

Is Breitbart Racist?

A Corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis of the Breitbart News Website

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Abstract

This study set out to assess whether or not the website Breitbart News disseminates unjust, racist discourses against Muslims and Mexicans, using the method of corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis. Two specialist corpora built from online articles from the US and London based offices of Breitbart News were analysed. One corpus was comprised of articles relating to Muslims, and the second corpus was comprised of articles relating to Mexicans. Both corpora were analysed for word and cluster frequencies, collocates and concordances. The analysis uncovered several racist discourses relating to Muslims and Mexicans.

Introduction

Breitbart News Network is a US-based, far-right (Usborne, 2016) news and opinion website founded in 2007 by the late American conservative activist Andrew Breitbart. Established with the purpose of “destroying the old media guard” (Spiering, 2012) and being “unapologetically pro-freedom and pro-Israel” (Solov, 2015), it has grown from a simple news aggregation website to becoming a leading US conservative online information source based in California with regional branches in Texas, London and Jerusalem. Following the death of Andrew Breitbart in 2012, Steve Bannon, a former US naval officer, Goldman Sacs investment banker, and film maker, took over as CEO. Breitbart News has been accused of anti-Semitism (Rozsa, 2016), misogyny (Saul, 2016), xenophobia and racism (Grynbaum & Herrman, 2016a), Islamophobia (Hanaoki, 2017) and of being anti-immigrant (Piggott,

2016). Former Breitbart editor Ben Shapiro has alleged that, under Bannon's leadership, "Breitbart openly embraced the white supremacist alt-right"¹ (2016). He claims that the website pushes "white ethno-nationalism as a response to political correctness", with the comments section turning into "a cesspool for white supremacist meme makers". Piggot (2016) further accused the website of "embracing ideas on the extremist fringe of the conservative right", and of disseminating racist, anti-Muslim ideas. Richard B Spencer, a leading American white nationalist, said, "Breitbart has elective affinities with the Alt Right, and the Alt Right has clearly influenced Breitbart. In this way, Breitbart has acted as a 'gateway' to Alt Right ideas and writers" (Woodruff & Resnick, 2016). Although Bannon is reported to have said of Breitbart, "We're the platform for the alt-right" (Posner, 2016), the website has denied being racist or anti-semitic (Breitbart News, 2016) and released a statement saying that it was "preparing a multi-million dollar lawsuit against a major media company for its baseless and defamatory claim that it is a 'white nationalist website'" (Concha, 2016). The statement also said that "Breitbart News rejects racism in all its varied and ugly forms".

Breitbart News became a major focus of attention during the 2016 US presidential campaign with the appointment of Steve Bannon as Donald Trump's third campaign manager and subsequently, as his chief strategist in The White House, having been elected US President. Bannon left the post of Breitbart CEO at this point. Trump's appointment of Bannon was condemned in many quarters, with numerous people accusing him of being a racist, an anti-Semite, anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, and sexist (Devaney, 2016; Ng, 2016; Norton, 2016; Pleat, 2016) citing evidence from both his personal life, his earlier professional life, and his time at Breitbart News. These commentators, amongst others, pointed to content of Breitbart News, as evidence of the allegations against him. The Washington Post reported that Bannon wrote an outline for a documentary in 2007 called 'Destroying the Great Satan: The Rise of Islamic Fascism in America'. In it, he described the Islamic Society of North America and the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) as "cultural jihadists", and "front groups" for Islamic fundamentalists and accused the Washington Post, the New York Times, US

broadcaster NPR, the “American Jewish Community”, the American Council for Civil Liberties, the CIA, the FBI, the State Department and the White House of, although being driven by “best intentions”, being “enablers” of a covert mission to establish an Islamic republic in the United States (Gold, 2017).

In the summer of 2014, Bannon delivered a talk via Skype to the conservative Roman Catholic lay-organisation the Dignitatus Humanae Institute in the Vatican. In his talk he claimed that “the world, and particularly the Judeo-Christian West, is in crisis”, and that this was “the organizing principle of how we built Breitbart News to really be a platform to bring news and information to people throughout the world” (Bannon, 2014). He described this crisis as being threefold: crony capitalism; the rise of secularism; and a threat from Islam. On his perceived threat from Islam, he argued that the Judeo-Christian West is “at the beginning stages of a global war against Islamic fascism”. He called on those attending the conference to form a “church militant . . . to fight for our beliefs against this new barbarity that’s starting, that will completely eradicate everything that we’ve been bequeathed over the last 2,000–2,500 years”. When asked how the West should respond to radical Islam, he said, “I believe you should take a very, very, very aggressive stance against radical Islam”. Bannon was sacked from the White House in August 2018, when he returned to Breitbart as CEO, but was removed from that position in January 2018 after making criticisms of Donald Trump.

Two other Breitbart News members of staff joined the Trump administration, Sebastian Gorka, as member of the national security advisory staff, and Julia Hahn as a special assistant to the President, working directly under Bannon. Gorka, Breitbart’s former National Security Affairs editor, shares Bannon’s beliefs that CAIR has links to “jihadi terrorism”. He accused CAIR, and another US organisation the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), of helping to establish ‘violent extremism’ “as the official label for jihadi terrorism” through links with the Muslim Brotherhood (Kant, 2016). He argued that accepting Muslim refugees would be “national suicide” for the USA (Hayward, 2016) and that “98% of terrorists come from a certain

faith community, have a certain ethnic background” is a justification for the profiling of Muslims” (Gorka, 2016).

The movement of Breitbart staff to the Trump administration may be evidence of an ideological synergy between Breitbart News and President Trump. Shapiro (2016) further argues that Bannon shaped Breitbart News into “Trump’s personal Pravda”, correctly predicting that several Breitbart staffers would be included in Trump’s presidential campaign team. Former Breitbart News spokesperson Kurt Bardella has called the website “as close we’re going to have to a state-run media enterprise” (Grynbaum & Herrman, 2016a). Trump’s campaign trail announcement of an intention to ban all Muslims entering the United States (Pilkington, 2015) accusing, “such a big portion” of the world’s Muslim of harbouring “hatred [towards Americans]” was decried as racist and xenophobic (Diamond, 2015), and it was reported that Bannon was involved with Trump’s subsequent temporary ban from seven predominantly Muslim countries deemed to house threats to the USA from violent Islamic extremists (Perez et al., 2017). Trump’s policy of building a wall along the US border with Mexico has received firm endorsement from Breitbart News (Hadfield, 2017), but has been linked to Trump’s controversial comments about Mexican immigrants, which have been described as racist (Ye He Lee, 2015). He claimed that Mexico was sending “people that have a lot of problems”, including people who were bringing crime, drugs, and who were rapists.

This study investigates some of the allegations being made against Breitbart News. It looks specifically at how Breitbart News represents Muslims and Mexicans, to ascertain whether or not these groups are subjected to ‘discursive injustice’ (van Dijk, 2009, pg.63), that is, if Breitbart News’s discourse surrounding these groups “contributes to social inequality” and “(re)produces inequalities of race” with regards to both groups. The study employs the methods of corpus-based critical discourse analysis of two corpora built from articles written about Muslims and Mexicans.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and racism

When trying to answer the question of whether or not discourse is racist, it is first necessary to clearly define what we mean by racism, as there is considerable disagreement over the term's definition, for example, if Islamophobia is in fact racist, given that Islam is a religion and not a 'race' (Richardson, 2011). For many people still today, the concept of 'race' as reflecting a biological make-up of human society still holds considerable sway. Scientific racism argues that human society is divided into biologically distinct groups. One very early categorisation was by the eighteenth century Swedish botanist, physician and zoologist Carl Linnaeus. In his text *Systema Naturae* (1735), Linnaeus categorised human beings into four varieties based on continent and skin colour: *Europæus albus* (white Europeans); *Americanus rubescens* (red Americans); *Asiaticus fuscus* (brown Asians); and *Africanus Niger* (black Africans). He went further in ascribing characteristics for each group, calling Europeans 'sanguine and muscular', Americans 'choleric and upright', Asians 'melancholy and stiff', and Africans 'phlegmatic and relaxed' in effect placing the categories in a hierarchy (Evans Braziel, 2007, pg. 44). Following the Second World War, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation initiated a scientific program which challenged theories of race based on biological differentiation. Subsequently, four statements on the question of race were released that asserted that the "biological differentiation of races does not exist" and that the phenotypical differences between populations living in different geographical areas of the world can be attributed to the "interaction of historical, economic, political, social and cultural factors, rather than biological ones" (Sane, 2001). Later, in the 1970s and onwards, with the onset of the field of genetics, scientists were drawing the conclusion that "there was no significant genetic discontinuity between any so-called races in or species that would justify the use of racial classification in humans (Yudell and Hammonds, 2011). With arguments for biological racism being discredited in this way, scholars identified a shift in focus for racist arguments, away from biology and towards culture. The term 'new racism' was coined by Barker (1981), who observed this shift

to the culture argument in the context of the ideologies underpinning the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher in the UK towards what he argued was a racist public discourse depicting immigrants as a threat (Chin et al., 2009). New racism posits the view that different ethnic groups should not live in the same space, not because of biological reasons, but because of the incompatibility of cultures, which would inevitably give rise to conflict.

For the purposes of this analysis, racism will be understood according to van Dijk's theory. Whereas racism is generally understood as an ideology, he defines it as "a complex societal system of ethnically or 'racially' based domination and its resulting inequality (2008, pg. 103). He argues that the system of racism consists of a social and cognitive subsystem. The social system is defined by social practices of discrimination at local (micro) level, and the abuse of power by dominant, elite groups, organisations and institutions at a global (macro) level. The cognitive subsystem of racism is the mental basis which underpins the practices of the social subsystem. This consists of biased models of ethnic events and interactions, which are in turn rooted in racist prejudices and ideologies. He points out that discourse plays an important role for the cognitive dimension of racism insofar as racist prejudices and ideologies are not innate, and do not develop spontaneously through the interaction of individuals from different ethnic groups. Racism is acquired and learned through communication, that is, through text and talk. Also, such representations are usually expressed, formulated, legitimated and defended in discourse and in that way may be reproduced and shared within a dominant group.

Corpus Linguistics Approach (CLA) to Critical Discourse Analysis

Corpus linguistics (CL) is, according to McEnery and Wilson (1996, pg. 1), 'the study of language based on real life language use'. It is a methodology which uses a variety of computer software packages to analyse authentic bodies of textual data, in particular, concordance programs, which allow for the analysis of often very large bodies of text (Mautner, 2009, pg. 122). In the era of the Internet many corpus linguists are seeing the web as

a corpus from where texts that they want can be intelligently harvested and compiled into corpora (Lee, 2010, pg. 115). To qualify as a corpus-based discourse analysis, argues Thornbury (2010, pg. 271), a study would need to use quantitative methods with the aim of producing findings that are both descriptive and explanatory. He argues that descriptive findings are generated by searching for particular discourse features in a corpus—typically a collection of texts, using computational means. To explain the frequency, significance and use of these features would generally involve reference to context, either in the co-textual environment, or to other texts. Therefore, an analyst can compare and contrast an individual text, or sub-corpora of a specific type, with texts of another type. Baker (2006, pg. 1) argues that, unlike exclusively qualitative approaches to research, corpus linguistics uses bodies of electronically encoded text and implements quantitative methods by using, for example, frequency information to identify the “occurrences of particular linguistic phenomena”. Biber et al. (1998, pg. 4) point out that corpus-based analysis employs both qualitative and quantitative methods, “Association patterns represent quantitative relations, measuring the extent to which features and variants are associated with contextual factors. However, functional (qualitative) interpretation is also an essential step in any corpus-based analysis”. Baker et al. (2008, pgs. 273–274) also take the view that CL employs both quantitative and qualitative approaches. They do not view CL as being a single method. Rather, it utilises a collection of methods that are related insofar as they “are performed on large collections of electronically stored naturally occurring texts”. They are quantitative and/or make use of statistical tests. “However, most CL methods require considerable human input, which often includes qualitative analysis (such as examining concordance lines)”. This is disputed by Fairclough (2015, pgs. 20–21) who says it is misleading for Baker et al to “establish that corpus linguistics is not only quantitative, but also interpretative and qualitative”. Concordances do provide extended co-texts that can be, to some extent, interpreted and analysed qualitatively, but when corpus linguists “switch hats” and do this themselves, they are no longer doing corpus linguistics, he argues.

Whilst there is an increasing number of CDA analysts using CL as

a method of analysis, according to Mautner (2009, pgs. 122–123), the techniques of CL are not yet generally considered as being part of the core of CDA’s methodological canon. He lists three ways in which CL contributes to CDA:

CL allow researchers to work with much great bodies of text data than if doing analysis manually.

By enabling analysts to significantly broaden their empirical base, CL can help to reduce researcher bias (also see Baker, 2006, pg. 10), which goes some way to overcoming a problem for which CDA has received “harsh and persistent criticism (e.g. Widdowson 1995, 2004)”.

Corpus linguistics software allows for both quantitative and qualitative perspectives on data. It offers analysts the opportunity to compute frequencies of lexical items and measures of statistical significance, as well as “presenting data extracts in such a way that the researcher can assess individual occurrences of search words, qualitatively examine their collocational environments, describe salient semantic patterns and identify discourse functions”.

A distinction is drawn within CL between ‘corpus-based’ and ‘corpus-driven’ linguistics. Baker (2006, pg. 16) notes that the corpus-based approach uses a corpus as a set of examples, to “check researcher intuition or to examine the frequency and/or plausibility of the language contained within a smaller data set”. On the other hand, corpus-driven analysis is more inductive, “the corpus itself is the data and the patterns in it are noted as the way of expressing regularities (and exceptions) in language.” Flowerdew (2014, pg. 174) asserts that CL in the corpus-driven sense is underpinned by a “phraseological syntagmatic approach to language data consisting of five categories of co-selection “with the core lexical item and the semantic prosody as obligatory elements, and collocation, colligation and semantic preference as optional categories”. Proponents of the corpus-driven approach regard CL as essentially a theory with corpus analyses identifying previously unknown aspects of language, thereby challenging the “underlying

assumptions behind many well established theoretical positions’ (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001, pg. 48)”.

Methodology and framework of analysis

This study aims to ascertain whether or not the Breitbart News staff are guilty of allegations of racism being made against them, and which they have denied. Given the limits on the study posed by word length and time scale, it would be too difficult to assess all of the allegations of racism towards immigrants, migrants, black people, Jews, Muslims, and Mexicans, amongst others, the focus will be on trying to uncover unjust discourses directed at Muslims and Mexicans. This decision was made purely on the basis of an empirical analysis determining that articles concerning both of these groups would yield enough data to draw a definitive answer to the question. The analysis sought to identify discourses across a randomly selected range of articles pertaining to Muslims and Mexicans.

Corpus analysis

In order to achieve its research aims, this study employs analyses of two small (Nelson, 2010, pgs. 54–55; Koester, 2010, pg. 69), specialised (Baker, 2006, pg. 26) corpuses comprised of articles from the Breitbart News website. Articles were sourced using the search nodes *Muslim* and *Mexican* and were chosen using the website’s own search facility, which offered up a limited total of 80 random articles for each search. The search nodes were selected to try to draw out articles relating to two controversial discourses in the current US political system, Mexican and Muslim immigration to the USA, which were empirically identified as being substantially represented in Breitbart News’s output, and for which the website has been accused as peddling racism (see Introduction). The articles were from Breitbart’s USA and London offices, but with the articles about Mexicans coming almost entirely from its Texas office.

The analyses were undertaken by examining the results of word frequency counts, and collocates (MI and t-score) and concordances. The situational

representativeness of the corpuses (Koester, 2010, pg. 69) was achieved by excluding comments from the public, as they do not necessarily reflect editorial positions, insofar as they were not commissioned by Breitbart News, and there is no evidence that the comments threads are moderated in any way.

The corpus files were cleaned of extraneous information (Baker, 2006, pg. 33) except for minimal content information such as file descriptions and word counts. Other than that, only article headlines and contents were included. The Muslim corpus contains 58,262 word tokens, with 7,107 word types, spanning 39 articles. One of the 40 search results provided a link to an unrelated page. The Mexican corpus is 35,734 word tokens, with 4,975 word types, spanning 40 articles.

Frequency

Raw and lexical frequency lists (Baker, 2006, pgs. 51–53) were generated and analysed in an attempt to uncover possible underlying discourses in the corpora. The frequency lists were generated using the corpus analysis software Antconc, v3.4.4 (Antony, 2017). It was hoped that frequency data could help generate a sociological profile of lexical items and phrases enabling greater understanding of their use in context. As Baker notes (2006, pgs. 47–48), whilst languages are rules-based and people operate within their confines, words are chosen by users due to express ideological positions, and it is the tension between these two facts that makes the concept of frequency important. Consciously or not, these language choices reveal speakers' or writers' intentions.

Raw frequency lists were generated for each corpus. AntConc allows for searches for groups of stipulated words, so, for each corpus, searches were performed for the singular and plural forms of *Muslim* and *Mexican*. The raw frequency lists were cleaned of grammatical words such as articles, determiners, conjunctions, prepositions, modals, and so on, to identify lexical terms more likely to reveal discourses. Given that the intention of this study is to ascertain whether or not Breitbart News has engaged in racist or discriminatory discourses, *saliency*, in terms of search nodes, refers to their likelihood of being used in unjust ways or of uncovering unjust discourses.

AntConc allows for the generation of frequency lists for word clusters, so relevant clusters were investigated further by analysing the original news article for greater context. Attention was also paid to lexical verbs in the hope that their use might shed light on the representation of social actions (van Leeuwen, 2008, pgs. 55–76) undertaken by Muslims and Mexicans.

Concordance Analysis

In order to carry out a closer analysis than with frequencies, a concordance analysis was undertaken. Selected search nodes were concordanced in order to reveal the contexts in which they occurred. The node words (Evison, 2010, pg. 129) under investigation appear in the centre of each line, with extra space on either side. Context lengths were set to nine words either side of the search nodes. Node words for the concordance analyses were *Muslim(s)* and *Mexican(s)*. Analyses sought to identify evidence of grammatical, semantic, or discourse patterns. Analyses used the Key Word in Context (KWIK) format provided by AntConc, whereby the concordance results were sorted in alphabetical order in an attempt to identify patterns such as references to actors, quantity, beliefs, or actions.

Baker (2008, pgs. 86–88) outlines the concepts of semantic preference and discourse prosody and points to their value in concordance analysis. Concordance analysis, he notes, elucidates semantic preference, and he quotes Stubbs (2001, pg. 65) who defines the concept as, “the relation, not between individual words, but between a lemma or word-form and a set of semantically related words”. It differs from collocation insofar as it focuses on lexical sets of semantic categories rather than single words or related sets of grammatical words. Discourse prosody, on the other hand, shows how patterns of discourse can be found between words, phrases and sets of related words that suggest discourse. Although the difference between both concepts is not always clear cut, “semantic prosody denotes aspects of meaning which are independent of speakers, whereas discourse prosody focuses on the relationship of a word to speakers and hearers and is more concerned with attitudes.” Efforts were made to identify instances of discourse prosody in the discourses identified in the corpora. Concerns about cases of anaphora

obscuring analyses were mitigated against by close analyses of articles revealed in concordances.

Collocates

In a further attempt to identify possible discourses surrounding search terms, collocate analysis was undertaken on both corpora. The strength of bond between collocates was assessed using the statistical test Mutual Information (MI), (Baker, pgs. 101–102), and the measure of certainty of collocation was measured using t-scores (Mautner, 2009, pg. 125). Span range was set to five left and five right of the search term, with a minimum frequency value of 5. Collocates were sought for the terms Muslim(s) and Mexican(s), and other salient terms chosen from the results of the concordance analyses in an attempt to identify underlying discourses.

Occasionally, given a wieldy number of search hits, samples containing 30 concordances were selected by choosing the n^{th} result, for example, for *Muslim(s)* in the Muslim corpus there were 845 concordances. The 1st, 15th, 30th, 45th, and so on, were chosen (approximately) unless obviously unjust discourses were identified nearby in the list.

Analysis and discussion

Muslim Corpus

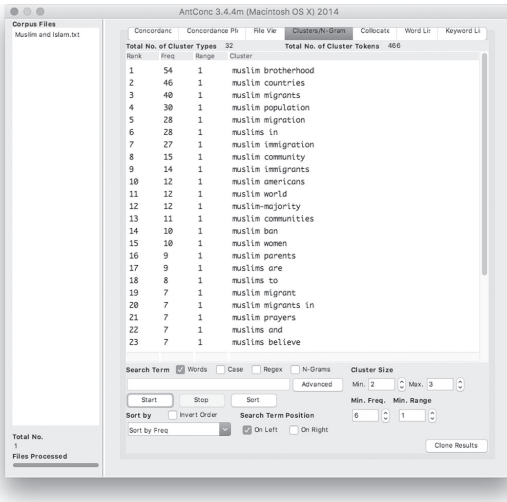
Frequencies

Having set aside the grammatical words in the frequency list (Appendix 1), we are now more able to identify possible discourses in the corpus. Immediately we notice that the most frequently occurring lemma *muslim(s)* (n=845) is followed by *immigration* (n=212). This, with *immigrants* (n=136), which is the 8th most frequent, 19th placed *migrants* (n=91) and 21st *refugees* (n=90), gives us a strong indication that Muslim immigration is a prevalent discourse. With *United* (n=179) and *States* (n=176) being 3rd and 4th in the list, we can guess that it means immigration to the USA. In 10th and 11th place are the numeric values ‘,000’ and *million*, which suggest that

the linguistic strategy of *aggregation* might have been employed. The high frequency of *Islamic* (n=149) and *Islam* (n=97) suggest a discourse moving beyond Muslim immigration to the religion of the immigrants. The 6th most frequent word is *Trump*, suggesting a discourse related to President Trump's campaign promise to ban all Muslims from the USA on his election to the Presidency, and/or his two unsuccessful attempts to suspend visa access from six Muslim-majority countries. The term *women* (n=95) was in 16th place in the list, Number 23 on the list was *Brotherhood* (n=88), and a reference to the organisation 'The Muslim Brotherhood'. Significant other frequencies were *law* (n=78), *security* (n=67), and *terrorist* (n=67), suggesting discourse related to threat.

Clusters

Muslim in its singular form can function as a singular noun, part of a noun phrase, or an adjective, so in an attempt to explore its use, a cluster search was performed. With minimum and maximum cluster sizes set at 2 and 3 respectively, and the minimum frequency was set to 6, the most frequent use was *Muslim Brotherhood* (n=54), a term which is explored further in the concordance analysis. The top ten frequencies was dominated by references to immigration and migration, including Muslim migrants (n=40), although *Muslim Americans* (n=12) was 9th. *Muslim ban* (n=10) and *Muslim women* (n=10) were in 12th and 13th, and *Muslim rape* (n=6) appeared at 21st. The screenshot below shows the raw frequency scores before cleaning:



Collocates

Below is a table showing lists of most salient MI and t-score collocates selected on the basis of a minimum collocate frequency of 6. Collocates were sorted by statistical value (highest first) and are ordered left to right in the table below:

As we can see, both searches have brought up very similar results. The collocates *British* and *Britain* suggest a discourse relating to the British Muslim population. Once again, we see numerical words and quantifiers, which suggests even further the use of *aggregation*. The close proximity of *hate* and *crimes* offers up the possibility of discourses on ‘hate crimes’ or the common negative trope of immigrant criminality.

Collocates of Muslim(s)	
MI	crimes British believe percent hate Britain Christian young America many majority news population million islamic
t-score	British percent hate America believe many Britain Christian crimes young majority population million islamic

Concordances

A concordance dealing with references to Muslims was sought using the search nodes Muslim(s). A table of 30 randomly chosen concordances was constructed by choosing approximately every 30th concordance of 845 concordance search hits (see Appendix 2). Concordances which provided a stronger indication of the presence of a discourse were chosen. Various discourses present Muslims as being a threat are evident.

Firstly, a discourse emerges of Muslims threatening the political and cultural life of the West. A file analysis on the term *Muslim Brotherhood* found a commonly disseminated theory that this organisation has a plan to establish an Islamic Caliphate in the USA and other Western countries. The term *political Islam*, relates to this theory, as does the (UK Muslims) *Demand Caliphate* headline fragment; *51% of US Muslims Want Sharia; 51 percent of U.S. Muslims “agreed that ‘Muslims in America [should have the choice of being governed according to Shariah]’”*; and *Civilisation Jihad*. The use of such phrases seems to be designed to provoke fear and mistrust of Muslims in the reader.

Furthermore, there are several references to immigration, which seem to share the same goal. The term *influx* suggests a negative view of Muslim immigration given its negative discourse prosody; *large flows of Sharia-sympathetic Muslim Migrants* (*large flows* suggest drowning/flooding); *unrestricted Muslim immigration*; *expand Muslim migration into the United States*; *roughly 149,000 migrants*; *Muslims would outnumber Jews*; *300,000 Muslim immigrations in the next 12 months alone* (*alone* suggests that many more Muslim immigrants coming). A reference to *A plan to Hire 1,000,000 refugees*, might be the use of the common negative trope of ‘job theft’ by foreigners from the indigenous population. The use of such large numbers to describe Muslim immigration could be viewed as another tactic to provoke fear.

Then we see a discourse appear regarding a potential ‘solution’ to the ‘immigration problem’. Two such references are identified: *“All further migration from mainly Muslim countries must be stopped”*, and *“Voters Back Temporary Ban on All Muslim Entry to the United States”*. Both of these

proposed solutions strongly reflect policy statements by Donald Trump, before and after his election to the Presidency.

Language linking Muslims to physical violence is particularly commonplace throughout the concordance. [*What is the] Right Punishment for Blasphemy?* suggests a threat against non-Muslims ([] contains part of the sentence/phrase not shown in the results of the concordance search); *Young Muslims in the West are a Ticking Time [Bomb]*; *5% of UK Muslims would not report a terror [attack being planned]*; *Muslim children bully Jewish children*; *Muslim assailants; harassment, assault and discrimination by Muslims against others*; “[*Those who insult Islam*] should be killed”; *Muslims celebrating on 9/11*; [*25% of U.S. Muslims*] *Okay with violence against Americans*. These search results represent approximately 30% of the concordance. Furthermore, Muslims are accused of *discrimination* towards non-Muslims and *harboring anti-Semitic attitudes*.

Regarding those search results that do not seem to share, on face value, the negative discourse prosody of the others, file analyses of those concordances reveal that they do, when viewed in the wider context of the article. The *marginalised student populations* article is from the Daily Mail, and it tells of a Muslim student body in the University of Maryland making a “long list of demands” of the university authorities, which includes a request for prayer rooms in “every major campus building”, a shuttle-bus service to a local mosque and a commitment not to participate in a “nation-wide Muslim registry”. The use of the noun *demands* suggests that the Muslim students were being demanding and confrontational, when there was no evidence offered to support that allegation.

This corpus analysis was undertaken to ascertain if there are any negative discourses concerning Muslims on the Breitbart News website, and the results of the analysis show that there are. The primary discourse centers on Muslim immigration, which is portrayed as being a political, cultural and physical threat to non-Muslims in the West, with references made to conspiracy theories which argue that there is a hidden plan to turn the USA into a Muslim caliphate, which is in keeping with the beliefs for former Breitbart CEO Steve Bannon. Suspicions that the use of large numbers and

quantifiers revealed in both the frequency analysis and the collocate analysis are evidence of *aggregation* are borne out in the concordance analysis. Muslims are portrayed as being violent through language such as *terrorism* and *Muslim rape culture*, *bullying*, *ticking time bombs*, and *assailants*. What is highly significant about the results of the concordance analysis is that there are no references to Muslims which can be considered positive, or, indeed, even neutral.

Mexican Corpus

Frequencies

This corpus was built by searching Breitbart News using the lexical items *Mexican(s)*. After cleaning out grammar and non-salient words, it was possible to identify discourses of criminality and politics. *Mexican* (n=450) was the most frequent item, yet *Mexicans* (n=19) was 258th. The second most frequent was *cartel(s)* (n=402). *Texas* (n=242), *Mexico* (n=221), *border* (n=172), and *drug(s)* (n=156) were at 3rd, 4th, 6th and 7th respectively. Already, possible discourses are emerging. The prevalence and similar frequency of these four lexical items suggests a focus on the cross-border drug trade between Mexico and the USA. Also, the high frequency of *Breitbart* (n=180) at 5th might be explained by the convention in the journalistic register of self referencing in articles (e.g. ‘Breitbart News asked’; ‘she spoke to Breitbart News’, etc). The drug crime discourse is further evidenced by numerous entries in the list of top 35 most frequent lexical items (Appendix 3): *authorities* (n=113); *Zetas* (n=83) (a cartel); *police* (n=69); *gunmen* (n=58); *enforcement* (n=54); *Gulf* (n=56) (a cartel); *law* (n=49); *criminal* (n=48); *heroin* (n=45); *prison* (n=44); *murder* (n=42); and *illegal* (n=41). There is evidence of a political discourse with *Trump* (n=138), *state* (n=121), *authorities* (n=113), *government* (n=88), *federal* (n=68), and *president* (n=68) all present in the top 16. The lexical item *wall* (n=38) also appears, suggesting a discourse surrounding President Trump’s policy of building a border wall between the USA and Mexico.

Clusters

Clusters were sought for the lexical terms *Mexican(s)*. Minimum and maximum cluster sizes were set at 2 and 3 respectively, and the minimum frequency was set to 6. The cluster types mirrored, to some degree the possible discourses identified in the lexical frequency list above. *Mexican cartels* (n=51), *Mexican cartel* (n=28), *Mexican drug cartels* (n=19), *Mexican mafia* (n=7), and *Mexican TCOs* (Transnational Crime Organisation) (n=6), *Mexican border* (n=12), support previous evidence of a discourse relating to cross-border drug trafficking between the Mexico and the USA. The presence of *Mexican president* (n=34), *Mexican President Enrique* (n=16), *Mexican government* (n=21), *Mexican state* (n=11), *Mexican politician* (n=9), support previous evidence of a discourse relating to Mexican politics. Cluster types relating to the Mexican military were found, which might be concerned with a Mexican government response to the activities of the cartels (see screenshot below):

Rank	Freq	Range	Cluster
1	34	1	mexican president
2	31	1	mexican cartels
3	29	1	mexican drug
4	28	1	mexican cartel
5	24	1	mexican authorities
6	21	1	mexican government
7	19	1	mexican drug cartels
8	16	1	mexican president-enrique
9	13	1	mexican marine
10	12	1	mexican border
11	11	1	mexican federal
12	11	1	mexican marines
13	11	1	mexican state
14	10	1	mexican flag
15	10	1	mexican military
16	9	1	mexican national
17	9	1	mexican politician
18	9	1	mexican state of
19	8	1	mexican navy
20	7	1	mexican mafia
21	7	1	mexican president's
22	6	1	mexican nationalists
23	6	1	mexican tcos

Collocates:

Below is a table showing lists of most salient MI and t-score collocates selected on the basis of a minimum collocate frequency of 6. Collocates were

sorted by statistical value (highest first) and are ordered left to right in the table below:

Both collocate lists offer up further evidence of the discourses suggested above, with additional lexical items giving possibly greater insight into the nature of those discourses. Regarding criminality, new items such as *meth*, *[El] Chapo* (a cartel leader), *killed*, *kidnapping*, *[drug] lord*, and *graphic* give us greater detail about the nature of the crimes being reported. Concordance and direct file analyses show that *graphic* is used solely in its adverbial sense and is used to describe either videos of crimes linked or provided as part of the article, or descriptions of crimes themselves. The videos include footage of beheadings, male-male sexual assault as part of cartel conflict, and gun battles showing cartel members being shot to death. The appearance of the item *protesters* can be explained by its inclusion in articles about protests over gasoline prices in Mexico and by protests staged against Donald Trump over his policy to build a border wall.

Collocates of Mexican(s)	
MI	mafia navy marines marine TCOs nationals Enrique nationalism flags politician meth flag cartels president graphic helicopter Chapo Americans lord military arrested DEA authorities drug killed kidnapping
t-score	cartel(s) drug president authorities border Trump government Texas Enrique marine arrested Breitbart military marines officers flag Chapo mafia politician police navy protestors law TCOs meth enforcement

Concordances

The concordance list for this analysis was built from results of a search using the nodes Mexican(s). A table of 30 randomly chosen concordances was constructed by choosing approximately every 15th concordance of 469 concordance search hits (see Appendix 4). Concordances which provided a stronger indication of the presence of a discourse were chosen.

Expanding on the political discourse identified earlier, some concordances indicate a discourse alleging links between the Mexican government and

drug cartels: *Mexican Government Allows Top Cartel Bosses to Escape*; *Mexican president's softness towards Mexican drug cartels*; *Juarez Cartel financed the political campaign of Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto*; and *Nieto made no mention of the various Mexican drug cartels that have been responsible for*, all point to such a discourse. Other concordances show a discourse of political conflict between Donald Trump and Mexicans, namely the president, but also at a campaign rally in California, '*Anti-Trump Protests Rage, Mexican Flags Fly Outside CA Trump Rally*'. The opening paragraph following this headline reads:

Angry protesters swarmed outside a Donald Trump campaign rally in Costa Mesa, California Thursday night, drawing scores of police in riot gear and on horseback as Trump supporters responded singing God bless America and the Star Spangled Banner.

The juxtaposition of *angry* protestors waving Mexican flags *swarming*, and provoking a riot police and mounted police response, against Trump supporters singing US patriotic songs confirm this discourse, as does, *Trump is "stirring up" Americans against Mexicans, according to a version of [a Mexican presidential candidate's] speech*, and "*hostile act against Mexico*" [says Mexican politician].

The discourse of violent Mexican cartels in evidence with several references; *torture*; *gunmen*; *cartels continue to murder rivals*; *hitmen*, but a further discourse marking Mexicans more widely as being violent emerges: [Mexican gas protesters] *rioting, looting, and other acts of vandalism*; *Mexican model executed*; *Mexican Jihadi Was Radicalized near Texas Border*. Another related discourse emerges of Mexicans posing a threat to US citizens inside the USA: *WARNING GRAPHIC: 9 Reasons to fear Mexican Cartels more than ISIS*—this article warns:

"If They Want You, They Can Get You, Even In America—While public information on the cases is rare, Mexican drug cartels have a history of kidnapping people in the United States and taking them to Mexico."

Other results are: Middle America Waking Up to a Mexican Cartel Heroin Nightmare; US-based Mexican Mafia verifiably operating as hitmen; the influence of a Mexican drug cartel can be felt in your [neighborhood]; Families affiliated with various Mexican TCOs in Mexico vouch for US-based relatives and friends (who can engage in drug trafficking).

A final discourse identified relates to Mexican immigrants and immigration to the US. Two concordance hits suggest that the Mexican government are operating a policy to encourage immigration to the USA in order to repatriate dollar to boost its economy: *the many programs for encouraging and helping Mexicans to move north*; and *millions of Mexicans living in the U.S. send \$25 billion* (back to Mexico annually).

The analysis of the Mexican(s) corpus has revealed negative discourses relating to Mexican social actors: criminals, politicians, immigrants, as well as the general Mexican population. In the criminal discourse, cartels are sending large amounts of dangerous drugs to the USA, meth and heroin, and their activities in Mexico include extreme violence, including beheading and male-male sexual assault, and they are a direct threat to US citizens in the USA through violence and kidnapping. Furthermore, the Mexican government is corrupt and financially beholden to the cartels, ‘going soft’ on them and maybe allowing them a free hand on the border, ‘*almost complete lack of patrolling by Mexican federal authorities*’. On top of this they are encouraging Mexican citizens to emigrate to the USA. And with all of this, they oppose President Trump’s proposed border wall, which is designed to keep out these threats from Mexico.

Conclusion

This study set out to assess whether or not the website Breitbart News disseminates unjust racist discourses against Muslims and Mexicans. Corpus analysis found that there are discourses relating to both groups displaying significant negative prosody. The study examined two specialist corpora built from articles on the Breitbart News website and covering output from their US and London based offices. One corpus was comprised of articles

relating to Muslims, and the second corpus was comprised of articles relating to Mexicans. Both corpora were analysed for word and cluster frequencies, collocates and concordances.

Through the word and cluster frequency analyses, various possible unjust discourses were identified. Firstly, a discourse showing concerns about Muslim immigrants and refugees going to the USA and Europe became evident. The strategy of *aggregation* was used to suggest that overwhelming numbers of Muslims represent a threat to societies in Europe and the USA. Data also emerged suggesting a discourse surrounding President Trump's policies regarding Muslim immigrants and refugees. Further data emerged that suggested a discourse concerning allegations that have been made of a secret plan by Muslims to take over the USA and establish a caliphate there. Other data suggested a discourse which marked Muslims as being a violent threat. The cluster frequency analysis provided data which mirrored these findings, with the terms *Muslim Brotherhood*, *Muslim migrants/immigrants/refugees*, *Muslim ban*, and *Muslim rape* appearing, and MI and t-score collocate searches thereafter provided further evidence of the presence of these discourses, as well as providing some deeper insight into them. The concordance analysis confirmed the presence of these discourses and provided further evidence of their negative prosody. Muslims in general were portrayed as being a political, cultural and physical threat to non-Muslims in the West. There were references in various articles in which Muslims were accused of, for example, seeking to build a Caliphate in the West, implement Sharia Law, and commit "civilisation jihad" against the USA. Muslims, both foreign and domestic, were portrayed as being violent bigots by using language such as *terrorism* and *Muslim rape culture*, *bullying Jewish children*, *ticking time bombs*, and *assailants*. Throughout the corpus analysis, no discourses about Muslims were identified that were characterized by a positive prosody.

The discourses uncovered by the corpus analysis of the Mexicans corpus were somewhat different. The two major discourses identified were crime and immigration. The word and cluster frequency analysis identified discourses relating to drug cartels in Mexico, violence and US and Mexican

political and government actors. MI and t-score collocate searches provided further evidence of the presence of these discourses by identifying similar and additional data. The concordance analysis confirmed the presence of these discourses and uncovered data revealing negative prosody towards Mexican people and society in general. Throughout the corpus analysis, no discourses about Mexicans were identified that were characterized by a positive prosody.

The findings of the study are that Breitbart News propagates a significant number of racist discourses against Muslims and Mexicans, whether foreign or US citizens. These unjust discourses accuse Mexicans and Muslims of having inclinations towards violent crimes such as, terrorism, drug dealing, murder and rape and could result in both groups being treated as objects of fear. In the case of both groups, they are portrayed as threats Western society, and these threats are used as justification to limit or ban immigration from south America and Muslim countries. The allegations of racism made against the website, which are detailed in the introduction, have been verified as true.

Further research might take into consideration the wider context provided by the comments sections appended to each article. As Steven Bannon said, Breitbart News is a platform for the alt-right, and an analysis of the contents of the comments sections might give further insight into discourse emanating from that political constituency.

Regarding the findings of this study, the corpora were somewhat restricted in size due to the limit on searches imposed by the Breitbart website. Larger corpora might possibly have been built through perseverance, but time and resource restrictions militated against it. A much more extensive corpus analysis would be preferable in order to identify any further discourses, particularly relating to content relating to black people, Jews, and women, and to add veracity to the findings of this study.

Notes

- 1 Alt-right (Alternative Right) is a term coined in 2008 by Richard B. Spencer, an American white nationalist, to describe a movement largely centered on white

nationalism. Spencer described the movement as a ‘big tent’ which holds proponents of scientific racism, pseudo-libertarians, and ‘archofuturists’ (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). The SPLC describes the alt-right as “a set of far-right ideologies, groups and individuals who believe that “white identity” is under attack by multicultural forces using “political correctness” and “social justice” to undermine white people and “their” civilization”. The alt-right supports the mass deportation of undocumented immigrants from the USA and protectionist trade policies. It opposes feminism, diversity, gay rights, globalism, gun control and civil rights (Main, 2016).

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Rank	Frequency	Lexical item
1	845	muslim(s)
2	212	immigration
3	179	united
4	176	states
5	156	countries
6	156	trump
7	149	islamic
8	136	immigrants
9	131	people
10	122	(numeric) 000
11	122	million
12	119	country
13	113	state
14	109	population
15	97	islam
16	95	women
17	94	america
18	92	report
19	91	migrants
20	91	president
21	90	refugees
22	89	clinton
23	88	brotherhood
24	82	american
25	78	law
26	74	number
27	74	percent
28	70	order
29	70	world
30	69	government
31	67	ryan
32	67	security
33	67	terrorist
34	66	foreign
35	66	obama

Appendix 2

Hit	KWIC	
1	is the Right Punishment For Blasphemy? asks	Muslim-focused BBC Radio Network The BBC's
2	“political Islam” in power there, including the	Muslim Brotherhood. Members of that delegation, m
3	red, law last, elections irrelevant. DATA: Young	Muslims in the West Are a Ticking Time
4	.” While just 5 per cent of UK	Muslims said they would not report a terror
5	average of 55 percent of Western European	Muslims harbored antisemitic attitudes. Acceptance
6	one of every eight Muslims worldwide. The	Muslim population in each of these seven countries
7	many that illustrate the devastation that the	Muslim migrant influx is bringing to American comm
8	social media to claim they witnessed American	Muslims celebrating on 9/11. But you'd
9	titled roughly 149,000 migrants from predominantly	Muslim countries on green cards in 2014. Yet
10	send their children to public schools, where	Muslim children bully Jewish children, Canet said
11	church before the doors were locked, but	Muslim assailants stationed outside the church bui
12	revealed that 51 percent of U.S.	Muslims “agreed that ‘Muslims in America should ha
13	... Britain desperately wants to think of its	Muslims as versions of the Great British Bake
14	into the West. “We estimated that the	Muslim population of the UK would be approaching
15	one recent study found. Café Countersuit Accuses	Muslim Women of ‘Civilizational Jihad’ The attorne
16	tion of harassment, assault and discrimination by	Muslims against others —such as the Muslims who
17	to Demand Caliphate Over a thousand British	Muslims took to the streets of London on
18	to “marginalized student populations,” including	Muslims, Campus Reform reports. Other demands by
19	explicitly requires the president to be a	Muslim, and requires that “Islamic jurisprudence s
20	Party. Ryan has championed policies to expand	Muslim migration into the United States. Ryan has
21	Likely Voters Back Temporary Ban on All	Muslim Entry to United States Supporters and famil
22	admission of large flows of Sharia-sympathetic	Muslim migrants has posed several assimilation cha
23	the statement, “All further migration from mainly	Muslim countries should be stopped”. Apart from S
24	al matter, liberals and advocates of unrestricted	Muslim immigration want desperately to censor open
25	ombibus will bring in nearly 300,000	Muslim migrants in the next 12 months alone,
26	ilar explanation, blaming “societal pressures” on	Muslims for the hate crime hoaxes Muslim American
27	States.” Shock Poll: 51% of U.S.	Muslims Want Sharia; 25% Okay with Violence Agains
28	Muslim population. Pew noted that by 2050,	Muslims would outnumber Jews and nearly equal the
29	Announcement of Plan to Hire 10,000	Muslim ‘Refugees’ When Starbucks promised to hire
30	Should be Killed A self-identified Birmingham	Muslim has told the BBC that those who “

Appendix 3

Rank	Frequency	Lexical Item
1	450	mexican
2	402	cartel(s)
3	242	texas
4	221	mexico
5	180	breitbart
6	172	border
7	156	drug(s)
8	138	trump
9	121	state
10	113	authorities
11	97	reported
12	88	government
13	83	zetas
14	69	police
15	68	federal
16	68	president
17	64	officials
18	63	states
19	62	members
20	58	gunmen
21	56	gulf
22	54	enforcement
23	52	nieto
24	51	news
25	49	law
26	48	criminal
27	45	heroin
28	45	nuevo
29	45	officers
30	44	peña
31	44	prison
32	42	murder
33	41	illegal
34	39	donald
35	38	wall

Appendix 4

Hit	KWIC	
1		Mexican Government Allows Top Cartel Bosses to Escape
2	that Trump is “stirring up” Americans against	Mexicans , according to a version of his speech
3	of the Mexican president’s softness towards	Mexican drug cartels could fill hundreds of pages.
4	Juarez Cartel financed the political campaign of	Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto . The cartel m
5	President Donald Trump’s border wall . The	Mexican politician tried to use the stunt as
6	and torture three others . News outlets and	Mexican Navy officials have remained quiet about t
7	at the gunmen in mere seconds. The	Mexican military had been trying to arrest Juan
8	to humiliate them. In that property, the	Mexican marines found a large weapons cache that
9	terms are served. Anti-Trump Protests Rage,	Mexican Flags Fly Outside CA Trump Rally Angry
10	rioting, looting, and other acts of vandalism.	Mexican gas protest Most recently, in Monterrey,
11	Nieto made no mention of the various	Mexican drug cartels that have been responsible fo
12	by tweeting directly at him while onstage.	Mexican Model Executed in Front of Her Family
13	y to Nuevo León. Spanish Authorities: Arrested	Mexican Jihadi Was Radicalized near Texas Border
14	it a “hostile act against Mexico” . The	Mexican politician served as foreign minister for
15	. He can do so through Donald Trump. ”	Mexican Peso Down 30% Since Trump Began Campaign
16	Sharyl Attkisson made the shocking assertion that	Mexican cartels have infiltrated the U.S. military
17	Sergio Hernandez Guereca was shot on the	Mexican side when the agent was on U.
18	an almost complete lack of patrolling by	Mexican federal authorities , particularly in the o
19	time. Middle America Waking Up to a	Mexican Cartel Heroin Nightmare When most America
20	Breitbart Texas. For years, the deportation of	Mexican immigrants has caused problems due to the
21	of fireworks is its main industry. GRAPHIC:	Mexican Cartels Continue Murder of Rivals in Fight
22	passage refers to the same US-based	Mexican Mafia verifiably operating as hitmen and n
23	Mexican President Peña Nieto Congratulates Trump	Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto took to Twitt
24	evening, California Governor Jerry Brown said all	Mexicans, including illegal immigrants, are welcom
25	a mile-long tunnel. After the escape,	Mexican authorities arrested 23 prison guards and
26	he country. WARNING GRAPHIC: 9 Reasons to Fear	Mexican Cartels More than ISIS Mexican drug carte
27	which reveals that the influence of a	Mexican drug cartel can be felt in your [neighborhood]
28	ily and friends. Families affiliated with various	Mexican TCOs in Mexico vouch for US-based
29	””? Does the fact that the millions of	Mexicans living in the U.S. send \$25 billion
30	the many programs for encouraging and helping	Mexicans to move north , programs that provided “su