Artemis Allison

HU3621

Module 7 Comparative News Analysis

A week after Michigan’s Supreme Court initially struck down Governor Whitmer’s orders to try and limit the spread of coronavirus throughout the state of Michigan, the Supreme Court has yet again struck down her attempts to keep the restrictions in place – this time, however, the ruling is effective immediately. Reported on by many outlets, it’s important to notice how two different Michigan-based organizations, the Detroit Free Press and MLive, also known as Booth Newspapers, especially in contrast to a national-level news outlet like CNN. Both CNN and Detroit Free Press share similar titles about Monday’s news, with CNN titling their article “Michigan Supreme Court rules against governor again, ending Covid-19 executive orders” and Detroit Free Press titling theirs “Michigan Supreme Court strikes down Gov. Whitmer's emergency orders, effective immediately”. Surprisingly, in contrast, MLive includes a different spin, featuring another tidbit of information that CNN and Detroit Free Press leave out of their titles: “Michigan’s coronavirus executive orders are gone. Here are the health orders put in their place.”

Out of the three sources, MLive is rated to be the least biased of the three by Media Bias/Fact check, while Detroit Free Press is considered left-of-center due to their editorials and CNN is still, of course, considered to be left-biased. Both Detroit Free Press and MLive, in contrast, are highly factual, with CNN still being considered to have a mixed factuality rating with a note about their text-based credibility usually being higher. The bias seems to immediately spring to mind when, then, looking back at the title: by focusing on the Supreme Court and the orders being stripped, there is a narrative that can be spun by both sources that allows for a focus against the right-leaning Supreme Court, and by ignoring that the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services replaced Governor Whitmer’s orders almost immediately last week, it allows for a mixture of a more fearful and a more angry story to be spun against right-leaning officials who oppose Whitmer. Both CNN and Detroit Free Press, however, do mention the health department’s orders within their text, so neither is ignoring these orders – which does lead to a bit of confusion as to why they decide it was not important enough to include in the title if not for that reason. The Detroit Free Press does bring up, however, that the health department’s order misses one part of the executive orders that extended unemployment benefits up to 26 weeks from 20, which is something that MLive does mention as well while CNN doesn’t. Most of the three sources, however, do cover a lot of the same information, with not a lot of biased language it feels like.

In the end, I’m still stuck on why CNN and the Detroit Free Press didn’t mention the health department orders in their titles; is it really an attempt to drum up fear? Is the fact that it’s missing a signifier of bias? Another thing that caught me off-guard is how the editorials by Detroit Free Press are the reason that Media Bias/Fact Check considers them left-of-center, as I feel like that shouldn’t be a factor in their news reporting – especially because they might have right wing writers who just don’t do editorials. Would having a mixture of editorials with bias change how they’re skewed?

# Bibliography

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