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Women Representation on CNN and Fox News

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Research question: What difference does a political bias matter when analyzing how CNN and Fox News portray women's issues, the number of women guests on their shows, and how much airtime women receive.

Hypothesis: My hypothesis is that both networks will have relatively low coverage on women's issues and guests on the show will be predominately male, but I do hypothesize that CNN will have a higher yield of women as guests on the show.

Introduction:

Politics is often associated as a bad word. "Playing Politics" is stigmatized as playing dirty and cheap and in association with being corrupt. In 2018, politics have been so sharply polarized and rhetoric from both sides of the aisle have been divisive to energize their bases. At the forefront of the polarization of politics is the mainstream media.

There have been two giants in the televised news media industry. First is the Cable News Network, more commonly referred to as CNN. The second is Fox News. CNN owned by the media conglomerate Times Warner and Fox News, owned by another media conglomerate, Fox Entertainment Group, are the two most popular media giants in the business.   CNN is a left-leaning to centrist cable 24/7 cable network. It is one of the most trustworthy televised news organizations in America. Fox News is a conservative 24/7 cable network who's reporting isn't usually the most reliable.

Now that I've introduced CNN and Fox News, I can talk about my project and the research I conducted on these two media behemoths. In a time when politics are so fiercely divided, I wanted to see how each station treated women. Over three days, I watched *The Situation Room with* Wolf Blitzer from 5pm-6pm CST and then *the Story* with Martha MacCallum from 6pm-7pm CST. I chose the Wolf Blitzer program because he is a well-known and respected media host. I chose The Story because I wanted to stay away from the more questionable programs and conspiracy artists as Tucker Carlson and Sean Hannity. I also took my bias as a liberal into effect and strayed away from the more polarized programs.

During the three days of watching the programs, I did a content analysis on the topics they were discussing. I noted if it was a women's issues topic or not. I kept track of the number

of male and female pundits/experts/guests and how long each were on screen. A few other things I kept track of was whether it was a foreign affairs topic, the number of minority women, and the number of Democratic and Republican women.

My research question is what difference does a political bias matter when analyzing how CNN and Fox News portray women's issues, the number of women appearing on the show, and how much airtime the women receive. My hypothesis is that both networks will have relatively low coverage on women's issues and guests on the show will be predominately male, but I do hypothesize that CNN will have a higher yield of women as guests on the show.

Literature Review:

Hayes, Lawless, and Baitinger (2014) discuss how women are scrutinized when in the media by what they wear. The authors discuss how most people do not have much political knowledge and use simple information shortcuts to make their judgements on a candidate or someone in the media. This goes along with my hypothesis, that women are going to be treated differently due to their gender alone. The authors bring up Chris Christie and his size. While this is a valid point, not every man is judged by his size while most women are scrutinized from head to toe on what they wear and how they look.

Beam and Di Cicco (2010) look at 20 small newspapers and see how they differ when a woman takes command. They start by explaining how about two-thirds of newsroom employees are male. This again goes toward my hypothesis that women's issues are not going to be brought up much due to their not being much women in the field. The result that Beam and Di Cicco found slightly go against my hypothesis. "The women-led treatment papers showed slight increases in coverage of consumerism/ fashion and in minority issues. The men-led papers,

however, showed slightly more emphasis across time on "feminine" topics like children/ youth and personal relationships" (Beam and Di Cicco 2010: 400).

Burrel (2012) discusses how they media can misportray women. "With the end of the Cold War, attention was increasingly turning away from foreign policy and defense and toward domestic issues on which women were perceived to have more expertise" (Burrell 2012: 221). Looking at the topics women are covering is going to be another part of my research I will be looking at. Women are rarely asked their opinion on matters of foreign policy but rather domestic issues such as childcare and healthcare.

Bystrom (2012) discusses how women and women's issues are portrayed online and in the mass media in the chapter *Advertising, Websites, and Media Coverage.* "Women forging new political ground often struggle to receive media coverage and legitimacy in the eyes of the media, and subsequently, the public" (Bystrom 2012: 244). It is much harder for a woman to get into the media than it is a man. As the study by Beam and Di Cicco found, only one-third of newsroom employees are women. Their issues thus get pushed to the back burner and do not get discussed.

While I will be looking at televised mass media in CNN and Fox News, Authors Shor, van de Rijt, Ward, Askar, and Skiena (2014) looked at what women say in partisan newspaper in *Is There Political Bias? A Computational Analysis of Female Subjects' Coverage in Liberal and Conservative Newspapers.* This paper will help with my own research. It is not the same research I am doing due to me looking at televised media, but their research will help me pick up additional factors to look for while doing my content analysis.

Schreiber (2010) looks to see if liberal women's groups are correct when they claim they don't get enough airtime and/or if conservative women's groups are correct that most women coverage is biased and liberal. This will help my research because I will be able to see how Ronnee's research correlates with televised media. I will be able to take a closer look at if the media coverage on women's issue is related to liberal causes, conservative causes or both.

Stillman (2007) discusses how when some girls go missing, they appear on the news and when others go missing, the news does not report it. Sarah is saying that there is a bias against these women and that the media only deems some women's lives valuable. This research will help my research because it can show a reason why women are in the media enough if my hypothesis is proven correct.

The last article I ended up choosing was by Debra Beck (1998). Beck believes that the media is huge in the way the public perceives feminism and how it alters public policy. This is a great piece of research for me to look at because it will help me see ways in which members of the mass media treat feminism and the acceptance or rejection the movements.

Content Analysis:

My first day of viewing was Monday, March 5th, 2018. I started with *The Situation Room* with Wolf Blitzer. The first topic was a former Trump aide saying he will defy the Russia probe subpoena. This segment lasted for 31 minutes and included 5 male pundits and 3 female pundits. The segment was broken up into three parts due to commercials and each time, new pundits were introduced effecting the amount of time the women where on. For the rest of the show, there were no topics that were women's rights issues. The show ended with 6 men and 4 women (1

minority woman) in total and 56 minutes of airtime for men and 29 minutes for women. There were no foreign affairs topics.

For the next hour on Monday, March 5th, 2018, I watched *The Story* on Fox News. Fox News always had more topics and shorter segments than CNN. The topics started with Obama not wanting to act against Russia in 2016 and Robert Mueller focusing on Trump campaign connections to EAU. Fox News covered one foreign affairs issue. The Israeli Prime Minister called out Iran in the Oval Office. There was one male and one female pundit on this segment that lasted 6 minutes. The show ended talking about the Florida gun bill and an Oscar Actor who talked about the military and didn't get a loud clap. In total, there were 7 male guests making up 49 minutes of airtime and 3 female guests making up 17 minutes. All three women were Republicans. It is important to note that I do not include the host Martha MacCallum as a female guest in any of the segments.

The second day of my content analysis was Tuesday, March 6th, 2018. CNN did not cover any women's rights or foreign affairs topics. The show covered two topics for the entirety of the show. The first topic was breaking news that Gary Cohn resigned as top economic advisor. This topic was split into three segments, 7 minutes, 14 minutes, and 11 minutes each respectively. The second topic lasting 10 minutes was Mueller looking into Trump's personal lawyer. In total, there were 6 male guests making up 112 minutes and 3 female guests making up 55 minutes of total airtime. Two of the three women were Democrats and the other woman being unknown.

Once again, after *The Situation Room* ended on CNN, I flipped the channel to Fox News to watch *The Story.* The first 11 minutes covered the Gary Cohn resignation and then moved to the U.S saying it will counteract any Russia meddling in the 2018 midterms. They quickly

moved to the Texas primaries, then shifting to a former Russia spy and his daughter allegedly being assassinated in the U.K. and finishing with bringing on a conservative Florida school shooter who had an idea on how to fix gun violence. At the end of the show, there were a total of 10 male guests and only 1 female guest. She was a Republican woman who received 7 minutes of airtime in comparison to her male colleagues who received 68 minutes. There was no coverage of any women's rights issues.

Going into my last day of analysis, there wasn't a single story covering women's rights on either network. The last day of my content analysis was Thursday, March 22nd, 2018. *The Situation Room* on CNN started with the story of Trump's top Russia lawyer quitting, and 4 lawyers refusing to join his team. The topics then shifted to the G.O.P ending the House Russian investigation, Stormy Daniels asking the Trump Organization to preserve documents in the case, and the breaking news of Trump firing his national security adviser McMaster and hiring John Bolton, a Fox News contributor. There was a total of 7 male pundits making up 105 minutes and 6 female pundits making up 88 minutes of airtime. Three of the women spent 24 minutes on a foreign affairs issue. There was one minority women and 5 of the 6 women were Democrats and 1 was unknown.

At 6pm CST, I moved onto Fox News. The opening story was Austin, Texas investigators hunting for Austin bomber motive. This segment lasted 4 minutes and they moved onto new security footage of the Vegas shooter. This again lasted 4 minutes. It was 15 minutes into the show until they broke the news of the firing of General McMaster as national security advisor and being replaced by Fox News's own analyst John Bolton. This segment including 1 male pundit, John Bolton himself, and lasted 18 minutes. At the very end of the show, the first and only women's rights issue by either network was brought up. The story was of Icelandic

women gets abortions when tests show they have a high chance of having a down-syndrome child. As one would expect, Fox News did not argue in favor of women and their choice to have an abortion. This segment lasted 5 minutes and had one female Republican guest. In the last day, there were 6 male guests making up 35 minutes of airtime versus 2 female guests making up 9 minutes of airtime.

At the end of my analysis, I tallied up all the categories to get a better picture of my research. In the three days of analysis that I conducted; CNN had a total of 32 guests. Of the 32, 19 were male and 13 were female. In percentage, which will be an important part of the research, 59.4% of the guests were male and 40.6% were female. In means of airtime, there was a total 445 minutes of combined airtime. Men held 273 minutes compared to 172 minutes for women. Again, in percentage, men held 61.3% of the airtime compared to 38.9% for women. This shows that while females have significantly less airtime, when female guests were on the show, they earned about as much of the airtime in regard to their representation. In other words, roughly 40% of the guest were female and 40% of the airtime had a female guest.

Fox News was extremely similar regarding airtime versus representation. At the end of the three days, there were a total of 28 guests on the Fox News program. Of the 28, 23 were male guests compared to 5 female guests. Of all guests, 82.1% of the guest were male compared to 17.9% that were female. Of 185 total airtime minutes, 152 belonged to men and 33 minutes belonged to women. Of the total airtime, 82.2% of the time there was a male guest on and 17.8% of the time there was a female guest. In regards of their airtime versus representation, it was a 0.1% off. 17.9% of the guests were female and 17.8% of the time there was a female on screen (excluding the host, Martha MacCallum).

Analysis

So far, my hypothesis has held up. CNN had 22.7% more female guests and had females on screen 21.1% longer than Fox News. Women were still significantly underrepresented on CNN as they only made up 40% of the guests. Neither show had any significant discussion on any women's rights issues.

In terms of foreign affairs, a category in which women are often looked at as inferior, CNN had 4 women on foreign affairs segments. Fox News had a total of 2 women on foreign affairs segments. The women on CNN had a total of 26 airtime minutes on foreign affairs compared to the Fox News women who had a total of 13 airtime minutes on foreign affairs.

Of minority women, CNN had two minority female guests and Fox News had only one. The CNN minority women had a total of 20 airtime minutes as the lone minority women on Fox News had 6 minutes.

As was stated before, both sides are highly polarized. Of the total 13 women on CNN, 10 were Democrats and none were Republicans. Of the 5 women on Fox News, all 5 were Republicans. Amongst women, there was no representation from the other side of the aisle to make an argument.

Over my three days, I noticed a heavy partisan lens on both networks. CNN took every chance it had to hammer Donald Trump and the chaos taking place within the White House. Over on Fox News, they did their best to dodge Donald Trump's problems and praising anything he did while discussing topics that spread fear. Neither networks were able to broadcast the news of the day with arguments outside of the partisan politics. Each network only had guests on that we're able to argue their point-of-view and did give the opposition suitable time, if any, to

depend their point-of-view. This connects to women's rights issues being discussed because whatever Trump does will get broadcasted. If news breaks on allegations of Trump sexually assaulting a woman, CNN will discuss that extensively while Fox News would be relatively silent on the issue. If Trump signed a bill into law protecting a piece of women's rights, CNN would be relatively silent while Fox News would sing its praises. The women's rights issues will only get airtime when it's convenient for CNN and Fox News.

Table Analysis

Category		CNN #	%	Fox News #	%
Total Males		19	59.40%	23	82.10%
Total Females		13	40.60%	5	17.90%
Women's Issues		0	- 0/9	1	1/16
Total Male Minutes		273	61.30%	152	82.20%
Total Female Minutes		172	38.90%	33	17.80%
Democrats		10	76.90%	0	0%
GOP		0	0%	5	100%
Minority Women		4	- 30.8%	1	20%
Foreign Affairs w/ Women		2	15.4%	2	40%

CONCLUSION:

My research has shown that there is still a gender gap in terms of representation of women on media news shows. My hypothesis was confirmed as both networks did not reach an equal 50/50 representation between men and women. However, CNN had a significant more number of women on its show than Fox News did. In terms of my research question, not enough analysis was done to make a competitive argument regarding the number of women's issues covered by both channels, number of minority women, and women on panels talking foreign

affairs. My research provided a glimpse and was suggesting that CNN is more women-friendly in regard to minority women and women talking on foreign affairs. In the end, my content analysis provided some insight on the gender gap that still exists amongst cable news networks, especially amongst conservative news networks.

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