Understanding Political Opinion Makers

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The American political landscape has undergone transformations throughout history accelerated by the varying methods of information retrieval we command. Since the American Revolution, America has enjoyed the ability to convey information from one place to another better than most international actors. The success of the pony express during the American Revolution, the Telegraph during the First World War or especially the vast access to the internet our country boasts has left our nation with an enshrined desire for current information and expects the relationship between news and their lives to be an ever present one. Like the relationship between news to the masses, our nation has come to depend on opposing political thoughts. Whether our nation’s framers identified as Federalists or Anti-Federalists, the public has been presented views famously even by horseback and continues to thirst for the access to all political viewpoints. These political ideologies can however become the source of a dividing nation and if we are to successfully navigate the challenges of a declining twenty first century super power, we must understand why varying political viewpoints serve so well to drive our opinions on all matters of life. To understand the political viewpoints presented to us we must seek to understand the driving forces behind the news’ origin or source and weigh the information against the news outlet’s motivation. One must look at which media sources are most popular among the American public to understand the trends on what our nation values as meaningful news. Charismatic news anchors serve as a major contributing factor to how we understand and feel about the national news realm. Often we think to form an opinion about a certain topic and seek out evidence that will serve to solidify the opinion we’ve already chosen. This common occurrence pushes Americans towards certain media outlets that present information that aligns well with our beliefs. Public sentiment can be driven simply by the channel or person from which their data is received. Why is it that America values Tom Brokaw as a respected journalist and denounces the journalistic exploits of tabloid reporters? Can Bill O’Reilly be more effective in regards to presenting certain information than Anderson Cooper? Should we take similar information presented by these anchors, factor in the media outlet, color of suit, or vigor of guest list when we evaluate information? Once we understand how we evaluate data presented, it is vital to understand how each opposing anchor, and broadly media, affects the way we deal with events in America. The relationship forged between news and the public is one of parallel to that of the public and their elected officials. The American political stage and how we interact with the information is complex and ever vital to a functioning democracy.

The U.S. political system has two major political parties, the Republicans and the Democrats. Republicans often identify with a strong belief in being fiscally conservative, that is that they seek to lessen government spending and as such are privy to taxing the public at a lower rate than their liberal counterparts. Democrats are often characterized with believing in a system of government that allows for social aspects of life to be less regulated by the federal government. Journalists often seek to stay neutral on all issues facing the nation. The objectivity a journalist portrays can make them seem as a credible source in the world. Anderson Cooper has been regarded as an effective journalist since his first days of hosting weekend programming for the media juggernaut CNN (Cable News Network). Bill O’Reilly is commonly seen as the conservative poster boy for anti-liberal ideas. O’Reilly has hosted “The O’Reilly Factor”, the Fox News station’s most watched shows for ten consecutive years. Each respective news station was come to be synonymous with a political ideology and as such has proven to affect how the public interact with the information each anchor provides us. Fox News’ pro conservative ideals are presented by the guests they are most frequented with. Regulars on Bill O’Reilly’s program include Sarah Palin, Mike Huckabee and Mit Romney all of which are major players in the conservative realm of politics. The Cable News Network is typically seen as the adversary to Fox News in that it has the largest amount of capacity to face off with Fox News. Anderson Cooper’s part in CNN’s fight to bring impartial news is a major part of why CNN is regarded as Fox’s liberal counterpart. His views are typically seen as more centered and focused on journalism. Because he and the rest of his network fight to make their news production as objective as possible it is safe to say that Americans value the effort and label CNN as the Democratic advocate. The centering of views and verbally letting audiences know about the news’ aim to be objective is something Americans want to hear. Like most things in life, the station at which each anchor sits matters in how we interact with the news. We, the American people tend to tune in to which ever station is seen to align with our views. This has a major impact on how we interact with each respective anchor. Liberals would likely tune into Bill O’Reilly in efforts to denounce any idea he may seem to peddle simply because of preconceived notions Fox News commands. Conversely, Liberals tend to tune into CNN and defend Anderson Cooper. Americans tend to dislike figures simply because of the team they play for and as such we must cast aside the idea that a network would influence the views a news anchor may believe.

The News Channel on which we may find each respective anchor matters in how we interaction with the news we receive. Since this aspect of an anchor’s credibility building piece is so important, one should seek out the news source’s background in efforts to factor in any bias corporate facets of Fox or CNN may have. Unbeknown to most Americans, media in the United States is owned by a small group of corporations which have conflicting objectives. The American market place is one that seeks out companies that are the most equip to survive and because of that ideal each media company seeks to edge out its’ competitors by nearly any means necessary. Time Warner Inc owns CNN and is noted as the largest media corporation in the nation. (cjr.org) Fox News is owned by News Corporation which is headed up by Rupert Murdoch, one of America’s wealthiest businessmen. Seeing that these two companies are motivated by profit margins, one must keep in mind that the news generated by their respective media stations is based in business. We must keep in mind that each media source must battle with questions regarding to whether a story will be profitable for their company. Profitability may be gauged in viewership produced by a story, favor on certain other business corporations or even favorability on political ideas/ figures. Anchors Anderson Cooper and Bill O’Reilly are influenced in the way the present news because of the extra-journalistic factors that go into making news cast viable. Robert Greenwald, former FOX/MSNBC news contributor recently appeared in a documentary by John Moyneham called “OutFoxed: Rupert Murdoch’s War on Journalism” and in the film he produced a number of memorandums from then station director John Moody “deeming certain news stories as the necessary focus of FNC’s broadcast for days to come”. (outfoxed.com) These memorandums show that the corporate hierarchy is widely responsible for the news we see and not necessarily that of any news anchor. We often like to attach the anchor that presents the news with the way we remember a certain story. This common attachment allows us to look at Bill O’Reilly and assume that he is a conservative and in translation gears his journalistic endeavors to aid the Republican Party. Representative Bernie Sanders, an Independent Congressman from Vermont said about Fox “[Fox News Corp] is an adjunct of the Republican party, there is no journalism at the Fox News Channel.”(outfoxed.com) Ideas like these prove that the idea of political and corporate interest are intertwined and as such push us to further assume that O’Reilly is a major player in the power play that is media-politics relations.

Bill O’Reilly is one of the leaders of conservative rhetoric on the political stage. With his corporation’s blatant push for that which is conservative based one may think to instantly disregard O’Reilly as a journalist and seek out other anchors. Fox News has some of the best ratings which leads one to see how valued they are by American viewers. After all, the American citizen is the important factor on the media agenda; they watch the commercials, vote in elections and propel anchors like Cooper and O’Reilly to stardom. Should we value Cooper less because his nightly program “Anderson Cooper 360” on any given night averages 740,000 viewers while “The O’Reilly Factor” pulls in more than 3 million? (tvbythenumbers.com) Simply put, no. People tend to gravitate to the media sources that align with a certain ideal. If Fox News proclaimed that they were the Republican news source, they may be privy to even more viewers than they already command which can also be said about CNN. The amount of viewers a program commands is important when thinking about how we relate to news anchors. In life one is often tempted by what others have or hold in high regard and the media is no different. Anderson Cooper does not have the privilege of broadcasting to millions of viewers which often makes the general public wonder if they should watch the show when many of their fellow citizens are watching CNN’s competitors.

The news giants Bill O’Reilly and Anderson Cooper have many attributes that provide them with very different public-media relationships. Anderson Cooper, the silver fox, is noted as being level headed and part of a team of journalists that is most centered in their views. He spends actual time in the field which shows the level of commitment he has to honest and upfront. This connection to field work is lost on established news personalities which may serve to provide the public a closer connection to Cooper. This connection comes from an understanding that although he enjoys the ability to sit in the station, he chooses to seek out the truth for the public. Cooper’s counterpart, Bill O’Reilly, is often described as stoic and pressed for tough news with little sympathy for human emotion. Typically those who identify with Cooper’s style of journalism are an older demographic and as such leads us to assume that an older audience is more established in life. These demographic disparities among Cooper and O’Reilly lead one to wonder about the vast disparity in their popularity? Consider possibly that older Americans tend to be more politically involved than their younger counterparts and in the past twenty years have had a much greater turnout rate which may be a large reason for O’Reilly’s goliath audience numbers. (tvbythenumbers.com) Cooper is consulted when a center based person needs the news while O’Reilly is followed for the news.

Whether you get the news or follow the news, every American is affected by certain national events which are when the differences in anchors matters most. During the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks on the New York City Trade Center occurred, when the first black President was elected and when Obamacare was signed in to law; these are the events one should focus their attention. Getting the news from Bill O’Reilly versus Anderson Cooper may significantly affect how one interacts with the news. During the September 11th 2001 “The O’Reilly Factor” had an audience that dwarfed even their usual ratings while Cooper’s 360, losing out to O’Reilly were much closer than any usual basis. (tvbythenumbers.com) During the election night in 2008, CNN won out in ratings possibly due to the large democratic victory of President Obama. (tvbythenumbers.com) It goes without saying that in times of great national importance the disparity among both Cooper and O’Reilly support is lessened because of the public immense need for the service provided by these two media figures.

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