

KILLING WITH APPLAUSE: EMERGENT PERMISSION STRUCTURES FOR MURDER IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Killing with Applause: Emergent Permission Structures for Murder in the Digital Age

NCRI BRIEF

Executive Summary:

The murder of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson has revealed a dangerous shift in societal norms. Using social media data, AI, and social psychology survey methods, we find an evolving online “permission structure,” a framework that justifies previously unacceptable beliefs or actions with a mutually reinforcing dynamic: Social media platforms provide amplification, while psychologically susceptible individuals provide justification. Together they form an emergent system that normalizes violence.

Our data suggest that this is not simply about extremist fringe groups. These narratives are becoming popular on mainstream platforms in ways we have only previously seen on extremist platforms such as Gab or 4chan, creating widespread cultural shifts that lower moral boundaries for targeted violence against political, social, or class enemies. Our survey revealed that the more social media a person consumes, the more likely they are to believe that Mangione’s actions were at least somewhat justified.

Key Observations of a Moral Shift:

- **Targeted violence is becoming normalized online and in the real world.** Memes, viral content, gamification and the lionization of Luigi Mangione are constructing frameworks that endorse and legitimize violence, encouraging harassment and further acts of violence against corporate figures.
 - **A real-world copycat culture to attack CEOs is growing:** An apparent copycat attack against a corporate leader occurred on December 17, 2024, when Nathan Mahoney, a newly hired employee of Anderson Express Inc. stabbed company president Erik Denslow during a staff meeting leaving him in critical condition. Mahoney appeared smiling in his police photographs.
 - **A real-world copycat culture to target and harass CEOs is growing:** Supporters of Luigi Mangione vandalized a former Goldman Sachs executive’s home in NYC, with phrases like "Deny, Defend, Depose" and "Free Luigi." These messages, drawn from Mangione’s rhetoric, illustrate

how digital narratives endorsing violence are manifesting in real-world acts of symbolic aggression against perceived corporate elites.

- **Previously fringe rhetoric has migrated into the mainstream:** Once confined to 4chan and Terrorgram subcultures that venerate mass shooters, the mass following of Mangione's X account and the virality of "Free Luigi" across multiple platforms, shows that the elevation of violent actors now permeates everyday discourse.
- **Viral memes gamification and humor-driven content have commodified murder:** Memecoins, merchandise sales, and in-person gatherings have transformed the assassination into a cultural commodity. The repeated depiction of Mangione as a heroic renegade—spread through montage edits and viral videos—fosters tacit approval for further targeted attacks.
- **Harassment campaigns escalating to tangible threats:** By December 7th, The #EatTheRich hashtag already surged nearly 300% as compared to the previous monthly average and over 500% compared to the prior week, correlating with an increase in explicit targeting of corporate leaders. Circulating "wanted: CEO" posters and executive "hit lists" bridge online rhetoric and physical-world acts of intimidation, illustrating how digital harassment can evolve into orchestrated threat campaigns.
- **Conspiratorial and anti-establishment rhetoric is further eroding already low institutional trust:** Viral numerology theories and allegations of planted evidence feed a conspiratorial environment that undermines institutional trust and encourages resistance to law enforcement. Popular online content now includes claims that Mangione's arrest was staged and urges jury nullification, legitimizing interference with the justice system.
- **Survey data on public opinion confirms widespread adoption of rhetoric seen online.** Approximately 44% of Americans surveyed rejected the assertion that the CEO's murder was "not at all justified". This reflects the adoption of anti-establishment sentiments and narratives of justification that are proliferating across social media platforms.
- **Our analysis confirms social media supports a digital "permission structure" for justifying murder:** Authoritarian tendencies, low internal locus of control (lack of personal agency), and social media use are the strongest predictors of justification for the shooting.
 - Those who justify the murder are young (78% are 18-27), social media users (64% use social media 4+ hours a day) and highly authoritarian (approximately 70% are in the top quartile for this trait).
 - Platforms matter. Users of Bluesky score highest in justification for the murder with 78% reporting that the CEO's killing was at least somewhat

justified. Only extremist platforms such as Gab or 4chan evidenced similar levels of endorsement for the murder.

Background

On the morning of December 4, 2024, Brian Thompson, CEO of UnitedHealthcare, was fatally shot outside the New York Hilton Midtown hotel in Manhattan, where he was attending an investors' conference. The assailant, wearing a mask, fled the scene. Days later, Luigi Mangione was apprehended in Altoona, Pennsylvania, in possession of a 3D-printed firearm and a manifesto condemning the U.S. healthcare system, revealing potential ideological motivations behind the attack.

Following the shooting, social media erupted with memes and posts glorifying violence and sexualizing the assailant. We found that the virality of these posts intensified after Mangione's arrest, as did threats targeting other CEOs and law enforcement.¹ The shooter's image and narrative were commodified into online content, merchandise, and even "memecoin" cryptocurrencies which capitalize on those who wish to "buy-in" to a burgeoning social movement.

To better describe this unprecedented wave of support for murder, its scope and severity, we conducted an in-depth analysis of scaled social media trends and quantitative psychological studies. In the process, we uncovered insights into the mechanisms of online radicalization, the commodification of violent acts, and the role of social media in normalizing extremist discourse.

The Glorification and Lionization of Luigi Mangione

Following his arrest on December 9, 2024, Luigi Mangione was transformed into a romantic symbol of anti-establishment resistance. Across platforms like Twitter/X, TikTok, Reddit, and Telegram, narratives glorify Mangione, framing his actions as justified retaliation against corporate greed and healthcare injustice. Much of the narrative praising Mangione paints him as an attractive, intelligent, and moral actor.

On December 9, Mangione became the top trending topic on Twitter/X with over 1.15 million posts.

Trending
Luigi
1.15M posts

... Politics · Trending
Mangione
821K posts

...

¹ [NBC: Insurance executive's killing sparks online praise and hate](#)


As of December 9th, Mangione’s X account @pepmangione, which had approximately 5000 followers before the shooting, gained more than 400 thousand new followers since his arrest.

TWITTER STATS SUMMARY / USER STATISTICS FOR PEPMANGIONE (2024-12-09 - 2024-12-12)					
DATE		FOLLOWERS		FOLLOWING	
2024-12-09	Mon	–	237,224	–	73
2024-12-10	Tue	+133,223	370,447	-1	72
2024-12-11	Wed	+21,272	391,719	-1	71
2024-12-12	Thu	+23,374	415,093	🟡 LIVE	71
Daily Averages ↩		+13,057		+2	

Spinoff accounts like @LuigiCrave, @luigimangione_updates, and @freeluigi.live were among the most followed X accounts in the 24 hours following his arrest.

TWITTER STATS SUMMARY / USER STATISTICS FOR LUIGICRAVE (2024-12-09 - 2024-12-12)							
DATE		FOLLOWERS		FOLLOWING		TWEETS	
2024-12-09	Mon	–	10,431	–	6	–	33
2024-12-10	Tue	+25,911	36,342	-2	4	+7	40
2024-12-11	Wed	+15,299	51,641	–	4	+6	46
2024-12-12	Thu	+2,043	53,684	🟡 LIVE	4	+2	48
Daily Averages ↩		+1,721		–		+1	
Last 30 days ↩		+51,641		+4		+46	

The subreddit r/Luigi_Mangione, which was created on December 9th, 2024 has gained more than 13 thousand subscribers.

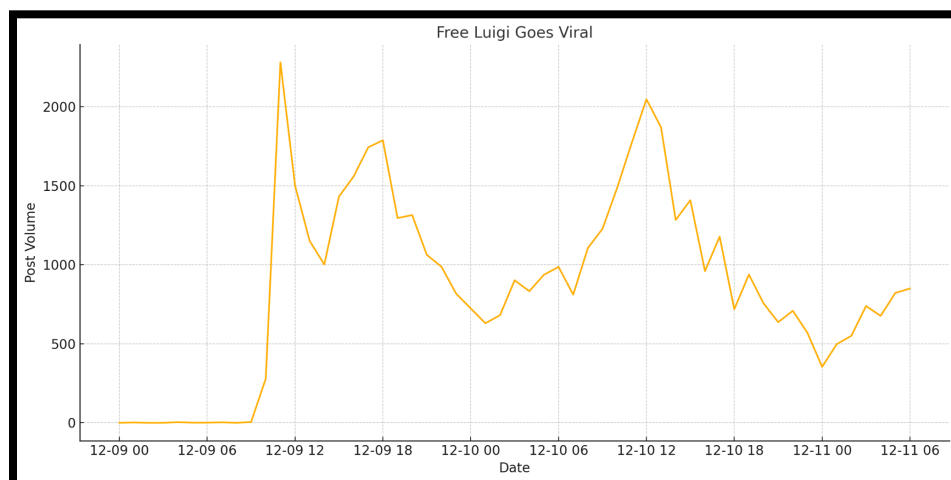


Luigi_Mangione
 Not a fan club. This sub is for discussion and updates about the suspected killer of Brian... [More](#)

13.63K Subscribers **December 9, 2024** Created at

In the 48 hours after Luigi Mangione was identified as a suspect in the UHC CEO killing, “Free Luigi” was posted more than 47 thousand times across social media platforms,

garnering more than 793 thousand engagements across Twitter and Reddit, with impressions likely to be in the tens of millions.



Volume of posts with "Free Luigi" between December 9th and December 11th

We sought to understand the pervasiveness of calls to action in reference to Thompson's violent death. From a sample of posts discussing Luigi Mangione and Thompson, we used large language model extraction to examine the proportions of comments making explicit calls for violence. Posts containing these calls to violence received over 50 thousand engagements and 18 million impressions, signifying a wide audience for these messages, a phenomenon historically found on fringe and extremist web communities.

Memes and the Deification of Killers

Examination of open source materials revealed notable efforts to commodify the murder as a cultural phenomenon, contributing to a form of mass revolutionary ideation in mainstream online discourse. This reaction reflects a broader pattern in "terrorgram" accelerationist communities on telegram and fringe social networking platforms like 4chan, 8chan, and gab, where the concept of sainthood is used to sacralize mass violence, fostering a cult-like reverence for attackers.

Sainthood narratives historically have fueled recruitment into fringe communities and extremist groups, reinforcing right-wing extremist ideologies, drawing on symbolism that mirrors traditional martyrdom in religious extremism. Similar to the deification of mass shooters by fringe communities, Mangione's image and ideology have been adopted as symbols to rally support for Thompson's murder and inspire further violence. The scale of popular adoption of the sainthood meme for Mangione is unprecedented.



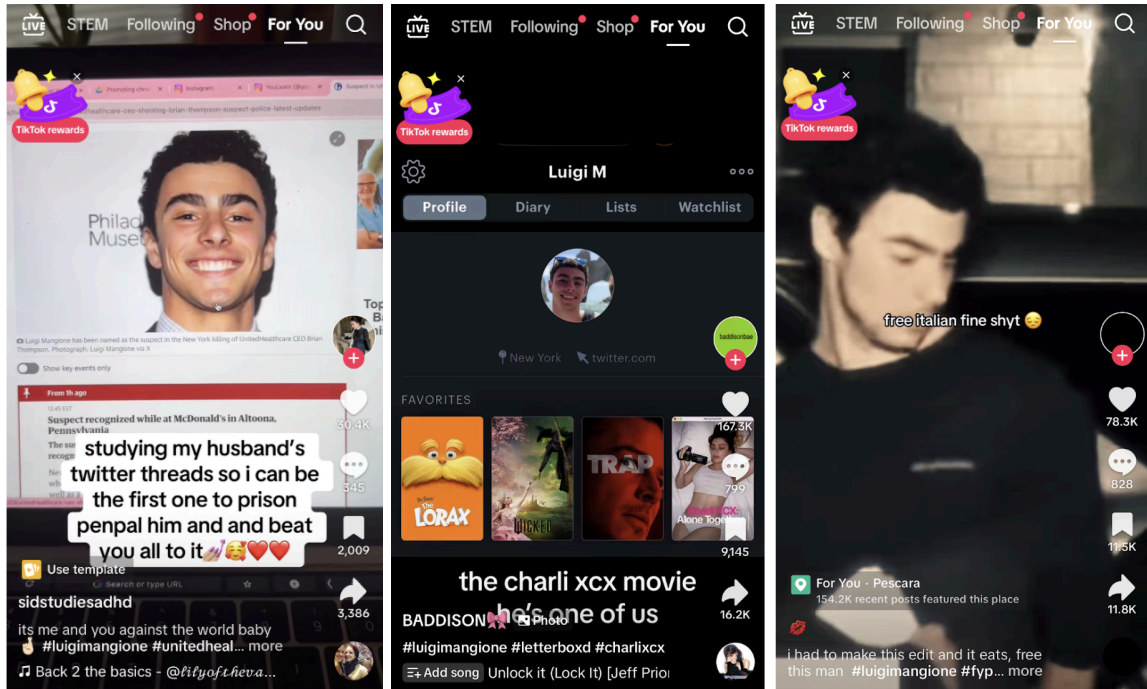
Deification of the Christchurch shooter shared on Terrorgram and adjacent extreme communities.



Deification of Luigi Mangione shared widely across social media platforms.

We sought to understand the content of mainstream conversation reflecting support for the shooter. We therefore developed a topic network² of posts related to the killing across social media platforms (Twitter/X and Reddit) between December 3rd December 11, 2024. Our analysis found discussions about Mangione's Ivy League education, his appearance in publicly disseminated photos, his "heroic" motives, and suggestions that something is fishy about his arrest.

² A topic network is a visual representation where nodes represent topics, and edges indicate relationships such as co-occurrence or similarity, revealing thematic structure and connections within a dataset. For more information see: <https://ojs.aaai.org/index.php/ICWSM/article/view/7343/7197>



Popular videos on TikTok use “fancam” style montages to rally support for Mangione

These videos frequently feature romantic or hyperbolic captions, highlight in-group affinity, or focus on his physical appearance, further lionizing him and glamorizing his actions. This valorization fuels permission structures that could potentially inspire others to perceive violence as a legitimate and even admirable form of activism.

Photos of Mangione and CCTV images of the murder have become pervasive references in online humor, with memes spreading throughout internet communities across the political spectrum. These memes reflect a dangerous and cross-partisan normalization of targeted violence, with humor and engagement desensitizing the public and broadening the appeal of such acts. Humor-driven content³ dilutes the severity of the event while broadening its appeal, making it more accessible to casual users and reinforcing a broader cultural acceptance of violence against corporate figures.

Events like the "UHC Shooter Lookalike Contest"⁴ in Washington Square Park are indicative of these memes' cultural penetration. Public events transform violent acts into community spectacles, illustrating how online meme culture can materialize in real

³ [Pleated Jeans: 50+ Funniest Tweets About Luigi Mangione Being Arrested](#)

⁴ [New York Post: New Yorkers celebrate assassination of UnitedHealthcare CEO with shooter look-a-like contest: 'I wear this everywhere'](#)

life, further normalizing violence, desensitizing participants to its gravity and moral depravity.



Meme coins and cryptocurrency tokens like \$DDD (referencing bullet casings engraved with "Delay, Deny, Depose")⁵, \$PHD (a nod to Mangione's joking tweet, "Pretty Huge Dick"), and \$LUIGI⁶ traded in the hundreds of millions, transforming both the murder and public reaction to Mangione into a speculative casino where users seek profit, exploiting and trivializing acts of violence.

T-shirts and merchandise,⁷ some featuring Mangione's image and some of the Mario character, Luigi, with slogans like "FREE LUIGI" were widely sold on commercial websites. These products reflect a broader cultural commodification of violence and rebellion. Onlyfans accounts⁸ using deepfake porn to pose as Luigi Mangione to financially capitalize on his glorification have also surfaced.

⁵ [Newsweek: UnitedHealthcare Shooting Suspect Luigi Mangione Memecoin Skyrockets](#)

⁶ [Nairametrics: \\$LUIGI Memecoin inspired by the alleged killer of American CEO hits \\$60 million market cap](#)

⁷ [Fast Company: 'Free Luigi Mangione' merchandise is flooding Amazon and other e-commerce platforms](#)

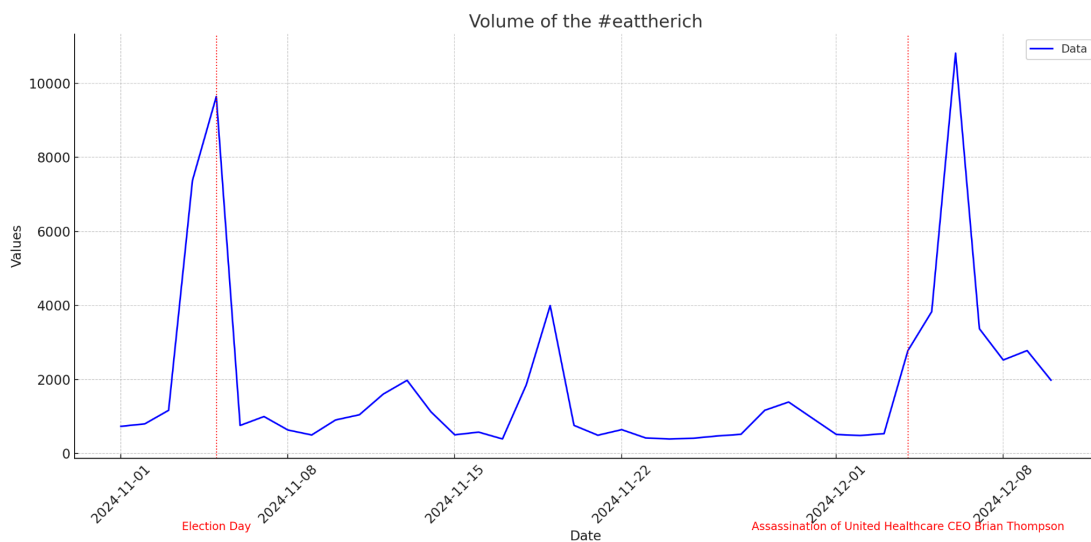
⁸ [Newsx: Brian Thompson Murder Suspect Luigi Mangione Had OnlyFans Account! Claim Goes Viral After Tinder, TikTok Videos Surface](#)

The viral velocity of this disturbing social phenomenon has fueled a surge in conspiracy theories, particularly allegations that Mangione was framed by police. On TikTok, Reddit, and Twitter/X, viral content includes numerology-related conspiracy theories tying the murder to larger conspiracies. Users speculate about patterns in Mangione’s arrest date, Thompson’s death, and supposed "coded messages" related to the number 286.⁹

Posts alleging that law enforcement planted foreign currency, false identification, and the murder weapon on Mangione have proliferated, sowing distrust in the justice system. Online discussions promote jury nullification, with arguments ranging from forgiveness for Mangione’s actions to loss of faith in the criminal justice system. Search trends indicate a high interest in jury nullification, potentially a consequence of the emerging permission structure for targeted violence.

Lists of Healthcare Executives and "CEO Wanted" Posters

The resurgence of the #EatTheRich hashtag, which most recently peaked in usage during the leadup to the 2024 election, has re-emerged as a unifying call across political spectrums, amplifying denunciations of perceived corporate elites. While cloaked in discussions of systemic inequality, this discourse increasingly includes explicit threats against high-profile executives.



Volume of posts with "#eattherich" between November 1st and December 9th

Escalation of Targeted Threats

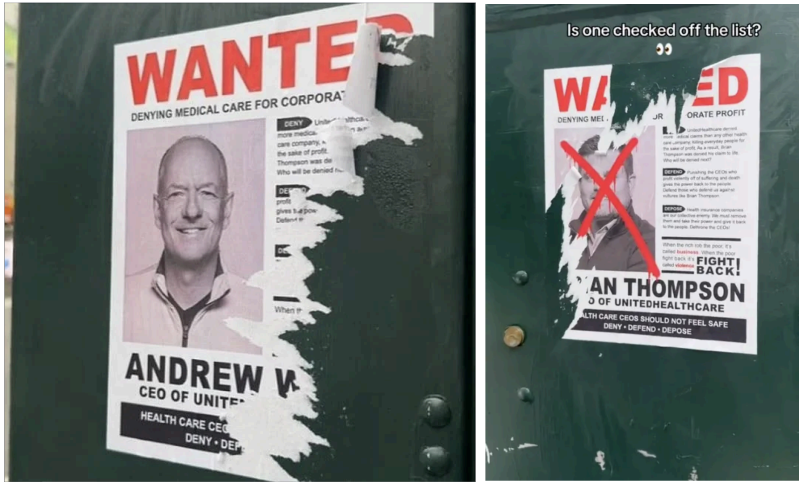
⁹ [Reddit post breaking down numerology conspiracy theories.](#)

In the aftermath of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson’s murder, extremist groups on Telegram circulated detailed lists with the personal information of healthcare executives from United Healthcare and other insurance companies. The framing of these individuals as symbols of corporate greed suggests a growing normalization of retribution as a justified response to perceived systemic issues.



In New York City, "CEO Wanted" posters¹⁰ have appeared, featuring mocked-up mugshots of healthcare executives, including leaders from Aetna and Cigna. These posters echo the rhetoric of vigilante justice proliferating online, demonstrating how digital narratives can manifest in tangible actions. The imagery and language of these posters suggest a deliberate attempt to provoke fear and potentially to destabilize corporate leadership.

¹⁰ [Fox 5 New York: 'Wanted' posters spotted in NYC reportedly target healthcare CEOs](#)



Viral AI-generated videos have further fueled this phenomenon. For instance, one widely shared video references Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk as targets, using sensational visuals to evoke a dystopian narrative of holding corporate actors accountable through violence. The use of AI tools to produce such content illustrates the technological sophistication behind these campaigns, enabling rapid dissemination and emotional resonance.



#VoteBlueToSaveAmerica 🌐🌍⚖️
@ideate_vision



On TikTok someone created this video called #TheAdjuster
With the assassin of the #UnitedHealthcareceo
With #ElonMusk #JeffBezos #MarkZuckerberg #DonaldTrump
running for their lives.
People are mad.
#EatTheRich



11:44 AM · Dec 8, 2024 · 1,872 Views

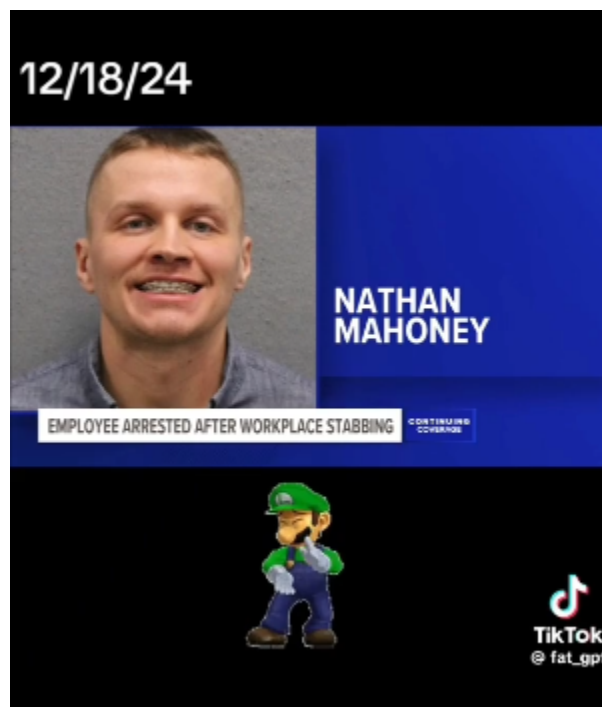
The murder of Brian Thompson appears to have catalyzed a dangerous feedback loop, where glorification, humor, conspiracy theories, and targeted harassment create an environment ripe for further violence. The interplay of these elements highlights the need for both public discourse addressing the risks of normalizing violence and law-enforcement monitoring.

Real-World Harassment and Attacks

Recent events underscore the alarming transformation of online glorification of violence into real-world harassment and physical attacks against corporate leaders. On December 17, 2024, Nathan Mahoney, a newly hired employee of Anderson Express Inc., allegedly stabbed company president Erik Denslow during a staff meeting. Mahoney, who had been with the company for only two weeks, left the meeting and returned

wearing a medical mask before attacking Denslow with a knife¹¹. It is notable that this mirrors the wearing of a medical mask by Mangione during his attack. In his police booking photos (in the image below), Mahoney eerily smiled, echoing the unsettling demeanor of Mangione, whose actions have been widely celebrated online.

Authorities are investigating whether Mahoney's actions were inspired by Mangione but online audiences were quick to seize on the events, characterizing Mahoney as “player 2” in highly engaged posts on TikTok, Threads and Blue Sky, complete with images of an applauding Luigi character.



In another incident, supporters of Luigi Mangione vandalized a Manhattan townhouse owned by Michael Daffey, a former Goldman Sachs executive, a home previously owned by Jeffrey Epstein¹². The vandals spray-painted messages such as "Deny, Defend, Depose," a phrase linked to Mangione, along with "Free Luigi" and anti-corporate slogans. These acts of vandalism not only targeted Daffey but also carried the symbolic weight of Epstein's controversial legacy, conflating broader anti-elite frustrations with

11

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2024/12/19/company-president-stabbed-nathan-mahoney-arrested-muskegon-michigan/77068666007/>

12

<https://nypost.com/2024/12/28/us-news/pro-luigi-mangione-punks-vandalize-jeffrey-epsteins-former-nyc-mansion-deny-defend-depose/>

direct hostility toward individuals. The use of Mangione's rhetoric in the physical world demonstrates the dangerous feedback loop in which online narratives legitimizing violence and resistance against systemic injustices inspire real-world acts of aggression and harassment.

Together, these incidents reveal a growing convergence between digital ecosystems that amplify violent narratives and real-world actions that embody those sentiments. The symbolic and physical targeting of corporate figures underscores the urgent need to address the mechanisms enabling this escalation, as well as the societal consequences of allowing such rhetoric to permeate mainstream discourse.

Psychology Meets Social Media in an Emergent Permission Structure

Our investigations reveal that the critical issue is not as simple as individual psychology or independent social media platforms. The data appear to reflect that a "permission structure" is evolving online with a mutually reinforcing dynamic: Social media platforms provide the amplification, while susceptible individuals provide the justification—together they form an emergent system that normalizes violence.

Key questions arising from this phenomenon are: Which psychological factors contribute to the emergence of such movements? How do these systems enable individuals to rationalize and support violence in tandem with social media use?

A Study of Violence and Social Media

We first sought to understand how the medium of social media interacts with users' psychology to produce these patterns. We conducted a survey on a sample of 1021 U.S. residents (balanced based on the U.S. Census estimates for gender, race/ethnicity, age, and party identification¹³). Using Amazon Prime Panels (see appendix for demographics and key questions), the survey was designed to probe the extent to which users internalize and reflect digital narratives of permissiveness in their attitudes toward violence and systemic distrust.

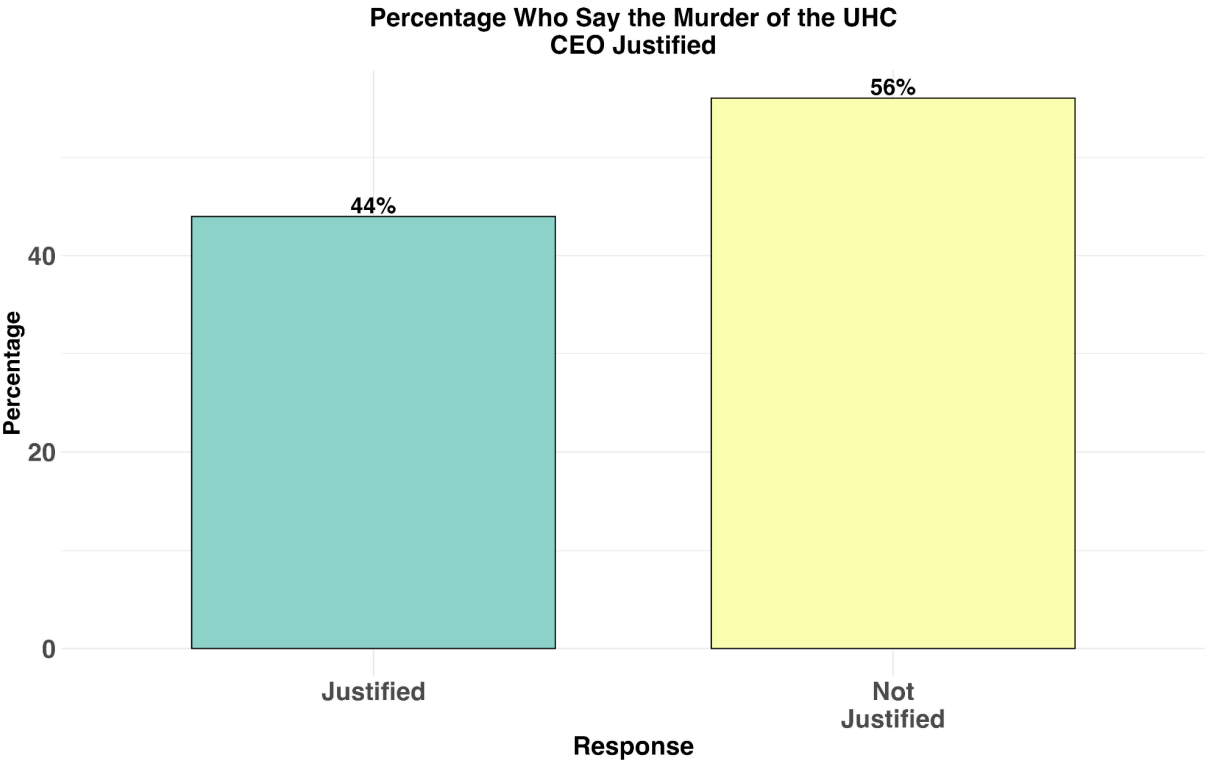
The survey collected data on demographics, social media habits, and psychological traits like susceptibility to authoritarian messages and perceived agency. It aimed to understand how social media exacerbates psychological factors that justify violence and contribute to mob behavior; and also to explore how these elements interact.

¹³ We weighted the survey sample based on age, gender, race/ethnicity, and party identification. Age, gender and race/ethnicity proportions were based on the Census Bureau data and party identification based on Pew Research. We found that this only made marginal changes to our data and did not influence the outcomes.

Key Results: Insights into the Normalization of Violence

We began our analysis with responses to the question, “How justified or not justified was the killing of the UnitedHealthcare CEO?” Participants rated their responses on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “not at all justified” to “completely justified.” To focus on permissiveness we re-coded the scale into a binary variable. Any response other than “not at all justified” was coded as “at least somewhat justified.”

The findings were striking: Using our binary options, **44% of respondents indicated that the murder was at least somewhat justified.** This highlights an openness to morally justifying acts of violence under certain conditions among a significant minority.

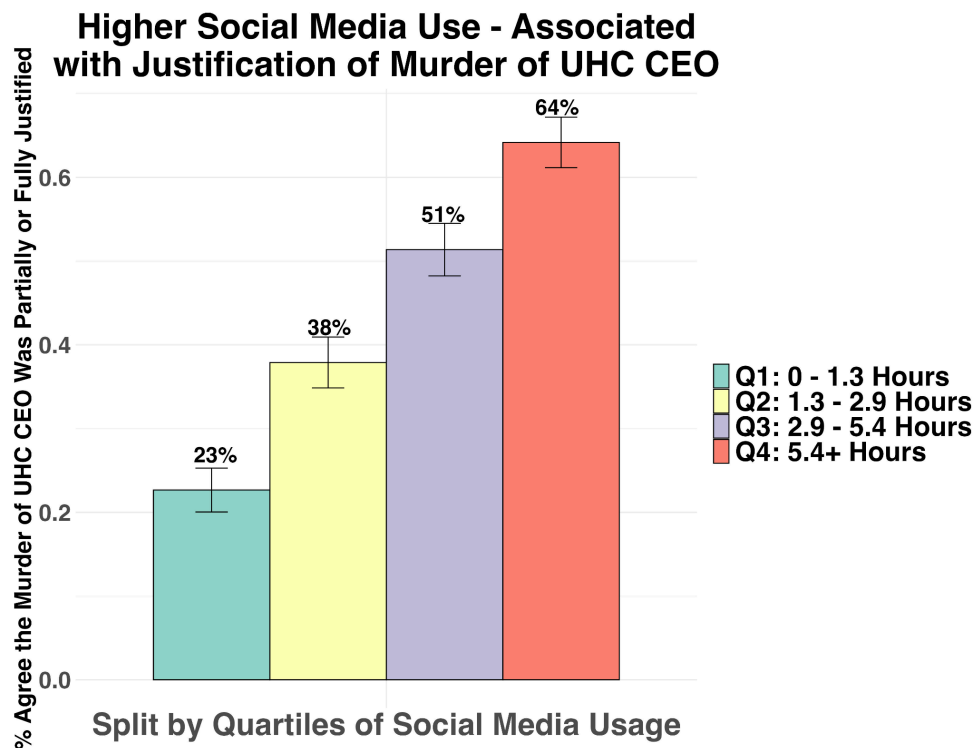


Bar chart showing the split between those who reported that the murder of the UHC CEO's was at least somewhat justified and those who reported it was not justified at all.

Given the unprecedented celebration of violence on social media discussed above, we investigated the relationship between social media usage and the justification of the murder.

Social Media

Using quartiles of self-reported daily social media usage, we analyzed responses on whether the murder was “not at all justified” versus at least somewhat justified. The results revealed a striking correlation: **individuals with the highest levels of social media use (Q4: 5.4+ hours per day) were significantly more likely to at least partially justify the murder (64%)**, compared to just 23% among those with the lowest levels of use (Q1: 0–1.3 hours per day). The justification rate increased progressively across usage quartiles, underscoring the role of social media in fostering permissive attitudes toward the justification of violence. Even when examining the effect of age, the effects of authoritarianism, external locus of control, and the amount of time spent on social media held as the strongest effects.



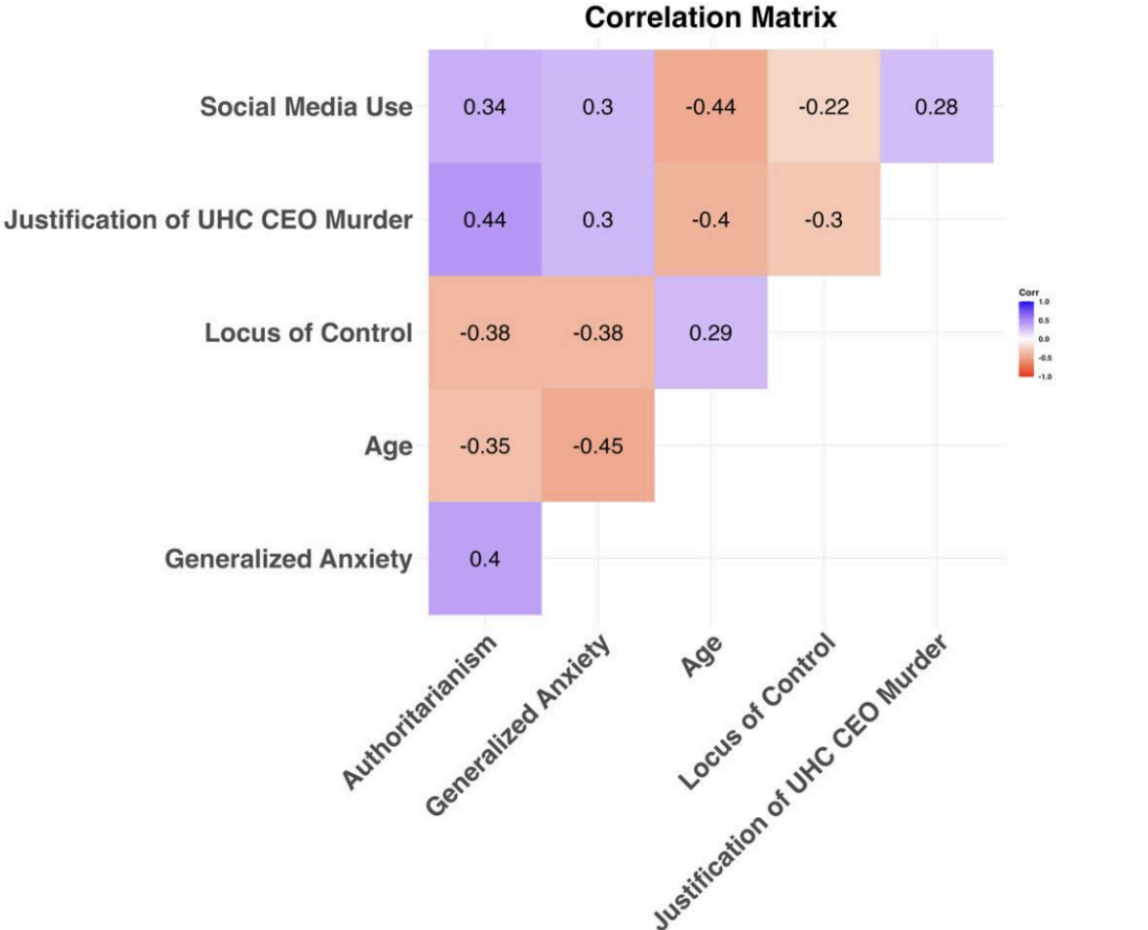
Bar chart showing a strong positive correlation between higher social media usage and increased justification of the UHC CEO's murder, segmented by usage quartiles.

Psychological Constructs

While the link between social media use and justification of the UHC CEO's murder is significant, it could be influenced by underlying factors such as age, psychological traits, or broader behavioral tendencies. To probe these relationships, we examined

correlations across several potentially predictive factors.

The results show that along with social media use, we see other psychological and behavioral traits, such as winner-take-all thinking (belief in zero sum dynamics), anxiety, and authoritarian tendencies. Those who are most likely to justify the murder are young, anxious, and authoritarian social media users.



A visualization of key psychological and behavioral variables, highlighting significant relationships between social media use, locus of control, generalized anxiety, and justification for the murder of the UHC CEO.

The Key Factors Predicting Support: Authoritarianism, Social Media Use, and External Locus of Control.

The correlation matrix showed significant connections between important factors such as social media usage, anxiety, age, authoritarian tendencies, and external locus of control. To eliminate confounding variables and accurately identify which factors influence justifying the murder, we used multivariate and interaction models (see

appendix), which allowed us to isolate and examine the independent effects of each variable while controlling for others.

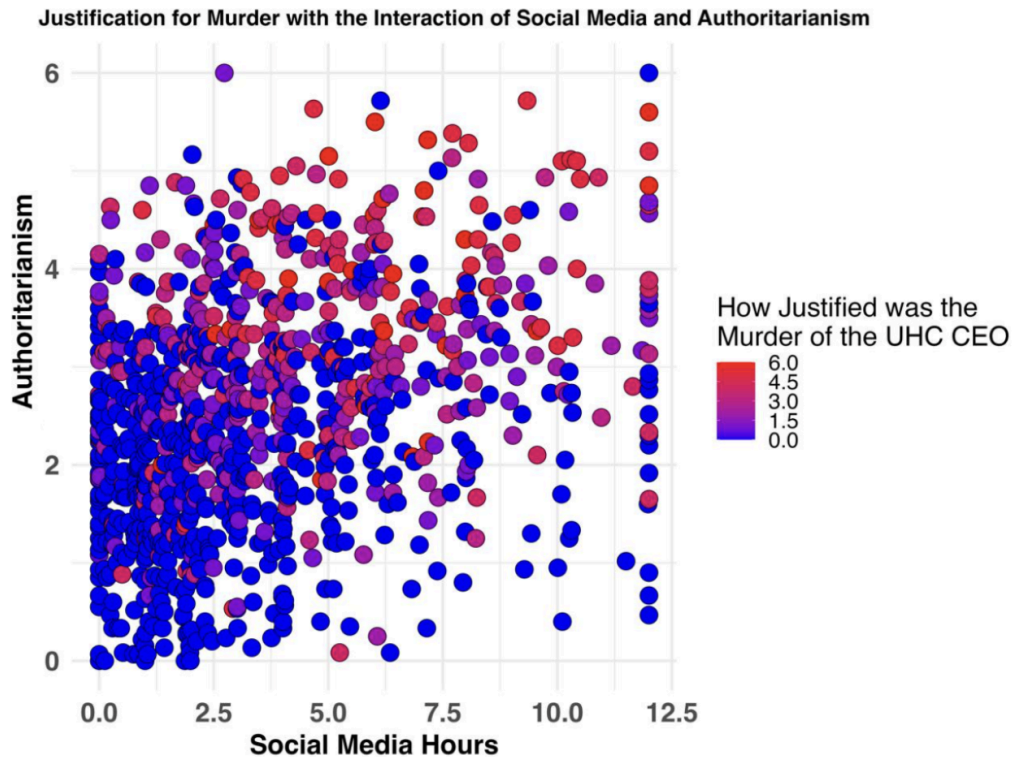
Our regression analyses indicate that the strongest psychological predictors for justifying the murder of the UHC CEO are social media usage, authoritarian tendencies, and a reduced sense of personal agency (low internal locus of control). While age, at first blush, evidenced a strong correlation to justification, in better controlled models, neither age nor anxiety were significantly associated with the justification of violence. These three key predictors—low internal locus of control, high authoritarianism, and frequent social media use were however, and these factors contribute to a phenomenon we call "[botification](#)."

Based on our previous research, botification, the combination of authoritarian tendencies, the feeling that one has little control over one's life, and a high amount of time spent online, makes individuals more susceptible to adopting support for conspiracy theories, across the ideological spectrum.¹⁴

Psychology and Social Media Interact to Predict Justification for the Murder.

To understand the relationship between psychological factors and the reaction on social media, we developed an interaction model between authoritarianism and social media use. As the data illustrate, higher social media engagement amplifies the effect of authoritarian tendencies, creating a synergistic relationship that fosters the justification of extremism—including violence. This interaction suggests that social media does not merely reflect existing extremism regarding the UHC murder, but actively interacts with it to shape permissive attitudes toward violence more broadly.

¹⁴<https://networkcontagion.us/reports/the-botification-of-the-american-mind/>



Scatterplot illustrates how increased social media hours and authoritarianism interact to predict justification levels for the UHC CEO's murder.

Conclusion

The key findings of our study point to a downward moral shift in societal norms. This shift is notably accelerated by the dynamics of online platforms, which both magnify and normalize extremist behaviors in a digital permission structure for violence:

1. **Digital Permission Structure:** Social media platforms have created a digital "permission structure" that normalizes and even glorifies acts of violence. Fueled by the viral nature of memes and the isolating effects of online echo chambers, this effectively lowers moral barriers and normalizes targeted aggression.
2. **Blurring of Online and Offline Violence:** The escalation from online threats to physical acts of violence may be facilitated by these platforms as the line between social media rhetoric and real-world violence appears increasingly blurred.
3. **Impact on Public Safety and Societal Cohesion:** As digital platforms become arenas for ideological conflict, the consequences could potentially extend beyond individual incidents of violence. The permission structure facilitated by social media may already be destructive to social cohesion and could eventually

threaten broader public safety. This moral breakdown underscores the need for effective strategies that address root causes of online radicalization to mitigate its impacts.

The spread and scope of justifications for murder have significantly eroded what was once a barrier between mainstream society and fringe online communities that supported violence and glorified killers. This shift underscores the urgency of initiatives aimed at restoring moral norms and reinforcing the bonds of civic trust. Such efforts are essential not only in countering the tide of extremism but also in fostering a resilient liberal democratic society where dialogue and mutual respect prevail.

Appendix

Appendix A:

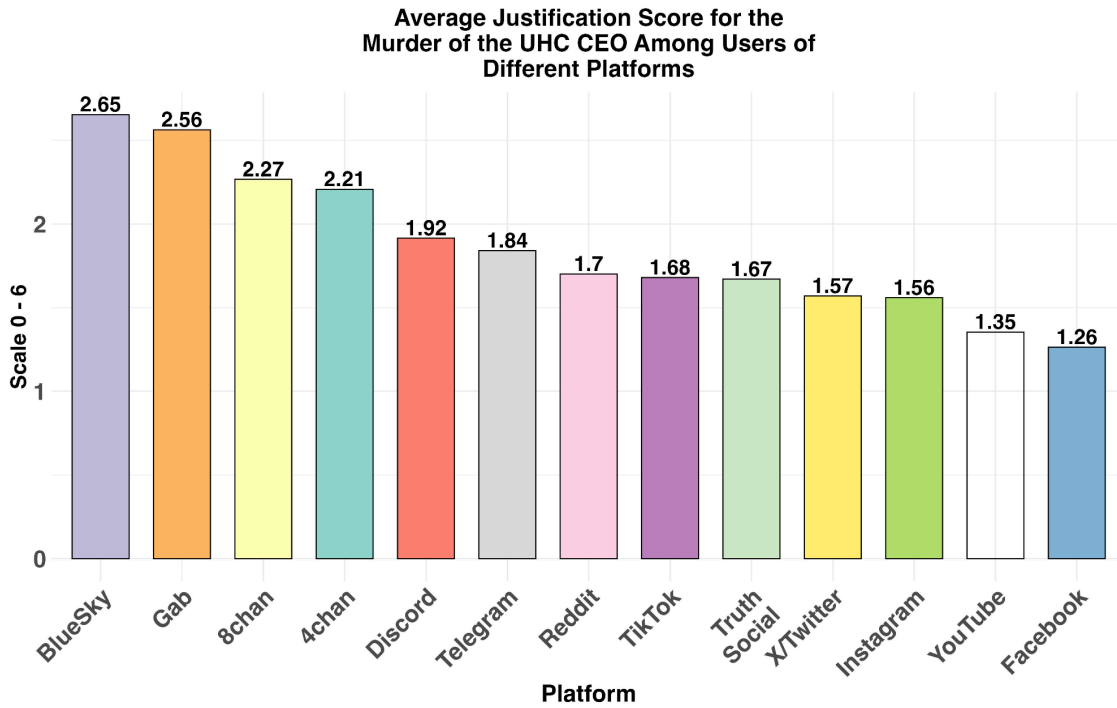


Figure Appendix A: Bar chart showing amongst the users of each social media platform, what percentage gave at least some justification for the murder of the UHC CEO.

Appendix B:

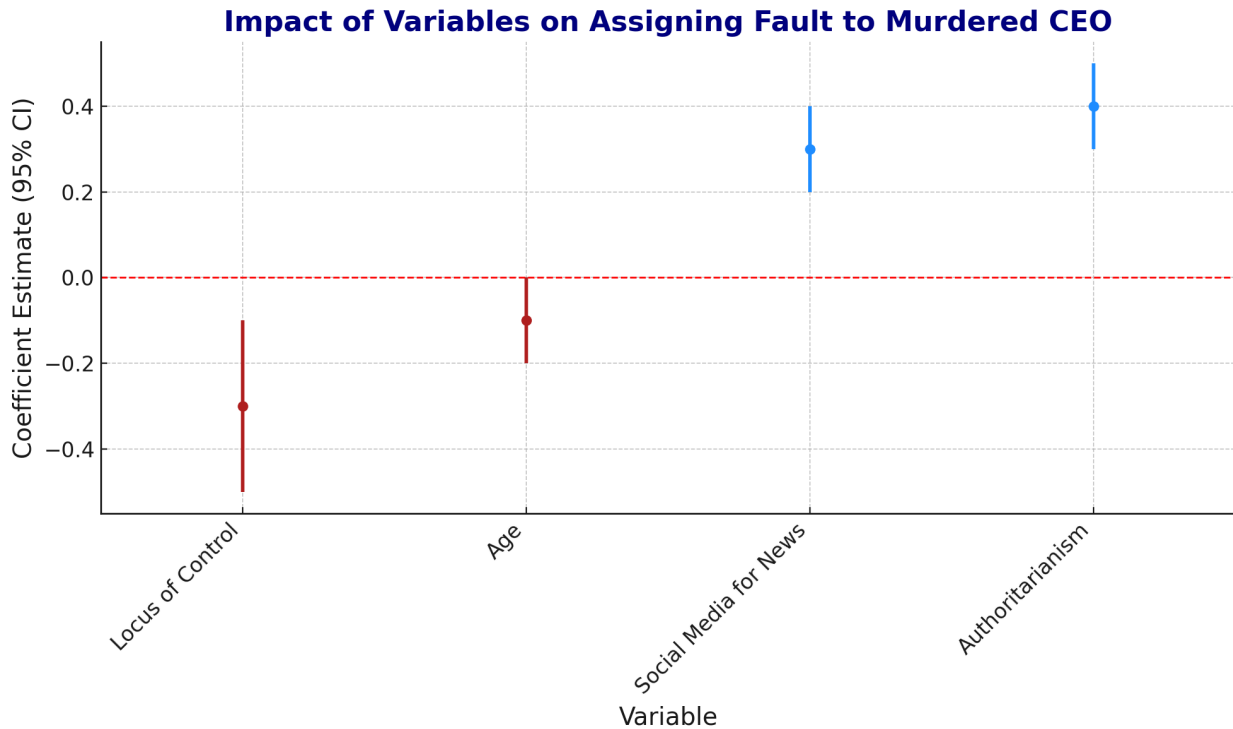


Figure Appendix B: A visualization of the regression model (Adjusted R-squared = 0.2673) with the dependent variable being how much fault was given to the shooter (Luigi Mangione) and/or the UHC CEO for the shooting. Using social media for news ($p=0.0053530$), authoritarianism ($p=6.863e-08$), age ($p=0.0002025$), and locus of control($p=0.0008137$) were all significant predictors of who respondents believed was at fault.

Appendix C:

Impact of Variables on Justifying the Assassination of the United Healthcare CEO

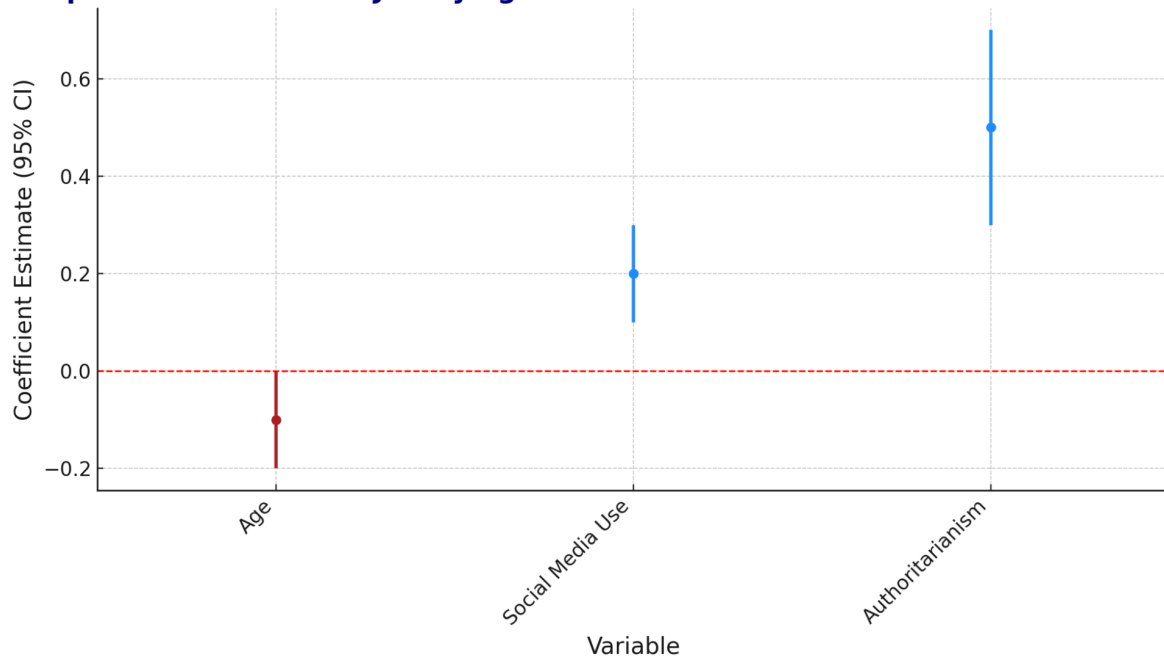
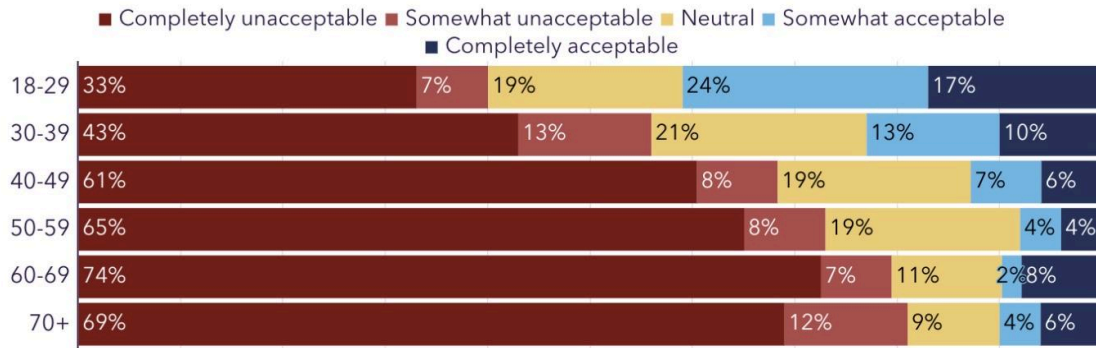


Figure Appendix C: A visualization of the regression model (Adjusted R-squared= 0.3257) with the dependent variable being how justified the shooter was. Using social media($p =0.0125$), authoritarianism ($p = 8.710e-13$), and age ($p = 4.761e-11$) were all significant predictors of how justified respondents believed the shooter was.

Appendix D:

Do you think the actions of the killer of the United Healthcare CEO are acceptable or unacceptable? 

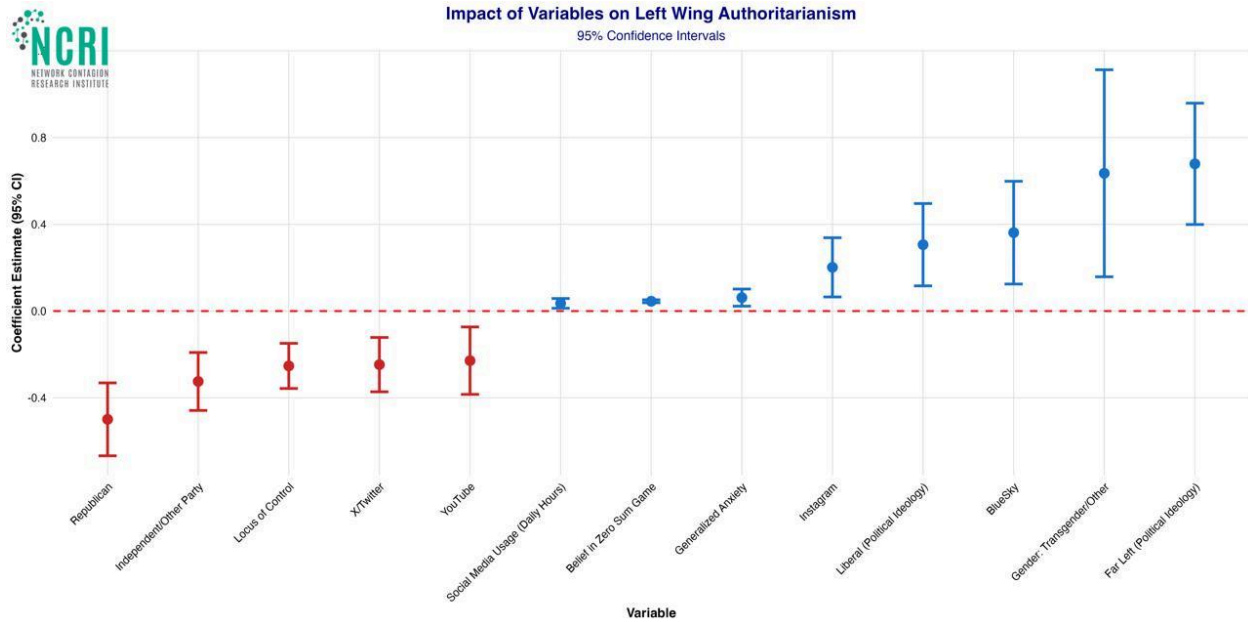
Results by age



US Voters, December 11-13, 2024

[Emerson College December 2024 National Poll: Young Voters Diverge from Majority on Crypto, TikTok, and CEO Assassination](#)

Appendix E:



We ran regression analyses to test how social media usage and specific social media platforms predict Left Wing Authoritarianism. We included demographic information including age, gender, income, and political leanings to ensure we were controlling for all relevant factors. Even while controlling for these factors social media use was predictive of Left Wing Authoritarianism, and usage of BlueSky specifically, was extremely predictive of Left Wing Authoritarianism, even after controlling for possible left leaning sample of the platform.

Dependent Variable: Left Wing Authoritarianism

Independent Variables: Social Media Hours Daily + Use of the Following Social Media Platforms (BlueSky, Discord, Youtube, X/Twitter, Truth Social, TikTok, Telegram, Reddit, Gab, Facebook, 4chan, 8chan, Instagram), Generalized Anxiety + Belief in Zero Sum Game + Gender + Age + Income + Healthcare Coverage Satisfaction + Locus of Control + Political Ideology + Party Identification + Ethnicity

We ran what we refer to as the “Kitchen Sink” Model to test for how social media usage and the use of specific social media platforms predicts Left Wing Authoritarianism. By including an extensive list of demographic, political, and psychological controls in the model, we are able to see if usage of, rather than simply those opting into a specific platform, is predictive of Left Wing Authoritarianism.

Demographically we included age, gender, income, and race/ethnicity. Additionally, we included party identification (3 category), plus political ideology to control for political leanings. We included several psychological scales to help control for how different types of psychological profiles may opt in to specific platforms. We use scales that calculate Generalized Anxiety, belief in the world being a zero sum game, and Locus of Control, a measure of whether one perceives themselves as having control over aspects of their lives. Lastly, we included one’s satisfaction with their healthcare coverage, to test if those who did not like their healthcare coverage were more likely to believe in Left Wing Authoritarianism, which we were testing due to the reaction to the UnitedHealthcare CEO shooting.

After producing the model, we tested for heteroskedasticity; whether there is consistency throughout the model in regards to the model’s predictions. The model was heteroskedastic or inconsistent across its predictions, and therefore we adjusted the model using robust standard errors to adjust for this.

We then ran the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test to check for multicollinearity, or if the independent variables in our model were too highly correlated (an issue that can throw off a linear regression model). We ran this to ensure that including social media usage by daily hours plus whether or not one used specific platforms led to multicollinearity. Our VIF and GVIF (Generalized VIF) scores show that multicollinearity is not a meaningful concern here.

After these tests, we then went to analyze the model. Two platforms, BlueSky and Instagram, were predictive of an increase in the belief in Left Wing Authoritarianism. BlueSky’s coefficient was over double that of Instagram, revealing a stronger influence on predicting Left Wing Authoritarianism. Furthermore, social media usage (by daily hours) was predictive of Left Wing Authoritarianism (with a p value of .028).

The adjusted R squared on this model is .3465, fairly strong for a social science/survey research model.

Crosstabs

Justified by Age

	Number	Not Justified	Partially or More Justified
18-27	151	21.2%	78.8%
28-43	289	43.9%	56.1%
44-59	282	62.4%	37.6%
60-78	259	78.7%	21.2%
79+	36	88.8%	11.1%

Justified by Social Media

	Not Justified	Partially or More Justified
Social Media 1st Quartile (0-1.3 Hours Daily)	77.3%	22.7%
Social Media 2nd Quartile (1.3-2.9 Hours Daily)	62.1%	37.9%
Social Media 3rd Quartile (2.9-5.4 Hours Daily)	48.6%	51.4%
Social Media 4th Quartile (5.4+ Hours Daily)	35.8%	64.1%

Justified by Generalized Anxiety

	Not Justified	Partially or More Justified
Generalized Anxiety 1st Quartile	79.8%	20.2%
Generalized Anxiety 2nd Quartile	58.3%	41.7%
Generalized Anxiety 3rd Quartile	42.4%	57.6%
Generalized Anxiety 4th Quartile	43.2%	56.8%

Justified by Locus of Control

	Not Justified	Partially or More Justified
Locus of Control 1st Quartile	37%	63.7%
Locus of Control 2nd Quartile	50.4%	49.6%
Locus of Control 3rd Quartile	62.5%	37.5%
Locus of Control 4th Quartile	79.9%	20.1%

Justified by Authoritarianism

	Not Justified	Partially or More Justified
Authoritarianism 1st Quartile	84.9%	15.1%
Authoritarianism 2nd Quartile	67.7%	32.3%
Authoritarianism 3rd Quartile	48.6%	51.4%
Authoritarianism 4th Quartile	25.9%	74.1%

Fault by Age

	Number	CEO More at Fault	Equal Fault	Shooter More at Fault
18-27	151	33.1%	19.7%	47%
28-43	289	21.1%	13.8%	65.1%
44-59	282	14.1%	12.1%	73.7%
60-78	259	3.5%	5.8%	90.7%
79+	36	5.6%	2.78%	91.7%

Fault by Social Media

	CEO More at Fault	Equal Fault	Shooter More at Fault
Social Media 1st Quartile (0-1.3 Hours Daily)	7%	7.4%	85.5%
Social Media 2nd Quartile (1.3-2.9 Hours Daily)	11.7%	10.2%	78.2%
Social Media 3rd Quartile (2.9-5.4 Hours Daily)	18.4%	16.4%	65.1
Social Media 4th Quartile (5.4+ Hours Daily)	27.6%	13%	59.4%

Fault by Generalized Anxiety

	CEO More at Fault	Equal Fault	Shooter More at Fault
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Generalized Anxiety 1st Quartile	7.1%	8.6%	84.3%
Generalized Anxiety 2nd Quartile	13.4%	11%	75.6%
Generalized Anxiety 3rd Quartile	17.7%	13.6%	68.7%
Generalized Anxiety 4th Quartile	25.9%	13.2%	60.9%

Fault by Locus of Control

	CEO More at Fault	Equal Fault	Shooter More at Fault
Locus of Control 1st Quartile	30.4%	13%	56.7%
Locus of Control 2nd Quartile	15.8%	13.2%	71%
Locus of Control 3rd Quartile	10.2%	11.9%	77.9%
Locus of Control 4th Quartile	4.8%	7.9%	87.3%

Fault by Authoritarianism

	CEO More at Fault	Equal Fault	Shooter More at Fault
Authoritarianism 1st Quartile	3.2%	8.8%	88%
Authoritarianism 2nd Quartile	8%	8.4%	83.7%
Authoritarianism 3rd Quartile	11.6%	15.3%	73.1%
Authoritarianism 4th Quartile	40.2%	13.9%	45.8%

General Demographics

Gender	Percent
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Male	48.1%
Female	51.1%
Transgender/Other	.8%

Income	Percent
Less than \$25,000	20.8%
\$25,000 - \$49,999	30.1%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	30.2%
\$100,000 - \$249,999	15.2%
\$250,000+	2.8%

Age	Percent
18-27	14.8%
28-43	28.4%
44-59	27.7%
60-78	25.5%
79+	3.5%

Race/Ethnicity	Percent
Asian	3.7%
Black	12.8%
Hispanic/Latino	7%
White	72.6%
Other	3.9%

Education	Percent
High School or less	26.2%
Associate/Some College/Trade School	42.9%
Bachelor's	22.6%
Post Graduate	8.1%