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Villains, Victims and the Virtuous in the 'No-Spin Zone': The O'Reilly
Factor's Propaganda Devices and Role-Players

Abstract

In the 1930s, the Institute for Propaganda Analysis used seven propaganda devices to monitor speeches of the "Radio Priest," Charles Coughlin. In a similar vein, the study reported here examines Bill O'Reilly's employing of propaganda devices in the "Talking Points" section of his cable show. In a content analysis of 105 commentaries the use of the seven devices, fear frames, and O'Reilly's characterization of people or ideas as victims, villainous, or virtuous were documented.

Not only did O'Reilly use propaganda devices substantially more often than Coughlin, but he was also less nuanced in his use of the devices. He used name calling more than twice as often as any other device. Moreover, almost half the commentaries were grounded in a fear frame, and specific people or ideas consistently emerged in the roles of victims, villains, or part of the virtuous.