

A Tragedy In Search Of A Scandal:
A Linguistic Study Of Aggressive Journalism In North America After The 2012
U.S. Embassy Attack In Benghazi, Libya

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Tämä pro gradu -tutkielma käsittelee metaforan, synekdokeen, toiseuttamisen, modaalisuuden, nominalisaation ja transitiivisuuden käyttötapoja yhdysvaltalaisen uutislähteiden verkossa julkaistuissa artikkeleissa, jotka käsittelevät Yhdysvaltojen Libyan lähetystyön vuonna 2012 tehtyä hyökkäystä. Tutkielman tavoite on tarjota yleiskatsaus tunnettujen kielellisten keinojen käytöstä uutisotsikoissa ja artikkeleissa sekä selvittää, onko demokraattien ja republikaanien kannattajiksi miellettyjen uutislähteiden konventioissa poliittisen ideologian motivoimia eroja näiden kielellisten keinojen käyttötapojen suhteen. Lisäksi tutkielma pyrkii selvittämään, edustaako pitkään jatkunut Benghazi-uutisointi uuden tyyppistä poliittisen hyökkäyksen muotoa – hyökkäysaihetta (*attack topic*). Tutkielman metodologinen lähestymistapa koostuu kriittisen diskurssianalyysin ja korpuslingvistiikan yhdistelmästä. Tekstejä tarkastellaan kriittisesti yhteiskunnallisten diskurssien ilmentyminä, pyrkimyksenä yhdistää kvalitatiivisen ja kvantitatiivisen lähestymistavan keinoja. Korpuslingvistisenä päätyökaluna toimii *WordSmith*-korpusohjelmisto, jonka avulla tutkitaan aineiston sanamääriä ja kollokaatiota. Aineisto koostuu kahdeksan eri uutislähteen manuaalisesti kerätyistä verkkoartikkeleista. Artikkelit on koottu pääkorpuksen ja erilaisiin alakorpuksiin, jotta aineistoa voidaan analysoida sekä yleisluontoisesti että kontrastiivisesti. Aineisto käsittää yhteensä 11 641 uutisartikkelia ja 7 593 692 sanaa.

Tutkielma esittelee kriittisen diskurssianalyysin tutkimusmetodina ja kartoittaa aggressiivisen journalismin muotoja Yhdysvaltain poliittisissa uutisissa. Teoriaosissa käsitellään jokaista kielellistä ilmiötä yleisluontoisesti ja havainnollistetaan niiden käyttötapoja Benghazi-uutisoinnissa. Analyysiosissa tarkastellaan metaforan, synekdokeen, toiseuttamisen, modaalisuuden, nominalisaation ja transitiivisuuden käyttötapoja ja -määriä aineiston demokraatteja ja republikaaneja tukevissa uutislähteissä. Tämän lisäksi analyysiosissa tarkastellaan erityisesti demokraattien ja republikaanien uutislähteiden välisiä kontrasteja osana Benghazi-hyökkäysaihetta.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että demokraattien ja republikaanien uutislähteiden konventioissa on selkeitä eroja, jotka ilmenevät Benghazia koskevien uutisten yhteydessä. Republikaaneja tukevat uutislähteet osoittautuivat aggressiivisemmiksi sekä kielellisten keinojen että julkaisumäärien suhteen. Aineiston melko rajattu aihepiiri ja koko estävät suuremmat yleistykset, mutta republikaanien mediatahot käyttivät selvästi demokraatteja useammin tutkittujen kielellisten keinojen hyökkäävämpiä muotoja. Tulokset viittaavat myös siihen, että Benghazin hyökkäyksiä koskeva narratiivi on rakennettu näitä kielellisiä keinoja käyttäen kahdella eri tavalla: demokraatit ilmaisevat Benghazin tragediana, republikaanit skandaalina. Tulosten perusteella Benghazin synnyttämää ilmiötä voidaan tietysti mielessä pitää uutena poliittisen journalismin hyökkäysmuotona. Alkuperäistä hyökkäysaiheen premissiä hälventää se, että Benghazin käyttökelpoisuus tehokkaana poliittisena aseena vaikuttaa olevan ajan ja osuman summa. Sitä ei voi valmistaa kielellisin tai diskursiivisin keinoin tyhjästä tai missä tahansa olosuhteissa.

Avainsanat: kriittinen diskurssianalyysi, korpuslingvistiikka, ideologia, Benghazi, metafora

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1. Introduction

On 11 September 2012, the US diplomatic mission in the Libyan city of Benghazi was attacked, resulting in the death of four US citizens, most notably the US ambassador to Libya. The incident stirred an unforeseen torrent of media aggression, which initially divided along two heavily contradictory storylines, reflecting the polarized political field in the United States. While it is true that the reasons behind the Benghazi events are likely “different, and murkier, than either of those storylines suggests” (Kirkpatrick 2013), the conflicting accounts did give life to a new form of aggressive journalism – the *attack topic*.

The focus of this thesis is the news reporting in U.S. media surrounding the 2012 Benghazi attacks with a purpose that is essentially three-fold. The first objective is to provide a general overview of the various ways in which grammar and vocabulary, the very expression of human “patterns of experience” (van Leeuwen 2009, 280), can be subtly manipulated in order to promote political ideologies and influence opinions. The second objective is to utilize linguistic analysis in order to unveil the evolution, anatomy and function of the Benghazi attack topic. Can the voluminous news material surrounding the Benghazi incident justifiably be said to represent a unique form of aggressive journalism, how did this form come to be and how is it used as an instance of discourses both political and journalistic in order to affect its readership. The third objective is to discover meaningful differences in these methods of manipulation that might yield a contrastive look at how Democratic and Republican news outlets, pundits and opinion-makers seek to represent the Benghazi events and influence the general public in support of their political ideology.

This thesis will utilize analytical tools provided by the field of *Critical Discourse Analysis* (hereafter CDA), *Systemic-Functional Linguistics*, and *Corpus Linguistics*. Headlines and news articles will be studied with regard to their structure, syntax and specific lexical choices. This thesis

seeks to combine the qualitative aspects of CDA that focus on the interpretation of content with the quantitative aspects of summarizing certain linguistic patterns and regularities in a large amount of corpus data. This approach is taken in order to avoid possible authorial prejudice by basing conclusions and generalizations on qualitatively analyzed quantitative data and numerically justified results gleaned therein. The main research questions are as follows:

- I. What linguistic methods of manipulation can be seen in the Benghazi reporting?**
- II. Does Benghazi reporting represent a new form of aggressive journalism – an *attack topic*?**
- III. Are there notable linguistic differences in the ways Republican and Democratic news sources represent their respective ideologies in Benghazi related reporting?**

American political reporting presents an unparalleled window into the operation of the unique combination of political discourse and news discourse intertwined with ideological motivations. It yields an opportunity for a study that provides a contrastive analysis of features between Democratic or liberal news outlets and their Republican or conservative counterparts.

English is the official language of international politics (Woods 2006, 53) and journalistic conventions are hardly immune to cultural imperialism, so some larger-scale implications are also a realistic topic of discussion. Journalists produce and reproduce social realities (Richardson 2007, 115), such as the turbulent state of Middle-East and southern Asia and the tensions between these continents and the United States. The journalistic maelstrom of the post-Benghazi blame-game provides an excellent and seemingly never-ending source for the study of various contrasts between news outlets and the evolutionary stages evident in modern aggressive journalism.

2. Language and Political News

Human language can be a surprisingly confusing thing to define. It constitutes a social action that involves the use of *power* and is, therefore, inherently political (Richardson 2006, 13). Manuel Castells defines power as “the most fundamental process in society” (2009, 31). Values and institutions have a critical impact on the way a society is formed and how it functions. Power dictates what is deemed valuable and what gets institutionalized. Elements of the socio-constructivist position are evident, strongly echoing the views of Stephen Bax (2011, 30-3). According to Bax, language has the ability to impose pre-constructed views on others and discourse, an inherently constructionist device, is created in the midst of society’s competing ideologies, at a “site of struggle”. Central to this struggle is the aforementioned concept of power. In this context, the gaining, maintaining and undermining of power is predominantly accomplished by influencing the views and behavior of readers – instilling opinions advantageous to a particular group (Semino 2008, 85).

Language bears definition in the functionalist tradition as well. As it can hardly be seen as a static thing on any level, language is clearly an actively used method of influence and persuasion (Richardson 2006, 23). Essentially, in addition to providing a way to influence and promote, language serves as a tool that enables one to construct his or her identity, to build and maintain oneself as a specific type of person (ibid., 11). If the scope of observation is moved beyond the subjectivity of personal experience, it is easy to see how the ideologically motivated manipulation of language in the fields of political and news discourse can, in skilled hands, turn into an incredibly powerful weapon of mass persuasion.

2.1 Ideology and Institutionalized Forms of Discourse

Due to their interrelated nature, concepts such as *discourse* and *ideology* can be somewhat challenging to define and describe. Elena Semino (2008, 90) provides some much needed clarification:

The relationship between discourses and ideologies is a dynamic one: discourses reflect particular ideologies, but also contribute to change them and shape them; ideologies result from discursive and social practices but also determine and constrain these practices.

Fairclough (1989, ix) emphasizes struggle as a something that can be seen in action in the structures of discourse. He separates discourse from actual text by defining a single textual item as a *product* of a single action, whereas discourse is a *process* formed by several continuous actions (ibid., 24). Van Dijk (1977, 3) condenses the criteria for acceptable examples of discourse into the confines of textual representation – anything that can be given a textual structure can be seen as an exemplar of a given discourse. The continued activity of political and news institutions – their discursive and societal practices that produce text – therefore form and represent their respective discourses. News reports, for example, can be seen as continuous communicative acts within their discourse. They are complex units of form, meaning and action that extend beyond the boundaries of immediate dialogue to interact on a wider scale (van Dijk 1988b, 8-9).

Fairclough (1989, 39) uses the term *reproduction* – the interpretation and production of discourse – to underline the two-way effect that exists between discourse and societal structures, such as the news media and political seats of power: when discourse is being interpreted and produced, it is both the product and the producer of these structures. As van Dijk points out, “ideologies are typically expressed and reproduced by discourse” (van Dijk 2009, 79). Ideology reaches a type of invisibility when it is an implicit part of discourse (Fairclough 1989, 85) and it is

closely linked to the power wielded by influential institutions. The ideological language produced by societally established sources is the medium through which their power and influence is upheld and exercised (Fairclough 1989, 2). The end products of this function are tools, such as news and political discourse, which are used to legitimize existing power relations in a given society (Fairclough 1989, 33).

Before delving deeper, a point should be made: the target of analysis here is the production of political news without studying specific consumer responses in greater detail. Analytic weight is placed on production and dissemination, methods of encoding, not on decoding or the reactions of an implied readership. The focus of this thesis seemingly places the reader in a rather passive position. However, it is generally agreed upon that as interpreters of conventions and news discourse, the readership of news – intended or otherwise – has inherent knowledge of certain meanings and actually has both an active and potentially powerful role in the equation (Fowler 1991, 44). The humble confines of this thesis, however, are dedicated to the study of authorship, arguably the more influential side of news and political discourse.

2.1.1 Political Discourse

Political news combine two powerful types of institutional discourse: news and political. Political discourse is omnipresent in human interactions and encompasses all institutional and individual communication on political matters. As T. R. Muralikrishnan (2011, 20) points out, every medium from entertainment to news media to informal face to face arguments is a potential site of political discourse. The use of political discourse in America has deep roots in historical narratives such as *American exceptionalism*, based on the classic “City upon a Hill” analogy originated by the first puritan settlers. It places the United States above the rest of the world as a nation and an example

(Winship 2012, 232). This “exceptionalist logic” (Madsen 1998, 1) has forged a distinct mythology throughout the nation’s history (Madsen 1998, 146). It is deeply embedded in the historical form and contemporary function of the two ruling political parties: the Democrats (hereafter DEM) and the Republicans, or GOP, (hereafter GOP) meaning Grand Old Party, an old-fashioned, yet commonly used moniker (Murse 2018). Political discourse has an undeniable tendency towards antonymous lexical choices (Chilton 2004, 202-3). News concerning polarized U.S. politics often urge a reader to choose a side – consciously or unconsciously.

American political discourse is utilized to promote the competing ideologies of the DEM and GOP parties: liberalism and conservatism, respectively. Charteris-black defines the influence political ideologies such as these seek to exert as a significant “discourse goal” (2004, 8). This discourse goal is what Muralikrishnan (2011, 24) in turn calls “the manufacture of consent”, also recognized by Wodak (2007, 214). In short, it is the endeavor to construct an ideological standpoint as an unquestionable part of the status quo of society and, by extension, the world.

Traditionally, the functions of language, and thus the functions of discourse, have been divided into the general categories of *transactional* and *interactional* (Brown and Yule 1983, 1). The transactional function relates to the expression of content and the interactional function involves attitudes and social relations. Opinionated political discourse, with its undeniable intermarriage with ideology, represents a potent mix of both functions. The actual operation of political discourse is characterized by a prolific manipulation of language to produce various permutations of a given semantic content. In other words, an event and its participants can be presented to us in several different ways, depending on the use of various, largely subliminal, methods collectively known to some as *spin*, “the black art of manipulating the output of political discourse” (Woods 2006, 52). The intimate relationship of politics and language - ideology expressed via linguistic finesse - is an embedded feature of the western political tradition (Chilton 2004, 4).

2.1.2 News Discourse

News reports are arguably the most pervasive and influential form of institutional discourse (van Dijk 1987, 3). It is worthy of note that news discourse itself is an amalgam of various discourses. A news story, in its finished form, has almost always been refined from various raw forms of discourse, such as eyewitness reports, interviews and press releases. The final product can be seen as the result of “source text processing” (ibid., 6). Richardson calls this a “constellation of discursive practices” (2006, 76). The textual output of these practises stands out from other culturally and societally defined texts. News media can never be considered passive in the way a street sign – although also usually meant to engage – might be. News seeks to produce meanings both inside and outside of the reader’s active consciousness (Burton 2010, 5).

News plays a significant role in the shaping of our beliefs and personally adopted ideologies, while often acting as the sole source of information on world events (van Dijk 1987, 3). Tuchman (1987, 12) goes as far as to ascribe news the ability to construct reality for its readers. Assessments such as these give the news media and the discourse it employs immense power, especially with the decline of traditional televised news and the advent and subsequent ubiquitous takeover of internet media. However, despite the birth of myriad new freelance and non-professional web-based information sources, news journalism has remained the main architect and distributor of conflict images and surrounding discourses (Cottle 2004, 3). The crucial role of authorial choices remains unchanged, regardless of used medium and professional status. As Richardson (2006, 40) notes, “the producer and mode of production encode meaning into the text”. The various ways in which ideology is weaved into the tapestry of news and political discourse is often motivated by a non-objective aspiration to present and promote a skewed viewpoint.

Political and news discourses represent two distinct “genres of discourse” (van Dijk 1984, 6). They have distinct properties that often operate in unison in political news - reporting on

campaigns and the minutiae of party-politics - or news on events that have ostensible political ramifications – as in the case of the Benghazi attack. The genre of news discourse provides its political counterpart a vehicle for the dissemination of promoted ideological opinions. This process can be described with various related analogies. Tuchman (1978, 1) sees news as a “frame” around presented world events. Via this frame, social realities are constructed and disseminated and can thus be subtly manipulated. Roger Fowler (1991, 10) considers language to be a “structuring medium”. News can therefore be seen as the window or frame through which ideologically structured messages are distributed to the public. According to Simon Cottle, this frame has the ability to *mediate* the events it describes. Manipulation of the frame can amplify, narrativize, moralize and visualize what is shown to various degrees (2004, 185). Extending the analogy from window to camera viewfinder, Graeme Burton (2010, 228) underlines the incomplete and momentary nature of the view provided by this frame: it is often but a snapshot or a still image of a complex and constantly evolving situation. Whether conscious or unconscious, these frames or snapshots are always created “in a light of the journalist’s choosing” (Kuypers 2013, 51). So, the press frames issues, but it can just as easily be said to issue frames.

The increased polarization of American politics and the resulting differences in the interpretation – the framing – of factual events has given rise to some awareness of competing ideologies in news discourse. Nevertheless, as Tuchman stated in 1978 (109), “the acceptance of representational conventions as facticity makes reality vulnerable to manipulation”. The manipulative misuse of the truth-value the media and news discourse as a social institution still inherently possess is, perhaps, more deserving of study today than ever before.

2.2 Political Bias and Aggressive Journalism

Language engaged in political discourse can be combined with news discourse to form an ideologically motivated news story. This combination forms the core for the type of media tradition that gave birth to various political strategies used to defame and misrepresent an opponent and their ideology – the *smear campaign*, the *spin*, the *attack ad* and, most recently, the *attack topic*. As an instrument for the use of political power, language is “a thousand ways biased” (Bolinger 1980, 68) and far from neutral. Language and discourse are the crux of the function of political institutions (Feldman 1998, 195). Political talk, rhetoric, operates within political discourse and the current discourse acts as the ultimate fiat of what forms that rhetoric can take. In United States, the contemporary polarization of the two-party system has created a discourse climate that allows the expression of more openly hostile sentiments in news media.

As a societal institution, the media can be said to have three general functions (Richardson 2006, 6-7): 1) to entertain, 2) to maintain a status quo by upholding the views of the powerful and 3) to operate as a business. Naturally, this division sets some constraints. Needs to entertain and to survive economically are closely related and have created a wealth of smaller, politically-minded publications that seek to define their readership and cater to a limited, heavily opinionated group. In light of this, it is relatively easy to concede to Roger Fowler’s (1991, 232) observation that news reporting, especially political, often seeks to construct its consumers in an attempt to create ideal readers. Another observation that can be made is that along with the intensifying polarization of politics, the worsening economy and the increased partisan entrenchment of both political parties and newspapers, bias and aggression in the media have increased in near-exponential degrees.

2.2.1 News Bias

Bias is an integral part of political news. Completely objective reporting on politics is impossible, as each individual carries their natural predispositions as a part of their psychological makeup (Baranowski & Barbara 2013, 46). Psychologically, news reporters and journalists can be just as heavily affected by personal views and political leanings as people in any other field. Jim Kuypers, among others, answers the question of whether or not subjective influences such as these can shape a journalistic product with a “resounding yes” (2013, 86). Any reporting of an event is essentially an act of mediation (Kress 1983, 120). Mediation in this sense contains an element of subjectivity and bias that cannot be avoided – the actual event is always filtered through the mediator. A level of bias is therefore inescapable and cannot be consciously removed. Fowler expands on this view by describing the institution of news – its discourse and practice on topics both political and otherwise – as a socially, economically and politically situated constant that always operates with a bias determined by its context (1991, 10).

The phenomenon of context-related bias is easily discernible in most openly political publications. It commonly entails the ideologically motivated framing of an event or issue and use of group labels that signal inclusion to their target audience via the exclusion of the ideological enemy. As stated earlier, one key reason for such open partisanship is economic survival in part by attracting a loyal readership. The DEM-minded *Mother Jones* and the GOP-leaning *The Weekly Standard* and *Fox News* provide examples.

- (1) *Carly Fiorina Just Unleashed an Unhinged Rant Against Hillary Clinton*
(Mother Jones Jan. 29, 2016)
- (2) *Fiorina: We caught Hillary Clinton red-handed on Benghazi*
(Fox News Oct. 31, 2015)
- (3) *Fiorina: “Hillary Clinton Has Blood on Her Hands”*
(The Weekly Standard Jul. 13, 2015)

(4) *Liberal Media Takes Aim at Conservative Media*
(The Weekly Standard 12 Nov. 2012)

Example (1) shows the way an ideologically Democratic news outlet frames the person of Carly Fiorina, a then Republican presidential nominee, and the event of her speaking. The contrast to the way the Republican leaning Fox News and The Weekly Standard, examples (2) and (3), frequently describe and quote Fiorina is evident. Mother Jones openly displays its derision and the negative value it gives Fiorina's comments. Fox News and The Weekly Standard, however, afford Fiorina the dignity of a direct quote. Example (4) shows the way openly political publications often label groups to position their desired readership in opposition to ideological rivals. Here, The Weekly Standard draws lines between liberal and conservative media and simultaneously separates the readership of both into two distinct camps, one of which is attacking the other.

Vincent Campbell notes that bias can be either unconscious or, as is commonly the case with aggressive political journalism, overtly deliberate – the open *advocacy* of an issue or view (2004, 169). The presentation of facts is therefore often ideologically motivated and clearly biased. The advocate or author of a news article expresses an attitude towards the events that are reported. This attitude also serves as a method to align the reader with the author's ideological viewpoint (Kress 1983, 135). In the realm of political news especially, authorial attitudes and advocacies can be seen to represent the ideologies of both writer and the entire newspaper simultaneously.

Fowler (1991, 11) and Richardson (2006, 89) view the process of *selection* as an inherently biased process that constitutes a method of limiting and shaping a reader's view of the world. The core assumption here is that presentation in news is the result of choice, of the selection of facts and construction of viewpoints. As a noteworthy fact, ideologically motivated selection also operates on the other end of the author-reader relationship. The psychological phenomenon known as *confirmation bias* leads news consumers to only seek information that reinforces their expectations and the ideological standpoint they have already adapted – at the cost neglecting

anything that conflicts with this world view (Casad 2007, 163). For the consumers of the more openly biased news outlets especially, confirmation bias is often the impetus to pick and process only the most ideologically bolstering facts from a partisan range of authorial products. In general, people respond far more harshly to facts they consider contradictory to their belief system than facts that support it – the “tend to believe what they want to believe” (Castells 2009, 199).

2.2.2 Aggression in Political Journalism

Along with increased bias comes the need to promote and defend an adopted position with increasing ferocity. Journalistic aggression has a long history and, like bias, has developed and intensified alongside other phenomena. Berry and Sobieraj (2014) speak of “outrage talk” – the increased offensiveness of modern political discourse that is reproduced and often heightened even further in political journalism. Outrage talk takes the form of various biased ad hominem and other attacks. From a financial perspective, constantly stoked political outrage, or “scream politics” (Berry & Sobieraj 2014), has also become a sound economic strategy for most new outlets.

One bias-fueled form of aggressive or scream politics that often combines the discourses of news and politics is the *attack ad*, arguably the most prevalent and nasty form of American political campaigning. It was born in the 1950s, the first DEM and GOP attack ads both aired during a campaign in 1952 (Geer 2008). As a form of influencing voters, its efficacy remains a debated issue. The attack ad has, nonetheless, cemented its position as a modern campaign tool (North et al. 2012, 33-5).



Image 1. A still image of a striking attack ad from 2016 by the Donald Trump campaign. Hillary Clinton's laughing face is superimposed on video footage of the burning U.S. embassy in Benghazi. The juxtaposition is brutal and efficient.

Central to the influence of tools such as the attack ad is the fact that consumers of various forms of media often have their opinions shaped and strengthened by what they are exposed to (Tuchman 1978, 2). Pre-existing views are also often empowered through media (van Dijk 1987, 23), with confirmation bias, as mentioned in section 2.2.1, influencing decision heavily.

The increase of attack ads from 2000 to 2012 is exemplified below in chart 1 by the *Wesleyan Media Project* that shows a significant increase in numbers from the election of 2000 to the one in 2012 (Wihbey 2013). 2012 seems to represent peak negativity in electoral advertising, at least temporarily, as evidenced by chart 2, by the *Wesleyan Media Project* and *Kantar Media* (Wesleyan Media Project & Kantar Media/CMAG 2016). Chart 2 shows a clear decline in negativity when comparing 2012 to 2016. While the conclusion is somewhat speculative, the Benghazi event and subsequent media aggression could be construed as a meaningful cause for the spike in ad negativity seen in 2012, despite occurring as late in the year as September.

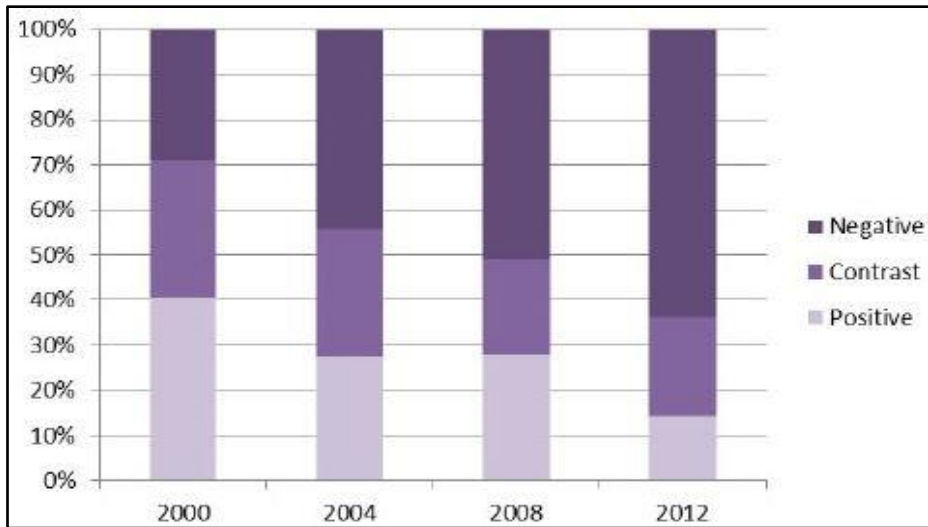


Chart 1. Election attack ads from 2000 to 2012.

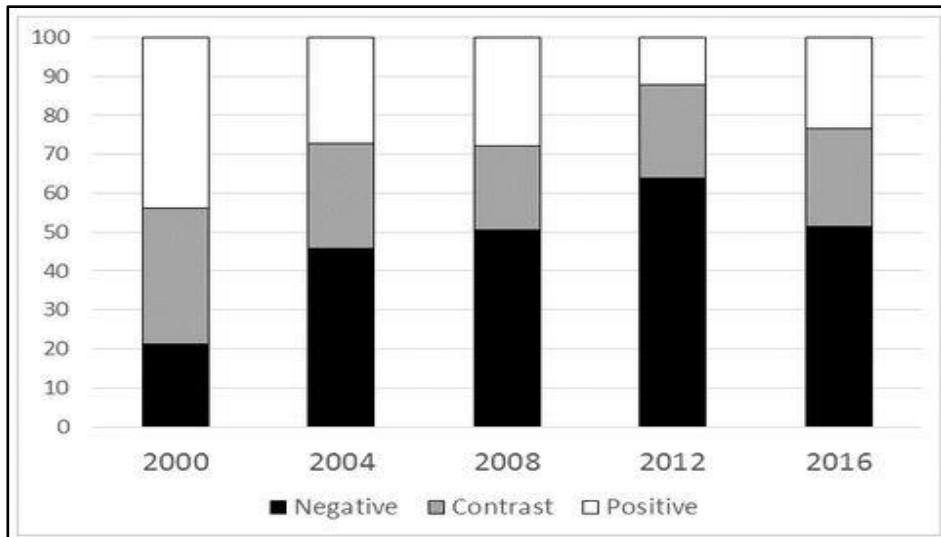


Chart 2. Election attack ads from 2000 to 2016.

In addition to enforcing opinions in existing and ideologically engaged readers, skewed and ideologically motivated news items seek to influence less interested and less informed individuals, known as *low-information voters* – especially in the ideological trenches of the DEM and liberal actives. The term has received criticism (Lakoff 2012) as a one-sided form of derogation aimed towards conservatives who, the opposing side feels, are voting wrong. The concept of low-information voters is related to the *political cognition theory* (Mio 1997, 117). According to this theory, individual processing capabilities are limited when one is struggling to interpret competing

information, such as two ideologically opposite versions of a news event. The objective applicability and somewhat accusatory tone of labels like low-information or limited processor notwithstanding, the existence of such terminology serves as a telling example of the motivations behind the use of biased and aggressive discourse – the attempt to bend a neutral segment of people to one side or another. It can also be seen as one of the factors that brought about the success of the attack ad.

2.3 Benghazi – An *Attack Topic*?

The U.S. embassy in Benghazi was attacked on 11 September in 2012 by a group consisting of members of local militia forces, suspected terrorist operatives and street protesters. Several hours after the embassy invasion, a nearby CIA compound was also attacked. Four U.S. nationals were killed, among them U.S. ambassador J. Christopher Stevens. The U.S. media reacted to the events by diverging along two storylines that more or less adhered to the political division of the entire country. The DEM and liberal side of the argument stated that the attacks resulted from a riot protesting a YouTube video that was seen to insult Islam. The GOP and conservatives saw the attacks as a carefully orchestrated assault by terrorists, namely Al Qaida, and made claims of a cover-up by the White House. The finger was pointed at the Democratic government and the foreign policy decisions of then President Barack Obama and then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Amos Kiewe (1998, 80) makes two meaningful observations: as sociorhetoric and discursive constructs, crises can be both manufactured and real and the president symbolizes the nation. The Benghazi events can be seen as both a real crisis and a manufactured scandal that questions the credibility of the United States as a leading international policy maker and power. As

a method of attack, the same questions can automatically be transferred to reflect negatively on the president. The GOP adopted the Benghazi events as their attack topic.

Groch-Begley et al. (2014) provide some enlightening numbers on the activities of Fox News, the leading GOP media. In the 20 months after the September 11, 2012 incident, Fox News put out 1 098 segments that discussed Benghazi. By way of comparison, Fox hosted Benghazi discussions with GOP congress members almost 30 times more often than DEM representatives and interviewed 144 GOP representatives versus a meagre five DEM counterparts. Initially the ramifications of the issue remained within DEM control, as seen in a study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs (2012a). Major news outlets such as NYT and WSJ framed the Benghazi events as the result of a spontaneous and unforeseeable protest, favoring the version offered by the Obama administration. However, the focus and emphasis of the narrative changed not long after. Another study showed that major news outlets moved to a more GOP favored version of the events as a planned terrorist attack, placing the blame on missteps taken by the ruling DEM administration (The Center for Media and Public Affairs 2012b). As the attack topic evolved, so did public opinion.

2.3.1 Features of an Attack Topic

The anatomy of the attack topic can be summarized as an issue that is repeatedly brought up in and outside of its logical context and used as a weapon meant to cause harm on various levels, including personal defamation, attacks on a political party and on wider ideological orientations. As a proposed exemplar of the attack topic, the Benghazi incident and its role as an ever-evolving GOP crowbar is seemingly without equal.

Value judgements are an integrated element of creating news (Richardson 2006, 86). Aitchison (2007, 89) points out that as a news value, negativity always out-sells positivity. The power of negativity is evident throughout the field of political media, but the attack topic could, with some justification, be seen as the epitome of journalistic and discursive negativity. Surprisingly enough, negativity has its defenders. John Geer (2006, 85) makes an interesting point: in addition to general ad hominem, attack ads have had a rising focus on issues. North et al. (2012, 33-35) go on to state that “policy failures” are the most common issues tackled with attack ads. Attacks on person will most likely still be more common within the sphere of attack advertising, but the tendency to include a focus on issues, especially policy issues, forms one of the features of the Benghazi attack topic. Another interesting and related point is brought forth in a 2006 observation by John Geer (2006, 88): GOP representatives are generally much more likely to latch onto matters of foreign policy and defense – the very nucleus of the Benghazi issue.

The debate intensified as the 2016 election closed in. The Benghazi attack topic shifted focus from then President Obama to the most likely DEM nominee Hillary Clinton with seemingly increased momentum and in a more openly weaponized fashion. In a 2014 *Pew Research Center* study, Seth Motel (2014) found that out of all trending news stories, GOP representatives overwhelmingly chose to follow the Benghazi issue with 38 interested GOP participants versus 15 DEM participants. Another Pew Research Center (2014) study found that out of all the common positive and negative aspects of Hillary Clinton, GOP representatives registered most heavily with her involvement in Benghazi with 28 participants versus the second biggest issue with 11 participants.

The Benghazi events played a major role in the overall coverage of key issues during Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign. Chart 3 by Thomas Patterson (2016) shows Clinton’s overwhelmingly negative share in issue related news reporting during 2015, compared to the other top presidential candidates.

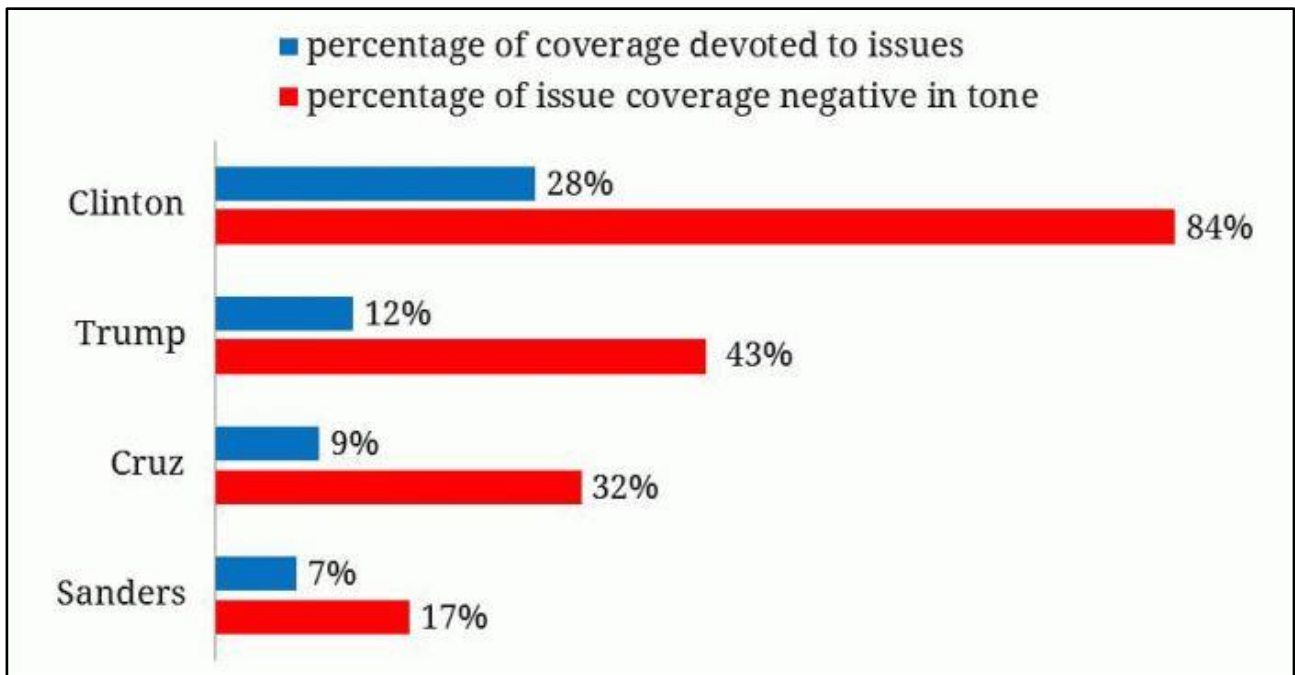


Chart 3. Percentage of negative issue coverage for top presidential candidates in 2015.

This shift from Obama to Clinton brings out an interesting connection to other forms of negative political and news discourse. Baranowski and Barbara (2013, 53) note that “personality bias”, a central focus on persons, is a critical component in the construction of news stories with any hope of a prolonged shelf-life. The shift from Obama to Clinton could be construed as a strategy motivated by personality bias and a strategic need to prolong the lifespan of the weaponized issue, as the two-term President was starting to lose credibility and usefulness as a viable target.

Linguistic phenomena, such as the various types surrounding and participating in the formulation of the Benghazi attack topic, can be viewed as representatives of special categories of social phenomena with concrete influence that extend beyond mere rhetoric (Fairclough 1989, 23). In this sense, cases such as the Benghazi reporting are both socially conditioned and, in turn, have societal ramifications. Image 2 below serves as a blunt, yet efficient example of the later evolutionary stages of the Benghazi attack topic (blurring by author).



Image 2. The late U.S. ambassador to Libya. Viral campaigning using the Benghazi attack topic.

3. Materials

Media institutions are inherently political. News reporting can be an indicator of societal changes in the way that it “reflects, and in return shapes, the prevailing values of a society in a given historical context” (Fowler 1991, 222). This characteristic is best exemplified by political journalism, especially the particularly aggressive output of American politics during election time. The political culture that refined the attack ad and possible subsequent forms, such as the attack topic, seems like the perfect source of data for a critical analysis of discourse. It has the potential to reveal with some efficacy what Durant and Lambrou (2009, 84-6) called the “persuasive undercurrent” and “rhetorical purposes” of news language.

Baranowski and Barbara (2013, 57-8) point out that in terms of sheer volume and coverage, the last years have been a veritable golden age, but go on to note the downsides of being

overwhelmed by a constant barrage of news and possibly ending up in a position, where one's "filters" enable, even force, one to only accept desired and pleasant information. This represents a dilemma that certainly poses the risk of creating low-information voters quite content in their position of media-fed and reinforced opinion. The difficulty often experienced in identifying parody news-sites lends some credibility to Molek-Kozakowska's observation that few of us have the time, energy and inclination to check the reliability of every news item we run into (2010, 83).

For reasons of general availability and access and in light of problems such as an unsustainable volume of physical material, the material for this thesis consists solely of the electronic news articles, blog-entries, opinion pieces and editorials gathered from a list of sources compiled based on information of political bias and circulation. Electronic news is favored over traditional print media in part because the fast-paced environment of online journalism is overrunning the declining traditional papers in both speed and productivity – although, perhaps, not in the quality of actual journalistic content. The changes in the nature of journalism can be seen as a manifestation of technological determinism, as noted by Durant and Lambrou (2009, 181). Undoubtedly, the capabilities of new technological innovations have had a clear impact on the way news is produced. This change was already evident back in 2006, as can be seen from the remarks of Nicola Woods (2006, 46):

[I]t is frequently unclear where to draw the line between the discourses of politics, media and advertising. Political discourse has been profoundly affected by the rapid media expansion of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and mass communication systems have resulted in a huge proliferation of the forms it can take.

3.1 Publications Based on Size and Political Bias

The material for this thesis comes from the websites of eight news outlets, chosen based on size, circulation and political bias. The list of sources consists of two major and ostensibly more objective news outlets and six more openly political sources, three representing the DEM or liberal viewpoint and three representing the GOP or conservative equivalent. The major sources classified as more objective are the *The New York Times* (NYT) and *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ). In a 2014 survey, *Statista* (2015), a website specializing in statistical information, ranked WSJ as the second largest news outlet in the United States by average circulation, placing NYT third. Circulation information seems to be subject to surprisingly sudden shifts, as a *Huffington Post* (Associated Press, 2013) survey from 2013 found WSJ to be the biggest news outlet.

More recent data supports the position of NYT and WSJ as the two biggest and most influential daily sources in the United States. In 2017, the public relations and media company *Cision Ltd.* (2017) ranked WSJ as the biggest daily newspaper with a circulation of 1 180 460 thousand and NYT as the second largest with 597 955 thousand. In 2018, Cision also ranked NYT as the largest U.S. news outlet on Twitter with an impressive figure of 40 986 005, placing WSJ second with 15 447 462 (Cision.com 2018a). A 2018 ranking by *Agility PR Solutions* also lists NYT at the top and WSJ as the second biggest news outlet, judged by circulation numbers (Agility PR Solutions 2018). In regards to political bias, a 2014 *Business Insider* study by Pamela Engel (2014) found WSJ to lean a bit to the right, the conservative or GOP side, and NYT a bit more to the left, the liberal side. Baranowski and Barbara (2013, 47-48) affirm a liberal skew in NYT, at least on its editorial front.

In regards to readership and catering to a very specific audience, the more politically opinionated publications on the list stand on a somewhat equal footing. A plethora of choices, multiplied by the advent of electronic news, and the resulting audience fragmentation (Richardson

2007, 78) between various papers affects all outlets. Every paper has to compete by offering consumers, however limited and selective, information in an enticing form in both topic material and ideological underpinnings. These smaller, more openly biased publications have no problem self-identifying as GOP or DEM.

The DEM representation on the source list includes three news outlets: *CNN.com* (CNN), *Mother Jones* (MJS) and the *New Republic* (TNR). The specific place of CNN on the continuum of political ideologies is a somewhat complicated issue in itself, as the news portal has been accused of both DEM and GOP favoritism. However, in recent years CNN has positioned itself further into the field of DEM bias, as attested to by a 2008 election coverage study by the *Joan Shorenstein Center* (2007, 32). The study found CNN to carry a “consistent bias towards Democratic issues” and to “cast a negative light on Republican candidates”. A 2014 *Pew Research Center* survey found that CNN was the most trusted outlet by 15% for all survey participants identifying themselves as “consistent liberals” (Mitchell et al. 2014a). In terms of web-based size and influence, CNN competes with few and a 2018 ranking by Cision places it as the largest news outlet on social media (2018b).

The GOP side of the list is represented by 3 publications: the unquestioned ruling champion of the GOP cause in the world of media and in general *Fox News* (FOX), *The Christian Science Monitor* (CSM) and *The Weekly Standard* (TWS). A 2015 *About News* listing by Justin Quinn (2015) found TWS to be the number one conservative magazine in the country with CSM ranked as eighth. A Pew survey in 2014 showed that most “consistent conservatives”, 47% of survey participants, view FOX as the standard-bearer of, and most trusted source for, their views and ideology (Mitchell et al. 2014b). Mitchell et al. (2014a) also noted that most participants identifying as “consistent conservatives”, 61%, display a particular distrust towards CNN. In some respects, FOX and CNN can be seen as opposite ends of an ideological spectrum, although FOX seems far more openly conservative than CNN is openly liberal.

Table 1 below presents the complete list of sources in a concise and easily reviewed form. The publications, the “mediators of preferred meanings” (van Dijk 1987, 15), are arranged in order of size and political bias.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Major publications<ul style="list-style-type: none">1) <i>The New York Times</i> (NYT)2) <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> (WSJ)○ Conservative publications (GOP)<ul style="list-style-type: none">1) <i>Fox News</i> (FOX)2) <i>The Christian Science Monitor</i> (CSM)3) <i>The Weekly Standard</i> (TWS)○ Liberal publications (DEM)<ul style="list-style-type: none">1) <i>CNN.com</i> (CNN)2) <i>Mother Jones</i> (MJS)3) <i>The New Republic</i> (TNR)

Table 1. Material sources for the thesis. Arranged by size and bias.

3.2 Retrieval

The material for this thesis consists of articles, editorials, blog posts, opinion pieces and other textual material (henceforth collectively referred to as *news items*) that discusses the Benghazi embassy attacks or refers to the incident in some fashion. The news items were searched with a single word, *Benghazi* - a rather obvious choice as there is no variant spelling for it in US media. The searches comprise published news items from a span of approximately six years, from September 12th of 2012, a day after the incident, to August 8th of 2018. In the few instances where

there was no option to define a timeline or arrange the search results chronologically, the news items were hand-picked according to date of publication.

Each news item was extracted manually from the website of each source news outlet by first opening the link to each item with the Mozilla add-on *Textise-it* (available from: <https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/textise-it/>) in order to be able to open web links in pure text form without graphic elements. The relevant textual material was then copied and pasted onto a Word document which was later converted into raw text form. Manual selection acted as a filter to exclude the occasional dead links, false hits in the form of Benghazi news items unrelated to the embassy attack, full transcripts from other sources quoted in verbatim and repeated instances of the same news item. Each selected news item was cleaned of the inevitable noise - comment sections, unrelated references in connection to a different news story, parts of transcripts, on-page links, various HTML code elements and other textual material deemed non-relevant and misleading for the analytical purposes of this thesis.

The method chosen, albeit painstaking and arduous, represented the best way to ensure a combination of minimal distraction and maximum preciseness. Some unwanted material did pass the filter, however. The Word files had to be converted into raw text form (*.txt) to be viable for corpus processing, which caused a few undesired textual artifacts to appear in the final corpora. Table 2 shows the exact amount of Benghazi related news items filtered from the source websites of this thesis.

Source	News items
NYT	1 866
WSJ	1 492
FOX	4 037
CSM	928
TWS	739
CNN	1 821
MJS	461
TNR	297
Total	11 641

Table 2. Amount of news items from each material source.

3.3 Corpora: Composition

The downloaded textual material was first formed into eight single source corpora, one for each source, each containing all the source material of each one news outlet. In addition to this, eight more corpora were formed containing only the headlines of each single news outlet. The source material was then combined to form four main political corpora, three sources each, one containing the entire mass of DEM news outlet material, one containing all the DEM headlines and two GOP equivalents. In addition to these, all the news items were also compiled into one master corpus and all the headlines into one master headline corpus. In total, the source material for this thesis forms twenty two different types of specialized corpora. Tables 3 and 4 show the different corpora compiled from said news items and their size (according to Word document tabulation).

Single source	Words	Single headlines	Words
NYT	1 671 014	NYT	13 172
WSJ	1 362 667	WSJ	8 530
FOX	1 608 707	FOX	39 016
CSM	484 261	CSM	5 441
TWS	508 914	TWS	4 742
CNN	1 361 671	CNN	17 958
MJS	365 339	MJS	4 145
TNR	231 119	TNR	2 284
Total	7 593 692	Total	95 288

Table 3. Amount of words in each single source corpus.

Compiled Sources	Words	Compiled headlines	Words
GOP	2 601 882	GOP	49 199
DEM	1 958 129	DEM	24 387
Master	7 593 692	Master headlines	95 288

Table 4. Amount of words in each compiled corpus.

The arrangement of the formed and compiled corpora might seem somewhat convoluted, but it provides an efficient practical base for various types of qualitative, quantitative and contrastive analysis. The master corpus, with a total of 11 641 news items and 7 593 692 words, contains the entire news items of each source of this thesis and acts as the primary basis for larger scale quantitative analysis. The bias-based political corpora enable contrastive analysis between conservative and liberal news media and contain the ideologically opposing sources. The conservative GOP corpus consists of the news items of FOX, CSM and TWS, the liberal DEM counterpart contains the news items of CNN, MJS and TNR. The headlines of the source news

items were isolated into their own group of corpora for the purposes of syntactical analysis. The headline corpora correspond to the source corpora in both function and composition.

The total numbers for each source reflect the differences in their operation as news outlets. Publishing volumes differ due to various financial reasons and some news outlets focus on longer texts while others produce prodigious amounts of shorter missives. Understandably, smaller publications have smaller numbers, whereas colossal media portals such as FOX can put out dozens of news items daily. The variation in textual style is most evident in the numerical comparison between NYT and FOX. With a total of 4 037 news items and 39 016 headline words against NYT's 1866 news items and 13 172 headline words, FOX clearly has the most voluminous output in terms of published single items. However, the word totals for entire news items for FOX and NYT are 1 608 707 and 1 671 014 respectively, which shows that NYT tends to publish longer texts, while FOX veers towards brevity and a more rapid fire approach.

4. Methodology

This thesis seeks to combine the qualitative approach of *Critical Discourse Analysis* (henceforth CDA) and the quantitative approach of *Corpus Linguistics* in order to form a more objective basis for conclusions and interpretations. This end is sought via the utilization of *WordSmith* corpus tools (available from: <https://lexically.net/wordsmith/>), which are used to analyze both larger scale numerical data and smaller examples. The focus will be on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of a set of lexical and syntactic linguistic phenomena adapted for this thesis following the general framework and methodologically interdisciplinary precedent set by earlier work in CDA.

4.1 Critical Discourse analysis

CDA is, as the name suggests, a field of research that focuses on the analytical dissection of discourse. From a methodological perspective, the most defining characteristic of CDA is its eclecticism (van Leeuwen 2009, 277). CDA is an interdisciplinary approach that contains elements from the humanities and social studies (van Dijk 1988a, 17). In terms of research interests, CDA also encompasses a considerably sizeable group of seemingly non-related disciplines, such as philosophy and anthropology. CDA does not study linguistic phenomena in isolation, but in connection to larger social aspects. The inherent complexity of these aspects demands approaches that combine several academic principles, in terms of both disciplines and methods (Wodak 2001, 1-2). Another defining feature of CDA is its critical standpoint. CDA presupposes the existence structural injustices that are upheld through various forms of societal discourse. It seeks to reveal the ways in which language is used to these ends, without restricting itself to a single analytical method (van Leeuwen 2009, 277). Essentially, CDA acts as an umbrella under which various discursal practices can be subjected to critical analysis with a range of linguistic tools.

The origins of CDA date back to 1970, when an earlier form, known as *Critical Linguistics*, was championed by Roger Fowler. Critical Linguistics saw language as a tool for maintaining various discriminatory categorizations in society. Michael Halliday's *Systemic Functional Linguistics* provided this approach the means to expand beyond formal descriptions of language, giving it the capacity for larger scale social critique (van Leeuwen 2009, 277-9). Fowler characterized Critical Linguistics as a specific type of analysis that focuses on the signs, meanings and conditions of discourse (Fowler 1991, 5). Contemporary CDA had other precursors as well, albeit rather similar in both form and function. Norman Fairclough (1989) sought the same ends with *Critical Language Study*. The mission statement for Critical Language Study, much like

Critical Linguistics and CDA, involved the disclosing of “opaque cases” within, and the consequences of, discourse in use (Fairclough 1989, 42).

4.1.1 Criticism and Critical Standpoints

The discourse critical pursuits of CDA are inherently interventionist. The motivation of unveiling and examining various language-operated forms of societal discrimination and injustice is to provide awareness and possible ways of correcting defects in the various types of discourses that are seen to enable such injustices. CDA often seeks to question the language utilized by the institutional powers in society - such as the discourses of the media and the political elite. It gives every act of discourse, every form of text or dialogue, the potential of conscious intent. This intent can, under scrutiny, disclose significant details concerning the author, intended recipients and the discursive environment in which the act occurs (Charteris-Black 2004, 30).

CDA work has a tendency to be directed at specific themes and social domains, chief among them political discourse, ideology and media language (Blommaert 2005, 26). Wodak (2001, 11) points out some of the most central topics on the CDA research agenda. Prominent on the list, especially for the purposes of this thesis, is the interaction of globalization and new media in the creation of new phenomena in the arena of Western politics. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is also present. As a political *modus operandi*, challenging the powers that be has an undeniably leftist tone, as explicated by Fairclough, who saw the main goal of the critical analysis of discourse as “the critical consciousness of discourse as a basis for social emancipation” (1989, x). Ruth Wodak (2007, 209) appoints CDA with the mission to “guide human action”, to “produce enlightenment” and to “support emancipation”. CDA has a clear initial mission statement and views language as incapable of neutrality (Blommaert 2005, 33).

In light of its lofty goals and self-implied gravitas, it comes as no surprise that CDA itself has been the target of a significant amount of criticism. The main argument has been that CDA, with its inbuilt leftism and motivation to intervene, has a tendency to yield colored and overly partisan results. Critical Discourse analysts have been accused of cherry picking facts and interpreting them according to their own pre-held views (van Leeuwen 2009, 278-9). Further points of critique levied against CDA refer to diachronic and cultural limitations (Blommaert 2005, 35-7). CDA rarely offers a perspective that spans wider than the immediate time and culture of the institutional discourse that is being analyzed. In that sense, this thesis represents a typical topic of CDA analysis with its focus on a single, albeit unusually prolonged political event expressed in the discourse of news - a decidedly Western and 1st world institution.

In an effort to avoid these very real pitfalls, this thesis seeks to combine the qualitative analysis typical of CDA with Corpus Linguistics assisted quantitative analysis in order to justify results and conclusions with concrete numerical data. A certain degree of authorial prejudice is nevertheless accepted as unavoidable.

4.1.2 Categories and Terminology

Operating under the auspices of CDA involves the application of various interrelated categories and stages. Michael Halliday's (1971, 332-334) Systemic Functional Linguistics provides a logical starting point with the three main functions of language:

- I. *Ideational function*: the expression of the actual content of a message
- II. *Interpersonal function*: the expression of the speaker's / writer's relationship to the hearer / reader
- III. *Textual function*: the creation of text within a type of discourse

The output of the ideational function can be studied by the syntactical analysis of, for example, *transitivity*. The interpersonal function can be examined by paying attention such attitude-implying aspects of language as *modality*. The textual function of language is the production of textual material within the confines of a discourse, based on mutually understood conventions. This third function can be seen as the end target of CDA critique that can be reached through the analysis of the first two functions.

Fairclough (1989, 109) divides the critical analysis of discourse into three stages of activity, closely related to Halliday's functions: *description*, *interpretation* and *explanation*. *Description* refers to the features of a text and *interpretation* involves the relationship between the text and the interaction of discourse participants, for instance, between a news article and its interpretation and decoding by its readership. *Interpretation* focuses on the cognitive faculties of authors and readers and will therefore receive less attention in this thesis. *Explanation* seeks to open up the relationship between this interaction and the specific social context in which it takes place. Analytical weight in this thesis lies mainly on *description*, the lexical and syntactic features of a news article, with elements of *explanation* employed to place and describe news discourse as a societal process.

CDA endeavors to provide descriptions of and study individual texts as instances of a given discourse. News articles, for example, are seen as instances of news discourse. Van Dijk (1988a, 25) divides these descriptions into two types: *textual* and *contextual*. Textual descriptions focus on the features of a text, while contextual descriptions seek to place the text and its features in a specific context of use. The description types employed by van Dijk are near-identical to Fairclough's *description* and *explanation* - the two activity stages relevant to this thesis. Finally, Reisigl and Wodak (Wodak 2009, 578) arrange types of CDA critique into three levels.

- I. *Text or discourse imminent critique*: seeks inconsistencies, fragmentations and contradictions in a text
- II. *Socio-diagnostic critique*: analyses a text in relation to context, author(s) and authorial interests
- III. *Prospective critique*: proposes changes to levels I and II

All of the various categories, levels and stages related to CDA seem to share a similar progression from smaller phenomena of form to larger features of function. While more than partially overlapping, they provide their own essential perspectives into the methods and aims of the research undertaken in this thesis.

The approach to CDA taken here is an amalgam of the type of analysis outlined and practiced by the likes of Halliday (1971), Fairclough (1989 & 2010), Fowler (1991) and van Dijk (1988a & 1988b), among other notables. Adhering to the general from-micro-to-macro direction of the models described above, focus will first be directed to the textual microelements of the material and expanded from there to possible conclusions on the larger practices of Benghazi reporting – from the perspectives of both political and news discourse.

The ideological power of news discourse stems from cumulative practices (Fairclough 1989, 54) - repeated similarities in the description of agency and causality in a series of news stories describing an event. Each new news item strengthens the views of the one preceding it. Semantic content such as agency and causality can be manipulated through lexical and syntactic choices, words and structures. These choices influence, or seek to influence, our views and opinions on the events or phenomena they describe. Fowler (1991, 4) sees this “relationship between semantic structure and cognition” as a workable hypothesis, although impossible to prove in an absolutely empirically airtight sense. In order to achieve a coherent picture of the way news discourse operates, one must pay attention to more than one type of lexical or syntactical choice. News language and the institutional discourse under which it is produced is complex to such an extent that

the emphasis of just one aspect inevitably leads to the neglect of others of equal, or greater, significance (Fowler 1991, 8).

In addition to presupposing the existence of social injustices maintained through various types of institutional discourse, CDA somewhat dogmatically presupposes deliberation and conscious choice in every level or stage of critical textual analysis, precluding the possibility of ideological neutrality in any structural property (Richardson 2006, 20). It should be emphasized, however, that news reporting involves a significant subliminal element. Not every linguistic choice is purposefully made, nor are texts crafted by selecting each syllabic atom with an ideological motivation and a specific aim in mind. As Fowler (1991, 41) notes, habit and convention exist in a shifting equilibrium with deliberation and control, both influencing the end result. Likewise, conservatism and liberalism are hardly monolithic as ideologies (Lakoff 1996, 283), whether studied through linguistic micro-phenomena or larger syntactical structures or even on a grander discursive level. Permutations, combinations and overlaps are common, often even within one individual or news outlet.

A comprehensive CDA study of linguistic aspects, such as choices of *metaphor*, *synecdoche*, *othering*, *nominalization*, *modality* and *transitivity* is essential in order to give shape and definition to the Benghazi attack topic as an exemplar of the operation of both political and news discourse. More importantly, CDA work on political news also helps unveil systematic ideological differences and their textual manifestations, divulging some of the common methods used to influence a mass readership on a daily basis. Ideally, CDA can assist one in navigating the ceaseless crossfire of opinionated persuasion that is the modern political media apparatus.

4.2 Corpus Linguistics

Among the multitude of methods CDA can use, the one that stands out in the context of this thesis is CLA, the Corpus Linguistics Approach (Wodak & Meyer 2009, 30). CLA involves the use of a concordance software, such as WordSmith, and a corpus or corpora compiled from selected source material. Corpus analysis provides CDA with a quantitative element that can legitimize results and generalizations on a larger scale.

4.2.1 Specialized Corpora

McEnery et al. (2008, 5) list the key qualities and distinctive features of a purposefully compiled corpus: *representativeness* and *authenticity*. The requirements of representativeness are divided into *balance*, the range of genres and categories the corpus contains, and *sampling*, the method and motivation of text selection (ibid., 13). The supreme overall criterion for a corpus is intended use and the ability to match the posed research questions. In the context of this thesis, the corpora are specialized: they are limited and compartmentalized to answer limited research questions. In terms of representativeness, in other words of balance and sampling, the manually compiled and cleaned corpora represent their intended analytical purpose. All available textual material has been gathered from the designated timeline and sources, the websites of each news outlet. All the linguistic variance of Benghazi reporting demanded by the research questions is present. In terms of authenticity, all compiled Benghazi news items are authentic news texts published by authentic authors.

As mentioned before, corpus data can yield impressive statistical information. The raw numbers involved in corpus linguistics can also act as an efficient method of reducing possible researcher bias (Mautner 2009, 123). Despite these tempting benefits, or perhaps precisely because

of them, a caveat is necessary. The level of sophistication of statistical conclusions drawn from even more limited and closely refined corpora can often be lower than expected, which can in turn leave some room for researcher bias. This risk is especially prevalent in cases where the premise behind the research questions is based on the type of intuition that creates a strong desired outcome, even before any actual analysis. As McEnery et al. (2008, 52) point out, in most cases users of corpus data cannot and do not wish to make claims that are too exact. Bearing this in mind, the corpus-linguistic direction taken in this thesis seeks to pair intuition with evidence, as expressed by Charteris-Black (2004, 31).

Corpus linguistics and specialized corpora have often been paired with CDA, especially in the study of political discourse (McEnery et al. 2008, 111). The combination has produced several studies of note with respect to the methodology, analytical focus and source material of this thesis.

4.2.2 Precursory Work

In their 2008 article, *Fleeing, sneaking, flooding: A corpus analysis of discursive constructions of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press, 1996 – 2005*, Costas Gabrielatos and Paul Baker examined the discursive construction of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press using the WordSmith concordance program and a source corpus of 140 million words. The source material consisted of news items and the timeline was limited from 1996 to 2005. The study focused on diachronic change, frequency of terms and consistently appearing collocates. Gabrielatos and Baker found mostly negative categorizations (2008, 20) and strongly biased “nonsensical” (2008, 30) terms for immigrants that developed over time. Impressive numbers and statistical data notwithstanding, Gabrielatos and Baker acknowledge the limitations of corpus based analysis in

discourse analysis and go on to suggest a more multi-faceted approach with a stronger emphasis on the critical portion of CDA. Corpus linguistics can reveal larger patterns, but cannot explain all the reasons behind linguistic variation. It disregards “the social, political, historical, and cultural context of the data” (Gabrielatos & Baker 2008, 33-34). The salient point here is that mechanistic data processing surpasses human capabilities in raw numbers, but cannot paint a comprehensive picture of the motivations behind an inherently human process.

In an article published in 2010, *The representation of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in British newspapers*, Majid KhosraviNik combined the qualitative facets of CDA with the quantitative potential of corpus linguistics with analyzed material that was “down-sampled” and consisted of a restricted set of news items from a specific timeline, between 1996 and 2006 (KhosraviNik 2010, 1). The sources for the material were selected on the basis of their ideological stance and their type as a news outlet. The focus was on new discourse, on the way the selected news sources represented the groups of people in question. KhosraviNik (2010, 22) found that within the news discourse of the analyzed sources, the groups of people were generally constructed from a base set by certain negative macrostructures. A comparative analysis also uncovered certain differences between the discursive strategies of news sources representing differing ideologies and between tabloids and news sources that were more generally accepted as journalistically reliable. KhosraviNik (2010, 23) also found certain features of news discourse, such as the conventions of the order of information provision and summarization, that were shared by all analyzed sources.

In his 2012 article, *A comparative discourse analysis of the construction of “in-groups” in the 2005 and 2010 manifestos of the British National Party*, Geraint Edwards analyses the discursive methods used by the British National Party (hereafter BNP). The study combines corpus analysis with certain aspects of CDA. The main focus was on the potentially racially motivated construction of in-groups to signal inclusivity in BNP materials in 2005 and 2010 (Edwards 2012, 245). The aim, in other words, was to uncover the development of discriminating

practices within the political discourse of the BNP via corpus linguistic methods. The comparative study analyzed the various lexical choices in both manifestos to reveal different developmental patterns (Edwards 2012, 248). The results showed how the BNP was undergoing a “discursive makeover” that was directing lexical choices to reflect a party more confident in its political image. Edwards avoids correlating the results with overly accurate conclusions concerning BNP’s political successes. He concludes the article by suggesting further study in the same vein in order to shed more light on the operation of various discursive techniques (ibid., 256).

All of these studies share key features of methodology and focus with this thesis. They represent different ways to combine CDA and Corpus Linguistics and various ways to limit and define the object of study into a form that is reasonable enough in size and variation to justify some, though not all, conclusions. As precursors, they serve as both signposts and warning signs. They are useful as examples of what to take into consideration when using corpus linguistic methods and CDA to study news and political discourse.

4.3 WordSmith: Key Functions

The Corpus Linguistics portion of this thesis will employ WordSmith as its main concordance tool. WordSmith has many features that facilitate the type of analysis that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. For the purposes of the methodological hybrid adapted, a few key functions should be introduced. The analytical work will begin with *WordLists*. WordSmith can be used to compile WordLists that present every word item in a corpus in alphabetical order or by frequency of use.

N	Word	Freq.	%	Texts	% Disp...ion	
1	THE	392 533	6,16	1	100,00	0,99
2	TO	170 272	2,67	1	100,00	0,99
3	OF	160 288	2,52	1	100,00	0,98
4	A	140 300	2,20	1	100,00	0,97
5	AND	139 678	2,19	1	100,00	0,99
6	IN	135 557	2,13	1	100,00	0,98
7	#	101 458	1,59	1	100,00	0,93
8	THAT	90 678	1,42	1	100,00	0,97
9	ON	65 158	1,02	1	100,00	0,98
10	S	59 766	0,94	1	100,00	0,88
11	FOR	55 219	0,87	1	100,00	0,99
12	IS	51 577	0,81	1	100,00	0,97
13	WAS	47 821	0,75	1	100,00	0,98
14	HE	42 809	0,67	1	100,00	0,94
15	IT	40 039	0,63	1	100,00	0,94
16	AS	39 025	0,61	1	100,00	0,98
17	WITH	37 272	0,58	1	100,00	0,98
18	SAID	34 723	0,54	1	100,00	0,91
19	BY	34 353	0,54	1	100,00	0,96
20	HIS	30 053	0,47	1	100,00	0,94
21	AT	29 282	0,46	1	100,00	0,97
22	CLINTON	28 362	0,45	1	100,00	0,84
23	NOT	28 056	0,44	1	100,00	0,98
24	HAVE	27 994	0,44	1	100,00	0,97
25	HAS	27 084	0,43	1	100,00	0,98
26	BUT	26 480	0,42	1	100,00	0,95
27	FROM	26 412	0,41	1	100,00	0,99
28	AN	26 084	0,41	1	100,00	0,98
29	BENGHAZI	26 031	0,41	1	100,00	0,87
30	BE	24 404	0,38	1	100,00	0,98
31	THIS	23 174	0,36	1	100,00	0,92
32	I	22 518	0,35	1	100,00	0,88
33	WHO	22 199	0,35	1	100,00	0,95
34	ABOUT	22 030	0,35	1	100,00	0,98
35	HER	21 432	0,34	1	100,00	0,89
36	ARE	21 298	0,33	1	100,00	0,97
37	THEY	20 130	0,32	1	100,00	0,97
38	SHE	19 758	0,31	1	100,00	0,91
39	OBAMA	19 552	0,31	1	100,00	0,89
40	HAD	18 183	0,29	1	100,00	0,91

Image 3. A frequency WordList of the master corpus compiled with WordSmith.

Wordlists can be extremely useful for highlighting possible frequency based lexical usage patterns. The master corpus WordList in image 3 above indicates that the word *Benghazi* appears a total of 26 031 times in all of the news articles gathered for this thesis. The WordLists will be analyzed for instances of the linguistic phenomena relevant for this thesis. Lexical and syntactic phenomena will be studied more closely in *concordances*. Concordances can show various collocation patterns and

common clusters of words within the textual material of the corpus. A word in the main concordance listing can also be traced to its original context in the source article. The main search word for the concordance can be combined with a context word, the location of which can be specified within a span of up to L30 and R30, 30 words to the left and to the right of the main search word.

N	Concordance	Set	Tag	Word #	Sent. #	Sent Para	Para. H...	H... Sect	Sect	File	Date	%
					Pos	#	Pos	#	Pos			
1	up until hours before the House report dropped confirming that yes, Benghazi was an al Qaeda attack and, no, it had absolutely nothing to			2 287 524	12 949	22	0	255	0 255	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	88%
2	four employees responsible for mistakes in the run-up to last year's Benghazi attack -- even though they are still working for the State			1 130 164	6 050	65	0	116	0 116	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	43%
3	four employees responsible for mistakes in the run-up to last year's Benghazi attack -- even though they are still working for the State			973 458	15 833	58	0	299	0 299	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	37%
4	for partisan purposes. May 18, 2013 By Brad Knickerbocker Staff writer Benghazi terrorist attack ... IRS and the tea party ... snooping on			1 888 013	9 469	10	0	195	0 195	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	73%
5	for Benghazi and "grossly inadequate" to deal with the attack. Witness: Benghazi attack was 'inevitable' Oct. 28, 2013 - 4:38 - Adam Housley			952 414	14 752	3	0	278	0 278	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	37%
6	for Benghazi and "grossly inadequate" to deal with the attack. Witness: Benghazi attack was 'inevitable' Oct. 28, 2013 - 4:38 - Adam Housley			1 114 087	5 208	3	0	100	0 100	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	43%
7	of "approximately ten Islamist militias and A.Q. training camps within Benghazi." Considering the June attack on the consulate, the August			929 190	13 578	5	0	255	0 255	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	36%
8	- 1:35 - State Department: 30 newly revealed emails could deal with Benghazi attack Obama extends Libya bombing mission against ISIS,			196 736	10 236	16	0	196	0 196	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	8%
9	- Sen. Lindsey Graham gearing up for key hearing on terror attack Will Benghazi whistle-blowers unearth a cover-up? May. 07, 2013 - 4:56 -			1 256 445	12 448	13	0	242	0 242	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	48%
10	is covering up what happened in Benghazi the night of the attack. Why Benghazi whistle-blowers fear retaliation May. 06, 2013 - 3:32 - Jennifer			1 257 786	12 526	3	0	244	0 244	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	48%
11	deal with Adolf Hitler in Munich.... at least for a little while. Benghazi transcripts: Obama briefed on 'attack,' not video Jan. 14,			1 068 167	2 909	2	0	54 444	0 54	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	41%
12	, President Obama told Steve Kroft it was "too early to know" whether Benghazi was a terror attack. A month later, whether Obama would			2 224 836	9 708	24	0	193	0 193	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	85%
13	Jul. 02, 2014 - 1:51 - Catherine Herridge reports from Washington Benghazi attack suspect Khatallah must remain in custody, judge			679 297	320	12	0	5 539	0 5	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	26%
14	Obama? Jun. 17, 2014 - 2:27 - A look at the political impact How was Benghazi attack suspect Ahmed Abu Khatallah captured? Jun. 17, 2014			701 871	1 607	15	0	28 113	0 28	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	27%
15	, Clinton, who has so far escaped blame for the attack, wanted Benghazi to be a permanent operation. The policy, according to Issa,			976 061	15 995	20	0	302	0 302	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	38%
16	Wanted Benghazi men: FBI seeks info on 3 in Benghazi attack Wanted Benghazi men: The bureau posted photographs of the three people			1 908 073	10 409	14	0	215	0 215	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	73%
17	, Clinton, who has so far escaped blame for the attack, wanted Benghazi to be a permanent operation. The policy, according to Issa,			1 131 247	6 110	20	0	117	0 117	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	44%
18	in the early weeks following the attack. This is simply unacceptable.' Benghazi terror attack: One year later and still no answers Sep. 08,			988 831	16 672	2	0	315	0 315	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	38%
19	in the early weeks following the attack. This is simply unacceptable.' Benghazi terror attack: One year later and still no answers Sep. 08,			1 139 346	6 520	2	0	125	0 125	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	44%
20	our military undertake. Critics trying to turn Niger attack into Trump's Benghazi? Oct. 20, 2017 - 6:45 - A.B. Stoddard, associate editor and			57 060	3 218	10	0	57 059	0 57	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	2%
21	lead on the prosecution. Critics trying to turn Niger attack into Trump's Benghazi? He will not be going to Guantanamo Bay, officials told Fox			51 637	2 927	10	0	51 636	0 51	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	2%
22	Benghazi attack complicates appointments Administration treating Benghazi as criminal investigation? Jan. 09, 2013 - 5:47 - Reaction			1 350 069	17 296	22	0	336	0 336	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	52%
23	had happened a terrorist attack. On September 15, Obama referred to Benghazi as a "tragic attack." On September 16, Susan Rice, then U.N.			2 255 793	11 287	8	0	224	0 224	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	87%
24	percent, with two months until Election Day. Rep. Gohmert reacts to Benghazi attack discrepancies Sep. 05, 2014 - 7:12 - U.S. security			654 655	16 485	5	0	317	0 317	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	25%
25	December 20, 2014 Libya militants deny Islamic militia leader linked to Benghazi attack on US consulate shot By Associated Press TRIPOLI,			1 275 028	13 409	19	0	261	0 261	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	49%
26	not until two days later that administration officials began referring to Benghazi as a terrorist attack—something the Libyan government had			2 255 856	11 292	15	0	224	0 224	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	87%
27	to 'spiral out of control? U.S. seeking Al Qaeda terrorist linked to Benghazi attack By Washington Free Beacon The U.S. government is			1 074 431	3 235	8	0	60 708	0 60	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	41%
28	opposition from within his own party. Panetta defends US response to Benghazi attack Feb. 04, 2013 - 4:33 - Defense secretary says there			1 321 896	15 822	7	0	308	0 308	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	51%
29	2015 Rep. Issa subpoenas State Department for documents related to Benghazi attack By Associated Press GOP congressman: Internal			1 168 713	8 136	10	0	154	0 154	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	45%
30	directed to head straight to Sigonella air base in Italy -- rather than to Benghazi. The final attack on the CIA annex, which killed Americans			1 419 527	3 583	28	0	66 877	0 66	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	55%
31	administration official who knew nothing about events leading up to Benghazi and the attack itself, yet the White House asked her to go on			1 197 219	9 544	18	0	183	0 183	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	46%
32	Report All-Star panel weighs in What led to slow military response to Benghazi attack? Jan. 13, 2014 - 3:36 - Jennifer Griffin reports Newly			889 896	11 512	20	0	216	0 216	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	34%
33	reports from Washington Report: Egyptians arrest suspect linked to Benghazi attack Dec. 08, 2012 - 0:25 - Alleged terror leader with			1 382 448	1 542	18	0	29 798	0 29	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	53%
34	in refusing to send the Foreign Emergency Support Team (FEST) to Benghazi when the attack began. CBS's Sharyl Attkisson reported this			2 434 029	3 119	29	0	62 817	0 62	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	93%
35	Col. S.E. Gibson wanted to take three special operators from Tripoli to Benghazi after the first attack. Military commanders were concerned			1 030 953	930	12	0	17 230	0 17	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	40%
36	Col. S.E. Gibson wanted to take three special operators from Tripoli to Benghazi after the first attack. Military commanders were concerned			1 030 527	902	12	0	16 804	0 16	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	40%
37	. John Bolton weighs in New York Times reports no Al Qaeda link to Benghazi attack Dec. 29, 2013 - 6:00 - Lt. Col. Tony Shaffer weighs in			908 269	12 500	15	0	234	0 234	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	35%
38	2014 Last Update March 26, 2015 Libyan militia leader says he went to Benghazi consulate, denies role in attack By Associated Press			1 481 164	6 853	18	0	128	0 128	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	57%
39	in Libya's 2011 civil war. Libyan national detained in connection to Benghazi attack Mar. 15, 2013 - 6:01 - Sources report on arrest in			1 283 937	13 863	8	0	270	0 270	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	49%
40	the year off on the right foot." Why did administration deny terror link to Benghazi attack? Sep. 28, 2012 - 2:43 - Peter Johnson, Jr. weighs in			1 544 786	10 115	9	0	192	0 192	GOP MST	2018.marras.19.00	59%

Image 4. A concordance listing of the main search word *Benghazi* and context word *attack* within a span of L10 to R10 in the GOP corpus.

After the attacks in Benghazi, Bin Hamid spoke openly with reporters, granting interviews to the New York Times and Washington Post, among others. Bin Hamid acknowledges his presence at the U.S. mission shortly after the attacks started. He claims, improbably, that he merely watched the attacks as they unfolded, standing alongside Abu Khattala, the one person in U.S. custody for his role in the attacks. The House Intelligence Committee report notes: "Ample intelligence reporting from multiple reporting indicates Khattala's role in the attacks," but it does not connect him to Bin Hamid.

The report also notes that a security team from Tripoli, comprising five Americans from the CIA and two from the U.S. military, made their way to Benghazi. They originally intended to "locate and rescue Ambassador Stevens." The House Intelligence Committee reports that the Tripoli team, while "holding" at the Benghazi airport, "was approached by about 30 militiamen from different groups offering assistance," but it was "not entirely clear . . . which groups were present, which were trustworthy, and which posed a threat." According to the New York Times, Bin Hamid was one of the militiamen who met the Tripoli team at the Benghazi airport.

In all, the Tripoli team was delayed for approximately three and a half hours at the Benghazi airport. The circumstances surrounding the delay are not made clear in the House report.

"After much review, [the House Intelligence Committee] uncovered no evidence that the Libyan Shield militia played a role in the final attack [on the CIA's annex] or tipped off the attackers of the Tripoli Team's presence," the report concludes. It cites some evidence that members of the Libyan Shield were helpful during the attack. But it does not account for Bin Hamid, a known Libyan Shield leader. The report does not address Bin Hamid's presence at the U.S. mission shortly after the first attack began, or his association with Abu Khattala. Nor does the report address claims that Bin Hamid met up with the Tripoli team at the Benghazi airport, where the Americans were delayed for an inordinate amount of time.

Today, Bin Hamid openly fights alongside Ansar al Sharia, one of the al Qaeda groups responsible for the Benghazi attacks. Ansar al Sharia advertises Bin Hamid's leadership role in videos and pictures disseminated on its official Twitter feed.

The absence of bin Hamid, the exclusion of the Khattala indictment, the whitewashing of intelligence failures, the spinning of NDAs, the reliance on discredited witnesses, and the mistreatment of credible ones—these are just some of the problems with the House Intelligence Committee's report on Benghazi.

The report seeks to bring an end to the committee's work on Benghazi, but it's clear that in this, too, it fails. A spokesman for Devin Nunes says the incoming chairman "is looking forward to cooperating with Representative Gowdy's select committee, which will be the definitive report on the events surrounding the deaths of four Americans in Benghazi."

Defenders of the Obama administration have suggested that the intelligence committee's report makes the work of the select committee unnecessary, but a senior Republican leadership aide, reached on the day the intelligence committee's report was released, made the opposite argument.

He said: "Rogers proved today why we needed a special committee."

The Benghazi Whitewash
The Scrapbook
December 8, 2014 at 12:00 AM

On Friday, November 21, the Republican-majority House Intelligence Committee released a report about the CIA and the intelligence community's conduct in the terror attack on the U.S. compound in Benghazi, Libya. The report uncritically accepted the CIA's defense of its conduct, and so reporters hastened to accuse previous Republican inquiries and hearings into Benghazi of being illegitimate political theater. National Journal's Ron Fournier said the "GOP should be ashamed." Politico's Michael Grunwald said the report suggested "Benghazi wasn't really a scandal." The Atlantic's Conor Friedersdorf suggested "audiences of conservative sites [should] express anger at being misled about Benghazi for so long."

It would be nice if the journalists using the report as a cudgel read the thing. The report is for the most part more damning than the gloss reporters are putting on it. And the parts that aren't damning are a classic Washington whitewash. It is in no way a complete overview of all that happened on that fateful day of September 11, 2012, nor does it review the conduct of everyone involved. And one of the central facts confirmed by the report is an indictment of the mainstream media coverage of Benghazi. (Here's one of the things that should have tipped off reporters about the weaknesses in the report: It unironically uses the phrase "mistakes were made" on page one.)

So what does the report get right? To start with, last December the New York Times ran a lengthy piece the paper claimed was based on months of investigation, concluding there was "no evidence that Al Qaeda or other international terrorist groups had any role in the assault" and "it was fueled in large part by anger at an American-made video denigrating Islam." This conclusion was preposterous, and The Weekly Standard's Stephen Hayes (as well as our contributor Thomas Joscelyn) quickly debunked it. Nonetheless, this remained the "official" version of events right up until hours before the House report dropped confirming that, yes, **Benghazi** was an al Qaeda attack and, no, it had absolutely nothing to do with a video. That morning, the Times revised its version of events. But soon, everyone in the media was too busy wrongly using the report to shame Republicans to note the stunning journalistic failure.

And notably, the report reviewed only CIA conduct—it did not review the State Department's actions (or lack thereof). The report notes, "The State Department had contracted with the February 17th Brigade" to provide security in Benghazi. Interestingly enough, the report does not note the full name—the "February 17th Martyrs Brigade," or that the group is now allied with Ansar al Sharia, which led the attack that night. It would be nice to know more about how this security decision was made, but if the media asked reasonable questions it might put a damper on publishing op-eds from Clintonistas such as Lanny Davis demanding the GOP investigate itself in the wake of the report. Team Hillary is hoping the report will divorce Hillary from any responsibility for the Benghazi tragedy. It assuredly does not.

Finally, the report details a disconcerting version of events showing how the Obama administration's Benghazi talking points were crafted in a highly politicized and flawed process. If you think the administration denied known facts about al Qaeda's involvement in favor of blaming a YouTube video, attacking the First Amendment, and putting the president's reelection above the truth—the report lends credibility to this version of events. The report has numerous other problems (The Scrapbook's friend Mollie Hemingway published a 6,000-word account at the Federalist of "20 ways the media completely misread" the report, and she was only summarizing). The Scrapbook encourages you to read the report for yourself. Heaven knows the media have no plans to bother.

Crêpes Suzette or Pie?
Irwin M. Stelzer
December 8, 2014 at 12:00 AM

So we've done it: wrested control of the Senate from the do-nothing Democrats. But who are "we"? Are we the corporatist conservatives who fret that high marginal tax rates are stifling the risk-taking of wealthy investors, that business taxes are too high, that the entitlement state is unsustainable? Or are "we" the populist conservatives who worry about bank bailouts, dislike bonuses set by buddy-buddy boards, and believe with Adam Smith that workers are entitled to a decent wage and that free trade is fine so long as its beneficiaries, the winners, concede some of their gains to the losers? As Frank Sinatra might have put it: Are we crêpes suzette or pie? Wall Street or pawn shop? Country club or ballpark?

In practical terms, do "we" care more about businesses' desire for lower taxes, free trade regardless of its effect on income distribution, asset-bloating monetary policy, and wage-shrinking immigration policy, or are "we" to have as our first priority the improvement of the living standard of disaffected middle-class voters, many of whom stayed home in the recent elections in despair of casting a vote that might improve their lot? If "we" are to be populist conservatives, what ought "we" be doing?

We could start by concentrating on what Republicans can do in the here and now for great masses of voters—consistent with good, conservative principles. The first would be a tax cut—and not in the marginal rate for upper-income families or for corporations, the historic targets of tax-cutting Republicans. The theory of reducing marginal tax rates is that such cuts encourage job creation and risk-taking. Perhaps, but it is difficult to argue that current returns to businesses provide insufficient cash to fund new projects—just look at the idle cash piled up in corporate coffers—or that the wealthy are being overtaxed (cast an eye over data relating to the recent rise in incomes of the better off). Instead, cut the payroll tax paid by all workers earning less than some agreed level. After all, a stimulus to private consumption by people whose real incomes have been stuck on hold for years just might help conservatives get what they have been asking for—more rapid economic growth.

This reduction in the middle-class tax burden can be financed in part, at least, by ending capital gains treatment of so-called carried interest, compensation received by hedge fund and private equity fund managers that almost no expert is prepared to defend

Image 5. The instance of *Benghazi* highlighted in image 4 shown in its context within the news item in the GOP corpus.

Collocates in a concordance can similarly be shown from a span of up to L30 to R30 and can be listed based on various factors, such as total frequency or frequency on the left or right side of the main word. *Collocate relationships* can be computed by combining the concordance with the WordList of the same corpus. This will eliminate most of the common grammatical words that obviously appear with most words. Collocate relationships can be displayed according to various values, such as the MI, or *mutual information score*, the *Z-score* and *Log likelihood*. Computing collocate relationships can show true and semantically meaningful collocational patterns.

N	Word Set	Texts	Total	Total Left	Total Right	L15	L14	L13	L12	L11	L10	L9	L8	L7	L6	L5	L4	L3	L2	L1	Centre	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12	R13	R14	R15	
1	THE	1	4095	3001	1094	154	115	104	113	105	110	121	97	99	132	170	296	254	109	1022		17	98	107	112	63	110	85	64	80	72	66	61	57	45	57	
2	BENGHAZI	1	2664	110	69	4	4	7	6	6	12	9	21	20	11	2	1	4	3	2485		3	4	1	3	1	1	10	10	2	7	8	7	7	5		
3	ATTACK	1	2569	701	1868	9	4	1	4	5	7	5	12	5	10	82	47	37	465	8	1149	375	66	121	93	4	6	6	10	10	4	3	1	11	9		
4	IN	1	1754	1415	339	35	50	37	33	42	39	34	43	42	29	57	43	29	142	769		8	47	35	27	23	16	20	33	26	23	16	12	15	15		
5	#	1	1433	936	497	20	27	34	37	38	42	48	67	106	130	58	115	70	22	124		1	8	49	80	62	34	32	44	52	35	20	24	23	17	16	
6	TO	1	1279	844	435	43	50	47	66	48	66	58	64	57	48	59	46	57	99	36		5	42	38	33	38	31	31	33	29	26	26	22	26	26	29	
7	OF	1	1259	813	446	45	42	49	62	46	54	45	40	37	47	63	45	35	152	51		4	24	35	46	52	35	22	37	35	37	34	32	37	16		
8	ON	1	883	616	267	15	24	24	24	32	24	24	21	28	19	52	76	30	125	98		19	43	17	27	22	22	14	11	15	15	22	14	11	10	5	
9	A	1	863	375	478	18	29	19	22	30	36	37	34	31	33	37	42	2		5		15	93	58	46	37	33	25	26	16	28	23	30	17	17	14	
10	AND	1	779	367	412	9	22	27	27	33	27	39	26	40	40	25	26	11	12	3		25	68	37	22	30	35	23	26	19	20	17	19	23	15	33	
11	THAT	1	675	328	347	9	17	14	13	23	27	23	27	25	32	23	43	10	28	14		36	58	43	13	37	33	19	19	12	19	15	11	17	8	7	
12	WAS	1	480	185	295	6	7	10	8	8	24	15	13	15	17	23	24	9	5	1		91	66	14	16	15	11	6	15	14	7	11	7	11	3	8	
13	FOR	1	408	290	118	18	19	6	17	8	10	28	21	19	17	26	32	20	32	17		1	9	9	11	11	11	13	15	9	4	8	3	5	5	4	
14	TERROR	1	371	78	293	6	2	1	2			2		1		11	4	46	3			243	13	8	9	5	2	2	1	2		1	3	2	2		
15	LIBYA	1	345	66	279	5	4	5	5	6	3	11	4	2	12	2	2	3	2			224	1	6	2	3	4	2	3	4	7	3	7	5	5		
16	TERRORIST	1	331	135	196	4	1	6		4	1	2	1	3	2	6	3	101	1			89	10	50	22	3	4	1	1	5	3		3	1	2	2	
17	BY	1	315	110	205	1	4	6	10	9	10	10	14	15	10	6	4	5	5	1		2	38	24	13	15	24	13	14	10	14	14	10	5	7	2	
18	ABOUT	1	288	233	55	11	14	10	9	17	8	9	3	9	3	29	22	9	66	14		4		2	6	1	7	6	6	5	3	4	2	2	3	4	
19	S	1	252	200	52	8	11	12	9	9	9	8	9	10	19	18	32	39	1	6			1		6	5	8	2	5	4	1	4	8	1	3	4	
20	AMERICANS	1	239	82	157	4	5	5	4	2	4	2	6	1	8	6	16	3	16				4	1	18	28	22	9	32	12	8	9	7	3	1	3	
21	AN	1	226	79	147	7	3		5	10	6	6	9	4	6	6	9	8					6	16	37	12	5	10	8	11	11	5	4	7	5	5	
22	AS	1	225	104	121	3	4	11	12	11	10	6	7	11	3	4	7	7	7	1		16	25	15	10	10	7	6	5	5	5	3	5	1	3	5	
23	AL	1	220	122	98	9	8	12	9	10	11	8	12	10	6	17	10					1	5	15	9	4	5	17	11	8	6	2	6	2	7		
24	OBAMA	1	218	141	77	3	9	21	12	5	13	9	13	13	11	12	4	6	6	4		2	7	5	6	8	4	9	5	5	3	11	2	3	2		
25	AFTER	1	217	146	71	3	7	4	4	6	3	3	2	6	4	14	13	13	51	13		8	27	4	6	3		5	4	4	3	2	2	2	3		
26	WITH	1	204	117	87	9	8	8	8	9	12	5	15	9	10	4	12	3	4	1		2	2	2	10	8	7	13	6	3	2	3	7	9	13		
27	NEWS	1	202	97	105	2	7	14	10	4	10	6	11	8	10	7	2	3	1	2			1	18	4	13	15	7	3	19	4	5	4	6	6		
28	IS	1	201	102	99	5	7	5	11	6	7	12	9	12	17	6	4		1			9	18	8	6	7	7	4	7	4	10	10	1	3	3	2	
29	FROM	1	189	135	54	4	3	10	9	12	4	9	9	9	13	15	5	12	9	12		2	2	10	4	2	4	3	7	3	4	6	3	4			
30	AT	1	187	111	76	6	4	7	13	4	10	7	5	9	13	6	6	1	9	11			6	6	8	5	5	12	6	8	7	2	3	4	3	1	
31	FOX	1	186	79	107	2	2	7	13	7	3	11	10	11	5	2	3	1	2			1	17	5	12	15	7	3	19	4	5	4	5	6	4		
32	HOUSE	1	186	130	56	7	7	3	8	7	11	9	8	10	11	17	13	14	2	3			2	8	4	5	5	10	2	4	4	2	5	3	2		
33	STATE	1	186	114	72	7	7	7	9	12	7	4	9	13	11	15	7	6						8	5	12	5	8	3	3	6	5	1	7	5	4	
34	KILLED	1	184	50	134	4	2	5	4	1	1	1	1	3	1	6	4	11	6			1	30	38	15	8	21	6	1	4	3	2	2	3			
35	CLINTON	1	180	122	58	10	11	6	8	10	7	6	9	11	9	11	14	5	3	2		1	1	4	5	6	4	10	4	8	3	3	1	2	3	3	
36	CONSULATE	1	176	118	58		1	1	1	1	1				7	4	2	9	91			42		2	2	1	3	1		2	2	1	1	1	1		
37	NOT	1	175	83	92	3	4	2	7	6	8	3	11	9	5	11	5	7	2			2	12	11	8	7	6	4	7	7	10	2	6	3	6	1	
38	FOUR	1	172	36	136	2	3	4	3	1	3	3	2		2	8	2	3				1		21	27	23	11	27	7	2	4	8	2	1	1	2	

Image 6. Collocates of *Benghazi* in the GOP corpus. The span of the listing is L15 to R15 and it shows that the highlighted *terrorist* appears a total of 331 times – 135 times on the left and 196 times on the right side of *Benghazi*.

N	Word	Dice	MI	MIG	Z	Log_L	T	Log_R	Texts	Total	Total Left	Total Right	L15	L14	L13	L12	L11	L10	L9	L8	L7	L6	L5	L4	L3	L2	L1	Centre	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8
1	ATTACK	0.22	5.70	28.36	28.06	1	49.71	0.60	1	2569	701	1868	9	4	1	4	5	7	5	12	5	10	82	47	37	465	8	1149	375	66	121	93	4	6	6	6
2	BENGHAZI	0.19	5.16	27.92	8.66	284.55	50.17	0.00	1	2664	110	69	4	4	7	6	6	12	9	21	20	11	2	1	4	3	2485		3	4	1	3	1	1	10	10
3	TERROR	0.05	5.47	22.54	7.52	108.19	18.83	3.16	1	371	78	293	6	2	1	2			2		1	11	4	46	3			243	13	8	9	5	2	2	2	1
4	DISTINGUISHING	0.00	7.34																																	

Finally, another key function of the concordance is the *clusters* display. Clusters, frequently appearing word patterns, can be shown from a span of up to L25 to R25 from the main search word. The size limitation of clusters is from two words to eight and the listing can be computed to show clusters according to a minimum frequency that can be anywhere between one instance and a thousand.

N	Cluster	Freq.	Set	Length
1	THE BENGHAZI ATTACK	690		3
2	ATTACK IN BENGHAZI	424		3
3	BENGHAZI TERROR ATTACK	243		3
4	IN BENGHAZI LIBYA	205		3
5	THE BENGHAZI TERROR	187		3
6	THE ATTACK IN	155		3
7	OF THE BENGHAZI	151		3
8	IN THE BENGHAZI	126		3
9	ON THE BENGHAZI	117		3
10	TERRORIST ATTACK IN	96		3
11	CONSULATE IN BENGHAZI	93		3
12	TO THE BENGHAZI	91		3
13	BENGHAZI TERRORIST ATTACK	89		3
14	THE 2012 BENGHAZI	87		3
15	2012 BENGHAZI ATTACK	66		3
16	ON BENGHAZI ATTACK	65		3
17	IN BENGHAZI ATTACK	65		3
18	ABOUT THE BENGHAZI	64		3
19	THE BENGHAZI TERRORIST	63		3
20	ATTACK ON THE	62		3
21	A TERRORIST ATTACK	60		3
22	IN BENGHAZI WAS	58		3
23	AFTER THE BENGHAZI	51		3
24	TERROR ATTACK IN	51		3
25	BENGHAZI ATTACK AND	50		3
26	BENGHAZI WAS A	46		3
27	WAS A TERRORIST	44		3
28	BENGHAZI ATTACK WAS	38		3
29	OF BENGHAZI ATTACK	37		3
30	BENGHAZI ATTACK BY	36		3
31	THE TERRORIST ATTACK	35		3
32	2012 ATTACK IN	35		3
33	THE CONSULATE IN	34		3
34	THE ATTACK ON	34		3
35	2012 TERRORIST ATTACK	34		3
36	NIGHT OF THE	33		3

Image 8. Clusters of the main search word *Benghazi* in the GOP corpus. The cluster size is three words and the span L5 to R5. Somewhat unsurprisingly, the most common three-word cluster involving *Benghazi* is *the Benghazi attack* with 690 instances.

5. Analysis

The source material will be analyzed with a special focus on news headlines. Using a twin analogy, the headlines will provide a lens through which the lexical content of the entire news item is studied and will act as guides to the contrasting and systematic lexical and syntactic possibilities within the news items. The starting point of the analysis is the examination of each headline corpus and the WordLists of each headline corpus. From there, the analysis will move on to the DEM, GOP and master corpora. Lexical usage patterns in the headlines will be the initial basis for the closer inspection and more quantitative examination of the larger text masses within the larger corpora. After this, concordances will be compiled from the syntactic patterns and lexical choices in the headline corpora and the analysis will expand in scope to include the WordLists of each compiled major corpora: the DEM and GOP sources and the master corpus.

As instances of news discourse, headlines possess some unique qualities that justify their elevated role. The top-down principle of the structure of news dictates that information that is seen as most relevant is presented at the beginning (van Dijk 1988a, 43). This applies to macro- and micro levels alike. Headlines summarize the most salient points, paragraphs dispense information starting with the most important points and sentences start with the most relevant elements of the news item. Headlines also employ a fairly exclusive set of information condensing lexical items, at least in terms of their semantic capacities (O'Donnell & Todd 1980, 88).

(5) *Pompeo Nears Confirmation but Faces Historic Rebuke From Committee*
(NYT Apr. 19, 2018)

(6) *Mike Pompeo came close on Thursday to clinching confirmation as the nation's 70th secretary of state when Senator Heidi Heitkamp, Democrat of North Dakota, announced her support. But before that triumph, he is expected to face a historic rebuke from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which most likely will not recommend his confirmation.*

(7) *Democrats say their opposition to Mr. Pompeo springs from more than just anti-Trump sentiment.*

Examples (5), (6) and (7), from a New York Times article, display the way information is elaborated on as the news story progresses. The most relevant and important information, Pompeo's close *confirmation* and the *Historic Rebuke* are expressed first in the headline (5). The points given by the headline are then elaborated on and expanded with added information in the following paragraph (6). Facts concerning the circumstances and participants are exposed: the time, *Thursday*, Pompeo's first name, *Mike*, and a previously hidden *Senator Heidi Heitkamp*. Even the exact nature of the *Senate Foreign Relations Committee* is elaborated on. Example (7) shows a similar informational progression from more important to less important in a single sentence.

Headlines compress the semantic content and organization of the news story as a whole. Actors presented as prominent, whether positively or negatively, tend to be present on the top levels of this "inverted pyramid" (van Dijk 1987, 21). Headlines also play a prominent role in what van Leeuwen (2009, 281), among others, calls the social actor theory: the strategic exclusion of actors from the representation of actions and events.

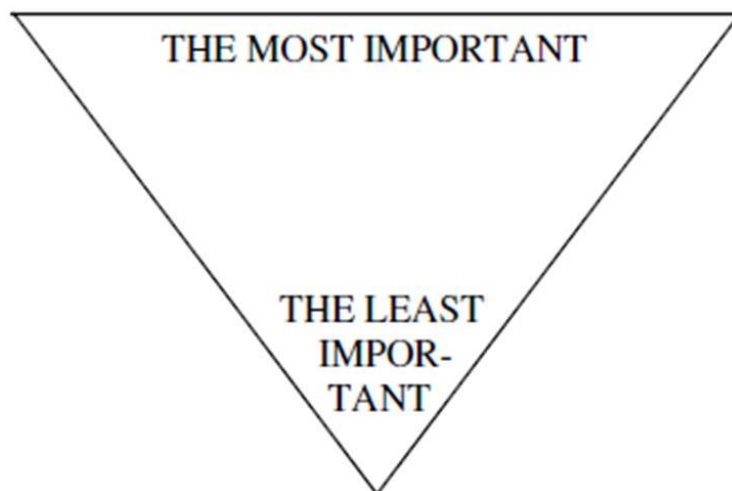


Image 9. The inverted pyramid of news information.

News headlines have three main functions (Wodak 2009, 444). First, they need to attract readers, a paying customer base. This requirement has intensified considerably in the ever expanding and competitive digital environment modern news organizations operate in. The second function is to indicate the topic of the news item and the third is to possibly suggest the author's and/or news outlet's ideological approach to this topic. The appeal of a headline is, therefore, of paramount financial and ideological importance within the hectic newsfeeds of the 21st century. The movement of information can be seen as a reversal of the from micro-to-macro progression typical of CDA work. Headlines can be seen as templates containing tightly packed information – the top level of an inverted pyramid or the semantic macro level. The semantic content of this template can be unpacked via the analysis of lexical and syntactic features, which moves the analysis to a more micro level within the textual body of a news item. The movement eventually shifts back to the macro end of the continuum, however, in the form of the conclusions and generalizations drawn from analysis results.

5.1 Lexical Features

The source material of this thesis will be subjected to lexical analysis with a focus on metaphorical choices, use of synecdoche, types of othering and modality – structures and lexical phenomena that are more ideologically sensitive and malleable (Muralikrishnan 2011, 27). The aim is a) the contrastive and more qualitative analysis of features within the DEM and GOP corpora and single source corpora in terms of frequencies that indicate significant contrasts between the lexical conventions of these news outlets and b) a more quantitative general analysis of lexical phenomena and conventions via the master corpus. After going through the lexical features, analysis will

conducted on the syntactic features seen relevant for this thesis. Before analysis, each lexical feature will be given an introductory overview from a theoretical perspective.

5.1.1 Metaphors

Metaphors are an inherent part of human language and integral part of the way that language is used. According to Adrian Beard (2000, 21), metaphors are “deeply embedded in the way we construct the world around us and the way that world is constructed for us by others”. They are also essential to the growth and development of language and the knowledge it is used to communicate (Charteris-Black 2004, 3). From the very beginning of life, metaphorical analogies serve as a tool for the categorization of new information (Bolinger 1980, 141). Cognitively speaking, metaphor stands above mere linguistic expression and forms a significant part of human conceptualization (Chilton 2004, 51). More significantly for this thesis, metaphorical usage can also be a powerful tool of subliminal persuasion (Semino 2008, 85).

In addition to their function as linguistic ornamentation and essential building blocks for informational organization, metaphors can be used to obscure and mislead - to portray events, participants and circumstances in different ways, something Jean Aitchison (2007, 178) refers to as “mental manipulation”. Metaphors can be said to be persuasive in nature (Charteris-Black 2004, 7), which gives them a unique position as manipulative elements in the mostly argumentative output of politics and political news. Referring to the artifice and purposeful nature of metaphor use, Jeffrey Mio (1997, 113) calls them “persuasive devices”. Utilizing metaphors has the potential to invoke strong emotional responses by resonating with underlying views and ideologies (Charteris-Black 2004, 24) and skilled political authors often employ metaphors to deepen the ideological foxholes of their target readership. Metaphors have an overarching influence on everyday linguistic output,

both spoken and written, but they also have an undeniable and often at least partially subliminal impact on actions (Lakoff & Johnson 2003, 3). This notion is both obvious and, at the same time, frequently overlooked in respect to its wider ramifications.

Essentially, metaphors move concepts from one semantic domain to another (Woods 2006, 65). They are used to “frame” concepts to elicit different interpretations of depicted events (Semino 2008, 91). The political language employed in the practice of international relations is especially sensitive to the capacity of metaphors to construct social realities. Whether or not metaphors actually frame the world objectively is a constant source of debate (Walter & Helmig 2008, 119).

As a linguistic starting point, metaphors can be divided into three rudimentary categories (Charteris-Black 2004, 21). *Reification* takes an abstract word and treats it as if it were a concrete physical entity or event. *Personification* refers to an inanimate entity with a word that possesses animate meanings in other contexts. *Depersonification*, in turn, refers to an animate entity with a word that possesses inanimate meanings in other contexts. Personification, most commonly giving a physical object the capabilities of a person, is a type of ontological metaphor that is especially prevalent as a feature of the discourses of both politics and media.

(8) *Fear, panic grip Libyan capital as unknown fighters wage battle in Tripoli*
(CNN Jun. 27, 2013)

(9) *White House Tries to Throw Military Under Bus*
(TWS Oct. 27, 2012)

(10) *Why Donald Trump is surging in the polls*
(CNN Jul. 18, 2015)

Example (5) displays reification. The abstract concepts *fear* and *panic* are given the physical capacity to grip the *Libyan capital*. Headline (6) is a rather typical example of personification, where the *White House*, an inanimate building, is gifted with the very human capability to throw

someone or something under the bus. Example (7) displays depersonification, a rarer metaphorical category in this context. The animate entity known as *Donald Trump* is depicted as *surging*. Surging is a word commonly used in connection with inanimate topics such as electricity and natural phenomena such as waves.

So, in addition to conventional use, metaphors can be employed in the creation of new ways of describing the human experience by extending humanity to inhuman entities and vice versa. Essentially, metaphors can either describe reality or create it (Lakoff & Johnson 2003, 144). It should be pointed out that not all seemingly metaphorical words are actual metaphors. A “heavy” word for a seemingly “heavy” event, such as *massacre* when describing an *attack*, is an example of what Danuta Reah (1998, 18) calls a “loaded” word. Loaded words are not always metaphorical. Despite a characteristic tendency to stretch the semantic dimensions of the described event beyond the literal meaning, no semantic content actually moves from one domain to another. The differentiation of loaded words from actual conceptual metaphors that also often have “loaded” interpretations is essential, as news headlines frequently employ terminology and constructions that can use either variation. The co-occurrence of cognitively heavy events and heavy descriptions, with both loaded and metaphorical words, is part of what Aitchison (2007, 116) quite aptly describes as the “iconic” tendency of language in general.

5.1.1.1 Concept Metaphors

Sources of long-term metaphorical themes, *conceptual domains*, manifest as *conceptual* or *concept metaphors* and serve as permanent or semi-permanent mental representations of reality (Semino 2008, 87). Conceptual metaphor usage has the capacity to be subliminal for both author and audience. It is largely controlled by cognitive activity that lies below the level of conscious thought

and can, as such, offer a view of a given language user's notion of "common sense" (Lakoff 1996, 4). Simplified to a rudimentary level, conceptual metaphors can be seen as vehicles to turn abstract, "experience-distant" concepts and phenomena into "experience-near" and understandable equivalents (Stenvoll 2008, 34).

Metaphors are a staple of both political and news discourse as the foundation of what Paul Chilton calls the "metaphorical reasoning" of political language (2004, 203). They are an efficient and sometimes almost mandatory tool for conceptualizing complex political topics (Semino 2008, 91-2). Another useful feature of metaphors, in the context of politics especially, is the fact that a strong emotional response to a subject usually elicits a stronger memory of it (van Dijk 1988a, 85). Elena Semino (2008, 91-2) notes some conceptual domains of metaphors that are dominant, especially in the sphere of politics: WAR, SPORTS and PATH/JOURNEY. WAR acts as a source domain for various metaphorical representations. In political debate, ARGUMENT IS WAR is a common metaphorical idea (Aitchison 2007, 167).

(11) *Republicans trade fire over Benghazi report*
(FOX Nov. 24, 2014)

(12) *Romney Attacks Obama on "Bumps in the Road"*
(WJS Sep 24, 2012)

Example (8) uses terminology from military nomenclature to depict a debate within the Republican party. Typically only opposing army forces *trade fire*. Example (9) is perhaps one of the most typical forms of ARGUMENT IS WAR, where one participant of a debate *attacks* another. The very idea of winning or losing an argument presents a thoroughly commonplace example of this conventional conceptual metaphor that often depicts acts of political debate as military actions. It is, to a certain extent, submerged in everyday usage (Lakoff & Johnson 2003, 3). The way this

structural metaphor defines the actions undertaken by the participants of an argument is exceptionally clear in the political arena.

SPORTS is another common semantic domain for metaphorical usage, especially in American politics and in connection with American sports (Semino 2008, 97). Within the sphere of North-American politics, domains like WAR and SPORTS are especially prolific (Charteris-Black 2004, 88).

(13) *Obama counter-punches in effort to regain political balance*
(CNN May 17, 2013)

(14) *It's Still Clinton's Race to Lose*
(WJS Sep. 20, 2016)

Example (10) uses terminology such as *counter-punch* and *to regain balance*. Boxing concepts like these are directly transferred from the SPORTS domain. Example (11) uses *race* as a very common metaphorical depiction of political campaigns.

Metaphors create and uphold social realities and can guide – in the political realm of persuasion and conflict even provoke - actions that fit a given metaphorical description (Lakoff & Johnson 2003, 156). One of the most characterizing features of political output, especially of the campaign variety, is the use of metaphors from the PATH/JOURNEY domain. It can be applied on several levels. The essential metaphorical idea here can be expressed as FORWARD IS GOOD, BACKWARD IS BAD (Semino 2008, 81), applicable to both smaller and larger concepts. For example, veering off point in a discussion is often depicted as heading in the wrong direction (Beard 2000, 21) and the entirety of life as a journey is undoubtedly one of the most important and all-encompassing conceptual metaphors of the human experience (Lakoff 1996, 85).

(15) *President Seeks Path Forward Beyond Troubles*
(NYT Aug. 17, 2013)

(16) *Path toward justice for Benghazi suspect still unclear*
(FOX Jun. 27, 2014)

(17) *Forward into the past: another Bush or Clinton in the White House?*
(CNN Feb. 6, 2014)

Examples (12) and (13) depict the journey forward along a path as a beneficial process that leaves *troubles* behind and takes the traveler to a desired outcome, such as *justice*. Example (14) shows the negativity inherent in the prospect of moving backwards. The article under the headline casts doubts on the desirability of the representatives of old political dynasties, such as the Clinton or Bush families, returning to power by winning the presidency.

The prevalence of the PATH/JOURNEY domain in political language can reach comical proportions. It is one of the more commonly recognized features of political discourse, as evidenced by this 2015 segment of the Comedy Central program *The Daily Show*.



Image 10. Humorous acknowledgement of the PATH/JOURNEY source domain in American entertainment.

The PATH/JOURNEY source domain can be seen as a facet of a larger metaphorical construction inherent to human cognition and ubiquitously present in all language - political and otherwise. Charteris-Black (2004, 74) gives a more detailed version of this metaphorical idea, better suited for use in various political contexts: *purposeful social activity is travelling along a path towards a destination*. Aitchison (2007, 168) calls this construction the *verticality schema* and it can be expressed with the metaphorical idea UP IS GOOD, DOWN IS BAD, as in the idioms *down on his luck* and *things are looking up*.

Another conventional metaphor closely linked to the PATH/JOURNEY domain can be described as POLITICS IS PHYSICS, which creates an analogy between physical objects and topics of political discussion (Stenvoll 2008, 35). It typically manifests in the form of well know turns of phrase or concepts such as *slippery slope*, *domino effect* and *a step too far*. The overall theme is space, movement, orientation and physicality. Lakoff and Johnson (2003, 14) have given this class the apt moniker *orientational metaphors*. Again, the discourses of politics and media provide examples aplenty.

(18) *Hillary Clinton's Next Step*
(NYT Jul. 8, 2016)

(19) *Obama approval rating slides: Scandals taking toll?*
(CSM May 30, 2013)

Example (15) refers to the metaphorical *next step* taken in the strategy of Hillary Clinton's campaign and (16) depicts then president Obama's *approval rating* as something physical that can, and is, sliding downwards.

It is worth noting that conventional metaphorical usage, in all its forms, is often culturally dictated. Therefore, the arena of American politics has exceptional value as a salient exemplar of the linguistic functions of modern western politics and media. Lakoff and Johnson

(2003, 22) point out that culturally important values are coherent with the metaphorical structures of culturally key concepts, such as *up is good* or *up is more*, *progress equates with forward motion*, *bigger is better* and *down is bad* or *down is less*.

In addition to the domains of conceptual metaphors above, VALUE represents a source of metaphorical expression that is central and influential in all developed societies (Bolinger 1980, 142). This holds true in both the purely monetary sense and the in terms of what is seen as valuable by different ideologies. Lakoff (1996, 5) points out that morality is commonly conceptualized by using terms native to the field of finance, terms from the source domain of VALUE. Morality can also appear in various metaphorically depicted positions of elevation. The moral views of liberals and conservatives differ from each other on many contested issues and can, to some extent, be studied via certain metaphorical choices (Lakoff 1996, 11).

(20) *The Republicans' Morally Bankrupt Response to Trump's Russia Scandal*
(TNR Jul. 17, 2017)

(21) *Hillary Clinton and Democrats lose the high ground on Russia*
(FOX Oct. 27, 2017)

Example (17) is a headline from the DEM leaning TNR. The news item gives a sternly negative moral evaluation of the opposing political party's actions in connection with Donald Trump's Russian connections. The terminology adapted comes from the world of banking and finance and represents a very common expression of low moral value – being *morally bankrupt*. Example (18) by the heavily GOP FOX touches on the same topic a few months later with an opposite frame. The Democrats have lost their moral superiority, their *high ground*, due to a revelation that people connected to Clinton had apparently funded a dossier that initially incriminated Donald Trump.

Lakoff (1996, 12-13) describes a fascinating feature of metaphorical preference in American politics. Conservatives, or GOP, mold their view of government from a “strict father”

perspective, while liberals, or DEM, opt for a “nurturing parent” view. The common denominator for both ideologies is the conceptual metaphorical idea of NATION AS PARENT. The “strict father” view held by GOP sees the world as a dangerous place in need of preemptive strikes and virtually unlimited military funding. The world operates on a strict dichotomy of good and evil, West versus East, Christianity versus Islam. Crime is followed by punishment without leniency - the GOP government does not balk at the idea of the death penalty. The “strict parent” government is small and favors those who help themselves in order to survive. Social benefits are frowned upon. Competition is highly valued and free market capitalism upheld as the reasonable model of economy.

The “nurturing parent” government of DEM ideology strongly favors cooperation over competition, basing the ideal template of foreign politics on withdrawal from conflict. Fair distribution of social wellbeing in the form of, for example, income equality is high in the hierarchy of priorities and empathy is generally strong in the approach to crime. The need of a larger and stronger government is generally acknowledged as the source and guarantee of a safe, prosperous society and big business is felt to need supervision.

(22) *Libya needs outside help to avoid perpetual war*
(CSM Oct. 11, 2013)

(23) *US won't seek death penalty against Benghazi suspect*
(FOX May 10, 2016)

(24) *In N. Africa terror battle, U.S. should lead from way behind*
(CNN Jan. 24, 2013)

(25) *With torture, America hurt itself for nothing*
(CNN Dec. 10, 2014)

The Benghazi news items offer examples of NATION-AS-PARENT that mostly utilize the metaphorical vehicle of personification. In example (19), the GOP news outlet CSM promotes U.S.

military interventions into foreign soil and depicts *Libya* as a person in need of the strict father's *help*. In (20), FOX is dismayed by a *US* that has apparently decided to abandon the just punishment of *death*. Examples (21) and (22) construct a different frame. In (21), CNN demands *U.S.* withdrawal from foreign conflicts and in (22) admonishes the non-nurturing torture practices of its nation parent.

The features of NATION-AS-PARENT can be used to segue to another type of metaphorical categorization relevant for this thesis. The ultimate source of representations for both the GOP "strict father" and DEM "nurturing parent" government ideals is *nation*, a *radial category*. The radial category *nation* is the source both ideologies use to shape their subjectively best metaphorical extensions, their *ideal case prototypes*, according to their own motivations.

5.1.1.2 Radial Categories

Radial categories represent the most common conceptual domains of human language (Lakoff 1996, 7). They consist of variations of a central model, such as the basic *mother* or *bird* or the more complex *leader*. The variations are essentially metaphorical extensions of the central model and can be subcategorized into a set of *prototypes*. These prototypes are used as subjective representations of their radial category (ibid., 9-11).

1. *Central subcategory*: the basis for metaphorical extensions from a radial category. The central subcategory for *liberal*, for example, contains the various central types of people with liberal views, both negative and positive.
2. *Typical case*: neutral in tone, this prototype represents commonly known typical cases of a radial category. In the case of *conservative*, for example, a typical case contains the features attached to a person of conservative views, such as pro-gun ownership, anti-abortion and heavy nationalism. A typical case can be used to represent a whole radial category.

3. *Ideal case*: as the name suggests, an ideal case prototype is a positive standard for all other subcategories. With *conservative* and *liberal*, ideal cases represent what are seen as the best possible representatives of each ideology, respectively. The ideal case prototype is commonplace in the rhetoric of competing ideologies and the ideal cases of radial categories such as *leader* and *negotiator* can differ widely across the political field.
4. *Anti-ideal case*: negative in tone, this prototype represents the worst type of metaphorical extension drawn from a radial category. A common tool for demonizing, the anti-ideal case prototype occurs constantly in political debate, as the representative of the radial category of the opposing ideology or as the negative representation of some other radial category significant to a contested topic.
5. *Stereotype*: not to be mixed with more negative representations, this prototype is, perhaps, the most familiar of its kind. Culturally situated social stereotypes are often used to act as typical case prototypes in an effort to elicit swift judgments of an entire radial category. In American politics, stereotypes are omnipresent and each side has their own arsenal of weapons-grade category representations.
6. *Salient exemplar*: a prototype that represents a radial category via a single memorable example. The salient exemplar prototype can be - and often is - used to cast an entire category in a negative or positive light. Needless to say, salient exemplars are highly common in political debate.
7. *Essential prototype*: a more rudimentary representation, an essential prototype is a hypothetical set of properties that constitutes the essential features of an entity. An essential prototype for the radial category *human*, for example, contains properties such as *rational thought* and *emotion*.

Lakoff notes that *conservative* and *liberal*, in themselves, form two radial categories with their own central models (1996, 8). Similar to other radial categories, *conservative* and *liberal*, while fundamentally more complex than more basic categories, can act as the source of a set of typical prototypes, the choice of which depends on ideological motivations and context of use. It is worth pointing out that the use of these types of prototypical representation is rarely consistent on an individual level (Lakoff 1996, 14). A voter, for example, may very well base her or his voting activity on one prototype during a presidential election and on another during state-level elections.

As radial categories and the prototypes through which they are actualized in different contexts are quite complex and can contain overlapping features, a visualization is called for. In the context of this thesis, the always-current radial category *leader* provides an apt political archetype.

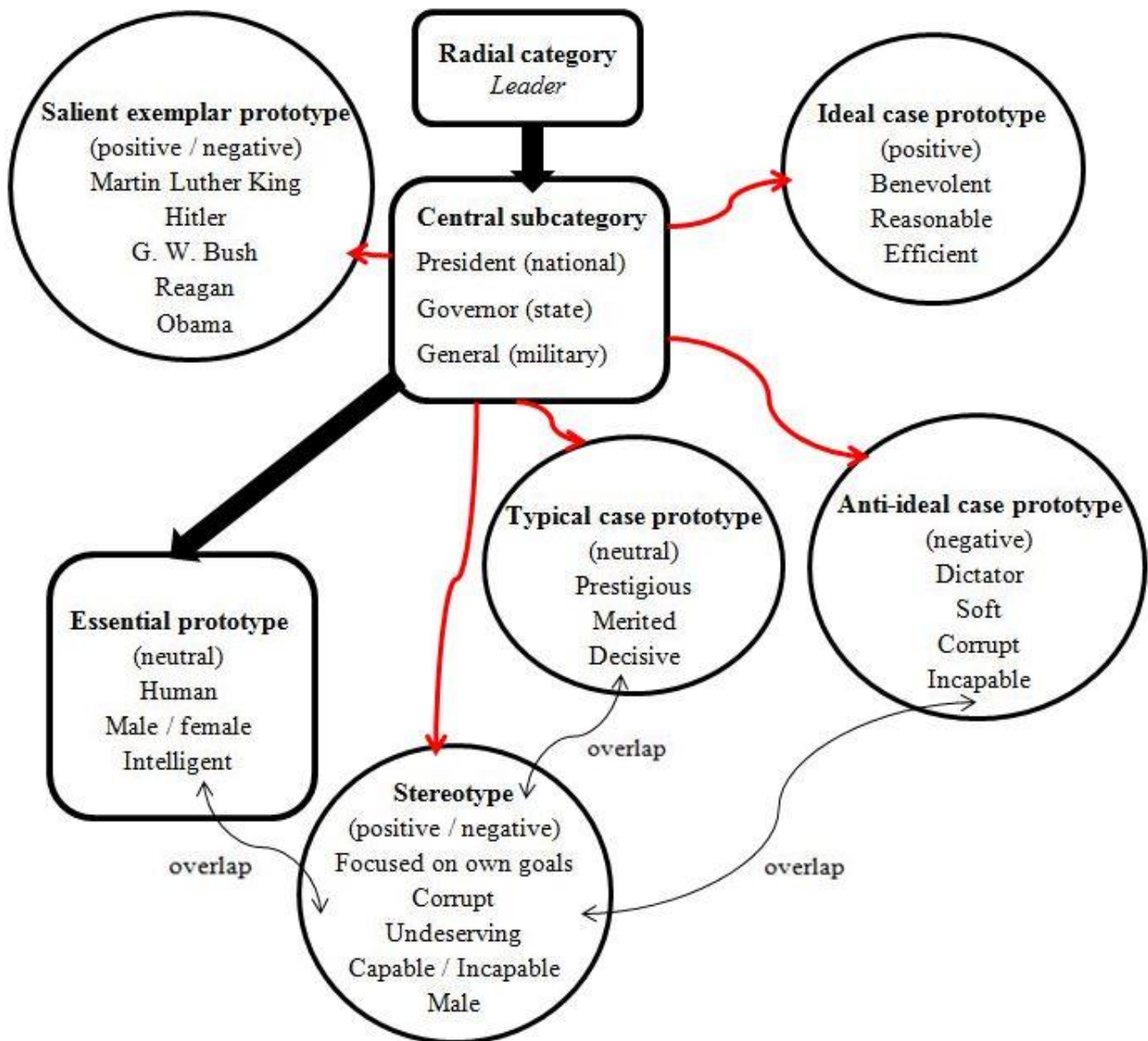


Image 11. A visual representation of a radial category and partially overlapping typical prototypes.

As a type of metaphorical taxonomy, key radial categories such as *event* or *leader* or the representation of a political group and/or ideology in the form of *liberal* or *conservative*, combined with their central subcategories, provide interesting possibilities for contrastive analysis. There can be stark contrasts between the prototypical properties DEM and GOP news outlets attach to their respective depictions of events, actions, or people.

(26) *Poor Hillary, intimidated in the debates by big, bad Donald Trump*
(FOX Aug. 24, 2017)

(27) *You're paying for Trump to promote his golf courses*
(CNN Jul. 15, 2018)

(28) *Liberal Media exploits hurricane Harvey to attack President Trump*
(FOX Sep. 2, 2017)

(29) *Is Obama the Democrat's Reagan?*
(CSM Sep. 6, 2015)

In example (26), FOX gives the Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton properties such as weakness, softness and a tendency to be victimized, making her a decidedly anti-ideal prototype of a leader. In headline (27), CNN depicts Donald Trump as an anti-ideal prototype of a leader by attaching properties such as greed and corruption. Headline (28) is an example of the properties often attached to opposing ideological groups. FOX depicts the liberal media, a label given to news outlets seen as opponents to the conservative ideological position, with the properties of opportunism, aggression, deviousness and even dishonesty – all part of an extremely anti-ideal case prototype of both a political party and a representative of the media institution. Headline (29) by the GOP-leaning CSM is an interesting example of manipulating the salient exemplar prototype by moving it from positive to negative. By combining Obama and Reagan, even hypothetically, the CSM headline deftly attaches the negative properties Democrats typically associate with Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama. The headline can also be seen to question whether Obama has the

characteristics of Reagan seen as overwhelmingly positive by many, if not most, Republicans. In the sense of being an extension of the radial category *event* via the central subcategory *attack*, the events in Benghazi are often framed in ideologically motivated ways.

(30) *The straight story about the murders in Benghazi*
(FOX Jan. 2, 2014)

(31) *So the Benghazi Attacks Were Motivated by the Video After All?*
(MJS Jun. 18, 2014)

Example (30) by FOX frames Benghazi as an aggressively criminal act on no uncertain terms. The legal connotations of *murders* are also used as a not-so-subtle accusation directed towards the administration in charge during the events. Headline (31) by the DEM MJS frames Benghazi in a more neutral manner as *attacks* while simultaneously supporting the protest narrative that favored the DEM administration at the time. Worthy of note here is the fact that although the Benghazi events cannot in a true sense be seen as an ideal case prototype of the radial category *event*, a distinction can be made between an aggressive and a more neutral interpretation. *Attack* and *murder* differ in tonality and can be used strategically as properties of ideal and anti-ideal prototypes. In the case of Benghazi, ideal and anti-ideal can be replaced with neutral and aggressive.

From the perspective of the analysis of metaphorical usage, one of the central characters of the Benghazi events presents an interesting case. For the conservatives, Hillary Clinton has an admirable track record as the quintessential anti-ideal prototype of radial categories such as *politician*, *leader* and even *citizen*, as seen in example (26). Lakoff (1996, 171-172) gave her a full score on the conservative list of undesired, demonizing features as far back as 1996 - far before any realistic presidential aspirations could have been on the horizon for her. Another interesting facet comes in the form of Carly Fiorina, the GOP presidential nominee, who can be seen as the GOP response to what Hillary represented in terms of a radial category. With Fiorina,

the GOP pitted their female candidate against the DEM female candidate. Fiorina represented the GOP's non-stereotypical ideal case prototype, an efficient businesswoman and leader, in contrast to the anti-ideal case prototype Hillary Clinton. The perception of Clinton and Fiorina as ideal or anti-ideal prototypes of course varied depending on ideological stance in both media and individual opinions. Carly Fiorina's campaign was relatively short lived, however, and eventually petered out due to a lack of popularity within her own party, despite initial successes (Allen 2016).

(31) *We cannot allow Hillary Clinton, "midwife to chaos" and a public liar, to be our next president* (FOX Oct. 29, 2015)

(32) *Carly Fiorina Abuses the Truth Just Like a Teenage Conservative Hoaxer* (TNR, Sep. 28, 2015)

Headlines (31) and (32) show the ideological polarization between their authors clearly. In (31), FOX frames Hillary Clinton as the anti-ideal case prototype of *leader* by giving her the highly undesirable property of dishonesty. In headline (32), a product of the same election coverage, TNR returns fire by giving Carly Fiorina the same negative property and emphasizes the derogation with the label *hoaxer*.

Before concluding the theoretical examination of various metaphor types and categories, a point needs to be made. The analysis will focus on a select group of metaphors and metaphorical phenomena deemed relevant for the purposes of this thesis and justified in light of the restricted topic and limited source material. Analysis will be conducted on reification, personification and depersonification, the concept metaphors ARGUMENT IS WAR, SPORTS, PATH/JOURNEY and POLITICS IS PHYSICS and radial categories formulated as *event* and *leader*. Rudimentary root-level metaphor classes, such as the ontological *container* metaphor – the metaphorical representation of something as having an inside and outside – as well as the vast and more abstract metaphorical domains VALUE and NATION-AS-PARENT will be disregarded. These

domains represent metaphorical use on a basic, widespread and inbuilt level. Deeper quantitative or contrastive analysis is likely to yield few meaningful distinctions in the discourses of the two opposing political ideologies or in the overall operation of political or news discourses, due in large part to the size and restricted subject matter of the specialized corpora. Similarly, larger-scale radial categories will be disregarded as too universal for the context of this thesis. These disregarded phenomena serve as tools of general linguistic overview and provide a concise look into their respective metaphorical functions within the Benghazi source material.

5.1.2 Metaphors in Benghazi Reporting

In a linguistic sense, the Benghazi news items offer a microcosm of political and news discourses. It is reasonable to assume the trends and tendencies discovered within the source corpora of this thesis reflect the operation of language in this context on a larger scale – cautious though these conclusions might be. As discussed in the beginning of this section, the general analytical approach is the use of the headline corpora and their respective WordSmith WordLists as a starting point. Syntactic and lexical phenomena and their frequencies in the headlines are the basis of a deeper analytical plunge into the DEM and GOP compiled corpora and the master corpus: features found in headlines are assumed to be present within the body of texts as well. These corpora will be studied via concordances, using key WordSmith functions discussed in section 4.3, such as tracking collocate relationships with various values and limiting search horizons from the main search word. The focus will be on frequencies, collocates and clusters common enough to warrant meaningful contrasts or conclusions.

5.1.2.1 Reification, Personalization, Depersonalization

The occurrence of reification and depersonalization was sporadic at best. These types of metaphorical expressions are rarely used in the Benghazi news items. Cross-referencing the wordlists of the source corpora with the headline corpora revealed only a few typical headline examples and the phenomena seemed to appear mostly outside of the body of the text. The numbers and tendencies revealed very little in the way of meaningful contrasts between DEM and GOP news outlets. Reification commonly animated abstract concepts such as *diplomacy* or *hope* by giving them physical abilities. Depersonalization was mostly used to give inanimate capabilities to various key characters of the Benghazi issue, *Trump* leading the others by an infinitesimal margin. Headlines (33) and (34) offer typical examples of reification and depersonalization in Benghazi news items.

(33) *When Hope Tramples Truth*
(NYT Mar. 24, 2013)

(34) *Donald Trump Is About To Go Nuclear on Hillary Clinton*
(TNR Sept. 29, 2016)

Personalization, however, is rampant in the Benghazi news items, seemingly adhering to its qualities described in section 5.1.1. It does indeed seem like a staple of both political and news discourses. The most common forms of personalization included government institutions, such as the *White House* or *WH*, *administration*, *committee* and *state department*. Somewhat obviously, the *United States* or *US* was itself among the most commonly personalized institutions. The most common actions were verbal with *to say* the as most common. The various government institutions were mostly depicted performing official functions, such as *addressing* claims, *holding* meetings, *filing* charges and *subpoenaing* individuals. Personalization is closely related to the whole-for-part

manifestation of synecdoche to be discussed in section 5.1.3. The two features overlap greatly in the Benghazi source material and, therefore, some of the more frequent combinations of whole-for-part synecdoche and personalization will be studied in greater detail in the analysis portion of synecdoche. The two most common personalized entities not involving a whole-for-part representation were *email* or *emails* and *report* or *reports*, which were depicted as *addressing*, *showing* and *revealing* various details.

email* GOP: 146 DEM: 211	report* GOP: 218 DEM: 107	US* GOP: 174 DEM: 63	WH* GOP: 163 DEM: 97	committee GOP: 123 DEM: 54
<i>address*</i> GOP: 29 DEM: 21	<i>say*</i> GOP: 140 DEM: 70	<i>say*</i> GOP: 46 DEM: 25	<i>say*</i> GOP: 82 DEM: 39	<i>seek*</i> GOP: 35 DEM: 21
<i>show*</i> GOP: 69 DEM: 14	<i>find*</i> GOP: 36 DEM: 16	<i>capture*</i> GOP: 28 DEM: 8	<i>release*</i> GOP: 18 DEM: 20	<i>interview*</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 9
<i>reveal*</i> GOP: 23 DEM: 17	<i>reveal*</i> GOP: 9 DEM: 5	<i>file*</i> GOP: 23 DEM: 10	<i>call*</i> GOP: 27 DEM: 15	<i>question*</i> GOP: 36 DEM: 13
<i>suggest*</i> GOP: 4 DEM: 26	<i>slam*</i> GOP: 9 DEM: 3	<i>issue*</i> GOP: 21 DEM: 7	<i>hold*</i> GOP: 16 DEM: 9	<i>declare*</i> GOP: 28 DEM: 2
<i>say*</i> GOP: 4 DEM: 21	<i>blame*</i> GOP: 5 DEM: 2	<i>send*</i> GOP: 26 DEM: 9	<i>dodge*</i> GOP: 9 DEM: 0	<i>subpoena*</i> GOP: 9 DEM: 2

Table 5. Most common personalized words and collocated actions in the source corpora. (Key: the asterisk denotes every relevant form of the word and, in cases like *WH** and *US**, both their common abbreviations and longer forms. GOP refers to total frequency in GOP news items, DEM to totals in DEM news items)

The frequencies of *email** and *report** and *committee* can be used as the basis for a few tentative conclusions. GOP sources seemed to refer to *report** and *committee* more often than DEM sources, and GOP sources depicted the *email** as definitively *showing* something more frequently than DEM sources. *Email** refers to Hillary Clinton’s email practices during her tenure as secretary of state. They were an integral part the Benghazi enquiries and GOP news sources had a tendency to frame their contents as solid proof of criminal incompetence. *Report** refers to reports concerning the

investigation of the Benghazi attacks. Judging by total frequency, GOP sources seem to discuss *report** more often than DEM opponents, likely due to the incriminating nature of most reports. Among other actions, *report** is depicted as *slamming* opponents with its contents. Similarly, the aggressively performing *committee* investigating the Benghazi attacks appears more frequently in GOP news items. *WH** offers a final contrastive detail. In 9 instances, GOP personalizes the White House into an entity *dodging* Benghazi related accusations. Headlines (35) – (38) demonstrate some of the more contrastive uses of personalization in Benghazi related news items.

(35) *Clinton emails show Benghazi response, back-patting after contentious hearing*
(FOX Dec. 1, 2015)

(36) *House Benghazi report slams administration response to attacks*
(FOX Jun. 28, 2016)

(37) *House Benghazi committee subpoenas ex-Clinton White House aide Blumenthal*
(FOX May 20, 2015)

(38) *White House dodging Benghazi security questions?*
(FOX Oct. 19, 2013)

5.1.2.2 Conceptual Domains

In keeping with the prevalence of verbal action evidenced by personalization, ARGUMENT IS WAR was overwhelmingly the most common conceptual domain in the Benghazi source material. The corpora were brimming with various forms of attacking and military nomenclature used to depict political disagreements and electoral competition. Fire was traded, cover was taken and battlegrounds fought over. Seven common uses of ARGUMENT IS WAR stood out from the source material with frequencies that merited closer inspection.

attack* GOP: 3605 DEM: 1431		fight* GOP: 1716 DEM: 1123	fire GOP: 1095 DEM: 739	battle* GOP: 290 DEM: 222	hit* GOP: 418 DEM: 432	blast* GOP: 234 DEM: 171
<i>attack* on</i> GOP: 37 DEM: 6		<i>a fight</i> GOP: 32 DEM: 29	<i>under fire</i> GOP: 83 DEM: 46	<i>the battle</i> GOP: 58 DEM: 22	<i>hit by</i> GOP: 48 DEM: 77	
<i>attack* against</i> GOP: 9 DEM: 11		<i>fight* over</i> GOP: 36 DEM: 13	<i>fire* back</i> GOP: 30 DEM: 14	<i>battle* over</i> GOP: 32 DEM: 12	<i>hit* back</i> GOP: 16 DEM: 31	slam* GOP: 126 DEM: 114
<i>his attack*</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 0	<i>Republican attack*</i> GOP: 0 DEM: 23	<i>fight* back</i> GOP: 18 DEM: 22	<i>backfire*</i> GOP: 31 DEM: 18	<i>battle* to</i> GOP: 38 DEM: 15	<i>hit* hard</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 4	

Table 6. Most common uses of the metaphorical domain ARGUMENT IS WAR with most common collocates in the source corpora. (Key: the asterisk denotes every relevant form of the word. GOP refers to total frequency in GOP news items, DEM to totals in DEM news items)

Unsurprisingly, *attack** was most frequent when referring to political disagreements. GOP seemed to dominate the use of *attack* overall, with GOP combinations such as *his attack**, referring to Donald Trump, and the DEM news outlets' *Republican attack** creating the most visible contrast on a more specific level. A similar trend is visible with *fight** with one exception. The phrase *fight* back* appears more often in DEM news items, depicting Hillary Clinton's or the Democratic administration's defense against Republican accusations.

Fire provided several forms of ARGUMENT IS WAR, with GOP leading in frequency and *battle* followed the same trend of GOP aggression. *Hit** provides another slight exception. Excluding *hit* hard*, the DEM news items seem to use the metaphorical description more, often when depicting defense or retaliation against various Benghazi related accusations. A common example of this was Clinton, Obama or the Democrats *hitting back*. *Slam** and *blast** seem to enjoy a special role in political and news discourse. The general trend of GOP aggression applies, but both sides use the terms frequently. Headlines (39) – (45) demonstrate some of the manifestations of the metaphorical domain ARGUMENT IS WAR in the Benghazi news items.

- (39) *“Pure Political Hackery”: Security Expert Blasts Republicans’ Latest Attack on Clinton* (MJS Sept. 15, 2016)
- (40) *Trump and Clinton trade fire, insults in hard-hitting speeches* (FOX Jun. 22, 2016)
- (41) *“Clinton Benghazi Flu” claims backfire* (CNN, Jan. 4, 2013)
- (42) *Hillary Clinton hits back at “demeaning” Donald Trump* (CNN Dec. 29, 2015)
- (43) *Benghazi hero slams Clinton’s comment on defending diplomat* (FOX Jul. 20, 2018)
- (44) *Groups in Benghazi named, WH theory torpedoed* (FOX Jan. 10, 2014)
- (45) *Romney on battleground stump jabs Obama on foreign policy* (CNN Sept. 25, 2012)

Headline (45) by FOX contains an example of another metaphorical domain common in politics. SPORTS can be seen as the milder cousin of ARGUMENT IS WAR. It seems to have very specific uses in the Benghazi news items and, as a fair assumption, in political news in general. In addition to the pugilism lexicon of punching and jabbing, SPORTS had other forms that appeared fairly often in the Benghazi related news of this thesis. Five words were frequent enough to highlight in more detail.

run* GOP: 1912 DEM: 1478	race GOP: 683 DEM: 658	win* GOP: 751 DEM: 451	game GOP: 300 DEM: 254	match* GOP: 76 DEM: 57
<i>run for President</i> GOP: 72 DEM: 64	<i>the Presidential race</i> GOP: 113 DEM: 69		<i>blame game</i> GOP: 13 DEM: 16	<i>matchup</i> GOP: 20 DEM: 12
			<i>game changer</i> GOP: 12 DEM: 15	

Table 6. Most common uses of the metaphorical domain SPORTS with most frequent clusters in the source corpora. (Key: the asterisk denotes every relevant form of the word. GOP refers to total frequency in GOP news items, DEM to totals in DEM news items)

The terminology of the domain of SPORTS does not provide much in the way of meaningful contrasts, but it seems to have a very specific purpose: SPORTS terminology is almost exclusively connected to elections and campaigns. *Run**, by far the most frequent term in the Benghazi source material, was formed into the cluster *run for President* in fairly equal amounts by both GOP and DEM sources. *Race* was similarly employed, describing an election in its entirety, instead of an individual campaign run. *Win** was also connected to various nominations and, of course, the 2016 presidential elections. *Game* and *match** provided some exceptions to the rule. The clusters *blame game* and *game changer* appeared frequently in connection with Benghazi accusations and related new events. The cluster *matchup* was especially common in news describing the presidential debates. Headlines (46) – (50) contain some of the variations of SPORTS in Benghazi related news items.

(46) *Gowdy: I'm not running for majority leader*
(CNN Sept. 29, 2015)

(47) *Democratic race gets real in Iowa*
(CNN Oct. 26, 2015)

(48) *Debate Night: Win, lose or draw*
(FOX Nov. 11, 2015)

(49) *Benghazi blame game is useless*
(CNN Jan. 23, 2013)

(50) *Ted Cruz vs. Marco Rubio is on. Why this matchup is important.*
(CSM Dec. 1, 2015)

The metaphorical domain PATH/JOURNEY shares many aspects with SPORTS. Certain manifestations of it are similarly close to political campaigning and frequency-wise its use is quite evenly distributed between the GOP and DEM news items. Depictions from the PATH/JOURNEY

domain are used to describe the political competition between ideological rivals as well as various grander schemes of sociopolitical progress. The overall frequency of PATH/JOURNEY was markedly smaller than ARGUMENT IS WAR or SPORTS, but three words stood out as typical examples.

trail* GOP: 197 DEM:201	path* GOP: 149 DEM: 101		road* GOP: 87 DEM: 68
<i>campaign trail</i> GOP: 67 DEM: 84	<i>path to defeat</i> GOP:22 DEM: 0	<i>path to victory</i> GOP: 0 DEM: 7	<i>down the road</i> GOP: 17 DEM: 18

Table 7. Most common uses of the metaphorical domain PATH/JOURNEY with most frequent clusters in the source corpora. (Key: the asterisk denotes every relevant form of the word. GOP refers to total frequency in GOP news items, DEM to totals in DEM news items)

As noted, PATH/JOURNEY was quite evenly used. *Trail**, *path** and *road** were usually used to depict a process where the outcome – the end of the road, so to speak – is the end of the process, with desired or undesired results. Common ways to describe these processes were idiomatic expressions, such as to *hit the road* or to *hit the campaign trail*. The outcome was commonly at the end of the path, as evidenced by the one clear numerical contrast in the Benghazi source material. GOP uses used the cluster *path to defeat* 22 times to refer to the Clinton campaign and Hillary Clinton’s ill-fated presidential aspirations. In turn, DEM sources put Hillary on the *path to victory* in 7 clusters. *Road** was often used to describe events later on during a process, as evidenced by the common cluster *down the road*. Delays in a process were also often obstacles or bumps on a road leading to the desired outcome. Headlines (51) – (54) demonstrate some of the ways PATH/JOURNEY appeared in the Benghazi news items.

(51) *Bill Clinton to hit the campaign trail in January*
(CNN Dec. 20, 2015)

(52) *Without Hillary Indictment, Trump's Path to White House Gets Even Harder*
(TWS Jul. 5, 2016)

(53) *Will Benghazi be Hillary's "bump on the road" to the White House?*
(FOX Dec. 21, 2014)

(54) *Africa's rocky road to democracy*
(CNN Jul. 29, 2013)

The PATH/JOURNEY source domain often involves movement on the roads, trails and paths it depicts. Descriptions of this movement often use the domain POLITICS IS PHYSICS. In addition to general descriptions of movement, POLITICS IS PHYSICS seems closely tied to poll numbers and various other measurements of political popularity. Key political figures and other entities move or are moved forward and backward or rise and fall. Similar to SPORTS and PATH/JOURNEY, use of POLITICS IS PHYSICS seems to represent a fairly evenly employed convention in the Benghazi source material. Four manifestations of this metaphorical domain appeared frequently enough to invite a closer analysis.

move* GOP: 910 DEM: 605	push* GOP: 709 DEM: 481	forward GOP: 427 DEM: 274	ahead GOP: 416 DEM: 237
<i>forward</i> GOP: 71 DEM: 42	<i>push* on / to / for</i> GOP: 417 DEM: 267	<i>go* forward</i> GOP: 51 DEM: 32	<i>push* ahead</i> GOP: 12 DEM: 7
<i>toward*</i> GOP: 23 DEM: 15	<i>pushback</i> GOP: 18 DEM: 13		<i>move* ahead</i> GOP: 9 DEM: 6

Table 8. Most common uses of the metaphorical domain POLITICS IS PHYSICS with most common collocates in the source corpora. (Key: the asterisk denotes every relevant form of the word. GOP refers to total frequency in GOP news items, DEM to totals in DEM news items)

POLITICS IS PHYSICS mainly appears in connection with political competition and various strategic positions taken. The most common direction is *forward* or *ahead*, often appearing with *move** and *push**. Up and down were also common in terms of popularity related physical movement,

expressed with different forms of rising, surging, falling, dipping, sinking and plummeting or with special terms describing voting results, such as *landslide*. The concept of going up or coming down was also used to explain more complex issues, such as economic developments. *Push** was employed in a special compound, *pushback*, to depict a negative or retaliatory reaction by an ideological opponent. The concept of *stonewalling* can also be seen as an instance of POLITICS IS PHYSICS. The noun-come-verb has a very exclusive and limited range of use in political rhetoric. The physicality associated with stonewalling comes in the form of abruptly stopped movement, usually as a metaphorical representation of questions left unanswered. Headlines (55) – (60) display some of the forms POLITICS IS PHYSICS took within the Benghazi source material.

(55) *Benghazi investigation moving forward or taking steps back?*
(FOX Oct. 25, 2015)

(56) *Bob and weave: Graham maneuvers around conservative pushback*
(CNN Jun. 11, 2014)

(57) *Hillary Clinton approval plummets. Benghazi?*
(May 31, 2013)

(58) *Independents day: Trump needs nonpartisan landslide*
(FOX Jun. 30, 2016)

(59) *How Erie Went Red: The Economy Sank, and Trump Rose*
(NYT Nov. 12, 2016)

(60) *Graham: White House stonewalling on Benghazi means “no information, no confirmation”* (FOX Dec. 21, 2012)

5.1.2.3 Event and Leader

The radial categories *event* and *leader* are central in Benghazi related news items. The central event, and thus the central subcategory of event, is quite obviously the Benghazi attack. In the Benghazi

source material, the key figures acting as representatives of *President*, the central subcategory of *leader*, are Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and Donald Trump. The Benghazi hearings, committees, panels, inquiries and probes did of course feature several other characters, such as Pompeo, Graham, Gowdy, Rice and so on, but their frequency in the source material was nowhere near the numbers of the three aforementioned people.

The radial categories *event* and *leader* show clear contrasts in the way the leaders of an opposing ideology and the Benghazi attack are constructed by DEM and GOP news outlets. The categories were analyzed on with a focus on collocational elements – nouns, verbs and pronouns – that carry certain implications and evaluations. These elements were associated with central subcategories to produce different case prototypes. As pointed out in section 5.1.1.2, the Benghazi attack can hardly be seen as an ideal case prototype of *event*, and neither GOP or DEM sources sought to construct it as such. There was a marked difference between a more neutral typical case prototype and an openly anti-ideal one, however. Below is a table of twelve of the most frequent collocational elements of implication used in connection with Benghazi in the source material.

Benghazi GOP: 14 085 DEM: 6 815	
<i>Clinton*</i> GOP: 564 DEM: 369	<i>scandal*</i> GOP: 163 DEM: 56
<i>controversy</i> GOP: 70 DEM: 48	<i>tragedy*</i> GOP: 74 DEM: 96
<i>truth*</i> GOP: 70 DEM: 34	<i>coverup*</i> GOP: 64 DEM: 10
<i>lie*</i> GOP: 25 DEM: 12	<i>narrative</i> GOP: 36 DEM: 8
<i>conspiracy</i> GOP: 9 DEM: 38	<i>accountability:</i> GOP: 39 DEM: 9
<i>bombshell</i> GOP: 20 DEM: 0	<i>whistleblower</i> GOP: 16 DEM: 2

Table 9. Most common collocates within an L5-R5 horizon from the central subcategory *Benghazi* in the source corpora. (Key: the asterisk denotes every relevant form of the word. GOP refers to total frequency in GOP news items, DEM to totals in DEM news items)

The numbers seem quite revealing. In GOP news items, *Benghazi* appeared an impressive 14 085 times in contrast to DEM news outlets' figure of 6 815. The GOP media clearly had an incentive to keep hammering away at the Benghazi issue, while the DEM counterpart seemed less verbose on the topic. *Clinton** was associated with *Benghazi* more often in GOP news items, usually as the main culprit behind a *scandal**, *controversy**, *coverup** or *lie**, all of which were used more often by GOP news outlets in connection with *Benghazi*. GOP media also discussed a false Benghazi *narrative** more often than the DEM opposition. Similarly, *truth** appeared in close proximity to *Benghazi* frequently in GOP news items. The seeking and revealing of hidden truths was a common theme in news items discussing the various investigations surrounding the Benghazi attacks.

*Accountability** was another word laden with implications that GOP news outlets seemed to dominate. Usually it was used to imply that someone is clearly guilty and responsible for *Benghazi*, most typically the Democratic administration and the leaders thereof. *Tragedy** seems to offer a slight counter-balance to *scandal*1*. The DEM news outlets used the word more often in connection with *Benghazi* than GOP sources. DEM sources often sought to depict *Benghazi* as a tragic typical case prototype of an attack in contrast to the anti-ideal scandal of the GOP media. Finally, the words *bombshell* and *whistleblower* appeared almost exclusively as parts of the GOP arsenal in the Benghazi news items. New turns in the Benghazi investigation were often depicted as monumental revelations, *bombshells*, and the inquiry process involved more than one *whistleblower* responsible for said revelations.

In addition to the most common elements described above, the construction of the central subcategory *Benghazi* had other more limited permutations. One interesting recurring GOP phenomenon was the comparison of *Benghazi* and *Watergate*, which seemed to change the Benghazi attack from an anti-ideal case prototype into a decidedly negative salient exemplar that carries the weight of one of the most recognized political scandals in the history of North American politics. Another curiosity came from a stalwart DEM news outlet. MJS often combined *Benghazi*

with the strongly dismissive compound *nothingburger*. The word seems like a neologism coined for this specific purpose and isn't used by any other source. In MJS however, more than one author refers to the *Benghazi nothingburger*.

The overall frequencies of the central subcategory *Benghazi* or *Benghazi attacks* paint a picture of GOP fervor versus a defensively dismissive and at times apoplectic DEM media. In this context Benghazi does indeed seem like topic weaponized for repeated attacks. Headlines (61 – (66) demonstrate some of the ways in which Benghazi was constructed as an event in the source corpora.

(61) *Hillary Clinton and Benghazi look very different through lens of history*
(CSM Jul. 1, 2016)

(62) *Shocking new evidence in Benghazi scandal*
(FOX Apr. 30, 2014)

(63) *“Incredibly serious”: Cover-up claims in spotlight ahead of Benghazi hearing.*
(FOX Sep. 17, 2014)

(64) *Donald Rumsfeld hopes Benghazi narrative is exposed*
(FOX May 14, 2013)

(65) *Benghazi bombshells: what Americans need to know*
(FOX Sept. 22, 2014)

(66) *Benghazi whistleblower reacts to latest email revelations*
(FOX Dec. 11, 2014)

(67) *A new “Watergate”? Team Obama and the hunt for the truth about Benghazi*
(FOX May 8, 2014)

(68) *Yet Another Benghazi Nothingburger Today*
(MJS May 8, 2013)

The construction of *Clinton*, *Obama* and *Trump* as the representatives of the radial category leader and its central category president show tendencies similar those surrounding the *Benghazi event*. Each key character was depicted differently by the GOP and DEM news outlets, as evidenced by different elements – verbs, adjectives and nouns in this time – appearing in close proximity. Six

elements appeared with the three central characters with a frequency high enough to reveal meaningful contrasts.

Clinton* GOP: 5 513 DEM: 11 595	Obama* GOP: 10 441 DEM: 5 989	Trump* GOP: 3 496 DEM: 5 630
<i>lie*</i> GOP: 128 DEM: 21	<i>take*</i> GOP: 44 DEM: 38	<i>take*</i> GOP: 17 DEM: 24
<i>take*</i> GOP: 46 DEM: 157	<i>try*</i> GOP: 37 DEM: 12	<i>attack*</i> GOP: 19 DEM: 10
<i>try*</i> GOP: 28 DEM: 7	<i>lie*</i> GOP: 18 DEM: 4	<i>claim*</i> GOP: 3 DEM: 28
<i>defend*</i> GOP: 28 DEM: 14	<i>claim*</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 3	<i>slam*</i> GOP: 16 DEM: 1
<i>weak*</i> GOP: 39 DEM: 4	<i>weak*</i> GOP: 37 DEM: 16	<i>good*</i> GOP: 18 DEM: 5
<i>bad*</i> GOP: 27 DEM: 9	<i>strong*</i> GOP: 4 DEM: 41	<i>strong*</i> GOP: 31 DEM: 5

Table 10. Most common collocates within an L5-R5 horizon from the central subcategories *Clinton*, *Obama* and *Trump* in the source corpora. (Key: the asterisk denotes every relevant form of the word. GOP refers to total frequency in GOP news items, DEM to totals in DEM news items)

Somewhat surprisingly, the total frequencies reveal that DEM news outlets spoke of *Clinton** far more often than their GOP counterparts. *Obama**, however, seemed to be in GOP crosshairs more often than in the DEM news items. References to *Trump** seemed to be more evenly dispersed. This is most likely due to the timeline of the source material. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton were strongly present from the beginning of the Benghazi events and Donald Trump started to gain larger coverage only after his position as the Republican presidential nominee was solidified.

*Clinton** was frequently associated with *lie** by GOP media in the Benghazi news items as the Benghazi investigations intensified. The DEM news outlets often depicted *Clinton** as decisive with *take**, in taking action or measures or taking on opponents. The GOP media seemingly responded by associating *Clinton** with *try** and *defend**. The total frequencies of *weak** and *bad** in connection with *Clinton** seem to imply that GOP news outlets had a tendency to depict Hillary Clinton as the anti-ideal case prototype of the central category *President*. The same trends seem to apply to *Obama**. GOP dominates the use of *try**, *lie**, *claim** as well as *weak**, all implying a lack of success and unsuitable, anti-ideal traits for a *leader* and *President*. DEM media associated *strong** with *Obama** more often than GOP opponents, constructing then President Barack Obama as more of an ideal case prototype.

*Trump** was frequently connected to *attack**, *slam**, *good** and *strong** by GOP news outlets, building him as an ideal case prototype of a *leader* and, by extension, *President*. DEM media responded by dominating the use of *claim** in connection with *Trump**, putting many of his actions and comments into question and pushing his prototypical presentation more towards anti-ideal. The GOP depictions of *Trump** can be seen as a manifestation of the NATION-AS-PARENT metaphorical domain discussed in section 5.1.1.1. GOP news outlets seem to equate Donald Trump with the entire nation, as is common in American politics, and ascribe to him the desired values of aggressive decisiveness common to the “strict father” view. Headlines (69) – (74) display some of the prototypical presentations of the radial category *leader* and central subcategory *President* found in the Benghazi source material.

(69) *Hillary Clinton takes on the GOP*
(CNN Jun. 2, 2014)

(70) *Paul: “Very good chance” Clinton lied about knowledge of arms to rebels in Libya, Syria* (FOX Jul. 8, 2015)

(71) *Did Obama lie to the American people on Benghazi?*
(FOX May 7, 2013)

(72) *“Weak, disengaged” Obama again on display in VA scandal?*
(FOX May 22, 2014)

(73) *Trump slams Obama, Clinton for “politically correct” war against ISIS, warns of more attacks* (FOX Aug. 18, 2016)

5.1.3 Synecdoche

As seen in the discussion on personalization metaphors in section 5.1.1, features analyzed in this thesis frequently overlap. Personalized entities such as the United States in phrases like *US snatching suspects* are also instances of the whole-for-part *synecdoche* that, in turn, bears a close resemblance to metonymy. Metonyms, words that denote one thing while referring to something associated with it, are a frequent lexical feature in political discourse. The closely related and equally common *synecdoche* is a part-for-whole or whole-for-part trope that refers to an entity by using only a part of it or a part of an entity by using the whole entity (Lakoff & Johnson 2003, 36). Adrian Beard (2000, 26) notes that metonyms can be an efficient way to hide individual responsibility and the related *synecdoche* is particularly potent, especially in the context of this thesis. Consequently, *synecdoche* can also be used to disperse, redistribute or extend responsibility in order to blame larger entities for the actions taken by their parts.

(74) *Was WH more interested in protecting Obama than 4 Americans?*
(FOX May 1, 2014)

(75) *US launches Libya drone strike as Africa operations appear to ramp up*
(FOX Nov. 17, 2017)

Examples (74) and (75) display typical action of the synecdoche in political news items. In (74), the blame for the actions of certain people is extended to cover the entire political entity that is the White House, abbreviated here as *WH*. FOX equates the whole White House with the representatives who were seen to emphasize a pro-Obama stance that disregarded possible failures of the administration. By widening the scope, FOX manages to attach fault to unconnected parties it nevertheless sees as ideological opponents and parts of Obama's Democratic administration. Headline (75) obscures exact individuals and disperses responsibilities behind the ordering of drone attacks that were largely denounced by the international community. By placing *US* as the main shot-caller and protagonist, FOX hides the individuals actually authorizing the strikes and protects the GOP administration lead by Donald Trump. In addition to entire countries and hierarchically larger institutions such as the White House, political entities such as *campaign* and *administration* are also common form of synecdoche in American politics.

(76) *Clinton campaign plotted to withhold Obama emails*
(FOX Oct. 14, 2016)

(77) *Administration Relying on Shoddy Benghazi Report to Absolve Itself of Blame*
(TWS May 12, 2013)

(78) *What Obama administration has said about Libya attack*
(CNN Oct. 2, 2012)

In headline (76), the negatively depicted actions of certain members of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign are pinned on the entire campaign. FOX manages to accuse the whole campaign staff and, most importantly, Hillary Clinton herself of calculated dishonesty. Similarly, in examples (77) and (78), *administration* is used to collectivize accusations to all the people associated with it and to obscure responsibility. Headline (77) blames the *Obama administration* of using what the GOP-leaning TWS deems an insufficient and partisan report to relieve itself of fault. In (78), the exact individuals giving ostensibly false or misleading statements are hidden under the

umbrella of *Obama administration*. Although this strategy could just as well be used to blame the entire administration, CNN employs the synecdoche here to conceal individuals that, if directly mentioned and accused, could hurt the Democratic administration and Obama more than a collective dose of guilt. The attempt to diffuse responsibility is a form of damage control. Another typical form of synecdoche shares features with the personification metaphor mentioned in section 5.1.1 and employs an expression American politics seems particularly enamored with.

(79) *Did the State Department Throw Hillary Clinton Under the Bus?*
(MJS Sep. 23, 2015)

Headline (79) depicts the actions of certain members of the United States *State Department* as the physical actions of an entity with human, or at least animate, capabilities. Semino (2008, 102) notes that anthropomorphic personification of this type is efficient in creating a strong emotional involvement with a news story. When used repeatedly, it can also create a type of identity for the personified entity. The concept of throwing somebody under the bus is remarkably frequent in American political news, most likely due to a rather blunt efficacy as a description of deception. It casts a negative light on whomever or whatever is placed in the subject position of the sentence.

Examples (74) - (79) above demonstrate that the relationships between synecdoche, metonyms and the personification metaphors discussed in section 5.1.1 is often a close one – they frequently operate in unison. Similar to metaphors, metonyms and synecdoche are often culturally dictated (Lakoff & Johnson 2003, 37). The part-whole reference of synecdoche, as described above – the use of the institution to refer to the parties responsible for an event or actions and the use of the place of an institution to refer to the actual institution – is extremely commonplace in the patterns of synecdoche in western media and politics.

5.1.4 Synecdoche in Benghazi Reporting

The analysis of synecdoche indicated three major trends in the Benghazi source material. Firstly, the whole-for-part representation was overwhelmingly more frequent than part-for-whole. The main instances of part-for-whole descriptions came in the form of the President or leader representing the whole nation, their administration, political campaign or various governmental institutions. The numbers and tendencies of the central part-for-whole representations manifested mainly in the form of Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and Donald Trump, discussed in the analysis of radial categories in section 5.1.2.3. The second finding is that synecdoche operates more in headlines, leads and opening paragraphs, petering out as the text of the news item progresses. Overall, the total frequencies were lower than initially expected. The third discovery was that synecdoche in the Benghazi news items is used far more frequently to place responsibility and blame on an entire entity via one part of it than to hide it. In addition to *US**, *WH** and *committee* already covered in the analysis of personalization metaphors in section 5.1.2.1, four other instances of whole-for-part synecdoche stood out in terms of frequency.

US* GOP: 174 DEM: 63	WH* GOP: 163 DEM: 97	committee GOP: 123 DEM: 54	administration* GOP: 119 DEM: 47	state department* GOP: 94 DEM: 42	congress GOP: 73 DEM: 29	panel* GOP: 41 DEM: 17
<i>say*</i> GOP: 46 DEM: 25	<i>say*</i> GOP: 82 DEM: 39	<i>seek*</i> GOP: 35 DEM: 21	<i>claim*</i> GOP: 34 DEM: 2	<i>say*</i> GOP: 26 DEM: 11	<i>state*</i> GOP: 24 DEM: 16	<i>subpoena*</i> GOP: 13 DEM: 6
<i>capture*</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 8	<i>release*</i> GOP: 18 DEM: 20	<i>interview*</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 9	<i>fail*</i> GOP: 19 DEM: 0	<i>issue*</i> GOP: 18 DEM: 6	<i>say*</i> GOP: 26 DEM: 4	<i>say*</i> GOP: 7 DEM: 3
<i>file*</i> GOP: 23 DEM: 10	<i>call*</i> GOP: 27 DEM: 15	<i>question*</i> GOP: 36 DEM: 13	<i>mislead*</i> GOP: 16 DEM: 0	<i>release*</i> GOP: 23 DEM: 10	<i>want*</i> GOP: 8 DEM: 4	<i>ask*</i> GOP: 6 DEM: 2
<i>issue*</i> GOP: 21 DEM: 7	<i>hold*</i> GOP: 16 DEM: 9	<i>declare*</i> GOP: 28 DEM: 2	<i>say*</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 21	<i>order*</i> GOP: 8 DEM: 5	<i>return*</i> GOP: 6 DEM: 0	<i>approve*</i> GOP: 6 DEM: 3
<i>send*</i> GOP: 26 DEM: 9	<i>dodge*</i> GOP: 9 DEM: 0	<i>subpoena*</i> GOP: 9 DEM: 2	<i>announce*</i> GOP: 9 DEM: 13	<i>refuse*</i> GOP: 12 DEM: 7	<i>investigate*</i> GOP: 5 DEM: 2	<i>interview*</i> GOP: 5 DEM: 2

Table 11. Most common forms of the whole-for-part synecdoche with associated actions in the source corpora. (Key: the asterisk denotes every relevant form of the word and, in cases like *WH** and *US**, both their common abbreviations and longer forms. GOP refers to total frequency in GOP news items, DEM to totals in DEM news items)

Use of the synecdoche in the Benghazi source material revealed surprisingly little in the way of meaningful contrasts between GOP and DEM news items. Official governmental entities, such as the *state department**, *congress* and the Benghazi investigative *panel** were mainly depicted performing the actions of one or more of their key members. Verbal actions were prevalent: the entities were often described as saying and stating as well as undertaking more official functions, such as issuing, approving and subpoenaing.

The one interesting contrast involved the GOP news outlets' use of synecdoche to represent *administration* – namely the Obama administration. The Democratic administration of President Barack Obama was consistently depicted as making claims, failing and misleading and generally stalling investigative procedures. The accusations were mostly Benghazi related and directed at Obama by depicting his entire administrative cabinet as incompetent and unreliable.

Naturally, synecdoche did have more infrequent manifestations as well and some descriptions reached the level of both brutal and humorous. One interesting combination with the metaphorical domain ARGUMENT IS WAR involved the military term AWOL, used to describe the entire congress when a key member was seen as too slow in responding to a new developments in national security. In another instance involving a colorful quote, the Democratic administration is depicted as skewering a key figure due to the inflammatory comments of one representative. Headlines (80) - (82) exemplify some of the whole-for-part forms of synecdoche in the Benghazi source material.

(80) *Uncle of Benghazi victim: Administration failed to keep word*
(FOX Sept. 17, 2014)

(81) *Georgia Rep: Administration dragging its feet on Benghazi*
(FOX May 4, 2013)

(82) *State Department releases new batch of Clinton emails*
(CNN Oct. 7, 2016)

(83) *House panel subpoenas State Department over Benghazi*
(CNN May 29, 2013)

(84) *Why Congress is AWOL on national security policy*
(CSM Feb. 6, 2015)

(85) *Sen. Isakson: Susan Rice was “put on the tip of the spear by the administration”*
(CNN Nov. 28, 2012)

5.1.5 Othering

Binary oppositions can be considered defining hallmarks of political language (Semino 2008, 81). One of the most typical features of political discourse involves binary conceptualizations that construct *us* and *them* groups, which allows for the easy adding of various ideologically colored connotations. This creation of in-groups and out-groups is known as *othering* (Wodak 2009, 583-585). It can, to a reasonable extent, be argued that othering in news reporting has had a significant role in the extreme polarization of politics in America. Psychological studies have shown that news readers and people in general have a tendency to accept and enforce stereotypes and labels in order to save cognitive resources when interpreting complex political issues (Molek-Kozakowska 2010, 84). These types of cognitive labelling functions can be seen in politically loaded words often in polar opposition. Labels such as *democratic*, *Republican*, *liberal*, *conservative*, *left* and *right* impose on their referents an almost tribe-like membership, regardless of any true affiliations or lack thereof.

Categorization by vocabulary is an integral part of representing ideologies (Fowler 1991, 84) and political labels are both given and taken – people voluntarily identify themselves as representatives one group and cast ideological opponents into another. Roger Fowler (1991, 52-53) calls this *dichotomizing*, a strategy of upholding a certain consensus of us versus them. Fowler’s term is essentially at the heart of othering that often places group labels in polarizing or conflicting

positions. Rivaling political ideologies tend to have an existing list of epithets for each other (Bolinger 1980, 120). The same can be said of larger scale ideological divisions, such as east versus west or Christianity versus Islam.

The polarization of US politics and the instability in the Middle East and South-Asia has produced a regularly appearing set of common terms used to disparage and marginalize ideological opponents. Naturally these terms are also a common occurrence in Benghazi reporting.

(86) *Conservatives “won” the Phony IRS Scandal. And Democrats Helped Them.*
(TNR Jul. 29, 2013)

(87) *Liberals to Romney: Only We Can Politicize Hurricane Sandy*
(TWS Oct. 30, 2012)

(88) *This Is How the Right Milks Benghazi for Cash*
(MJS May 23, 2014)

(89) *Stuart Varney: Trump’s on the verge of a big win. Brace yourself for more hysteria from the left...*
(FOX Oct. 24, 2017)

Headline (86) by the DEM supporter TNR clearly separates two opposing groups: the *conservatives* and the *Democrats*. TNR dismisses a conservative political victory and criticizes their own Democratic group for being too passive. Example (87) shows how TWS, a GOP-leaning news outlet, depicts the actions of an ideologically opposing group. The liberals are shown as opportunistic, claiming the right to politicize an issue. Headline (88) by the DEM news outlet MJS uses another common group label to describe opponents. The right, meaning conservatives or Republicans, is seen as devious and greedy. Example (89) returns the favor, as FOX depicts the left as unreasonable and downright hysteric.

Worthy of note here is the fact that the construction of such in-groups and out-groups involves the use of anti-ideal case prototypes of radial categories, as was discussed in section 5.1.1.2. More direct metaphorical expressions and figures of speech are also common. The lexical

and syntactic phenomena analyzed in this thesis are often interrelated and appear in constructions where they seem to complement each other. Headline (88) could be seen as a combination of some of the lexical features covered thus far: *the right* and *Benghazi* are personified and given animate properties and anti-ideal case prototypes are employed in the construction of an ideologically motivated out-group.

Another strategy of in-group building is the calculated use of the pronoun *we*. It is often employed as a signal of implied membership and an invitation for the reader to adopt an offered view or a particular position towards a contested issue. Pronouns like *you* and *we* are very commonplace as tools used to construct a relationship to the reader (Jones 2012, 52).

(90) *What did we learn about Benghazi at marathon hearing?*
(CNN, Oct. 23, 2015)

(91) *When will we see justice for victims of Benghazi attack?*
(FOX Aug. 7, 2013)

(92) *If you knew who was behind “Close-Gitmo” push, you’d be shocked*
(FOX Jan. 10, 2014)

The *we* in headlines (90) and (91) represents two opposing ideologies and is purposefully used to invite the reader to take a side and allow the news item to reinforce possible pre-existing opinions. Example (90) by CNN questions the usefulness of what is depicted as a marathon length Benghazi hearing by a Republican lead committee and implies that this position should be adopted by *we* – all members of the group and all readers of the news item. In headline (91), FOX constructs *we* as a group righteously demanding justice from an incompetent and possibly criminal Democratic administration and invites all reasonable readers to participate. Headline (92) addresses the reader with *you* and presupposes a strong reaction. FOX offers the reader a strong incentive to keep reading by seemingly speaking to him or her directly and simultaneously seems to place the reader in the ideological group they represent.

Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska sees othering as a discursive strategy that she calls *(mis)labeling*. For news consumers, it constitutes a “cognitive shortcut” that lets one disregard the details of several sentences in favor of a single word (2010, 84). It is worthy of noting that this cognitive shortcut is closely related to the political cognition theory and limited processing capability due to competing information that were discussed in section 2.2.2. The two phenomena seem to operate with the same logic of mental resource economy.

Othering, or (mis)labeling, can be strategically utilized to alter the truth of what is being reported in various degrees or to abandon objectivity altogether. The use of labels often leans on emotion to elicit stronger responses (Woods 2006, 59-60). Frequently used and emotionally charged labels for groups inevitably become part of commonly accepted knowledge and experience (Molek-Kozakowska 2010, 87). This is certainly the case with groups like *liberal* and *conservative*, the members of which demonize each other based on negative connotations they have been given with minimal cognitive effort – almost without thinking.

5.1.6 Othering in Benghazi Reporting

As expected, othering was actively present in the Benghazi news items. Both DEM and GOP media had an established arsenal of terminology to both refer to the ideological opponent and to reinforce their own in-group. Some terms were especially strong as signals of identifying with one’s own and disparaging others. The typical in-groups and out-groups were often placed in opposing positions by both DEM and GOP news outlets. Frequency-wise, the Benghazi source material revealed a total of nine terms used to construct in-groups and out-groups.

Democrat* GOP: 4280 DEM: 3318	dem* GOP: 110 DEM: 36	liberal* GOP: 475 DEM: 414	progressive* GOP: 107 DEM: 175	the left* GOP: 181 DEM: 99
<i>defend*</i> GOP: 18 DEM: 0	<i>accuse*</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 2	<i>liberalism</i> GOP: 34 DEM: 26	<i>agenda</i> GOP: 15 DEM: 7	<i>lean*</i> GOP: 15 DEM: 0
<i>complain*</i> GOP: 23 DEM: 2	<i>foolish*</i> GOP: 7 DEM: 0	<i>lean*</i> GOP: 17 DEM: 0	<i>value*</i> GOP: 8 DEM: 0	<i>fear*</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 2
<i>win*</i> GOP: 0 DEM: 12		<i>agenda</i> GOP: 16 DEM: 0	<i>progressive democrat*</i> GOP: 2 DEM: 8	
Republican* GOP: 5989 DEM: 5164	conservative* GOP: 1162 DEM: 1461	GOP GOP: 1467 DEM: 1542	the right* GOP: 76 DEM: 480	
<i>attack*</i> GOP: 4 DEM: 23	<i>target*</i> GOP: 95 DEM: 0	<i>strong*</i> GOP: 7 DEM: 0	<i>lean*</i> GOP: 14 DEM: 0	
<i>strong*</i> GOP: 19 DEM: 2	<i>conscience</i> GOP: 1 DEM: 9	<i>waste*</i> GOP: 0 DEM: 9	<i>conspiracy</i> GOP: 0 DEM: 9	
<i>narrative*</i> GOP: 0 DEM: 7	<i>activist*</i> GOP: 12 DEM: 0	<i>bully*</i> GOP: 7 DEM: 0	<i>narrative*</i> GOP: 0 DEM: 11	

Table 12. Most common terms of othering and collocated contrastive words in the source corpora. (Key: the asterisk denotes every relevant form of the word and, in cases like *the left** and *the right**, the forma *left-wing* and *right-wing*. GOP refers to total frequency in GOP news items, DEM to totals in DEM news items)

The total frequencies imply that *Democrat** and *Republican** are the most neutral terms of referring to both one's own group and the opponent. The most telling contrasts were the GOP media's use of *defend** and *complain** in connection with *Democrat**, creating the image of a defensive and indecisive political party. In the same vein, DEM media frequently referred to *Republican** in connection with *attack** and *narrative**. The words construct the Republicans as a needlessly aggressive party prone to creating false narratives. The use of *dem** presents another contrast. The term was rare, but had a specifically negative purpose when employed by the GOP media. The abbreviation was associated with *foolish**, creating an out-group characterized by what almost amounts to buffoonery.

*Conservative**, *liberal** and *progressive** had the most strength and often acted as tools of both in-group construction and out-group bashing. GOP news outlets frequently spoke of the unfair targeting of conservatives by enemies – namely the liberals or the left. GOP news items attached a high prestige value to *conservative**, often referring to conservative activists striving to uphold proper views against a threatening tide of cultural corruption.

Similarly, GOP media frequently associated *liberal** with *lean** and *agenda**, referring to various liberal-leaning institutions and individuals as well as a liberal agenda in an unquestionably negative manner. *Agenda** was also attached to *progressive**, another term of disparagement for GOP. Progressive values were also depicted as undesirable by GOP media. DEM news outlets responded by referring to a *conservative conscience* that was often far from clean as well as using the term *progressive democrat**, a fairly new in-group term seen as extremely negative by most representatives of the GOP side. The abbreviation GOP was often denigrated in DEM news items. Common associations constructed the opposing group as a party that bullied its opponents and wasted both time and tax dollars on futile scandalmongering.

*The left** and *the right** showed some of the clearest differences in total usage. Both were strong signals of out-groups and typically associated with negative aspects. The DEM media, especially, hammered the opposing group often speaking of right-wing narratives, conspiracies and conspiracy theories in connection with the Benghazi investigations. *Liberal** and *conservative** were also often used to designate the group membership of media entities. The terms *liberal media* and *conservative media* were solid parts of their respective ideological groups and used as derogatory terms for the opponent.

Otherring in the Benghazi news items showed that both political groups have a strong we-mentality and often evaluate individuals by focusing solely on group membership. The DEM media seemed dismissive of the constant GOP-led Benghazi accusations and belittled the GOP for engaging in a fruitless endeavor while the GOP media kept seeking new angles to fault Clinton and

the Democratic administration. Headlines (93) – (99) display othering in the Benghazi source material.

(93) *Dems defend admin’s Libya response, accuse Romney of exploiting issue*
(FOX Jan. 27, 2015)

(94) *McCaskill: Facts don’t fit Republican narrative*
(CNN Oct. 22, 2015)

(95) *Two cheers for Lindsey Graham – not conservative, but an indispensable Republican* (FOX Dec. 19, 2013)

(96) *Bernie is the Pragmatic Pick for True Liberals*
(TNR Feb. 24, 2016)

(97) *The Democratic party is leaning far to the left and racing for the cliff*
(FOX Oct. 15, 2015)

(98) *The Right’s (Possible) Coming Freak-Out*
(TNR Nov. 4, 2012)

(99) *Susan Rice caught “unmasking” Trump aides as Democrats, liberal media do backflips to divert attention* (FOX Apr. 4, 2017)

5.1.7 Modality

Modal expressions operate via modal verbs, adjectives and adverbs that contain judgments on the truth, likelihood and desirability of the actions they are used to describe and can also be used to “grant permission” (Fowler 1991, 64). *Modality* often reveals authorial attitudes coded in between the hard facts and other textual content of news articles and can be divided into two groups, based on the orientation of authority expressed in a text (Fairclough 1991, 126-127). *Relational modality* involves the authority of the author in relation to readers. It commonly takes the form of direct *you*-addressing and is a typical part of public discourse in signposts and warnings. The FOX headline (92) discussed in section 5.1.5 offers an example of *you*-addressing in Benghazi related news items.

Expressive modality deals with the author's relation to reality, proposed truth or probability – in essence the author's evaluation, and thus presentation, of a reported event or phenomenon. In the realm of expressive modality, the use of modal verbs, adjectives or adverbs can be further divided into four categories of purpose (Fowler 1991, 85-87).

- 1) *Truth*: the author commits to the subjective truth of a claim. Truth operates on a scale between unwaveringly confident and less certain.
- 2) *Obligation*: the author feels a participant or participants have an obligation to perform described actions.
- 3) *Permission*: the author gives participant(s) the permission to undertake action(s) or denies it.
- 4) *Desirability*: the author expresses approval or disapproval towards a described state, action or entity.

The manipulation of modality can serve as an authorial method of identification or distancing (Kress 1983, 135). A news story can utilize modal auxiliaries, adjectives or verbs to express agreement and support or conversely create a seemingly subjective distance to what is being reported. Most common is the manipulation of the four categories of expressive modality to express a direct opinion towards what is being reported.

- (100) *Opinion: Why Mexican American Men Will Not Vote For Hillary Clinton*
(FOX May 6, 2014)
- (101) *Benghazi Is Back. And This Time Republicans Could Take the Blame.*
(MJS Oct. 2, 2017)
- (102) *Hillary must fight the GOP's "Lock Her Up" Fantasy*
(TNR Jul. 25, 2016)
- (103) *The questions legitimate journalists should be asking Hillary Clinton*
(FOX Dec. 14, 2015)

In headline (100), FOX expresses the modal subcategory *truth* and depicts an unwillingness to vote for Hilary Clinton with a decisive *will not*. The non-voting of Mexican American men is constructed as an ironclad fact. Headline (101) shows a DEM supporting MJS using two words of varying strength to signal authorial attitudes towards the truth of what is being reported. Benghazi *is* back as an unwavering fact and the blame *could* be put on the Republicans, as a less certain fact. Example (102) contains a word that signals strong *obligation*. A DEM sympathetic TNR demands that Hillary Clinton *must* fight against an accusatory GOP campaign. In (103), FOX expresses a slightly lesser degree of obligation by suggesting questions journalists deemed legitimate *should* ask Hillary Clinton. *Obligation* and *truth* are eminently common modal subcategories in political and news discourses. The less common subcategory *desirability* and *permission*, the most uncommon form of modality in the source material of this thesis, also make semi-regular appearances in Benghazi related news items.

(104) *Conservatives Are Right About Reckless Political Rhetoric*
(TNR Dec. 22, 2014)

(105) *Here are some good sentences from Roger Stone's insane letter to the press about Russia.* (TNR Mar. 23, 2014)

(106) *We cannot allow Hillary Clinton, "midwife to chaos" and a public liar, to be our next president* (FOX Oct. 29, 2015)

Headline (104) demonstrates an expression of *desirability*. In a rare show of agreement, the DEM-leaning TNR extends an olive branch towards the ideological conservative opposition by admitting they are *right*. In example (105), TNR calls Roger Stone's letter insane, expressing an unmistakably negative degree of desirability towards the actions and, by extension, the person of an outspoken supporter of Donald Trump. Headline (106) by FOX is recycled from the discussion of radial categories in section 5.1.1.2 due to rarity of permission in the Benghazi source material. The headline employs a strong form of denial with *cannot* and the authorial position here does not give

permission for Hillary Clinton to be president.

Modal evaluations that show the various degrees of truth, obligation and desirability expressed by ideologically motivated authorship are common enough to be analyzed in order to uncover various forms of bias in Benghazi news items. Expressions of permission, however, are extremely rare in the source material of this thesis. The most common words associated with granting permission, such as *can* and *may*, appear almost solely in a sentence-initial position and form questions that cannot be seen to represent modality. Permission will therefore be predominantly disregarded in the analysis, as focusing on it is likely to yield little to no meaningful results.

5.1.8 Modality in Benghazi Reporting

Modality showed some interesting contrasts in the Benghazi news items both in terms of how the Benghazi attack was depicted and how the two ideological opponents addressed their respective readerships. The usual suspects of the Benghazi investigations, *Clinton*, *Obama* and *Trump*, featured in expressions of truth and obligation, either by name or by pronoun. A large portion of truth and obligation verbs such as *will*, *can*, *could* and *should* had a natural tendency to appear in sentence-initial positions to form questions and were thus disregarded. Nevertheless, both DEM and GOP news outlets used them frequently to reflect varying degrees of truth and obligation.

In addition to truth and obligation, desirability was often expressed in close proximity to *Benghazi*. While these expressions were rarely as direct as *good*, *bad*, *right* or *wrong*, some openly contrastive differences were present. Three collocates for each truth and obligation verb stood out frequently. Desirability was expressed most frequently with eight adjectives.

TRUTH					OBLIGATION		DESIRABILITY	
will	can	may	could	might	must	should	<i>inadequate</i> GOP: 54 DEM: 28	<i>right</i> GOP: 24 DEM: 54
<i>Clinton</i> GOP: 126 DEM: 107	<i>government</i> GOP: 23 DEM: 15	<i>Benghazi</i> GOP: 65 DEM: 4	<i>Clinton</i> GOP: 30 DEM: 21	<i>Clinton</i> GOP: 13 DEM: 14	<i>we</i> GOP: 99 DEM: 46	<i>we</i> GOP: 169 DEM: 133	<i>wrong</i> GOP: 20 DEM: 8	<i>misleading</i> GOP: 19 DEM: 2
<i>Obama</i> GOP: 96 DEM: 8	<i>President</i> GOP: 22 DEM: 4	<i>Clinton</i> GOP: 42 DEM: 28	<i>Obama</i> GOP: 22 DEM: 14	<i>Trump</i> GOP: 2 DEM: 13	<i>he</i> GOP: 20 DEM: 16	<i>he</i> GOP: 94 DEM: 73	<i>stupid</i> GOP: 0 DEM: 7	<i>dishonest</i> GOP: 6 DEM: 0
<i>Benghazi</i> GOP: 33 DEM: 15	<i>Obama</i> GOP: 22 DEM: 19	<i>Obama</i> GOP: 25 DEM: 10	<i>Benghazi</i> GOP: 15 DEM: 8	<i>Obama</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 8	<i>she</i> GOP: 3 DEM: 14	<i>they</i> GOP: 7 DEM: 86	<i>deceitful</i> GOP: 5 DEM: 0	<i>hysterical</i> GOP: 0 DEM: 4

Table 13. Modality in the source corpora. The most common L3 - L1 collocates of modal verbs and most common evaluative words of desirability within a horizon of L5 - R5 from *Benghazi*. (Key: the asterisk denotes every relevant form of the word. GOP refers to total frequency in GOP news items, DEM to totals in DEM news items)

GOP news items tended to employ the decisive *will* more often than DEM news, especially in the case of *Benghazi*. Use of *Can* was fairly evenly distributed, although GOP sources tended to refer to the *President*, commonly Trump, more often as definitely being able to do something. Use of *may* showed another contrast. GOP news items were far more interested in speculating what Benghazi may do than their DEM counterparts. Use of *Could* displayed the same tendency, albeit to a lesser degree. Conversely, DEM sources seemed much more willing to speculate on what *Trump might* do.

The heavily obligatory construction *we must* showed that both DEM and GOP news outlets sought to include their partisan readership to share the view offered by the news item. GOP media seemed much more demanding in this respect – both of its own party and its opponents. *Benghazi* related desirability was expressed with adjectives that left little to be guessed. Both GOP and DEM sources associated the Benghazi issue with inadequacy. GOP dominated this category as well, most often referring to the investigations and foreign policy issues in general. GOP news

outlets were also in charge of using words like *wrong*, *misleading*, *dishonest* and *deceitful* in connection with *Benghazi*. The DEM response seemed somewhat meek with a slight numerical superiority in the use of *right* and a few instances of *stupid* and *hysterical* peppered in. Headlines (107) – (113) demonstrate modality in the Benghazi source material.

(107) *Inhofe: Benghazi will be biggest cover-up in history*
(FOX Nov 28, 2012)

(108) *Fox News poll: Obama could Have Done More In Benghazi*
(FOX May 22, 2013)

(109) *Hillary Clinton might stay on in a second Obama term. What about 2016?*
(CSM Oct. 25, 2012)

(110) *The battle goes beyond Planned Parenthood. We must end abortion in America*
(FOX Jul. 23, 2015)

(111) *Colin Powell calls Benghazi a “stupid witch hunt” in DCleaks emails*
(CNN Sept. 14, 2016)

(112) *Fox News poll: Obama, Clinton seen as deceitful on Benghazi*
(FOX May 14, 2014)

5.2 Syntactic Features

As with the lexical features in section 5.1, the analysis of the syntactic features – nominalization and transitivity – will begin with the more qualitative and contrastive analysis of the single source headline corpora and the GOP and DEM headline corpora and then move to a more general quantitative analysis of the master headline corpus. The key difference is an emphasized focus on headlines and less attention paid to the corpora containing entire news items. The analyzed syntactic features operate almost solely by condensing information – by leaving things unexpressed – and several semantic elements are compressed into one word to various effects. As already covered in

section 5, headlines are the main domain of this *modus operandi* and it is present there to such a degree that a considerable amount of the analytical weight that was placed on entire news items in section 5.1 feels misplaced here. With the possible exception of some facets of nominalization, the syntactic features are primarily centered on headlines and do not appear beyond them to a meaningful extent. Following section 5.1, the analysis will likewise begin with the introduction and theoretical overview of each studied phenomenon.

6.2.1 Nominalization

In certain contexts, words such as *attack* function as *process nouns* (van Leeuwen 2009, 282) or *derived nominals* (Fowler 1991, 79). Nouns of this type are the product of a process called *nominalization*, which can turn verbs and adjectives into nouns. Nominalization can be used to turn actions into participants and to obscure details. Roger Fowler (1991, 80) calls this kind of obscuring by nominalization *mystification*, prolonged instances of which can lead to a process of *reification* related to the one operating in connection with metaphors discussed in section 5.1.1 – the perception of processes and actions as things. Mystification can exclude relevant information, such as time and participants, as well as modality.

Fowler (1991, 77) emphasizes nominalization as one of the most significant types of syntactic transformation that can be used to form the semantic content of a sentence. Nominalized words are at their most influential in news headlines – the first and sometimes only part of the text a reader is exposed to.

(113) *Should the Benghazi attack have been a topic at the debate?*
(FOX Sep. 27, 2016)

(114) *Both disliked, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump Accentuate the Negatives*
(NYT May 10, 2016)

Headline (113) by FOX displays a process noun very common in political news. The verb *to debate* is presented as a noun, excluding bureaucratic intricacies and other details that would be required to explain a political debate completely. The headline also contains what is, perhaps, the most common of all process nouns appearing in the context of Benghazi related news items: *attack*. *Attack* has been reified to the point that effacing the details surrounding a multi-faceted event, such as the Benghazi embassy incident, is more or less unquestioned. This makes the nominalization of the verb *to attack* a supremely efficient method of bypassing possibly incriminating details, starting with who actually attacked and who allowed it to happen. Headline (114) offers an example of a nominalized adjective. NYT points out that both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump suffer from a lack of popularity and seem to bring out only negative qualities, *the negatives*. In addition to its somewhat frequently appearing forms, nominalization also can operate in more biased constructions.

(115) *Fox News Gives Paris Massacre the Benghazi Treatment*
(MJS Jan. 7, 2015)

(116) *Benghazi reactions from the left, right*
(CNN Jan. 1, 2014)

In example (115), MJS uses two process nouns. As is common in news headlines, some articles are excluded and the nominalized form of the verb *to massacre* might first elude the eye in *Paris Massacre*. The second process noun compresses the verb *to treat* into *the treatment* with the addition of *Benghazi* to imply that the ideologically opposing *Fox News* is using a dishonest template to create a narrative that combines the Paris terror attacks with Benghazi. Headline (116) is another salient example of the interrelated nature of the lexical and syntactic features studied in this

thesis. Othering, as discussed in section 5.1.5, works together with nominalization in the form of frequently used group labels. Here, nominalization from the adjective forms *left* and *right* can be seen as an initial part of the evolution that created the commonly used appellations for the ideological adversaries *the left* and *the right*. Some instances of nominalization can show how one large topic can be presented in two starkly contrasting ways.

(117) *The Benghazi Witch-Hunt Against Hillary Is Backfiring Just Like Bill Clinton's Impeachment* (TNR Oct. 19, 2015)

(118) *How the news covered the Benghazi cover up*
(FOX Jan. 16, 2014)

Headlines (117) and (118) show how process nouns can be used to reflect an ideological stance with more uncommon compounds. In (117), the DEM-leaning TNR nominalizes the verb *to hunt* in the compound *witch-hunt*. TNR depicts the official investigation of the Benghazi events as a politically motivated frivolity undertaken solely in order to besmirch Hillary Clinton. In example (118), FOX offers a contrasting view in a fashion quite neatly suited for the purposes of demonstrating the function of process nouns. The headline toys with alliteration by using both the verb *to cover* and the rather more limited nominalized form *the cover up*. The implication is clear: FOX depicts the actions of the Democratic administration of the time as dishonest and accuses it of hiding facts regarding the Benghazi events.

Nominalization is more or less ubiquitous in English. This form of syntactic transformation is particularly prevalent in formal contexts, such as politics and political news (Fowler 1991, 79). As seen in examples (113) - (118) above, compressing an event, action or process into one noun provides an opportunity to exclude details and to express an ideologically slanted viewpoint. Headlines are commonly restricted by space constraints and the resulting need for word economy. Process nouns enable the author to delete the unnecessary minutiae of what is

being reported. In addition to saving space, process nouns can have an interesting psychological function. Nominalization can help transform certain complex political processes into more understandable and easily deciphered terms. As Roger Fowler (1991, 47) puts it, “institutional concepts have to be translated into personal thoughts”.

(119) *A Hearing, and a House, as Divided as the Country Watching It*
(NYT Oct. 22, 2015)

(120) *GOP congressman who led the Benghazi probe will leave the house*
(FOX Feb. 1, 2018)

Headline (119) by NYT employs the process noun *a hearing*, nominalized from the verb *to hear*. *Hearing* is very common in Benghazi related news items. In its nominalized form, it can be used to compress all the information related to a complex institutional process that might otherwise prove too burdensome to attract continued reading. A complete explanation would also simply be too large to fit into a headline. Headline (120) by FOX uses a similar tactic with a more specialized process noun. *Probe*, nominalized from *to probe* is essentially an invasive synonym for *investigation* and appears to be used in a more restricted fashion than *hearing*, despite a certain semantic kinship. *Hearing* and *probe* feel intuitively natural when compared to the more jargonistic lexicon often employed in similar circumstances. They package the intimidatingly complicated processes they describe in a form a lay reader can approach more easily.

Kress (1983, 129) provides an interesting observation of the possible effects of nominalization: condensing an event or action into a single word can make it, in a sense, timeless. The verbs of entire sentences anchor their structures to a certain time and to a set of specific circumstances. Nominalized actions lack this necessity and can be used to move events from the realm of the specific to more abstract interpretations. In this sense, regularly repeated process nouns such as *attack*, *hearing*, *left* and *right* start losing the ties time and specific details usually afford

them. Cognitively, they can occupy a temptingly effort free mental space. The reader no longer has to account for particulars, such as who attacked whom, who actually forms a group or political party referred to with a nominalized label like *the left* or *the right* or who asked what and why in a hearing. The process nouns become abstract and the association of negative or positive connotations becomes easier and more efficient. In this form, packed information can be offered to an opinionated readership in a palate pleasing manner that favors fast paced consuming.

In summation, process nouns or derived nominals can be used to save space, to simplify the complex and to disseminate strategically crafted viewpoints by implying “a shared subjective reality” (Fowler 1991, 57). The essential power of nominalization lies in undisclosed causality (Fairclough 1991, 51) – the obfuscation of facts potentially crucial to the described process, either for the sake of brevity or in order to emphasize a specific opinion.

5.2.2 Nominalization in Benghazi Reporting

The nominalization in the Benghazi news items of the DEM and GOP headline corpora showed that the linguistic feature can be omnipresent to a degree that is often hard to discern. Among the multitude of nominalized words in the analyzed headlines, *attack** stood out as a process noun that is reified to the point of near-invisibility as a word that can, and often does, actually contain several actions and participants. The use of this syntactic feature did not display overly clear contrasts in consistent attempts to mystify – to hide or to obscure. The nouns used were largely conventional terms of political processes shared by both DEM and GOP sources. Four process nouns appeared frequently enough to be studied in more detail. Two special cases are also added due to the intriguing contrasts their numbers seem to imply.

the/an attack* GOP: 483 DEM: 157	the/a debate* GOP: 98 DEM: 72	the/a hearing* GOP: 146 DEM: 50	the/a probe* GOP: 126 DEM: 26
the/a cover-up* GOP: 41 DEM: 12		the/a witch-hunt* GOP: 7 DEM: 16	

Table 14. The four most frequent instances of nominalization and two highly contrastive examples in the DEM and GOP headline corpora. (Key: the asterisk denotes every relevant form of the word. GOP refers to total frequency in GOP news items, DEM to totals in DEM news items)

Nominalization in the Benghazi news items seemed to repeat the two macro-level motifs already seen in the analysis of the lexical features. First, GOP news outlets seem more aggressive and verbose on the Benghazi topic and second, DEM sources seemingly respond to GOP attacks with a general dismissiveness and avoidance.

Process nouns directly relating to the Benghazi events, such as *attack** and *hearing**, were used far more often by GOP media. Use of *Debate** was more even, as both sides had a fair amount of election coverage referencing Benghazi. *Probe** presents an interesting case. Semantically *probe** can be construed as a more invasive version of *hearing** and GOP sources seemed to favor this option far more than the DEM side.

The frequencies of *cover-up** and *witch-hunt** underline the contrast between the DEM and GOP news outlets in their approaches to Benghazi. GOP sources favor *cover-up**, implying that the Democratic administration purposefully hid relevant facts concerning the embassy attack. DEM sources seemingly respond with *witch-hunt**, again depicting the whole Benghazi investigation as a calculated political hit job. The Benghazi material also contained a few rarer process nouns such as *search* and the compounds *ceasefire* and *downfall*. Headlines (121) – (127) demonstrate some of the process nouns in the Benghazi source material.

(121) *Was there an abuse of power after the attack in Benghazi?*
(FOX Apr. 1, 2014)

- (122) *Jim Jordan on Benghazi hearing and the search for truth*
(FOX Oct. 20, 2015)
- (123) *GOP congressman who led the Benghazi probe will leave House*
(FOX Feb. 1, 2018)
- (124) *Fiorina: Clinton engaging in a Benghazi cover-up*
(FOX Jul. 13, 2015)
- (125) *Benghazi: Search for truth or witch hunt?*
(CNN May 11, 2013)
- (126) *Libya rivals agree to a ceasefire and elections after Paris talks*
(CNN Jul. 25, 2017)
- (127) *Lawmakers on the downfall of Petraeus*
(CNN Nov. 25, 2012)

5.2.3 Transitivity

The syntax of a linguistic message can be manipulated in order to portray events, people and circumstances in various ways. *Transitivity* involves an analytical look into the processes that construct relationships between the participants of a sentence (Jones 2012, 12-13). It should be pointed out that transitivity in this sense has no relation to the grammatical division of transitive / intransitive – the feature of verbs that dictates whether an object is taken. Ideologies are commonly promoted by manipulating participants and processes (ibid., 49) and both Michael Halliday and Roger Fowler (1991, 70) consider transitivity “an essential tool in the analysis of representation”. John Richardson deems it “the very heart of representation” (2006, 54). In essence, blame and credit for actions can be distributed or obscured by placing weight on different parts of a sentence (Beard 2000, 30). Transitivity analysis employs an impressive number of terms and categories for participants and processes. The following is a list of the core terminological constituents of analysis used by Halliday and Fowler (Fowler 1991, 73-76).

Types of participants:

Agent: controls action

Beneficiary: receives a positive outcome from an action / process

Experiencer: sentient experiencer of a mental action / process

Force: inanimate, non-sentient cause of an action / process

Patient: sentient, affected by action / process

Object: non-sentient entity affected by material action / process

Result: comes into being due to an action / process

Instrument: used for an action / process

Circumstances: expressions indicating the time and place of the described event

Types of action / process:

Action: deliberate physical action

Process: involuntary physical action

Material action / process: physical, external results

Mental action / process: verbs such as feel, think, dream, etc.

Verbal action / process: verbal action such as cry, say, etc.

State: a verb that describes no real change in a situation

Elements such as participants or processes can, as constituents of a clause, be foregrounded by placing them in sentence-initial positions – often followed by a verb in the *passive voice*. Negative depictions of events can employ this foregrounding by emphasizing blame on this sentence initial slot and a passive voice can de-emphasize this blame (Bax 2011, 143). On a macro level, it is fairly reasonable to assume that the semantic content in active and passive sentences is, to a greater or lesser extent, identical (Fowler 1991, 78). The passive voice can, however, be utilized to obscure

responsibility and foreground certain aspects at the expense of others. It is worth pointing out that although the passive voice has impressive potential as a manipulative apparatus, its use is quite often motivated by routine practical concerns. It can be used in a less ideologically motivated manner when the specific circumstances and participants of an event or action are still unknown. The passive voice is also commonly used if details must be excluded for the sake of the word economy that so often dictates construction in news headlines.

(128) *Jordan's ambassador to Libya is kidnapped in Tripoli*
(CNN Apr. 15, 2014)

(129) *Benghazi mastermind convicted of terror, acquitted of murder*
(FOX Nov 28, 2017)

Headline (128) by CNN displays a typical use of the passive voice when the specifics of what is being reported are still unknown. The body of the news item describes the kidnappers as “masked gunmen” and emphasizes that most details concerning the physical action of kidnapping are still awaiting confirmation. The headline, therefore, concentrates only on what is known as a certainty: the *patient*, the *ambassador* who was taken, and the *circumstances*, or *Tripoli*, where the action took place. Headline (129) by FOX shows another typical use of the passive voice. Details of the judicial processes of convicting and acquitting can be left unexpressed without too much damage to the core semantic content of the construction. Readers of this headline can also be expected to know the unexpressed *agent* of the described action, which could be formulated collectively as the United States or US. In addition to more mundane applications, the active and passive voices can be utilized to various ideologically motivated ends. The effects can vary in both detectability and strength.

(130) *The Benghazi Mastermind Was Captured. Let the Conspiracy Theories Begin!*
(TNR Jun. 17, 2014)

(131) *Trump vows justice as US captures key Benghazi militant*
(FOX Oct. 30, 2017)

Examples (130) and (131) employ the passive and active voices in a more ideologically motivated manner. In (130), TNR excludes the agent of the action of capturing, which can hardly be due to space constraints, as an alternative construction with US as the agent would have required an equal or lesser amount of letters. The motivation here seems to be the effacing of the semantically heavy agent role in order to drive attention away from the obligatory establishing sentence *The Benghazi Mastermind Was Captured*. TNR uses the passive voice to place emphasis on the second part of the headline, *Let the Conspiracy Theories Begin!* The second sentence depicts ludicrous Benghazi accusations spearheaded by the GOP that are expected to materialize swiftly as soon as the key suspect is interrogated. The effect is subtle, but carries an undeniable element of authorial calculation. Headline (131) by FOX uses the active voice to anchor the sentence with two clearly expressed agents, *Trump* and *US*. The motivation is to assign credit and highlight the successes of the current GOP administration, which is often personalized in the figure of Donald Trump.

Syntactical choices can ascribe various faculties to the participants and depict their roles in different ways. The participant can be positioned as the subject or agent of the sentence if the described event or action is positive and the aim is to depict the agent in a meaningful and positive way in relation to said action, as seen in headline (131). If the event or action is negative, the subject or agent position can be used to give a positively viewed participant an underlined victim role or place the weight of blame and responsibility on a negatively depicted participant. This latter aspect is an unfortunate commonality in news reporting concerning minorities (Richardson 2006, 20), which can be seen in news items related to Benghazi as well. The participant can also be hidden in cases of negative events and actions by using the passive voice. Agency and causal relations are constructed within grammatical structures via the manipulation of the actions and events these structures contain and seek to describe (van Leeuwen 2009, 280).

Examining grammatical structures from the viewpoint of transitivity can therefore reveal concealed ideological shades, further exemplified by the following headlines.

(132) *Islamic Supremacist Mob in Lovable “Rebel” Benghazi Kills American Official at U.S. Consulate* (TWS Sep. 12, 2012)

(133) *US Ambassador to Libya Killed in Benghazi; Romney Says Obama “Sympathizes” With Attackers* (MJS Sep. 12, 2012)

In example (132), the GOP supporting TWS offers its view of the Benghazi events. Throughout the election, and after it, the agenda on the Republican side was to chip away at the credibility of the foreign policy and security measures of the Democrat administration by attempting to place the blame for cataclysmic foreign events on poorly controlled extremist groups. The events in Benghazi became their main weapon to this end. The agent of the action of killing is labeled as an *Islamic Supremacist Mob* and the nationality of the *patient*, the *American Official*, is made abundantly clear. Even the *circumstances*, the sarcastic *Lovable “Rebel” Benghazi* and *U.S. Consulate* seem to be represented in a state of antithetic parallelism – opposing each other. Headline (132) is in the active voice with the agent in sentence-initial position, a form of “syntactic transformation” (Fowler 1991, 77-78) that effectively foregrounds the agent and places the blame squarely on its shoulders.

Headline (133) by the DEM-leaning MJS defends the policies of the ruling administration by presenting the same events in the passive voice with the patient, the *US Ambassador to Libya*, in sentence-initial position without mention of a possible agent. This construction employs a method Nicola Woods (2006, 73) calls *passive agent deletion* or the *agentless passive*; the victim and the tragedy of the event itself are foregrounded and possible guilty parties are left opaque. Bolinger (1980, 86) describes the agentless passive as one of the salient features of “irresponsible journalism”. The second sentence in headline (133) also depicts the agent, *Romney*, performing the *verbal action*, *says*. Not surprisingly, the constant statements, quotes,

arguments and disagreements inherent to the nature of political and news discourses make verbal actions the most common type in reported events (Fowler 1991, 74). The Benghazi source material contains examples of some of the other action / process types as well.

(134) *Official: US warplanes hit multiple IS targets in Libya*
(FOX Feb. 19, 2016)

(135) *Obama Defies Critics With State Dept. Choice*
(NYT May 23, 2013)

(136) *Libya: Gunmen Kill Intelligence Official*
(NYT May 8, 2014)

Headline (134) by FOX contains another pragmatic curiosity often seen in news headlines. The colon is often used as a replacement for the verb *to say*, and is a very commonplace signal of verbal actions. The verbal quotient of this headline therefore stems from the interpretation of *Official:* as *Official says*. The headline combines action and verbal action as the agent, *US warplanes*, performs the deliberate action of metaphorically hitting multiple *IS targets*, the non-sentient *object*. The participant role of circumstances is taken by *in Libya*. Headline (135) by NYT expresses verbal action with the verb *to defy*. Although one can defy something physically and even mentally, the context of *defy* here is primarily verbal and manifested through comments made, as the body of the text reveals. The defying by the agent, *Obama*, is done using his *choice* of State Department official, the *instrument* of the construction. Example (136) by NYT also uses the colon, but not as a signal of verbal action. The colon is employed here as a concise way to add circumstances. The deliberate physical action of killing took place in Libya, expressed with *Libya:*, and the patient directly affected is the *intelligence official*. Common verbs signaling mental action can be used to disparage an ideological opponent – especially their cognitive faculties.

(137) *Obama thinks we won the War on Terror and it's time to move on*
(FOX Jul. 15, 2015)

(138) *13 Conservatives Who Think Benghazi is Obama's Watergate*
(MJS May 6, 2014)

In headline (137) by FOX, the mental action of thinking is undertaken by the Democratic president *Obama*, both the controlling agent and the sentient *experiencer*. The verb *to think* often carries the implication that the agent of the mental action is mistaken and, in one way or another, intellectually incompetent. The agent position in these cases is usually occupied by an important representative of the opposing political ideology. Headline (138) by the DEM supporter MJS uses *to think* in a similar capacity. *13 conservatives* perform the mental action of thinking and are ridiculed for believing in a scandal narrative that MJS feels is obviously not based on reality.

Similar to some of the other features already discussed in previous sections, some of the participant and process categories of transitivity analysis are either too rare in political and news discourse or too universal in nature to yield meaningful contrastive results in the Benghazi source material of this thesis. The analysis will therefore focus on the use of the *passive voice*, key participants *agent* and *experiencer* as well as the action / process types *action*, *mental action* and *verbal action*.

5.2.4 Transitivity in Benghazi Reporting

The analysis of transitivity in the Benghazi news items showed that the DEM and GOP sources employed passive structures far less frequently than expected. The tactics used were fairly conventional and did not show ideologically motivated contrasts in numbers that would justify an in depth study or conclusions drawn therein. GOP news outlets repeated the construction *Benghazi*

talking points were altered / changed in a somewhat recurring fashion seemingly unwilling to pinpoint a specific individual in charge of actually making undesired changes during the investigation process. Similarly, DEM sources tended to refer to the Clinton emails connected to the Benghazi enquiries with the construction *emails were withheld / destroyed*, obscuring the actual party seen as primarily responsible for allegedly destroying key evidence.

In addition to this, the Benghazi headlines contained one rather spectacular exemplar of obscuring responsibility. An ex-IRS official apologizes for the misdeeds of his institution by stating that *mistakes were made*. The frequency of these seemingly contrastive uses of the passive structure was too low for any generalizations, however. The more contrastive bends in transitivity appeared in the use of process types and participants. Headlines (139) - (140) display some of the passive structures employed in the Benghazi headline corpora.

(139) *Graham: Benghazi talking points were altered over politics*
(FOX Apr. 3, 2014)

(140) *Former IRS Commissioner apologizes on Capitol Hill: "Foolish mistakes were made"* (CSM May 17, 2013)

5.2.4.1 Process Types

The main discovery of the analysis of process types in the headline corpora of Benghazi news items seems in keeping with what was suggested in the theory section 5.2.3. Verbal action is ubiquitous in political discourse and thus also in political news. Physical action was scarce, mental action even more so. Neither provided any remarkable contrasts between DEM and GOP sources. Physical action mostly involved military maneuvers, attacks and killing. Mental action consisted of rather neutrally reported thinking, considering and feeling. The most interesting contrasts involved the five most frequent verbal actions and the three most common agents undertaking them.

VERBAL					ACTION (Physical)			MENTAL
say* GOP: 286 DEM: 182	claim* GOP: 68 DEM: 26	tell* GOP: 47 DEM: 21	blast* GOP: 40 DEM: 9	lie* GOP: 40 DEM: 6	kill* GOP: 110 DEM: 39	attack* GOP: 61 DEM: 24	capture* GOP: 29 DEM: 7	think* GOP: 11 DEM: 7
<i>source*</i> GOP: 34 DEM: 3	<i>Clinton</i> GOP: 27 DEM: 2	<i>Hillary</i> GOP: 15 DEM: 0	<i>report</i> GOP: 18 DEM: 0	<i>Clinton</i> GOP: 21 DEM: 0	<i>attack*</i> GOP: 47 DEM: 14	<i>force*</i> GOP: 31 DEM: 15	<i>US*</i> GOP: 26 DEM: 5	<i>consider*</i> GOP: 14 DEM: 6
<i>Clinton</i> GOP: 38 DEM: 21	<i>administration</i> GOP: 16 DEM: 2	<i>Obama</i> GOP: 7 DEM: 10	<i>King</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 0	<i>administration</i> GOP: 8 DEM: 0	<i>bomb*</i> GOP: 53 DEM: 8	<i>militia</i> GOP: 17 DEM: 2		<i>feel*</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 3
<i>Republicans</i> GOP: 5 DEM: 24	<i>Obama</i> GOP: 19 DEM: 4	<i>Pence</i> GOP: 0 DEM: 9	<i>Fiorina</i> GOP: 1 DEM: 4	<i>Romney</i> GOP: 0 DEM: 5	<i>gunmen</i> GOP: 3 DEM: 2	<i>protesters</i> GOP: 0 DEM: 9		

Table 14. Common process types in the DEM and GOP headline corpora with most common types of action and most common agents. (Key: the asterisk denotes every relevant form of the word and, in cases like *US** and *bomb**, both the abbreviation and longer forms, such as *bombing* and *bomber*. GOP refers to total frequency in GOP news items, DEM to totals in DEM news items)

Verbal actions dominated the Benghazi news items, *say** topmost among them. GOP sources used *say** more often than DEM media and frequently referenced a *source** related to the Benghazi investigation speaking out. DEM media seemed most active in keeping their readership up to date on what the *Republicans* said. Use of *claim** was likewise dominated by GOP news items. The three most common agents – *Clinton*, *administration* and *Obama* – were usually depicted as making false or at the very least suspicious claims. *Tell** was more evenly used. Adapting an unusually familiar approach, GOP sources once again seemed to concentrate on *Hillary*, while the DEM news outlets reported on the actions of the Republican vice President Mike *Pence* more often.

The frequency of *blast**, especially on the GOP side, seems to adhere to the commonality of the metaphorical domain ARGUMENT IS WAR discussed in section 5.1.2.2. The report published by the Benghazi investigative committee blasted various Democratic targets in

GOP headlines, as did Republican representative *King*. The implications of the use of *lie** are also fairly evident. GOP sources frequently depict *Clinton* and the Democratic *administration* as a liar. The DEM election coverage contained a few instances of then Republican candidate Mitt *Romney* being described similarly.

The theme of the physical actions is fairly grim. Various forces, gunmen and bombings undertook killing and attacking. *US** was frequently depicted as capturing in the news coverage concerning the few incarcerated Benghazi suspects. The one contrast in physical action can be seen in the frequencies of *attack** undertaken by *militia* or *protesters*. In keeping with the GOP narrative that saw the Benghazi attack as a planned terrorist strike made possible by lapses in U.S. foreign security, GOP sources placed *militia* as the agent of attacking. The DEM sources at least initially responded by describing the attack as one caused by a *protesters* in a spontaneous event that escalated in a way that the Democratic administration could not have prepared for. Headlines (141) - (145) demonstrate how different process types manifested in the Benghazi headline corpora.

(141) *Benghazi guards turned on US diplomats in 2012 attack, sources say*
(FOX Nov. 7, 2016)

(142) *Clinton claims House Benghazi report “found nothing,” says time to “move on”*
(FOX Jun. 29, 2016)

(143) *Newt Gingrich: Clinton lied while Americans were dying*
(FOX Jun. 28, 2016)

(144) *Rep. King blasts Dem’s call to boycott Benghazi probe*
(FOX May 5, 2014)

(145) *Protesters attack U.S. diplomatic compounds in Egypt, Libya*
(CNN Sept. 12, 2012)

5.2.4.2 Participants

Due to the somewhat miniscule role of mental actions in the Benghazi headline corpora, the participant role of experiencer did not reveal too many ideological shades or seemingly purposeful authorial choices. The most common forms of mental action, *think**, *consider** and *feel** were mostly performed by the central characters of the Benghazi events, *Clinton*, *Obama* and *Trump*. The GOP sources seemed slightly more concerned with what voters thought and DEM news outlets displayed a slight tilt towards speculating more on the thoughts of conservatives. However, the frequency of these phenomena did not warrant a closer inspection.

The agent roles revealed more in terms of ideologically motivated tendencies, recapping much of what earlier analysis in this thesis has already hinted at. For the purposes of an in depth analysis, the agent positions occurring in the DEM and GOP headlines have been divided into three categories: *person*, containing the three most common individuals, *institution / process*, containing the four most common institutions and political processes and *group*, with the three most frequently appearing ideological groups. Each category contains the three most frequent actions performed by each agent.

PERSON			
Clinton GOP: 81 DEM: 76	Obama GOP: 79 DEM: 28	Trump GOP: 41 DEM: 58	
<i>say*</i> GOP: 38 DEM: 21	<i>say*</i> GOP: 22 DEM: 12	<i>slam*</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 1	
<i>defend*</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 3	<i>defend*</i> GOP: 25 DEM: 0	<i>say*</i> GOP: 9 DEM: 13	
<i>take*</i> GOP: 1 DEM: 9	<i>nominate*</i> GOP: 1 DEM: 7	<i>take*</i> GOP: 7 DEM: 9	
INSTITUTION / PROCESS			
WH* GOP: 71 DEM: 11	US* GOP: 92 DEM: 29	committee GOP: 61 DEM: 23	probe GOP: 39 DEM: 5
<i>release*</i> GOP: 13 DEM: 4	<i>say*</i> GOP: 25 DEM: 17	<i>subpoena*</i> GOP: 8 DEM: 2	<i>say*</i> GOP: 11 DEM: 0
<i>call*</i> GOP: 6 DEM: 5	<i>file*</i> GOP: 10 DEM: 4	<i>question*</i> GOP: 18 DEM: 7	<i>file*</i> GOP: 8 DEM: 2
<i>claim*</i> GOP: 7 DEM: 0	<i>capture*</i> GOP: 26 DEM: 5	<i>seek*</i> GOP: 16 DEM: 8	<i>plan*</i> GOP: 13 DEM: 1
GROUP			
GOP GOP: 49 DEM: 28	Republicans GOP: 22 DEM: 35	Democrats GOP: 27 DEM: 9	
<i>demand*</i> GOP: 18 DEM: 4	<i>say*</i> GOP: 5 DEM: 24	<i>call*</i> GOP: 7 DEM: 4	
<i>blast*</i> GOP: 8 DEM: 4	<i>want*</i> GOP: 6 DEM: 2	<i>boycott*</i> GOP: 9 DEM: 3	
<i>move*</i> GOP: 16 DEM: 6	<i>demand*</i> GOP: 7 DEM: 5	<i>release*</i> GOP: 5 DEM: 1	

Table 15. Common agents and agent types in the DEM and GOP headline corpora. (Key: the asterisk denotes every relevant form of the word and, in cases like *WH** and *US**, both their common abbreviations and longer forms. GOP refers to total frequency in GOP news items, DEM to totals in DEM news items)

As seen earlier, verbal actions dominate the Benghazi news material of both DEM and GOP news outlets. GOP sources seem to have a tendency to depict *Clinton* and *Obama* defending various actions and *Trump* taking aggressive measures in slamming opponents. *WH** and *US** are mostly engaged in official procedures, releasing statements and filing charges and, as noted before, capturing suspects. The Benghazi *committee* appears more frequently in GOP news headlines as the agent of *subpoena** and *question**. The GOP sources' strong tendency to depict the Benghazi *probe* as taking various actions and planning also seems to adhere to previously analyzed frequencies.

In keeping with the trend of Republican aggressiveness and demands for their own group, as evidenced in the discussion on othering in section 5.1.6, GOP sources seem to position the common abbreviation of their party, *GOP*, as the agent of making moves, blasting opponents and demanding action. The same seems to apply to *Republicans*, although the DEM news items seem to reference on the opposing party as the agent of saying more frequently than the GOP media. Conversely, the GOP sources seem more focused on the *Democrats*, especially in the headlines regarding the party's plans to *boycott* the Benghazi hearings.

In addition to the most typical cases, the headline corpora did contain some more sporadic instances of partisan constructions that reflected the ideological stance taken by their author a bit more openly. By way of example, the White House was depicted as scrambling by GOP media and the Benghazi probe was the agent of pressing ahead, despite a report that allegedly nullified its purpose. Headlines (146) - (154) exemplify some of the agent roles in the DEM and GOP headline corpora.

(146) *Clinton defends "video", statements made after Benghazi*
(FOX Aug. 1, 2016)

(147) *Obama Nominates Benghazi Scapegoat for Promotion*
(MJS Mat 24, 2013)

(148) *Unlike Tillerson, Trump says Pompeo "always on same wavelength"*
(CNN Mar. 13, 2018)

- (149) *White House releases Benghazi e-mails. Will that quiet critics?*
(CSM May 15, 2013)
- (150) *US captures key militant in Benghazi attack*
(FOX Oct. 31, 2017)
- (151) *GOP moves to limit 2016 presidential debates after complaints of media bias, high number in 2012 season* (FOX May 11, 2014)
- (152) *Congressional Republicans want to keep doing Benghazi.*
(TNR Jan. 27, 2017)
- (153) *White house scrambles to answer when they learned of Clinton email habits*
(FOX Mar. 7, 2015)
- (154) *Benghazi probe presses ahead despite new report*
(CNN Aug. 6, 2014)

6. Conclusions

The lexical and syntactic features analyzed in this thesis seem to adhere to the larger tendencies discussed in their relevant theory sections. The overall effect of linguistic manipulation was somewhat smaller than initially expected. This is most likely due to the relatively small size of the assembled corpora and a very specific topic. It represents only a small snapshot of the constant development of news and political discourse and can hardly justify any ironclad conclusions. The predominant caveat of this thesis concerns the size and handling of the source corpora. Although the numbers gained via analysis seem temptingly precise, some discrepancy is almost certain. The analytical work centered on automated corpus analysis, but had a quantitative element, which was far more extensive than expected. Ultimately, qualitative intuition played a meaningful role instead of the background position it was supposed to be relegated to. This seems to be a risk that is more or less inescapable with the methodical hybrid adopted for this thesis. Analytical tools count numbers precisely, but the human deciding what to count is bound to err eventually – every single

word cannot be accounted for. An example of this is the spelling of Benghazi. The Internet searches made in order to compile the source corpora returned nothing with alternate spellings, but the news items themselves did nevertheless contain spelling variants, such as *Benhgazi* and *Benghazo*. This type of variance is no doubt the result of typographical errors by the news authors and it can distort the raw numbers a corpus tool can pull.

Despite the smaller focus, technical limitations and inevitable margin of error, certain generalizations can of course be made – the numbers can still be used to reflect larger trends. The techniques employed in the Benghazi news items can, at times, be subliminal to the level subconscious authorship, but there is little doubt that most of what we absorb from the political media has been intentionally crafted for us with a finesse that has surprisingly little to do with anything as mundane as simply telling someone what has happened. Norman Fairclough states that “ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible” (1989, 85) and the presentation of actual events does indeed seem to yield to a surprising range of manipulation. This range can be applied with the lexical and syntactic features discussed in this thesis. One of the main conclusions in this respect is that in addition to being hard to discern, these features coexist in the same structures and overlap constantly. Virtually every cited example in this thesis had more than one discussed feature operating simultaneously. Fox News, preeminent among the GOP news sources and consistently dominant in the use of these features, displayed a level of artifice often far above its professional collegiate, exemplified in this final masterpiece of linguistic architecture.

(155) *Mueller’s team of dem donors under fire from Trump as probe hits one-year mark* (FOX May 17, 2018)

As was seen in the Benghazi source material, actual circumstances can eventually be stripped of objectivity and a purely factual nature. This happens most effectively during the linguistic mediation of constructed information to the public via the frame of newspapers or digital news

outlets. The societally and politically anchored conventions of news outlets have an unavoidable tendency towards aggression and bias. Most events reach the world audience written from a pre-manufactured perspective. As Fowler (1991, 25) puts it, “Representation in the Press ... is a constructive practice” – a practice that created the attack ad and lingered around the Benghazi issue, evolving it into a form of attack that seems beyond the simplicity of an attack ad. The Benghazi issue seemed to outlast Clinton’s tenure as Secretary of State, as well as her subsequent campaign run in 2016. But can it be called an attack topic?

6.1 The Attack Topic

The general theme in the DEM and GOP material analyzed in this thesis was one of attack and defense. GOP news outlets seemed to hammer their ideological opponents with the Benghazi topic consistently and aggressively. The frequencies of the lexical and syntactic features showed that the language employed by GOP sources seemed more colorful than the DEM counterparts – Fox News outshining all in terms of both ornamentation and volume. DEM news outlets seemed to respond by seeking to dismiss the attacks as conspiracies and hyperbole or by avoiding the issue completely. Despite the underlying purposefulness of these authorial choices, it is relatively easy to concede to Lakoff’s (1996, 3) view that conservatives or Republicans, in a very real way, do not see the world in the same way as liberals or Democrats. Both ideologies have difficulty in fully understanding each other: one side sought an incriminating scandal, while the other was steadfastly constructing its narrative on the basis of a tragedy, both using their respective “ideologically biased” frames (van Dijk 1984, 2).

The Benghazi incident has remained a central issue of debate, mainly due to its role in the arsenal of the GOP and conservative media. One of the defining features of an attack topic seems to be its longevity. Attack ads are somewhat ephemeral and usually election-based, but

Benghazi retained its momentum, even outside election cycles. The Benghazi affair proved malleable when necessary, first used to target the Democratic President Barack Obama, then shifting to the 2016 Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton.

It bears noting that due to all of its unique features, political attack tools such as Benghazi seem impossible to manufacture out of thin air. As a potential evolutionary step beyond former methods of political attack, Benghazi constitutes a unique combination of opportune time and real circumstances: the election and resulting personalization of Benghazi in Hillary Clinton, the unprecedented rise in political polarization and the longevity of the topic due to continued usefulness as a weapon. Its categorization as an attack topic seems justified, however, as it can be argued that the incident has distinguished itself as a discursive phenomenon with features that could offer either ideological side a similar weapon, should similar circumstances arise around some new event or series of events in the future. The Benghazi attack topic was utilized efficiently and, in the end, Clinton's campaign efforts couldn't escape it. Benghazi was kept alive with a constant barrage of news items and it held her back as one of the key failures of her political career.



Image 12. Benghazi among other Clinton campaign troubles (TWS / Jason Seiler)

Despite being an effective weapon in the GOP election arsenal of 2016, it seems that the Republicans were ultimately left without their arduously sought scandal on Benghazi. The widely contested report released by the House Select Committee on Benghazi faulted the Democratic State Department and the CIA, but not Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton specifically (2016 416-417). Nevertheless, the aggressive Benghazi reporting and split political narratives undoubtedly weighed heavy among the other issues that tipped the scales towards Hillary Clinton's loss and a 2016 Republican victory. After Donald Trump's presidency and Hillary's subsequent withdrawal from the epicenter of North American politics, the Benghazi issue has cooled. However, it is guaranteed to resurface in the unlikely event that Clinton, or anyone else close enough to the topic, should run in 2020. There was no smoking gun for the Republicans, but there does seem to be a loaded one.

6.2 The Future

In 1980, Bolinger made the observation that “active control through language has become in our time the most devastating form of control, for it works at the source” (1980, 188). Over a decade and a half later, Jeffery Mio stated that this source, the news media, represents “an arm of the political elite” (1997, 130). This perspective paints a bleak contemporary landscape and even more melancholy future vistas for objective and non-partisan journalism. Christine Maxwell (Rainie et al. 2017) articulates an ever increasing concern related to the diminishing objectivity of news journalism in the fast paced realm of online communication: meaningful decisions are dependent on reliably objective sources of information. Lack of objectivity and commonplace phenomena such as confirmation bias inevitably lead to thickening ideological cocoons echoing with partisan opinions and subjectively selected informational buttressing. In this environment, negativity can gain a foothold that is near impossible to remove. Dystopian though the observation might be, this form of hostile political tribalism can already be seen taking shape within the various factions claiming

ground and nurturing their members in the Internet of 2018. In light of all this, the all too common conception of established media institutions as completely egalitarian and objective does indeed seem to be in need of at least some degree of deconstruction.

Foregrounding the use, variation and effect of linguistic cues such as metaphor, synecdoche, othering, modality, nominalization and the permutations of transitivity can defamiliarize readers, giving them “a heightened awareness of what is being said” and providing them with a “freshly critical” view of it (Fowler 1991, 45). Future work utilizing the combination of CDA and Corpus Linguistics will no doubt expand awareness on this topic and will hopefully provide more practical tools for educational purposes. These phenomena should, in one form or another, be present and analyzed on every educational level. The understanding and decoding of meanings in public discourse, especially in news discourse, should, in Fowler’s terms (1991, 234), move from meek acceptance towards active criticism.

The modern digital media institution has inherited a lot of the negative aspects of its traditional print-based forebears. It has intensified the potential for ideologically motivated manipulation with new forms of attack, as well as more efficiently constructed polarizing world views. The risks of unawareness were pointed out quite eloquently by W.R. O’Donnell and Loreto Todd (1980, 88) back in 1980:

Perhaps our newspapers, instead of informing us, as is often claimed, are really doing our thinking for us. Most of us prefer to read the paper which we believe most closely reflects our own opinions. It may in fact be that we are reflecting theirs.

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The Weekly Standard: <http://www.weeklystandard.com/>