

# **“Colin Kaepernick Does Not Understand the Big Picture of His Country”**

A critical discourse analysis of Bill O'Reilly's representation of Colin Kaepernick on Fox News's Outnumbered

Bachelor's Thesis  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2016, then San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick started sitting, and then kneeling during the pre-game national anthem in order to bring attention to police violence toward African Americans. The protest was not immediately noticed, but once it was, it became a source for a divisive debate. Other players started joining Kaepernick, and the protest gained media attention. Now the right of NFL players to protest is a widely debated issue, and Kaepernick has not played professional football since early 2017.

This study will examine former Fox News anchor Bill O'Reilly's representation of Colin Kaepernick and the national anthem protest on *Outnumbered* in 2016. Fairclough's critical discourse analysis will be utilized to determine what linguistic and grammatical tools O'Reilly uses to depict Kaepernick. The socio-discursive context of the text will also be taken into account.

Fox News is the most popular cable news channel in the United States (Quinnipiac University Poll 2015). Previous research on Fox News's reporting have found it to espouse questionable views on race and social justice in the US (Mills 2017, Johnson et al. 2010). In covering the Ferguson protests and Hurricane Katrina, Fox News has offered divisive depictions of the black community. As Fairclough (1995b: 2) states, the media has great potential to influence public discussion, and this is why Fox News's coverage must be looked at critically.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the theories and past studies that inform the research done in this thesis. First, critical discourse analysis, or CDA, will be discussed. Theories presented

in some of the seminal as well as newer works in the field will be examined in order to give the reader a better understanding of how CDA views discourse and language. Next Fairclough's theories on media discourse and representation will be discussed. This is because understanding the role of the media in influencing public opinion is important when examining representation on the media. Finally, the author will discuss previous research on Fox News's media discourse and representation of minorities. This is relevant in giving context to the larger socio-discursive environment in which the data examined in this study was produced.

### **2.1. Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis**

Blommaert (2005: 3) defines discourse as "all forms of meaningful semiotic activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use." Discourse is not just a set of linguistic structures, it is dynamic, flexible and activity-centered. Fairclough (1992: 63-64) argues that discourse is a social practice and that is both shaped and constrained by social structure. In other words, there is a direct relationship between discourse and social structure. The understanding of discourse as something more than words and sentences has evolved over the years as linguists have taken part in interdisciplinary research with scholars from fields including literary analysis, semiotics, philosophy, anthropology, and sociology (Blommaert 2005: 2). This research has led to the understanding that discourse is a form of general semiotic behavior that "does things".

Language does things. Concrete examples of this are language being used to make promises, open meetings, propose, argue, and pray (Gee 2010: 2-3). Language allows people to take on identities – like doctors, lawyers, and siblings. These identities do not represent the fundamental nature of any person, but rather they are ways of being in the world. Something else language allows for is the allocation of social good. Social good is anything people in a given society want and value (Gee 2010: 5). Gee (2010: 7) argues that social goods are always at stake when language is used, and this leads to the risk of individuals being seen as winners or losers in the context of the language being used. An example of this is labeling the partnerships of gay couples' civil unions instead of marriages; this labelling denies gay couples the social good of marriage. Language is, therefore, inherently political, seeing as it can be used essentially as a tool for valuing things.

According to Fairclough (1995a: 21), CDA is an analytical framework for studying the relationship between language, power, and ideology. Although the division is not absolute, CDA differs from non-critical discourse analysis in that it not only describes discursive practice, but also sheds light on how power relations and ideology shape discourse and how discourse in turn has an effect in social identities, social relations, as well as systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough 1992: 12). CDA can also be used to point out the unequal distribution of social goods as well as those who benefits and who is disadvantaged in this process (Gee 2010: 10). Despite the traditional divide between critical and descriptive discourse analysis, the inherently political nature of language has lead Gee (2010: 9) to argue that all discourse analysis should be critical.

## **2.2. Representation in the Media**

Van Dijk (1993: 254) argues that understanding power and dominance is an imperative presupposition of competent discourse analysis. Power involves control, that is, a powerful group limiting another's freedom of action. Today, this control often takes a cognitive form. This can be seen in language being used to persuade and manipulate in order to bring others to agree with one's own interests. This is what makes power such an inherent part of shaping discourse (Van Dijk 1993: 254). Not only are media narratives shaped by power and ideology, but they are also themselves a potent force. Fairclough (1995b: 2) states that mass media has the power to influence knowledge, belief, values, social relations, and social identities. This leads Fairclough (1995b: 2) to argue that analysis of media language is an important element within research on contemporary social and cultural change.

Discourse representation in the media is a socially important ideological process (Fairclough 1995a: 65). This is very much due to the fact that as stated earlier, discourse is itself the product of social structure – language in action. Language is shaped by power relations and ideology and is used to allocate social good. Therefore, discourse representation, and representation in general in the media is always a product of interpreting and representing the subject in one way rather than another (Fairclough 1995a: 54).

“The truth”, as Fairclough (1995b: 47) states is a problematic concept and a source for an endless and futile debate. But in comparing representations, however, one is able to determine differences in their partiality, completeness, and interestedness. Moreover, when comparing representations, one can often come to a conclusion concerning the relative truthfulness or untruthfulness of the representation. The counterargument here is that even the person making the evaluation on a representation’s truthfulness is making their claim from a certain point of view. However, Fairclough (1995b: 47) argues that here one must distinguish between how public-spirited or self-serving the person making the evaluation is – in other words – people are capable of somewhat objective media analysis when acting out of public-spiritedness.

This leads to a few important questions that are central to media analysis: what is being included and what is left out as well as what is being foregrounded and what is backgrounded. In addition to these questions, one must also consider the factors and interests driving certain representations (Fairclough 1995b: 47). This is where ideology comes into play. Fairclough (1995b: 14) defines ideologies as propositions that manifest as assumption in text that contribute to producing and reproducing unequal power relations. These assumptions are often presupposed, or taken for granted, by author of a text.

In short, the role the mass media in influencing public opinion carries the implication that the public is liable to ideological manipulation. Certain news corporations are capable in framing events in certain ways that benefit their political agenda. This is why it is crucial we scrutinize narratives in the media. The next subsection will deal with previous studies that have found Fox News to frame events in a way that benefits conservative politics.

### **2.3. Fox News and Conservative Discourse**

Fox News is an American news outlet owned by Rupert Murdoch and considered to represent a conservative ideology (Mills 2017: 40). According to a 2015 poll, Fox News is the most trusted news outlet in the United States. Furthermore, Fox News is the most trusted news outlet among Republican voters, with 58% of GOP voters stating they trust Fox the most (Quinnipiac University Poll 2015). In addition to leaning conservative, previous studies of Fox News’s coverage indicate

that it has represented issues in racially divisive terms at times. This subsection will outline two previous studies in which Fox News has been found to espouse views that are politically charged.

Mills (2017) found that in covering the Ferguson protests of 2014, Fox News consistently relied on five different discourses that framed the issue in a light that was unfavorable to the black community. To summarize the events of the Ferguson protests: Michael Brown, a black unarmed teenager was shot dead by police officer Darren Wilson on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri. The incident incited widespread unrest in Ferguson and across the country (Mills 2017: 40). According to Mills (2017: 41), news coverage on Fox News aimed to shift blame onto Brown, the victim, by emphasizing his physicality and stature as well as describing him as violent and belligerent, disregarding the fact that he was an unarmed teenager. In addition, coverage sought to undermine prominent US officials' credibility by depicting President Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder as siding with protesters over law enforcement, while often bringing up the fact that Obama was on vacation when the shooting happened (Mills 2017: 44). In addition to these narratives, also present in Fox News's rhetoric was a tendency to blame the black community, which was painted as "other" and rampant with "black-on-black crime" exacerbated by "weak family structures" (Mills 2017: 46-49). Finally, Mills (2017:51) discusses the discourse of "the politics of racial division", which Fox News uses to discredit the issues of racism that were brought up around the shooting. Protest for racial justice and the Obama Administration's comments on the issue were represented as feeding racial discord and the breakdown of trust between minority communities and police.

Johnson et al. (2010) looked at interjournalistic post-Hurricane Katrina discourse about African Americans on several major cable news channels including Fox. Public, on-air conversations between journalists after the hurricane were analyzed in the study in order to identify how semantic items reflected racial ideology. In attempting to refute claims that the Bush Administration's sluggish reaction to the crisis reflected racial resentment, former Fox News host, Bill O'Reilly uses flawed logic, arguing that President Bush would have ordered federal rescue workers to delay efforts if he did not care about black people, and that this is an inconceivable scenario. O'Reilly's conclusion is that George Bush must care about black people (Johnson et al. 2010: 251). O'Reilly also framed law enforcement being given orders to shoot to kill in order to deter post-Katrina

looters by shifting the blame from the state and governor to the looters themselves (Johnson et al. 2010: 251). The looters, who were predominantly black and low-income, were depicted as the Other and juxtaposed with Us, white people and the state. The implication being that blame should be put on looters instead of the state and the Governor.

These previous studies demonstrate a tendency in Fox News's rhetoric to represent black Americans in what they deem at best problematic, and at worst, racist terms. Their relevance to the study at hand is in setting a precedent for racially divisive rhetoric in Fox News's reporting, and they inform the discursive and social context in which the discourse being examined in this study has been produced.

### **3. PRESENT STUDY**

#### **3.1. Research Aim and Question**

The aim of this study is to determine how Fox News anchor Bill O'Reilly uses language to build a narrative around Colin Kaepernick and the NFL national anthem protest. A video clip of the anchor discussing the subject will be analyzed in order to answer the following research questions:

1. How does Bill O'Reilly represent Colin Kaepernick?
2. What are the discursive and social contexts of O'Reilly's text?

Fox News has been covering Kaepernick since the national anthem protest story broke in 2016. By applying research questions to the clip of O'Reilly discussing the NFL national anthem protest, the author intends to determine how the anchor uses linguistic and discursive tools in his portrayal of Kaepernick and the effect these tools have. The author will also examine the larger context that the clip is part of. Relevant to this question is how and who the clip was made for, as well as the larger discourses and social practices the clip reflects.



As stated in the background chapter of this study, Fox News's past coverage of issues such as been found to be politically charged. Despite its slogan, *Fair and Balanced*, previous studies have suggested that Fox's coverage of events such as the Michael Brown shooting, Ferguson, and looting during Hurricane Katrina has been racially divisive and unfavorable toward Democratic politicians and the Black Community as a whole (Mills 2017 and Johnson et al. 2010). The author expects similar themes to come up in analysis over the course of this study.

### **3.2. Data**

This study's data consists of a video clip posted on YouTube by a channel run by Fox News. In conducting this research, the author was interested specifically in how social justice issues are framed by conservatives for a conservative audience. Because of this, Fox News's rhetoric is examined alone and not contrasted with examples from more liberal media.

Because of the limited scope of this study, only one video clip is analyzed. The clip is three minutes and forty-three seconds long was posted on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016. It features Bill O'Reilly on the Fox News talk show *Outnumbered*. The data was chosen for the relevance and prominence of the speaker in the clip: when it was still on the air, Bill O'Reilly's program, *The O'Reilly Factor* was long the most watched cable news shows in the United States, averaging 2.8 million nightly viewers in 2015 (Guthrie 2015). O'Reilly was therefore one of Fox News's most popular personalities at the time when the clip from *Outnumbered* was filmed.

The aforementioned video data has been transcribed for analysis in this study. This was done for two reasons, the first being that this study focuses on the analysis of textual features and transcribing the data from video to writing is appropriate for the purpose of this study. This is not a multimodal analysis and video data is therefore not necessary.

Ethical considerations in studies focused on the analysis of publicly available material are relatively straightforward. Use of copyrighted material in research falls under section 22 of Finnish copyright law (404/1961), which states that published material may be cited in necessary length providing that the source and author are mentioned. The data analyzed in this study is owned by

Fox News and has been posted on YouTube. It is quoted several times in this study, and in addition, a transcription of the text is included in the appendix. Accordingly, the source of the data is included in the bibliography and cited in the text.

### **3.3. Methods**

In this study, the author will combine Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional framework for critical discourse analysis with analytical tools provided by Gee (2014). Fairclough's (1992: 62) three dimensions of analysis are text, discursive practice, and social practice. Text analysis is concerned with features such as vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure (Fairclough 1992: 75) whereas analysis of discursive practice examines the processes of text production, distribution, consumption, as well as interpretation (Fairclough 1992: 78). Fairclough's (1992: 86) third dimension of analysis is concerned with discourse as social practice i.e. discourse in relation to power, ideology and hegemony.

In addition to Fairclough's framework, the author will use five tools provided by Gee (2014) to examine my data. In examining text features, the author will use Gee's *Doing and Not Just Saying Tool*, *This Way and Not That Way Tool*, *Cohesion Tool*, and *Politics Building Tool*. The first tool, the *Doing and Not Just Saying Tool* is used to examine speech acts and the function of an utterance as well as the action it seeks to accomplish (Gee 2014: 50). The second tool, the *This Way and Not That Way Tool*, is used to analyze why something is said in a certain way and not another way (Gee 2014: 63). Gee (2014:63) states that the *Doing Not Saying Tool* and *This Way and Not That Way Tool* are not really separate tools, but rather complementary ways of looking at data, both giving slightly different angles. The author will also use the cohesion tool (Gee 2014: 137) to determine how cohesive devices are used to connect and communicate information in the text. The last text analysis tool, Gee's *Politics Building Tool* is used to determine the distribution of social goods in speech (Gee 2014: 124-127). This tool is used to examine how words and grammar are used to construct social good, as well as to build a viewpoint of how social good is supposed to be allotted.

One final tool from Gee (2014) will be used to complement Fairclough's framework for analysis of discourse practice. Gee (2014: 109) writes that people use language to take on certain identities, and that people in a certain identity group recognize one another partially through their use of language. The *Identities Building Tool* is used to analyze what identities a speaker is trying to exhibit. This tool is used in the analysis to identify O'Reilly's representation of himself and of Kaepernick in relation to a larger discourse type and its interpretation.

The final dimension of analysis, social practice is concerned with examining how the discourse practice is informed by and connected to the social practice. By examining the nature of the social practice, we can see why the discourse has come to be shaped the way it is (Fairclough 1992: 237). The final part of the analysis will deal with connecting Social and political identities identified with the use of Gee's tools to the larger socio-political environment in which this discourse exists.

## **4. ANALYSIS**

### **4.1. Text Analysis**

Data analysis will begin with an analysis of text features. In addition to looking at O'Reilly's use of vocabulary, the author uses Gee's Doing and Not Just Saying Tool (Gee 2014: 52), This Way and Not That Way Tool, Cohesion Tool (Gee 2014: 137), and Politics Building Tool (Gee 2014: 124-127) to analyze the text.

To begin, the Doing Not Saying and This Way Not That Ways tools will be used to analyze speech acts. The data is a video clip from a news and current events program which seeks to inform its viewers. Many of the speech acts found are not only explanatory and informative, but also seek to condemn Kaepernick outright and to justify their own position. In order to justify criticism towards Kaepernick, some speech acts also seek to define certain norms and values as American, and by extension label breaking these norms as un-American. In addition to condemning Kaepernick's behavior as disrespectful and unpatriotic, many speech acts also portray him as unintelligent and misguided.

- (1) 14. **O'Reilly:** It is my contention, and I could be wrong, that uh, Colin Kaepernick does not  
 15. understand the big picture of his country.  
 16. I'll be very interested to see these so-called policy suggestions that he comes out with.  
 17. Um, and I'll take them seriously I mean I'll look at them, but if I were sitting with Colin  
 18. Kaepernick right now on outnumbered, alright, and you had to bet on who was going to  
 19. win the debate about patriotism in America.  
 20. Who are you going to put your money down on, alright? (Fox News 2016)

At first glance the speech acts present in lines 14-20 (example 1) seem to simply serve the purpose of informing the audience of O'Reilly's opinions. However, in addition to serving this initial purpose, they also seek to undermine Kaepernick's intelligence while asserting O'Reilly's expertise. In doing this O'Reilly skillfully uses common rhetorical devices to craft speech acts that deliver several meanings to the viewer.

O'Reilly notably begins by stating that what he is about to say is his contention and could be wrong. This speech act is an example of understatement (Harris 2013: 8) and seeks to make O'Reilly appear humble before the audience. Harris (2013: 9) states that the use of understatement allows one to show respect for an audience's understanding and humbly steer them right. It is difficult to persuade someone who is offended.

After underlining that what he is about to say is his opinion, O'Reilly states that he does not think Colin Kaepernick understands the big picture of America, a statement that overtly questions Kaepernick's intelligence. Using the This Way Not That Way Tool, it is clear that O'Reilly could have made his statement more neutral. He could have said "*Kaepernick is not taking into account the big picture*". This would tell the audience that the problem is not with Kaepernick's intelligence, but in his assessment of the situation. Instead, O'Reilly says Kaepernick does not "understand" which implies that he is not intelligent enough to understand the discourse he is taking part in.

O'Reilly follows up by stating he would be interested in seeing Kaepernick's "so-called policy proposals" and that he would take them seriously. Gee's (2014: 135) cohesion tool, which is used to ask how cohesion is used to connect pieces of information can be used here to determine that O'Reilly is actually signaling to the audience that the proposals should not, in fact, be taken

seriously. He uses the modifier “so-called” to describe Kaepernick’s policy proposals, which tells the viewer that it is his presupposition that the proposals are not serious. In addition, using the This Way Not That Way Tool it can be demonstrated further that O’Reilly’s statement is not neutral: if O’Reilly thought Kaepernick’s proposals were legitimate, he would simply call them proposals. Therefore, by calling Kaepernick’s proposals “so-called proposals”, O’Reilly uses his speech act to imply to the audience that they are not to be taken seriously.

O’Reilly further belittles Kaepernick’s policy proposals by stating he will “look at them”. Initially this may not seem noteworthy, but O’Reilly’s word choice must be considered more closely. He does not promise to read Kaepernick’s proposals, nor does he promise to study, examine, or contemplate them. He merely promises to look at them. This tells the viewer that there is not much to read into in Kaepernick’s proposals, and they can be looked at, much like one can look at a child’s homework.

O’Reilly ends this section with a rhetorical question on line 20. According to Harris (2013: 21) a rhetorical question is a question that is not answered by the author because the answer is obvious. They are used for emphasis or drawing a conclusion from facts that have been presented. In this case, O’Reilly has spent several lines discussing Kaepernick while representing him as unintelligent. He ends by asking rhetorically who would win a debate on patriotism in America. The intended answer is obvious after looking at the context: O’Reilly is the most popular anchor on the most trusted news network in America, and Kaepernick, O’Reilly has just essentially said, does not understand enough to really know what he is talking about. O’Reilly uses this rhetorical question to emphatically end the first section of his monologue, in which he establishes the power relation between himself and Kaepernick. He has established that he is an expert and that Kaepernick is a novice. He then moves on to the second part of his monologue, in which he not only seemingly disseminates Kaepernick’s arguments, but also paints him in a more damning light.

- (2) 21. And it’s, here, here is the problem with Kaepernick.  
 22. When you put yourself in a position to criticise and disrespect, which is exactly what he  
 23. did, the national anthem and your flag on 9/11, on that day, then you better have a pretty  
 24. damn good reason why you’re doing it.  
 25. Now if he’s going to fall back on that some black people have been killed by police, fine,  
 26. that happens, it happens, and it should not happen, alright, and it should be investigated,  
 27. but it happens very, very seldomly, alright.

28. All the stats, all the studies show that, alright.
29. So, the stats are we're not a nation engaged in an act of trying to put down African
30. Americans.
31. That's not happening.
32. So, if you have a beef, an individual beef, I want to hear it.
33. If you're going to disrespect the whole country, then there's a problem. (Fox News 2016)

On lines 21-33 (example 2) O'Reilly addresses the reason for Kaepernick's protest, stating that one must have a good reason to "criticise and disrespect" the national anthem and flag on 9/11. Once again, using the This Way Not That Way Tool one can determine that O'Reilly describes Kaepernick's actions in negative instead of neutral terms: criticize and disrespect are lexical choices meant to paint a harsh image of Kaepernick. O'Reilly could have said that Kaepernick is protesting or he could have used a more positive term such as bringing attention to. However, he deliberately chose to represent Kaepernick's actions as disrespectful toward the flag, national anthem and country, all on 9/11

Later, O'Reilly concedes that black people are killed by police, however, he dismisses the number of African Americans killed by police as negligible and rejects the premise of Kaepernick's argument by claiming that black people are killed by police very *seldomly*. O'Reilly represents Kaepernick's argument in a form that allows him to easily refute it, stating: "*some* black people have been killed by police". Once again, the cohesion tool can be used to examine this phrase. In this case, the determiner *some* in *some black people* suggests that the number of black people killed is small. Essentially, O'Reilly is already playing down the number of black people killed by police when he introduces Kaepernick's argument.

O'Reilly states that the United States is not a nation engaged in the act of trying to put down African Americans: a statement that challenges Kaepernick's thesis directly. O'Reilly continues challenging Kaepernick, stating that he wants to hear his "individual beef", if there is one. O'Reilly also states that he takes issue with "disrespecting the whole country". These speech acts serve complimentary purposes in signalling to the viewer. The first sentence seemingly disproves the basis for Kaepernick's protest, while the second and third sentences assault his character. O'Reilly demanding that Kaepernick state his individual beef implies to the viewer that there is none: he is therefore protesting without a real reason and disrespecting the whole country in the process. This signals to the viewer that Kaepernick is acting immorally and without cause.

O'Reilly makes lexical choices that allot social good in the text. Social Good, according to Gee (2010: 5) is anything that people consider to be valuable or desirable in society. The Politics Building Tool (Gee 2014: 126) is used to look at how grammar and lexical choices are used to construct and distribute social good. For example, in describing protesting the national anthem and flag as *disrespecting* them on line 22, O'Reilly places social good in a certain type of behaviour. Specifically, he is stating that protesting in the presence of the flag and national anthem is immoral and undesirable behaviour while being respectful is good and moral. O'Reilly's idea of social good is informed by presuppositions that spring from the ideology he holds. Ideology and presupposition are dealt with in more depth in the next section, but in short, O'Reilly is practising a conservative ideology that viewers identify with when he assigns social good in the text.

#### **4.2. Discourse Practice**

Fairclough states that discourse practice involves processes of text production, distribution and consumption (1995a: 78). First the author will look at the role of ideology in text production. Fox News's conservative ideology (Mills 2017: 40) informs the text of the data and gives meaning to many of the statements O'Reilly makes. This ideology is clearly connected to the consumption phase of the text. Media can greatly influence public opinion (Fairclough 1995b: 2), and viewers may be expected to digest and agree with the ideology of the text. In addition to production and consumption, ideology is also relevant to text distribution. Being the most watched cable news channel in the United States (Quinnipiac University Poll 2015), Fox News is in a good position to widely distribute ideologically biased media.

Interdiscursivity, coherence, and discourse representation as well as presupposition must be taken into account when analyzing discourse practice (Fairclough 1995a: 232-233). Characterizing the discourse sample in its entirety, examining the interpretive implications of the discourses drawn upon in the text, as well as examining what kind of meanings are represented as well as the kinds of presuppositions carried are all relevant to analysis. As a whole, the text can be characterized as conservative discourse: O'Reilly draws on a number of discourse types (Fairclough 1995a: 232) including patriotism, 9/11, and respect for American troops while exhibiting a conservative

identity and appealing to conservative politics over the course of the text. He begins by presenting himself as an authority on patriotism in America, stating that he would win a debate with Kaepernick on the subject. Meanwhile, O'Reilly consistently portrays Kaepernick as ignorant and unaware of the full context of the issues he is raising.

Gee's (2014: 109) Identities Building Tool, is used to determine what socially recognizable identity or identities a speaker is exhibiting in a text. In this case, O'Reilly uses topics such as 9/11 and American troops to claim identities that are related to patriotism and conservatism for himself. Kaepernick, on the other hand, is represented as unpatriotic and disrespectful.

- (3)
21. And it's, here, here is the problem with Kaepernick.
  22. When you put yourself in a position to criticize and disrespect, which is exactly what he
  23. did, the national anthem and your flag on 9/11, on that day, then you better have a pretty
  24. damn good reason why you're doing it. (Fox News 2016)

In referencing 9/11 (example 3), O'Reilly includes the presuppositions that it is morally wrong to carry out political protests on the day in question without an exceptional cause. He even states this outright. O'Reilly also states that one must have a "damn good reason" to "criticise and disrespect the national anthem and flag" on the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. By bringing up 9/11, an event that to many Americans is sacred, he positions Kaepernick as the opposite of patriotic, an identity which he already claimed for himself.

- (4)
38. O'Reilly: (Little kids) Right, because they don't understand the nobility of the nation.
  39. One of the reasons I wrote Killing the rising sun.
  40. To show the world, and Americans, that
  41. individual Americans gave their lives to free tens of millions of people all over the world. (Fox News 2016)

O'Reilly bringing up American troops (example 4) also has implications for how viewers perceive Colin Kaepernick. By juxtaposing Kaepernick's protest with the sacrifice of American soldiers, O'Reilly seeks to identify Kaepernick chiefly as ignorant of American nobility, but also as unpatriotic in general. O'Reilly starts by implying that Kaepernick is ignorant, stating that he does not understand the nobility of the American nation. This echoes his earlier statement of "Colin Kaepernick does not understand the big picture of his country.". According to O'Reilly, American nobility stems from the fact that individual Americans have fought wars on behalf of global



freedom. O'Reilly's statement "individual Americans gave their lives to free tens of millions of people all over the world" carries ideological presuppositions that give meaning to his words. These presuppositions include: The United States always goes to war to fight for freedom around the world and that individual American soldiers killed in combat have sacrificed themselves for freedom around the world. These presuppositions set up respect for American troops as a moral imperative that is taken for granted O'Reilly's ideology. By bringing up respect for the troops, O'Reilly is signalling that Kaepernick's protest of the symbols of the American state, the national anthem and flag, directly disrespects American soldiers killed in combat over decades. Therefore, O'Reilly is implying that Kaepernick is not only acting ignorantly, but also unpatriotically.

People consume media with a certain mindset (Fairclough 1995a: 79). In this case, it can be argued that since the text is presented as news and airs on a cable news channel, those watching are seeking to gain information. This gives O'Reilly power to set his own narrative about Colin Kaepernick and the NFL national anthem protest.

O'Reilly's presuppositions reflect the conservative ideology he is espousing. In portraying himself as patriotic and Kaepernick as unpatriotic, O'Reilly's arguments carry presuppositions that emanate from his own, and from Fox News's conservative ideology. The representations found in the text are stark, and based on this, the author would argue that a desire to turn public opinion against Kaepernick may be a motivating factor in these depictions. This is backed up by the fact that Fox News is a very popular news source with the potential to influence a large number of people and by the fact that, as stated several times in this study, Fox News is considered to represent a conservative ideology.

### **4.3. Social Practice**

A full discussion of O'Reilly's representation would require taking into account a broad range of American discourses on politics and race. However, due to the limited scope of this study, the discussion of social practice in this section will be restricted. The author will seek to examine the Bill O'Reilly's ideology in the context of power relations and hegemonic struggle. Questions that arise in this section are difficult to answer definitively in a study of this scale, but possible interpretations will be discussed.

Fairclough (1995a: 87) argues that ideologies are significations and constructions of reality. In other words, they allow us to understand the physical world, social relations, and social identities. Ideologies embedded in discourse are most effective when they become naturalized and accepted as “common sense” (Fairclough 1995a: 87). Fairclough (1995a: 92) also introduces the concept of hegemony, which is leadership and domination of the social, cultural, economic, and ideological domains of society. It is the center of a struggle over points of instability between different classes and blocs. Discourse practice is part of a hegemonic struggle, which contributes to the existing order of discourse, and draws on existing social and power relations (Fairclough 1995a: 93).

Based on Fairclough’s writings on ideology and hegemony, the author would argue that the Bill O’Reilly’s representation of Colin Kaepernick as well as the identities and ideologies O’Reilly exhibits are in line with Fox News’s conservative leaning. This ideology is more apparent at certain times in the text than others, and occasionally it manifests rather subtly. For example, in stating that American soldiers have given their lives to free tens of million of people in the world on line 41, O’Reilly makes this statement very matter-of-factly and does not acknowledge the ideological presuppositions that back his statement up. This is an example of O’Reilly’s ideology being naturalized and accepted as common sense.

Other questions arise regarding Fox News, conservative discourse, and racism in the United States. The US has a complicated history of racism, and Colin Kaepernick and the NFL national anthem protest are now part of that history. In discussing Kaepernick the way he does, O’Reilly is seeking to control the narrative. He states that the United States is not a nation engaged in the act of putting down black people on lines 29 and 30. Clearly, O’Reilly thinks that Kaepernick’s protest is misplaced, and that he is being disrespectful without real cause. O’Reilly also represents Kaepernick as ignorant and unaware of the “big picture”. This raises wider questions regarding the representation of black men and athletes in the media. Would O’Reilly take the same tone if a white athlete was in question? How are black men represented in the media?

## 5. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to determine how Bill O'Reilly represents Colin Kaepernick on *Outnumbered*. By utilizing the methodology of critical discourse analysis and tools provided by Gee (2014), the author examined how O'Reilly uses language to represent Kaepernick as well as the socio-discursive context of this representation.

O'Reilly consistently depicted Kaepernick as not having enough knowledge to take part in the debate he is participating in. Meanwhile, he cast himself as an authority on patriotism, and positioning himself in this way allowed O'Reilly to set the narrative. O'Reilly practiced his ideology visibly in the text. He brought up 9/11 and American soldiers, neither of which was directly related to the national anthem protest. However, bringing these subjects up served to further make Kaepernick look unpatriotic. The effect of O'Reilly's text was that it made him look patriotic and Kaepernick ignorant and disrespectful. The text is also representative of O'Reilly's and by extension, Fox News's conservative ideology.

Because of the great influence it holds, media needs to be looked at critically, and that is what this study does. This study's findings are valuable contributions to discussions on politics, race, representation in the media, and the acceptable bounds of protest. This study also demonstrates the effect ideology can have on a text. It is important to take the role of ideology in reporting on Fox News into account, especially since it is the most popular cable news channel in the US.

Because of the limited scope of this thesis, the study focused only on the text analysis of one video. Future studies could incorporate multimodal analysis in order to gain a larger picture of what is being communicated. Future studies could also compare more than one video for possible contrasts. Videos from different news sources could serve to give a larger picture of the debate in question.

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## 7. APPENDIX

### **O'Reilly: Kaepernick missing the big picture of his country**

1. **Host 1:** All right an update now to the firestorm over the 49er's backup quarterback
2. Colin Kaepernick refusing to stand for the national anthem.
3. Kaepernick says he's met with human rights lawyers and community activists in recent
4. week and expects to release a list of policy proposals soon.
5. Kaepernick telling USA Today, quote: "I don't want to kneel forever...
6. I want these things to change.
7. I do know it will be a process, and it is not something that will change overnight.
8. But I think there are some major changes that we can make that are very reasonable."
9. Kaepernick also recently announced he plans to make a one-million-dollar donation to
10. groups fighting racial injustice, uh, Bill O'Reilly I know that you have as to offer Colin
11. Kaepernick a copy of your new book, Killing the Rising Sun
12. **O'Reilly:** Yeah, (were going to send it to him).
13. (how America vanquished World War II Japan.)
14. **O'Reilly:** It is my contention, and I could be wrong, that uh, Colin Kaepernick does not
15. understand the big picture of his country.
16. I'll be very interested to see these so-called policy suggestions that he comes out with.
17. Um, and I'll take them seriously I mean I'll look at them, but if I were sitting with Colin
18. Kaepernick right now on outnumbered, alright, and you had to bet on who was going to
19. win the debate about patriotism in America.
20. Who are you going to put your money down on, alright?
21. And it's, here, here is the problem with Kaepernick.
22. When you put yourself in a position to criticize and disrespect, which is exactly what he
23. did, the national anthem and your flag on 9/11, on that day, then you better have a pretty
24. damn good reason why you're doing it.

25. Now if he's going to fall back on that some black people have been killed by police, fine,  
26. that happens, it happens, and it should not happen, alright, and it should be investigated,  
27. but it happens very, very seldomly, alright.
28. All the stats, all the studies show that, alright.
29. So, the stats are we're not a nation engaged in an act of trying to put down African  
30. Americans.
31. That's not happening.
32. So, if you have a beef, an individual beef, I want to hear it.
33. If you're going to disrespect the whole country, then there's a problem.
34. **Host 2:** It wasn't just Colin Kaepernick, so it's, after he did it now other players are  
35. (doing some sort of it)
36. **O'Reilly:** (Little kids)
37. **Host 2:** (Now little kids) in high school are doing it.
38. **O'Reilly:** (Little kids) Right, because they don't understand the nobility of the nation.  
39. One of the reasons I wrote Killing the rising sun.  
40. To show the world, and Americans, that  
41. individual Americans gave their lives to free tens of millions of people all over the world.
42. **Host 3:** But Bill, don't you think that's broad to presume that he doesn't understand the  
43. nobility of America when, you know, certainly many people would agree that its very  
44. American to, to protest and it, it's a (part of our freedom and our liberties)
45. **O'Reilly:** (There's a difference between a protest) and a disrespectful protest, alright,  
46. there's a difference and everybody should know that.
47. My solution to this is the San Francisco 49er ownership should tell the whole team, you  
48. need to abide by the rules, here are the rules:  
49. "when you're on the field in the presence of paying customers, we don't want any  
50. political or social protest, period.
51. But we are going to set aside a room for you, alright, on Thursdays and anybody who  
52. wants to talk to the press about any social beef can do so, alright".
53. That's the fair compromise, but to impose your negative view, your unpatriotic view, in  
54. my opinion, on the fans.
55. The company that they work for, the 49ers or any other team has the absolute right to say

56. you cannot do that.

57. **Host 4:** It's interesting what you pointed out too though is what we saw with occupy and  
58. many other groups, that kind of narrowing of message didn't happen from the beginning  
59. and, and, you're right it's hard to know what he stands for at this point.

60. **Host 3:** I love, I love Bill's suggestion, I will say I think it fascinating though that we  
61. police the protest and we often ignore the message.