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The Partisan Delivery of News: A Content Analysis of CNN and FOX

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Johnson & Wales University
Providence, Rhode Island

College of Arts & Sciences

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Honors Program

The Partisan Delivery of News: A Content Analysis of CNN and FOX

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to determine how political party affiliation impacts how news is delivered in America. I will be researching how partisanship affects television news and the commentators' ability to report the news. Scholarly conversations regarding political party preferences acknowledge that partisanship has more significance than in the past as the two parties have become more polarized. The mode of delivering news also has an important role because each delivery method emphasizes unique factors: television utilizes tone and supplemental images, magazines and newspapers can use only verbiage, and social media is often more dramatic in order to catch attention and be a quick read. I hypothesize that television news is presented in a manner that is biased due to political affiliation. Using research gathered through a content analysis of transcripts of Fox News and CNN, I will add to the discussion on the influence of how news is conveyed when political leanings are involved. Results of the content analysis found that both Fox News and CNN contain political bias. Both objectively and subjectively, the networks consistently make negative comments on the members and policies of the other party and have polar opposite opinions of President Donald Trump.

Introduction

What is the impact of political affiliation on the delivery of news? It is necessary to answer this research question because news media bias has become an increasing concern over the past couple of decades. Bias in the news is an issue for democracy because this could mean Americans are missing the full story. Instead of delivering the facts, some information already includes opinion or ideas that favor one party, causing viewers to be misinformed. According to a study that was featured on the front page of both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, the number of analytical stories was growing while the “straight news” stories decreased (Micu).

Prior research discusses the differences in methods of delivering news, but lacks an analysis of the differences within each delivery method, such as between newspaper competitors. For this reason, I will conduct a content analysis on the delivery of news through television between the two most popular channels: Fox News and CNN (Micu). I randomly pick two dates in August 2018 and analyze the transcripts from the 6pm and 9pm show from both networks. The objective part of the content analysis will be fulfilled by counting the number of times the news outlets mention Democrat, Republican, President Trump, the opposite network, and guest speakers. The subjective aspect is measured through an ideological ranking between liberal and conservative, support for the opposite political party, support for the President, and support for the media. I found that CNN was much more critical of the President, while Fox only supported him. Additionally, each network typically mentioned the other political party far more often than their own, which indicates they are more critical of the other. Although both networks brought in a similar number of guest speakers, CNN featured guests from both political parties, adding to

the political conversation, while Fox News highlighted only Republicans, giving viewers a limited picture.

My paper will be structured as follows. First, my literature review focuses on three topics to give the reader a general understanding of partisanship and media: political affiliation, delivery, and interpretation of news. Next, I explain the methodology, and then I carefully discuss the results, including the tables of my content analysis, followed by the results with interpretations. Lastly, I will give a conclusion that presents a summary of the paper, including improvements to make in the future.

Literature Review

Introduction

Politics can be a controversial topic, yet it can also be a key characteristic of one's identity. In America, there are two main political parties, Republicans and Democrats. Political scientists know that partisanship is the psychological identification with a political party while political ideology is an individual's belief system about the government. In my paper, however, the term "Republican" will be used interchangeably with "conservative" and likewise "Democrat" with "liberal" because there were no significant differences found in research (Rempala). Though there are only two parties, their respective political ideologies have gone to extreme and opposite ends while partisans have more disagreements than ever (Barthel). This polarization is now impacting how Americans receive news as well. News providers, such as television news sources, have political leanings that put a slight twist on the delivery of information. On the other end, viewers, listeners, and society as a whole are allowing their political beliefs to impact how each person interprets the information they are given. Political affiliation affects both the delivery and interpretation of news and is negatively impacting the way Americans receive trustworthy information. By the end of this review of the research on partisanship and news, the reader should understand previously established information on the topics of political affiliation, delivery and interpretation of news in order for all of the information to be used together in the later parts of this project.

Political Affiliation

An individual's political affiliation has become an increasingly important characteristic within the past few decades. The combination of the growth of technology and the rise in political involvement of millennials on these platforms has allowed for political beliefs to become more public and part of one's identity. However, liberals and conservatives have very different belief systems.

Two of the key components that divide liberals and conservatives from one another are that conservatives typically resist change and justify inequality more than liberals (Rempala). This is seen as conservatives typically oppose socially progressive issues that liberals support, such as same-sex marriage or the legalization of marijuana. Also, conservatives push for tax cuts for the wealthy to stimulate the economy, but it also allows for the separation and inequality of socioeconomic classes. They tend to keep with tradition and how things were done in the past, along with stricter adherence to what is right and wrong, seen when conservatives embrace a more literal interpretation of the Constitution (Kimmelmeier). Markus Kimmelmeier, Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Nevada-Reno, adds that conservatives are threatened by uncertainty and complexity, while liberals' ideology is that of the opposite: liberals embrace change and uncertainty, and they have a higher tolerance for the unknown.

Society typically believes that political views are influenced through exposure to certain environments and cultures such as geographic location, age, or socioeconomic status (Smith). Children commonly grow up to have similar political interests as their parents. However, some phobias, preferences, and behaviors have been proven innate, and researchers have begun to

investigate if political dispositions are linked in genetic DNA as well (Smith). Along with DNA findings, political affiliation has been studied to determine its linkage with the brain.

Brain research scans as recent as 2013 show that conservatives show (1) larger and more active amygdala - associated with decision-making, (2) less insular cortex activation - self-awareness of one's physiological reactions to affective experience, and (3) smaller anterior cingulate cortex - known to monitor uncertainty (Rempala). These results help explain conservatives' characteristic resistance to change. Previous researchers Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford have conducted studies that linked conservative ideology with lower levels of cognitive functioning (Kimmelmeier). This refers back to conservative beliefs requiring less cognitive activity due to resistance to change (Kimmelmeier). Kimmelmeier conducted an experiment correlating college students' political affiliation with their scores on the SAT and ACT, which are considered good indicators of cognitive ability. Students described their political orientation on a range from "far left" to "far right", which were then compared to their test scores. Results found a negative, linear relationship between conservatism and cognitive ability and that political extremists have greater cognitive ability than those in the middle of the political spectrum (Kimmelmeier). However, it must be noted that the study was conducted using students from the top-25 universities in the country and therefore little variance between age or socioeconomic status was present. Additionally, college students, especially of elite universities, are more involved in politics than the average American, resulting in voter turnout rates that typically surpass the national average (Kimmelmeier).

Another divide is the Democrat and Republican disagreement on media's role in society: whether the criticism of news organizations on political leaders keep them in line or keep them

from doing their job, also referred to as the “watchdog role” (Barthel). According to the Pew Research Center in a study from early 2017, there is a 47% point gap between Democrats and Republicans on their support for the watchdog role, which is the widest gap in history by far (Barthel). Comparatively, during the presidential primary season in early 2016, Democrats and Republicans almost equally supported the role at 74% and 77%, respectively (Barthel). Historically, Democrats are more likely to support the watchdog role during a Republican presidency and vice versa (Barthel). This helps explain the drastic change in support as the results directly correlate with the election and inauguration of President Donald Trump, who changed the administration to Republican after eight years of a Democratic president, Barack Obama.

The two parties have become so polarized that voicing one’s political opinion, or simply identifying with one party over the other, is causing distress among family and friends that don’t share the same beliefs (Marder). Many people “like” pages on Facebook that they support or share an interest with, including political pages that give party updates and help users gather information on which candidate to vote. However, researchers have found that many people are reconsidering this simple “like” if it means publicly opposing views of their family and friends due to the anxiety of what Facebook friends will think (Marder). Similar scenarios are happening around the world. In the 2015 general election in the United Kingdom, the conservative party won with 11 million votes, yet their Facebook page had only 450,000 likes the day before the election (Marder). Another party in the same election had under 300,000 likes but received over 9 million votes (Marder). Although Facebook users may benefit from the additional information gained from “liking” the page, the social anxiety from potential negative

responses or judgment from friends and family is enough of a deterrent for some (Marder). This helps explain why a study found that 40% of Americans self-identify as independent, neither Republican or Democrat, but their voting behavior corresponds with one of the political parties (Rempala).

Delivery

The delivery is a significant part of characterizing news media. Traditional media consists of television, radio, and newspapers. However, the rise of technology introduced new media, which includes social media, adding features of convenience and accessibility. News is most commonly delivered in three ways: social media, television, or through friends and family (Barthel). Barthel found that Americans are keeping up with national news more often, with 40% paying close attention now compared to 30% a year ago. About 4 in 10 Americans receive their news from online, and most prefer a mobile device over a desktop (Barthel). It seems that 62% of adults in America get news from social media like Facebook, the most popular place for fake news stories to be shared (Belhadjali). Nonetheless, social media is a key factor in modern news, giving people the opportunity to encounter news they did not purposefully seek out (Weeks). When people find information that is similar to their own views, the person is more likely to “like” or comment on the post compared to information that opposes their beliefs, where a person would tend to remain silent (Weeks).

Television news media also comes in a variety of forms, the most popular being Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN with 3.3, 1.8, and 1.1 million primetime viewers, respectively, as of August 2018 (U.S. Cable News). Pfau stated, “watching television closely resembles interpersonal communication because it emphasizes relational rather than content messages,

source as opposed to content factors, and a more casual communication style” meaning that how the information is delivered seems more important than the content (Micu).

Cable news channels such as Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN give Americans 24-hour coverage of the news. Political scientist William Taubman, who worked for CNN as an expert analyst during the Reagan-Gorbachev summit, believes that the reality of 24-hour access to news is not as beneficial as advertised (Wattenberg 37). After suggesting multiple interviews with Soviet citizens about their country’s struggles, Taubman realized that CNN believed itself to have “forty-eight half-hour segments, each of which had to cover the world and pay for that coverage with regularly scheduled features” (Wattenberg 37). Out of the few interviews that were allowed, each only lasted a few minutes before being cut short by the words, “Wrap it up and head for commercial” (Wattenberg 37).

The delivery of news has changed over time, but studies comparing networks is somewhat outdated. A study was conducted during the coverage of the 2003 war in Iraq, and Fox News averaged 4 million viewers each day compared to CNN’s 3.57 million (Micu). Some believed that the delivery of news was changing, noting that, “more coverage was focused on mediating what public people were saying, rather than simply reporting it” (Micu). Another study that was published on the front page of both the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, found that the number of analytical stories were growing while the “straight news” stories decreased (Micu). Also in 2003, Columbia University’s Project for Excellence in Journalism performed a content analysis on Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN, analyzing 240 hours of cable news programming (Wattenberg). Their findings showed that (1) written and edited stories only took 11% of the broadcast time, (2) the role of the reporter is primarily to speak

extemporaneously, (3) stories were frequently repeated, usually without any important new information, and (4) the coverage of the news ignored many important topics and was spotty (Wattenberg).

Alex Jones, director of the Shorenstein Center of the Press, stated that the, “conservative ideology that drives its [Fox News’s] prime-time programming seems to be spreading more into its news coverage” (Micu). Micu then determined that Fox News Channel seems to have a more engaging coverage with a conservative slant, especially during the 2003 Iraq war coverage. A 2003 study from the Program on International Policy Attitudes reported survey results that showed that viewers who got most of their news from Fox News showed that they had significantly more incorrect beliefs about the Iraq War (Micu). Also, they were more likely to think there was evidence that linked Iraq and al-Qaeda, that weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq, and that world public opinion approved of the U.S. going to war with Iraq (Micu). Moreover, Fox News’ unique delivery style kept viewers more engaged, but the inclusion of Republican analytical stories blurred the line between fact and opinion of what really happened during the war.

Scholars have established that news is delivered differently depending on the network, as a *New York Times* article reads, “Officials at MSNBC emphasize that they never set out to create a liberal version of Fox News” (Steinberg). While Fox News denied any political bias in its programming, MSNBC admitted that they were managing to add viewers while the country was voicing their dissatisfaction with President Bush (Steinberg). Moreover, MSNBC was having success gaining viewers with the same negative opinions on the President, which probably would build up to the network having political leanings if that is what generates success.

A prime example of political leanings between news stations can be seen in the titles of articles. On December 2, 2003, American troops fought a battle in the Iraqi city of Samarra. Fox News reported the story beginning with the following paragraph:

In one of the deadliest reported firefights in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, US forces killed at least 54 Iraqis and captured eight others while fending off simultaneous convoy ambushes Sunday in the northern city of Samarra (Gentzkow).

The New York Times article on the same event read:

American commanders vowed Monday that the killing of as many as 54 insurgents in this central Iraqi town would serve as a lesson to those fighting the United States, but Iraqis disputed the death toll and said anger against America would only rise (Gentzkow).

The English-language website of the satellite network Al Jazeera (AlJazeera.net) reported the story as:

The US military has vowed to continue aggressive tactics after saying it killed 54 Iraqis following an ambush, but commanders admitted they had no proof to back up their claims. The only corpses at Samarra's hospital were those of civilians, including two elderly Iranian visitors and a child (Gentzkow).

All three networks based their articles on the same underlying facts; however, each story gives drastically different impressions of what happened. Using the same foundation and simply changing the delivery of news through selective wording, news providers are able to manipulate the effect of the story. In their study on media bias, Gentzkow and Shapiro found that a channel tends to misrepresent information to fit the standard of viewers' prior opinions.

Interpretation

Interpretation of news is how each person perceives information. It is shown that viewing human faces activates certain regions of the extrastriate cortex in your brain (Kaplan). When someone sees a face, neural systems retrieve associated memories, assess emotional content, and determine the significance of the face, including politicians (Kaplan). A researcher scanned the brains of registered Republican and Democratic voters as they viewed faces of George Bush, John Kerry, and Ralph Nader during the 2004 presidential campaign - a highly emotional and significant campaign to American voters at the time (Kaplan). Twenty registered voters (10 Republicans and 10 Democrats) from the Los Angeles area participated, viewing 25 pictures of each candidate for 5 minutes and 8 seconds total and completing a questionnaire on their perceived strength of a number of emotions (Kaplan). Republicans gave significantly higher ratings of their positive emotion in response to George Bush's face compared with Democrats, who had a more negative emotional response (Kaplan).

In a similar study, researchers were able to predict the outcomes of elections for the U.S. Congress based solely on facial appearances (Todorov). Participants that did not know the candidates were given pairs of black-and-white headshots of the winner and runner-up of the 2004 election and were asked to pick which one they perceive as more competent. These inferences of competence correctly predicted the winner of the Senate and House elections in 71.6% and 66.8% of respondents, respectively (Todorov). These findings were also linearly related to the margin of victory (Todorov). The significance of these results is that people are predisposed to have certain beliefs, regardless of merit or reasoning. Party affiliation, ideology, and a candidate's overall campaign should play the biggest role in determining which candidate

receives a vote; however, these findings suggest that a quick judgement on facial appearance may be the biggest factor.

Americans are also divided on how they interpret many topics related to the media. Issues such as (1) whether news outlets favor one side in political coverage, (2) whether people trust national news media, and (3) the extent to which national news organizations are doing a good job keeping viewers informed are being debated more than ever (Barthel). The great majority of both Democrats and Republicans perceive the relationship between the media and the Trump administration as unhealthy and getting in the way of Americans' access to political information (Barthel).

Not only has society begun to distrust the news, but the term "fake news" has become a common phrase to describe this deliberate disinformation. According to a CNN online report in June 2017, Donald Trump had a fake *Time* magazine cover hanging in at least five of his golf clubs (Belhadjali). The May 2017 issue of *Newsweek* Magazine reported that two thirds of Americans think that the mainstream media publishes fake news (Belhadjali). More specifically, a Harvard-Harris poll published that 53% of Democrats, 80% of Republicans, and 60% of Independent voters believe that the news media publishes stories that are not true (Belhadjali). On top of it all, 91% of a study agreed that fake news affects Americans and leaves them confused either a great deal or some (Belhadjali). Only 5% of people trust news found from social networking sites (Barthel). Americans have become increasingly skeptical of the news, making interpreting it nearly impossible when there are sometimes no facts to base it on.

A survey conducted via email during the Iraq war asked respondents their top choice for news about the war and 44.7% said cable news was their top choice (Micu). The study

questioned the patterns of Fox News viewers and found that 63% were Republican and only 11% considered themselves Democrat, much lower than CNN or other cable news channels (Micu). Fox News also had significantly more male viewers than those of other news channels (Micu). Micu found that a source that takes a more extreme stance than the audience on the same side of an issue will be interpreted as more genuine and competent than one that takes a moderate position. Likewise, a source that takes an extreme position on the opposite side of an issue will be interpreted as more genuine but less competent than one that takes a moderate stance on the opposite side of the issue (Micu). Three conclusions were made from the study: if Fox News viewers share the same ideology as Fox News, then they are more likely to (1) approve more of President Bush's decisions than viewers of CNN or other cable news channels, (2) to show increased interest in the war than CNN or other cable news channel viewers, and (3) to be optimistic about the outcome of the war than viewers of other cable news channels (Micu). Other studies also found that 88% of consistent conservatives trust Fox News (Mitchell).

Dissonance arousal is the desire to avoid information that might prove your views wrong, which often leads people to engage in selective information seeking, a practice that is seen increasingly in today's media and political climate (Vraga). Selective exposure is seeking only information that confirms one's beliefs and avoiding ideas that do not (Vraga). Ideas and behaviors not aligned with one's party affiliation are especially troublesome and likely to lead to selective information seeking (Vraga). Vraga believes that political views do not simply determine how a person responds to incoming information, but they also signal differences in worldviews and orientations. According to selective exposure, viewers would prefer to watch and listen to news reports that align with their beliefs, so over time, individuals from one party

would become loyal to one channel because they have not been challenged or upset enough to switch. Likewise, someone that does not agree with how an anchor presents the news would not continue to watch that show because it challenges their ideas, resulting in the viewer likely finding a new source for their news. Both dissonance arousal and selective exposure help explain why Fox News has considerably more conservative viewers, which leads us to believe that the network is conservative leaning.

Conclusion

Each political party believes in a different ideology; conservatives are known for their resistance to change and uncertainty, while liberals are more likely to embrace change and are more progressive. These beliefs are now supported by studies on the cognitive activity of the brain (Kimmelmeier). Beliefs have become extremely judgmental, to the extent of feeling social anxiety on social media about others' perceptions (Marder). News is typically delivered through social media, television, or through friends and family. Research found that Fox News has conservative ideology and the viewers of Fox News do as well (Micu). However, it should be noted that this was only studied during the time of the Iraq war and there were no in depth studies of other news channels. Interpretation of news is influenced by the individual. A study scanned the brains of 20 participants and found that the brain releases negative emotions when viewing a face of the opposite political party (Kaplan). The widespread and unfortunately popular "fake news" concerns most Americans and as a result social media is not trusted (Belhadjali). Dissonance arousal and selective exposure are vital in understanding how Americans are not allowing themselves to correctly interpret information, regardless of delivery (Vraga).

After preliminary research, there seems to be a gap when it comes to information on the delivery of news. Detailed studies have examined Fox News, but ignore MSNBC and CNN. Researchers have failed to explain the process or methodology behind delivering news, or how political leanings affect what stories are covered. My research will aim to dive deeper into the delivery of news and uncover more information about the influence of political affiliations. I hope to discuss what is specifically done differently between news providers through verbiage and noting any attitudes present when discussing topics or stories.

Methods

I conducted a content analysis in order to hone in on the delivery of news. There are various modes of delivering news including television, newspaper, radio, and social media. I picked television because it is one of the most popular sources (Gottfried and Shearer) and has transcripts available online that are easily comparable between news channels. By analyzing the transcripts of various news shows, I was able to take note of common themes and verbiage in both a quantitative and qualitative manner.

Once I determined the type of research I would be conducting and what platform I would be examining, I needed to pick which news channels I would analyze. I narrowed the selection down to compare Fox News and CNN for many reasons. These two channels were picked because a previous study used the two (Micu et al). Additionally, Fox News and CNN are often pitted against each other in the media and the reliability of either source has come into question over the past few years. I decided on the times of 6pm and 9pm because these are the most popular times that users get their news (“The Most Popular Times of Day Vary”). The 6pm show is popular because some viewers like to turn on the news when they come home from work, or watch the news before, during, or after dinner. CNN’s 6pm show is *The Situation Room* with Wolf Blitzer while Fox News’ is *Special Report* with Bret Baier. The 9pm show was chosen because this is often watched before people go to sleep. The 9pm shows are *Cuomo Prime Time* on CNN, and *Hannity* on Fox News. Lastly, two days in August 2018 were selected because one date is not enough to notice a pattern.

The content analysis was conducted by first choosing the month of August, as it is the most recent, complete month. I then used a randomized number generator to pick a number between 1-31 (days in August). I made sure that this date had transcripts available from all four shows and then printed them so that I could begin the content analysis. Four dates were discarded because they were missing at least one of the shows. Throughout each transcript, I looked for both objective and subjective measures of political ideologies and biases.

Manifest content is objective as it is concrete terms contained in a communication. The objective measure included highlighting every time the word Democrat, Republican, Trump, the name of the opposite news channel, and the number of guest speakers that were featured in each transcript. Synonyms for Democrat (liberal, left), Republican (conservative, right, GOP), and Trump (president, Donald) were also included. Counting these specific words was intended to help determine if there is a correlation between the occurrence of the word and possible political leanings. I also counted the amount of guest speakers in each show to explore their influence on the political leaning of the show. However, words being used often could mean the show was either very positive or very negative, so subjective measures were also necessary.

Latent content is the underlying meaning of communication and therefore subjective. I rated subjectivity using a scale from 1-10 in five different categories: liberal-conservative of the transcript as a whole (1 liberal, 10 conservative), support-critical of the president (1 critical, 10 support), support-opposition of the other political party (1 support, 10 critical), support-opposition of the media (1 support, 10 critical), and liberal-conservative of the guest speakers (1 liberal, 10 conservative). Each rating was determined based on the verbiage of the

transcript and positive or negative statements made about each political party, the president, or the media.

Results

After conducting the content analysis, I gathered objective and subjective measures based on four news shows (*The Situation Room*, *Cuomo Prime Time*, *Special Report*, *Hannity*) from two channels (CNN and Fox News) on August 10th and 29th. See Table 1, Table 2, Figure 1, and Figure 2 on pages 28-31. On August 10th, CNN had four transcripts total, two from each show. Meanwhile, Fox News only had two total, one per show. On August 29th, CNN had three transcripts while Fox News still only had two. Additionally, the 6pm Bret Baier show on Fox News was only seven pages both days, compared to the other transcripts that range from 21-29 pages. The difference in available data must be taken into consideration.

Objective

On August 10th, the usage of Democrat compared to Republican was fairly even with the count either matching or having a variance of one, as seen in Table 1. Wolf Blitzer's second show used the term "Democrat" a little over twice as often as Republican, with a count of 9 to 4. Throughout the entire Fox News *Hannity* show, Hannity and guests used the term "Republican" almost twice as often as Democrat, 29 to 17. These differences on August 10 could imply that each show is talking about "their" party more often than the other, but the subjective analyses may suggest otherwise.

On August 29th, CNN used Democrat almost equally with Republican except for a 7 to 11 gap in the second 6pm show. Fox News, however, used Democrat twice as often as Republican in both 6pm and 9pm shows, 15 to 8 and 16 to 8, respectively. The August 29 count

shows that Fox News is talking about the opposite party twice as often, which is most likely negative.

On August 10th, CNN transcripts said the word “Trump” more often than Fox News transcripts, especially in the 6pm show with Wolf Blitzer, pictured in Figure 1. During the two half-hour shows, “Trump” was said 158 times (although the two shows repeat similar stories), whereas CNN’s 9pm show said “Trump” 96 times. Compared to Fox News however, the 6pm show said it 9 times and the 9pm show said it 65 times. On August 29th, CNN used “Trump” 249 times between the two shows in the 6pm time slot. The 9pm showing only mentioned him 47 times, while Fox News said “Trump” 14 and 63 times on their 6pm and 9pm shows, respectively. Although the stories that were covered in both CNN and Fox News included the president, CNN mentioned his name much more often, possibly meaning they linger on the topic or criticize more than average.

On August 10th, “Fox News” was mentioned twice in each of the 6pm CNN shows, and “CNN” was mentioned twice in the 9pm Fox News *Hannity* show. On August 29th, however, Fox News referenced CNN 33 times, whereas Fox was only referenced 5 times total throughout the two shows in CNN’s 6pm time slot, pictured in Figure 1. The fact that either station is mentioning another station by name seems irrelevant, but clearly it’s common and is polarizing viewers as seen in the book, *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, when testing the effects of partisan media on attitudes toward the other side (Levendusky 98).

CNN’s 6pm show with Wolf Blitzer again had the most speakers (9-12), compared to Fox’s four speakers at the same time. However, Fox News’ 9pm had 10 speakers while CNN had 5-6 speakers. On August 29, CNN again had the most guest speakers at 6pm (9-11), next closest

being Fox at 9pm with 9. CNN's 9pm show had 5 and Fox's 6pm had 3. From these two days, CNN brings in more hosts during 6pm shows while Fox brings in a similar number during the 9pm show.

Subjective

I based the scoring of liberal to conservative as a whole on the other categories, taking into account how the commentators spoke about the President, Democrats, Republicans, the media, and political leanings of the guest speakers that were brought on the show. A 1 is extremely liberal, 5 is neutral, and 10 is extremely conservative. On August 10th, I gave CNN's transcripts a 2 and 3, meaning that they were liberal leaning. Fox News' 6pm show was very neutral and therefore received a 5. The 9pm Fox News show was extremely conservative and received a 10 in every category. On August 29th, both the 6pm and 9pm CNN shows received 3's because they were liberal leaning. Fox News' 6pm show was more conservative leaning so it was scored a 7. The 9pm show was again very conservative and received 10's in all categories. It is clear that each network has its own political leanings based on what is said about the President and the other party. See results section for a summary of the data.

When scoring the criticism/praise of the President, on August 10th, two CNN transcripts were scored a 1 because they were extremely critical of the president. The transcript of Wolf Blitzer's second show featured Democratic Congressman Hakeem Jeffries from New York as a guest on the show. When speaking about the Mueller investigation, he said, "This is all an example of the culture of corruption that we have seen invade Washington, D.C., since January 20 of 2017, the moment that Donald Trump was inaugurated. And it's a shame." He was extremely critical of Trump for the entirety of the time he was on the show, making other

statements such as “[The President] has never hesitated to fan the flames of racial hatred in order to advance his own personal, political, or professional ends” and “We have a reality show host running around the Oval Office masquerading as President of the United States.” The conversation was never shifted to defend or support the President and therefore received a 1. CNN’s 9pm show, hosted by Chris Cuomo, started off by saying, “And looks like Trump wants to give himself another tax cut” in just the first few sentences. The rest of the show continues to criticize Trump as well. Fox News, on the other hand, is very positive about the President throughout its 9pm show, saying, “President Trump is our greatest asset in the campaign trail. He energizes our base. He brings an energy to our candidates.” Fox News’ Hannity also defends him in the Mueller investigation, “They’re investigating Trump, they don’t have anything, they have zero on Donald Trump. There is no real case, there is nothing there.” On August 29th, CNN’s Wolf Blitzer featured Adam Schiff, a Democratic Congressman for California, on the show and when talking about the President he said, “And, of course, for Donald Trump, he cares about nothing about the presidency. It’s all about him.” Meanwhile, Fox News’ Hannity is supporting the President stating, “The American economy is booming...And the state of our country, by the way, is strong. And the president has literally changed things around. We’re now heading in a much better direction.” From the two dates analyzed, CNN consistently criticized the President while Fox has praised him. The most notable difference is who specifically is talking about Trump. Almost all of the criticism of the President was from guests on CNN, whereas the anchor of the Fox show praised Trump.

I also analyzed the extent to which the shows were critical of the opposite political party. On August 10th, Wolf Blitzer’s guest, Hakeem Jeffries, the Democratic Congressman from New

York, was on the show and was quite critical of Republicans, stating, “Democrats stand for the people. [Republicans] stand for the wealthy, the well-off, the mega-corporations, the special lobbyists, as evidenced by their Republican tax scam, where 83 percent of the benefits went to the wealthiest 1 percent.” Fox News was very critical of Democrats in their 9pm show, stating, “Our country is doing better. Our economy is roaring. And jobs are coming back. And if we give it to the Democrats they will double down and obstruct and resist and mirror us down in investigations and stop this great comeback that is helping every single American.” Fox News’ Jeanine Pirro was also promoting her new book, *Liars, Leakers and Liberals* throughout the show, adding to the distaste toward Democrats. On August 29th, CNN political commentator Angela Rye was a guest on their 9pm show. While talking about the Republican candidate for governor of Florida that made a very controversial statement, she said, “Well, I don’t understand how you go to two Ivy League schools and end up three times as stupid.” Fox News’ Sean Hannity opened up the 9pm show saying, “We will explore the Democratic Party’s hard turn to the left as gubernatorial candidates in two states are now calling for universal health care, open borders and a tax rate that’ll make your stomach turn.” Both networks clearly favor their own party and don’t have much tolerance for the other. However, similar to the analysis on speaking about the President, CNN is most critical of Republicans through their guests, while Fox is critical of Democrats with their host.

Additionally, attitudes towards and criticism of the media were evaluated. On August 10th, Fox News was very critical of the media as the anchor said, “This is major developing news...but the mainstream media couldn’t care less. They were too busy bashing President Trump for everything under the sun.” Sara Carter, a Fox News Contributor, also directly

criticizes CNN, saying, “They’re dumping on the American people, Judge Jeanine. They’re not just dumping on the President of the United States, his rhetoric, without any basis, I mean it’s constant attacks, constant rhetoric, constant going after in it, it’s reflective in their ratings. It’s reflective in the ratings that CNN has. It’s reflective in the ratings that MSNBC is now dealing with.” CNN was also critical of the media and Fox News, explaining their frustration that Hannity (host of 9pm Fox News) turned over his three-hour radio show to Trump’s lawyers. A guest on Wolf Blitzer’s show, Sabrina Siddiqui, stated, “this is an unmistakable display of partisan loyalty.” Following with, “It’s not surprising, given Sean Hannity is one of the President’s biggest public cheerleaders” and “On the part of the President’s legal team, they are trying to control the public narrative. And the fact that they are targeting conservatives speaks to wanting to keep the President’s base intact and convince them, without evidence, of course, that this investigation is somehow tainted.” On August 29th, Fox News was especially critical of the media, specifically CNN, mentioning the network 33 times within the transcript. The introduction included, “We’ll expose the latest example of the media’s sickening anti-Trump bias, especially fake news CNN” where it was followed with an audio clip of an audience chanting, “CNN sucks! CNN sucks! CNN sucks! CNN sucks! CNN sucks! CNN sucks!” CNN mentioned Fox five times throughout the two 6pm shows, all in reference to the controversial statement the Republican governor candidate for Florida made while speaking on Fox. Both networks mention and criticize the other, although unrelated to the news.

Guest speakers on August 10th were interesting for CNN as the 6pm show had more guests but were all Democrats or CNN analysts, while the 9pm show brought in Republican guests. During Cuomo’s 9pm show on CNN, he spoke with Mueller’s lawyer about the trial,

Trump's tax lawyer to explain the reasoning behind tax changes, co-founder of Women for Trump, and a Republican Senate candidate for Arizona. With this diversity, the show had more depth and was able to report on more issues. On August 29th, the 6pm show on CNN brought 11 and 9 guests; however, it received a score of 3 because they were all Democrats: a Hawaii Democratic senator, a *New York Times* analyst, a California Democratic congressman, and CNN analysts. The 9pm show only had 5 guests but featured Trump's former campaign manager and the Florida Democratic candidate for governor to keep the conversation neutral with a 5. At 9pm Fox News brought 9 guests but they were all Fox News analysts: Trump's former press secretary, and the Florida Republican gubernatorial candidate. For both days, CNN brought a combination of guests on the show, which added depth and another side to the conversation. However, Fox only featured Fox analysts or other Republicans, which only gives one side of the story.

Content Analysis

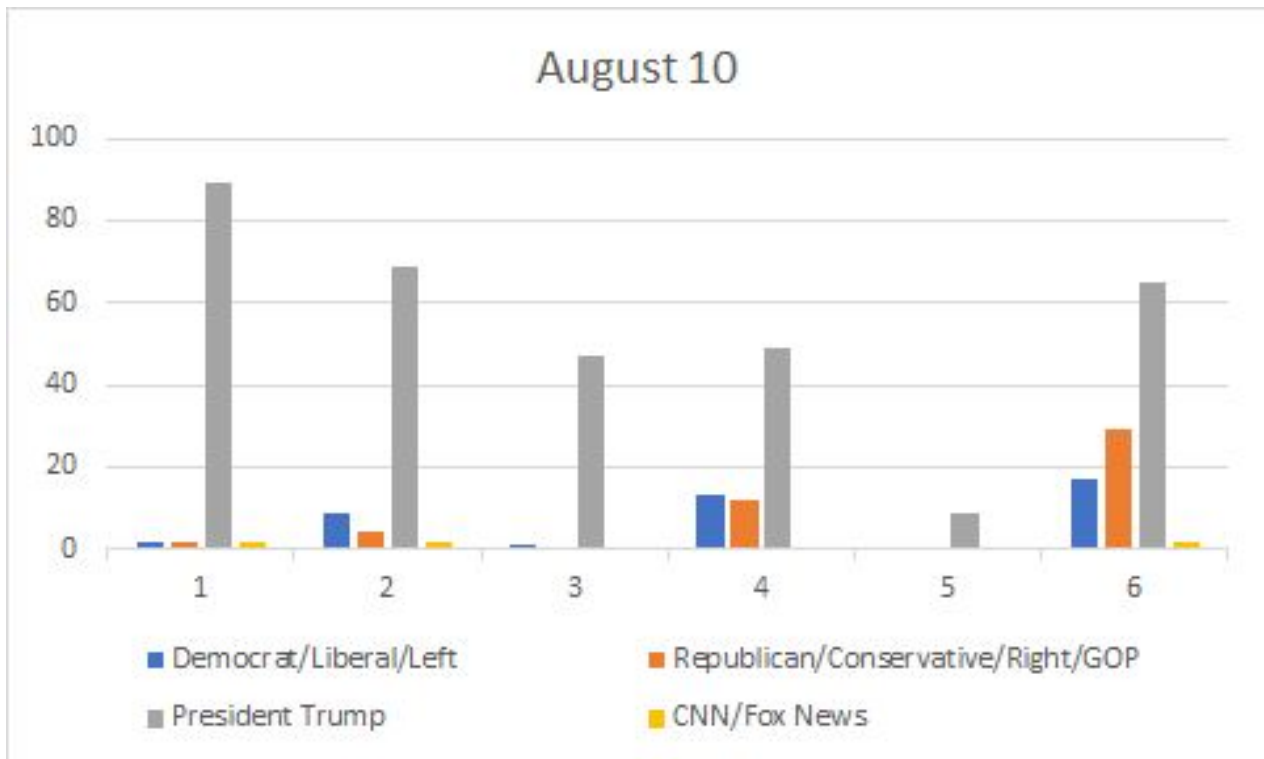
Table 1

August 10												
Channel	Show	Article	# of Pages	Objective Count				Subjective Scale				
				Democrat/ Liberal /Left	Republican/ Conservative /Right/GOP	President Trump	CNN/Fox News	Guest Speakers	Liberal to Conservative (1 very liberal, 10 very conservative)	For/Against Trump (1 strongly against, 10 strongly support)	Bashing Other Side (1 support the other side, 10 bash the other side)	Bashing the Media (1 support the media, 10 bash the media)
CNN	6pm: The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer	"Manhattan Madam" Faces Grand Jury In Mueller Probe...	21	2	2	89	2	2	3	6	6	3
		Omarosa Criticizes Trump...	27	9	4	68	2	2	1	8	7	1
	9pm: Cuomo Prime Time	Talking with Attorney for Former Roger Stone Aide Andrew Miller...	29	1	0	47	0	0	1	7	6	8
Fox News	6pm: Special Report with Bret Baier	Mueller's Team Pressure Roger Stone on Russia Probe...	23	13	12	49	0	0	2	8	5	8
	9pm: Hannity	The Politics of Trump's Economic Pressure Campaign Ronna McDaniel: Trump is an Asset on the Campaign Trail	25	17	29	65	2	2	10	10	10	10

Table 2

August 29													
			Objective Count				Subjective Scale						
Channel	Show	Article	# of Pages	Democrat/Liberal/Left	Republican/Conservative/Right	President Trump	CNN/Fox News	Guest Speakers	Liberal to Conservative (1 very liberal, 10 very conservative)	For/Against Trump (1 strongly against, 10 strongly support)	Bashing Other Side (1 support the other side, 10 bash the other side)	Bashing the Media (1 support the media, 10 bash the media)	Guest Speakers (1 very liberal, 10 very conservative)
CNN	6pm: The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer	Interview with Mazie Hirono White House Counsel Don McGahn to Step Down...	23	7	7	126	3	11	3	2	6	6	3
		Washington Post: US Denies Passports to Americans Along Southern Border...	25	7	11	123	2	9	3	2	6	6	3
	9pm: Cuomo Prime Time	Trump Brags about "Fantastic Job" in Puerto Rico...	27	15	15	47	0	5	3	3	9	7	5
Fox News	6pm: Special Report with Bret Baier	President Trump's influence on crucial midterm elections	7	15	8	14	0	3	6	6	6	5	5
	9pm: Hannity	Kellyanne Conway: CNN's Bombshell Report is Just a Bomb	24	16	8	63	33	9	10	10	10	10	10

Figure 1



1-2: *The Situation Room* (CNN)

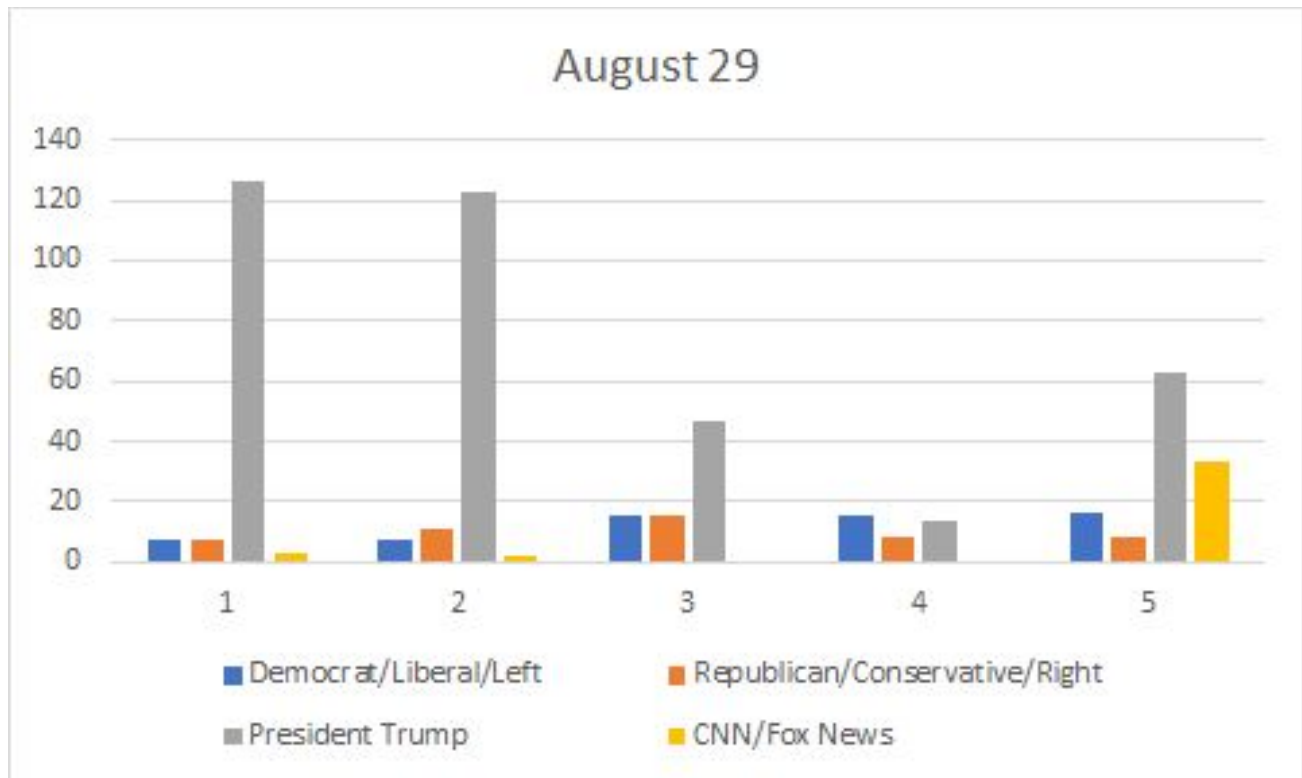
3-4: *Cuomo Prime Time* (CNN)

5: *Special Report* (FOX)

6: *Hannity* (FOX)

Note: *The Situation Room* and *Cuomo Prime Time* have two graphs because two transcripts were analyzed during the hour time slot, whereas the others had only one transcript.

Figure 2



1-2: *The Situation Room* (CNN)

3: *Cuomo Prime Time* (CNN)

4: *Special Report* (FOX)

5: *Hannity* (FOX)

Note: *The Situation Room* has two graphs because two transcripts were analyzed during the hour time slot, whereas the others had only one transcript.

Conclusion

Scholars have discussed the political divide in viewership between television news networks. However, they have not systematically considered the differences in the delivery of news between these networks. Fox News has been studied extensively, yet other channels such as MSNBC or CNN have been ignored. People know that channels have political leanings, but research has not stated what factors are present that make each channel liberal or conservative. I decided to conduct a content analysis to determine what is specifically done differently between news providers through verbiage and noted partisan attitudes present when discussing topics or stories.

After conducting the content analysis, it is clear that media bias exists in our news culture today. The findings from the content analysis showed that CNN and Fox were polar opposites: CNN is very liberal while Fox is very conservative. For instance, CNN was much more critical of the President, while Fox vehemently supported him. Also, each network typically mentioned the other political party far more often than their own, which indicates they are more critical of the other. Although both brought in a similar number of guest speakers, CNN featured guests from both political parties, while Fox News only highlighted Republicans.

Some limitations I faced while conducting the content analysis were timing and availability. If I had more time to complete the content analysis and thesis as a whole, I would be able to analyze each transcript more in depth. I could add other relevant categories such as which stories were covered during the show and how the choice illustrates political bias. Additionally, I would have a bigger sample size and could analyze more than just two dates. I believe analyzing

five dates randomly selected throughout a month, or two dates each month throughout an entire year would show clearer patterns for each network. Also, results found CNN to be more critical of President Trump, but it would be interesting to see how the two networks reacted to a democratic president as well. However, that number of transcripts for one person is too much given the circumstances. I would also have three people read each transcript in an effort to get clearer subjective measures that aren't influenced by the scorer's political affiliation. Taking an average of the three ratings would give more reliable answers. Also, availability was a limitation because transcripts were not always available from both channels during both the 6pm and 9pm show. Two dates that I randomly selected had to be discarded because transcripts were missing from at least one of the shows. Lastly, I planned on using three dates; however, Fox News' 9pm Hannity show removed all of their transcripts from August so I was unable to do so.

Scholars can add to my research contributions by continuing to research the gaps in knowledge. I have only begun to investigate the objective differences between these news stations. More research should be completed on other showtimes besides primetime, such as morning and afternoon shows, to determine if and/or how prevalent political bias is during these times.

These results support previous findings because much more opinion was brought into the news instead of the straight facts. As a result, someone with a liberal political leaning is very likely to disagree with the delivery of Fox News and would probably not use this channel as their source for news. Instead, they would rely on a channel that favors their opinion, such as CNN. Likewise, those with a conservative leaning would ignore CNN for the same reasons. Knowing

this information, readers can be more informed and aware so they can form their own unbiased opinion of the news.

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