**Appendix 2**

**Sources for Table 3**

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?

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

A 2014 discussion on sanctioning a PF editor: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Requests\_for\_comment/Arzel\_2

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

2017 vote on whether to deprecate the Daily Mail: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reliable\_sources/Noticeboard/Archive\_220#Daily\_Mail\_RfC

**Rebuttal of additional 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)