**Appendix 1**

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**1. The Lead to Controversial Science-related Wikipedia Pages**

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| **Page (page creation)** | **Fringe Normalization** | **Teach the Controversy** | **False Balance** | **Identification of the Fringe View** | **Proactive Fringe Busting** |
| **Abortion and mental health (2005)** |  | **2006–2007** - States in WP voice that "post-abortion syndrome" refers to symptoms "that have been observed" in women who have abortions - Quotes a 1992 *JAMA* article that describes post-abortion syndrome as a "myth" - Overwhelming focus on lending credence to the notion that abortion adversely impacts mental health | **2005–2006, 2007–2011** - Delineates that there is no causal scientific evidence in support of the association - Mentions statistical correlations which lend credence to the notion that abortions adversely affect mental health - Scientific bodies are investigating the relationship | **2011–2020** - Lead is devoted to citing studies and attributed statements about the lack of support for the relationship - The lead no longer says that there are forms of evidence in support of the relationship |  |
| **Abortion-breast cancer hypothesis (2004)** |  | **2004–2006** - Suggests that scientific opinion is divided on whether abortion causes breast cancer |  | **2006–2009** -Notes that the hypothesis has not been verified - Notes that no scientific organization endorses it - There is a scientific consensus that it's invalid - Includes arguments from proponents of the hypothesis | **2009–2020** - The hypothesis is described as discredited (WP voice) - The scientific consensus is clearly described - Lead delineates in detail why the hypothesis is wrong and poorly based |
| **Acupuncture (2001)** |  | **2007–2009** - Critics say it is pseudoscience - Proponents disagree | **2001–2006, 2010–2016** - Focus on criticisms - Has "often" been characterized as "pseudoscience" - Not "based on the scientific method and science" (2010–2015) - acupuncture's claims are "still the subject of debate" (2010–2015) | **2016** - Acupuncture "has been described" (or sometimes "is often described") as a "pseudoscience" - Delineates why acupuncture is poorly founded | **2016–2020** - "Acupuncture is a pseudoscience" (WP voice) |
| **Conversion therapy (2001)** | **2008–2009** - Simple explanation of conversion therapy. - No criticisms |  | **2001–2007, 2009–2012** - "Controversial" - "Most professionals" (2001–2006) or "most medical organizations" (2006–2007, 2009–2012) believe it does not work or is harmful - Arguments by proponents of conversion therapy | **2007–2008, 2012–2016** - Scientific "consensus" that conversion therapy does not work (WP voice) (2007–2008) - Characterized as pseudoscientic (sometimes in Wikipedia's voice, other times as attributed criticisms) (2012–2016) - Contains pro-conversion therapy rationales | **2016–2020** - Conversion therapy is "pseudoscience" (WP voice) - No reliable evidence in favor of it - Medical organizations say it is ineffective or harmful |
| **Cupping therapy (2004)** | **2004–2017** - Lends credence - No criticism |  |  | **2017–2020** - "Has been characterized as a pseudoscience... and quackery" |  |
| **Discovery Institute (2002)** | **2002–2005** - A think tank that promotes Intelligent Design - Mentions various "areas of interest" for the think tank, suggesting its focus is broader than just ID (2004–2005) |  |  |  | **2019–2020** - Promotes the "pseudoscientific concept of intelligent design" (WP voice) |
| **Genetically modified food (2003)** |  | **2003–2006, 2007–2013** - There is disagreement on the subject | **2006** - There is "disagreement" between nations - "Many scientific organizations" consider GM food as no more risky than non-GM food | **2013–2020** - WP says the "scientific consensus" is that GM food is as safe as non-GM food - Mentions public concerns |  |
| **Genetically modified food controversies (2006)** |  | **2006–2007, 2009–2010** - Opinion is divided |  | **2007–2009, 2010–2020** - WP voice says that "no health harms" have been identified - Many studies attest the safety of GM food - Mentions public concerns - WP voice says there is "scientific consensus" that GM food is safe to eat (2010–2020) |  |
| **Global cooling (2003)** |  |  |  | **2003–2006** - A "theory" - Does not clarify that scientists never accepted the theory | **2006–2020** - "Never had strong scientific support" |
| **Global warming (2001)** |  | **2002–2004** - The causes are disputed - Whether warming is good or bad is disputed - Scientists are divided - "Global warming theory" | **2001–2002, 2004–2005** - All climate models point to human activity as a contributor of warming (2004–2005) - Refers to "global warming theories" (2004–2005) - Some space to climate deniers - There is uncertainty to climate science - "Scientists generally believe" that human factors "play an important role" (2001–2002) | **2005–2009** - A scientific consensus exists (WP voice) and it holds that human activity significantly contributes to climate change - Mentions that some scientists contest the consensus | **2009–2020** - A scientific consensus exists (WP voice) and it holds that human activity significantly contributes to climate change - Delineates the breadth of scientific organizations that endorse the consensus - Delineates the evidence in favor of the consensus - No mention of dissenting views |
| **Global warming controversy (2002)** |  | **2002–2003, 2004–2005, 2007–2010** - Scientific opinion is divided | **2005–2006** - States in WP voice that the "current scientific opinion" is that the climate is warming primarily due to human activity - Delineates the bodies that endorse the consensus - Mentions dissent | **2006–2007, 2010–2019** - States in WP voice that the "scientific consensus" is that the climate is warming primarily due to human activity - Delineates the bodies that endorse the consensus - Mentions dissent - Criticisms of funding for both deniers and mainstream scientists (2012–2019) | **2019–2020** - Lead is exclusively devoted to what it characterizes in WP voice as the scientific consensus on climate science - Dissent is primarily characterized as poorly based and motivated by industry funding - Removal of content disputing motives of climate scientists (e.g. funding) |
| **HIV/AIDS denialism (2003)** |  |  |  | **2003–2007** - "Most of the scientific community" challenges HIV/AIDS denialism - HIV/AIDS denialism challenges the scientific consensus that HIV causes AIDS - Explains basis of HIV/AIDS denialism | **2007–2020** - There is a scientific consensus that HIV causes AIDS (WP voice) - HIV/AIDS denialism is conclusively wrong - That HIV causes AIDS has been thoroughly proven |
| **Hockey stick controversy (2007)** |  | **2007–2010** - The graph is disputed (2007–2010) - Lead includes lots of attributed criticisms and expressions of uncertainty (2007) - Lead also includes language about how the graph has been reproduced by other scientists (2007) | **2010–2012** - Lead contains a lot of criticisms of the graph - The lead is very long - The final paragraph clearly states that the bulk of evidence supports the hockey stick graph and that a "broad consensus" supports it | **2013–2020** - The final paragraph clearly denotes that the graph is extensively supported by studies and that there is a "consensus" behind the graph - However, the rest of the lead focuses a lot on criticisms and uncertainty regarding the graph |  |
| **Homeopathy (2001)** |  | **2001–2006** - "Controversial system of alternative medicine" | **2006–2013** -"Lack of convincing scientific evidence supporting its efficacy" - Has been "regarded as pseudoscience" - In the words of a 1998 medical review, a "placebo therapy at best and quackery at worst" | **2013–2015** - "The scientific community regards homeopathy as a sham" - "Homeopathy is considered a pseudoscience" | **2015–2020**  - "Homeopathy is a pseudoscience" (WP voice) |
| **Intelligent design (2001)** |  | **2001–2004** - Critics say - Proponents say |  | **2004–2014** - "Overwhelming majority" of scientists reject ID - Scientific organizations say it's a pseudoscience - The "scientific community" says it's a pseudoscience (2006–2013) - The scientific "consensus" is that it's not science (2009–2013) | **2014–2020** - ID "is a pseudoscience theory" (WP voice) |
| **Judy Mikovits (2010)** | **2010–2011** - No criticism - Lends credence | **2011** - "Research director of the Whittemore Peterson Institute" - "Led a research effort" - "controversy" - Critics say her claims are without evidence - Supporters praise her |  | **2011–2020** - "Researcher" or "former research director" - fired - Arrested but the charges were dismissed - Research retracted by Science | **2020** - "Former... research scientist" - "Known for discredited medical claims" - Described as a "promoter of conspiracy theories" - "Accused of scientific misconduct" - "Promoted conspiracy theories about the COVID-19 pandemic" |
| **Passive smoking (2006)** |  | **Jan–June 2006** - Science is divided on the issue | **June–Oct 2006** - There is "controversy" over the health harms - "Most recent studies" confirm the health risks | **Nov 2006–2009** - "Current scientific evidence shows that exposure to tobacco smoke causes death, disease and disability" | **2009–2020** - "Scientific evidence shows that exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke causes disease, disability, and death" - Health harms are a "matter of scientific consensus" - The tobacco industry manufactured the appearance of a scientific dispute |
| **Plandemic (2020)** |  |  |  |  | **2020** - "Conspiracy theory video" - "Promoting falsehoods and misinformation" - "False medical information" - "Discredited researcher" |
| **Race and Intelligence (2002)** |  | **2004–2011** - A "controversy" or "dispute" over what causes IQ differences between races - Some say it's genetic, others disagree | **2013–2020** - Some academic bodies reject that IQ is biologically or genetically determined - The Bell Curve is mentioned - Arthur Jensen is cited as someone who believes IQ differences are biologically determined | **2011–2013** - Clear rebuttal by several academic bodies of the notion that differences in IQ are rooted in biology | **2020** - Race is a social construct - Intelligence has no widely accepted definition - Validity of IQ tests are disputed - States in WP voice that there is "no scientific evidence" that IQ differences can be attributed to genetics |
| **Scientific creationism (2001)** |  |  | **2001–2003** - Many scientists accept evolution, and they consider creation science an oxymoron - Explains the gist of scientific creationism's claims | **2005–2015** - "Considered" pseudoscience by the scientific community | **2015–2020** - Creation science is a pseudoscience (WP voice) |
| **Scientific opinion on global warming (2003)** |  | **2003–2004** - Simply says bodies have expressed views (without delineating them) | **2007–2009** - The lead quotes the IPCC position but doesn't say it's the scientific consensus - No mention of dissenters | **2009–2011** - Lead quotes the IPCC position (but doesn't say it's the scientific consensus) - Lead says no scientific body of standing disagrees with the consensus - Mentions that a few bodies hold non-committal positions | **2011–2020** - A scientific consensus exists (WP voice) and it holds that human activity significantly contributes to climate change - No scientific body of national or international standing dissents with the consensus - The title of the page changes "scientific opinion" to "scientific consensus" (2019–) |
| **Sex reassignment therapy (2004)** |  |  |  | **2014–2020** - Major health organizations support SRT as a "medically necessary treatment" in appropriately evaluated cases - There is "broad clinical consensus" that SRT is effective "in terms of subjective improvement" - But "there is academic concern" over the evidence |  |
| **Traditional Chinese medicine (2001)** | **2001–2011** - Absence of criticism - Lends credence to TCM |  | **2011–2014, 2015–2020** - Wikipedia's voice: TCM is not supported by evidence-based medicine - Concerns that some TCM treatments can be harmful - From 2015, lead quotes a Nature editorial which says TCM is "fraught with pseudoscience" | **2014–2015, 2020** - TCM is described in WP voice as "largely a pseudoscience" in a non-prominent part of the lead (2014–2015) - First line of the lead describes TCM as a "medicine practice" - Vital energy is described as "pseudoscience" (WP voice) - TCM is "fraught with pseudoscience" (attributed to a Nature editorial) |  |
| **Vaccine hesitancy (2004)** |  | **2004–2006** - Vaccines have been "widely credited" with reducing disease - The role of vaccines in causing autism is "unresolved" - Critics challenge the wisdom of mass vaccination campaigns | **2006–2015** - No longer characterizes vaccine-autism debate as unresolved - Increased focus on mainstream scientific opinion - Expresses anti-vaccine views, such as attributed concerns over a "lack of research on the adverse effects" of vaccines - Anti-vaccine rhetoric can cause harm (2011–2015) | **2015–2019**  - Detailed attributed criticisms on the dangers of antivaccine rhetoric  - Describes Wakefield's claims on a vaccine-autism link as "discredited" (WP voice) | **2019–2020** - There is a "scientific consensus" that vaccines are "safe" and "effective" (WP voice) - Mentions how there are "unsubstantiated" anti-vaccine "scares" (WP voice) - Anti-vaccine rhetoric causes preventable disease outbreaks and deaths (WP voice) |
| **Vitalism (2003)** | **2003–2012** - Lends credence - Absence of criticism |  | **2017–2020** - "Biologists consider" vitalism to have been "refuted by empirical evidence" | **2012–2017** - "Rejected by mainstream science" |  |
| **Wind turbine syndrome (2015)** |  |  |  |  | **2015–2020** - "The false idea" (or sometimes "conspiracy theory") that wind turbines have adverse health effects - Not recognized by scientific community - Pushed by the fossil fuel industry |
| **Wireless device radiation and health (2004)** | **2011–2012** - WHO classifies mobile phone radiation as "possibly carcinogenic" - No pushback on the purported adverse health impact | **2007–2010, 2012–2017** - The WHO says serious health effects are very unlikely - "However, some nations' radiation advisory authorities" advise citizens to minimize exposure to radiation from cell phones - "Some researchers" say it's harmful | **2004–2007, 2010–2011, 2017–2018, 2019–2020** - Multiple bodies say there are no known adverse health effects but that on-going research and precaution is needed - Aa 2011 assessment that "wireless radiation" is "possibly carcinogenic" is mentioned | **2018–2019** - Quote from WHO: "A large number of studies have been performed... To date, no adverse health effects have been established"  -Quote from the FDA indicating that cell phone usage is safe | **2017** - "No evidence" of health harms (WP voice) |

**2. The Lead to Controversial Politics-related Pages**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Page (page creation)** | **Fringe normalization** | **Teach the controversy** | **False balance** | **Identification of the fringe view** | **Proactive fringe busting** |
| **Abstinence-only sex education (2006)** | **2006–2007, 2009–2010** - No criticism in lead - Presents what they advocate for | **2010–2011, 2013–2014** - Proponents say - Critics say | **2007–2009** - Arguments by proponents - Critics include prominent professional associations across many scientific fields who say it's ineffective and even counterproductive |  | **2011–2013, 2014–** - "Evidence does not support" its effectiveness - "Found to be ineffective" in reducing HIV - "Does not decrease rates of sexual activity or unplanned pregnancy" relative to comprehensive sex ed |
| **Alex Jones (2003)** |  | **2004–2006, 2008–2013** - "Critics" (2005–2006) or "mainstream media" (2008–2012) say he's a conspiracy theorist - His supporters (2006–2008) or "Russia Today" (2008–2012) say he's an independent investigative journalist |  | **2003–2004, 2006–2008** -"Conspiracy theorist" (WP voice) - "Paleoconservative" (2006–2008) | **2013–2020** - "Conspiracy theorist" (WP voice) - Delineates the conspiracy theories he has promoted - *InfoWars* is described as a "fake news website" (2016–) - "Far-right" (WP voice) (2019–) |
| **Alt-right (2016)** |  |  | **2016** - "Right-wing" - Has been linked to "white supremacy" and "anti-Semitism" | **2016–2018** - "Far-right" (WP voice) - Has been linked to "white supremacy" and "anti-Semitism" | **2018–2020** - "Far-right, white nationalist movement" (WP voice) - "Espouse white supremacism", "racism", "antisemitism", "homophobia", "islamophobia" (WP voice) |
| **American Civil War (2001)** |  | **2005–2007** - The causes of the Civil War are "debated" or a "subject of controversy" | **2001–2003** - There are several reasons for the outbreak of the Civil War  - Slavery is the main one - The causes of the Civil War are debated |  | **2012–2020** - Clearly states that the primary cause was slavery (WP voice) - "Slave"-related terms are peppered throughout the lead - No other causes are mentioned. "States' rights" is mentioned, but only as "states' rights to uphold slavery" |
| **Barack Obama religion conspiracy theories (2010)** |  |  |  |  | **2010–2020** - "Conspiracy theories" in WP voice - Clearly identified as "false" in WP voice (2010–2017) - "Obama is a Protestant Christian" in WP voice (2017–) |
| **David Barton (2005)** | **2005–2006, 2007–2008** - Lends credence - No criticism - Describes him as a "historian" (or "self-taught historian") | **2008–2010, 2010–2011** - Some criticize his work - Influential - Defended by some - WP voice says he "is a collector of early American documents" (2010–2011) | **2006–2007, 2010, 2011–2012** - “Historians dismiss his work" - Critics say Barton does not have credentials - includes lengthy arguments by Barton | **2012–2020** - Scholars say his research is "highly flawed", "pseudoscholarship" and "spreading "outright falsehoods"" - "Political activist and author" - He rejects the "consensus view" that the Constitution calls for separation of church and state - "Has been described as a Christian nationalist" |  |
| **David Horowitz (2003)** | **2003–2018** - No criticism - Lends credence | **2018–2020** - The SPLC describes Horowitz as "a driving force of the anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant and anti-black movements" |  |  |  |
| **Deep State in the United States (2016)** | **2016–2017** - Lends credence to the notion of a deep state in the US | **2017–2019** - Critics say it's a conspiracy theory |  | **2019–2020** - Described as a "conspiracy theory" in WP voice - Includes arguments by proponents |  |
| **Douma chemical attack (2018)** |  | **2018–2020** - "Attributed to the Syrian army" by rebel forces, and governments in the US, UK and France - OPCW report found no evidence for a Syrian government claim that rebel fighters used a local facility to produce chemical weapons |  |  |  |
| **Family Research Council (2003)** | **2003–2012** - No criticism - Lends credence | **2012–2020** - The SPLC calls FRC "an anti-gay hate group" and says it makes "false claims" and uses "discredited research and junk science" |  |  |  |
| **Gab (social network) (2016)** | **2016–2018** - Lends credence - No criticism |  | **2018** - "Has been described" or "criticized" as "a platform for the alt-right and white supremacists" | **2018–2020** - "Known for its far-right userbase" - "Widely described as a safe haven for extremists including neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and the alt-right" |  |
| **Gamergate controversy (2014)** |  |  | **2014** - GG is both about the harassment of several women in the video game industry and GG supporters' concerns with video game industry ethics - Harassment of women took place (WP voice) | **2014–2020** - Harassment of women took place (WP voice) - GG supporters say they are concerned with ethics. Others respond that the concerns are "trivial, conspiracy theories, groundless, or unrelated to [ethics]" - Has been "defined by the harassment" of GG supporters and "viewed as a right-wing backlash against progressivism" |  |
| **Guccifer 2.0 (2016)** |  |  | **2016–2020** - Some of the leaks are "forgeries" and "disinformation" - US intel community and many cybersecurity organizations have attributed the persona to Russian intel services - The Russian government and WikiLeaks deny |  |  |
| **InfoWars (2017)\*** |  |  |  |  | **2017–2020** -Pushes "conspiracy theories" and "fake news" (WP voice) - Initially described as "right-wing" (gets changed to "far-right" over time) (WP voice) |
| **Jared Taylor (2004)** | **2004–2005, 2009–2010** - Journalist - "Advocate" of "racialist theories" - No criticism | **2008–2009, 2010–2011** - Journalist - Advocate of "racial realist explanations" - His journal self-describes as "racial-realist" - Accused of racism | **2005–2008, 2011–2014** - "White nationalist journalist" - His journal addresses "issues of racial difference and their impact on societies" - Proponent of "racial realism" - Described as racist by various actors - He rejects the accusations of racism | **2014–2016** - Lead is primarily devoted to attributed claims that he is racist and that his journal is white supremacist - WP describes him as a "journalist" and advocate of "racial realism" | **2016–2020** - Is a "white supremacist" (or "white nationalist") in WP voice - "Accused of promoting racist ideologies" by civil rights groups, news media and academics who study racism |
| **Khan Shaykhun chemical attack (2017)** |  | **2017** - Accusations and denials from various sides |  | **2017–2020** - Multiple governments, Human Rights Watch, and the UN attributed responsibility to the Assad regime - Syrian and Russian governments claim the attack was staged or fabricated (WP voice says it did occur) - OPCW-UN attributed responsibility to the Assad regime |  |
| **Lauren Southern** | **2016–2017** - A libertarian - She was suspended from the Canadian Libertarian Party but reinstated "after public outcry" |  |  | **2017–2020** - "Far-right" in WP voice - "Has been described as alt-right and a white nationalist" - Promotes the "Great Replacement conspiracy theory" - Has been "credited" with popularizing the "white genocide conspiracy theory" |  |
| **Lost Cause of the Confederacy (2005)** | **2005–2015** - Delineates what the Lost Cause proposes - No criticisms of its validity |  |  | **2015–2019** - Slavery played a central role in the outbreak of the war (WP voice) - Extensive criticism by historians - "Founded upon several historically inaccurate or debatable elements" - Attributed claims that Lost Cause boosts white supremacy - "A literary and intellectual movement" | **2019–2020** - The Lost Cause is a "pseudo-historical, negationist ideology" (WP voice) - The Lost Cause is tied to the maintenance of "white supremacist policies, such as Jim Crow" |
| **Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (2014)** |  | **2014** - Accusations against both pro-Russia separatists and the Ukrainian government |  | **2014–2020** - Delineates all the evidence that points to the pro-Russian separatists and role of Russian government - Attributed claims that the separatists were responsible - Summarizes the findings of the official investigation that Russia was involved and separatists launched the missile (2016–2020) |  |
| **Men's rights movement (2003)** | **2003–2013**  - No criticism - Lends credence | **2013–2019** - Includes criticism and attributed claims by specific organizations that some MRM groups are mysogynist  - Arguments by MRM proponents | **2019–2020** - Criticism comprises a large part of the lead - Criticism is not attributed to specific organizations, but attributed more generally (e.g. MRM activities "have been criticized and labelled hateful and violent") - Lead is less devoted to arguments by MRM proponents |  |  |
| **Origins of the American Civil War (2003)** |  | **2004–2008** - Slavery is mentioned extensively but the lead obfuscates whether slavery or unrelated factors caused the outbreak of war | **2008–2015** - "Main explanation... was slavery" - Lhe lead also gives prominent placement to other "important factors", which includes unspecified states' rights, tariffs and party politics | **2015–2020** - The primary cause was slavery (WP voice) - "Most" (2015–2010) or "virtually all" (2020) historians agree that slavery was the cause of the war - Last sentence of the lead mentions "other important factors" (several of which do not explicitly relate to slavery) |  |
| **Paul Joseph Watson (2016)** |  |  |  |  | **2016–** - "Conspiracy theorist" (WP voice) - "Alt-right" (WP voice) - Mention of the specific conspiracy theories and falsehoods he has pushed |
| **Pizzagate conspiracy theory (2016)** |  |  |  |  | **2016–2020** - "Debunked conspiracy theory" (WP voice) |
| **Poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal (2018)** |  | **2018–2020** - Russia has been "accused" or "alleged" to have done it - Russia denies it |  |  |  |
| **Racial views of Donald Trump (2018)** |  | **2018–2019** - History of making "racially controversial" or "racially charged" remarks - Taken actions that are "perceived" to be racially motivated or that exacerbate racial anxieties - Trump denies that he is racist | **2019–2020** - Speech and actions "that have been widely viewed as racist or racially charged" - Accused of fueling racism in the U.S. - "Some scholars" place his rhetoric in the context of white supremacy - Trump denies that he is racist - "Some people who know him" deny that he is racist |  |  |
| **Reverse racism (2011)** | **2011–2015** - Described as "controversial" - No criticism of the concept | **2015–2017** - Some groups deny reverse racism exists | **2017–2018** - The concept ignores disparities in power and authority (WP voice) - Scholars argue power and authority are important aspects of racism - Part of a racial backlash against gains by non-whites | **2018–2020** - "Little to no empirical evidence that white Americans suffer systemic discrimination" (WP voice) - RR claims tend to ignore disparities in power and authority, "which scholars argue constitute an essential component of racism" - RR has been used wherever white supremacy has diminished |  |
| **Russia investigation origins counter-narrative (2019)** |  |  |  | **2019–2020** - "A right-wing alternative narrative, sometimes identified as a conspiracy" (WP voice) - "From the outset, conservatives tried to delegitimize the Mueller investigation" - Trump has requested that the DOJ "chase unfounded conspiracy theories" - DOJ IG found some errors but no political bias in the initiation of the investigation |  |
| **Russian interference in the 2016 election (2016)** |  |  | **2016–2018** - Lead overwhelmingly focuses on attributed claims that Russia interfered (sometimes framed as the U.S. government "accused" Russia) - Emphasis on multiple bodies who concluded that Russia interfered - Includes denials by the Russian government and WikiLeaks | **2018–2019** - The first line states in WP voice that Russia interfered - The rest of the lead is full of attributed claims | **2019–2020** - Interference stated as fact in WP voice, including the hacks of the DNC, DCCC and John Podesta - Delineates who concluded that Russia interfered - Includes Russian government denials |
| **Spygate (2018)** |  |  |  |  | **2018–2020** - "Conspiracy theory initiated by President Donald Trump" (WP voice) - No evidence (WP voice) |
| **Steve Sailer (2005)** | **2005, 2006–2018** - "Reporter" - No criticism - Characterized as influential | **2005–2006** - Critics have criticized him - Lends credence to him | **2018–2019** - "Journalist" - Columnist for outlets associated with "white supremacy" - Credited with coining "euphemistic race theory" which has become popular on the alt-right as a euphemism for scientific racism | **2019–2020** - "Journalist" - Columnist for outlets associated with "white supremacy" - "History of making racist statements", promotes "racist and anti-immigrant theories" and "credited with coining the pseudoscientific "euphemistic race theory"" - SPLC calls him a "white supremacist" |  |
| **Swift Vets and POWs for Truth (2004)** |  | **2004–2013** - Presents the accusations - Presents counterclaims |  |  | **2013–2020** - "Considered an example of a successful political smear campaign" - The Swiftboater claims are "discredited" (WP voice) |
| **Trump–Ukraine scandal (2019)** |  |  |  |  | **2019–2020** - WP voice: Trump undertook efforts to "coerce Ukraine and other foreign countries" to provide damaging info about Joe Biden - WP voice: Trump enlisted Barr and Giuliani to pressure foreign countries to "cooperate in supporting conspiracy theories" - Delineates the evidence that supports the aforementioned events |
| **Use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Civil War (2014)** | **2014–2016** - No attribution of responsibility | **2016–2017** - A confidential UN report blamed Assad for the attacks on Talmenes and Sarmin |  | **2017–2020** - "The Syrian Ba'athist military was seen as the main suspect" - "Mainly blamed on Syrian Ba'athist forces" - UN and the OPCW "explicitly blamed" the Assad regime for chemical weapons use in Talmenes, Sarmin, Qmenas and Marea - In 2020, the OCPW determined Assad perpetrated the sarin gas attack in Latamenah |  |
| **VDARE (2004)** | **2004–2010** - No criticism - Lends credence | **2010–2014, 2015–2017** - SPLC calls it a hate group - Some civil rights groups say it is white nationalist (2010–2011) - VDARE rejects that it is white nationalist - "Has been criticized" as being white nationalist and a hate group, which VDARE denies (2012–2014) |  | **2014–2015, 2017–2020** - "White nationalist" in WP voice (2014–2015) - Includes attributed criticisms - It is "associated with" "white nationalism" and "white supremacy" (2017–2020) |  |
| **Waterboarding (2004)** | **2005–2006** - "Interrogation technique" |  | **2007** - "Many", "some" or "numerous" "legal experts" consider it torture |  | **2004–2005, 2006–2007, 2007–2020** - "Torture" (WP voice) |
| **White genocide conspiracy theory (2015)** |  |  |  | **2015–2016** - "Conspiracy theory" in WP voice - "Associated with" White nationalists | **2016–2020** - "Conspiracy theory" in WP voice - "Is a white supremacist belief" (or "is a white nationalist" belief) (WP voice) - "Is a myth based on pseudoscience, pseudohistory, and hatred" (WP voice) |

**3. Sources for Table 3**

1. 2011 vote on “hate-group” designation in the lead of the Family Research Council: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Family\_Research\_Council/Archive\_4#Should\_the\_lead\_cover\_the\_controversy\_over\_SPLC's\_designation\_of\_the\_FRC\_as\_a\_hate\_group?
2. 2012 vote on “hate-group” designation in the lead of the Family Research Council: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Family\_Research\_Council/Archive\_6#Rfc\_on\_inclusion\_of\_Hate\_group\_in\_lead
3. A 2014 discussion on sanctioning a PF editor: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Requests\_for\_comment/Arzel\_2
4. A 2016 discussion on including a sentence in Donald Trump’s lead that stated in WP voice that "many" of Trump's statements have been "false": https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Donald\_Trump/Archive\_26#RfC:\_Donald\_Trump.27s\_false\_campaign\_statements
5. 2017 vote on whether to deprecate the Daily Mail: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reliable\_sources/Noticeboard/Archive\_220#Daily\_Mail\_RfC

**4. Rebuttal of Alternative Explanations**

*Status seeking*. Another hypothesis is that Wikipedians desire validation of the encyclopedia or themselves by the outside world. The hypothesis is problematic for several reasons. In terms of individual status, most Wikipedians appear to edit pseudonymously. Consequently, they do not gain status by the outside world for their efforts on the encyclopedia. Also, if Wikipedians seek status, what kind of status would they seek? From whom? It is reasonable to assume that different Wikipedians would prefer to be afforded high status by different actors, some of whom may staunchly oppose Wikipedia’s transformation.

In terms of achieving status for Wikipedia as a whole, most of the internal discussions about Wikipedia’s standing in the world emphasize the risks that come with moving away from stricter neutrality and the “teach the controversy” approach. Opponents of Wikipedia’s transformation frequently say that it jeopardizes the encyclopedia’s external legitimacy, whereas one rarely sees supporters of the transformation argue that the encyclopedia needs to transform in order to fulfill broader social purposes and be considered legitimate by the outside world. Wikipedians may hold those views privately, but they are rare in public discussions. Lastly, if Wikipedians want external validation of Wikipedia, then it can be risky to move from the stricter versions of neutrality and hands-off approaches adopted by other platforms, and taking actions that could be seen as biased and anti-conservative. One can frequently observe articles in conservative media (and some fringe left media) about biases on Wikipedia, along with frequent comments on Wikipedia talk pages where editors insist they will stop editing and donating money to Wikipedia due to perceived biases.

*Functional problems*. Another possible explanation for Wikipedia’s transformation is that the old understanding of Wikipedia’s rules was unsatisfying in dealing with new problems that emerged, such as being inundated with content related to fake news, conspiracy theories and extremism, thus necessitating a new understanding of the rules for content. This is inconsistent with the fact that Wikipedia was full of content sourced to outlets that promoted falsehoods, conspiracy theories and extremism in its early years and well into the 2010s. When news sources began to be deprecated, editors often had to scrub copious citations across the encyclopedia to the newly deprecated sources. Those citations were frequently added in the early years of Wikipedia. In later years, it became harder to use sources in practice (preceding their deprecation), which meant that it was not a common problem plaguing Wikipedia editors that needed fixing in the later years. Some editors oppose deprecations of sources on principle, arguing that that the deprecation of a particular source is pointless, given that the community generally blocks the addition of the source anyway through the normal editing practices.

*Interventions by the heads of Wikipedia*. Another hypothesis is that the transformation was caused by interventions by the Wikimedia Foundation, the body that runs Wikipedia, or by Jimmy Wales, one of Wikipedia’s founders and figurehead. Whereas Wales did serve as a “benevolent dictator” of Wikipedia in its early years, he primarily deferred to the community of users in substantive decision-making on content. In 2003, he set up the Arbitration committee to settle disputes related to user conduct. This body became a Supreme Court of sorts on Wikipedia, and its members are elected by the Wikipedia userbase. Wales did have outsized powers on paper until 2009 when the Arbitration Committee stripped him of the powers after he abused the powers. However, he did not use those powers to shape the rules or the content that pertained to the transformation documented in this paper.[[1]](#footnote-1) In other words, he was a ceremonial head. Similarly, the Wikimedia Foundation has not intervened in the rules or specific content in a way that would cause the transformation. For all intents and purposes, the power and decision-making lie with the userbase.

**References**

Wikipedia. 2009. “Jimbo Wales' block of Bishonen.” Wikipedia archive, 00:48, 5 August 2009. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wikipedia:Arbitration/Requests/Case&diff=next&oldid=306113495 (Accessed 9 May 2021).

1. Wales relinquished his powers to block users in 2009 due to a user revolt sparked by Wales’s decision to block a popular administrator for incivility on the English Wikipedia (Wikipedia 2009). Wales relinquished his remaining privileges in 2010 after he acted unilaterally to remove purportedly pornographic content from Wikipedia, thus side-stepping the Wikipedia’s community decision-making procedures and sparking a user revolt. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)