

Media Portrayal: The Case of Eric Garner

by: Mariel Edokwe

My Research

Comparing & Contrasting:

2 'objective' 2014 articles (NYT*)

2, partial, 2014 articles (CNN* and Fox News*)

2, partial, 2019 articles (CNN* and Fox News*)

*see Media Bias Chart in sources



Hypothesis: 2014 articles will be more partial/bias (accordingly*), 2019 articles will be more objective

*see Media Bias Chart in sources

The New York Times

Man's Death After Chokehold Raises Old Issue for the Police



The mother of Eric Garner's youngest child, Jewel Miller, and their 3-month-old baby on Friday on Staten Island. Robert Stolarik for The New York Times

By Joseph Goldstein and Nate Schweber

July 18, 2014

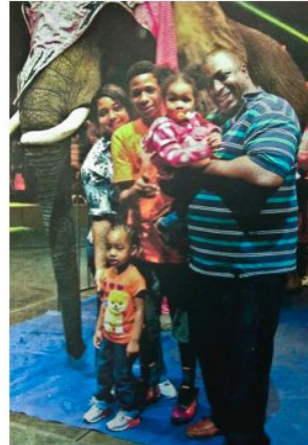


The New York Times

Staten Island Man Died From Chokehold During Arrest, Autopsy Finds

By Joseph Goldstein and Marc Santora

Aug. 1, 2014



Eric Garner with his children. He died on July 17 after a confrontation with the police on Staten Island. National Action Network, via Associated Press

Fast Facts (as of 2014): Eric Garner Case (NYT)

Event:

- **Eric Garner**, a 43 year-old black man, was in the process of being arrested for supposedly selling illegal cigarettes,
- Garner denies doing this, saying “please just leave me alone,” police officers begin to handcuff Garner and he “pull[s] free,”
- **immediately** after this, an officer “**throws his arm around [Garner]’s neck and “pull[s] him to the ground”**
- more officers come “swarm[ing]” in,
- Garner is heard, **repeatedly** saying, “**I can’t breathe.**”
- Garner was pronounced **dead** shortly after this incident

Additional:

- Garner had been arrested many times, for similar crimes, in the past.
- **Chokeholds**, defined as, “any pressure to the throat or windpipe, which may prevent or hinder breathing or reduce intake of air” **are forbidden** by police officers.
- “An autopsy found that **the manner of death for Eric Garner, 43, was homicide**, the medical examiner said in a statement. While the report found that Mr. Garner’s poor health was a contributing factor, it was not the primary cause of his death.”
- **Officer Daniel Pantaleo** (along with others from the scene) was **stripped of his gun and badge.**

New York man dies after chokehold by police



By [Deborah Bloom](#) and [Jareen Imam](#), CNN

Updated 5:31 PM ET, Mon December 8, 2014

Story highlights

Two EMTs, two paramedics suspended without pay, medical center official says

Officer arresting Garner grabbed him in a chokehold; Garner died en route to hospital

New York mayor calls incident "troubling;" NYPD is investigating and has taken officer's shield

(CNN) — Confronted by police trying to arrest him for allegedly selling illegal cigarettes, Eric Garner raised both hands in the air and, with passive defiance, told the officers not to touch him. Seconds later, a video shows the officer behind him grab the 350-pound man in a chokehold and pull him to the sidewalk, rolling him onto his stomach.



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POLITICS · Published December 4, 2014 · Last Update December 20, 2015

Justice Department to investigate Eric Garner case

By | Fox News



DOJ conducting investigation into Eric Garner's death

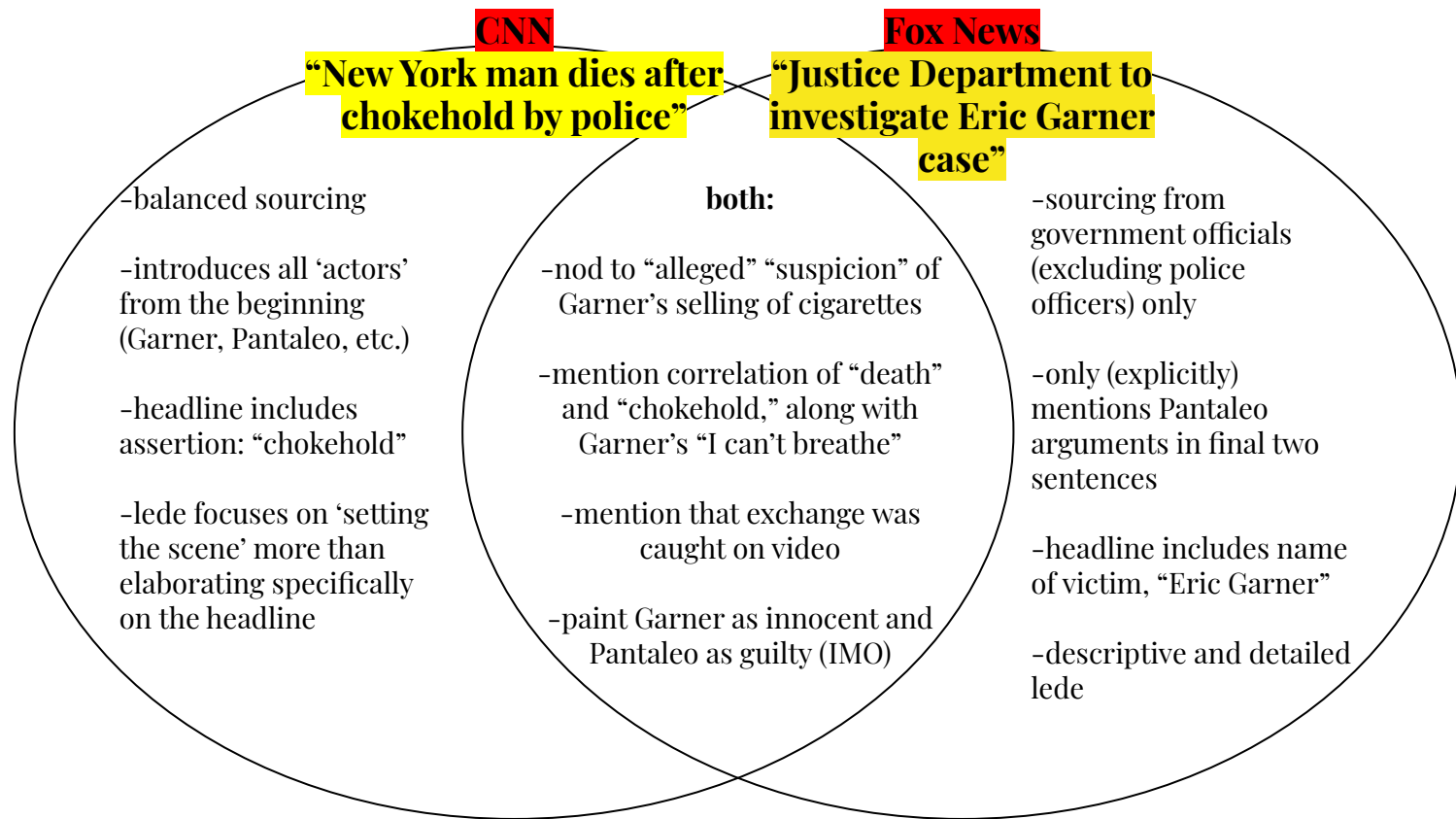
Doug Luzader reports from Washington, D.C.



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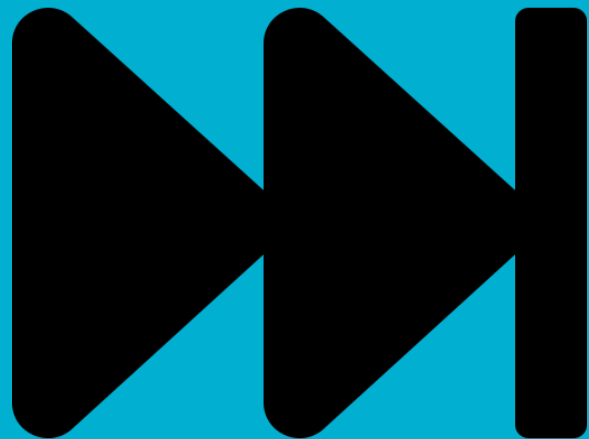
Comparing 2014 Articles



2014 Article Findings

- 2014 articles *were* partial, but not in the way I suspected: **both CNN and Fox** news seemed to adopt generally ‘Left-leaning’ rhetoric which blamed law enforcement over the civilian
- If anything (to my surprise), **Fox was more partial to ‘the Left’ than CNN was**, due to sourcing that primarily focused on Garner’s innocence and passive nature (“unarmed black man”), past tensions/“recent incidents” that have strained law enforcement’s relationships with civilians, Pantaleo’s wrongdoing (“the chokehold maneuver is banned”) and why it will most likely be hard to convict him despite all of this (“officials have to satisfy an extremely difficult legal standard”).

*Fast-forwarding
to five years
later...*



Prosecutors say they could not prove NYPD officer acted willfully in Eric Garner's death

By Mark Morales, David Shortell and Eric Levenson, CNN

Updated 4:35 PM ET, Tue July 16, 2019



- 01:43 No federal charges for NYPD officer in Eric Garner's death
- 02:26 New satellite images show Kim Jong Un's compound
- 02:33 States try to find balance of reopening within Covid-19 curve
- 01:59 Source: Trump allies pushing him to stop daily briefings
- 02:51 Officials discuss to replace Secretary

(CNN) — The Justice Department is not bringing federal charges against a New York Police Department officer accused of fatally choking [Eric Garner](#), the New York man whose last words, "I can't breathe," became a rallying cry in the Black Lives Matter movement.



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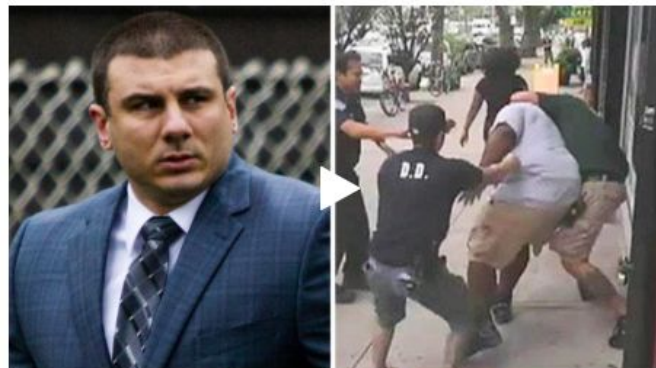


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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT · Published July 16

In Eric Garner case, Justice Department declines civil rights charges against New York City police officer

By Lucia I. Suarez Sang, Jake Gibson | Fox News



Eric Garner case: DOJ declines civil rights charges against police officer involved in death

The Department of Justice will not bring civil rights charges against the New York City police officer involved in the controversial and racially-charged death of Eric Garner.



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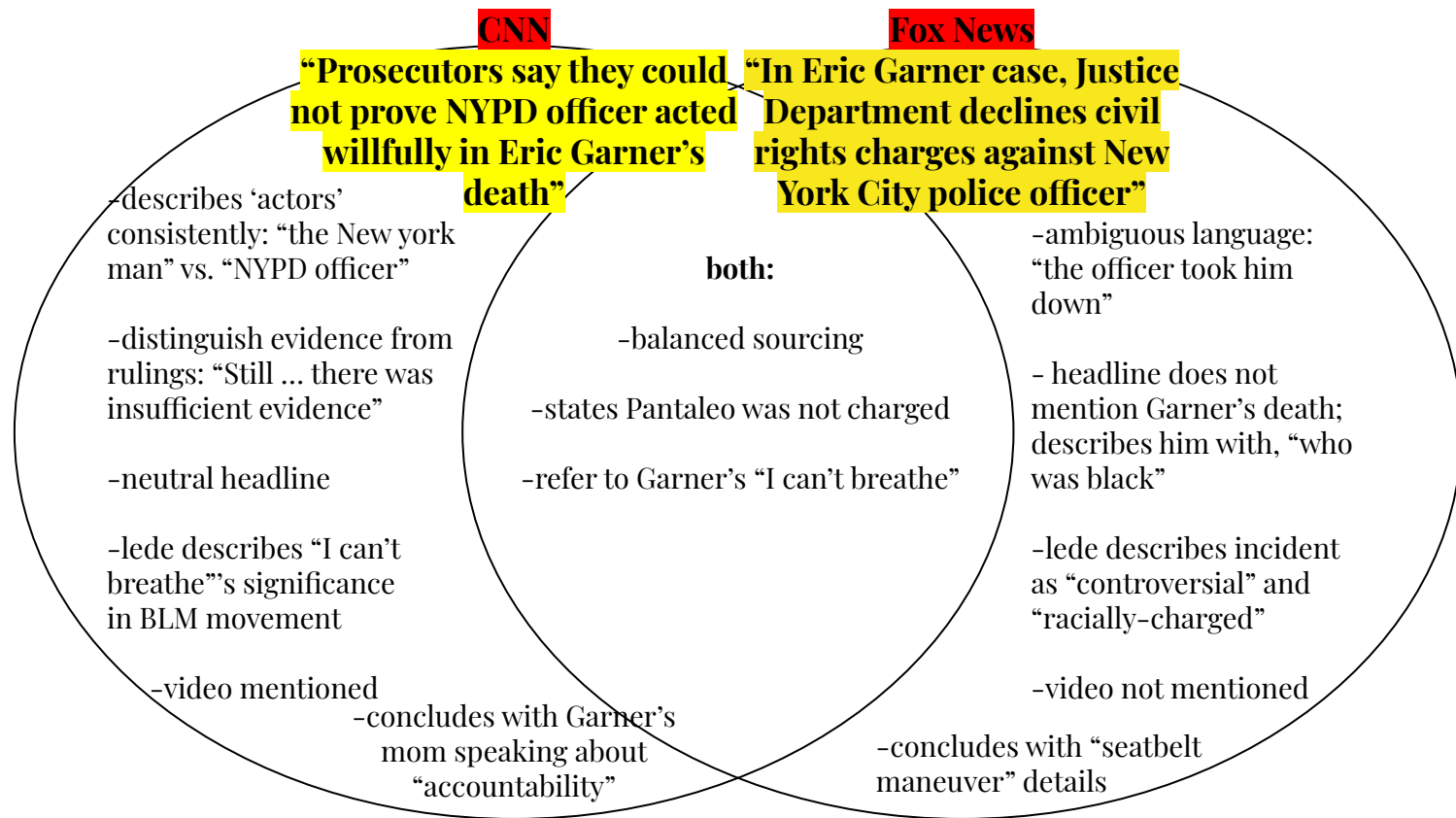
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Comparing 2019 Articles



2019 Findings

- Articles were *less objective* than 2014 ones and had much **less in common** than before
- **CNN** remained close to objective, but was definitely still ‘Left-leaning’
 - painted Garner and his family as victims of loss while revealing complexities of the legal system
- **Fox News** was, undoubtedly, quite ‘Right-leaning’
 - traces of Left completely eliminated, article appeared to be part of a completely different organization from its 2014 one as it took a very different stance
 - focused on semantics of “seatbelt maneuver” and less on Garner’s personhood

Hypothesis: 2014 articles will be more partial/bias (accordingly*), 2019 articles will be more objective

(wrong)

*see Media Bias Chart in sources

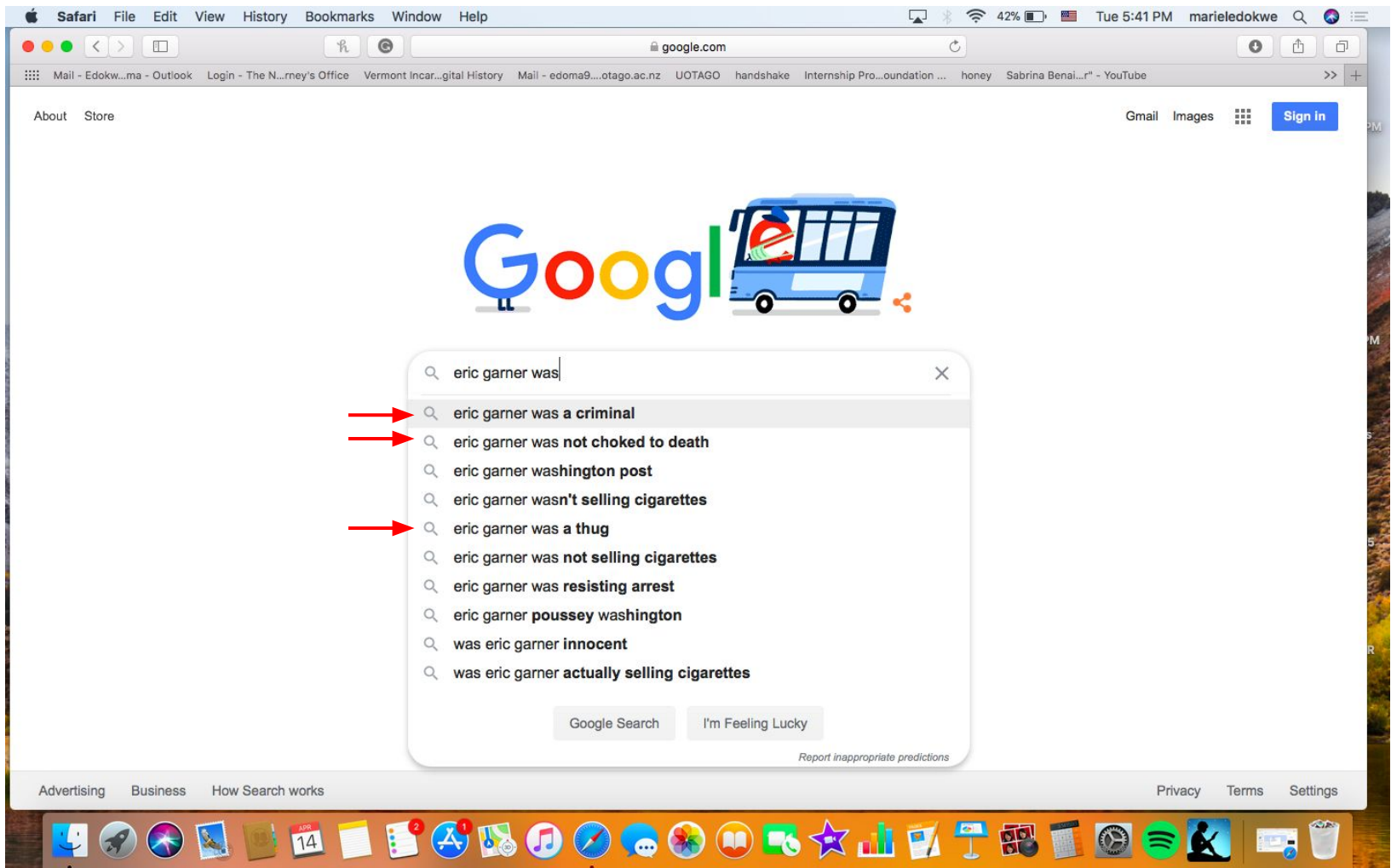
Conclusions

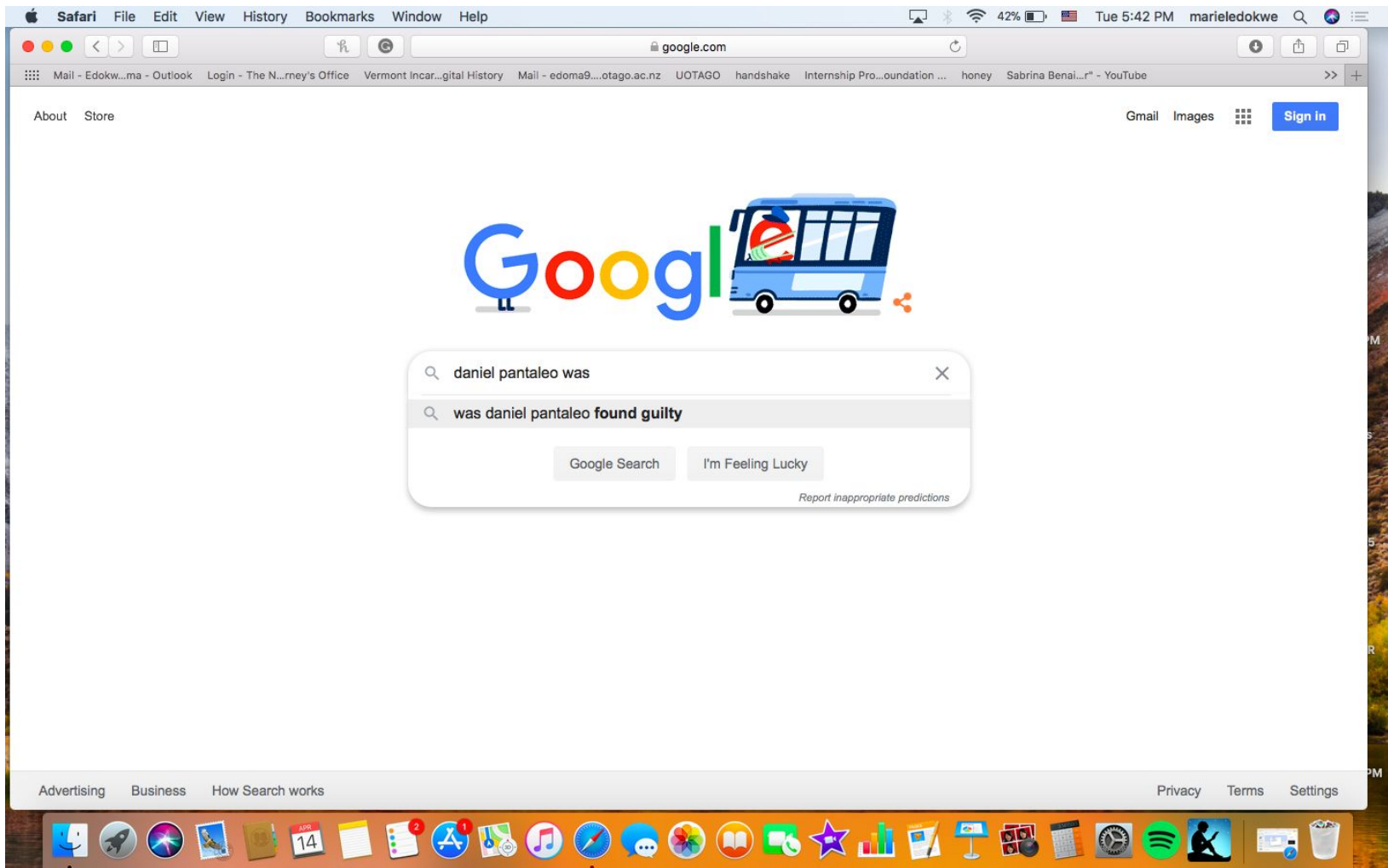
- The 2014 articles were more similar and thus slightly partial (but in similar ways), whereas the 2019 articles were vastly different and still partial in their own ways.
- While CNN remained relatively neutral with a 'Left-lean,' Fox News shifted all the way from the 'Left' to the 'Right.'
- The different news organizations, specifically Fox News, used the 2019 verdict (and personal word choice) as a way to *justify* the 'black and white' event that happened back in 2014 -- demonstrating an attempt to rewrite history.
- With 2014 context, aspects of the 2019 article(s) seem worse than I even initially realized.

Why does
this
matter?



Media Portrayal Affects How We Interpret Events





Sources

Articles (as seen):

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/19/nyregion/staten-island-man-dies-after-he-is-put-in-chokehold-during-arrest.html>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/02/nyregion/staten-island-man-died-from-officers-chokehold-autopsy-finds.html>
- <https://www.cnn.com/2014/07/20/justice/ny-chokehold-death/index.html>
- <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/justice-department-to-investigate-eric-garner-case>
- <https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/16/us/eric-garner-death-five-years-later/index.htm>
- <https://www.foxnews.com/us/doj-will-not-pursue-charges-against-cop-involved-in-eric-garners-death-source>

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Media Bias Chart:

<https://www.adfontesmedia.com/?v=402f03a963ba>