

Annotation Protocol for Political Bias

General

One annotator first annotates the main event and main entities for each article in a triplet. Our pilot study shows high agreement for these attributes, so resolution is not required. After this is completed, both annotators follow the instructions below.

Instructions to Annotators

You will be given a triplet of articles on the same event or topic. Please read all of the articles first. Next, for each article, answer the article-level questions, then annotate the article on the sentence-level. After annotating the articles, answer the triplet-level questions.

Document-level Questions

1. How do you think the author feels regarding the main event? (positive, negative, or neutral)
2. How do you think the author feels regarding the main entity(ies)? (positive, negative, or neutral) If there are more than one entities, label each one separately.
3. How did you feel about the main entity(ies) prior to reading the article?
If there is more than one entity, label each one separately.
 - Strongly negative
 - Slightly negative
 - Neutral
 - Slightly positive
 - Strongly positive

Triplet-level Questions

Relative to the other articles in the triplet, which article is more left-leaning (e.g. likely to be written by news media holding liberal views)? Which article is more right-leaning (e.g. likely to be written by news media holding conservative views)? Which article is more centered than the others?

Sentence-level Questions

We will ask you to identify author bias towards the main entity(ies) on a phrase or sentence level. For each sentence, ask yourself:

- Is this evidence for how the author feels regarding the main entity(ies)?
- Does it have the tendency to affect how you (the reader) feel about the main entity(ies)?

If yes, identify whether the bias is caused by a specific word or phrase, or by the sentence as a whole (see our bias guidelines below for more details). Use the annotation tool provided (See below for instructions).

For each identified span, answer:

1. If there is more than one main entity, who is the target of the bias?
 - Multiple choice of main entity(ies) that we provide. Disregard bias towards non-main entities.
 2. Which direction is the bias in?
 - Does this potentially make you (the reader) feel more **positively** or more **negatively** about the target?
 3. Is the bias direct or indirect?
 - Is the bias aimed directly at the main entity, or aimed at one of their allies or opponents?
 - If the bias is indirect, label the sentiment towards the ally or opponent as **positive, negative, or neutral**
 - See below for detailed explanation
 4. How is the bias expressed?
 - See our guidelines below for the 2 types of bias
 5. Is the bias part of a quote? If so, who said it?
 - Yes/No
 - If yes, answer multiple choice of main entity(ies) or Other
 - If the speaker is "Other", answer whether they are for, against, or neutral towards the main target. If unsure, mark "Other (Neutral)"
 6. Feel free to write notes to clarify decisions/reasons
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Direct vs. Indirect

- The bias is indirect if the phrase or sentence does not mention the main target at all, but contextually implies a connection to them (e.g. bias targeting an ally or opponent of the main target)
- Examples:
 - "Conservatives have **complained** for years about what they say is discrimination by the tech giants." (lexical bias against conservatives, indirectly aimed at Trump, an ally)
 - "All of the major platforms removed content from Alex Jones, **the far-right conspiracy theorist**, this month over what they called hateful and violent speech." (informational bias against Alex Jones, indirectly aimed at Trump, an ally)

Types of bias

Type 1 (linguistic/lexical)

- Bias is caused by the wording. The same exact information can be conveyed in a more neutral manner.
- Single words (subjective or with high intensity) that can be removed or replaced without changing the factual integrity of the word
- Can also include phrasal verbs (like "take part in", "put up with")

- Also includes the special case of using tiny quote snippets, where the author quotes someone for just one word or noun/verb phrase (ex. Trump tweeted about “fake news” yesterday. --shows author skepticism on fake news). In these cases, do not mark the bias as a quote.
- From a grammar perspective: Typically verb phrases, noun phrases, and adjectives
- Examples:
 - “In an explosive congressional hearing last month, Strzok sought to **clear his name**.”
 - “Peter Strzok, meanwhile, **blasted** the bureau on Monday.”
 - “One Strzok text in particular **vowed** to “stop” Trump from becoming president”

Type 2 (informational)

- The content of the clause/sentence itself is biased, especially considering the context of the whole article
- Also includes information that depends on context outside the phrase/sentence (ex. “Trump went golfing.” or “Trump, a former reality TV star, ...” when discussing his fitness as president)
- Can be descriptors (“Trump, a former reality TV star, ...”) or an event (“Trump went golfing.”)
- Typically a larger span of words than Type 1 biases, here we consider clauses or sentences. For clauses, consider subordinating clause structure or segments by punctuations
- Always a whole sentence or clause, whichever is the minimal text span
- From a grammar perspective: Typically clauses, participial phrases, and appositions
- Examples:
 - “Mr. Strzok, **who rose over 20 years at the F.B.I. to become one of its most experienced counterintelligence agents**, was a key figure in the early months of the inquiry.” (a descriptor not integral to the main story that frames the entity in a positive light)
 - “Mr. Trump urged social media companies to “let everybody participate, good & bad”... **Yet Mr. Trump has waged relentless attacks on news coverage that he does not like, and has long expressed hostility toward traditional press freedoms.**” (full sentence, shows Trump being hypocritical)

Annotation Tool Manual

- Select words and phrases by highlighting them.
- Select the entire sentence using the “S” button at the end of each sentence.
- The first 5 questions (“target”, “polarity”, “aim”, “bias type”, “quote”) are mandatory.
- The “speaker” question is mandatory and only used if the bias is part of a quote.

- The “indirect target” and “sentiment towards indirect target” questions are mandatory and are only used if the bias is indirect.
- You can edit or delete annotations by clicking the highlighted spans, or by clicking the “S” button again.
- **You will lose all progress if you exit the page.**
- When you are done with the entire article, click “Download annotation file” to save the annotations locally. Please keep track of these files manually.
- You can resume working on an article by importing a previously created annotation file.

Notes:

- In order to annotate overlapping spans, select the “S” button for the sentence and then use the “Duplicate” button to make a copy. You can duplicate sentences as many times as you want in order to capture overlapping spans.

Example Annotations

In the below examples, the main entity is Trump

- “Conservatives have **complained** for years about what they say is discrimination by the tech giants.”
 - Target: Trump
 - Polarity: negative
 - Aim: indirect (ally) --*conservatives are an ally of Trump*
 - Bias Type: lexical --*makes the conservatives sound whiny*
- “Mr. Trump urged social media companies to “let everybody participate, good & bad”... **Yet Mr. Trump has waged relentless attacks on news coverage that he does not like, and has long expressed hostility toward traditional press freedoms.**” (full sentence)
 - Target: Trump
 - Polarity: negative
 - Aim: direct --*direct criticism of Trump*
 - Bias Type: informational --*shows Trump being hypocritical*

In the below examples, the main entity is Strzok

- “In an explosive congressional hearing last month, Strzok sought to **clear his name.**”
 - Target: Strzok
 - Polarity: negative
 - Aim: direct
 - Bias Type: lexical --*implies he’s guilty*
- “**“This decision should be deeply troubling to all Americans,”** the attorney said.”
 - Target: Strzok

- Polarity: positive
 - Aim: indirect (opponent) --*criticism of decision, which was unfavorable to Strzok*
 - Indirect target: decision to fire Strzok
 - Sentiment towards indirect target: Negative
 - Bias Type: Informational
 - Quote: Yes
 - Speaker: Other (pro-target) --*attorney is an ally of Strzok*
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- “One Strzok text in particular **vowed to “stop”** Trump from becoming president”
 - Target: Strzok
 - Polarity: negative
 - Aim: direct
 - Bias Type: Lexical
 - Quote: No --*quoting “stop” is used to advance author’s opinion, doesn’t convey Strzok’s opinion*
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- “Mr. Strzok, **who rose over 20 years at the F.B.I. to become one of its most experienced counterintelligence agents**, was a key figure in the early months of the inquiry.” (a descriptor not integral to the main story that frames the entity in a positive light)
 - Target: Strzok
 - Polarity: positive
 - Aim: direct
 - Bias Type: Informational --*gives Strzok credibility*