

BLOWBACK

# Stop calling O'Reilly names

**A Fox News producer takes issue with a Rosa Brooks column.**

By Ron Mitchell

May 10, 2007

Armed with propaganda, and dangerous with ideological fervor, Los Angeles Times columnist [Rosa Brooks](#) stated flat-out that the anchor of *The O'Reilly Factor*, Bill O'Reilly, calls people names every 6.8 seconds in his opening monologue.

Anyone who watches the Factor knows that's nonsense. But some don't watch, and may believe our Ms. Brooks.

The information Brooks used to make that incredible statement of alleged fact came from an Indiana University study. But what Brooks did not tell Times readers is that the study defined name-calling as terms such as "buried headline." Researchers actually defined political terms like "conservative," "liberal," even "centrist" as name-calling if the term was somehow connected with "a problem or social ill." I hope you're catching on here. Anything other than reading directly from the phone book is apparently name calling.

Brooks also failed to tell Times readers that the researchers admit they had to make several changes to their "coding instrument" because the first attempts generated "unacceptably low scores." That's code for: they tried and tried until the results fit the preconceived notion of name-calling on the Factor.

But wait, there's more. The Indiana researchers used a framework based on a 1930's study of infamous anti-Semite Father Charles Coughlin. This "content analysis" was developed by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis. Talk about starting with the answer and working backward!

In 2006, one of the study's authors is quoted as saying that it's "obvious" that the Fox News Channel is "part of the Republican Party." Another author's claim to fame is a paper on the "morally conservative" Jerry Springer. A third used to work at CNN. Sounds like a fair and balanced group to me.

Finally, let's step back a moment and look at what Los Angeles Times readers were presented on the op-ed page. Rosa Brooks is a confirmed leftist. Did you know that she is counsel to George Soros' Open Society

Institute, perhaps the most far-left think tank in the country? Did you know that? Certainly that does not disqualify her from writing an opinion column, but when you make your living in a far-left environment, it should be known.

While it is true that the opinion forum in every newspaper and on *The O'Reilly Factor* as well is designed to present provocative views and thoughtful analysis, it is also true that when the analysis is not based on fact, it can deceive the reader. Spitting out propaganda from any ideological concern is not valid opinion.

Los Angeles Times readers are entitled to the finest journalism in the country. That includes an honest opinion page. Rosa Brooks' column on Bill O'Reilly was based on a biased study and laced with far-left propaganda. The Times can do better.

*Ron Mitchell is a senior producer for Fox News Channel's The O'Reilly Factor.*

BLOWBACK

# Bill O'Reilly and Krippendorff's Alpha

**The authors of the "name-calling" study respond to Ron Mitchell's recent column.**

By Mike Conway, Maria Elizabeth Grabe and Kevin Grieves  
May 16, 2007

As authors of a study on Bill O'Reilly's rhetoric, we would like to thank the Los Angeles Times, other journalists, media watch Web sites, and bloggers who have brought our research to a wider audience. We are pleased that our work has sparked vigorous debate.

At the risk of sounding like dry academics, here is unspun information in response to the May 10 [Blowback piece by Ron Mitchell](#) (senior producer, The O'Reilly Factor).

Mitchell accuses us of methodological bias. Ironically, the procedures we used for the study are scientific practices to guard *against* the bias that Mr. Mitchell is so concerned about. Perhaps it will ease his concern to know that prior to publication, the study went through two rounds of anonymous peer review, passing rigorous inspection from the social science community.

The mischaracterization of how we counted name-calling could be cleared up by [reading the study](#) [pdf]. We did not count "liberal, conservative, centrist" as name-calling unless they were linked to a derogatory qualifier. O'Reilly's reference to "kool-aid left" is an example of what we counted as name-calling. Or is the reference to folks of a particular political persuasion as a cult on a suicide mission fair and balanced reporting?

Mr. Mitchell objects to our comparison of O'Reilly and Father Charles Coughlin. A careful read of our paper will reveal that this comparison is specific to rhetorical use of techniques like name-calling, not—as Mitchell implies—anti-Semitism.

O'Reilly himself insinuated our study was connected to a \$5 million grant from George Soros and that we are allied with the Media Matters operation. We received no funding for this study and Media Matters probably came across the research the same way dozens of journalists and bloggers did: from the press release issued by our university.

With these issues cleared up, we hope the debate continues.

*Indiana University professors Mike Conway and Maria Elizabeth Grabe, and graduate student Kevin Grieves, are the authors of the study Villains, Victims and the Virtuous in Bill O'Reilly's "No-Spin Zone."*