

Why Are Trump Supporters So Committed That Nothing Will Change Their Minds?

This question has haunted non-supporters of the President from the beginning. We saw his support unaffected by numerous actions and statements which would have deep-sixed any other politician.

I'm sure you remember when Trump said he could shoot someone in the middle of 5th Avenue and not lose a single voter. Or when he said he could get away with grabbing a woman's private parts, and when nearly 20 women painted a picture of him as a sexual predator.

Now, remember when Gary Hart was photographed with a mistress on the yacht "Monkey Business"? That story of infidelity ended his 1988 presidential candidacy, yet multiple stories of marital infidelity haven't had any effect on the support for President Trump.

As you might guess, the unwavering support of Trump has been a topic of academic study by psychologists. Google the phrase "psychological reasons people support Trump," as I did.

One academic who has studied this phenomenon extensively and been published in *Psychology Today* is cognitive neuroscientist Bobby Azarian, PhD, who is affiliated with George Mason University. On Dec. 31, 2019, he posted "Why Evangelicals May Be Hardwired to Believe Trump's Falsehoods." A post on June 14, 2019 was titled "The Psychology Behind Trump's Unwavering Support," and a Dec. 27, 2018,

Talking Turkey



By JIM SMITH

post was titled, "A Complete Psychological Analysis of Trump's Support," which includes a short video about "Terror Management Theory," which I found really informative.

As Azarian wrote in that post, "The theory is based on the fact that humans have a unique awareness of their own mortality. The inevitability of one's death creates existential terror and anxiety that is always residing below the surface."

Because of this ever-present sense of our mortality, he argues, we are easily manipulated by stoking fear, which Trump does most effectively. It started with immigration, but you see it in many of his other issues. In the "hardwired" post mentioned above, Azarian asserts (citing scientific studies) that it

takes more brain effort and resources to question a statement than to believe it, and cites studies which show that people with a conservative worldview are more susceptible to fear-mongering than people with a liberal worldview.

In a June 24, 2019, post, Azarian wrote, "While the analytically-minded may see Donald Trump's opinions and answers as superficial and uninformed, many people view them as straightforward and relatable. A certain degree of perceived ignorance can be beneficial for a presidential candidate, especially if he can pass it off as being folksy."

Of course, when the person promoting fear or tell-

ing a lie is a leader for whom you voted, it's even easier to believe it, and having both TV and radio hosts echoing those fears or lies gives them more credibility. That's the world we're living in now, and Azarian addresses the issue of supporters not being exposed to other information or viewpoints.

In my previous "Talking Turkey" I wrote about Trump's mentor, Roy Cohn, who taught him that a lie repeated often enough becomes accepted as truth. According to Azarian, it may not have to be repeated much at all. Lies told only once by Trump immediately come to life in the echo chamber of Fox News and talk radio. And those same outlets, which Trump follows, have the power of starting those lies, which Trump then repeats in a tweet, and the outlets then attribute the statement to Trump, giving it greater and greater credibility.

In the first month of my GoFundMe campaign to raise \$8,000 to cover the cost of this advertising space through November, 37 readers have donated \$4,865. Another four readers sent me checks totaling \$350, along with many supportive comments that you can read at [FundTalkingTurkey.com](https://www.fundtalkingturkey.com). This support has definitely encouraged me to keep "talking turkey" through what we hope will be Donald Trump's defeat in November.

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