

**A Neo-Aristotelian Criticism of Persuasive Strategies Employed By U.S. News Journalists
in the Current Crisis of Credibility**

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Abstract

Through studying the persuasive strategies used currently in news reporting, one can see how contemporary journalists attempt to build credibility with their audiences. Using Neo-Aristotelian criticism, a form of rhetorical criticism, I conducted research through the week of October 4th through October 8th of 2021. This strategy was employed to analyze the persuasive strategies used by U.S. news journalists, Tucker Carlson and Jake Tapper, to address and overcome the current crisis of trust in the media. This project provides new insight into how persuasive strategies are used to cultivate credibility by current American journalists in the media today, whether it be through words or images. Through analyzing both the embodied strategies of producing credibility as well as the discursive strategies employed in the stories they cover, a picture can be generated on their ethos-promoting strategies. My analysis found that Tucker Carlson, who has consistently high viewership, presents himself as an equal to his audience, and reports on topics that are directly related to the problems of the 'common man' satisfying the audience's need for orientation. In contrast, Jake Tapper, who has lost significant viewership, presents his arguments in a way that is more authoritative, but lacks resonance with viewers' need for orientation as his stories frequently relate to national issues on a governmental level instead of the direct effect to the audience, lowering relevance. Tapper also emphasizes the importance of what is right and wrong through emotionally charged language which could dissuade viewers from deeming him as credible because he uses emotion to bolster his credibility more than other tactics. The benefit from this research includes helping reporters report more effectively as well as ethically to get the best response from their audience.

A Neo-Aristotelian Criticism of Persuasive Strategies Employed By U.S. News Journalists in the Current Crisis of Credibility

In the news media today there is a current crisis in trust; consumers of media do not believe that reporters are always credible in their reporting (Coddington & Lewis, 2020). In fact, between 2016 and 2021, the average percentage of trust U.S. audiences have in the media has gone down from 76% to 58% (Gottfried, 2021). According to a 2021 Gallup poll, “Trust in the media, which has averaged 45% since 1997, has not reached the majority level since 2003” (Brenan, 2021). Further, bipartisan trust in the media has a 57 point gap between republicans' and democrats' confidence as a whole with 68% of democrats and 11% of republicans trusting the media (Brenan, 2021). This lack of trust in our media makes it an important situation to analyze to understand why some are more trusting than others when it comes to our discourse in news journalism. As there are similar trends reflecting distrust in our branches of government— with trust in our handling of international problems down to 39%-- focusing on the media gives us a perspective into what politicians and journalists can do to encourage the rebuilding of trust in the future (Brenan, 2021). It also gives us a perspective to analyze our media consumption and why we trust what we do.

Contemporary research has focused on the tactics of how these messages have been communicated but it has not identified the impact of how journalists present themselves to gain credibility (Carr et. al, 2014; Nilsson & Mattes, 2015; Spence, 2011). This research aims to fill the gap in the literature by examining the impacts and tactics of two contemporary journalists who are striving to cultivate credibility. Through an analysis of the persuasive tactics in select

journalists' style of reporting, it can be shown how the rhetorical choices surrounding a situation can affect the reactions towards these journalists and affect trust to be built or destroyed. By understanding the power that language and imagery have to effectively move people into or out of trust, this analysis can help shed light on current dynamics today in who is considered credible across the political spectrum.

This research project will be directed at identifying and analyzing the persuasive tactics of CNN's Jake Tapper and Fox News's Tucker Carlson to cultivate credibility. To provide perspective from both progressive and conservative political leanings, a similar journalist from two opposing networks was selected. Both journalists have a similar amount of time on air and experience in journalism. These journalists were also chosen due to the stark contrast in viewership fluctuation over the course of this past year as Tucker Carlson consistently held high ratings while Jake Tapper experienced a meaningful drop in viewership. For the purpose of this study, neither of their social media accounts and interactions were taken into consideration as this study will focus on the live delivery of information to the public. By thoroughly identifying the live delivery tactics of these journalists, it can benefit news consumers to know how these journalists are employing these strategem to create credibility. Recognizing persuasive strategies that journalists use to build ethos can help structure perspective on what is being used today. Similarly, analyzing the differences in persuasive strategies in the political spectrum can encourage more critical thinking when digesting information from high influence journalists.

The Neo-Aristotelian method used in this research, will supply a framework to use to determine how both of these journalists craft stories to build ethos. This method will take into

account outside factors in American politics, verbal and nonverbal rhetoric surrounding reporting as well as the effects that these tactics have on popularity within their audiences. By answering how Jake Tapper and Tucker Carlson build ethos through persuasive strategies in the current crisis of credibility, this paper will help audiences realize the formation of credibility itself in today's context. To begin, I provide an overview of the current crisis of trust in the media as well as tactics to build trust between individuals and local news networks to clarify the issues at hand before turning to my analysis.

Literature Review

Looking into the effects of credible reporting helps to provide proper examples on how effective communication can change the audience's response to journalists. Credibility or Ethos, according to Aristotle, is one of the core features of persuasion (Rapp, 2010). Ethos refers to a speaker's perceived trustworthiness; it provides the audience with insight regarding the character of the speaker and it showcases how reliable the subject is perceived to be. Generally, this is cultivated through appearance and communication methods. The level of credibility would be determined by the audience but can be affected by the rhetor's outward persona as well as the individual's reputation.

In the U.S., credibility is created through the "perceived fairness" of the media as well as its visual presentation (Carr et. al, 2014). The cultivation of credibility can also occur through the actions of the rhetor to show the audience that they are working in the audience's favor. For example, in a study conducted by Matt Seger, it was found that more local radio stations and media outlets believed they held a stronger duty to their respective communities than larger media outlets although it was not studied the audience's perception of the effectiveness of this

response. A separate study conducted in 2019, however, suggests that audiences believe that local news journalists are more caring, trustworthy, and unbiased (Sands, 2019). This creates a divide of responsibility and, of course, a divide in the style and urgency of the rhetoric used to inform the public. In this research they deducted that “This lends further support to a disturbing argument – that radio stations who reach the greatest number of people may be both unwilling and unable to effectively communicate with the public” (Spence, 2011, p. 227).

Journalists’ perceived credibility can be determined in many ways in a digital culture, such as platforms for example. Jahng and Littau (2016) found that news can be assessed as credible or not, just from it being through television or through social media. Perspectives on credibility on different platforms vary but one could argue that television could both be more credible and less so because it is more mainstream. News on social media is less regulated so one could also argue that it would be less credible because it is less monitored but it could be considered more so because it is independent. U.S. journalists, in particular, would be deemed as more credible if they were active on social media in general because it opens up conversation and relatability between themselves and their audience. This can be applied to how journalists cultivate credibility because those on smaller platforms have different levels of ethos just due to their reach to the public.

Research into the general cultivation of credibility supports the argument that individuals tend to believe and trust those that have similarities to their own “. . . personality traits, cognitive cues, societal structures, situational factors, beliefs, and emotions. However, when it comes to the creation of resilient ‘deep’ trust, it is widely agreed that direct social exchange is virtually a

prerequisite” (Nilsson & Mattes, 2015, p. 230). Although, in the world of media, direct social exchange between the viewer and journalist is more difficult, deep trust of these personalities is possible. Nilsson and Mattes (2015) posit that trust is built upon the length of the relationship and frequency of interaction. For television journalists, this could mean that they continue to have their show consistently for the viewer to watch and for longer periods of time. Through being consistent in this manner, the journalist could become a well regarded figure for the viewer since they match their schedule. After establishing the U.S.’s definition and rules of credibility, it is also important to analyze the credibility problem that has been growing for years.

There is a crisis of trust in the media. Over fifty percent of journalists themselves are reporting in a recent study that journalism is going in the wrong direction in the United States (Weaver, Willnat, & Wilhoit, 2018). When journalists question the practice of journalism itself, it creates more doubt from the public. Additionally, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* reports that, “In 2017, 27% [of audiences] had high confidence in newspapers and 24% in television news. Seventeen years ago, it was 37% for newspapers and 36% for TV news” (Lee, 2018, p. 17). It may seem like the crisis in journalism is new, but it has long been this way and it has come further into light with the dawn of social media and media personalities.

Present tactics of overcoming the crisis in credibility in America include establishing balance in the newsroom. As seen in the research conducted by Vu and Saldaña (2021), audiences are becoming more critical of the news they digest and, when journalists create balanced perspectives, it shows that they can present both sides of a logical argument, thus bolstering credibility. Another tactic seen recently in the news is the aspect of independent

journalism. This helps to create a separation between the corporate entity or agenda and the individual, making independent minded journalists more credible to audiences (Vu and Saldaña, 2021). The main strategy, however, was accountability because it shows the audience that journalists can address their past actions (Vu and Saldaña, 2021). Partnered with research from Foster and Frieden (2017), whose research focused on international responses to crises, being accountable to past actions determines future credibility on a large scale. Throughout this new research, it will be analyzed how different patterns in communication and development of public opinion over time can cultivate credibility in journalists today in America.

Theory

Integrating a theoretical perspective in the analysis of journalists can provide insight into journalists' potential impact in today's media culture. The importance of this inclusion is to help identify possible attractions to different narratives—and therefore journalists—based on their homophily. The theories identified as most applicable to cultivation of credibility are cultivation theory and agenda setting theory. This is because these theories are directly linked to the audience media relationship and the process of shaping those perspectives as well as rely on each other to operate.

Cultivation theory focuses on how audiences perceive reality based on their media consumption over time (Özer, 2011). This implies that the more a message is repeated, the more likely that message will be perceived as truth even if it is not the case. Applied to the media, this could be the more repeated a style of attitude is towards a subject or perspective, the more adoptive the audience may be regarding that same attitude. In Özer's (2011) discussion, he states

that “The [cultivation] analysis tries to suggest that heavy viewers perceive the most common and recurrent messages of the television world as real world” (p. 188). One of the defining arguments of cultivation theory is in relation to crime statistics. In this scenario, the more that audiences were exposed to visuals of crime the more they thought that they lived in a world with higher crime statistics (Alitavoli, & Kaveh, E., 2018). This implies that the media that they consume is directly linked to their perspective on the world and “[form] a common culture through which communities cultivate shared and public notions about facts, values, and contingencies of human existence” (Potter, 2014, p. 123). Through the use of this knowledge, one could potentially plan verbiage usage to influence the perspectives of the audience on the real world.

This guides into the second theory mentioned, agenda setting, where this choice is made. In agenda setting theory the main argument is that the more focus given to a story the more perceived importance it will receive from the audience (Alvernia, 2019). In Alitavoli and Kaveh’s (2018) analysis of the relationship between agenda setting and cultivation theory, they state that “for the politically uninformed, media presentations were much more influential in shaping their attitudes.”

In the current political environment, audiences without attachment to a political group can be persuaded what topics are going to be important to them based on the media they consume thus guiding them towards a specific agenda. Similarly to cultivation theory, agenda setting theory focuses on the topics chosen but does not directly relate to the repetition as cultivation theory does. The second aspect of agenda setting theory is that the media presents

stories that they believe will be more applicable to their audiences, whether or not it actually is (Alvernia, 2019). This means that the topics that journalists choose would be directly related to what they want their audience to believe is important. The media does this through the usage of a human's tendency to have a need for orientation. According to McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver (2014), the need for orientation is what audiences search for to position themselves within the world physically and cognitively. This can be determined through separate levels of relevance and certainty. Journalists and surrounding media can manipulate audiences' need for orientation through using the basic principle that “. . . a high level of relevance coupled with high uncertainty led to a high level of [need for orientation].” (McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 2014, p. 782). Through analyzing modern news journalists with these theories in mind, we can identify the correlation between tactical choices in verbiage and the audience response in return.

Methodology

This analysis employs the method of rhetorical criticism. Rhetorical criticism is a qualitative methodology that takes as its focus a way to analyze persuasive artifacts of public life. Today, rhetorical criticism is used to analyze literature, images, media, and even people themselves. According to James Jasinski (2009), rhetorical criticism is employed to be “a process or method by which unsupported individual preference moves towards rationally defined and systematically determined choice. This movement results from a composite of judgments, not only in rhetoric, but related fields -particularly history, philosophy and logic” (p. 249). This definition of rhetorical criticism encapsulates the method's focus on defining meaning and identifying preference through a process in which one can identify the rhetorician's choices and

analyze them in tandem with other academic fields and theory. In using the resources of rhetorical criticism for this analysis of current journalists, I will be able to systematically identify the persuasive tactics in two opposing news journalists who have experienced major audience shifts over the past year and how those strategum affect each individual's audience response.

An early rhetorical method, Neo-Aristotelian criticism was developed to examine speakers in ancient Greece. This method was a way to determine the persuasive effectiveness of a speaker (Foss, 2004). According to Edwin Black (1956), Neo-Aristotelian criticism is a division of "the classification of 'proofs' or 'means of persuasion' into logical, pathical, and ethical . . ." (p.31). The approach employed by rhetorical criticism presents a way to analyze the speaker's use of purposeful persuasive strategum in the way they arrange their argument and other styling choices. This method presents a set of guidelines and categories to analyze the rhetor and present the effects the rhetor's choices have on their audiences. These categories, called the five canons of rhetoric, include invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery along with addressing the context.

Before dividing into these canonical categories, this method requires you to first define the context- including the rhetor, occasion, and audience of the rhetorical situation. The context provides a lens in which the canons will be viewed. Through defining the speaker or rhetor in their broader milieu, background knowledge will be presented as a foundation for analysis. This will be followed by the occasion. The occasion is the surrounding environment of the speaker, politically, socially, and economically ("The Five Canons of Rhetoric," n.d.). By defining the occasion, you provide a viewing lens into the audience's perspective. In using the

Neo-aristotelian method for analyzing the news, the occasion stays consistent as the same events are taking place across the country but the choice to report on them is varied. Finally, the audience. One of the most crucial defining perspectives to analyze a speaker is through the composition and reactions of the audience. After defining this element, one will have a solid grasp of the full context in which the rhetor is speaking.

The canons apply to the piece analyzed itself. The first would be invention. Invention, simply, is the creation of the content and identification of suitable arguments. This would include the physical elements of the rhetor's words. In the news these could be considered talking points. In this canon there are two separate paths to create their main ideas. These are external proofs and internal proofs (Foss, 2004). External proofs come from outside sources such as testimonials, documentations, or another type of outside evidence (Foss, 2004). Internal proofs are created by the rhetor and can be used similarly in identifying persuasive strategies in today's context. These internal proofs use the same main ideas as identifying tactics to contribute credibility to a speaker. Ethos is the speaker's character or simply defined as a combination of morality, intelligence, and homophily with the audience (Foss, 2004). Pathos is the emotional appeal to the audience which guides audience members into a certain emotional state concerning an argument. Lastly, Logos is a rational appeal and focuses on fact based reasoning (Foss, 2004). This aspect of internal proofs focuses on the creation of an argument using the tools provided by the external proofs.

The next canon is arrangement, or how these 'talking points' are organized. Arrangement can determine how the speaker wants the audience to follow their thoughts and arguments. This

includes the structure of the conversation itself as well as the structure of each individual argument noting how they introduce, present and defend that idea (Burton, n.d.). The third is style; this canon adds personality to the rhetoric. Through this stage we can identify choices that do not necessarily have to be relevant to the foundational text but create a persona for the rhetor. In new media today, this can also apply to headlines and verbiage choices (“The Five Canons of Rhetoric,” n.d.). After this stage is the canon of memory. As most news programs today use a script, memory might seem to be less applicable in today's context. The canon of memory, which was used to see how much information the speaker is able to retain, can be applied to journalists and how they are able to respond to new information in correlation with their previous knowledge. Also included in memory is an aspect of impromptu communication which applies to the speaker's knowledge of the subject at hand as well as being thoroughly versed in the broader context of the conversation (Burton, n.d.). By presenting oneself to have knowledge and understanding under unknown conversational circumstances, a speaker can show effective usage of their knowledge. Finally, the last canon is delivery which serves as the final product and focuses on the presentation style itself. This can include not only verbiage, but also eye contact, vocal variation, gestures, clothing choices, visuals, background music as well as framing on television (“The Five Canons of Rhetoric,” n.d.). These final two canons will be discussed conjointly as memory and delivery work in tandem in a news setting. In this context, memory is being used as a tool to show impromptu and improvisational responsiveness to a discussion and the delivery of that response is highly important in a live setting. Delivery affects the establishment of ethos and pathos in the argument in the act of speaking (Burton, n.d.). This final canon combines all aspects of credibility into the presentation and how that is delivered to the

audience. A strong delivery can establish credibility without the audience having preconceived notions towards one's character.

Some limitations are that the method was developed to examine singular public addresses by rhetors in ancient Greece, a time that is different in perspective and values than our own. During this timeframe, it was created to focus on the rhetorical principles which have undergone many changes. Neo-Aristotelian criticism also lacks a facet of study for non-rational persuasion. As Aristotle was a rationalist, criticisms derived from his work focus strictly on humanity's capability to be able to engage in rational discourse with the emphasis on tactics of rational appeals (Foss, 2004, p. 31). In this methodology, the Neo-Aristotelian method will be used in tandem with persuasive strategies as well as highlight credibility building through non-rational argumentation. This method will be extended to analyze television personalities in the 21st century context and show its utility for today.

When studying individuals and how they encourage trust in their reporting, there are many different styles of analysis that can be used. Through discussing this topic, it was determined that a Neo-Aristotelian criticism would be best applied to this research because it allows the critic to fully evaluate the weight of the context, strategies, and effects of the journalist's persuasive efforts on affecting their perceived credibility. By taking this approach, it allows the analysis to focus on the core features that make someone credible.

In choosing the journalists to analyze, I focused on a journalist from opposing networks. The conservative perspective was covered with the selection of Tucker Carlson of *Tucker Carlson Tonight* on Fox News. Tucker Carlson is Fox's primetime news show and ended 2021 as

the most watched news show on cable television with 3.2 million viewers (Kats, 2022).

Choosing Tucker Carlson was based on a few criteria; he had a substantial marker of audience stability, he has a very distinct reporting style, and he has a similar amount of news education to the liberal perspective journalist that I decided to analyze.

The direct counterpart on CNN to Tucker Carlson's show would have been Anderson Cooper. In this decision, I did not see Anderson Cooper as a source for meaningful analysis of credibility because he did not differ in strategy enough. Instead, I decided to analyze Jake Tapper from *The Lead with Jake Tapper* on CNN in comparison to Tucker Carlson because Tapper had a shift of audience viewership that identified him as a more interesting subject for analysis in terms of identifying his perceived credibility. Jake Tapper has a two hour show from 4:00pm-6:00pm which has experienced a meaningful drop in viewership since January of 2021. Although all news networks have been experiencing a decline in viewership over the past year, with Fox experiencing a 34% decline and CNN 38% down, Tapper has lost a greater percentage of viewers making him a more intriguing target for analysis (Variety, 2021). From January of 2021 to October 2021, Tapper has lost over 55% of his viewership in the target demographic (Kwayisi, 2021). Both journalists can also be measured on a similar basis involving race, gender, and sexual orientation as they are both white, heterosexual males who are both 52 years old. While studying these two journalists, I watched both shows for the entirety of the news week from October 4th through 8th of 2021 because stories relating to the national debt crisis as well as legislation relating to school boards were prevalent in the news cycle. Both of these stories represent large governmental stories as well as more local ones.

This style of analysis will allow me to first evaluate the context of the situation, which includes the rhetor, the occasion, and the audience. This would mean establishing the environment and circumstance in which these journalists are reporting in the first place (Newbald, 2017). In this first stage of criticism, the context will be established that these journalists are going to be compared in.

Analysis

Context

Rhetor

During this research period the rhetors' chosen, Jake Tapper and Tucker Carlson, have held several different and polarizing viewpoints on the current events in America. Both the strategies they choose and their efficacy are shaped in part by their experiences and reputation, both past and present. In analyzing the rhetors, we can identify the foundation of their ethos and better understand the tactics they use to gain credibility in the current day.

Jake Tapper, the host of *The Lead with Jake Tapper* from 4:00-6:00pm, has been involved in news media since 2001 and joined CNN in 2013 (CNN, 2014). At CNN, Tapper hosts several news programs focusing on political commentary. His biography at CNN states "Tapper has been celebrated for standing up in a nonpartisan way for truth and decency during a period where the U.S. political world has seen shortages of both" (CNN, 2014). This statement followed directly after connecting the "Trump-era" media to that of disinformation (CNN, 2014). Before CNN Tapper was a White House Correspondent for the 2008 Presidential Election and then moved on

to work for ABC. During his time at ABC he focused on the events of the Iraq War, and Hurricane Katrina. These claims assume Tapper conducts nonpartisan reporting and bolsters his credibility by stating how many books that he has published as well as awards that he has received directly on his biography. Historically, Tapper's audience leans more on the left side of politics and has liberal viewpoints.

However, Fox News host Tucker Carlson of *Tucker Carlson Tonight*, hosted the show *Crossfire* on CNN from 2000-2005 and then proceeded to move through multiple networks, such as PBS and MSNBC. Kelefa and Nussbaum (2017) state that "Carlson features powerful analysis and helps bring important perspectives to what's happening in America and around the world." However, before getting into journalism, Tucker Carlson was raised in a household that did not initially have a fortune but gained it through the marriage between his father and the heiress to the Swanson fortune (Kelefa & Nussbaum, 2017). This presents an interesting perspective as he came into money in his early childhood. His on screen personality does not reflect the rich persona but almost rejects it. Before his journalism career he had also attempted to join the CIA and was turned down for being so young. As for his past experience in journalism, one of the major events mentioned that he covered were the 2012 and 2016 election cycles. Historically, Tucker's audience leans more on the right side of politics and has conservative viewpoints.

Occasion

The events leading up to the week studied are crucial to understanding the current climate in the new media. Throughout the year leading up to the week of October 4th-8th there had been many polarizing stories relating to our current political climate. Some notable stories prior to the

week of data collection were the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the audit of the 2020 election, and the Covid-19 pandemic and attached regulation.

One story in particular that has framed the political reporting climate of 2021 was the events which occurred on January 6th, 2021. According to multiple sources, this day has been considered an attempted coup and violent insurrection on the United States Capitol (Daymude, Joshua, et al., 2022). In tandem, other outlets have been reporting it as a setup and that the FBI had incited violence at the capitol to delegitimize the concerns about election integrity (*Revolver*, 2021). Both perspectives have served to divide the country and provided major news outlets material to report on. This event led to strong and polarizing news coverage and served as a frame for all following news stories. Coverage of January 6th had boosted viewership in general for news media and all stories were presented differently across news stations while simultaneously claiming the other is spreading disinformation or conspiracy. Each station has been attempting to become more credible than the other in multiple ways through their reporting of these events.

At the time of analysis, the major news stories included the National Debt Crisis and raising the debt ceiling, treatment of parents at school board meetings, Covid-19 vaccinations, and Dr. Fauci's medical history. Overall, these were the topics but through watching, both broadcasts did not talk about the same topics consistently. These stories in the prior week help to frame the political atmosphere of reporting for each journalist and provide context in analysis.

Audience

Since both news broadcasters are targeting the American audience there are a few nationwide similarities that each audience would have that would influence their opinion of the broadcaster. National interest in topics can help to discern what groups would be more attracted to either journalist. In general, topics in recent history help to polarize opinions. The first would be the 2020 election and surrounding politics. Audiences with leanings more liberal would tend to trust more liberal sources while those with more conservative leanings would tend to trust more conservative programming which aligns itself with bias-affirmation. This would be evidence of cultivation theory as the more homophily experienced by the audience and more exposure would lead them to trust those who they agree with first (Potter, 2014). The second major topic would be the Covid-19 Pandemic and audiences can again be split into those who believe the virus needs to be handled in a more authoritarian manner or those who believe the virus needs to be handled more organically and by personal decision. Both of these divides have intense nuance depending on individual subjects but the divisions made are meant to provide a general viewpoint on these addressed audiences.

At the time of this analysis, Jake Tapper's audience size was an average size of 791,000 and moving at a downward trend since its peak of 2.8 million viewers in January of 2021 (Kywaissi, 2021). His audience most likely consists of individuals who identify more liberally and support government experts. This is because most of his reporting focused on government tied experts and had a focus more on diversity initiatives and a support for more government regulation.

Contrasting this is Tucker Carlson, whose audience size is 3,369,000 viewers on average. *Tucker Carlson Tonight* also has held ranking at #1 since March 2021 according to reports from Nielson (Kywaisi, 2021). His audience most likely consists of individuals who are more wary of current regulations and lean more conservatively. This is because most of his reporting focuses on the inconsistencies of those currently in power and has a focus on individual rights and consistency. According to Nielsen reports, part of this demographic is actually registered democrats. Interestingly enough, “Tucker Carlson is the number-one watched host among democrats in the key 25-54 age demographic – across all networks” (Griffing, 2022). This data for October, shows a higher percentage in the key demographic for Fox’s primetime news networks compared to expected competing news networks (Rigolizzo, 2022). One of the reasons for this political shift in viewers can be attributed to reporting style.

Canons

After the context is established, the true analysis can begin on credibility building tactics used, drawing on the insights of the five canons of rhetoric. These canons focus on the invention or creation of the communication as well as the structure through which the rhetor’s message is delivered (Newbald, 2017). Following the foundation of invention, the canon of arrangement will focus on how those elements are organized to create an argument. From here, the canon of style will be compared in reporting. Style refers to how the information is delivered, either in an embodied or discursive sense. The last two canons of memory and delivery will go together as they both address speaking skills and choices when presenting information to the public. After

these points have been met, I will go into the effects that their rhetorical devices had on the audience's perception of their credibility.

Jake Tapper

Invention.

Invention throughout the week analyzed can be described in a few different ways but the core value of intention can be described as what would be deemed important to the audience. (Newbald, 2021). Jake Tapper's show has a consistent form of telling the audience what will be addressed. At the beginning of each segment, there is a portion of time dedicated to introducing the day's topics in order of importance. This emphasis on segmenting the topics tells the audience exactly what to expect for the next two hours and prepares them for a high ratio of news. This canon relies heavily on the audience's willingness to follow logical thinking. The way a story is formatted can lean more towards facts or feelings and both can affect an audience's opinion.

The Lead with Jake Tapper employed this canon in three separate areas. The first would be to show the relationship of events and what caused stories to happen (Newbald, 2021). For example, throughout this week Tapper focused on political events. On October 6th, 2021, he reported Biden's polling numbers at the time. This showed that more than half of the American people say that Biden is not competent in running the government. As this might not be the best information, Tapper then follows up with reasoning to his audience that this is the case because the administration has not yet delivered on the Build Back Better plan. In the reporting, he states that more than half of the country does not believe that Biden is competent in running the

government but that rating has only to do with the lack of deliverance on Biden's promises. This structure uses claims of data but shifts directly into the reasons that caused that data assuming it is accurate without providing further context. Tapper then moves to a counter argument that could be presented or completely goes over this step. If he includes a counterargument, he follows up with statements like "which is not true" or ones that invalidate the other side's credibility by calling it "conspiracy." This builds a precedent for the audience to look at future numbers in a new light.

Another example of relationship setting would be correlating the national debt crisis with cause from the Republicans. On the same day, there was a meeting in the United States Senate to determine if they should raise the national debt ceiling and most of the republicans and Mitch McConnell were blocking it. This story provides an example into the second aspect of invention. This aspect, called circumstance building, is used to present predictions. Tapper states that if you cannot raise the debt ceiling the government will collapse and it will be the Republican Party's fault. This relationship pairs republican ruling to the total downfall of our government. By doing this, Jake Tapper not only builds a relationship between these two opposing parties but also demonstrates what future circumstances will be because of it. Circumstance building is yet another part of invention which allows the rhetor to predict what will happen.

The third aspect of invention that *The Lead with Jake Tapper* used was the aspect of testimony. Testimony is used to bring in outside experts to lend their credibility to another speaker (Newbald, 2021). Over the course of the week studied Tapper brought in around 10 separate individuals to interview and provide expertise and argumentation on the subjects at

hand. One notable example would be that most days when talking about the Covid-19 Vaccine, Tapper brought in CNN Dr. Sanjay Gupta to provide his opinion and knowledge on the subject. Most other testimonies were conducted by senators and CNN Chief National Affairs correspondent Jeff Zeleny in regards to the National Debt Crisis.

Arrangement.

Arrangement, used for the structure of an argument, can be clearly and consistently seen in *The Lead with Jake Tapper*. While watching Tapper shift from topic to topic, the main theme was that his show let the audience in on the theme of the topic before starting the conversation. He does this through the usage of ‘leads’ and arranges stories into four different categories. These categories are: Politics, World, Health, and Earth Matters. Normally organized in this order, politics generally take up the majority of the news broadcast as that is directly relevant to both local and nationwide governments. As he focuses on political stories heavily this would lead the audiences into focusing on political stories as being more relevant to them, as agenda setting theory suggests (Alvernia, 2019). Tapper structures each argument using the graphics as his introduction to the topic and transitions directly into his intended narrative.

News shows in general have a specific style of how they are set up visually. Arrangement, normally attributed to the choice of structure or ordering of the material presented, can also be applied to a visual make-up. The way the set is structured for this show, it brings in classic newsroom styles along with adding some modern flair. This familiar structure helps the audience feel comfortable with the changing topics and guests and helps to build a subconscious comfort with the set, aiding credibility.

Jake Tapper's newsroom presents itself as a large room. At the beginning of every segment, Tapper is seen standing in front of a billboard projection with visuals regarding the upcoming topic. He can then be seen at the news desk which can be revealed to be a round table when he has in-person interviews. In this setup, the background is able to be virtually changed and presents itself most often as the Capitol building as a skyline behind the newscast. The framing around this image is also in patriotic colors but did not show a traditional American flag.

These motifs can elicit a response that helps the audience understand that this is a professional and American broadcast. By using colors that are so strongly associated with the traditional meaning of the American way, it can help the audience believe that this show is just as dedicated to the good of the American people as the Capitol is. Similarly, in the eyes of marketers, color creates brand identity and consumers use color cues to make buying decisions (Labrecque, Patrick, V. M., & Milne, G. R., 2013). Applying this idea to the already heavily nuanced meanings behind the American flag color scheme, news outlets borrow those ideas to apply American identity to the channel identity.

Style.

Style is the most clear canon in *The Lead with Jake Tapper*. This can be seen in both phrases he invokes as well as tag lines presented across the screen. Style is the way that something is said or presented (Newbold, 2021). This could help to employ an argument through the use of pathos. By using constantly emotionally charged commentary with certain subjects, according to agenda setting theory, the audience will eventually start to adopt those same feelings as that is the frame presented (Alvernia, 2019). Tapper used most of these phrases in

regards to the Republican party to show them as a threat. These included phrases such as: “Chilling warning,” “Rabid MAGA mob,” “Anti-science aggression,” “Crackpottery,” “Not constructive, it’s lies,” “Alt-Right Rasputin,” and “Revenge and Retribution.” As these are not full discussions, it also does not show the context or persuasive manner surrounding the discussion. This styling employs the usage of strong devil terms. In Jones and Simon's book *Persuasion in Society* (2017), they state that “in any society certain symbols function as God words or devil words” (p. 81). Terms in this context are usually polarizing and can be perceived directly as either very good or very bad. In a society that highly identifies with God terms and highly dis-identifies with devil terms, this distinction can be used to identify what is acceptable or unacceptable to the broader culture. By using a devil term along with the opposing viewpoint, the strength of society’s identity associates the opposing viewpoint with opposing society’s values itself (Jones & Simons, 2017). For example, one phrase that was particularly powerful in this news cycle was “Anti-Science Aggression.” Since American society at this time has been severely divided over which tactics to trust to handle the Coronavirus pandemic, labeling conservative viewpoints as both “Anti-Science” as well as aggressive in that manner implies that the tactics that are favored are inherently not trustworthy as they are labeled non-scientific. “Alt-Right Rasputin” also evokes a stark connection between republicans and the apparent connection to the devil. By labeling Rasputin as an alt-right character, Tapper is assimilating the image of a false holy man who created terror in Russia to the ideologies of the right leaning population (Timofeychev, 2019). This implies that those with these ideologies are representatives of the devil itself and are a form of pure evil.

Memory and Delivery.

Memory in this context would not be associated with just the memorization of a speech but that the presenter has knowledge or feigns knowledge that they can continue the conversation if needed (Newbold, 2021). This is also connected to the improvisational caliber of the speaker and the familiarity with the further context. As seen from some of the ad-libbed commentary from Tapper, it seems that he has an understanding of his topics at hand and the narrative that he wants to present. By using verbiage that focuses on what is right and wrong, he shows the audience that he has an understanding that others may not have.

Oftentimes, Tapper was noted to have filled in the blanks within the conversation and followed up interviews with “is that what you are saying?”, adding “which is not true” to other perspectives, and stating “it’s a fact.” These additives to guests’ explanations help to guide the audience into following the preferable thought process and guides the guest speaker into the preferable talking points. This tactic can be considered the ‘yes-yes’ or ‘yes-but’ technique. (Jones & Simons, p. 139, 2017). In the ‘yes-yes’ technique, the rhetor leads the audience into agreeing with multiple smaller premises to the argument. By doing this, the speaker can guide the audience into agreement with the final target premise. As Tapper does often when communicating with his guests, he starts by first laying down known premises as to what people want to be associated with and starts them on a known agreement. As the conversation progresses with each agreement with his guest, he lays out the ‘yes-but’ technique in gesturing to the observing audience. This amends the content by providing the opposing viewpoint and following it up with a ‘but . . .’. After establishing agreement throughout the rest of the conversation, this technique presents a counterpoint that moves in a different direction that the

rheter hopes the audience will continue to agree with, due to the previous points of consensus. This tactic is directly related to the canon of memory because memory implies having a base understanding of the content you are presenting. Through using both strategies to get the audience to agree with a premise, it proves the rhetor capable of explaining each step of the argument process and shows that they are able to bring the audience back to the desired agreement within the presence of counterpoints.

Tapper's delivery is traditional to most news journalists. He dresses professionally, enunciates clearly and he moves minimally to stay confident on screen. His attire consists of monochromatic suits without a statement piece to distract from the outfit as a whole. According to Gurney, Howlett, Pine, Tracey and Moggridge (2017), “. . . teachers are judged as more intelligent when dressed in smart clothes, but more interesting when dressed casually. In a professional context, individuals are considered to have greater expertise, knowledge, and credibility when dressed smartly” (p. 437). Tapper's clothing choices directly relate to his credibility. While he dresses ‘smartly’ he can be considered more trustworthy just on that basis but perhaps lacks interest from his audience. When he is speaking he tends to tilt his head to the side slightly but makes little to no facial expressions with full eye contact. His body posture is highly important to his delivery because he stands at a sharp posture evoking a feeling of dominance and a perception of higher intelligence (Gurney, Howlett, Pine, Tracey, & Moggridge, 2017). His tall posture helps to communicate that he is confident and possibly more successful (Gurney, Howlett, Pine, Tracey, , & Moggridge, 2017). Tapper's tall stature of 6'1” also contributes to communicating this message as an increased height notes the perception of a better chance of winning a confrontation whether physical or intellectual (Stulp, Gert, et al, 2017).

Without the help of his setup and story, this could look unnatural but as he is trying not to be the focus it does not hinder the reporting style. This calm and professional reporting choice helps to give him ethos on a visual level which matches him to his surrounding environment.

Tucker Carlson

Invention.

Invention is one of the most important elements to help build and structure an argument. This canon lays the foundation for the audience to be able to follow an argument and create logic for it (Newbold, 2021). As invention is supposed to appeal to logos, it only makes sense that it relies on events current and past.

Tucker Carlson introduces his day's topics one at a time and ties them together throughout the broadcast. This tells a consistent story to the audience and makes it easy to follow. Throughout his arguments he employs most of the traditional tactics that go along with invention. The first would be comparison and Carlson uses this mostly when in reference to his stories to the Covid-19 pandemic. Comparison can include pulling in outside information or using past experience. In most cases, Carlson used references to past information and changes that have been made according to political context. For example, he used footage of a reporter asking Dr. Fauci if the mass illegal immigration had anything to do with an increase of covid cases. Fauci had said no and Carlson related it back to multiple political leaders saying there was no risk of covid if protesting for Black Lives Matter.

Comparison in Tucker's context is mainly used to amplify hypocrisy of those in charge. He employs this by reporting on Merrick Garland's conflict of interest when he is in support of Critical Race Theory in schools where his relative owns the rights to the curriculum. This comes from Garland's dedication to identify harassment and acts of violence towards school board members using the powers of the National Security Division. In this segment, Tucker uncovers the bias in Garland's procedures citing "Merrick Garland's daughter is married to a man who is the co-founder of an 'education service company' called Panorama Education . . . [which] provides materials on critical race theory to school districts" (Carlson, 2021, para. 38). In his discussion, Tucker also states the Department of Justice's own protocols regarding conflict of interest and states, "The DOJ's rules require employees to seek official guidance before participating in any matter in which his or her impartiality could be questioned. That includes situations in which matters can 'Affect the financial interests' of a 'relative with whom a [DOJ] employee has a close relationship'" (Carlson, 2021, para. 41). By adding this governmental layer to his argument, Tucker is again highlighting hypocrisy in the American government with their own rules.

The next factor that he employs is how he describes the relationship between the subjects. Again highlighting the hypocrisy, Tucker Carlson describes the relationship between events involving the pandemic and how they benefit democrat policy. By highlighting this correlation, he tries to show the audience how they are being used and how those in power live under different rules than the "common person." This also serves as a transition between the topics of the day connecting each story to the previous.

One of the biggest influences in Tucker Carlson's invention is his testimonies. He brings in two to three people per episode to serve as the expert of that topic. This could be senators, governors, doctors, or even the common person. When interviewing them, he gives them time to speak and educate the public. One difference that was noticed was that if a new aspect came up that was not planned to be talked about, Carlson takes the time to ask a question or follow up in another episode. This creates the image of an environment of learning and the acceptance of new information. Testimonies like these can help to create audience trust because they serve as a tool to educate Tucker as well demonstrating humility alongside his audience. Tying in to this strategy, Tucker also tries to interview some experts with differing opinions than him. This week he had Andrew Yang and talked to him about his future campaign once he became an independent.

Arrangement.

Tucker Carlson's construction of an argument is highly different from Jake Tapper's in the arrangement itself. While Tapper uses the structure of his show or 'leads,' Tucker Carlson acts as a storyteller in his reporting style. As stated above, Carlson focuses on stories of importance to the 'common man' and how the common citizen is living under hypocrisy. One focus in constructing a narrative that was noticed during the analysis was the effort to correct and allow outside opinions to have a place in the discussion. In two stories that Tucker reported on he allowed corrections to be made and provided evidence for those claims to come in later.

The first story was centered on the Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen and her stories of Facebook promoting material to children that can harm their self image and encourage

human trafficking. Tucker Carlson starts his argument on October 5th with clips of her statements then addresses the issue asking why people are not defending the children from this. As this is a whistleblower situation, claims made by Frances Haugen were looked at speedily as that information was just released that day. The following day, however, Tucker came back to that argument and presented a different viewpoint on the story whilst apologizing for the reporting of the prior day as they dug deeper into the full story. On October 6th, Tucker came back into the argument with another perspective on the story to be a ploy for more internet censorship. He presents this idea through focusing on why the media would support a whistleblower if it does not push an ulterior agenda while focusing on the verbiage she used during the hearing as she used words most commonly employed when arguing against right-leaning ideologies. In today's political context these words could be similar to ones associated with misinformation or conspiracy theories.

The second example of this is in Tucker's analysis of the vaccination rate of Americans compared to the cases of coronavirus. On October 7th, Tucker Carlson included a segment relaying the promise from Biden to stop the pandemic. Following this information, Carlson presented statistics showing how the vaccination rate has gone up along with the infection rate of covid. Instead of directly stating his opinion on this topic, he presents the idea as something that he does not understand and opens up the opportunity for someone to come in and explain why the statistics look that way. He states "Anyone who can explain is welcome on the show, just speak slowly so we can understand." With this statement he is allowing someone to step up to explain statistics that seem to show the opposite of what Biden has promoted. By allowing this

opening, Carlson also demonstrates a relatable persona making him more comfortable to wider audiences.

One major arrangement that was noticed for *Tucker Carlson Tonight* was the setup of his newsroom and path he took while reporting. Unlike Tapper who used multiple camera angles and separate frames to present, Carlson generally used one angle of him at his desk and presented in front of a very plain blue background. The camera angle was also closer to his face and you could only see from mid-torso up rather than a full desk view. He would also generally not have people in the studio to interview and would have them as guests in a live call.

This set choice focuses on his expressions while speaking as well as removes background distractions so the audience is forced to focus on the topic as well as the speaker. As his show is aired during primetime, his background also fits the time of day to associate his program with nighttime. Another aspect was his use of graphics on the screen to add to his storytelling. These graphics usually presented themselves as political commentary. For example, he used visuals of Dr. Fauci as the “Patron Saint of Wuhan” to lead into the story of how Dr.



Fauci is canceling Christmas due to his recommended covid restrictions during the holidays (Carlson, 2021). These graphics call into meme culture and make a joke about the topics that Tucker Carlson is criticizing.

While he does this, Carlson uses common-ground appeals to build a foundation for lesser convinced audiences to agree upon. These appeals identify a point to agree upon and label that as

a start to the conversation to build an argument out of (Jones & Simons, 2017, p. 137). For example, when discussing Merrick Garland, Tucker creates a common-ground of Department Of Justice conflict of interest laws and then proceeds to explain Garland's policies in coordination with Garland's family members.

Style.

Tied into arrangement would be the way that Tucker Carlson evokes the canon of Style. Directly from the introduction to the show, the audience will get a less serious tone along with a more relatable one. Each introduction holds a guitar style instrumental to add a rock tone to the episode. This choice paired with the comical images attached to the stories add some light-heartedness to the show.

Verbiage used in these episodes are also a signature of Tucker Carlson's style. As he is very expressive there were moments where he would laugh at his own jokes, speak sarcastically as well as look highly intent when a guest was presenting. Like Tapper, he also used strong verbal messaging. Such messaging includes "Rubin is the dumbest person ever," "Don't bother being rational," "If you want to know what the sacred cows are, what are you not allowed to talk about?," and "Wokism will destroy civilization as we know it." Again presenting an example of God and devil terms, Tucker uses these societal distinctions. One variation that was noticed was that most statements were used sarcastically or involved using terms that only a select group of people would be able to identify as a God or devil term. One specific example of this is the use of "sacred cows" in a political analogy. Sacred cows in modern terms means something that cannot be criticized. This distinction on a political level, aligns political ideology with religious

and is intended to show what the untouchable elements of that ‘religion’ are in today’s political discourse (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Sarcasm itself is seen in the quote “Don’t bother being rational.” Sarcasm or irony has been used in journalism to relate ideas of criticism of the topic they are reporting onto their audiences. These tools are used to cue the audience to infer a meaning that is critical of the topic at hand. This rhetorical tool is a way to share a negotiated meaning with their audience and again create homophily with them (Taylor, 1993). Along with these verbal cues there are also many ad-libs that he adds such as laughing and even throwing in a maniacal one.

Memory and Delivery.

The canon of Memory was also shown similarly to Jake Tapper. When talking about a subject, Tucker Carlson liked to emphasize past conversations about a topic to compare them to the current state of the country. By adding callbacks, he connects the past to the present and it helps him present his arguments when people change their stance on a subject. This shows that even if he does not fully understand a concept, he knows what was said and when to hold people accountable.

Tucker Carlson has a different style of presenting where he becomes more expressive and attempts to create humor in the content. Since his frame on screen is more focused on him, it is hard to miss his expressions while listening to his guests. He looks very intent and like he is truly learning most times. Another key factor to Carlson’s delivery is his signature look. Most newscasters dress professionally but since Tucker Carlson has been in the media, he is most known for always wearing a bowtie which lends itself to a younger look. Even though he no

longer dons the tie in his current television career, the image of him in it is still associated.

Having a statement piece associated with his character makes him more interesting to listen to and draw viewers because he stands out by combining the ‘smart’ look with something out of the normative for journalists (Gurney, Howlett, Pine, Tracey, & Moggridge, 2017).

Along with his outfit choices, Tucker Carlson also speaks in a more casual manner and uses tones which one may not consider professional in a news setting. This shows the usage of the Plain Folks strategy to persuade. This coactive strategy is used to create relational bonds with the speaker's audience (Jones & Simons, 2017, p.133). By talking, dressing, and identifying with the target audience, a speaker can build credibility because audiences trust people who are more similar to them than an outsider. In his delivery, Carlson used casual language along with humor to identify himself as one of the ‘common people.’ Tucker Carlson also chooses to deliver news in a way that shows sarcasm when it comes to the government and its advice to the public resembling a populist ideology (Merriam-Webster, 2022). In statements about Biden and Fauci, Tucker speaks clearly how their narrative has changed over time and puts it into perspective for his audiences.

Conclusion: Tactics and Effects

Throughout this research some trends across outlets became apparent as a way to develop credibility among audiences. Both Jake Tapper and Tucker Carlson promoted ideas in a way that shifted blame to the opposing party. They did this through presenting the damage caused by actions taken or not taken being the blame of the opposing side. By making this the core of each of their arguments when developing their canon of invention, they are making it part of the core

logic to the argument. This could be interpreted as an example of agenda setting theory used in both journalist's cases. Agenda setting theory in these cases would be attributed to the usage of labeling the causes of world troubles as the fault of those with an opposing mindset (Alitavoli & Kaveh, 2018). Both news journalists relied on making the relationship aspect directly linked to future circumstances. This tactic was more prevalent in Jake Tapper's reporting as he focused on what would happen if the republicans did not raise the debt ceiling. This style would generally lead to a worse case scenario and put pressure on the public to think one way or else they would support the downfall of the American government. Tucker Carlson did also rely on this tactic but related the relationship to the effect on the audience's personal lives, thus personalizing his discourse. As he reported more so on Covid mandates and school board meetings he compared the relationship between the current governing party to how parents are allowed to make decisions for their children. This creates more relevance to the general audience as the government is presented to be directly affecting individuals on a personal level.

Another similarity between both journalists' reporting was their style of communication. Both used extreme emotionally charged language without it sounding like it was emotional entirely. As they used this in building their logical argument, it presented these statements as the correct viewpoint if you did not want to support the upcoming events that would be sure to happen. The caveat to this would be that future circumstances are unknown and they are presenting them as certain.

One way that shows credibility is if they have been proven correct in the past for their predictions of circumstances. Tucker Carlson generally shifts away from larger predictions and

stays to personal expectations. As he was reporting he would ask rhetorical questions and let the audience infer what he meant. Jake Tapper would be more traditional in this sense and tell the audience directly what would happen. This process is one of their main differences in reporting style. By making smaller, personal predictions based on audience inference, there is less room for it because the predictions are always kept in the short term whereas long term, definite predictions do not account for outside influences.

Credibility is also affected by the arrangement of a piece. Jake Tapper and Tucker Carlson also differed in their strategies in arranging their arguments. Jake Tapper structured his show in a way that let audiences know what each topic was before he discussed it. These ‘leads’ were used to organize his reporting and also served as his transitions. This strategy made Tapper seem well organized and resembled a bulleted strategy for delivering news. Tucker Carlson, however, presents his information as a story and it takes more time to understand the scope of his reporting. This storytelling gives the audience a sense of care for the personal being. By presenting information this way, it keeps the audience tied in with the larger picture rather than just individual events. One strong trait in this was that Tucker Carlson attempts to create credibility through focusing on the relationship between events in the past rather than in the future. This way he is able to gather information and take time to source it.

Another aspect of arrangement is the physical space and its relation to credibility. The more professional something looks the more credibility it has because effort has been placed into that setting. As more people have gained access to professional looking equipment professional visuals are not the only factor that encourages credibility. For instance, Jake Tapper has a very

large space that lends itself to both video calls and in-person interviews. This leans towards a more sterile environment and looks like a broadcast for thousands of people. He presents general information and makes it digestible for new viewers on a short schedule. This makes the audience take in little bits of information at a time and the information is digestible. Digestible information is something that can be carried and spread quickly because people can get a basic understanding fast. Tucker Carlson's set also holds these professional structures. One main difference in these sets, however, is that his reporting takes place in a more intimate close-up setting and it is presented more as a conversation between the viewer and the broadcaster. This closer video frame creates a sense of personal connection where a more distanced field of view can suggest a more distanced relationship between the broadcaster and the audience.

Tapper's and Carlson's usage of the canon of style also differed in a similar fashion in the way arrangement did. Both journalists evoked the usage of strong verbal strategies to deliver their core messages. They did this through the usage of God and devil terms associating the opposing ideologies with pre-determined negative images. Jake Tapper used this strategy plainly and would state the exact association he wanted to encourage. Tucker Carlson would also use a similar strategy but included more ironic rhetorical devices to create a sense of humor and criticism instead of just an association.

News broadcasters methodologies in relation to the canons of Memory and Delivery are also strongly similar due to the traditional formats of news television. Jake Tapper and Tucker Carlson are no different and employ similar tactics to achieve their argumentation in these categories. Jake Tapper and Tucker Carlson both dress professionally to cultivate credibility

although Tucker Carlson has had a history of dressing more creatively in style. Apart from their clothing styles, one major difference between each reporter's reporting style is what type of persona they wanted people to view them as. Jake Tapper frequently used strategies to make himself appear as an authority figure and spoke sternly and concisely to the audience. This positions himself in a higher position than his audience. Tucker Carlson used a different approach and presented himself as the 'common man' to his audience. This positioned himself to be a more relatable figure and less of an authoritative figure. Tucker's delivery also consisted of more conversational pieces rather than talking points for each topic.

The effectiveness of these strategies cannot be fully expressed from one week of data collection but some observations can be discussed. Over this year we have seen a major increase and draw to Tucker Carlson's programming and a major decrease in Jake Tapper's. Tucker Carlson's programming seems to be drawing viewership from all sides of the political spectrum as well and has held the number one position in TV ratings for 2021. Some rhetorical factors that could have contributed to the cultivation of credibility and therefore viewership is that Tucker Carlson presents himself as an equal to his audience and reports on topics that are directly related to the problems of the 'common man.' According to cultivation theory, audiences trust sources more if they are more familiar with the presented viewpoint and can relate to it. Tucker Carlson uses aspects of cultivation theory to his advantage and creates relatable content for his viewers. Jake Tapper lacks this relatableness as he focuses more strongly on presenting his argument in a way that is more authoritative. Although this information is more digestible in shorter periods of time, it does not resonate with viewers' need for orientation. This need for orientation is determined by a high level of relevance and a high level of uncertainty. While Jake Tapper

reports on stories, they frequently relate to national issues on a governmental level instead of the direct effect to the audience. This choice lowers the relevance to the audience and therefore their need for more knowledge. Jake Tapper also emphasizes the importance of what is right and wrong through emotionally charged language which could dissuade viewers from deeming him as credible because he uses emotion to bolster his credibility more than other tactics.

Future research might be able to identify further what encourages audiences to get involved, as well as open up the door to if the persuasive tactics being used are ethical for the audience in certain instances. When audiences are persuaded to think one way, it could suggest agenda-setting in the media and help encourage a more critical atmosphere in news circulation. This research in the current context shows that journalists who are relatable to their audiences and report on personally relative news can be perceived as more credible in the atmosphere where authority figures and the government itself is being perceived as less credible.

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