MASS MEDIA 101

OR, THE HOW AND WHY OF THE DISINFORMATION AGE

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INTRODUCTION

We're people, and people have brains. Since our brains want and need information, we tune in to the media, and the media sends us information -- sometimes. Unfortunately, sometimes it sends DISINFORMATION (decoys instead of ducks).

There's a fine line between true information and its counterpart. If the media is totally neutral, then the integrity of the information sent to your head will be high; if, on the other hand, the media is biased in some way, what you see as "information" may not actually reflect reality. The net consequence to the growing mind fed a steady diet of a false view of reality will be a messed-up mental compass. And if your compass is out of wack, you're liable to find yourself either barking up the wrong tree, throwing the baby out with the bathwater, or going around in circles.

Anything involving so personal a matter as our brains is something worth thinking about. And for the last three decades, some brains have rebelled, and there has been talk of media bias; some brains claiming the bias comes from the "right," others from the "left."

Since the stakes are higher in the world of politics, it is predominantly in the realm of politics that people perceive bias in the media. People are more likely to experience cognitive disturbance when the views sent to them counter their existing views, and so they are more likely to perceive bias when the views CONFLICT WITH THEIRS. If most people are "conservative," they are more likely to perceive a "liberal" bias in the media -- "liberals" will perceive the reverse.

Later on, this article will present evidence of media bias from both "sides," "left" and the "right"; but before we do, we must first examine the major premise that underlies both of these points of view, just like they taught us to do back in college in LOGIC 101, and that premise is that there is a "left/right" polarity of political discourse (and that this polarity is the proper one through which to view reality). According to the major premise, "left" and "right" are OPPOSED, "against" each other. Of course, this shared "observation" is, after all, itself only one view of many possible.

This notion of opposition seems valid; indeed, for many people, the idea of "left vs. right" is the "2 + 2 = 4" of political life. How else can we look at it? Well, there may be another way after all. Let's take an example from everyday life to see how an alternative way of viewing may actually be true.

Consider the following parties we typically find in civil litigation:

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     Plaintiff's attorney     Defendant's attorney
               Plaintiff     Defendant
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Here we have a corporation wronged by another party (the Plaintiff), and its attorney. And we would normally say, in everyday language, that "on the other side" is another corporation which did the wrong (the Defendant) and ITS attorney. Normally we would chop this reality vertically, like this:

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     Plaintiff's attorney  |  Defendant's attorney
               Plaintiff  |  Defendant
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But is this the ONLY way of slicing this reality?

To find out, let's consider the following hypothetical scenario:

Company A has been damaged by a contract breach to the tune of $500,000. The executives of Company A go to an attorney, who decides to sue for $1,000,000 ("ask for more to get what you want"). Company B, on its attorney's instructions, refuses to pay this inflated amount, and decides to fight. The battle is on!

Over a course of months and several different court hearings, evidence is gathered, depositions are taken, interrogatories and replies to interrogatories are submitted, briefs and replies to briefs are written, and motions to counter counter-motions are filed.

Throughout this process, we find on both sides paralegals making "deposition digests" and "cite-checking" legal briefs at $65 an hour; associates doing research for legal memoranda at $150 an hour on the database WESTLAW (which charges over $150 an hour for access), and distilling the research gathered; and partners reviewing the written memoranda and conferencing with associates at $350 an hour. In addition, airline ticket, photocopying, cab fare, "temp" wages, and after-hour meal costs mount. And so it goes, until the day of reckoning.

Then, the day before the trial (just by coincidence), the attorneys decide to settle after all, "meeting the other side halfway" to the tune of $500,000. And, interestingly enough, over the last few months the legal costs for each side have managed to equal $500,000 as well.

Let's examine the net profits and losses of the various parties involved. First the losers:

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     PLAINTIFF: minus $500,000
       (original damage of $500,000 added to $500,000 legal bills
        is offset by $500,000 settlement)

     DEFENDANT: minus $500,000
       (original gain of $500,000
        is offset by $500,000 settlement added to $500,000 legal bills).
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Now the winners:

Plaintiff's ATTORNEY: $500,000 (billings)
Defendant's ATTORNEY: $500,000 (billings)

Well, here's a fascinating turn of events. Turns out the financial losers in this scenario were the clients (the represented), and the winners were the attorneys (the representatives).

In light of these results, one may be forgiven for having this possibly paranoid hypothesis: that the attorneys, supposedly REPRESENTING their clients, were actually working AGAINST the interests of their clients all along!

This hypothesis would be made more credible if we could show that the extensive experience of these attorneys in these kinds of disputes told them that they could file motion upon motion and depose witnesses right and left (while generating vast profits for months) with hardly a peep from the clients; and if, on occasion, the clients did balk, the lawyers could "make things right" simply by "writing off" 15% of the vastly inflated bill (some of which involved "overbilling" for work not actually performed in the form of "inflating the timesheets"), and still leave a nice profit.

Of course, since we're not paranoid (which is "crazy"), we'll have to reject out of hand the "paranoid" hypothesis. Instead, let's look to reality: the reality of the spreadsheet. When we analyze along the lines of WINNERS and LOSERS, the true alignment would shift 90 degrees, and would look like this:

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    Plaintiff's attorney   Defendant's attorney   WINNERS (+ $500,000)
    ----------------------------------------
               Plaintiff   Defendant              LOSERS  (- $500,000)
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Once we draw the line horizontally (to reflect the actual financial state of affairs), we can see that the Plaintiff and Defendant, who saw themselves as "enemies" throughout the "conflict," were actually mutual victims brought together in fact (though not in mind) with reference to their pragmatic status as PAWNS in the game of SUCK OUT THE CLIENT'S SURPLUS INCOME. (Woops -- slipping into "paranoia" again!).

These pawns were played by the PLAYERS, who, as it turns out, happened to also write the RULES of this game of redistribution of wealth many years before the dispute in question occurred.

If upon financial analysis this alignment turns out to be the valid one, we can see that the real issue is not the surface "issue" (the contract dispute), but rather the process which pit unified agents against divided clients, unified representatives against the squabbling represented!

Let's not forget that the "opposing" attorneys are actually linked by

their legal status: they are "members of the bar," members of the "American Bar Association." The financial incentives for both "sides" are great to "churn," and all the attorneys have to do is DO IT.

Best yet, "churning" maps perfectly onto the conventional adversarial schema of the legal system, and thus can be plausibly framed as "looking out for the best interests of my client." After all, if a motion were filed against you, wouldn't you want your attorney to file a counter-motion? Wouldn't you want her to do legal research "on your behalf"? Wouldn't you want her to take depositions and subpoena documents for "your side"? Sure you would! And even if you didn't, given the adversarial framework, you wouldn't have much CHOICE in the matter.

Now let's apply the above analysis to the political realm. Here's the conventional framing given to us by the politicians and media -- let's call it VERTICAL Alignment A:

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           LEFT     RIGHT

      Democrats  |  Republicans
       Liberals  |  Conservatives
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The media and politicians, all the way from THE NEW YORK TIMES to Rush Limbaugh, Ted Kennedy to Jesse Helms, would have us believe that the "battle" is between the "Democrats and Liberals" on the "left," and the "Republicans and Conservatives" on the right. But what we learned from the contract dispute tells us that maybe the REAL framing isn't "left vs. right," but "up vs. down," HORIZONTAL Alignment B:

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      Democrats    Republicans          TAXPAYER'S REPRESENTATIVES
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       Liberals    Conservatives        TAXPAYERS
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If this is the actual framing, then we can see that the great task of the aligned parties (who will subsequently be referred to collectively as the ESTABLISHMENT), like the attorneys in the above example, is to convince you that "the enemy" is your fellow taxpayer who happens to have a different point of view from yours on various social issues -- once you are convinced the alignment is VERTICAL (and not HORIZONTAL), you will spend the rest of your political life fighting with your fellow taxpayers on these side issues (called "wedge issues" by the political parties) on which you happen to disagree, preventing alignment against those who've torn open wide holes in your pants pockets. (Yes, they really are called "wedge issues." Do a NEXIS search and prove it for yourself!)

What does this squabbling accomplish? A victory here, a loss there -- a decision made, a decision reversed, a decision reinstated; in the meantime, 1/3 to 1/2 of your labor hours are spent in service of the government (coincidence: tort attorneys on contingency can take anywhere from 1/3 to 1/2 of the total settlement).

Turns out the salary you paid the Democrats and Republicans wasn't enough to guarantee they would represent YOU -- heck, your share for your Representative's salary is less than $1 a year -- what did you expect for less than a buck? Sullivan and Cromwell?

A salary keeps politicians alive, but it doesn't keep them in office. To save their political lives, politicians solicit campaign contributions from PACs and various special interest groups, people who'll pay them what they're worth; in return, politicians PASS legislation mandating inefficiencies (benefiting these interests) and KILL legislation that would remove inefficiencies (benefiting these interests). Who pays for the inefficiencies? The clients!

Note that if they are aligned in fact (not theory), BOTH Democrats and Republicans will want you to see in terms of "liberals" and "conservatives," in terms of "left" vs. "right." THIS FRAMING OBLITERATES HORIZONTAL ALIGNMENT B (which would unite the clients, allowing action against the real enemy) AND SUBSTITUTES VERTICAL ALIGNMENT A (which divides the clients, leaving them collectively powerless). And how is the frame kept alive? Easy as pie -- by simply referring over and over again, day in and day out, to the "liberals" and the "conservatives," instead of to the "taxpayers" and the "taxpayer's representatives."

The more the alignment is repeated, the more credible it seems; the more credible it seems, the more likely you are to see it as "the way things are." Once you see it as the "way things are," as a "fact," you come to believe it, and having internalized this framing, you thus come to see it as "your" way of thinking. Eventually, when the media resends this message for the 18,765th time, you finally see the "signal" as an "echo" (maybe the "geniuses" among us get it on the 9000th time); it echoes YOUR point of view. And now that it echoes, and thus does not conflict with, your point of view, you don't experience the cognitive dissonance that you would otherwise feel that would lead you to question this framing!

Elegant . . . economical . . . effective.

From this standstandpoint, we can see that both THE NEW YORK TIMES (the so-called leader of the "liberal" media) and Rush Limbaugh (the so-called leader of the "conservative" media) may actually be better seen as both part of the ESTABLISHMENT. Their mission?

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To change the way you slot reality in your head,
from horizontal to vertical!

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The sophistication of THE NEW YORK TIMES is matched by the vulgarity of Rush Limbaugh, who spreads cards red and black on the table in a pattern even a chimp could discern. (That's radio for you -- radio advertising works by repeating the same ad over and over and over again, drilling

the message into your subconscious; and so does radio broadcasting).

Count the number of times Limbaugh refers to "liberals" (or "Democrats") and "conservatives" (or "Republicans") in his broadcast, and contrast that with the number of times he refers to the "taxpayers" vs. "the political parties." Limbaugh, part of the "alternative" media, nonetheless employs a vertical frame. Of course, given that the broadcast networks and major newspapers (and eventually your peers) employ the same frame, small wonder you were unaware of any alternative. If your left speaker sends "left vs. right," and your right speaker sends "left vs. right," you don't have stereo -- you have MONO. You think your CDs are "dull" and "lifeless," but actually its your system that needs an overhaul.

This game can be played for eternity -- the 104th Congress with Republicans, the 105th with Democrats -- but does it really make a difference? Change the faces, change the uniforms, but the rules still rule -- play by the rules of football, you're going to get football. If you don't like football, better change the RULES of the game -- not the players, not the referees, not the uniforms, not the beer vendors, not the commentators, not the owners, not the stadium, and not the teams!

It takes two wings, left AND right, to make a plane fly; and we're the passengers on U.S. Airlines. Would you like the window or the aisle seat? Take the window, see the scenery change; take the aisle seat, and just "feel the motion." THE NEW YORK TIMES (and the Democrats) turn the plane to the "left" (in theory); Limbaugh (and the Republicans) turn it to the "right" (in theory). However, the real issue for the passengers isn't that the plane steered right a minute ago, left now, right a minute from now; rather, the central concerns of we, the strapped-in paying customers, are "who's flying the plane?" and, more importantly, "where is it taking us?"

The vertical framing, shaped like the throat, goes down smooth until it hits the walls of the stomach -- and those of us who have weak stomachs for this sort of thing are the first to feel the disturbance. "Liberals" are always opposed to "conservatives" (so we are told), but are Democrats always opposed to Republicans? If not, there's an unhealthy asymmetry at work.

Let's look at the "opposition" of the opposition. Both "liberal" Clinton (and his fellow Democrats) and "conservative" Gingrich (and his fellow Republicans) supported the GATT treaty. In addition, both Democrats and Republicans:

- -- gave us our National Debt;
- -- gave us our "education" system;
- -- thwarted health care reform;
- -- thwarted campaign finance reform;
- -- supported the Gulf War;
- -- supported NAFTA;
- -- fund the FCC, FDA, IRS, etc.;

-- appropriate year after year funds for food stamps, welfare, defense, etc.;
-- agree to raise taxes; and
-- make the taxpayers pay for their political "conventions," which are really just political advertisements broadcast for free over "public" airwaves.

Yo, you "liberals" and "conservatives" -- on what issues have YOU agreed lately?

Luckily for the purposes of reality checking, we can measure the price of false framing. With the contract dispute above, it was a $1,000,000 net loss for the parties. And for the people of America, the National Debt is a cool 1994 US $4,500,000,000,000, leading to interest payments per taxpayer of over $200 per month!

Heck, for that money you could have bought a REAL stereo system, or, better yet, Quadraphonic, or, best yet, the system always possible you never heard (of).

This new way of looking at reality illuminates some old issues. For example, we used to see "capitalism" as OPPOSED to "communism"; but from this new perspective, it may be helpful to ask, "what do 'capitalism' and 'communism' have in common?"

And here's one answer: the central premise that the solution to social problems is ECONOMIC, not POLITICAL. If you want change, say these two "opposed" philosophies, look to the economic sphere -- as if this were the sphere where fundamental change takes place. Turns out that this sphere is gossamer, pure Ivory Tower -- substituting an unanchored hypothesis for the cold hard facts.

What this framing hides is this: all economic activity, no matter what country, currently takes place within a politically-circumscribed environment. To the extent that it is controlled by government, "economic" activity is really "political" activity!

The "free market" is a myth, and exists nowhere, not even in the United States; in the United States, business takes place in a world where contracts are enforced by government, a government which provides mechanisms for defining property rights and jailing violators of those rights, a government which prosecutes fraudulent businesses, which prevents mergers of certain businesses in the interest of maintaining competition, which regulates union activity, which issues the currency that makes commerce possible, which taxes and regulates, and which creates a Federal Reserve that controls the interest rates businesses pay for loans.

In fact, the 1787 Constitution (with only the Fifth and Sixteenth Amendments added), supposedly revered by lovers of the "free market" as PROTECTING the "free" market, actually did (and does) nothing of the kind: rather, it allows government to regulate interstate commerce;

props up domestic industries with tariffs and import quotas; allows for the confiscation of private property provided that there is "due process of law"; creates "socialist" phenomena like the Post Office and a standing army; and allows an income tax, which not only (in practice) forces one group of businesses to subsidize other businesses, but also finances the execution of "necessary and proper" laws designed to "promote the General Welfare." Yup, there it is, in black and white! Those whose eyes are open will see the market isn't free; and neither is market regulation free.

Economics, or politics? When we look to reality, we find that many businesses not only contribute to political campaigns, they get price supports, tax breaks, subsidies, and government contracts -- yes, some businesses make their entire living off the largess of government (you)! And when we look to reality, we find that often legislation is written by certain groups and put into practice by the government for the benefit of certain "special interests" (see, for example, the article "Copyright, Compromise, and Legislative History," 72 Cornell Law Review 857; 17 USC [s] 601 prohibits importation into the United States of "nondramatic literary material that is in the English language" unless that material has been "manufactured in the United States or Canada."). How do YOU get to be a "special" interest? It's easy: if you have enough money to pay for custom-made legislation, you're "special." After all, not much else gets through this Congress.

"Free" market? Check out 104 Stat. 3374, 7 USC [s] 1446e, the Milk Price Support Program. In subsection (b), we find that "[d]uring the period beginning on January 1, 1991, and ending on December 31, 1995, the price of milk shall be supported at a rate not less than $10.10 per hundredweight for milk containing 3.67 percent milkfat." Can't let that nasty competition lower our prices! In 104 Stat. 3480, 7 USC [s]1359bb, we discover the following mandated crystalline fructose allotments: "For any fiscal year in which the Secretary establishes allotments for the marketing of sugar under section 359c, the Secretary shall establish for that year appropriate allotments for the marketing by manufacturers of crystalline fructose manufactured from corn, at a total level not to exceed the equivalent of 200,000 tons of sugar, raw value . . ." "Appropriate allotments" for marketing established by "the Secretary"? That's a strange notion of marketing freedom!

But this is just the tip of the tip of the iceberg. In the "Agricultural Promotion Programs Act of 1990" (7 USC [s] 6001), subtitle A, the "Pecan Promotion and Research Act of 1990," we are told Congress has found that "pecans are a native American nut that is an important food, and is a valuable part of the human diet," and also that "the maintenance and expansion of existing markets and development of new markets for pecans are vital to the welfare of pecan producers . . . as well as to the general economy of the United States." Therefore, the following policy was enacted:

> It is declared to be the policy of Congress that it is in the public interest to authorize the establishment . . . of

> an orderly procedure for . . . carrying out an effective . . . program of promotion . . . designed to:
>
> (1) strengthen the pecan industry's position in the marketplace;
> (2) maintain and expand existing domestic and foreign markets and uses for pecans; and
> (3) develop new markets and uses for pecans.

Don't know what "promotion" means? Go to Section 1907, "Definitions," subsection (19). There you'll find that "[t]he term 'promotion' means any action taken by the Board, pursuant to this subtitle, to present a favorable image of pecans to the public with the express intent of improving the competitive position of pecans in the marketplace and stimulating sales of pecans, including paid advertising."

Gee, we get to pay for their advertising. Does that mean we get the profits too? . . . No, I guess not. You might be wondering who serves on this "Pecan Marketing Board": turns out it has "8 members who are growers," and "4 members who are shellers," and, oh yes, "one member representing the general public, nominated by the Board . . ." Hey, we get a member!

One implication flows strongly from the above: anyone who thinks that the American market is "free" is a nut!

When we leave the Ivory Tower of wish fulfillment and examine the literature, we find that the assumption "business and government exist separately in hermetically-sealed compartments" underlying the "left/right" polarity is pure fantasy, one demonstrably disproven by evidence presented in books like THE BEST CONGRESS MONEY CAN BUY by Philip Stern, THE FARM FIASCO by James Bovard, OPEN SECRETS by Larry Makinson, and AMERICA, INC. by Mintz and Cohen.

At the higher levels of the system, there's no illusion. In an article on the Supreme Court and the economic system in Volume 98 of the HARVARD LAW REVIEW, Judge Easterbrook writes on page 18 that "[i]f statutes are bargains among special interests, they should be enforced like contracts." Whoa! A law is a "bargain among special interests"? Hey, hasn't someone been left out of this "bargain"?

Where did Easterbrook get this idea? It's not new. This view echoes one at least as old as 1975, when Landes and Posner noted in Volume 18 of the JOURNAL OF LAW AND ECONOMICS on page 877 that under the interest-group "theory" of government, "legislation is supplied to groups or coalitions that outbid rival seekers of favorable legislation."

When one group of businesses (the "right," under the conventional code) authors and pays for legislation that regulates other businesses (a function of the "left," under the conventional code), the conventional "left/right" polarity begins to look awfully spurious.

The same is true of the broadcast media, regulated by government. Rush

Limbaugh claims to hate the heavy hand of government, yet that same government gives him a monopoly over the airwaves; if the taxpayers decided to broadcast a framing 90 degrees opposed to the one he employs over "his" airwaves, that group would find the FCC knocking at the door, probably with a battering ram.

Turns out that not only does the FCC prohibit your power to broadcast (see 47 USC [ss] 151,301), but also the Republican and Democratic-run governments have power to renew (or not renew) the licenses of broadcasters over the "public" airwaves (47 USC [ss] 307-12). Both Democrats or Republicans could care less that you're a Democrat or Republican, so long as you're a Democrat OR Republican, and buy into the idea that they are the ONLY alternatives.

"Conservative" or "liberal" though they claim to be, it'll be a cold day in hell before you hear either Phil Donahue, Rush Limbaugh, Peter Jennings, Newt Gingrich, Ted Kennedy, Robert Dole, or Bill Clinton advocate turning over the public airwaves back to the public.

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As the above paragraphs clearly indicate, no discussion of media, if it wants to be at all accurate, can omit a discussion of the political framework within which the media operates, whatever that framework happens to be.

I've spent a lot of time on the political/media connection not only because its real, but because the following writings analyzing media, which do such a good job of illuminating the essential concepts you need to have to understand the HOW and WHY of media, unfortunately keep alive the vertical frame. While these writings convey much that is accurate, the central frame within which these facts have been anchored is, at best, an unsubstantiated hypothesis.

Nonetheless, the concepts themselves are valuable. The trick with these writings (and incidentally, all writings) is to disassociate the facts from the frame. "2 + 2 = 4" is true whether uttered by Hitler, Mother Theresa, Limbaugh, or Albert Einstein. Of course, if some "radical" or "left/right-wing nut" has stated it, those framebound among us will disregard the facts. People like that are easily controlled; just embed the truth in a negative frame, and you need never fear -- they'll think the facts are false because they despised the frame which surrounded the facts.

To avoid falling into this trap, remember this: the facts are king, not the frame. Facts are pieces of the puzzle -- the more facts you have, the more accurate a picture you get. Since the following excerpts present evidence that the media is biased from the "left" AND the "right," rather than conclude that one of the authors are wrong, consider the possibility that BOTH of them are wrong -- or at least, that neither has a monopoly on the truth.

Gather facts from ALL points of view, and let the frame emerge from the facts gathered. Then you're well on your way to true liberation.

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PART 1: The HOW of Media DisInformation

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Introduction to Part 1

The following writings start at the top (the surface: what we see), then work their way down.

In this first excerpt, we will learn about some techniques of media manipulation. In part 2, we'll explore the pressure "behind the scenes": the "why" of media manipulation.

This first excerpt discusses the presidential campaign coverage of 1968, during the height of the Vietnam war. While the author here seems to think that the media was biased towards the "left," there are three factual anomalies that throw this hypothesis into doubt:

1) Note that prior to 1968, the Vietnam War, supposedly a fight against "communism," was financed by a Democratic Congress and led by a Democratic President. Now, under the normal cultural code, the "left" and "liberals" are associated with promoting "communism." If that is true, then why would a "left" controlled Congress FIGHT communism when it supposedly WANTED communism?

2) According to the author, Nixon was a "conservative." If "conservatives" are against "liberals," and if "liberals" were for the Vietnam War, then we would expect Nixon to end the Vietnam War and all that nasty "government spending." But if this view is true, why did this "conservative" go along with the "liberals" in fighting this war for another five years?

3) The author also notes that the media talks favorably about "Black Panthers" and "Yippies" during this time, and this supposedly indicates a "pro-liberal" media bias (even though these "liberals" opposing the war were opposed to the "liberals" financing the war). However, there is another, equally plausible reading. Since most Americans did not identify with these "fringe" groups, a media that wanted to have the war continue would have done well to have the spokesmen for anti-war sentiments be "nutballs" like the Yippies (people who met one day to levitate the Pentagon), or "murderers" like the Black Panthers. Thus, in Media America circa 1968, to accept the view that the war was wrong would be to implicitly identify oneself with one of these discredited groups; and who'd want to do that?

Anomalies aside, there are still many juicy critical concepts here. All of the concepts discussed are still with us today, displayed most gloriously in the anti-Perot media feeding frenzy in the eight months

preceding the 1992 Presidential elections.

The real theme here, as you'll see, is Nixon, Humphrey, Nixon, Humphrey, pro or con. That is, Tweedledum OR Tweedledee. Did it really matter which?

B. Krusch

WRITING 1

Covert opinion is disguised opinion. There are only two types. In the first, the reporter does not disguise that what he is saying is opinion, he disguises its source -- so that it does not appear to be coming from him. In the second, he is obviously the one interpreting, but he communicates his opinion in a circuitous, devious, implicit, or coded fashion, so that it doesn't appear to be opinion -- but fact.

Most of the time, overt and covert opinion are intermixed. It is impossible for a reporter to weave a tissue of implication for any length of time without becoming totally unintelligible -- and it is impossible for him to speak openly for any length of time without arousing the wrath of viewers. Consequently, editorializing reporters shuttle back and forth between the explicit and the implicit -- often leaving the viewer stunned with the confused conviction that he has just heard opinion, but is not quite sure what it is -- and, above all, whose it is.

Like any game, however, the mysteries dissipate once one knows the rules. And there are "rules" in network editorializing. They are standardized, save for an occasional individual specialty. They are used singly or in combinations at all three networks. And in the course of this study, I isolated 33 of them. Although in principle each of these 33 techniques can be used to support either side of a controversy, in practice the vast majority of them are used in support of Democratic, liberal or left positions.

I hereby list them with illustration and references to my own research files, which contain detailed analyses of every editorial opinion found during the study period.

ATTRIBUTION TO AN EXTERNAL SOURCE

The most important category of covert editorializing takes place by means of attributing the reporter's own ideas to an external source, so that he appears to be "reporting" impersonally on other people's opinions. There are two outstanding techniques of this type:

MIND-READING

This is the single most consistently used technique of expressing covert political opinions. The newsman pretends to he reporting authoritatively

on the views of various human beings, ranging from individuals all the way to aggregates of multimillions. Characteristically he "reports" on the inner feelings, the buried emotions, the concealed thoughts and goals and the unconscious psychological motivations of: single persons; small groups; crowds ranging from ten thousand to a half-million people; entire socio-economic classes; inhabitants of great geographical areas, states and nations; the whole voting population of the United States; and whole races. And invariably the reporter draws vast political generalizations from this "reporting."

This technique, absurd on the face of it, is carried to ludicrous heights when the reporter is not merely content to inform us what 600,000 people thought at a Nixon rally or what all blacks in Delaware feel or what emotions "the white middle-class majority" is experiencing, but engages in "multiple mind-reading." Here the newsman "reports," for example, on what he believes Humphrey believes that all Democrats believe about Humphrey. (ABC 10/21, Pro-Humphrey.) Or what he believes White House Officials believe the North Vietnamese believe about Johnson and Nixon. (ABC 10/16, Anti-Nixon.)

In fact all this is nothing but a claim to telepathy -- a claim made incessantly on all three networks by virtually all reporters. It is a cynical device. No network reporter can read single minds, let alone unconscious motivations, let alone the unconscious motivations of unknown millions. This is pure editorial opinion projected into other minds -- and falsely "reported" as hard fact.

It is significant that all "mind-reading" invariably results in opinion supportive of Democratic or liberal or left causes. No "mind-reading" is ever supportive of Republican or conservative or white middle-class causes, and is usually opposed to them.

ANONYMOUS

Occasionally the reporters hide behind "anonymous" sources of opinion. Scattered throughout news stories are such phrases as "critics feel,..." "observers point out,..." "experts believe,..." "it is widely thought..."; along with "Nixon aides believe,..." "the Humphrey people think, ..." "the police feel,..." and "the North Vietnamese say ..." These sources are totally uncheckable and must be taken on blind faith.

The transmission of anonymous opinion by vague "observers" and "critics" is a remarkable luxury in which to indulge, in a 22-minute newscast into which the major events of the universe must be stuffed each day. It suggests that the reporter has a tenacious desire to transmit those particular opinions.

Not coincidentally, "anonymous" sources invariably support liberal or Democratic or left causes; never the other side. In all cases of "anonymous opinion" in this study, the reporter is flatly credited with it as his own.

OMISSION
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If projection or "mind-reading" is the most important single device of the network reporter for presenting his own political views on the air, omission (or exclusion) is his most important single device for keeping political views he dislikes off the air. There are four characteristic types of omission:

EVASION OR SUPPRESSION

This is the grossest form of omission and the most widely used. While allegedly covering both sides of a controversial issue, the reporter evades or suppresses crucially relevant material -- which is readily available -- so that his story actually presents only one side of the controversy.

The most startling use of this technique on all three networks was made in the coverage of the Presidential campaign. Network reporters presented story after story on this campaign, reporting the battle between Democrats and Republicans, and on the political shift in the country away from the Democrats -- without including any anti-Democratic opinion from Republican or conservative citizens to account for it! All anti-Humphrey and pro-Nixon statements can be scoured in vain for such public opinion.

PERSPECTIVE

This technique is exclusionary policy at its purest. Here the network newsman reports on a controversy or a political clash without even pretending to cover both sides. He simply reports on one side, reflecting that side's attitudes, language, and emotions exclusively.

Thus, in one story of a student riot at Berkeley, all language, all emotions, all attitudes, all values, all purposes reported on, were those of the rioters. The sole perspective transmitted was theirs. One would not have known that anyone else existed, either at the university, in the city, in the state or in the country, who had a different penpective on this situation. (See ABC 10/24, Pro-"Demonstrators.")

The most striking campaign example of this technique was a long "news analysis" conducted by three reporters about the campaign -- the entire discussion conducted from beginning to end from a Democratic perspective. One could not know from the analysis that a drastically different Republican perspective existed on the very issues they were discussing. (See ABC 9/27, Anti-Nixon.)

EUPHEMISMS

This selective technique is so crude that it has been widely recognized and commented on in the country, and has already been thoroughly

illustrated in this study. It consists of using evasive terminology when discussing illegal, violent or criminal activities -- always to the advantage of practitioners of political violence. Violent mob outbreaks are called "restlessness"; violent disruptions of people's rights of free speech are called "protest"; violent assaults on persons are called "heckling"; violent provocations of the police are called "confrontations" or "demonstrations"; violent assaults on property are'called "liberating buildings"; thefts of property are called "commandeering"; acts of arson are described as "fire dances"; radicals shrieking abuse at candidates and threatening to destroy society are called "youth."

By omitting the correct legal and moral nomenclature, the network reporter omits the critical opinion of organized society itself on such actions and tacitly communicates his sympathy for them.

LAST WORD

This technique in writing conclusions to stories is commonplace. After reporting on conflicting opinions on a controversial issue, the reporter climaxes the story with a quotation or a paraphrase of endorsement of one side -- omitting all recapitulation of the other side.

Thus, after reporting on the conflicting opinion of the black militants and the New York Teachers Union in the New York school strike of 1968, a reporter "summed up" with the black-militant position only -- effectively endorsing it. (NBC 10/21, Pro-Black Militants.)

GLAMORIZATION
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Yet another body of techniques can be grouped under the title of "glamorization." By using them, the reporter glamorizes or morally idealizes an individual, group or cause. The greatest beneficiaries of this technique in the study period were: candidate Edmund Muskie, the violent student "demonstrators," and the violent black militants. There are six distinct types of "glamorization." Some of the illustrations of these techniques have already been previewed in the analyses of editorial justifications of violence:

Example: A reporter praises the character and courage of Vice Presidential candidate Muskie before and after Muskie praises radicals as "teenagers" with "honest doubts about the validity of our system." The reporter thus morally endorses both Muskie and this beneficent interpretation of the radicals. (NBC 9/19, Pro-Left.)

SUPPRESSION OF NEGATIVES

Example: A reporter's sole description of Eldridge Cleaver, in a story about a controversy over Cleaver, is the courteous title: "a noted black nationalist." The reporter suppresses all reference to this "noted Nationalist's" criminal record as a rapist, his pending murder

trial, his advocacy of murder as a political policy. (NBC 9/23, Pro-Black Militants.)

A variant of this technique might be called "what negatives?" It is an NBC specialty. The reporter travels around the country and repeatedly pretends not to know why Americans are so agitated over the militants. (NBC, 10/31, 10/14, 10/16, Pro-"Demonstrators.")

Example: The reporter presents Eldridge Cleaver calling for "black armies" to drive "white dogs" out, and calls him an "enthusiastic" fighter for Negro rights. (NBC 9/20, Pro-Black Militants.)

Example: A reporter describes a violent black-power riot in which many are injured, and justifies it as an expression of "black pride" and "black identity." (CBS 9/26, Pro-Black Militants.)

NAMING AND IGNORING NEGATIVES

Example: A reporter states that students committed acts of violence but criticizes them for "conformity" -- as if he were not aware of the violence. (NBC, 10/24, Anti-"Demonstrators.")

Example: A reporter covers a black militant threatening to create "flaming cities" and repeatedly calls him a "hero" as if he has not heard the threat. (CIB, 10/24, Pro-Black Militants.)

ENLARGING SIGNIFICANCE

Example: The reporter portrays a splinter minority of "student activists" as intellectually dominant at a university, intimating that the majority of the students accept their goals. He thus inflates the significance of the splinter group. (NBC 9/23/12, Pro-"Demonstrators.")

Example: The reporter describes the minority left-wing student movement as "big" and compares it to "big government," "big taxes," "the big press," and "the big networks," thus inflating its significance. . . .

ATTACKING OPPONENTS AS IMMORAL

Example: The reporter attacks those who condemn black political violence as racists, authoritarians and militarists. (NBC 9/17, Anti-White Middle Class.)

Example: The reporter attacks those who oppose student riots, violent dissent and class warfare as intellectually limited racists. (CBS 10/14, Pro-Demonstration).

DEGLAMORIZATION
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There is a negative parallel to "glamorization," and that is "deglamorization." Here, the reporter disapproves or undercuts the moral

character of an individual, group or cause.

There are seven distinct modes of communicating editorial disapproval -- all of them in frequent use at all three networks.

Ths most dramatic victim of these techniques during the seven-week campaign period was Richard Nixon.

DIRECT ATTACK

Direct attack from reporters is relatively rare, but it exists. The most unbridled editorial attacks on Nixon are to be found on ABC . . . .

INDIRECT ATTACK

The reporter attacks not the individual but his associates and, if a candidate, his supporters.

Example: The reporter portrays Nixon campaign aids as dehumanized squares. (CBS 10/28, Anti-Nixon.)

Example: The reporter portrays Nixon as supported by shallow and closed-minded people. (ABC 10/21, Anti-Nixon.)

DOUBLE-STANDARD ATTACK

Network men attack an individual by standards that are not applied to anyone else. Nixon was the principal victim of this practice:

Example: Nixon is attacked for being "unyoung, unhandsome, and unsexy" (CBS 9/17, Anti-Nixon), although neither of the other middle-aged candidates was criticized by this or any other network on such grounds.

Example: Nixon is criticized for giving the same speech over and over again . . . although all candidates are reported as giving the same speech over and over again . . . . Humphrey is never criticized for this.

Example: The reporter condemns Nixon for failing to give complex solutions to national problems at his public rallies (NBC 10/18, Anti-Nixon), but the network never attacks Humphrey for this same "failure."

Example: The reporter condemns Nixon for "scorn and ridicule" of Humphrey, but NBC never condemns Humphrey for "scorn and ridicule" of Nixon. (see NBC 10/16, Anti-Nixon, for the attack and examples of Humphrey's ridicule of Nixon which go uncriticized).

Example: One ABC man suggests Nixon is a liar because Nixon exults over a crowd of 600,000 when ABC says it is 400,000 (ABC 9/30, Anti-Nixon); while another ABC man warmly empathizes with Hmnphrey for exulting over a crowd of 10,000 and does not question the estimates of size (ABC 10/3, Pro-Humphrey).

Example: The reporter attacks Nixon for "formula" campaigning in key states, in big cities, with motorcades at high noon through crowded thoroughfares -- when this is and always has been the "formula" of all candidates. No other candidate is attacked for this. Since the alternative to the "formula" is to campaign in minor states, in small towns, in unpopulated areas, down rural roads on foot, when no one is there, this particular attack has its humor. (CBS 9/20, Anti-Nixon.)

HUMOR, SARCASM, SATIRE, AND IRONY

Network reporters use all of these forms to undercut an opinion, idea, doctrine, group or cause, to render it unimportant, silly, laughable or ridiculous.

Example: A reporter minimizes looting, burning and rioting and mocks those who take such "amateur" crimes seriously. (ABC 9/16, Pro-Black Militants.)

Example: A reporter informs the country that Humphrey was standing near a men's room when he received an important call about the war from the President, a gratuitous absurdity. (CBS 10/16, Anti-Humphrey.)

Example: A reporter mocks a Congressional hearing about alleged Yippie violence and jokes about the events at the hearing, communicating his view that such an investigation is laughable. (NBC 10/1, Pro-Left.)

This technique of disapproval is used with a certain frequency. The newsman is allegedly reporting on a controversial issue or situation but in fact serves as the voice of one side -- by "debating" with the other side. This "debating" technique varies in types -- some are more overt than others. In certain cases the reporter structures his entire story like a running debate allowing one side to speak -- then challenging the speaker's statements, character, value or integrity; allowing that side to speak again, then challenging again, etc.

The two most dramatic illustrations of this reportorial infighting with the subject of a story can be found in NBC 10/11 (Anti-Nixon), CBS 9/17 (Anti-Nixon). In both of these stories the reporter is locked in combat with candidate Nixon.

This technique of disapproval is an ancient one and much in vogue at the networks. It consists of constantly linking a political group with unsavory or immoral practices.

The primary objects of such linking during the seven-week period were: Nixon, the Republicans, the conservatives, the right, the police, the middle class and the U.S. majority -- all of which were continuously linked to "racism." (See all opinion files, Anti-Nixon, Anti-Conservative, Anti-Middle Class.)

An attack on an individual or group is too controversial to be delivered

openly -- so it is delivered symbolically. Some of the linking to "racism" described above was done by means of code references to "law and order," "justice," "Strom Thurmond," etc. (ABC 9/27, CBS 10/3, Anti-Nixon.)

Similiarly, Nixon was frequently linked to a hard-core liberal, anti-Communist past by means of code references to "the old Nixon," the man who goes after his enemies "with a club or a meat axe," the man who "impugns the patriotism" of his opponents, the man from whom one shouldn't "buy a used car," etc. . . .

FAKE NEUTRALITY
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There is yet another category of editorializing which may be described as "Fake Neutrality." It consists of a calculated effort to make the reporter appear neutral when in fact he is taking sides. There are six such techniques:

FALSE COMPLIMENT

The reporter pays a limited compliment to the character or mind of a political figure -- and then surrounds it with one or both of the following:

a) A thorough and extensive contradiction of the compliment, thus wiping it out.

b) Extensive praise of his opponent.

In this technique, the compliment is hypocritical: It is a camouflage for an attack. It is essentially a device to make the reporter seem "objective" -- one who sees both the pros and cons, the virtues and flaws. It serves as a peg on which to hang its opposite -- an attack on the person and/or praise of an opponent.

Virtually all of the rare compliments bestowed on Richard Nixon by reporters were of this "false" type. They were almost invariably annulled -- embedded in attacks on him and/or praise of Humphrey. For a reference to Nixon's "thoughtful" and sometimes "profound" speeches buried in a violent attack, see ABC 11/4 (Anti-Nixon). For a reference to the "intelligence" of Nixon campaign associates, buried in criticism of them as computerized squares, see CBS 10/28 (Anti-Nixon).

Mrs. Nixon was the object of a particularly tortuous use of the "false compliment" technique, on ABC, in which praise of her was imbedded in a massive attack on her mind and character, along with equally massive praise of Mrs. Humphrey. (ABC 10/10, Anti-Nixon.)

FALSE CRITICISM

This is the precise reverse of the false compliment technique. The

reporter issues a mild reprimand to a political figure -- then follows it with such substantial praise as to wipe out the criticism, and/or a severe attack on his opponent. Mr. Humphrey was the beneficiary of such treatment on several occasions. For an illustration see CBS 10/9 (Anti-Nixon).

FALSE SERIES

This technique was evoked on CBS alone and appears to be the invention of a particular reporter. It is a violation of a basic rule of logical categorizing, taught to children on the well-known children's show "Sesame Street" by means of a little refrain: "One of these things is not like the other." The reporter creates an ostensibly logical series in which "one of the things is not like the other." To cite one example: The reporter indicates with great precision that he intends to present a series of criticisms of all three Presidential candidates on certain grounds. He explains the grounds. He then cites an illustration of Mr. Wallace's errors in this matter. He follows by an illustration of Mr. Nixon's errors in this matter. But when it's time to get to Mr. Humphrey's errors in this matter, the reporter . . . changes the subject. (CBS 10/2/18, Anti-Nixon.)

FALSE PROTOTYPE

The reporter here presents the opinion of one individual, asserting that he stands for a huge political group in the U.S. The reporter lets the "false prototype" speak, standing aside, and saying nothing, acting as the embodiment of neutrality.

Actually, by endowing the individual with the status of a spokesman for millions, the reporter is endorsing the significance of these opinions. The most dramatic usage of this device was on NBC, which offered two Black Militants from Watts as representatives of black thought, and allowed both men to make the longest statements aired during the campaign period. (NBC 10/23, Anti-Middle Class.)

HALF-DEBATE

The reporter claims to be presenting the arguments on both sides in a controversy -- but in fact does not. Instead he presents the reasoning of one side very strongly -- and omits the reasoning on the other side altogether. Two striking uses of this technique can be mentioned.

Example: The reporter is "summing up" the argument within the administration over a bombing halt -- and leaves out the arguments of Johnson-Rusk-Rostow and the generals. (CBS, 9/25/22, Anti-U.S. Policy on the Bombing Halt.)

Example: The reporter is "summing up" the argument between the pro-Reagan and the pro-Cleaver forces re: Cleaver's being hired to teach at Berkeley. He leaves out all references to Cleaver's past criminal record as a rapist, his current advocacy of mass murder as a political

method and the fact that he is, at the time of the story, awaiting trial for murder. These, of course, were the grounds for the opposition's argument. (NBC 9/20, Anti-Conservative.)

DOUBLE TALK

The reporter, affecting neutrality, literally contradicts himself -- then elaborates on half of the contradiction.

Example: A reporter states that he does not intend to quote Rap Brown's attack on the United States as a uniquely violent country -- but does so in different words, elaborating extensively on Brown's opinion. (NBC 9/18, Anti-Middle Class.)

Example: A reporter states explicitly that Nixon's panel shows are not rigged, then spends the rest of his story covertly indicating that they are rigged. (ABC 9/25, Anti-Nixon.)

OUTRIGHT FALSIFICATION
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Yet another category of covert editorializing is that of outright falsification, The type discovered was:

DISTORTION

The reporter summarizes a quotation, a speech or an issue with gross inaccuracy -- resulting in the reinforcement or support of one side of a controversial issue.

The most serious example of distortion occurred on CBS in which a section of a Humphrey speech was quoted out of context, leaving the impression that Humphrey supported violent radicals when he had attacked them strongly as totalitarians and compared them to Hitler's youth. (CBS 9/30, Pro-"Demonstrators.")

EDITORIALIZED STRUCTURE
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There is another group of three editorializing techniques -- all of which are accomplished by means of structure and organization -- and which consist of burying or inflating material in accordance with reportorial sympathies:

"THE POISON SANDWICH"

The reporter buries opinion favorable to a candidate between a negative introduction and a negative conclusion -- sandwiching it in between, so to speak. This undercuts the favorable opinion, and, if skillfully done, virtually causes it to go unnoticed.

In network coverage, a striking example of this technique can he found

on ABC (9/20, Anti-Nixon) where the reporter sandwiches Nixon's triumphant reception in Philadelphia between a report on a catastrophe that never occurred and speculation about a failure that may not occur.

"THE SUGAR SANDWICH"

This is the reverse technique -- of sandwiching a negative opinion in between a favorable introduction and conclusion. This device has already been mentioned in the study. It was used by U.S. News & World Report to bury Carswell's past history of racism.

For an illustration, see CBS (10/10, Pro-Humphrey) where the suggestion that Humphrey is a manipulating politician is sandwiched in-between sentiment and poesy.

INFLATION OF DETAIL

The reporter inflates and elaborates on a negative detail, giving the impression that a candidate is widely disliked where this is not necessarily the case.

A striking example of this is to be found on ABC (10/22, Anti-Nixon) where extensive discussion of a small piece of trash thrown at Nixon takes up half of a story on his Ohio campaign tour -- a tour declared successful by CBS and NBC.

This same technique is incessantly used against Wallace, who as the campaign progresses is hardly visible, so intent are the networks on recording flying tin cans, rocks and apple cores.

MISCELLANEOUS TECHNIQUES
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There is, finally, a miscellaneous collection of editorializing techniques, which are usually used in association with others. There are, four of them:

OVERGENERALIZATION

The reporter makes a sweeping and groundless generalization about hundreds of thousands of millions of people -- supported by no polls or studies. (This is usually but not always associated with mind-reading.)

Example: A reporter states that the "majority" of Americans are willing to "pay any price" in freedom to preserve law and order. (NBC 10/4, Anti-Middle Class.)

UNPROVED THEORY

The reporter states an unproved theory or a controversial hypothesis in the social sciences as if it were proven scientific fact -- to support one side of a controversy.

Example: The reporter states as a fact that law-abiding, middle-class white citizens are responsible for the actions of individual black criminals -- when this is a highly disputed doctrine in the social sciences, not to mention the law. (NBC 9/18, Anti-Middle Class.)

LEADING QUESTION

The reporter asks a question of an interviewee which contains an opinion on a controversial issue.

Example: A reporter states that Humphrey is a "drag" on George McGovern's "kite," in an attempt to get Senator McGovern to criticize Humphrey. McGovern declines. (NBC 10/1, Anti-Humphrey.)

Example: A reporter states that all Americans are a "subconsciously" violent people, in an attempt to get Ramsey Clark to confirm it. Clark declines. (NBC 9/18, Anti-Middle Class.)

ONE-WORD EDITORIAL

The reporter uses one word or a phrase to communicate a rapid endorsement or criticism of an individual, group or position.

Example: Before George Ball's violent attack on Nixon as "tricky, cynical, shallow and irresponsible," the reporter describes Ball's attack as "pithy." (NBC 9/27, Anti-Nixon.)

This list is not all encompassing. There are unquestionably other editorializing techniques in existence -- and in use at the networks. But these are the ones that were used with sufficient frequency as to consider them the basic editorializing devices.

Of all these techniques, "mind-reading" and the omission-evasion-suppression category are the most frequent and potent. By the means of one, the reporter expresses his views. By means of the other, he keeps opposing views off the air. A revolution in network reporting could occur overnight if these two techniques alone were abandoned.

It would be an error to conclude from this that network news reporters have maliciously invented these devices to delude an unwary public. They have invented none of them. These are standard slanting techniques in use in the press, and they have probably been in existence in partisan communication since the beginning of time. Indeed, there are probably hundreds of other means of slanting and distorting communication beyond those I have named.

It would also be an error to conclude that these techniques have any intrinsic tie to liberal or left-oriented content. They do not. They are as useful to a partisan or evasive journalist working for the John

Birch American Opinion or for the conservative U.S. News & World Report as they are to network liberals -- and, indeed, partisan and evasive journalists of the right employ these very methods.

Nonetheless, this is a study of the network news product -- not of the full spectrum of the press -- and the network product in particular is skewed, editorially, to the liberal-left. Whatever this editorial opinion is called; whether it is identified or not; whether it is overt, covert, or a mixture of the two; whether it is 18% of total opinion as at NBC, 31% as at CBS, or 48% as at ABC: it is present on the air in significant quantities.

It is a serious contributor to the total bias picture.

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Part 2: The WHY of Media Disinformtion

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In this next section, we go behind the scenes. The next writer on occasion writes from a "left" perspective, though, as you'll see, the writer likewise has serious doubts about this polarity.

B. Krusch

WRITING 2

IMAGE POLITICS

The press sees the established governmental leadership as essential to the maintenance of social order . . . The foremost leader in the United States is the president, "who is viewed as the ultimate protector of order.'" A systematic examination of twenty-five years of presidential news in the New York Times and Time magazine, as well as ten years of CBS broadcasts, reveals a "consistent pattern of favorable coverage of the President," with sympathetic stories outnumbering critical ones by two to one. . . .

Candidates learn that if they take a stand on controversial issues, the press is less likely to get their position across to the public than to concentrate on the controversy arising from the position taken. Suddenly their judgment and suitability will be called into question. So rather than the press using its coverage to fit the campaign, candidates trim their campaigns in anticipation of coverage. In the act of reporting on political life, the media actively help shape it.

The media create conservative effects by slighting the issues and focusing on candidate image. Even when attention is given to issues, it is usually to conjecture on how the candidate used them to help his image and advance his electoral chances. Once considered an adjunct to political discussion, image now seems to be the whole point of the discussion. . . .

From Cronkite's Complaint to Orwell's Oversight

The George Washington University study conducted by the media specialist Michael Robinson found no liberal bias in campaign coverage but rather a "hollowness," and a lack of content. The campaign was treated more as a horse race than a clash of programs and policies. Who will run? Who will be nominated? Who's ahead? How will voters respond? Who will win? These preoccupations are supplemented with generous offerings of surface events and personality trivia. Commenting on the 1976 presidential contest Malcolm MacDougall observed, (with forgivable overstatement):

> I saw President Ford bump his head leaving an airplane . . . . I saw Carter playing softball in Plains, Georgia. I saw Carter kissing Amy, I saw Carter hugging Lillian. I saw

> Carter, in dungarees, walking hand in hand through the peanut farm with Rosalynn. I saw Carter going into church, coming out of church . . . . I saw Ford misstate the problems of Eastern Europe -- and a week of people commenting about his misstatement. I saw Ford bump his head again. I saw Ford in Ohio say how glad he was to be back in Iowa. I saw marching bands and hecklers, and I learned about the size of crowds and the significance of the size of the crowds . . . .
>
> But in all the hours of high anxiety that I spent watching the network news, never did I hear what the candidates had to say about the campaign issues. That was not news.

MacDougall's impressions are borne out by studies of the 1968, 1972, and 1976 campaigns, which found that newspapers devoted respectively 56 percent, 64 percent, and 61 percent of their presidential coverage to the personal attributes of candidates. Television gave even more emphasis to personality than the printed media. And in the 1976 campaign, by a ratio of more than four to one, both print and broadcast media stressed personality and campaign events over issue discussion. The media, like the major political parties themselves, treat campaigns not as an opportunity to develop democratic accountability and debate issues, but solely as a competition for office. The focus is on the race itself with little thought raised about what the race is supposed to be about, what makes it so meaningful, and why should it be considered an exercise in democratic governance.

By focusing on "human interest" trivia, on contest rather than content, the media make it difficult for the public to give intelligent expression to political life and to mobilize around the issues. Thus the media have -- intentionally or not -- a conservative effect on public discourse. . . . The democratic input, the great public debate about the state of the Union and its national policies, the heightening of political consciousness and information levels -- all the things democratic electoral campaigns are supposed to foster -- are crowded off the stage by image politics.

Not only during election campaigns but just about on every other occasion the news media prefer surface to substance, emphasizing the eye-catching visuals, the attention-catching "special angle" report, and the reassuring and comforting stories, while slighting the deeper, more important but politically more troublesome and more controversial themes. There is so much concentration on surface events that we often have trouble grasping the content of things, so much focus on action and personality that we fail to see the purposive goal of the action. For instance, during 1981, President Reagan . . . initiated enormous tax cuts for rich individuals and corporations, dramatically escalated an already huge military spending program . . . -- all policies of great import. However, the theme that predominated in most of the stories about those crucial actions was whether Reagan was "winning" or "losing" in his contests with Congress, the bureaucracy, labor, and foreign governments. Thus momentous political issues were reduced to catchy but trivial questions about Reagan's political "score-card," his efficacy as

a leader, and his personal popularity.

MONOPOLY POLITICS

Such as it is, media electoral coverage is lavishly bestowed on the two major parties, while minor parties are totally ignored or allotted but a few minutes, if that, over the entire campaign. Thus the media help perpetuate the . . . two-party monopoly.

. . . Deprived of mass media coverage, a third party cannot reach the voting masses. Most people remain unaware not only of its candidates but of its programs, issues, and critiques of status quo politics.

. . . As a nationally known ecologist, author Barry Commoner was a frequent guest on national television shows -- until the day he was nominated presidential candidate for the Citizen's Party and became virtually a nonperson.

While the local media are sometimes accessible to third-party candidates -- especially radio talk shows -- it is only when they happen to be visiting the area. Unlike the Democrats and Republicans who remain a constant focus for local as well as national media, third-party candidates receive no recurring coverage. Once they leave town, they leave the local media's vision. Being momentary rather than constant, the local exposure they receive is of limited impact.

Despite being censored out of campaigns by the mainstream media, third-party candidates do manage to garnish a considerable number of votes, taken together a total of between one and two million in each presidential election. But the people who vote for them are rendered as invisible as the candidates themselves. During election-night coverage of presidential and congressional elections, minor-party candidates go unmentioned and their votes unreported. . . .

Media exposure confers legitimacy on one's candidacy. By giving elaborate national coverage only to Republicans and Democrats, news organizations are letting us know that these are the only ones worth considering. Candidates who are not taken seriously by the media swiftly discover that they are not taken seriously by many voters. Even when they make face-to-face contact with live audiences and with voters on street corners, they still lack legitimacy as candidates for national office, being more a curiosity than a serious choice. People may like what third-party candidates say, because often they are the only ones saying anything, but they usually won't vote for someone who doesn't have a chance. Since third-party candidates are not in the news, they are considered to be not really in the race; and since they are not in the race, this justifies treating them as if they are not news.

The argument made against giving national coverage to minor-party candidates is just that -- they are minor; they do not represent the main concerns of the electorate; they are unknowns and of no significance to the national campaign. . . .

Were the media to give them national exposure, third-party candidates might very well win millions of votes, qualify for federal funds, and become serious contenders -- as indeed happened when John Anderson ran as an independent in 1980. And even if failing to win the presidency, with major media exposure the candidate would very likely have a real impact on the issues and the climate of political opinion -- as John Anderson did not have because he raised no serious politico-economic challenges to the major candidates but ran on an "I-can-do-it-better" platform, thereby making himself safe for big contributors and major media exposure. . . .

Whether a candidate is a prominent or an unknown personage is less important in determining media treatment than his or her politics. John Anderson was an obscure congressman who did miserably in the 1980 Republican presidential primaries; yet, given his mainstream politics and safe credentials, he was treated like a major candidate when he later ran as an independent. Dozens of Democratic and Republican contenders, such as Reuben Askew, Wilbur Mills, Patsy Mink, John Ashbrook, Sam Yorty, Paul McCloskey, and Shirley Chisholm "were brought from relative obscurity to the public's attention by the media. Few had any chance of winning their party's nomination and none did, yet they were treated as real candidates. In contrast, persons like Barry Commoner . . . and Benjamin Spock (the People's Party presidential candidate of 1972), were nationally known figures. Before Dr. Spock began his campaign, millions of Americans were already familiar with his name, having read his books on baby care and many knew of him as a dedicated peace activist. Yet because of media blackout, only a tiny fraction of the public ever knew of his candidacy and his views, despite almost a year of Spock's active campaigning.

To ensure impartiality on the public airwaves, Section 315 of the Communications Act requires that stations give equal time to legally qualified candidates if air time is granted to any one candidate. In 1959 this "equal time doctrine" was amended so as not to apply to coverage of "bona-fide" news events, including on-the-spot interviews, documentaries, campaign appearances, and by the 1960s, debates between major candidates, if sponsored by organizations other than the media. In effect, the broadcast media can give almost any kind of coverage to major candidates without putting themselves under an obligation to other candidates. Meanwhile the print media are completely free to censor third-party candidates since they do not use the public airwaves and need no public license. To impose an obligation on them to give some space to differing views has been judged an interference with their "freedom of speech."

DO THE MEDIA MANAGE OUR MINDS?

Are the media independent of government influence? If not, what is the nature of that influence? Are the media dominated by particular class interests? If so, does this dominance carry over into news content? Does control of news content translate into propaganda? Does propaganda

translate into indoctrination of the public mind? And does indoctrination translate into support for policies? These questions guide the present inquiry: let us run through them again, a little more slowly.

1. In the United States a free press is defined as one unhampered by repressive laws. As we shall find, government interference with the news is not the only or even the major problem. More often the danger is that the press goes along willingly with officialdom's view of things at home and abroad, frequently manifesting a disregard for accuracy equal to that of policymakers. To be sure, questions are sometimes raised and criticisms voiced, but most of these are confined to challenging the efficacy of a particular policy rather than its underlying interests especially if the interests are powerful ones.

2. The newspeople who participate in the many forums on freedom of the press usually concentrate on threats to the press from without, leaving untouched the question of coercion from within, specifically from media owners. Are the media free from censorial interference by their owners? Does ownership translate into actual control over information, or does responsibility for the news still rest in the hands of journalists and editors who are free to report what they want -- limited only by professional canons of objectivity? As we shall see, the working press, including newspaper editors and television news producers and even the top media executives are beholden to media owners and corporate advertisers. More specifically, the owners exercise control through the power to hire and fire, to promote and demote anyone they want and by regularly intervening directly into the news production process with verbal and written directives.

3. But does control over media content and personnel translate into ruling class propaganda? . . . The system of control works, although not with absolute perfection and is not devoid of items that might at times be discomforting to the rich and powerful.

4. A final concern: Does ruling class propaganda translate into indoctrination of the public? . . . It is this last question I want to deal with here at some length. For if the press exercises only an inconsequential influence over the public, then we are dealing with a tempest in a teapot and are being unduly alarmist about "mind management."

Early studies of the media's impact on voting choices found that people seemed surprisingly immune from media manipulation. Campaign propaganda usually reinforced the public's preferences rather than altered them. People exposed themselves to media appeals in a selective way, giving more credence and attention to messages that bolstered their own views. Their opinions and information intake also were influenced by peers, social groups, and community, so the individual did not stand without a buffer against the impact of the media. The press, it was concluded, had only a "minimal effect."

At first glance, these findings are reassuring: People seem fairly self-directed in their responses to the media and do not allow themselves to be mindlessly directed. Democracy is safe. But troublesome questions remain. If through "selective exposure" and "selective attention" we utilize the media mainly to reinforce our established predispositions, where do the predispositions themselves come from? We can point to various socializing agencies: family, school, peer groups, work place -- and the media themselves. Certainly some of our internalized political predispositions come from the dominant political culture that the media have had a hand in shaping -- and directly from earlier exposure to the media themselves.

Our ability to discriminate is limited in part by how we have been conditioned by previous media exposures. The selectivity we exercise is not an autonomous antidote to propaganda but may feed right into it, choosing one or another variation of the same establishment offering. Opinions that depart too far from the mainstream are likely to be rejected out of hand. . . . Thus, an implanted set of conditioned responses are now mistakenly identified as our self-generated political perceptions, and the public's selective ingestion of the media's conventional fare is wrongly treated as evidence of the "minimal effect" of news organizations.

In addition, more recent empirical evidence suggests that, contrary to the earlier "minimal effects" theory, the news media are able to direct our attention to certain issues and shape our opinions about them. One study found that "participants exposed to a steady stream of news about defense or about pollution came to believe that defense or pollution were more consequential problems." Other studies found that fluctuations in public concern for problems like civil rights, Vietnam, crime, and inflation over the last two decades reflected variations in the attention paid to them by the major media. Theorists who maintain that the media have only a minimal effect on campaigns ought to try convincing those political candidates who believe they survive and perish because of media exposure or the lack of it. And as we saw earlier, the inability to buy media time or attract press coverage consigns third-party candidates to the dim periphery of American politics. The power to ignore political viewpoints other than the standard two-party offerings is more than minimal, it is monumental. Media exposure frequently may be the single most crucial mobilizer of votes, even if certainly not the only one.

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If much of our informational and opinion intake is filtered through our previously established mental predilections, these predilections are often not part of our conscious discernment but of our unexamined perceptual conditioning -- which brings us back to an earlier point: Rather than being rational guardians against propaganda, our predispositional sets, having been shaped by prolonged exposure to earlier outputs of that same propaganda, may be active accomplices.
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Furthermore, there are many things about which we may not have a predetermined opinion. Lacking any competing information, we often unwarily embrace what we read or hear. In those instances, the media are not merely reinforcing previously held opinions, they are implanting new ones, although these implants themselves seldom fall upon tabula rasa brains and usually do not conflict too drastically with established biases. . . .

Thus the press can effectively direct our perceptions when we have no information to the contrary and when the message seems congruent with earlier notions about these events (which themselves may be in part media created). In this way the original implant is also a reinforcement of earlier perceptions. Seemingly distinct reports about diverse events have a hidden continuity and a cumulative impact that again suport previous views . . . .

[E]ven if the press does not elicit total public support for a particular policy, it is still not without a substantial influence in creating a climate of opinion that allows the government to get away with a lot. . . .

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[I]f the press cannot mold our every opinion, it can frame the perceptual reality around which our opinions take shape. Here may lie the most important effect of the news media: they set the issue agenda for the rest of us, choosing what to emphasize and what to ignore or suppress, in effect, organizing much of our political world for us. The media may not always be able to tell us what to think, but they are strikingly successful in telling us what to think about.
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Along with other social, cultural, and educational agencies, the media teach us tunnel vision, conditioning us to perceive the problems of society as isolated particulars, thereby stunting our critical vision. Larger causalities are reduced to immediately distinct events, while the linkages of wealth, power, and policy go unreported or are buried under a congestion of surface impressions and personalities. There is nothing too essential and revealing that cannot be ignored by the American press and nothing too trivial and superficial that cannot be accorded protracted play.

In sum, the media set the limits on public discourse and public understanding. They may not always mold opinion but they do not always have to. It is enough that they create opinion visibility, giving legitimacy to certain views and illegitimacy to others. The media do the same to substantive issues that they do to candidates, raising some from oblivion and conferring legitimacy upon them, while consigning others to limbo. This power to determine the issue agenda, the information flow, and the parameters of political debate so that it extends from Ultra-right to no further than moderate Center, is if not total, still totally awesome.

BEYOND ORWELL'S 1984

The news media operate with far more finesse than did the heartless, lacerating instruments of control portrayed in George Orwell's 1984. The picture Orwell draws of a Spartan barracks society with a centrally controlled electronic surveillance system barking exercise commands at a hapless, demoralized Winston Smith in his home, leaves no doubt in Winston's mind and ours that he is being oppressed. Something quite different goes on with our news media. For instance, for twenty-five years the United States portrayed the shah of Iran just as the State Department and the big oil companies wanted: a benign ruler and modernizer of his nation, rather than as the autocrat and plunderer he was. Hailed as a staunch ally of the West, the shah was photographed with presidents and senators and regularly interviewed on American television. Personality profiles and features were run on him and his family, making him a familiar and perfectly likable public personage -- with not a word about the thousands of men, women, and children . . . this personable fellow had tortured and murdered. Here was an Orwellian inversion of the truth if ever there was one, but most of us didn't know it.

Chapter II

In the United States, we have been taught, wealth and power are widely distributed among a broad middle class. But as noted earlier, most American institutions, be they hospitals, museums, universities, businesses, banks, scientific laboratories, or mass media, are not owned and controlled by the middle class but by a relatively small number of corporate rich. When trying to understand the content and purposes of the media, this pattern of ownership takes on special significance.

THE MONEYED MEDIA

Freedom of the press, A.J. Liebling once said, is for those who own the presses. Who specifically owns the mass media in the United States? Ten business and financial corporations control the three major television and radio networks (NBC, CBS, ABC), 34 subsidiary television stations, 201 cable TV systems, 62 radio stations, 20 record companies, 59 magazines including Time and Newsweek, 58 newspapers including the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, and the Los Angeles Times, 41 book publishers, and various motion picture companies like Columbia Pictures and Twentieth-Century Fox. Three-quarters of the major stockholders of ABC, CBS, and NBC are banks, such as Chase Manhattan, Morgan Guaranty Trust, Citibank, and Bank of America.

The overall pattern is one of increasing concentration of ownership and earnings. According to a 1982 Los Angeles Times survey, independent daily newspapers are being gobbled up by the chains at the rate of fifty or sixty a year. Ten newspaper chains earn over half of all newspaper revenues in this country. Five media conglomerates share 95 percent of the records and tapes market, with Warners and CBS alone controlling 65 percent of the market. Eight Hollywood studios account for 89 percent of

U.S. feature film rentals. Three television networks earn over two-thirds of total U.S. television revenues. Seven paperback publishers dominate the mass market for books.

Of the existing "independent" television and radio stations, 80 percent are network affiliates. Practically the only shows these "independents" produce are the local evening newscasts, the rest of their time being devoted to network programs. Most of the remaining stations are affiliated with the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), which receives almost all its money from the federal government and from corporate donors and their foundations, with a smaller share from listener subscriptions.

In the newspaper world the giant chains buy up not only independent papers but also other chains. Most of the large circulation dailies are owned by chains like Newhouse, Knight-Ridder, and Gannett. In its 1978 annual report, Gannett described itself as "a nationwide newspaper company with 78 dailies in 30 states." Less than 4 percent of American cities have competing newspapers under separate ownership; and in cities where there is a "choice," the newspapers offer little variety in editorial policy, being mostly conservative. Most of the "independents" rely on the wire services and big circulation papers for syndicated columnists and for national and international coverage. Like television stations, they are independent more in name than content.

As with any business, the mass media's first obligation is to make money for their owners. And they do that very well. Although declining in numbers, newspapers continue to be a major profit-making business in the United States, employing over 432,000 people. . . . The annual advertising revenues of newspapers in the United States ($15.6 billion in 1980) continue to top that of television and radio combined. The press can hardly be critical of high corporation profits when it enjoys a rate of return on investments equal to or higher than that enjoyed by most oil companies.

The same pattern of high profits holds for television. In 1980, the three networks netted an all-time high of $8.8 billion from advertising revenues. Corporations underwrite almost all prime-time shows - both on public and commercial television.

Like other businesses, the media corporations are diversified and multinational, controlling film, television, and radio outlets throughout Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East -- as well as Europe and North America. In recent years, independent publishing houses have been bought up by the giant corporations who place a great emphasis on mass-market books and profits; thus, Simon & Schuster is owned by Gulf & Western, and Putnam by MCA. Other big corporations like Litton, IBM, Raytheon, Xerox, and major oil companies are acquiring media properties. . . .

Many newspapers, magazines, networks, and movie studios are themselves giant corporations or subsidiaries of corporate conglomerates. Consider

Time magazine -- whose editors according to one ex-Time reporter, "have never been shy about its incestuous relations with the captains of industry." Time, along with Fortune, Sports Illustrated, Money, Life, and Discover is owned by Time Inc., a colossal multinational corporation with revenues of $2.5 billion. Time Inc. also owns Time-Life Books; Little, Brown and Co.; the Book-of-the-Month Club; and large interests in publishing firms in Germany, France, Mexico and Japan. In addition, Time Inc. owns Temple Industries, making it one of the biggest landowners in the United States. It also owns a marketing data company, a television station in Michigan, Inland Container Corporation, Home Box Office, American Television and Communications Corporation, and Pioneer Press, which publishes suburban Chicago newspapers.

WHO'S AT THE TOP?

The networks, newspapers, magazines, and movie companies are run like all other corporations in the United States, by boards of directors composed mostly of persons drawn from the moneyed stratum of society. Representatives of the more powerful New York banks sit on the boards of major networks and control network fiduciary and debt-financing functions.

Many directors of radio, television, newspaper, and publishing companies are also planners or directors of banks, insurance companies, big law firms, universities, and foundations. Overall, the directors of media corporations "are linked with powerful business organizations, not with public interest groups; with management, not labor; with well-established think tanks and charities, not their grassroots counterparts." Thus the Ford Motor Company -- already exercising a palpable influence on American society with an annual business of $43 billion -- has directors on the corporate boards of the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times.

At the local level the pattern is the same. "Almost any newspaper is part of the establishment of any city," observes Los Angeles Times reporter William Trombley. (The same could be said of most local radio and television stations.) "This means the paper has natural sympathies with business interests and other vested interests in the community . . . independence and integrity are weakened further when newspaper executives accept positions on boards of directors, whether corporate boards or groups as seemingly innocent as Boy Scouts."

Most of the wealthy business directors who sit on the boards of media corporations are unknown to the public. Others, however, are famous media tycoons, such as the late Henry Luce, William Randolph Hearst, Jr., Walter Annenberg, and Rupert Murdoch. Consider the last mentioned: Rupert Murdoch, an Australian, owns newspapers in major cities throughout that country, including Australia's only national daily, along with television stations, publishing houses, record companies, and a major airline. In Great Britain, Murdoch owns the London Times; and the London Sunday Times; two sex and scandal sheets with combined circulation of over 8 million; a string of special interest magazines;

provincial newspapers; and paper manufacturing, printing, and newsprint transport firms. In the United States, the inexorable Murdoch has gained control of the New York Post, New York Magazine (including Cue), the Village Voice, the Chicago Sun-Times, and two dailies and some seventeen suburban weeklies in Texas. By 1985 he was in the process of buying Metromedia's seven television stations in New York, Boston, and other major cities, giving him access to 21 percent of the U.S. viewing audience. According to its 1981 annual report, News Corporation Ltd., the parent corporation of Murdoch's empire, earned over $1 billion. Murdoch's own aftertax profits were $51.6 million.

Like Annenberg, Luce, and other media owners, Murdoch is a political conservative. His newspapers in Australia, Great Britain, and the United States, with one or two exceptions, back right-wing political candidates like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan . . .

MANY VOICES, ONE CHORUS

While having an abundance of numbers and giving an appearance of diversity, the mass media actually are highly centralized outlets that proffer a remarkably homogenized fare. News services for dailies throughout the entire nation are provided by the Associated Press, United Press International (which may soon merge with AP or go under), the New York Times and Los Angeles Times-Washington Post wire services, and several foreign wire services like Reuters. The ideological viewpoint of these news conduits are pretty much the same, "marked by a prefabricated standardization of news which is constricting and frightening." A growing portion of newspaper space is given over to "soft" rather than "hard" news, to trivialized features and gossip items, to "celebrities in the limelight," to crime, scandal, and sensationalism. Television, radio, and newspaper coverage of national and local affairs is usually scant, superficial, and oriented toward "events" and "personalities," consisting of a few short "headline" stories and a number of conservative or simply banal commentaries and editorials.

The same right-wing commentators, such as Evans and Novack, George Will, William Buckley, and James Kilpatrick, along with an occasional centrist or liberal like Joseph Kraft or Tom Wicker appear in papers coast to coast the same day. Many dailies in the smaller cities publish canned editorials and political cartoons supplied by the "syndicated word factories." . . .

Whichever newspaper one reads or television station one views, in whatever part of the United States, one is struck by the indistinguishable and immediately familiar quality of the news and views presented and of the people presenting them. One confronts a precooked, controlled, centralized, national news industry that is in sharp contrast to the "pluralistic diversity" of opinion that is said to prevail in the United States.

To think that information and viewpoints circulate in "a free market of

ideas" is to conjure up a misleading metaphor. A "market" suggests a place of plenitude, with the consumer moving from stall to stall as at any bazaar, sampling and picking from an array of wares. But the existing media market of ideas is more like the larger economic market of which it is a part: oligopolistic, standardized, and most accessible to those who possess vast amounts of capital, or who hold views that are pleasing to the possessors of capital.

To be sure, in this controlled market there is a vast array of publications -- for motorcycle owners, dog owners, and homeowners, for brides and singles, for fishing, hunting, and dating, for camping and gardening, for weight watching and weightlifting . . . for just about every conceivable diversion and taste. Relatively few of these have anything to do with meaningful political and social affairs. Most are devoted to mass media distractions and mass market consumerism. The diversity of publications, both serious and trivial, should not be mistaken for a plurality of ideas and ideologies, nor a wealth of political information. As one group of scholars noted after an extensive study: "Protection against government is now not enough to guarantee that a [person] who has something to say shall have a chance to say it. The owners and managers of the press determine which person, which facts, which version of the facts, and which ideas shall reach the public."

Chapter III

Does ownership of the media transfer into control over information? Or are journalists free to write what they want? Reporters themselves offer contradictory testimony on this question; some say they are independent agents while others complain of control and censorship.

CONDITIONAL AUTONOMY AND SELF-CENSORSHIP

Mainstream journalists are accorded a certain degree of independence if they demonstrate their ability to produce copy that is not only competently crafted but also free of any politically discordant tones. Indeed, competence itself is measured in part by one's ability to report things from an ideologically acceptable perspective, defined as "balanced" and "objective." In a word, journalists are granted autonomy by demonstrating that they will not use it beyond acceptable limits. They are independent agents in a conditional way, free to report what they like as long as their superiors like what they report.

Journalists (like social scientists and others) rarely doubt their own objectivity even as they faithfully echo the established political vocabularies and the prevailing politico-economic orthodoxy. Since they do not cross any forbidden lines, they are not reined in. So they are likely to have no awareness they are on an ideological leash. This is why some journalists insist they are free agents. Only when they stray off the beaten path is the pressure from above likely to be felt.

If every reporter had to be policed continually by superiors when

producing the news, the system could not maintain its democratic appearance. As it turns out, there is no necessity for editors and owners to exercise constant control; intermittent control will do.

There is no need for ubiquitous supervision, just occasional intervention. The anticipation that superiors might disapprove of this or that story is usually enough to discourage a reporter from writing it, or an editor from assigning it. Many of the limitations placed on reporting come not from direct censorship but from self-censorship, from journalists who design their stories so as to anticipate complaints from superiors. This anticipatory avoidance makes direct intervention by owners a less frequent necessity and leaves the journalist with a greater feeling of autonomy than might be justified by the actual power relationship.

"Some intervention by owners is direct and blunt," observes veteran journalist Ben Bagdikian. "But most of the screening is subtle, some not even occurring at a conscious level, as when subordinates learn by habit to conform to owners' ideas." Likewise, Gans notes that self-censorship "can also be unconscious, in which case journalists may not be aware they are responding to pressure." Gans mentions one reporter who considered arguing with an editor for deleting an uncomplimentary fact about the CIA "but inasmuch as too much disagreement with superiors types people as 'cranks,' she decided to save her scarce political capital for an issue about which she felt more strongly." Many people who learn to hold their fire eventually end up never finding occasion to do battle. After awhile anticipatory avoidance becomes a kind of second nature. Rather than seeing self-censorship as a more subtle form of censorship, journalists will describe themselves as "realistic," "pragmatic," or "playing it cool." In their ability to live in a constant, if not always conscious, state of anticipatory response while maintaining an appearance of independence, newspeople are not much different from subordinates in other hierarchical organizations.

When determining what to treat as news, media organizations often take their cues from one another, moving in a kind of rough unison, a phenomenon that has been called "pack journalism." The pack may run in one direction or it may suddenly stampede in another. But it is not entirely free to roam as it chooses, for past images influence present ones, and if a media opinion already exists about what is important and true, it usually will shape subsequent reporting on the topic.
If an opinion prevails for any great length of time without benefit of critical examination or hard evidence, it is usually because of a durable ideological underpinning. Opinion inertia is easier to sustain if it is rolling with, rather than against, the ideological tilt of the land. By definition, opinion inertia favors the existing framework of institution, power, and persuasion and generally operates with conservative effect. And pack journalism itself is usually a conformist journalism. But where does the conformity come from?

Journalists are exposed to the same communities, schools, universities, graduate schools, popular culture -- and media -- that socialize other

Americans into the dominant belief system. They react to much the same news that inundates their audiences. . . . The establishment biases they inject into the news reinforce their preconceived view of the world. With cyclical effect, they find confirmation for the images they report in the images they have already created.

This is not to imply that everything they write and say will automatically please their superiors. There is always the danger that a reporter or editor might report something that does not rest well with those at the top. On such occasions owners will rein in editors and editors will curb reporters. . . . James Aronson relates how as a young reporter for the New York Post in the 1940s, he was asked by his news editor if he was disappointed in not receiving an assistant editorship that ought to have been his:

> I was about to say, "Yes, but . . ." when he spoke in the Victorian manner of his mellow mood, "You were not advanced, my young friend, because your political views are at variance with those held by the managers of this enterprise and therefore not acceptable to them." . . . He was telling me, of course, that there was still time to change my views if I had any thought about getting to the top. But I think we both knew what my answer had to be.

Thinking back to when he worked as a reporter for the New York Times in 1947, Aronson again recalls:

> My political and social philosophy had made it increasingly difficult to write "objective" stories for a newspaper committed to United States policy, which was relentlessly developing the Cold War. A censorship so subtle that is was invisible affected everyone on the staff. The "approach" (it was never a vulgar "line") was made clear in casual conversations, in the editing of copy for "clarity," and in the deletion of any forthright interpretation as "emotionalism." Work became a conflict with conscience, although there was never an open challenge to conscience.

. . . . Another former journalist relates his experiences with a Time magazine news bureau:

> At one time or another those of us out in the field would be sent a suggestion, really a directive from the central office, maybe originating from [Henry] Luce himself, to cover a story or play up some angle . . . . If I protested and said that the suggestion didn't make sense, or was loaded, or presumed something that just was not true, they would say, "Oh, of course, sure, use your own judgment." There was a big show of not forcing [anyone] to obey a direct order. But after I balked a few more times, I found myself ignored and then reassigned."

The consequence of this kind of control is that "coverage is limited and certain questions never get asked," according to Len Ackland, a Chicago Tribune writer. Reporters think twice before delving into sensitive areas. "They worry about the editing. They worry about being removed from choice beats or being fired," Or they end up resigning as did Malcolm Browne who said he left the television industry in 1966 because he was unable to communicate the deeper aspects of the Vietnam War to the American public. When dealing with the economic and political problems relating to the war, he often found that "the producer switches you off and cuts the footage that he deems most illustrative of what you're talking about."

In 1949, correspondent Aslan Humbaraci resigned from the New York Times because his journalistic efforts in Turkey met with systematic hostility from Turkish officials and from the U.S. embassy and U.S. military mission in that country. Worst of all, he complained, his reporting in the Times itself, "when it was not completely suppressed, was cut, rewritten, buried somewhere in the back pages or distorted, if it did not happen to fit in with State Department policy." In his letter of resignation to the Times, Humbaraci wrote:

> The suppression of civil liberties [in Turkey], the brutal treatment of peasants by a ruthless gendarmerie, the police terror in the towns, the revolt of the peasants in remote Anatolian villages, the arrest and imprisonment and torturing of political prisoners, the persecution of intellectuals, the scandalous abuse by officials, and the offical support extended to the extreme right wing have found no place in the columns of the New York Times. Further, I cannot remember any anti-Russian news from any sources in Turkey that has not been published in the Times -- especially news depicting Russia as Turkey's enemy and the menace to Turkey's existence.

Humbaraci wrote that letter in 1949. The Times's reporting on Turkey has not changed significantly since then.

James O'Shea, former business editor of the Des Moines Register, argues that the media's pattern of business ownership and interlocking directorates are "going to affect the reporter, I don't care who he is; or editors. You're more cautious. That's not the way it should be, but that's what happens. A lot of reporters and editors will tell you that it has no effect on them, but I don't believe it." Finally, Chris Welles, a former journalist and now director of a program on business journalism at Columbia University, comments: "I daresay anyone who has been in the business for more than a few months can cite plenty of examples of editorial compromises due to pressure, real and imagined, from publishers, owners, and advertisers."

WHO REPORTS?

The image of the news reporter propagated by the Hollywood films of an earlier era is of a tough-talking, two-fisted, regular guy, more at home

in a bar than a country club, scornful of bluebloods and stuffed shirts. With a fedora shoved back on his head and sleeves rolled up, he gives his typewriter a furious two-finger pounding, pausing only to snap his suspenders and gulp coffee from a cardboard container, showing himself every inch the courageous investigator, ready to "blow this town wide open" with revelations that rock City Hall and other venal powers.

Turning from Hollywood fantasy to reality, we find that most journalists were raised in upper-middle-class homes. Only one in five come from blue-collar or low-status white-collar families. Almost all have college degrees and a majority have attended graduate school. Despite journalism's reputation as a low-paid profession, most newspeople have family incomes that put them in the top 10 percent bracket. Network correspondents, senior editors, and producers make considerably more, usually well into the high six-figure range. As of 1983, evening news anchorpersons and commentators like Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, and Barbara Walters reportedly earned between $1 million and $2 million a year.

As in other fields, so in the world of journalism: "knowing and pleasing the right people, and coming from a prestigious background do not hurt in the competition for promotions." Syndicated columnists like Stewart and Joseph Alsop, William Buckley, and George Will often start out with personal wealth or diplomas from elite schools or important political friends and business connections -- or all of the above. The apprenticeship they serve in the lower ranks is usually a brief one, if any. Jonathan Schell's meteoric rise from college graduate to a leading New Yorker writer was helped by his Harvard background, a father who was a successful Manhattan lawyer, and a family friend, William Shawn, editor of the New Yorker. Benjamin Bradlee's family connections with multimillionaire Eugene Meyer helped him get a reporter's job on the Washington Post, owned by Meyer. And while still a young reporter, Bradlee was invited into his publisher's social circle, not a usual practice, but Bradlee came from "aristocratic northeastern stock," a family of bankers. Bradlee later became Washington bureau chief of Newsweek (owned by the Grahams) and was then picked by Katharine Graham (Eugene Meyer's daughter) to be managing editor of the Post.

Most newspeople lack contact with working-class people, have a low opinion of labor unions, and know very little about people outside their own social class. A 1982 survey found that, by large majorities, journalists oppose state ownership of major corporations and believe private enterprise is a fair system, and deregulation of business a good thing for the country. Most newspeople, however, also are liberal in their choice of presidential candidates and in their belief that government should assist the poor and guarantee employment for all. Forty-six percent agree that American economic exploitation has contributed to Third World poverty, and 50 percent think that the main purpose of U.S. foreign policy has been to protect American business interests -- views that rarely, if ever, find their way into their news reports and commentaries. Newspeople also tend to be liberal in their personal opinions regarding abortion, gay rights, environmental protection, and other "cultural" issues.

In regard to economic and class issues, however, most journalists are educated into a world view that supports rather than opposes the existing corporate system. Most journalism schools offer politically conventional curricula. Under the name of "objectivity" and "professionalism," a journalist student can easily go through an entire program without ever raising critical questions . . .

Numerous conservative think tanks like the American Enterprise Institute and the Hoover Institute send pamphlets, "expert" reports, and other publications to newspeople across the nation, alerting them to the harmful effects of government regulations, corporate taxes, and labor unions, and making a case for bigger defense spending, a stronger national security state, and a more militant foreign policy. Even if this flood of material does not win the hearts and minds of all journalists, it is read by many and regularly referred to in their stories and news analyses. As the sociologist Peter Drier notes, the massive and unrelenting inundation of business propaganda is likely to affect the consciousness of the working press -- especially in the absence of an alternative view of equal currency.

Prestigious awards and prizes, funded by big corporations, are given every year for excellence in business reporting. For instance, the University of Missouri School of Journalism awards a prize for energy reporting that is subsidized by the National Gas Association. And the Media Awards for Economic Understanding, which in one year received 1400 entries from journalists, is supported by Chambion International Corporation. The Bagehot Fellowship, "an intensive program of study at Columbia University for journalists interested in improving their understanding of economics, business and finance," has featured such guest speakers as Paul Volcker, head of the Federal Reserve System; Donald Regan, formerly secretary of the Treasury and subsequently chief of staff to President Reagan; financier Felix Rohatyn; and David Rockefeller. Since editors are inclined to judge and promote reporters according to the number of awards they win, there is no shortage of eager journalistic applicants. These corporate-backed awards and training programs help "to shape the kinds of stories journalists pursue and the kinds of standards that editors recognize."

Business corporations offer other more familiar enticements, such as dinners, parties, gifts, and free trips to luxury hotels for "conferences" that boost the wonders of this or that industry. Peter Drier notes that newspeople claim they are free to write whatever they please about these junkets, but few ever produce critical reports. Most newspaper sections, such as food, auto, real estate, travel, fashion, sports, and business, offer little more than puffery and promotional copy, with stories initiated by business, written by sympathetic reporters, and rewarded with advertising revenue, observes Drier.

Persons of almost any political persuasion can get jobs at the lower entry ranks of journalism (unless they have gained some notoriety as radicals or have other credentials that markedly indicate political

deviancy.) The process of selection becomes more ideologically exacting the higher one goes up the communication hierarchy. Above the ordinary reporters stand the more prominent and influential columnists and commentators who are drawn from that portion of the spectrum ranging from arch-conservative to mildly liberal. "From the ideological point of view," observes Noam Chomsky, "the mass media are almost 100 percent 'state capitalist'" . . .

A CHAIN OF COMMAND: EDITORS, PRODUCERS, AND OWNERS

Actual responsibility for daily (or weekly) news production rests not with reporters but with the managing newspaper editors and the radio and television producers. Without having to answer to reporters, they can cut, rewrite, or kill any story they choose, subject only to "the advice, consent and final review" of their executive superiors. The top news executives meet on a weekly or sometimes daily basis with editors and producers in order to keep tabs on story selection. News and corporate executives "have virtually unlimited power and can suggest, select, and veto stories whenever they choose. But because they have other duties and because they are expected to abide by the corporate division of labor . . . they do not exercise their power on a day-to-day basis." Nor do they need to since editors and producers are likely to do what their supervisors want anyway. As one editor told Gans, "it is not what [the executive] will do or will veto, but what we expect that he will do or veto; that's his influence." Daily censorship is made unnecessary by the anticipatory responses of self-censorship. "There are hundreds of dailies," concludes Bagdikian, "in which editorials on certain subjects are as predictable as a catechism, whose news departments are designed to overreact or underreact to certain kinds of news, notably financial and political, not because of incompetence or sensationalism but because of the impulse to create a picture closer to the dreams of the ownership."

Journalists are subjected to on-the-job ideological conditioning conducted informally through hints and casual inferences that masquerade as "professional" advice. Thus they might be admonished not to get too "emotionally involved" and not to lose their "objectivity," when they are producing copy that is disturbing to persons of wealth and power. Veteran newspeople "have remarkably finely tuned antennae for finding out the limits" to which they can go, remarked one former reporter. "Some intervention by owners is direct and blunt," writes Bagdikian. "But most of the screening is subtle, some not even occurring at a conscious level, as when subordinates learn by habit to conform to owners' ideas."

When Washington Post editorial writer Roger Wilkins once asked Meg Greenfield, then deputy editor of the Post editorial page, about a particularly controversial subject, she said, "I don't know much. I'm like you. I've never been a 'cause' person." Wilkins, a dedicated progressive and the only Black editorial writer on the staff, pondered her comment:

> That was either a serious misreading of me or Meg was gently instructing me in the preferred approach to the work at hand. Other things she mentioned at other times confirmed the latter suspicion. Higher passions were tolerable foibles in minor associates, but not appropriate for more serious members of our [editorial] staff, the principal shapers of the Post's opinion .... We would judge each day's events as they were presented to us in a rational case-by-case basis in a framework of intellectualism that favored the credibility and stability of our institutions.

Wilkins eventually left the Post, but Greenfield was promoted to editorial page editor.

If, with all the hints, journalists still sometimes report things in a way they should not, direct interposition from organization superiors or sometimes advertisers becomes necessary. In the final analysis, the news is not what reporters report but what editors and owners decide to print. Going back some years, a former employee of Time remembers how Whittaker Chambers, foreign news editor of that magazine in the summer of 1944, repeatedly suppressed dispatches from Time's overseas correspondents. Chambers tailored the news "to make it conform to his own right-wing view of world affairs." "So many of John Hersey's stories from Moscow were suppressed that he stopped sending news and confined his cables to accounts of Shostakovich's newest symphony and other cultural events. Reporting from China, Theodore H. White saw his criticisms of Chiang Kai-shek's autocratic regime replaced with encomiums of Chiang as a defender of democratic principles." Time's researchers protested the distortions but Chambers prevailed, for he was producing stories his publisher, Henry Luce, liked.

. . . In time, as the example of John Hersey in Moscow shows, reporters give up and censor themselves.

Editors, too, must answer to top executives and owners. To maintain an appearance of their own editorial integrity, they sometimes speak in their master's voice. Former managing editor of the New York Times Turner Catledge notes how he used to pass publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger's numerous criticisms to reporters and editors as if they were his own so that his staff would not feel "the publisher was constantly looking over their shoulders. In truth, however, he was."

The top news executives are themselves subject to the judgments of the ruling corporate directors and owners who exercise final monetary and corporate power and, when necessary, final judgment over the way the news is handled and over who is hired or fired at any of the levels below them. Except for a few liberal publishers, the upper echelons are monopolized by persons of mainstream conservative and right-wing persuasion. As one writer observes:

Through the decision-making echelons of the three great bureaucracies of broadcasting -- from the level of network president upward -- there is

not a person who I would judge is a liberal in the sense that, say, Senators McGovern, Fulbright, and Javits are considered to be, although there were several who identified with the Western conservatism of Ronald Reagan. The ruling powers at the networks are decidedly Establishment in their politics and in general closer to the right of the political center than to the left.

"In the real world of the newsroom and board room," asserts Bagdikian, "the news is fiddled with by management, either crudely through direct intervention or more subtly by picking editors who know what is expected of them." Otis Chandler, publisher of the Los Angeles Times, readily admits there exists an ideological selection process: "I'm the chief executive. I set policy and I'm not going to surround myself with people who disagree with me. In general areas of conservatism vs. liberalism, I surround myself with people who generally see the way I do . . . I consider myself middle-of-the-road and I feel most of my editors are centrists."

Infused with notions of professional "integrity," some editors will deny they are the objects of corporate ideological control. Faced with an organizational chart that concentrates power in the hands of publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Times editors still insisted that power was widely diffused and that they had a good deal of influence in imposing their own professional standards of objectivity on the publisher. One editor claimed that if Sulzberger ran the paper from the top down, "I don't think there's anyone on the present staff who would be staying." "If the publisher told the managing editor every day what to run on page one, I can't think of Abe Rosenthal staying very long under those conditions," he maintained.

What this editor was overlooking was that Sulzberger would not hire nor keep anyone he might have to censor every day. Managing editor Abe Rosenthai, the man who complained about the Times's "left liberal" and "advocacy" tendencies in the later 1960s, regularly killed copy in order to "pull the paper back to center" (his own words). Rosenthal's idea of "center" included a more friendly and positive view of corporate business, big defense spending, and U.S. counterinsurgency . . . efforts in various parts of the world. This "center" was a place on the political spectrum not far from where the White House, the State Department, the Pentagon, and the giant corporations stood. There was no likelihood of Rosenthal being overridden every day by Sulzberger since he was doing very much what the publisher wanted. So the managing editor performed "independently" of his publisher, that is, without daily interference, because such interference was not necessary. But we must not mistake this kind of conditional autonomy for actual autonomy; there is no reason to believe that Rosenthal could have opposed Sulzberger even if he had ever wanted to.

Ironically enough, the editor who offered this dubious example of how professional integrity operates at the Times was himself subsequently transferred to a less responsible post as part of a major shakeup designed to remove people who were guilty of "anti-business bias" and

"advocacy." He did not resign in a fit of professional integrity.

Owners often make a show of not interfering in an editor's independence, but "the suggestiohs of powerful superiors are, in fact, thinly veiled orders, requiring circumlocutions in which commands are phrased as requests." Sometimes suggestions made by owners can be brushed aside by editors, but not too often. And if the owner insists, then the editor obeys. Gans writes: "Older journalists at Time told me that Henry Luce used to flood them with story suggestions, many of which were ignored; but those he deemed most important and urgent were not."

If an editor proves recalcitrant, the owner's velvet glove comes off. In the early 1950s Joseph Pulitzer, publisher of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, decided that his liberal editors were being too critical of the anticommunist escapades of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Eventually Pulitzer's urgent requests ("Please, please, please lay off the McCarthy hearings . . .") were replaced by a direct and final command that silenced his editors: "I must ask that the words 'McCarthy' or 'McCarthyism' or any oblique reference to either shall not appear on the editorial page without my specific approval in the issues of December 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12."

H.B. DuPont and his associates, owners of the Wilmington, De1aware, Morning News and Evening Journal, issued these memoranda to their editors:

-- On an editorial praising President Kennedy's Supreme Court appointments: "Why should we devote space to one who is an enemy of private enterprise and the capitalistic system?"

-- When [one DuPont executive] objected to running a letter to the editor signed by sixty-four University of Delaware students favoring integration, the editors asked if they should close the column to all letters from students. His answer was, "Yes." . . .

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DOING TIME AT TIME

Reporters and researchers gather information and compile "files"; writers read the files and construct highly-stylized prose; senior editors edit and frequently rewrite the writers' version; "top" editors edit the senior editors' copy . . . Even the corporate brass will get in on the act now and then . . . .

By fragmenting the functions of journalism, Time fragments re-sponsibility for content -- and vastly enlarges the capacity for editorial control.

"The bias in any Time story," says one Time writer, "begins with the query. From the moment it is sent out, the shape of the story has been established." . . . "There is a certain amount of freedom we have," observes a veteran of the Washington bureau, "but that really works two

ways. You can soothe your conscience by throwing in a few opinions of your own at the end of your file, but you know that these will usually be discarded." The chief of correspondents, he adds, is careful about whom he hires and where a reporter is assigned. Effective dissent is checked at any of several junctions in the system, and frustration in the bureaus is an oft-heard refrain. Says one reporter, "It's really a masturbatory job." . . .

Stuart Schoffman, who was a Time writer for four years, now describes that role as one of "an apparatchik in the service of the corporation's ideas. It is only in retrospect that I realized I was mouthing opinions not my own."

John Tirman, "Doing Time," Progressive, August 1981, p. 51.
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C. Peter Jorgensen, publisher of Century Newspapers Inc., advised all editors of his three Boston-area weeklies that he did

not intend to pay for paper and ink, or staff time and effort, to print news or opinion pieces which in any way might be construed to lend support, comfort, assistance, or aid to political candidates who are opposed by Republican candidates in the November election. You are specifically instructed to submit any and all political stories which mention any candidate in any race and any photographs, letters, editorials, cutlines, or any other kind of written material whatsoever relative to the election or elected officials and their record, to the publisher prior to publication . . . If this is unclear in any way, resolve every question in your mind with a decision NOT to print.

No state censor could have been more explicit and more thorough.

When publishers ram their dictates down their editors' throats, the editors learn to swallow; but occasionally one of them quits. The publisher of News-Herald Newspapers, Inc., which puts out newspapers in five economically depressed communities in Michigan, wrote a memo provoking editor John Cusumano to resign. It read: "From now on plant closings, business failures and layoffs will not appear on the front page of any of our newspapers. It will be our policy to aggressively support, promote, and report business organizations within our circulation area and/or those business organizations who support us with their advertising."

It is a rare event when a [journalist] stops pretending he or she is an independent agent and explicitly admits that a class power relationship exists in the media. In 1983 a conservative columnist for the Washington Post, James Kilpatrick, did just that in regard to a controversy at Howard University. It seems that after giving prominent coverage to a sex discrimination case involving the university, the editor of the Howard student newspaper, Janice McKnight, was expelled, because of discrepancies in her admission application of four years before. McKnight charged that the action constituted a violation of freedom of

the press. Entering the fray in one of his columns, Kilpatrick allowed that McKnight "was fired because of her editorial insistence" and then asserted that "Howard's president clearly had the power to remove her as editor." Warming to his subject, Kilpatrick continued:

Where did McKnight get the right and power to publish whatever she damn well pleases? The answer is, nowhere. The Hilltop is not her paper; she has invested not a dime in its costs of publication. Like every other student editor, she is here today and gone tomorrow. . . . I was for 17 years editor of a major newspaper, but I never had the slightest misapprehension of any "free press rights." If my publisher, in his gentle way, said that we ought to think a while before running one of my fire-eating editorials, that was it; the piece didn't run. It was his paper, not mine. . . . If student journalists want unabridged freedom of the press, their course of action is clear: let them buy their press and move off campus. Until that happens, let them grow up to what life in the real world is all about."

Here Kilpatrick admits, indeed, proclaims, that contrary to the established mythology, he was never editor of a free and independent press. His publisher exercised prior censorship over his editorials. All of which is just fine because freedom of the press, for Kilpatrick, is not a political right but a prerogative of property and wealth. He is correct when he concludes that's "what life in the real world is all about." It is just not often mainstream newspeople so forthrightly announce such truths about the real world.

There is, then, nothing mysterious about who controls the ideological direction and political content of the news. As with any profitmaking corporation, the chain of command runs from the top down, with final authority in the hands of those who own or who represent the ownership interests of the company. As Gans writes, "News organizations are not democratic; in fact, they are described as militaristic by some journalists. . . ." . . . .

HE WHO PAYS THE PIPER

Along with the ideological and informational constraints imposed by media executives and owners, the working press must reckon with the pressures exerted by corporate advertisers. Consider the New York Times's coverage of the auto safety issue. During 1973 and 1974 when the automobile industry was pressuring Congress to repeal the seatbelt and air-bag regulations that might have saved between 5,000 and 10,000 lives a year, the Times ran stories that were, as one Times staff person admitted, "more or less put together by the advertisers." Times publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger openly admitted that he urged his editors to present the industry position in coverage of safety and auto pollution because, he said, it "would affect the advertising." The auto industry was a major newspaper advertiser, responsible for about 18 percent of ad revenues in 1973 and 1974.

The notion that the media are manipulated by those with money is

dismissed by media apologists as a "conspiracy theory" or "devil theory," but there is nothing conspiratorial about it. Being the people who pay the bills, advertisers openly regard their influence over media content as something of a "right." Media executives like Frank Stanton, CBS president, readily say as much, "Since we are advertiser-supported we must take into account the general objective and desires of advertisers as a whole." . . .

On the power of advertisers, Todd Gitlin writes:

> The knowledge of who pays the bills can't be dispelled, even though it doesn't always rise to consciousness. Network executives internalize the desires of advertisers. CBS's Herman Keld . . . didn't qualify his answer when I asked him whether ad agencies -- and affiliates -- are taken into account in programming decisions. "I would say they are always taken into account. Always taken into account . . . ."
>
> No single advertiser can wield veto power over a network. Yet without even troubling to think about it, network executives are likely to rule out any show that would probably offend a critical mass of advertisers.

When ownership was more dispersed, the press was more of an autonomous force in society, it has been argued. The supposedly independent editor and crusading publisher of an earlier era have been replaced by the big corporate executive. To be sure, the concentration of ownership is an aggravating factor in the accumulation of corporate power, but the business class also does quite well under decentralized media ownership. The locally owned media are vulnerable to the pressures of advertisers and other business interests. . . .

The power of advertisers over the local "independent" press is touched on by veteran reporter Art Shields who tells of his experience working for a paper in an Ohio mill town almost seventy years ago:

> Ed was advertising manager as well as editor. He cautioned me to report nothing the merchants and brewers didn't like. "We can't live without their good will," he said. "Be especially careful when you write about the brewery," Ed went on. "It's our best advertiser . . . ." I ran into another roadblock when I told Ed I expected to get good stories from my friends in the big U.S. Steel plant, where I had been working. But the editor didn't share my enthusiasm. "Better check with management before you write what workers tell you," he said. "The steel mill runs this town."

More recently a reporter for the Willamette Week, an "aboveground alternative paper" in Portland, Oregon, asked her editor why the paper needed a business department, and he responded, "Because business is where the power is and we have to rub their backs." She noted that the supposedly liberal weekly regularly avoided any criticism of business practices. "Numerous articles containing mildly critical information on

business" were rewritten because the editor wanted only "positive" pieces. Similarly, in a study of how absentee mine owners dominated an impoverished Appalachian valley, John Gaventa found that the media in the area never questioned the power and policies of the coal company. The issues that involved the interests of the corporation and significantly affected the exploited and impoverished citizenry simply did not receive any press exposure. After a review of the many county weeklies published in the United States, Calvin Trillin concluded that very few "ever print anything that might cause discomfort to anyone with any economic power."

Along with a desire to protect a particular product or industry, advertisers on both the national and local levels will withdraw financial support in order to stamp out political heterodoxy. Gans finds that national advertisers usually do not cancel ads in the news media because the reporting reflects unfavorably on their own products as such, but because they dislike the "liberal biases" which they think are creeping into the news.

THE MYTH OF OBJECTIVITY

Corporate power permeates the entire social fabric of our society. Along with owning the media, the corporate business class, as already noted, controls much of the rest of America too, including its financial, legal, educational, medical, cultural, and recreational institutions. . . . Opinions that support existing arrangements of economic and political power are more easily treated as facts, while facts that are troublesome to the prevailing distribution of class power are likely to be dismissed as opinionated. . . . .

Relying heavily on institutional authorities for much of their information, newspeople are disinclined to be too critical of established sources. One sociologist studied a sample of 2,850 stories from the New York Times and Washington Post and found that 78 percent were based largely on statements by public officials. In Time and Newsweek, 20 percent of the column inches were given to the president alone. Studies of television coverage of foreign affairs find a general neglect of the views of foreign governments (except for an occasional crisis) and a general absence of views that do not coincide with the ones propagated by U.S. foreign policy elites and the U.S. government. Much of what is reported as "news" is little more than the uncritical transmission of official opinions to an unsuspecting public.

As already noted, journalists may or may not endorse or even recognize the value parameters within which they work. No matter how they happen to see themselves, the fact remains that they do not and usually cannot investigate the questions that rub against the ideological limits of their employers. These include why wealth and power are so unequally distributed in the United States and between developed and exploited nations; why corporations have so much power and citizens so little . . . why unemployment, inflation, and poverty persist; and why the United States is involved militarily in Central America . . . .

Objectivity means reporting U.S. overseas involvements from the perspective of the multinational corporations, the Pentagon, the White House, and the State Department, and rarely questioning the legitimacy of military intervention (although allowing critical remarks about its effectiveness). Objectivity has meant saying almost nothing about the tenacious influence exercised by giant corporations over Congress and the White House. "Objectivity," writes Jack Newfield, "is believing people with power and printing their press releases. Objectivity is not shouting 'liar' in a crowded country."

Objectivity means that reporters should avoid becoming politically active, and should keep their distance from their subject, while commentators, editors, and owners socialize, dine, and vacation with the political, military, and corporate leaders whose views and policies they are supposed to be obiective about. During the 1980 elections, George Will was an active member of Ronald Reagan's campaign team and helped Reagan prepare for his debates with President Carter. Without informing his audience of this, Will, the objective commentator for ABC News and columnist for Newsweek and the Washington Post, than praised Reagan's masterful performance in the debates. Despite the conflict of interest and the fraud that might have been involved, Will suffered no sanctions from his employers who, on other days, guard the journalistic citadel of objectivity from the taint of political involvement.

Objectivity means that while reporters should avoid conflicts of interest, hundreds of publishers and media corporate directors can also be directors of other powerful corporations, banks, universities, foundations, and think tanks. Objectivity means not reporting anything about how these corporate interlocking directorates represent a conflict of interest that might interfere with the directors' judgments regarding news selection and selection of editors, managers, and reporters.

The journalist Britt Hume urged that newspeople "shouldn't try to be objective, they should try to be honest." Instead of passing along the approved versions of things, they should attempt to find out if the officeholder or corporate representative or whoever is telling the truth. "What [reporters] pass off as objectivity," Hume concludes, "is just a mindless kind of neutrality."

Reflecting on the 1972 presidential campaign, former New York Times correspondent, David Halberstam, notes that "objectivity," which was "the basic rule of journalistic theology," prevented the press from uncovering important deceptions:

> So objectivity was prized and if objectivity in no way conformed to reality, then all the worse for reality. The editors were objective and they prided themselves very much on that. It did not bother them that almost everything else they did each day was subjective. Which 12 stories they put on the front page was a subjective decision. Which stories went on the inside page. Which stories were written and did not

> go into the paper. Which stories were never even assigned . . .
>
> So, in truth, despite all the fine talk of objectivity, the only thing that mildly approached objectivity was the form in which the reporter wrote the news, a technical style which required the journalist to appear to be much dumber and more innocent than in fact he was. So he wrote in a bland, uncritical way which gave greater credence to the utterances of public officials, no matter how mindless these utterances . . .
>
> Thus the press voluntarily surrendered a vast amount of its real independence; it treated the words and actions of the government of the United States with a credence that those words and actions did not necessarily merit.

By confining his attack to the media's treatment of the government, Halberstam himself may be acting "much dumber and more innocent" than he is, for he makes no mention of how the objectivity rule fails to give critical attention to the enormities of business power both in and out of government.

NOT ENOUGH TIME, SPACE, AND MONEY?

All sorts of vital issues go unmentioned in the electronic and printed news media. To try to cover all that is happening in the world would be impossible, it is argued, because it would be too expensive and there is not enough newsprint space and air time to give a more complete picture. Let's examine this argument.

1. The major newspapers, networks, newsweeklies, and wire services compose a vast news-gathering infrastructure with correspondents and stringers throughout much of the world (AP has a hundred reporters in Washington, D.C., alone). Despite these imposing resources, many important and revealing stories are broken by small publications with only a fraction of the material resources and staff available to the mass media. The startling news that the CIA was funding cultural, academic, and student organizations was first publicized by the now defunct Ramparts magazine. Ralph Nader's widely received work on automobile safety was ignored by the mainstream press and first began appearing in the Nation, a small low-budget magazine on the liberal left. Journalist Seymour Hersh sent his account of the My Lai massacre to an outfit almost nobody had ever heard of, Dispatch News Service -- after none of the major wire services would pick it up. . . .

Adam Hochschild, a columnist and erstwhile editor of Mother Jones observes that investigative reporters working for small progressive publications run into little or no competition from mainstream journalists when digging into many important and revealing stories:

> There are more than 1,000 correspondents in Washington, D.C., falling all over each other trying to "develop sources" in the White House . . . The press competes all right, but over ridiculous things. Last year . . . some 12,000 newspeople covered each of the political conventions: events whose principal results -- the nominations of Carter and Reagan -- were known in advance.

2. Another excuse given for inadequate and superficial coverage is that twenty-two minutes of televised evening news (with eight minutes for commercials) simply do not allow enough time for anything more than "snapshot-and-headline services." In truth, if one were to count the political daytime talk show, late night news shows, local and national evening news, and hourly news programs on commercial and public radio and television, there is almost round-the-clock news programming. But almost all of it is thin and repetitious in content. Although the network evening news has only a scant twenty-two minutes, it finds time for plenty of trivial or frivolous subjects that are clearly intended to entertain rather than inform. If the evening news were expanded to one hour, this would not guarantee more depth coverage. If anything, the evasive surface quality of television news would become more evident, and an hour of it more unsatisfying -- as demonstrated by the local TV news shows that now offer hour programs. Time is not an iron-clad factor in determining how in-depth one might go. In five minutes one could make devastating revelations and connections on any number of issues, but how often would a network news team attempt to do so?

Similarly it is not true that our leading newspapers lack the newsprint space for more comprehensive coverage of the day's events. . . . [N]ewspapers of one-tenth the length delve into controversial issues with more depth and revelation than the bulkier commercial papers. . . .

To be sure, more comprehensive news coverage, although desired by the public, is not encouraged because it costs more. Ironically enough, as profits from news programs have grown, the willingness to invest in more substantive news content has diminished. With higher profits there come "the competitive pressures to be more popular and appealing. The result is an increasing emphasis on eye-catching graphics, slick packaging and alluring promotion of highly paid [newscast] stars."

Critics have noted that news media have a penchant for stories that are simple and finite in scope so as to be easily grasped and sensational enough to attract as large an audience as possible. But there are many simple, finite, and quite sensational stories that are not touched. For instance, in October 1982 the media gave sensational coverage to the several deaths caused when someone slipped poison into Tylenol capsules that were later sold at drug stores. Yet these same media ignored the far greater number of deaths (ninety-seven abroad and twenty-seven in the United States) caused when Eli Lilly and Company marketed an "anti-arthritis pill" called Oraflex. The Food and Drug Administration allowed Oraflex to go on sale in April 1981 despite an FDA investigator's earlier report indicating that Lilly was withholding data on the dangerous side effects of the drug. Clearly here was a sensational story of mass murder and skulduggery, of possible corporate malfeasance and government collusion, yet the press did not bother with it. Why the difference in handling the two stories? The Tylenol killings seemed to have been the work of deranged persons; the corporate manufacturers (and advertisers) could not be blamed. Therefore, the story was not only simple and sensational, but safe, free of any criticism of the marketing

ethics of drug advertisers and of big business in general -- which was not the case with Oraflex.

As observed in Chapter 1, some critics say the problem of coverage rests with the journalists themselves. In 1971, the then president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Newbold Noyes, remarked:

It is obvious that we are lazy and superficial in much of our reporting. Often we do not even bother to challenge ourselves with the difficult question as to what really is going on. We rely, instead, on certain stereotypes as to what makes a news story . . . . Why is a speech, a press conference, a court decision, a Congressional hearing always news, while the real situations behind these surface things go un-noted? Why? Because it is easy that way, and because that is the way we have always done it.

But is it really just a matter of laziness and inertia? Behind the superficiality of the news there stands a whole configuration of power and interest that makes the lazy, conventional way of presenting things also the politically safer, less troublesome way. . . .

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"OBJECTIVITY" BY OMISSION

The news is slanted not only in what it says but in what it leaves unsaid. Every year "Project Censored," a panel of media critics including such notables as Jessica Mitford, Ben Bagdikian, Noam Chomsky and Nicholas Johnson, picks ten stories that the media have kept from the public. Among the unreported stories in 1982 were: that the U.S. cast the only dissenting vote in the UN on a resolution endorsing a treaty to outlaw nuclear weapons; that some leading U.S. corporations did extensive business with Nazi Germany during World War II and had been sympathetic to that regime; that nearly all the chemical fertilizer used in recent years, amounting to $2 billion a year, was found to be worthless by researchers . . . The "Project Censored" panel report was itself almost entirely ignored by the commercial press.

Based on David Armstrong, "Ten Stories the Media Didn't Tell," Guardian, June 1, 1983.

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MAINTAINING APPEARANCES

How is it that the idea of a free and independent press persists in the face of strong hierarchical corporate controls -- even among many members of the working press who should know better? We can answer that question by summarizing some previous points.

First, there is ideological congruity between many members of the working press and media owners. When reporters and editors look at the world in much the same way as their bosses, censorship becomes an intermittent rather than constant affair, something whose existence can

be more easily denied.

Second, within the existing ideological consensus there does exist a certain range of views on what to do about domestic and foreign policy issues . . .

Third, there is much anticipatory self-censorship practiced by reporters, editors, and producers even while not admitted or consciously perceived by the practitioners themselves.

Fourth, the rewards and punishments designed to induce conformity also socialize people into the existing system. With one's career at stake, it is not too hard for the newsperson to start seeing things the same way superiors do. Sanctions not only force conformity, in time they change people's political perceptions so that the conformity becomes voluntary, so to speak.

Fifth, the more obvious and undeniable instances of coercion, bias, and censorship are seen as aberrations. Bauman notes that New York Times journalists who were critical of the newspaper's handling of a particular story insisted that it was an isolated problem.

Sixth, reporters and editors who say they are guided (and protected) by professional integrity and journalistic standards of autonomy and objectivity have rarely, if ever, defined what they mean by these terms. "Professional integrity" remains largely unexplained and somewhat contradictory. For instance, an editor's claim to having final say on what his paper prints would seem to contradict a reporter's claim to independence in what he writes. Likewise, newspeople can cloak themselves in the mantle of objectivity only by ignoring the differences of perspective that make objectivity a highly debatable concept. . . .

For reasons of their own, media corporate executives and owners also sometimes maintain that their editors and reporters enjoy independence. After censoring and then removing a liberal editor, H.B. DuPont denied that his newspapers served his personal political biases; he reaffirmed that they "operated independently with the objective of being a constructive influence in the community, in the state, and in the nation." Thus do owners lend a democratic facade to an undemocratic relation in order to better secure and legitimate the power they wield. Furthermore, for many of the reasons already stated, they may actually believe that autonomy and objectivity are the operational rules. They have no reason to overrule compliant editors who are thereby seen as "independent." And they find it easy to believe that the dominant view -- which is their view -- is the objective one. Indeed, owners are even less immune to the self-serving myths of objectivity and autonomy than editors and reporters.

In order to operate effectively, the news media must have credibility; they must win a certain amount of trust from the public. To win that credibility they must give the appearance of objectivity as befitting a "free and independent press." Were owners to announce that their media

were the instruments of their own political biases and their class power, they would reveal themselves as they are, and they would weaken the media's credibility and the media's class control functions. Therefore, they must take care not to exercise too blatant a control over the news. Needless to say, the frequent acts of news suppression they do perform are themselves rarely if ever reported as news.