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Module 6 Comparative News Analysis

After President Donald Trump’s hospitalization over the weekend after a positive coronavirus test that, based off of medication prescribed, seemed to be more severe than official releases were directly letting the public onto, he was released from the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Monday, October 5th as reported on by CNN, CBS, and the New York Times, as well as numerous other sources. Of these three sources, CNN is reported to be the most left-leaning sourced by Media Bias/Fact Check, which also gives them a “mixed” factuality rating – however, they do note that this mixed factuality mostly applies to CNN’s TV programing, in contrast to their online, text-based articles which “tends to be properly sourced with minimal failed fact checks” (Media Bias/Fact Check, 2020). Both the New York Times and CBS, however, find themselves marked as left-of-center and as highly factual, according to them.

While CNN’s online options might be more factual, they most definitely are not less biased: “Trump mounts bizarre and misleading White House return despite warnings” conveys a strong emotion right off of the bat, while the New York Times “Trump Returns Home After Downplaying Disease, but Doctor Says He Isn’t ‘Out of the Woods’” is at least a little bit less charged and CBS’s “Trump back at White House after being discharged from Walter Reed” is even less so. The adjectives, even in just the title, that CNN use convey an emotion absent from CBS, and the New York Times addition of how Trump was downplaying the disease, while true, has a bit of bias attached into it as a result of the fact that we as a nation have turned a literal pandemic into something politically contentious.

Even going into the first paragraph, while all three sources immediately bring up the fact that Trump promptly took his mask off at a press release and the potential dangers with that and what he said about, it is immediately apparent that CNN uses the same techniques that a novel writer uses to get you to feel emotions with the amount of descriptive, adjective-laden language that they use to talk about Trump and his actions. It is a sharp contrast between what we often consider to be more “professional” reporting by agencies like NPR, PBS, Reuters, the BBC, and so on, and this isn’t a time where I would personally consider it a welcome change: it’s almost overbearing in CNN’s reporting. While there’s a time for some, it just leads you to wonder: why does CNN use this language so much?

In a kind of cynical sense, it brings a sense of confusion to me: do people really enjoy reading reporting that’s filled with this kind of language? I usually try to avoid CNN, as most of my news research is usually in the midst of some sense of argument that needs me to have as nonbiased as source as possible, and so if this is the standard they’re held to, it’s definitely shocking. The flood of information from this entire situation, too, is almost overbearing; I found it almost suffocating while I kept finding myself drawn back to it, which makes me wonder why so many of these articles were uploaded so early in the day: did something important happen at 3am in regards to this all?

# Bibliography

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