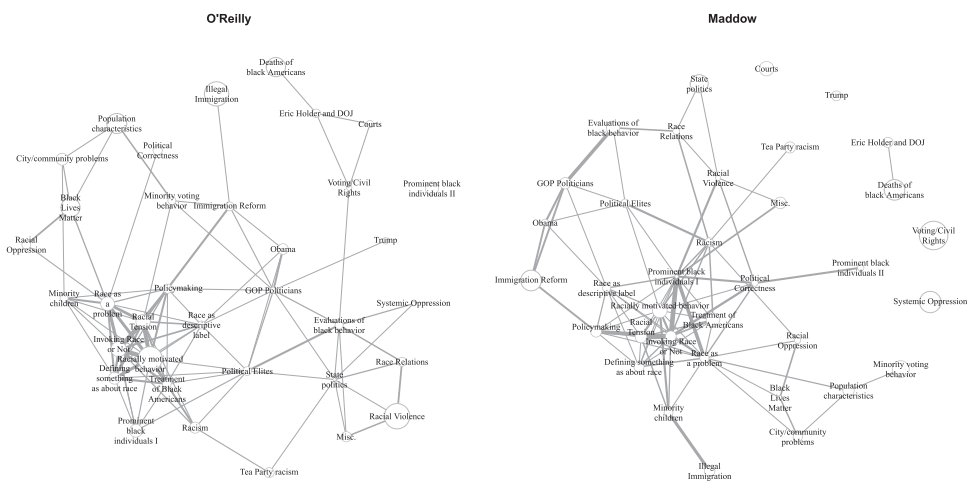


Figure 2. Correlation between topics by show. Edges weighted by correlation magnitude and nodes sized to indicate topic frequency. Only positive correlations greater than 0.10 are drawn.

Not only does topic emphasis vary, Figure 2 suggests that topic relationships also differ. For instance, when O'Reilly and his guests discuss whether race is a problem, they are also likely to talk about whether race should be invoked or whether race motivated the events at hand. Labeling something as about race, further, is closely connected to discussion of racial tension. Themes related to the merits of using race to understand current affairs appear to characterize racial conservatism. This also appears to be a frequent conversation point on O'Reilly given the relative node size.

Although the right panel reveals similar relationships among these topics for Maddow, these connections are weaker with other clusters more prominent. The connection between minority children and illegal immigration suggests that how Maddow discusses illegal immigration may differ from O'Reilly. Maddow and her guests also often discuss GOP politicians alongside Barack Obama or evaluations of black behavior, and the relationships are stronger here than for O'Reilly. These patterns may reflect Maddow drawing attention to Republican elites using negative racial rhetoric to describe Obama and black Americans (cf., Haney López 2014).

While the patterns in Figures 1 and 2 offer some insight into how racially conservative and liberal coverage varies, the Michael Brown case study indicated that they can differ in important ways when covering the same topic. To address this, and better identify racially conservative and liberal themes, I focus on three topics as example cases: race as a problem, population characteristics, and Tea Party racism. In Figures 3–5, I present three example documents from each show classified into each topic.

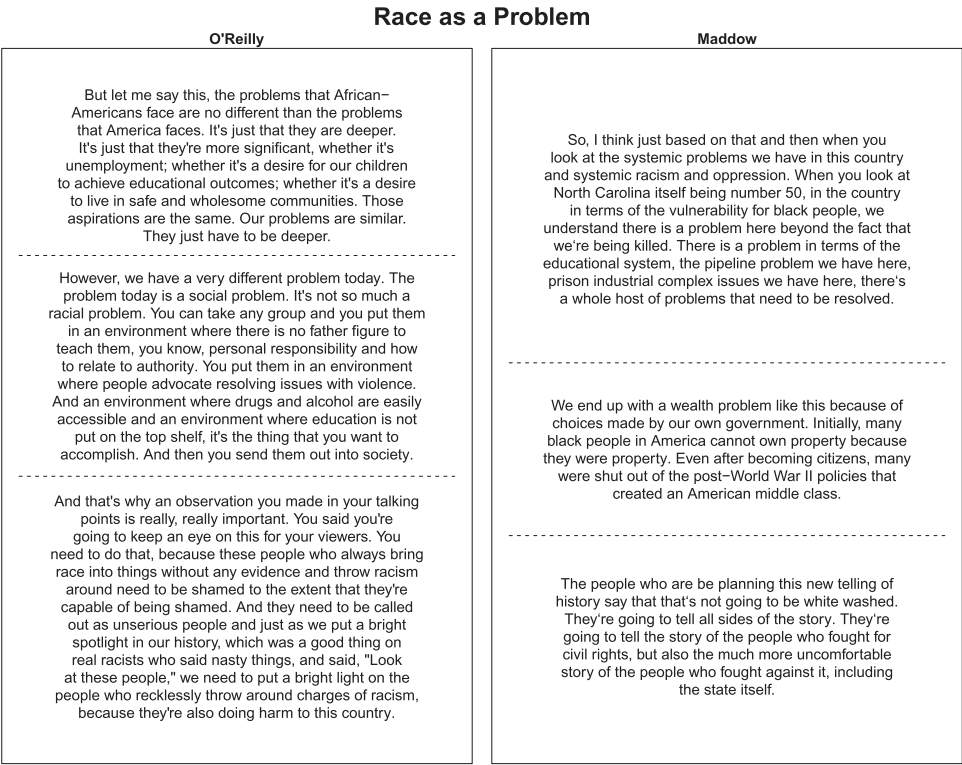


Figure 3. Example topic documents, race as a problem topic.

O'Reilly	Maddow
<p>Out of wedlock births, 17 percent for Asians, 29 percent for whites, a whopping 72 percent for blacks. It's no question poverty is driven by lack of education, poor supervision of children and fractured families.</p> <hr/> <p>According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics from 2012 to 2013, latest available, African-Americans are responsible for 22.4 percent of all violent crimes in the U.S.A., despite being just 13 percent of the population. Whites responsible for 43 percent of violent crimes with Caucasians making up 62 percent of the population. But here's the kicker. When you look at police shooting victims, whites comprise 50 percent of those shots, Blacks just 26 percent.</p> <hr/> <p>According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for black Americans is 11.4 percent. It's just over five percent for whites, 4.5 percent for Asians. So, do we have Asian privilege in America? Because the truth is, that Asian American households earn far more money than anyone else. The median income for Asians, close to \$69,000 a year; it's 57,000 for whites' \$33,000 for black -- so the question becomes why? And the answer is found in stable homes and in emphasis on education; 88 percent of Asian Americans graduate from high school compared to 86 for whites and just 69 percent for blacks. That means 31 percent of African-Americans have little chance to succeed in the free marketplace because they are uneducated. They are high school dropouts.</p>	<p>And the specifics are even worse. Child poverty rose from under 21 percent to 22 percent. Poverty among Hispanic Americans went from more than 25 percent to more than 26 percent. Poverty among African-Americans went from just under 26 percent to over 27 percent.</p> <hr/> <p>Crack was primarily afflicting urban neighborhoods and cocaine was viewed as the party drug of well-off whites. African-Americans made up 80 percent of those put in jail for crack offenses despite being 30 percent of crack users.</p> <hr/> <p>Thirty-one is the percentage that the Pew Research Center estimates of the population, the voting population, that will be non-white. That's huge, because in 2012, the non-white population was 29 percent. It had been growing at 2 percent every four years, it's grown an extra percentage point. The vast majority of the 10.7, the second number 11, of the 10.7 million new eligible voters, 7.5 million of them are black, Hispanic, or Asian-American.</p>

Figure 4. Example topic documents, population characteristics topic.

Figure 3 shows how the race as a problem topic merits this label and also speaks to racially conservative and liberal themes. These documents offer information regarding how each show references problems related to communities of color, but The Factor does so by defining them as problems all Americans face while Maddow points to legacies of discrimination maintaining race's relevance. On The Factor, real problems are not racial but social; violence, drugs, and personal responsibility are obstacles for minority communities, not race itself. Moreover, claims of racism are often specious and "unserious." Race itself has no political or social relevance. This contrasts sharply with Maddow, where discussion directly addresses systemic racism, policy legacies holding blacks back from economic success, and the civil rights struggle. Black Americans face issues in the educational system and criminal justice system, and have not had similar opportunities to build wealth. These examples reveal that in this context, The Factor's racially conservative view denies race's relevance and resents claims that racism matters. Maddow's racially liberal perspective calls attention to discrimination's legacies and obstacles nonwhites still face due to their race.

Figure 4 offers similar insights. The population characteristics topic includes racial group characteristics including rates of poverty, incarceration, and drug use, as well as minority groups' electoral significance. These examples again address racially conservative and liberal differences and how these analyses can inform work on mass attitudes. As the first and third O'Reilly texts show, The Factor attributes poverty to group cultural failings, a central part of racially conservative attitudes (e.g., Kinder and Sanders 1996; Kam and

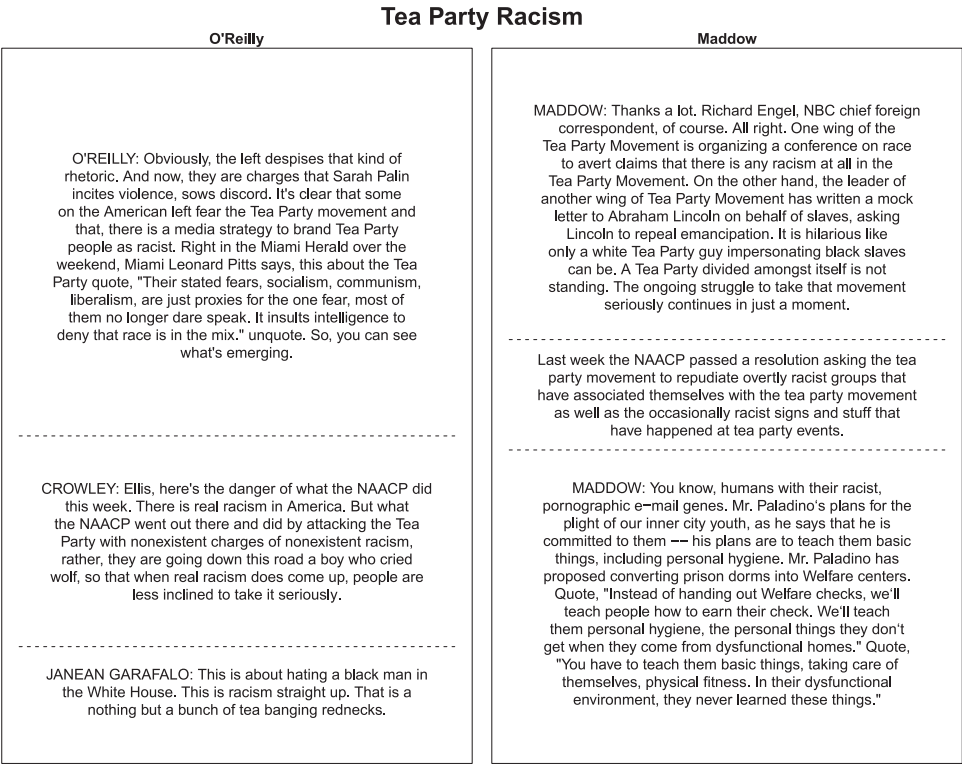


Figure 5. Example topic documents, tea party racism topic.

Burge 2018). O'Reilly often cites education and family socialization as necessary for success. Relatedly, the second text suggests Factor viewers hear that black Americans disproportionately commit crimes, a point reflecting the Michael Brown case study and potentially reinforcing impressions of black criminality (Gilliam, Iyengar, and Simon 1996).

In contrast, Maddow's racially liberal perspective emphasizes discrimination. While discussing child poverty rates, Maddow also mentions that aggregate numbers hide the worse experiences of Hispanic and African American communities. The second example highlights disparities in drug sentencing based on powdered or crack cocaine use and the overrepresentation of black Americans among those imprisoned for using the latter. These patterns suggest that those hearing racially liberal views hear more about racial group population features as they relate to other groups like whites, with a particular focus on nonwhites' unique experiences and continued disadvantaged.

How O'Reilly and Maddow discuss racism within the Tea Party speaks to how racial conservatives and liberals understand racism more generally. O'Reilly typically sees claims about Tea Party racism as baseless. As the first two texts in Figure 5 show, he and his guests argue that the left tries to "brand Tea Party people as racist" because they dislike what it stands for, ignoring what constitutes "real racism" in America.¹³ Since the Tea Party is not racist, such claims create a "boy who cried wolf" situation. The third text suggests these arguments are in part responses to media figures like actress and comedian Janeane Garofalo, potentially as a way to establish a belief that

elites were arrayed against the Tea Party. Racial conservatism sees charges of racism as illegitimate and instead part of an effort to discredit a movement built on authentic, principled grievances.¹⁴ With race irrelevant, people saying otherwise deserve condemnation.

Maddow, in contrast, promotes claims of Tea Party racism. The first two documents focus on the movement's attempts to deal with racism. Even though some Tea Party elements sought to address race, many others made racist remarks or did not condemn those who did. Citing the NAACP's efforts to address Tea Party racism, as the second text shows, may enhance Maddow's critiques by incorporating similar comments from a well-known civil rights organization. Further, as the third text indicates, Maddow also covered Republican politicians making racist remarks. Here, Carl Paladino, a one-time Tea Party-backed GOP candidate for a New York congressional seat, characterized inner city youth as welfare-reliant and irresponsible. From these discussions, Maddow's viewers may increasingly pair racism with the Republican Party, or at least elements within it. MSNBC viewers may see racism as intertwined with Republican Party politics while Fox's audience sees it as the excuses of people lacking credible ways to critique someone's politics (see Banks 2018).¹⁵

These examples offer evidence for some ingredients potentially constituting mass racial attitudes. Racially conservative and liberal elite rhetoric varies both in what receives attention and how content is presented. O'Reilly's racial conservatism identifies problems related to race as ones of family breakdown instead of racism and discrimination. Racial liberalism as epitomized by Maddow emphasizes race's social reality and disparities communities of color face. To summarize, I offer six stylized frames in Table 1, three from each show, that encapsulate divides in racially conservative and liberal elite views and suggest what mass attitudes may look like for people hearing these perspectives.

Strategic uses of racism constitute one dimension. A racially liberal perspective includes seeing racism as in part a tool Republican elites use to generate support for Republican candidates from white voters. GOP politicians pursue "George Wallace-type stuff" by employing racist conspiracy theories and imagery of "nonwhite people being scary" as dog whistles. Racial conservatism sees racism not as a campaign tactic, but as allegations by the media or minorities advancing their own interests. The "temptation of racial politics" is about a "color beef" promoted by "racial hucksters" employing racism charges to delegitimize reasonable opposition or simply get attention. Like McCarthyite allegations of Communism, racism claims are "boy who cried wolf stuff" that harm people.

A second area concerns the legitimacy of talking about race. Discussing race is affirming for racial liberals like Maddow. Black lives matter as *black* lives, and not at the expense of other groups. Someone's race is central to understanding who they are and their often-disparate experiences. The Factor's racial conservatism suggests it is better to ignore race.

Table 1. Stylized frames of racially liberal and conservative discourse.

Theme	Maddow	O'Reilly
Strategic uses of racism	Republican elites use race to scare whites	Charges of racism are self-interested
Talking about Race	Talking about race matters	A double standard exists for talking about race, especially when people should not see race
Race-related issues	Communities of color have unique (and disparate) experiences	Minorities get special favors and attention, ignoring the real problems in their communities

Evaluating outcomes through racial lenses is wrong because race is rarely related to social and political affairs. People should ignore race because “skin color is the least important human characteristic.” In fact, a double standard exists because people use race to criticize whites and deflect from nonwhites’ failings.

The final difference addresses race-related issues. Here, Maddow’s racial liberalism emphasizes “systemic problems” and “historic wrongs.” Acknowledging that discrimination is less overt today, this position emphasizes racial disparities in myriad social and economic outcomes, and how these relate to legacies of white supremacy and anti-black violence. For racial conservatives like O’Reilly, minority communities receive special attention from the government and media when facing the slightest issue. Black communities do not face systemic oppression from the government and other institutions; black family fragility is the important policy problem. In this view, social problems explain racial group disparities, not race itself. Such disparities may even suggest underlying group differences in industriousness and lawfulness.

Implications

Identifying these themes matters because elites can influence mass predispositions. Social psychologists have carefully identified how content akin to the frames I identify relates to racial attitude change. For instance, the race-related issues frame may contribute alternatively to positive or negative racial attitudes depending on the frame adopted. Learning about the United States’s changing demographics can lead whites to evaluate nonwhites more negatively (Craig and Richeson 2014), potentially following from status threat concerns (see also Wilkins and Kaiser 2014; Wilkins et al. 2017). Presenting racial change as threatening to existing social arrangements – for instance as minorities wanting, and being rewarded with, special favors and attention – can increase perceptions of anti-white bias and foster negative attitudes about nonwhites (Wilkins and Kaiser 2014; Wilkins et al. 2017; see also Knowles et al. 2009; Knowles and Lowery 2012). However, if information is presented non-threateningly – patterns consistent with the racially liberal themes I identify – then negative shifts need not occur (Wilkins and Kaiser 2014).

Relatedly, the strategic uses of racism and talking about race frames can socialize whites into selectively using race as an explanation for social phenomena (cf., Hoerl 2012; Corrigan 2017). Racially conservative versions of each frame that deny race’s importance, for instance, appear related to holding negative intergroup attitudes (Richeson and Nussbaum 2004) and ignoring race-based biases in intergroup settings (Apfelbaum et al. 2010; see also Knowles et al. 2009). Racially liberal versions, in contrast, relate to more positive attitudes (Richeson and Nussbaum 2004) and increased attention to racial bias (Apfelbaum et al. 2010). The evidence I provide reveals that the stimuli these studies consider manifest prominently in racially liberal and conservative discourse, indicating that these attitude change patterns carefully identified experimentally carry potential real-world implications.

As additional evidence that rhetorical differences may speak to general attitude change dynamics, I relate self-reported Fox and MSNBC viewership to racial attitude change and report these analyses in the appendix. Panel data from the Democracy Fund’s (2017) 2011–2016 Views of the Electorate Research Survey reveal changes on different racial attitude measures – racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996) and

feeling thermometers – consistent with partisan media viewers responding to differences in rhetoric on race by altering their beliefs in ways the preceding social psychological work suggests.¹⁶ The results offer the following hypothetical exemplifying partisan media consumption's possible influence. Holding constant a variety of demographic characteristics including partisanship, a non-Hispanic White respondent scoring at racial resentment's average in 2011 (.64) places at .52 in 2016 if they report only watching MSNBC, .66 if they only watch Fox, and .62 if they watch no evening talkshows.¹⁷ And these patterns extend to affective evaluations of blacks and Latinos.

Conclusion

By contrasting how The Rachel Maddow Show and O'Reilly Factor cover race I provide insight into how racially liberal and conservative elites' speech differs. Racial liberals celebrate racial diversity and argue nonwhites still face prejudice and discrimination. Racial conservatives attempt to delegitimize claims of racism and propose that discussing race is self-serving. Finally, insights from social psychology and evidence from panel data suggest these themes help construct mass racial attitudes.

The themes I identify also shed light on the nature of distinct racial attitudes. Some argue racial resentment conflates racial animus and race-neutral principles (Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Huddy and Feldman 2009), implying these are separable concerns with respect to racial policy opinions. But recent work supports the view that race and principles jointly matter (Kam and Burge 2018). My evidence may help explain these connections. Repeated exposure to racially conservative rhetoric like O'Reilly's that denies discrimination and explains racial affairs through individualism and other principles can racialize ostensibly race-neutral considerations by connecting race and values in viewers' long-term memory (Gilens 1999; Tesler 2016). This associative learning process also suggests people can express racial views through principles alone, letting them ignore, or be unaware of, how race shapes their thinking (Knowles et al. 2009; Bonilla-Silva 2014). Identifying racially conservative and liberal themes in elite rhetoric can thus shed some light on the nature and origins of mass predispositions.

The patterns I find also do not appear unique to the specific context or commentators (see Haney López 2014; Dixon 2017). Pundits applied similar frames when covering the August 2017 white nationalist rally and counterprotest in Charlottesville, Virginia. Although O'Reilly had since left Fox News, host Jesse Watters offered a view denying racism's relevance: "What we saw in Charlottesville were fringe fanatics who do not represent this country. America is not a racist nation. It's time we stop acting like it is." Rachel Maddow emphasized racism's importance, arguing, "[T]his persistent fascistic violent racist element in American culture and politics is a real thing that we have lived through before as a country. And it waxes and wanes but it has never really gone away."

These divergent elite views may have facilitated sharp partisan divides in attitudes about Charlottesville. Democrats and Republicans split 62–35% on whether the "political positions of white nationalists who attended the rally in Charlottesville" were mostly wrong (Edwards-Levy 2017). Likewise, while more Democrats than Republicans said the violence in Charlottesville was part of a broader problem in American society (79–61%), a full 25% of Republicans saw the violence as an isolated incident. That these divides reflect how elites covered Charlottesville, as well as the differences in racially

liberal and conservative rhetoric I identify, implies some degree of elite influence (Zaller 1992).

Future work could evaluate how apolitical and non-partisan sources present race. Sports commentators and athletes provide an interesting extension. Recently, NFL players including Colin Kaepernick and Eric Reid drew national attention by kneeling during the national anthem to protest police violence and other racial inequities. The NBA has perhaps been even more outspoken, with players and coaches including LeBron James, Stephen Curry, Steve Kerr, and Gregg Popovich speaking out against racism and discrimination. Future work could explore how these figures discuss race to see if rhetoric resembles the racially liberal and conservative views outlined above.

Studying how elites discuss race matters in light of work on prejudice reduction. While Myrdal (1962) may have believed that ignorance, willful and actual, about black Americans' social and economic circumstances helped shape whites' views on race, and thus publicity through media attention and other efforts would have salutary effects, reality seems more complicated. Motivation appears to play an important role in what makes a prejudice reduction technique effective (Paluck and Green 2009). I show some of the information elites may provide and highlight patterns suggesting this may shape mass attitudes. Subsequent work can establish how and why it is persuasive. Uncovering what encourages people to update attitudes about racial and ethnic minorities can help identify when people adopt elite views.

Notes

1. These shows provide the longest timespan in which to compare speakers regarded as characterizing consistently liberal and conservative commentary (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016). Indeed, accounts of Maddow's hiring describe MSNBC as deliberately adding more liberal perspectives (Carter 2008), making her show the most likely place to identify racially liberal themes over the longest time period. Further, analyses considering other shows offer complementary insights (Dixon 2017).
2. Emphasizing rhetoric is unfortunately limited, however, because I cannot account for visuals. Images link implicit rhetoric with racial groups (Mendelberg 2001) and may themselves shed light on racially liberal and conservative themes (cf. Farris and Mohamed 2018).
3. Focusing on nonwhites may still be limited because it does not consider whiteness. But accounts of whiteness's origins suggest these concerns are not dire. As Haney López (2006) notes, whiteness developed by establishing who is *not* white rather than affirmatively defining who counts as white (21). Consequently, focusing on rhetoric referencing nonwhites can speak to how people understand race in its myriad guises, including whiteness.
4. These shows offer the longest time coverage from programming providing a consistent viewpoint, making them opportune subjects seen as providing conservative and liberal perspectives (Carter 2008; Grossmann and Hopkins 2016). For example, Fox's Sean Hannity shared a primetime show with liberal Alan Colmes until February 2009 and Keith Olbermann left MSNBC January 2011.
5. Transcripts downloaded from FACTIVA and vary in length according to number of words spoken on each episode. Data contain 1830 and 2025 episodes for Maddow and O'Reilly, respectively.
6. Google trends data indicate that Ferguson occurred at the beginning of sustained public interest in police brutality in the period studied <https://bit.ly/2XyV3nE>
7. I exclude Barack Obama from mentions of prominent racial figures to guard against conflating discussion of race with references to the sitting president. Any results including Obama thus pair him with race defined some other way. This makes the picture I present restrictive

because I do not directly capture how commentators discuss the sitting president, references my coding scheme may otherwise miss.

8. This procedure is still limited because it cannot capture conversations across pundits and discussions on the same show if statements do not incorporate words identified as discriminating racial from non-racial text. I thus offer a restrictive characterization of racial discourse.
9. The supplementary information includes additional details on the text processing and model estimation.
10. Appendix C compares levels of racial discussion on Maddow and O'Reilly. The results indicate that O'Reilly covered race more than Maddow. While not substantively large, this runs against evidence that outlets ignore issues that are not winning topics for their coalition (Levendusky 2013).
11. Appendix B includes a case study of Henry Louis Gates's arrest offering similar insights.
12. Topic labels come from reading the 60 documents identified as most strongly loading on each topic with 30 each from Maddow and O'Reilly. The "misc." topic includes primarily guest introductions but also a mix of short-term events like the 2009 ACORN controversy.
13. When The Factor affirmatively addresses racism it usually invokes Jim Crow-style discrimination and biological racism. But this is rare. References to "real racism" provide no definition, suggesting the speaker and audience possess common knowledge about what actually constitutes racism. Alternatively, The Factor may define "real racism" via negation by indicating what racism is not.
14. This principled-movement view runs opposite network coverage of the Black Lives Matter movement. Banks (2018) shows how Fox's coverage incorporates frames delegitimizing a movement that could also be seen as principled. By establishing what count as principled vs. racially motivated claims, Fox may help establish which groups' concerns merit attention and also racialize non-racial value judgments.
15. Maddow's approach reflects partisan news's proclivity to use individual events and stories to reveal flaws in the opposing party (Levendusky 2013). The Tea Party demonstrates that the Republican Party is out of step on race in part by condoning racist remarks.
16. Surveys completed online via YouGov's respondent pool. Details on the statistical analyses are included in Appendix D. Comparing Maddow- and O'Reilly-only viewers offers similar insights.
17. Survey participants were asked "Which of the following news talk shows do you watch regularly on television?" and given a list of 9 cable news talkshows, 3 Fox News (O'Reilly Factor, Hannity, On the Record with Greta Van Susteren), 2 CNN (Anderson Cooper 360, Erin Burnett OutFront), and 4 MSNBC (Hardball with Chris Matthews, the Ed Show, The Rachel Maddow Show, and The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell). Fox(MSNBC)-only viewers are those reporting watching at least one Fox(MSNBC) show and selecting no shows from other listed outlets.

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Supplementary Information: **The Content of their Coverage: Contrasting
Racially Conservative and Liberal Elite Rhetoric**

Abstract

The material that follows incorporates additional information referenced in the text.

A: Text Analysis Procedure

I used a multi-step procedure to classify the documents according to whether or not they mentioned race. First, and as mentioned in the text, I took a random sample of 200 documents per month and coded each by hand according to whether or not they discussed race. Again, this included mentions of race in any context that explicitly refer to a racial group, racialized policy or experience, or prominent racial figure (Gillion 2016). I then partitioned this over 21,000 document set into a training set and test set by randomly dividing it in half. I preprocessed the documents by removing stopwords, numbers, and punctuation. I did not stem words because eliminating contextually-relevant information in the unstemmed words reduced classifier accuracy. After testing a series of classifiers on the training set, including Naive Bayes and maximum entropy, I settled on a support vector machine to classify these documents because it was the most accurate in terms of recall and precision on the test set (Hsu, Chang and Lin 2003).

I then did two things to improve classification accuracy. First, following prior work (Gillion 2016) I used a keyword search for words that are undoubtedly race-related (e.g., African American, Latino, racism, racial) to add additional information into the training data to improve classifier accuracy. Second, I weighted words based on mutual information (MI). MI captures how much information a word's presence or absence contributes to making a classification decision (Manning, Raghavan and Schütze 2009). I selected the specific MI cutoff by iterating over different MI levels and selecting the MI cutoff by evaluating each model's *F-score*, a weighted average of model recall and precision, or the frequency of type II and type I errors (Manning, Raghavan and Schütze 2009). I used an MI cutoff of 0.0033, with the model in the test set providing an overall *F-score* of 0.91 out of 1, and a race-specific one of 0.88. Finally, I addressed overfitting the SVM through cross-validation with total accuracy of 92.8%. After training the classifier I applied it to the uncoded documents. After collecting the coded documents I then read through each document classified as discussing race to correct any Type I errors. Following this, 2.6% of documents were coded as implicating race in some way. This is similar to the 4% of the hand coded set that related to race.

Using these coded documents I then applied the structural topic modeling discussed in the text. I preprocessed the documents the same way, again not stemming words. I then specified

different numbers of topics ranging from 20 to 50 in units of 5 and ran 10 different models for each topic specification. Each model allowed topic prevalence to vary by show and over time. For each topic specification I evaluated the 10 models based on exclusivity and semantic coherence as statistical criteria for each model's ability to identify unique topics that cohere well together (Roberts et al. 2014), and then inspected them to assess substance. After selecting a candidate model for each topic specification, I then compared these models across topic specifications, finally settling on the 35 topic model discussed in the text. While I make no claims that this is the definitive number of topics, the results appear meaningful based on the statistical and substantive comparisons, and from reading the documents while correcting Type I errors.¹

¹ The model's semantic coherence is -146.90, and exclusivity is 9.93.

B: An Additional Case Study: A Beer Summit Follows “Police Acting Stupidly”

As an additional case study I offer the arrest of Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates on July 16, 2009, the outcome of which led to the White House Beer Summit featuring Gates, President Obama, and arresting officer James Crowley.

The White House Beer Summit followed comments President Obama made during a White House press conference on healthcare reform that drew attention to how Officer Crowley handled his interaction with Professor Gates. “I don’t know – not having been there and not seeing all the facts – what role race played in that, but I think it’s fair to say, number one, any of us would be pretty angry; number two that the Cambridge police acted stupidly in arresting some- body when there was already proof that they were in their own home”

The O’Reilly Factor picked up the story following these remarks. Guest host Monica Crowley wondered whether President Obama should “have given say a more value-neutral statement” and if he “sees things through the prism of race or perhaps his liberal ideology.” Instead of sticking with his promise to “try and bring to America a post-racial era,” Crowley proposed that “[Obama] waited [*sic*] unnecessarily and irresponsibly knee deep into racial politics.” Her comments, reflecting a racially conservative view, suggest that President Obama was making too much about race. He did not put forward a reasoned reaction to racial profiling by the police, as argued by one of The Factor’s guests, but rather drew too heavily on his being a black man. Moreover, his comments did not befit the office of the President of the United States.

Across four episodes, The Factor paired guests who justified the arrest with those viewing the arrest as irresponsible, even reflecting racial bias. Factor hosts and guests justifying the arrest argued that Gates should not have acted “belligerently.” As one guest advised, “You

need to shut up when you're addressing a guy with a gun and a badge. And you need to be respectful, like we all are, or should be when we deal with somebody who's an officer of the law." This, despite his counterpart pointing out that "many African Americans have known the situation where police officers feel like they have to win," with officers feeling compelled to arrest blacks for even small infractions.

Most discussion, however, emphasized the racially conservative point that race was not a salient factor in the arrest itself. It was Professor Gates's behavior that mattered. He "had a chip on his shoulder" and "at a heartbeat turned this into a racial incident" according to O'Reilly, disagreeing with guest Geraldo Rivera's proposition that race is a constantly important factor in interactions between non-whites and the police. The view The Factor offered was that Gates's being a black man was irrelevant to how the event unfolded. President Obama, moreover, made a serious mistake by calling attention to possible racial dynamics present in the event and needed a mea culpa.

Rachel Maddow and her guests provided a markedly different perspective reflecting racially liberal themes. On two separate episodes, Maddow and guest Melissa Harris-Lacewell used the incident to talk about race's role in contemporary American politics. The first related to how the Republican National Committee was using President Obama's comments to fundraise. Both Maddow and Harris-Lacewell speculated that the GOP was more interested in stoking "racial indignation among [its] base" than in discussing "ideas and policy." On a separate occasion, Harris-Lacewell noted that "we had a little bit of a cheering section going on among progressive African American scholars when we heard Barack Obama speak so forthrightly about what sounded like his clear understanding of the anxious relationship between African Americans and the police." From this perspective the incident had clear racial implications.

Professor Gates's arrest opened up a path to talk about criminal justice issues and offered a teachable moment for police forces to understand how African Americans are taught to interact with the police.

Even when covering the same story, Maddow and O'Reilly incorporate race in different ways. Although The Factor did more to present competing depictions of the arrest than did Maddow, an unmistakable takeaway from watching the former is that race was not an important event feature. In line with a racially conservative perspective, claims to racial profiling or proposals that blacks have meaningfully different interactions with police officers take a back seat to exhortations that simply being respectful and following orders will solve any issues citizens may have with law enforcement. In contrast, Maddow's viewers were shown yet another obstacle facing the black community, reinforcing racially liberal themes. Moreover, not only were President Obama's comments on the incident warranted, in contrast to reactions presented on O'Reilly comments on Maddow suggested they did not go far enough. Obama had missed an opportunity to speak directly to the black community's concerns about issues in the criminal justice system.

C: Racially Liberal and Conservative Partisan Elites Consistently Talk About Race

I offer information here on the relative frequency with which Maddow and O'Reilly discuss race.

To do so, I rely on a classification algorithm to replicate human coding procedures over a larger document set. This recovers the set of show transcript excerpts related to race.

Figure C.1 plots the distribution of episodes from each show according to the attention given to race, defined as the proportion of texts (i.e., speaker-turn paragraphs) from an episode the algorithm classified as about race.² The top panel presents the distribution for Maddow while the bottom panel provides the distribution for The Factor.

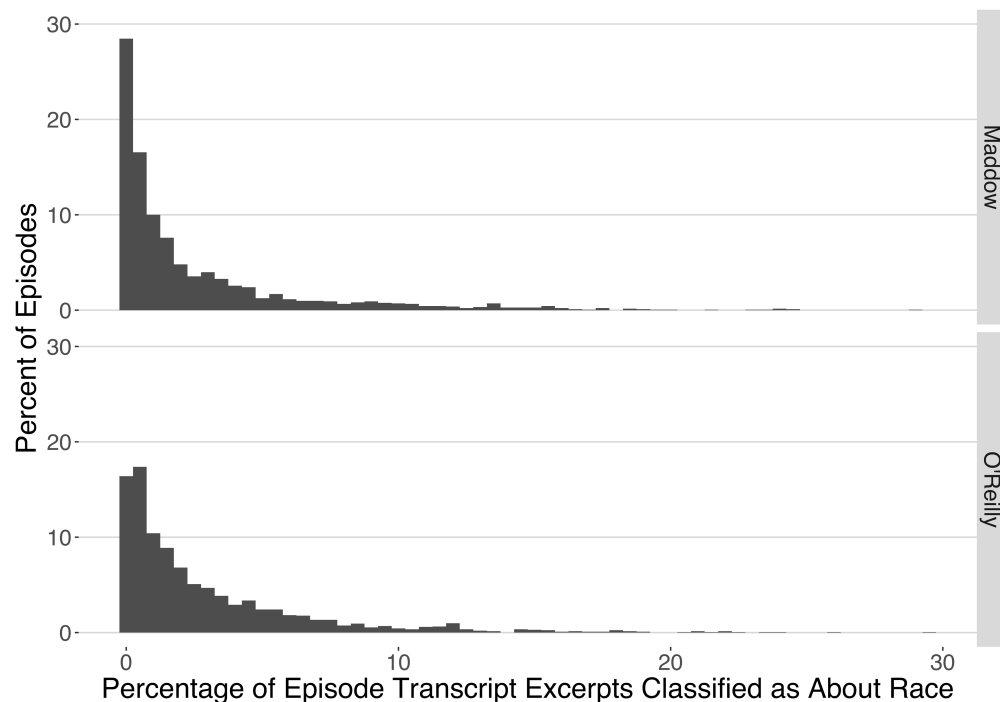


Figure C1: Distribution of episode attention to race by show.

² This is a noisy attention measure given the methodological issues highlighted in Footnote 8 in the main text. The classification algorithm cannot capture conversations across pundits and related discussions occurring later in an episode if they do not include words identified as differentiating between racial and non-racial text.

Figure C.1 shows that while decidedly not dominant, partisan media outlets do discuss race. Further, while the typical episode may contain no discussion, Factor viewers on average hear slightly more discussion about race than does Maddow's audience. Mean attention for a Factor episode is 2.9%, and for Maddow it is 2.6% (medians are 1.5% and 1% respectively). Racial discussion on Maddow is also marginally more variable ($SD_{\text{Maddow}} = 3.9$, $SD_{\text{O'Reilly}} = 3.8$). Finally, Figure C.1 shows that slightly more Factor episodes devote higher levels of attention to race, a pattern supported statistically (two-sample KS test $D = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$). Although these differences do not seem substantively large, they contrast with evidence that conservative-aligned outlets ignore issues that are not winning topics for their coalition (Levendusky 2013). Not only does O'Reilly discuss race, according to this measure he gives it more attention than Maddow.³

³ Gillion (2016) finds little partisan difference between members of Congress in how much they talk about race, results suggesting my finding is not a function of looking at partisan media or the specific attention operationalization.

D: Partisan Media Consumption and Racial Attitude Change in Panel Data

I use panel data from the Democracy Fund Voter Study Group's Views of the Electorate Research (VOTER) Survey to offer suggestive evidence that coverage variation by outlet has attitudinal patterns. These data, collected online by the YouGov survey firm, include interviews in December 2011 and November/December 2016. Each wave includes measures of racial attitudes (racial resentment, group feeling thermometers) as well as items related to self-reported media consumption. For this consumption measure, survey participants were asked "Which of the following news talk shows do you watch regularly on television?" and given a list of 9 cable news talk shows, 3 from Fox News (O'Reilly Factor, Hannity, On the Record with Greta Van Susteren), 2 from CNN (Anderson Cooper 360, Erin Burnett OutFront), and 4 from MSNBC (Hardball with Chris Matthews, the Ed Show, The Rachel Maddow Show, and The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell). If what shows talk about with respect to race, and how they talk about it, matters, then looking at Whites' racial attitudes across waves can suggest some potential influence.

To offer insight into the relationship between viewership and racial attitudes, I categorize respondents into Fox-only, MSNBC-only, Other, and None viewers.⁴ The first two categories consist of those reporting watching at least one Fox or MSNBC show and selecting no shows from other outlets on the list. The "Other" category includes cross-channel viewers as well as CNN-only viewers. The "None" category consists of respondents reporting they watched none of the provided shows.

⁴ This preserves cases within the Fox and MSNBC cells. Replacing outlet-only viewers with Maddow and O'Reilly only viewers does not alter the substantive results.

After classifying respondents this way, I then used coarsened exact matching (Iacus, King, and Porro 2012) to match White respondents according to news viewership category. I did this two ways. First, I matched on sex, Southern residence, age, education, and income. This flexibly accounts for demographic differences related to show viewership (Pew Research Center 2014). In a second matching procedure I include partisanship, defined in 3 categories including independent leaners with their respective parties, alongside these demographic characteristics. The number of matched cases drops substantially after including party because of the close mapping between partisan news consumption and party loyalty (Pew Research Center 2014), but helps address baseline differences in the propensity to accept information provided by the outlet (Zaller 1992). While this is still a selection on observables strategy, creating these matched datasets before evaluating change in racial attitudes over time better accounts for baseline differences in show viewership which should reduce model dependence.

Using these matched observations I then look at changes between 2011 and 2016 on 3 different measures of racial attitudes. The first consists of racial resentment which captures structural versus individual explanations for black Americans' social and economic status (Tarman and Sears 2005, Kam and Burge 2018). The second and third take feeling thermometer ratings of blacks and Latinos and subtract these from ratings of Whites to create a differenced affect measure that accounts for variation across individuals in how people use such rating items (Brady 1985). On the matched sample I regress racial attitudes measured in 2016 on indicators for each of the viewership categories, using Nones as a baseline, as well as racial attitudes measured in 2011. Table D.1 contains the estimates from these models for each different racial attitude measure. The first column for each measure uses the matched demographic sample while the second column uses the demographics and party matched sample.

The estimates suggest that consuming partisan media relates to divergent racial attitudes over time across different racial attitude operationalizations. Take racial resentment. Compared to non-Hispanic Whites who reported viewing none of the 9 evening talk shows listed, Fox-only viewers were 3-5 points on average more racially resentful in 2016 depending on the matched sample used. MSNBC-only viewers, were 8-10 points less racially resentful. Put differently, using the results from model 1 a respondent with an average level of racial resentment in 2011 (.64 in these data) scores at a .62 if they watch no evening talk shows. But if they just watch Fox they score at .66, while MSNBC-only viewers score at a .52. The remaining estimates in Table D.1 offer similar insights. Given the differences in coverage and rhetoric that I demonstrate, such attitude change patterns are consistent with viewers responding to this rhetoric by altering their beliefs in ways suggested by social psychological work discussed in the main text.

Table D.1: Media Consumption and Racial Attitude Change, 2011-2016

	Racial Resentment _t		White-Black Affect Difference _t		White-Latino Affect Difference _t	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Fox Only	0.048*** (0.007)	0.035** (0.014)	0.022*** (0.004)	0.017** (0.008)	0.017*** (0.004)	0.027*** (0.008)
MSNBC Only	-0.079*** (0.009)	-0.100*** (0.016)	-0.043*** (0.005)	-0.042*** (0.009)	-0.045*** (0.005)	-0.042*** (0.009)
Other	-0.026*** (0.008)	-0.015 (0.018)	-0.005 (0.005)	0.016* (0.010)	-0.007 (0.005)	0.011 (0.010)
Racial Attitudes _{t-1}	0.889*** (0.012)	0.863*** (0.025)	0.585*** (0.015)	0.507*** (0.030)	0.575*** (0.014)	0.533*** (0.028)
Constant	0.045*** (0.009)	0.069*** (0.019)	0.208*** (0.009)	0.248*** (0.018)	0.210*** (0.009)	0.230*** (0.018)
Matched Sample	Demographics	Demo + Party	Demographics	Demo + Party	Demographics	Demo + Party
Observations	4,765	4,765	4,765	4,765	4,765	4,765
R2	0.668	0.630	0.330	0.271	0.335	0.312
Residual Std. Error	0.180	0.184	0.103	0.100	0.106	0.109

Note: *p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < 0.01

Analyses among non-Hispanic Whites using matched-sample weights. Variables scaled 0-1. Non-cable viewers are the omitted category.

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