

## Chapter 4

### THE CONTENT OF MASS MEDIA: ELEMENTS FOR BIAS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION: A GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF HEGEMONY

In studying the mass media, the "bottom line" is content. If there are freely and widely disseminated opinions and information representing the entire range of inquiry that is possible and if a mass medium and audience are readily available and accessible for people who desire to speak out, then there is no need to make such a thorough study of the mass media as is contained in this dissertation.

But, as we shall see, this is hardly the case in the U.S.. There are many factors which contribute to the control of information and media accessibility. This chapter will address these. The first factor is the general framework

within which the mass media operate and the role they play within it. Next, we assess the corporate aspects which contribute directly to content selection, distortion and bias. Then we look at the nature of the top media managers and owners to see who they are and how they exercise their influence on content, particularly as it results in the social control of the newsroom. Following is a more detailed analysis of the ways bias and censorship are effected--and by whom: the agenda setters, the gatekeepers, etc. We also take a close look at the making of news at the TV networks. Finally, we shall see if all these structures and processes result in an opinion spectrum being presented on the pages and airwaves which corresponds generally to the range of opinions which are found within the American ruling class. We also will analyze the role of the media in attempting to insure that all these realities, plus the true nature of the U.S. power system, are not disseminated to the citizens.

The nature of the content which we experience with the mass media is not just a simple matter of decisions of various people to permit certain information to be disseminated in a certain manner, although this is the final way material is entered into the news system. This stratum of news production exists within a larger framework of the

political-economic system which has its particular values. The system's ruling class works hard to insure that these values predominate.

There are varying approaches to how this is accomplished--and the role of the mass media in the process (Sallach 1974);--but there are two which seem to be the most adequate. Schattschneider's concept is called the "mobilization of bias," which is inherent in the social, political and economic bases of the system. It is reflected in a "set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals and institutional procedures ('rules of the game') that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others" (Bachrach and Baratz 1970, 43, 44).

The concept of hegemony seems to be the most comprehensive explanation of this phenomenon. Marx provided the seminal idea with his famous statement that "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force" (Sallach 1974, 165). This analysis was elaborated by Gramsci to describe the way in which "a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and

private manifestations" (Sallach 1974, 165). Because the dominant class controls the prime economic and political organizations of society, as well as the idea-producing and disseminating institutions, the ruling class will use these media to inculcate its values in the masses and to reinforce existing societal structures and relationships in order to maintain the ruling class' privileged position within the society. Along with this is the prevention of the dissemination of alternative views of reality, history, ethics, and social, political and economic organization.

The next hegemonic step is the self-acceptance or internalization of these ruling class values by the lower, dominated classes (Sallach 1974, 166; Veblen 1948). Or, failing complete acceptance, at least the underclasses must not be able to perceive any viable alternatives, and so will remain with confused, fragmentary and contradictory orientations which will present no threat to ruling class hegemony.

In countries with more dictatorial and authoritarian governments, direct, comprehensive censorship or media monopoly can be used to accomplish the above. But in more open societies, particularly where there is a range of opinions within the ruling class itself--such as in the U.S.--the press can operate more freely, so long as it does

not venture outside of the hegemonic limits. Indeed, in such a situation the system can be strengthened if the ruling class control is not publicly heavy-handed, because it gives the impression of the press as being "free" and "objective," and the "watchdog of the system." The people, thinking they are getting "all the news that's fit to print," are less likely to look elsewhere for information. Societal stability is thus maintained and the power relationships are not seriously challenged, or, if challenged, are controlled and contained.

#### 4.2 MACRO-LEVEL INFLUENCES ON CONTENT

##### 4.2.1 CORPORATE OWNERSHIP INFLUENCES

As the previous chapter has shown, there can be no doubt that ownership of the media is firmly in the hands of the capitalists and that the three commercial networks and the leading newspaper companies are securely controlled by the core, monopoly power sector of the U.S. society and operated for the Ruling Cartel's benefit. But there are varieties of press ownership which at the local level have significant effect on content, even though the total range

of material printed and broadcast will remain within the constraints of the capitalist corporate system.

The effects on content of cross-ownership, chain ownership, and monopoly media situations have long been debated (Compaine 1979; Bagdikian 1971, 1972 and 1980; US Congress 1967b). There are studies regarding each category which indicate that a particular arrangement is beneficial, and there is some research which shows the opposite. For example, some group owners seem to allow more editorial independence than others. Some milk a newspaper for profits at the expense of content, while others occasionally build up a paper. Of course, this partly depends on how bad a paper was before it was purchased.

However, when all studies are considered, the majority conclusion seems to be that independent newspapers in competitive situations and without cross-ownership provide for better media. We should look at the deleterious effects on content in different situations of media ownership concentration (Barnett 1973 and 1980; Howard 1974; Leuchter 1976; Owen 1973; Hvistendahl 1970; Ardoin 1973; Rarick and Hartman 1966; Wirth and Allen 1979; Sterling 1969; Wirth and Woolert 1976; Thrift 1977; Wackman 1975; Powell, W., 1979; Wall Street Journal 1978).

#### 4.2.1.1 Chain/Group Ownership

1. News coverage and feature articles are fewer than with a competitive situation. Stories are shorter and there are fewer of them. There is less national news written by the staff and more from outside sources, particularly news services.
2. The newspapers in the chain tend to be homogeneous in content as well as in political endorsements.
3. The papers will be less likely to oppose the local power structure, because because they want to be good citizens and particularly do not wish to offend either the advertisers or the local power relationships, mainly because the distant corporate headquarters is too far away to have intense interest in local events--only the profits. However, there are strong opinions to the contrary, that the independent is less likely to go against the local Establishment because the publisher/owner is a part of it and has to live among his peers in town. The key factor may be local monopoly. If the paper has it, the company can withstand retribution by the advertisers' threats of withdrawal of business. However, the chain also could conceivably ride out the ire of the advertisers

because its deep pocket of other corporate interests could subsidize the intrepid paper until all was well again.

#### 4.2.1.2 Newspaper Monopoly and Papers with Joint Operating Contracts

1. The editor is less likely to be aggressive and controversial.
2. When a joint operation is effected, the coverage appears to become much the same and the loss of two voices seems to occur.
3. There is less local news, fewer pictures and fewer opinion columns.
4. The most comprehensive empirical study of such a situation was made by Grotta (1971) who observed the effects of a change to a monopoly situation from several aspects. His conclusion was that the people as consumers, employees, advertisers and news seekers all were losers. The only gainer was the owner, who raised the rates and prices, cut the number of editorial employees and kept the extra profits. Grotta's conclusion was that monopolists will be



monopolists regardless of what economic or business field they are in.

#### 4.2.1.3 Cross-media ownership

The effects of this type of ownership seem to fall into the range of from no benefit to serious problems, such as the following (Leuchter 1976; Compaine 1979, 40; Access 1976e; Sandman 1977):

1. There is a threat to objective reporting and editorializing because of the conflict between news events and the owners' economic interests.
2. Writers who are TV critics for newspapers indicated that if their publication also owned a TV station, their paper's policies prevented them from doing investigative reporting or editorializing and disallowed their commenting on public policy matters.
3. News content is similar in the paper and on the newscasts, because the reporters share facilities and sources.
4. The TV station carries less locally originated programming.
5. The TV station more frequently transgresses the

objectivity standard than a non-cross-owned station does.

#### 4.2.1.4 Total Media Monopoly

Two studies were made in situations of total media monopoly (Stempel 1973; American Institute for Political Communication 1973). It was found that the media content was less comprehensive in the monopoly city and the people were less informed than the inhabitants in the towns with media competition. Additionally, the citizens of the city with single ownership of all the media took considerably longer to be able to make up their minds about candidates running for state and local office than people did who were living in a place where there were more media voices.

Another observed phenomenon was that the inhabitants of the monopoly towns had a higher opinion of their media than did the people living in places with competition. And yet, Campaine (1979) and the Washington Post (1977b) expressed the view that press concentration must not be so bad because people have not complained about it.

However, a different conclusion could be drawn: if people are deprived of a variety of information from a

diversity of sources, they not only will not be informed, but they will have no (or little) information with which to compare to what they are being exposed. Perhaps their blameless ignorance and civic pride would cause them to regard their media so highly. Or maybe we can see the results of the hegemonic process in a more pure form.

Concerning the lack of concern by the populace regarding media concentration, the press itself almost never talks about it. How is the public supposed to know what they are missing? It is a circular argument to say that the monopoly press is beneficial because the people do not complain.

#### 4.2.1.5 Conclusion

The controversy over effects of media ownership and concentration will continue as researchers find examples of one category or other which differ in some way with results from studies of another category. Corporations, individual managers and cities are all different. Nothing will guarantee a "good" newspaper or broadcasting station. But regardless of the ownership situation, the advantages and disadvantages work within the narrow range of capitalist political and economic exigencies, and their employees are

similarly socialized, have similar news attitudes and traditions, work within similar corporate structures, and gather information in similar ways from similar sources. Therefore, the content and editorial policy still will generally stay within "acceptable" limits as determined by local and national ruling elites.

#### 4.2.2 CORPORATE ECONOMIC INFLUENCES

There are factors of corporate operations which have influences on media content. The supreme target--high profits--can greatly influence the amount of money spent on personnel and operations. Budgets may or may not correspond to the profit picture; but this is another area for corporate decision making which will have an effect on output. For the print and electronic media the rating and circulation systems are extremely important, particularly for broadcasting, and if the numbers and demographics are not what the managers want, the content of production frequently is changed. Advertisers can have significant influences on media content either by their economic support or non-support of firms or of individual programs or by threats of reprisals if the advertisers are displeased with the behavior or performance of the company.

#### 4.2.2.1 Profits

Owning a newspaper or broadcasting station is generally a profitable venture; owning a media conglomerate is almost invariably very profitable; owning a TV network is extremely profitable. Of course the making of profits is the "bottom line" under capitalism. Because the media are businesses run by businessmen, profits are the prime consideration.

Although English media magnate Lord Robert Thomson called the ownership of a commercial TV station "a license to print money" (Washington Post 1977b), not all media operations are equally profitable. The independents make less money than their network affiliate rivals; the stations in the top twenty markets are considerably more profitable than those in the smaller markets; the UHF stations historically have had a rough time financially compared with the VHF stations; and the three networks' owned-and-operated stations are extremely profitable (Sandman, Rubin and Sachsman 1972; Johnson 1970; Malone 1977). Furthermore, the networks, themselves, are three of the most profitable companies in America (Fortune 1977; Wall Street Journal 1977b and 1977e; Pearce 1976; Johnson 1970).

Newspaper ownership also is lucrative, particularly in

the monopoly situation in which most of the press finds itself today. New York Times columnist James Reston called ownership of such a paper a "license to steal" (Washington Post 1977b). Monopoly newspapers make profits which are three times those of the papers in a competitive market. "You can engineer your profits," remarked Otis Chandler, head of the Times-Mirror, Inc., media conglomerate (Washington Post 1977b).

What are the ways in which the pursuit of profits can affect content? We have already noted that content can change for the worse with different types of ownership situations. It depends on the company. If it wants to maintain high profits and decrease the quality and quantity, it can. However, if an owner is not making what he considers substantial profits, there will be insufficient funds for superior content.

Halberstam (1976) shows that the TV networks, CBS in particular, have become primarily profit conscious the past decades. The two basic historical drives are for profit and broadcasting excellence, with the latter clearly diminishing over the years. CBS chairman Paley, with his huge stock holdings, progressively became more interested in the bottom line than in broadcasting excellence as time passed and as he was accepted into some of the upper strata of the power

elite. (fn) Halberstam charts the profits of the corporation, showing that for each of the first twenty-five years the company's profits (ending in 1952) were generally around \$4 to \$5 million. But by 1965, as the corporation developed into a multinational conglomerate, needed financial support from Cartel banks, and became an attractive commodity on the stock exchange, the news and public affairs programming became not just less important, but troublesome. Paley demanded a 15% profit increase each year. He complained to stockholders that in 1965 the profit would have been higher had it not been for news and coverage of special events.

Another aspect of the economic and profit nature of the networks is their position and performance within the conglomerate corporate structure. Because the broadcasting sector within such a structure is often such a disproportionate profit producer (Dingell 1973; Pearce 1976), it is possible that these profits could be siphoned off from producing higher quality programming and could be used instead for other, non-broadcasting purposes. This has happened at NBC (Epstein 1973). At ABC the network had its public affairs budget reduced because of the poor profit picture in other areas of the conglomerate operation. The network itself had been profitable (Brown, L., 1975;

Friendly 1967, 170). The Justice Department has been concerned that "given their combined market share and current levels of profitability, network control over owned and operated stations may well contribute importantly to the networks' ability to preempt program acquisition and, consequently, to distribute a disproportionate share of programming and to obtain a disproportionate share of broadcast revenues" (Wall Street Journal 1976d).

#### 4.2.2.2 News Budgets

If profits are so healthy, what is the nature of the funding for news and public affairs? The network news departments operate under strict budgets. An example of a budget was presented in Epstein's (1973) study. On a weekly budget of \$7,000, exclusive of salaries, CBS was charging up to \$28,000 a minute for commercials, producing \$36 million in revenue and profits of approximately \$13 million.

If the profits are so large, why is the news and public affairs budget so small? One obvious answer is pure, capitalist profit maximization. But another reason is that the networks' managements believe that spending more money on gathering and presenting news will not result in an increase in audience size. They think that the size of



network news audiences is a product primarily of the carry-over of viewership from local news or entertainment programs and of the personalities of the network newsmen. The network executives also believe that the audience for news programs is older, less sophisticated, less educated, and not so affluent as the average audience.

One of the results of the budgetary shackles is a limit on where news stories are gathered--mainly in the major cities where the networks have their owned-and-operated affiliates and perhaps two or three major cities elsewhere. Otherwise, additional costs for crews and telephone cables are incurred. Another result is that producers plan for only one-half of the news program to be hard news, with the remaining time being taken up with "features," i.e., entertaining news from film strips from their libraries.

Because special events and documentaries usually have smaller audiences and cannot command high advertising rates, they generally are looked upon with disfavor by executives. But this is not always the case. Since the commercials missed during special events can be made up later, the net can show a comparatively inexpensive program (compared with entertainment programs) and still collect the money for the commercials. Documentaries come in handy when a network does not want to compete with a blockbuster show on another

network. One can be shown for one-third the cost of an entertainment program. Another desirable time to show a documentary is where a rival network also is showing one. But as a general rule, because the networks are in the business of attracting the largest possible audience, there simply will not be many documentaries. Another reason for avoiding such programming is that if they are too hard hitting or about subjects which are too sensitive, they can upset the advertisers, the high executives and the government.

An anomaly seems to be the CBS program 60 Minutes, which has been at the top of the ratings for many months in the early and mid-1980s. This may show that people are really interested in expose, muckraking programming. However, CBS had to survive many long years of low ratings while the audience developed. The fact remains, though, that normal documentaries shown on an aperiodic, special basis still have low ratings.

At the local level the same general economic setting dominates the news and public affairs (Altheide 1976, 6). Until recently, stations had been operating under the pressure of FCC requirements of a minimum level of news and public affairs. When these requirements were relaxed, many stations cut back on such programming (Access 1981a; Access

1981c; Access 1981j; Access 1982b). Now that all FCC requirements and restrictions have been lifted, it is highly likely that there will be even less news and public affairs programming, particularly by those stations of marginal profitability (Dallas Times-Herald 1984).

Unlike the network situation the local stations spend a disproportionate amount of their budgets on news. Generally it is the greatest single expense (Altheide 1976, 15). For many stations, especially in the smaller markets, the local news effort either operates in the red or barely breaks even (Altheide 1976; Author's conversation with Austin, Texas, station manager). But in the larger and many medium-sized markets the news operation can be very lucrative (Epstein 1973, 86; Kreighbaum 1972, 7; Kellner 1976, 23). However, it also can be very competitive, which explains why so many stations hire consultants to perform audience research (particularly on personality attractiveness of newscasters) and to make proposals for increasing newscasters' audience appeal, hence greater viewership size and larger profits. As a result, we see light news, happy talk and pretty young people (Wall Street Journal 1976a).

Because local news programs operate under budgetary constraints just as the networks do, they must be carefully planned in regard to time and materials expended. There

generally is sufficient time for personnel to cover the press releases, public relations announcements and other staged news which comprise at least one-half of the material, and also to cover some of the routine news (Altheide 1976, 16). Having small staffs makes it very difficult for local stations to perform much in-depth reporting, particularly on those subjects which would make for fine journalism but which have not been assigned by the local news directors for various reasons (Author's talks with Austin, Texas, TV news personnel). These limitations also keep any incipient muckrakers out of trouble with the station management and the local power structure.

It is frequently stated--even by TV personnel--that television news could be much better, but time and money are limited. But the fact remains that the sizes of the budgets and time make available are set by businessmen making rational business decisions. There is no doubt that both budgets and time could be expanded, particularly at the network level, if the decision makers so desired.

#### 4.2.2.3 Ratings and Circulation

Because the mass media are in the business to make a profit from selling advertising, they must provide some

basis upon which to establish advertising rates and to differentiate themselves from their competitors. This is easier for the print media than for broadcasting. Newspapers and magazines at least can point to subscriptions and to sales from newsstands and route deliveries. What is left, basically, is how to select and measure the audience, the number of readers per unit sold, and the various demographics involved. But even this can lead to controversy (Wall Street Journal 1976c and 1977j).

For some newspapers, particularly in monopoly situations, audience quantity is not so important as the desired demographic make-up of that audience. Otis Chandler, publisher of the Los Angeles Times and head of the Times-Mirror empire, candidly remarked that "American newspaper publishing is based on advertising . . . not a circulation base" (Washington Post 1977b). Therefore, the newspaper must seek the affluent reader, not just the poor masses.

However, the broadcasting industry, working with an ephemeral medium, has an immeasurably more difficult task than its print counterpart. Viewers must be counted so that advertising rates can be established and so that the advertisers know to whom their messages are being transmitted.

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Enter the rating services. The industry uses the results of the rating system as the officially defined market. At both the local and national levels, profits and careers rise and fall with the ratings. What and whom we are permitted to see and hear are greatly influenced by the ratings. There are various factors involved in producing ratings of the most desirable kind. The most basic aspect is the lineup of affiliates. The more you have, the more viewers you potentially will reach. ABC was handicapped many years by this as well as by the second significant factor: these affiliates must reliably clear the network programs for broadcasting (Epstein 1973, 19-93; Friendly 1967, 271, 272).

Next, the demographics must be right. Advertisers primarily want to reach urban women having access to high incomes and being from 25 to 49 years of age (Washington Post 1977b; Kellner 1976). Even programs with high ratings can be cancelled by the networks if the audience does not have the desired demographic composition.

Finally, of course, the ratings must be high quantitatively. As a president of NBC said, "First place in the ratings is where you maximize profits" (Daily Texan 1977b). The vice-president of program research of NBC was even more blunt about it when he said that TV is in the

business of selling people to advertisers, making program content largely irrelevant (Pursch 1975).

The preoccupation with ratings has resulted in a program philosophy called the Theory of the Least Objectionable Program (LOP), a description applied by a former programming and research executive at NBC, Paul Klein (Kellner 1976; Network Project 1973). The basis of LOP is that the TV audience seems to be of constant size during prime time regardless of programming, although the composition of the audience varies. People watch the tube regardless of what is on it. Klein said,

LOP explains why some interesting programs die and some stupid programs seem to thrive. Place a weak show against weaker competition, LOP teaches us, and it inevitably looks good; it may even look like a hit--get huge ratings and a quality audience if the time period it fills has that audience. Place a strong show against a stronger show and, never mind whether it is far superior to a dozen other shows on the air in other time slots, it will look like a bomb. . . . The best network programmers understand this. They are not stupid. They like most of the stuff they put on about as much as you do. But they also know that a program doesn't have to be 'good.' It only has to be less objectionable than whatever the hell the other guys throw against it.

(Kellner 1973, 26).

The influence of the ratings extends beyond the immediate uses by the networks and ad agencies. Wall Street also keeps a watchful eye on them. Low ratings can cause

affiliates to switch to another network or to non-clearance of programs. In smaller markets where one station will have more than one network, the programs with the highest ratings will be shown to the exclusion of the offerings of the other network(s). Finally, low ratings not only can cause a decrease in ad revenue for the network, it also can cause the network to spend more money on programming and perhaps audience research.

There many critics of the rating systems, including people in the industry (Skornia 1968; Advertising Age 1978a, 1979a and 1979b; Altheide 1976; Kellner 1976; Austin Sun 1977). The main criticisms are as follows:

1. TV/radio sets are counted, not people.
2. Total preferences or general likes and dislikes are not ascertained.
3. People are considered as economic units, not as individual human beings.
4. When using audimeters, the only measurement is whether the TV set is on, not whether it is being watched or if the material is understood.
5. People who submit to being used for ratings are of a certain type.
6. The people are subject to the Hawthorne Effect: their



behavior is changed by the fact that they are being used for testing.

7. The diaries can be subject to hearsay, estimates and recall problems.

Government inquiries into the ratings systems have been highly critical, mainly because the samples are so small and the non-response rate is so high (Skornia 1968). Other shortcomings are that measuring equipments (mainly the Neilsen audimeters) frequently malfunction and that TV sets would be counted which were on only for baby sitting or security purposes.

The major rating companies themselves admit weaknesses in their statistics. Arbitron said that it provided only "at best rough approximations" of the TV audience and its composition (Kellner 1976). Even broadcasting salesmen are doubtful of the validity of the ratings (Althiede 1976). A study of Arbitron ratings of radio stations in Austin, Texas, revealed that all station managers had serious doubts about the accuracy of the information, even the managers whose stations benefited from the ratings (Austin Sun 1977). But, nonetheless, the advertisers put their money where the ratings are. What this means to Austin radio is that the top three stations (according to the ratings) prosper while the others change format and personnel and also cut budgets,

particularly for news.

Perhaps the most basic criticism of the rating system is that it generalizes, averages and homogenizes human beings. But people are distinctive in their individuality, their uniqueness, their changing needs and moods, their growth, and their diverse cultural backgrounds. But the rating system herds people into "markets," and then sells them like cattle to advertisers. In the ensuing cultural slaughter we all are net losers--except for the broadcasters and advertisers.

#### 4.2.2.4 Advertising

Advertising is intertwined with the two subjects already discussed--ratings and profits. The mass news media must please advertisers or there will be no revenues, hence profits, hence company existence. Therefore, even though advertisers will disagree occasionally with content, normally the nature of content will remain within a range of acceptability of advertisers.

Publications from the alternative press--particularly from the left--have frequently disappeared because of inability to attract advertising support. This happens at the local as well as the national level (Trinkle 1981;

Guardian 1982b). It was this economic Achilles tendon which the FBI so successfully severed with its COINTELPRO program against the alternative press: seeing that advertisers, particularly record companies, ceased purchasing space in the underground papers (Mackenzie 1981).

There are many incidents of advertisers taking offense at media content and either making threats against the newspaper or TV or radio station or actually withdrawing advertising from the offender (Cirino 1971 and 1974). Additionally, there is always pressure on programs and editorial personnel from sales personnel within the media corporation itself.

In the electronic media, particularly at the network level, there has been a long history of advertiser involvement in the active determination of content. Sometimes advertisers have been at the initial stages of decision making regarding subject, content and treatment of programs, and the talent personnel involved (Network Project 1973b; Brown, L., 1971).

Advertisers try to create a universe--an ambience--around their programs to enhance not only the acceptability of their advertised products, but also to create a desired corporate image. Such relationships soon result in writers and producers either internalizing the

standards of the advertisers and the high media executives whose focus is on profits, or they learn what will be accepted and what will not and tailor their performances accordingly. This results in self-censorship (Cheek 1976; Epstein 1973, 57).

Another aspect of advertising, particularly at the network level, is that the high cost of commercial time on the networks has resulted in only the corporate giants being able to afford to advertise, thus narrowing the number of companies which can bring us their advertising and propaganda messages. The social and economic cost of this preemption of the scarce air time is inestimable.

#### 4.2.3 MEDIA OWNER INFLUENCE AND CONTROL IN LOCAL AREA

Is the media owner (publisher/licensee) merely an objective capitalist who is only interested in profits and does not involve himself in content, or does he set policy for his staff to follow? If he does officially set policy, how is his control established and how does it affect the treatment of news? It is important to remember that it is the owner's option as to how his power is to be used in the newsroom and in the community. He may be active or passive. It is the owner's prerogative as to whom to hire, fire and promote. The owner may be influenced by members of

the local power structure, financial institutions, local advertisers and his peer group; but it is his decision making which is crucial.

Most research on the subject has been focused on newspapers, not local broadcasters. But the experience of the author in working in radio stations and in conversations with TV and radio news people in Austin, Texas, and the material presented in Altheide's (1976) book indicate that the owner-staff-content relationship of the print media and the electronic media are generally comparable.

#### 4.2.3.1 Owner's Personal Influences

There are many reported cases of a publisher's personal intervention in matters of content (Johnson 1970; Kreighbaum 1972; Cirino 1974; Brucker 1973; Barnett 1973; Gerbner 1972; Washington Post 1977b). Studies show that the closer geographically the subject matter is to the paper, the greater is the tendency for the publisher to take a stronger, more direct hand. In the larger papers there is less predisposition for the publisher to supervise the editor closely. The publishers, particularly of small papers, are highly sensitive to news which might affect the financial status of the paper; hence, they would tend to

intervene more readily in this area than with general social issues. The next most sensitive area which would elicit direct publisher participation would be if he, his friends, his organizations or political party were directly affected (Bowers 1967; Lyle 1967; Bagdikian 1972; Bohn and Clark 1972).

If the publisher's control and influence were only restricted to the editorial page, the matter of publisher intervention would not be of such prime importance. But nearly every scholarly publication and journalism review indicate that in a large percentage of newspapers the editors give preferential news treatment to the politician or viewpoints endorsed on the editorial page (Cirino 1974, 188).

Most writers agree that the owner generally does not specifically set policy in writing and usually does not interfere with the day-to-day operation, particularly in large newspapers and local TV operations. However, his power and influence are such that a number of factors are at work which result in his ideas and policy being disseminated and generally adhered to (Madden 1971, 662; Silk and Silk 1980).

The publisher's relationship with his editor is significant. The editor is the owner's right-hand man

(Johnstone 1976; Bowers 1967, Wilhoit and Drew 1973). He is the transmitter and enforcer of policy. It is not just that the editor can be fired by the publisher, but that he has reached his position by adhering to the wishes of the publisher. The other personnel naturally see this, and, if they are ambitious and wish to advance within the organization, or if they want to get a good recommendation if they seek employment at another paper, they will adjust their work performances accordingly (Nixon and Hahn 1971; Friendly 1967; Metz 1976).

#### 4.2.3.2 Social Control in the Newsroom

In any study of this subject the work of Warren Breed (1955) is always quoted. Even though it was written many years ago, it still seems to be the most comprehensive and accurate analysis of the subject of social control in the newsroom.

Breed says that each publisher has a policy and that it is followed. However, this is not automatic because of (1) the ethical norms of journalism which indicate that the publisher shall not force his ideas and ideology on his staff, and (2) the usual liberal bias of reporters.

The publisher's policy can be ascertained from reading

the editorial page and in observing which news stories are selected and how they are treated in the paper. New reporters are not told directly what the policy is, but instead are automatically placed in a learning process on the job itself. The reporter reads the paper and its editorial page; he has his stories blue-penciled; he talks with other reporters; he attends meetings of the staff; he observes the publisher and editor in public; he is encouraged to cover certain stories and not others; he notices that star reporters will cover certain events and not others; he receives praise selectively; he sees what type of orientation the veteran reporter has; occasionally he is gently reprimanded; and he notices who is fired, hired and promoted.

So he goes along with the organization and adheres to its policy for the following reasons: he feels gratitude for being hired; he is concerned with his own professional aspirations; he wants to share the norms of his reference group; he wants approbation; and the newspaper is an exciting, pleasant place to work where there is a great deal of informal camaraderie and psychic income. Of course, there is the possibility that the reporter agrees with the policy, although this is generally not the case.



#### 4.2.3.3 Media Owner and the Local Power Structure

Most researchers, if they consider the local power structure at all in the relationship with the media, mainly make determinations as to the publisher's or licensee's place in the local Establishment. It is generally assumed that the content of the media will support the local power relationships (Nixon and Hahn 1971; Friendly 1967; Johnson 1970; Krieghbaum 1972; Cirino 1974; Barnett 1973). But there have been some studies on newspaper content in relationship to the position and degree of participation by the top media men in the local power structure. These showed that where the owner or publisher was prominent in the Establishment, the newspaper was less controversial (Bohn and Clark 1972), and did not play an adversarial role (Donahue, Tichenor and Olien 1973; Hvistendahl 1970). Additionally, even if a newspaper did become a watchdog, it would not be aggressive in reporting and commenting on matters which were sensitive to the strong, influential men and institutions in the community (Hvistendahl 1970). The key factor of course is that it is the publisher's option as to what kind of journalistic role he and his paper will play in the city (Dahl 1961; Fannelli 1956; Presthus 1961).

Presthus (1961) writes about two cities, their power

structures and the performances of their newspapers in relationship to local politics. In "Riverview" there was not a strong, dominant power structure of economic notables. The paper was owned and edited by a wealthy member of the Establishment. He was a dynamic leader who took part in the pluralistic, lively politics of the town. The newspaper reflected this with a great amount of local news and editorials.

The other city, "Edgewood," was the opposite: a tightly controlling, conservative economic elite dominated the town. There was no two-party activity. The conservative newspaper publisher kept the lid on his editor, resulting in no editorials and very little local news--which was buried in the middle pages.

Research shows that even controversial newspapers will not embarrass or oppose the local power structure, not only because the publishers are almost always a part of the power structure (particularly the large, dominant papers), but also because the bulk of the advertising expenditures usually come from the businesses owned by local economic notables (Cirino 1971 and 1974).

Little has been written about the local broadcasters and the community power structure. But George Hall of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters said that

because the people who constitute the power structure of the cities also control the dominant economic, political and cultural resources in the community--including the news media--"the power structure views broadcasting as an instrument for community good. There is no blunt censorship, but, since the broadcaster himself is closely allied with the power structure, he has the same attitudes" (Hall 1967, 26).

#### 4.2.4 MEDIA OPERATIONAL INFLUENCES

##### 4.2.4.1 Agenda Setting

Agenda setting is the process by which (1) either certain subjects and not others are brought before the public by the media or political bodies, or (2) the subjects which are brought to public notice and scrutiny are limited in scope (McAnany 1981, 107, 108). This is a process which the mass media and political entities routinely do. If a subject is not on the agenda, the public either is not aware of it, or, if aware of it, cannot focus attention to gain public support in order to take effective action (Bachrach and Baratz 1970). However, even if an item is on the media agenda but is not allowed on the political agenda, the same

result occurs--no effective action.

The process of agenda setting occurs from different directions. The prime news sources in political institutions try only to provide information on those subjects or aspects of subjects which they want the media to cover. Reporters, being dependent on these governmental sources for news (and frequently sympathizing and agreeing with the sources), will not expand the inquiry beyond the bounds set by the sources (McAnany 1981, 220, 221). In the opposite direction, the media place before the public only that with which they want the public to be concerned. Possibly even more important is that the core Establishment media also have an agenda setting effect on the congress and other federal government agencies, because governmental officials place great credence on what is presented in the New York Times, Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal and are guided by these newspapers' agendas and subject treatment (Epstein 1973, 37, 150; McAnany 1981, 225). (We already have mentioned that these same publications play the same role with the three TV networks.)

When the agenda setting of the media is added to that which is originated purely by political bodies, it can be very difficult to get public hearings by people with non-Establishment views or about subjects which are not

desired to be discussed by the power structure (Bachrach and Baratz 1970). People with agendas which include a basic analysis of the U.S. capitalist system and the interconnectedness of problems with the economic and political structures cannot freely get any platform--media or political. One of the reasons why people take to the streets and demonstrate is to expand the agenda to include their areas of concern and their opinions about them. To see what subjects are not on the Establishment media agenda, one can read the alternative press. More will be said about this later.

The process of agenda setting can be very specific or very broad in nature, embracing all of the aspects which affect media content. The concepts of hegemony and mobilization of bias show agenda setting at a macro level. Other aspects have been discussed previously and some will be analyzed in the following pages as we see various people in different media positions at work in the filtering and molding of media content.

The following are some of the subjects which are either not on the media agenda or, if they are mentioned at all, are not given significant in-depth analysis.

1. The big, U.S., transnational financial institutions and their power in national and international

affairs.

2. The mass media themselves. (The networks admit that they do not cover this subject because they do not want the Fairness Doctrine requirements to force them to discuss the subject, resulting in them having to present self-critical material or spokespeople (Epstein 1973).)
3. The U.S. power structure and ruling class.
4. The total framework and effects of multinational companies, both abroad and in the U.S..
5. Economic concentration in the U.S..
6. The Bilderbergers, Trilateral Commission, Council on Foreign Relations, and other elite ruling class organizations.
7. Corporate and U.S. ruling class penetration of and cooperation with government, and the consequences of this in laws, policy and administration.
8. A comprehensive analysis of regulatory agencies' relationships with business. (Occasionally the media mention a specific instance or agency, but never in the total framework.)
9. The root causes of inflation, recession and stagflation and the roles of the giant corporations and financial institutions within the monopoly capital

framework which are the bases of them.

10. The manipulation and rigging of the stock market.
11. Positive aspects of alternative political-economic-social arrangements.
12. The framework of connections of organized crime with big business and high-level politicians.
13. Any Marxist perspective.
14. The distribution of wealth and income in the U.S..
15. The true nature of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in supporting the multinational exploitation of countries, and the interconnectedness of these two institutions with the U.S. power structure.
16. The history and control of the Federal Reserve System.
17. The full, comprehensive nature of the CIA, and even most of the details of its activity, such as its covert support for right wing death squads and its teaching of torture methods to foreign army and police personnel.
18. Interlocking directorates.

Certain aspects of some of the above topics may rarely be discussed or mentioned in a piecemeal and distorted fashion, but never in a comprehensive way. Also, even if any of the above were discussed in a satisfactory way on one

occasion, the information would not be entered into the permanent media perspective of the operation of U.S. society in relation to current events.

#### 4.2.4.2 Gatekeepers

A great deal has been written about gatekeepers in the determination and dissemination of mass news (Krieghbaum 1972, 91). Gatekeeping has elements of agenda setting and censorship. The gatekeepers are the individuals who make decisions either on broad policy or on specific choices as to what information is to appear in print or on the air and how it is to be treated.

A good display of the quantity of information filtered by a series of gatekeepers is shown in the study by Cutlip (1953) containing the total amount of Associated Press news copy which was available daily compared with that which finally was printed in a Wisconsin daily newspaper. The 100,000-125,000 words which originally entered the system (plus 6,000 of state news) were cut by national and state AP bureaus and the local editor until only 12,848 words would be presented to the consumer, who would read about 1,683.

Figure 1 shows a general model of the gatekeepers in a newspaper. It could also be valid for a local TV news



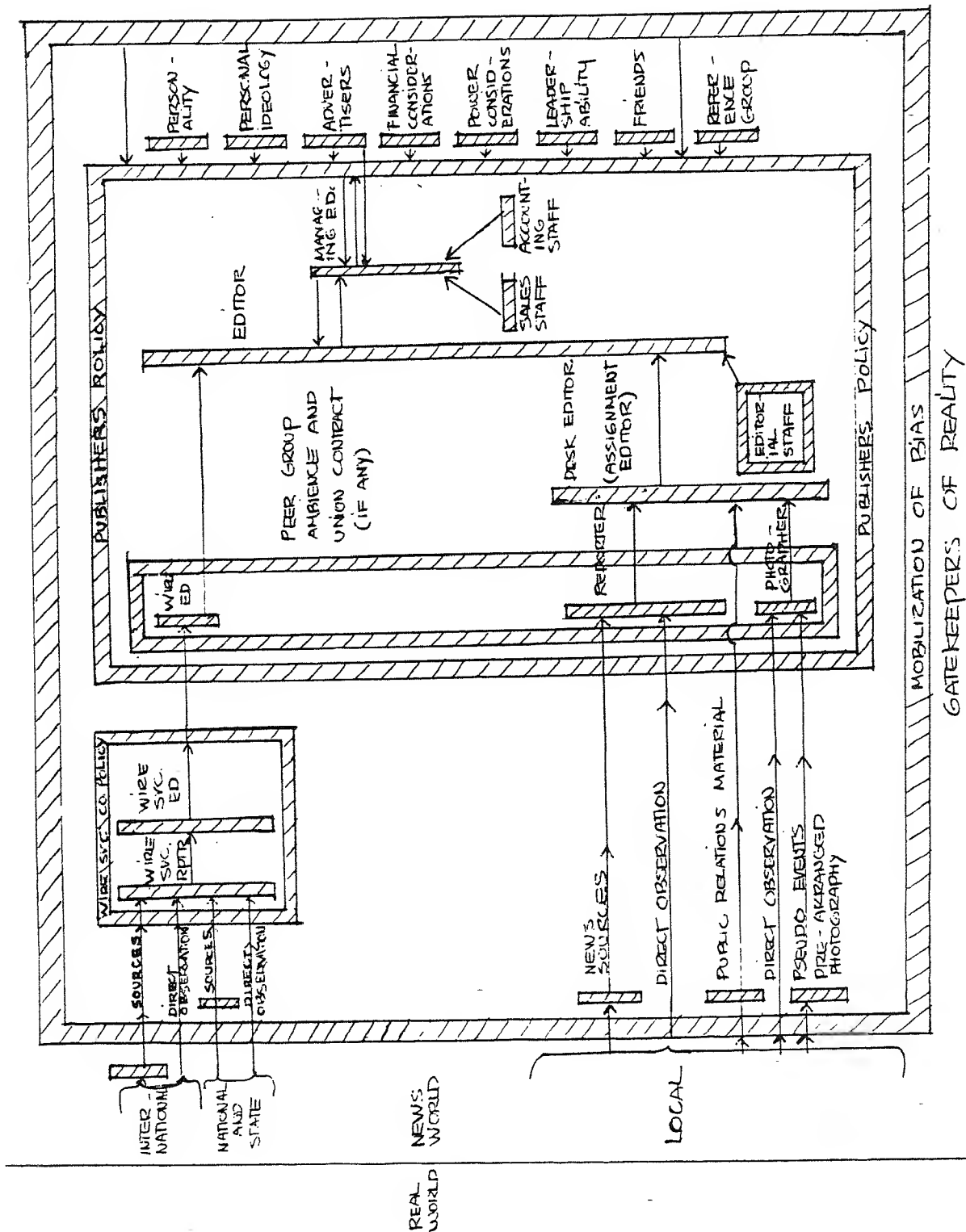


Figure 1

NEWS GATEKEEPING AT A TV NETWORK

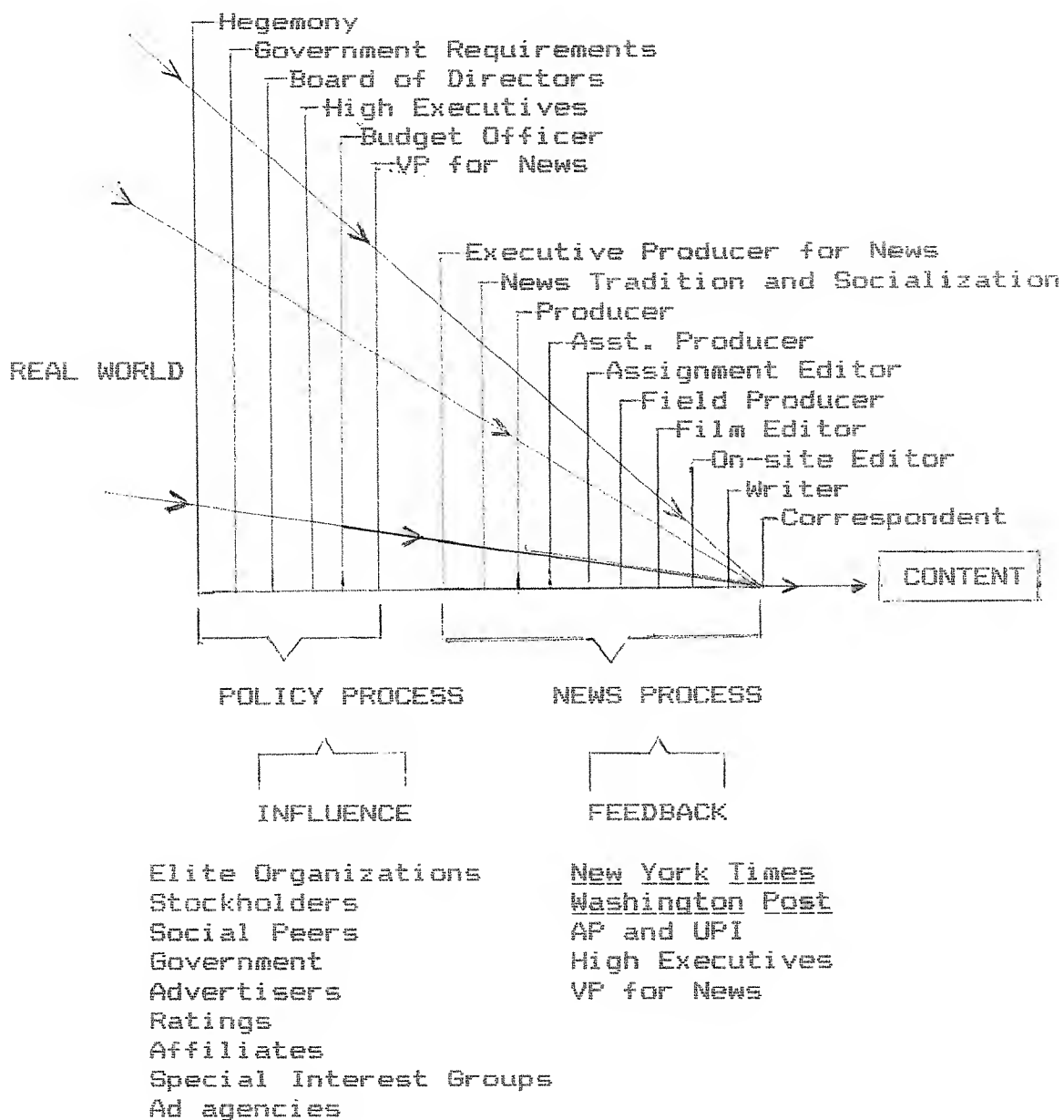


Figure 2

operation by substituting the appropriate television personnel and media inputs for those of the newspaper. Figure 2 displays the personnel positions involved in a TV network newscast and the associated sources of influence and feedback.<sup>3</sup> As these figures show, the information is highly filtered by the time it reaches the ultimate consumer.

Like any model, these are oversimplifications. Leroy and Sterling (1973, 150-167) try to provide more complexity into the presentation in their "cybernetic" model of gatekeeping, one which does not emphasize the individual or position so much as the social and organizational context of individual behavior. They see a newspaper or a TV newscast as an output of formal and informal organizational processes centered in the newsroom--a complex communication-decision making network populated by members of a trained and socialized subculture whose individual acts are governed by powerful norms.

Because there are more things happening in the world than could ever be placed in a newspaper or on the airwaves, gatekeeping is unavoidable. The key question is what and whose values and norms predominate.

#### 4.2.4.3 Kingmakers

The subject of the influence of the mass media in winning and losing political campaigns is very complex. Trying to determine the fairness and bias of the media and their impact on the public is a difficult, if not impossible, task. It seems that almost anyone can make an analysis to show that his or her candidate or party received unfavorable and unfair treatment at the hands of the networks and major newspapers.

It is made even more difficult by the great complexity of the television medium with its visual and aural impacts, by the self-proclaimed objectivity of the networks, by the government requirements of equal time and fairness, and by the packaging of candidates by advertising agencies which results in an image campaign of media manipulation rather than one of issues and real personalities. A further complication is that the ephemeral nature of the broadcast media makes them more difficult than their print counterparts in studying in detail the effects of their efforts.

If the transmitting end of the problem is complex, the receiving end is even more so. There are many opinions and schools of thought as to what happens when messages reach or

fail to reach the receiver. There is disagreement as to the significance of the various media in the total framework of the existence of other sources of influence on people.

There also seem to be differences of media impact on elections depending on whether they are local, state or national and whether the vote is on a non-candidate matter such as a referendum, where voter knowledge of the subject is low. Most research shows that the local news media, particularly the newspapers, have a great impact on the outcome of local elections, but progressively less influence as the election is for offices further away from the city (Robinson, J., 1974). A study of public opinion concluded that "relative availability of news items about two candidates has a clear effect on the exposure preferences by individuals with no pre-existing opinions," but for people who are already partisan, the availability and treatment of news makes little difference except for reinforcing opinions or for motivating people to participate (Atkin 1971). This means that in local non-partisan campaigns or in elections where little is known about the issues or candidates, the mass media may have a significant impact.

However, other research may show more impact of the media than the above would indicate. A comprehensive review was made of press coverage and endorsements of elections in

seven Texas cities from 1960 through 1971 in which it was noted that the candidate which was endorsed won nearly ninety percent of the time (McClenghan 1973). This may, of course, show that the people are simply following the lead and line which the media have been presenting all along, not merely just at the time of the campaigns. This would indicate media hegemony at work.

But, regardless of what the academic researchers indicate, the huge amounts of money spent by the political parties (and the continuously effective results to advertisers on TV) indicate that political campaign decision makers believe that the mass media, particularly TV, have a tremendous impact on people and election results.

Probably the most significant aspect of money and the media in relation to elections and society is not in kingmaking but king prevention. There are three main factors. The first is money. Even a rich person cannot finance a complete national campaign (and most statewide campaigns) without the help from other wealthy people and institutions. A poor person must sell himself or herself to the rich and powerful. Without money a candidate cannot buy exposure.

But exposure is not just a matter of money. There must be access to the media. The media frequently refuse access

to candidates with the funds to pay for space or time (McNeely 1982; author's conversations with third party candidates). Furthermore, the media will not give equal coverage to the activities and ideas of the non-cartel candidates, and the coverage which is given usually is of a negative nature. Even though there are FCC requirements for equal time, these are always either suspended for a presidential election or the requirements are circumvented by such methods as having debates presented as "news events" sponsored by "independent" groups. And frequently the "major" (Cartel) candidates merely refuse to participate if the alternative candidates are to be given equal access in a planned debate.

Probably the most basic aspect of kingmaking is one which goes on all the time. With voters constantly being bombarded by the standard, limited perspectives of the media, a candidate who is non-standard (meaning if he or she falls outside the Cartel range of approval) can sound very dissonant, even threatening or subversive, to the public which is conditioned to hear the usual ruling class line. Hence, the hegemonic process and agenda setting are significant, basic factors in the matter of kingmaking.

#### 4.3 MICRO-LEVEL INFLUENCES ON CONTENT

##### 4.3.1 DECISION MAKING AND BIAS AND CENSORSHIP

In all the facets of media content discussed so far, bias and censorship are at work. They could be considered at the micro level of content control, with hegemony being the macro stratum. Bias and censorship are the tools of kingmakers, gatekeepers and agenda setters. Some bias and censorship are unconscious, being hegemonically instilled, whereas some are conscious decisions.

Bias and censorship are interconnected and mutually supporting. There are various forms of each: cultural, institutionalized, socially induced, and technical. They come from many sources and influences, directly and indirectly: individual, governmental, advertiser, pressure group, corporate, the media personnel's perception of the nature of the audience, the professional "news perspective," peer group pressure, affiliated stations, competing media, elite newspapers such as the New York Times, budgetary exigencies, and the ratings race.

Even though these factors form a constantly changing, kaleidoscopic relationship, they exhibit a definite



framework by which one can notice the major sources of dominant influence and the places where the primary power lies in determining what we see on the tube and in the print media. One can also observe the effect of dissidence on this framework and how the output from this dissidence is handled by the media in the attempt to control or co-opt it in order to make it conform to the desires and needs of the corporate elite power system. One can also see the contradictions in the system where the media are forced to deal with subjects in their role as news and entertainment producers when they perhaps would rather ignore such events.

The next few pages should show clearly that there is no such thing as "objectivity" on TV; nor is it technically possible, no matter in what country the mass communications set-up is located or under what economic, cultural or ideological system there may be in existence. In the U.S. there is a definite, continuous attempt to censor, limit and distort as much information and opinion as possible on TV which run counter to the needs and ideological underpinnings of the American monopoly capitalist system as perceived by the corporate moguls and their subordinates. But this control is not always one-hundred percent complete and effective because there are contradictions in many of the

corporate goals and in the ideas of what constitutes news and good programming on the part of the professionals producing them. Also, there occasionally are events of such great public importance that they cannot be easily controlled, distorted or covered up (Molotch and Lester 1974). It is these factors which help us to see the nature of the censorship and bias and the various sources of them. Reading the alternative press makes it considerably easier to spot distortions, omissions, lies and disinformation.

To show the many sources and levels of bias and censorship we will look extensively at the operations of the TV networks. Actually, bias and censorship in broadcasting have been with us since the early days of radio (Barnouw 1966 and 1968; Hicks 1971). Prior to World War II broadcasters were loathe to permit labor news, any material they could label "red", and any reference to sexual matters. Engineers were given authorization to switch off anyone who deviated from the owner-approved list of subjects and words. Scripts were mandatory except for describing public events. (This practice continued into the 1950s.) Sponsors had a large hand in controlling content. Blacks were rarely on the air and then only in stereotypical roles where they had to sound like "negros." CBS Chairman Paley carefully censored a broadcast on the 1943 riot of Blacks in

Detroit and permitted the southern stations not to carry the program. After World War II there was the McCarthy Period during which the more liberal commentators, writers and actors were fired, gagged or blacklisted.

A news tradition was slow to develop in the electronic media, because very little news was broadcast until the advent of World War II. Advertisers were not interested in such programming, and the few who did sponsor such shows wanted to control content. The networks were particularly concerned with their staffs doing any opinion peddling and brought pressure on them to be "analysts" rather than "commentators," to show no emotion in their voices, and to use simple, short sentences.

We will now look at the various strata of the corporate structure which are involved in the making of a newscast, and we will assess the types of influence and control they have in the bias and distortion of content.

#### 4.3.1.1 Owners, Directors and Executives

Under the hegemonic umbrella of capitalism and the U.S. ruling class, the first level of bias is on the board of

directors. These people are interested not only in the profitability of their corporation, but also in its place in the overall power structure, regardless of whether the company is a national network or at the local, licensee level. This is the key level of power, particularly at the networks, because it is here where basic decisions are made on programming, budgeting, personnel policy, investments and corporate expansion (Kendrick 1969; Brown, L., 1971; Network Project 1973). It also is here where primary interface occurs with the non-broadcasting powers of the corporate and government elite. It is at this level, not only where measures are initiated to institutionalize various biases and censorship in the form of company policy, but also where the most influential and basic critique takes place on what is telecast. (Indeed, Les Brown (1971, 182) claimed that the directors give approval to each new program.) This does not mean that the boards of directors and the highest executives (who are also on the boards) get their way one-hundred percent of the time, but those personnel who go against their wishes very often or who "win" too many small battles will find themselves without jobs, not promoted, or transferred to less desirable positions. Even the sainted Ed Murrow of CBS was not immune to this treatment (Kendrick 1969; Friendly 1967).

There is another source of pressure which has not been studied in any systematic way, and probably never will be so long as the existing power structure remains in the U.S.. This is the peer group pressure which is found in the social circles within which the high executives and members of the boards of directors travel. No outsider knows what changes or non-changes in content and personnel have been made within the social clubs and watering holes of the various directors, and in the many elite political, civic and cultural activities of the upper class in which the media moguls participate. The Silks (1980) report that publisher Sulzburger of the New York Times is frequently under pressure from his social peers. The same observations could be made regarding local stations.

The stratum just below that of the owners and directors is that of the high executives--the presidents and vice-presidents of the various functions and departments. Here the basic policies are transmitted and the more specific critiques of what is aired are carried out. Pressure is applied through written policy and verbal directives as well as informal contacts while passing in the hallways during the workday.

#### 4.3.1.2 Government, Advertisers and Affiliates

Before moving to the production strata of network news, we should mention three other sources of influence on the news process. Advertisers and ad agencies have been discussed previously in their affect on content. They in turn are influenced by governmental sources and by pressure groups desiring to eliminate sponsor support of specific programs or program types or to object to specific types of advertising campaigns.

The government is another source of influence on the broadcaster, particularly the networks. There are many factors in the government-broadcasting relationship, stemming from various sources: the FCC holds life and death grip on licensees, although it rarely uses the death sentence; the Fairness Doctrine and various aspects of the Communications Act are continuous thorns pricking the corporate skin; in a "national emergency," as determined and declared by the President of the U.S., the government may take over the broadcasting facilities of the country (Executive Order 11490, 28 October 1969); broadcasters, particularly the networks, are highly dependent on the government for information, particularly regarding military and diplomatic matters; various congressional committees which are involved with oversight on broadcasting observe

what is telecast and are sensitive to the desires of well-organized and vocal pressure groups; network personnel are frequently called to testify before these committees (So are the FCC Commissioners.); the Justice Department puts pressure on the government agencies which have direct relationships with broadcasting; network advertising is scrutinized by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC); some rates for cable and satellite usage are determined by the FCC; and the President and his White House staff can initiate letter writing campaigns to the networks if they are displeased with what they see on the tube.

Less bureaucratic relationships between government and the networks can be found in the fact that many high network officials and news personnel have held important governmental positions; some network executives have had personal, friendly relationships with the President of the U.S.; and for many years there has been a continuous relationship with the CIA among journalists and media executives. Maybe more important are the personal, informal contacts and communications of high governmental officials with network executives at the highest levels (Brown, L., 1971; Halberstam 1976).

A significant source of pressure on the networks is the affiliates. The licensees and managers, being primarily

businessmen and basically conservative (Epstein 1973, 80; Sandman, Ruben and Sacheman 1972, 38; Donohew 1965), are vociferous in their denunciation of various news and public affairs programs as well as entertainment shows. The networks are sensitive to this because the stations can, and often do, refuse to carry certain programs, thereby diminishing the audience and depressing the ratings and revenues. The stations will even change affiliation to another network. There is a growing tendency, which has been used only selectively in the past (backed by approval of Congress, the courts and the Justice Department), to permit the affiliates to preview programs before they are transmitted. This allows the stations either to refuse to carry them or to censor portions of them. With this in mind, there is a lot of self-censorship on the part of the program-producing sector of the network operation so that problems with the affiliates will be either avoided or at least minimized (Epstein 1973; Friendly 1967; Brown, L., 1971).



#### 4.3.2 PROGRAM PRODUCTION AND INCORPORATION OF BIAS

##### 4.3.2.1 Structural Factors

The above sources of influence on content all flow eventually toward the program-producing elements of broadcasting. The structure of the system and the technical, social, psychological and fiscal interactions result in the impossibility of having objective, unbiased news. Network executives have written and testified before Congress and elsewhere that television does no more than hold a mirror up to society (Epstein 1973, 13-16).

The truth is that the "mirror" is a complex, subjective, human and technical construction. Decision making and gatekeeping proceed every step of the way from the real world to the tube world, modifying and distorting at every step. Leaving aside for a moment the question of decisions involved in what events to cover, let's look at how they are covered technically. Assuming there is a live broadcast, the decision must be made as to how many crews with what equipment will be used. Next, it must be determined where the cameras will be located. Then, with several cameras in place, it must be decided what the cameras will be focused on at any particular time. Fourth,

with several cameras showing various pictures, it must be determined which camera or cameras will be put on the air and in what sequence.

Already several layers of human subjectivity have intervened between reality and the viewing audience without a word being spoken on the air. All this is exclusive of the subjective decision to cover this particular event and not another one.

If the event is covered by a filmed or taped report, reality suffers even more, because, even after the human decides when and at what it will press the button to start the camera rolling and shooting what the eye sees through the lens, the editing process follows. It is this which gives the film and tape media their feeling of reality. Because only a tiny percentage (about five percent) of the footage taken of an event actually winds up in the edited, telecast version, even the NBC Vice-President for News said that "film is not reality, but an illusion" (Epstein 1973, 18). The same could be said for edited tape as well as film.

The next built in cause of bias is the time constraint. Because of the limited number of minutes in a half-hour newscast or public affairs program--about nineteen minutes in a newscast--some material must be left out. What

you see is the result of one or more person's decisions. The order in which each story is presented as well as the length of the story are also subjective decisions.

But the images you see on news and entertainment shows are subject to further distortion, censorship and bias which are attributable to the complex, bureaucratic group production of the programs. This results not just from individual decision making on specific matters, but also from the adherence to policy set from above.

At the executive level there are several types of activity which result in the desired news and program effect. General policy is established in writing.<sup>5</sup> Examples are as follows:

1. News stories must be in narrative story form, i.e., have a beginning, a climax and an ending (even if the reality of the event does not reflect this).
2. News will not be presented which will be upsetting or create alarm in the audience.
3. Each story will be of as wide an interest as possible to please the mass audience.
4. Controversy will be presented in a binary fashion with "both sides" being presented and without showing a result or solution (More than two views would be "confusing" to the audience).

5. A general ratio will be determined as to the mix of "hard" news (the immediate, timely reported events) and "soft" news (the material which is filmed in advance and which can be inserted almost anytime).
6. The transmission of information is not so important as "experience," i.e., emotions.
7. The producers should not wait for news to happen and merely react to it, but should anticipate what is important and guide the news resources to develop material for these preconceived, significant events or themes.
8. The handling of a news story must be carefully planned in advance, not only by the staff, but also on the scene by the crew.
9. Every attempt must be made not to be controversial or to give "extreme" viewpoints (As CBS' Paley said, "Play it down the middle" (Epstein 1973, 169)).
10. Select and accent stories which have action and are visually exciting.

Thus, the news is forced into a preconceived straight jacket. Epstein (1973, 41) believes, after making his long and detailed study of network news, that "the total news output of an organization is largely determined by general rules, routines and policies."

To understand more clearly the total degree of bias and censorship in TV news and special events, it is necessary to look at the structure of the news operation and how it functions within all the previously stated policies and pressures. The structure is set up to provide the utmost in control, as Figure 2 shows. The newscast is a complex, team effort in which the "rules of the game" are well known and internalized by subordinate personnel.

The players are as follows:

1. Top executives determine the time and money allocation for news; they also select the leading news personnel to be hired and fired.
2. The budget officer is also outside of the news department. He plays an important role in monitoring expenses.
3. The vice-president for news is the interface man in the operation, because he is the one who must implement corporate policy, but at the same time maintain professional standards and develop good programs. (Fred Friendly at CBS found this to be an impossible job and resigned.) The VP for news must see that his programs stay within the assigned

budgets. He approves long-term assignments and develops plans for coverage of special events. He decides what themes and aspects of ongoing stories are to be emphasized and which are to be downplayed or deleted. He conducts continuous critiques and holds daily briefings with the executive producers and their deputies. He also maintains close contact with the high executives above him in the corporate hierarchy.

4. The executive producer of the news programs makes the final decision as to which stories at what length will go into the program. From the initial selection of from 50 to 100 possible stories, he selects 8 from the final 10 to 12 presented to him. His deputy eliminates "stray" stories which do not fit in with the established news themes.
5. The producer is the key man in all news operations. He is the person with the most direct, continuous control over each program, not only from the aspect of news content, but also social control. He is the man on the spot who ensures that the individual programs conform to allocated budgets and policy guidelines. The producer determines which stories are to be covered, subject to final approval by the executive producer. He decides what type of stories will be

commissioned, which correspondents are to be used, which cities are to be featured, the visual treatment desired, and the preferred newsmakers to be interviewed or spotlighted.

6. The assistant producer previews all the available film in the morning and evaluates it for visual impact.
7. The assignment editor selects the original slate of events to be covered and the crews which will cover them. He may have assistants in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. This is an around-the-clock position through which all information is funneled. The assignment editor makes the agenda from which the final approval of news stories and treatment is made by superiors.
8. The field producer is the site supervisor of the news crew. He determines which aspects of the event are to be filmed.
9. An editor can also be assigned at each site who works with the field producer or correspondent and who writes the rough narration.
10. A writer prepares the lead-in for the story.
11. Next are the camerapeople and sound technicians.
12. Last is the correspondent/newsperson who writes the smooth narration and delivers it on the air or on

film/tape.

13. A chief film editor at network operations headquarters supervises the film editors in the field.

Hence, the network news is truly an intricate, team effort. But this does not mean that each newscast is the result of free and equal professionals working toward a collectively evolved effort. All performances must stay within the prescribed policy. This is maintained by frequent, sometimes continuous, coordination and communication among the various production personnel and operation levels to insure that standards are met.

But more than social and content control are the goals of this framework and operation. In such a complex medium requiring extensive coordination, the establishing of policy and maintaining of control simplify production. Otherwise chaos would reign. But the key aspects of it all are these: who sets the goals and policy, who ultimately controls the operation, and what are the end results presented on the tube?

#### 4.3.2.2 Newspersons' Roles: Reporters and Correspondents

A great deal of attention has been paid in the past to the alleged bias of TV news reporters, both individually and



collectively. Epstein (1973) believes this has been overemphasized because the organizational and social aspects are the primary influences, resulting in the on-camera personnel not having much room in which to operate. Walter Cronkite agrees so far as news is concerned and Mike Wallace concurs in the area of the program 60 Minutes (Anton 1978; Levin 1977a).

Epstein (1975, 201) claims that a very basic form of control of newscasts is through personnel policies, particularly in regard to newsmen. He says,

It is usually not necessary to control newsmen through tight editorial and writing supervision: the networks' policies of recruitment and advancement assure that only newsmen that give precedence to organizational over personal values will succeed in network news. . . . Indeed, all three networks act to filter out correspondents who have a high degree of personal commitment on issues or appear to the audience to have a bias, and to advance correspondents who hold or adopt a style of presenting the news that fits the networks' requirements.

This is supplemented by a form of blacklisting which occurs at the producer level. Certain correspondents are rarely, if ever, given a story to do or--more importantly--finally allowed to be aired, if the producer has prejudices against them: too controversial, not "sexy" enough, or his or her work does not fit the desired image or

conform closely enough to corporate policy. This not only leads to a star system of correspondents, but also lets all newsmen know what they have to be in order to be seen on the tube and to be advanced in their careers.

Another method used to keep correspondents "neutral" is to rotate them in jobs and assignments, not only so that they will not become emotionally involved or become too closely tied with the source or target, but also so that they will not become expert in a particular field. This ensures that they will not be very knowledgeable and perhaps be tempted into the proscribed land of "advocacy," and that they will not be apt to become emotionally involved with their subjects. The networks want generalists who know either no more or only slightly more about the subject than the average person watching. According to the NBC vice-president for news, the news should be "seen by an outsider on behalf of outsiders" (Epstein 1973, 137). Also an "American perspective" must be given, not that of the local people or government, unless, of course the local government supports U.S. policy. There are few examples of specialization--such as the White House reporter--but these stand out as the exceptions.

This does not mean that the newsmen cannot make some wrinkle in the mythical straight jacket of objectivity

through voice inflection, raised eyebrow or the spoken word. It does mean that this area for manipulation is quite circumscribed, generally, unless one has the stature of Walter Cronkite, and even he says he did not have much freedom to be deviant (Anton 1978).

Cronkite may be understating his power. It was considered a crucial event when, after returning from a trip to Viet Nam during the war, Cronkite openly came out against the conflict--a significant departure from his past treatment of the war. Even President Johnson was appalled (Halberstam 1976). (However, Frank Reynolds was removed from the ABC evening news when he became too dovish, even though the network said that it was a case of low ratings (Brown, L., 1971, 222).)

However, if the newsperson continues to exhibit individual, subjective behavior or presents information or points of view which contravene corporate policy or which bring too much adverse attention to himself or herself, the person either will be fired, transferred or blacklisted. This can also occur with principals in entertainment programs such as Ed Asner (Guardian 1982a). Even the renowned Ed Murrow, although made a member of the CBS board of directors, was eased out and given a government job in order to eliminate his muckraking. Thereafter, at CBS all

documentary production was done by committees and under heavy corporate supervision (Kendrik 1969; Friendly 1967).

#### 4.3.2.3 Program Formats: News Interview Programs, Talk Shows and Entertainment Shows

##### News Interview Shows

All the network programs such as Meet the Press operate in the same manner so far as guest selection and treatment of guests are concerned (Nix 1974). Interviewees generally fall into one of three categories: Administration spokespersons, prominent politicians, and heads of state of friendly nations. They are invited for their prominence and for the likelihood of their name drawing a good audience.

Nix concludes that these programs are basically conduits for any Administration to disseminate its point of view, even to the extent of permitting the Oval Office to supply hostile questions to anti-Administration guests. The politicians who are selected to appear are those with what the networks consider to be large constituencies (mainly senators) and who are considered as possibilities for running for presidential nomination. (The same criteria are used for selection of people for news interviews (Epstein

1973).) Controversial people are seldom asked to appear, and when they do, they are not treated with the same deferential respect and easy questions with which the Establishment figures are (MacNeil 1968, 156). Additionally, the types of people selected to be on the questioning panel are quite circumscribed, being a combination of reporters from the network and representatives from the safe, Establishment newspapers.

Perhaps some quotes from some of the network participants of these shows would be more revealing of the attitudes behind the nature of the programs, the content exhibited during these programs, and the people who participate on them (Nix 1974, 70, 71):

CBS panelist: "If you had (Establishment people) one week and (non-Establishment people) the next week, I think that would be a distortion. To overemphasize the extremes would be a mistake".

CBS co-producer: "We'd love to get into the world of ideas but there's always some screaming news story that we care more about. And there are only so many Sundays."

ABC producer: "With just a half an hour a week you really . . . cannot bring people on from the full spectrum (emphasis mine). They may not be interesting, articulate or representative."

### Talk Shows

Much the same type of filtering goes on for guests on talk shows (Tuchman 1974, 119-135). Guests are generally celebrities whom the producers hope will bring in large audiences. Pre-interviewing is carried out to decrease the probability of the guest introducing political topics. If political or other controversial discussions take place, guests are advised as to what subjects are to be avoided and even words they cannot use. Occasionally, the invitation to appear is rescinded if the network, advertisers or local affiliates raise too strenuous objections. This even occurs on programs such as Donahue, where the emphasis is not on celebrity guests. Where programs are taped, such as with Donahue, creative editing can sometimes accomplish what pre-interviewing failed to do (author's conversation with Madalyn Murray O'Hair).

### Prime Time Entertainment Programs

We have been talking about bias and censorship mainly in the news and documentary productions. For public affairs programs the networks would never admit that there was a censoring process, only an "editorial" function. But for entertainment programs there are acknowledged censors (Levin 1977b and 1977c; Diemer and Waz 1981; Cheek 1976; Tuchman

1974, 19-31; Talbot 1977; Grossberger 1976).

There is a continuous battle between program writers and producers on one side and the network censors on the other. The latter rarely lose because they have the power; however, they do grudgingly change or give-in over a period of months or years on certain issues, subjects or terminology. The pressure comes not only from the originators of the programs (mainly from Hollywood), but also from various special interest pressure groups, from the government (particularly Congress, the FTC and FCC), from advertisers and ad agencies, from program rating information sources and public opinion polls, and from a general "feel" of the audience as perceived by the network staffs. All this is filtered through the censors' middle and upper-middle class attitudes (Levin 1977b).

With what do the censors preoccupy themselves? From the general to the specific--from program ambience to specific trends and specific words and sentences in specific programs. There are certain words and behavior which will be deleted. Some controversial subjects will not be allowed to be dealt with in entertainment programs. Actually, any controversy is avoided by the networks, if at all possible (IV Guide 1977b).

The Fairness Doctrine is usually given as an excuse for

this; but the main reason is apparent when studying the rating system and its effect on programming and profits. The networks simply do not want to offend anyone if possible so that the viewership, hence profits, will not suffer. Additionally, most advertisers as well as the networks do not want anything in their programs which will have a deleterious affect on the desired euphoric, credulous attitude of the audience when commercials are shown. Last of all, and most basically important, is the need to try to keep the Establishment "line" intact, or at least to maintain control over content to ensure subjects, plots and characters are within acceptable, safe limits.

Except for news and documentaries the censors are responsible for everything which appears on the tube, even commercials (Levin 1977b; Diemer and Waz 1981). There is a heavy filtering process of scripts, with daily battles of censors with program production personnel, particularly writers. The censors are mostly middle class, ranging in age from twenty to fifty, with the average being in their thirties. They are hired because they are intelligent, they are not involved, they are not crusaders, and because they supposedly have that prime requisite of being "objective."

The censors feel that the "Hollywood creative community," as they superciliously label the writers and



producers, is only a small segment of the population, and "if we didn't object, they would always be pushing their philosophies on TV" (Talbot 1977). The chief censor at CBS said that he solicits a wide range of opinions. "I'm an advocate of everybody." He indicated that everyone gets his say. But, of the total population, "I ignore the 10-15% on each side and shoot for the 70% in the middle" (Talbot 1977). The NBC chief censor says, "I'm a dirty old man. I've got to think dirty" (Grossberger 1976). (He is a church elder.)

An extremely important facet of the censorship phenomenon is the attitude of the censors toward the audience and how they perceive the viewers' attitudes, tastes and reactions. The NBC chief censor stated that the audience is still very puritanical (Grossberger 1976). Another censor believes that you must be careful in entertainment programs as to how characters are treated, because people "take TV dramatic characters as authorities" (Talbot 1977). Censors do not think that people want relevance, but escape.

What are the types of things which are censored? They fall into certain categories (Talbot 1977; Grossberger 1976; Levin 1977b; Cirino 1971 and 1974; Deeb 1976; McNeil 1968:

1. "Dirty" words or swear words. Some words can be used

on some programs, but not on others. Also, there cannot be very many in one program or in a series. A scorecard is kept by the censor to see what the program's quota is and how many of what words have been used.

2. Controversial relevance. There could be no dramas about the Viet Nam War while it was going on.
3. People censoring. Smothers Brothers were dropped. Pediatrician and peace activist Dr. Benjamin Spock and actor Robert Montgomery were not allowed to speak freely about the Viet Nam War.
4. Intensity. A writer was told his script was "too intimate" and "intense," causing people to experience the same feelings.
5. Unstereotypical behavior. A hero was not permitted to cry after he failed.
6. Reality. A program about contemporary young people in the 1960s could not show any hippies or anyone who was out of work or struggling to make ends meet.
7. Taboo behavior. A son could not say that he loved his father because there might be homosexual overtones.
8. Pressure group influence. A program had to be re-written to please the Gun Lobby.
9. Gender double standards. An ex-husband could tell

about his sexual affairs, but his ex-wife was not allowed to do the same thing.

NBC censorship policy states that "speech should be consistent with standards that prevail throughout a substantial portion of the television audience" (Grossberger 1976). Because this is so vague, the censors must decide for themselves, using "good taste, written policy and the thinking of NBC's top executives" (Grossberger 1976). The latter is very significant, because many controversial matters are kicked upstairs for resolution.

There is another phenomenon which makes the program production and censorship situation even more complex. That is testing. Many scripts and pilot programs are rejected or highly modified as a result of the testing process. This consists of independent companies showing the pilot programs to groups which are composed of carefully selected people whom the company thinks are representative of the average viewers, particularly the prime target: women from eighteen to forty-nine years of age.

The vagueness of official guidelines, the pressure from the creative community and outside groups, the personalities of the censors, the obsession with the ineffective testing programs, and the corporate relationships and decisions all result in a strange hodgepodge of false relevance,

blandness, pseudo-hyper-violence (placed in scripts gratuitously at the demands of network executives in order to give the programs "excitement" (Deeb 1976)), and little reality or relevance.

The censors claim they are just following the tastes of the mass audience and protecting us from the "Hollywood creative community." They also believe that they are making progress in presenting more sophisticated material and real language all the time, a little at a time. They also say that they are constantly testing and pushing the allowable limits.

The writers and producers say that great issues and events of the day are avoided; reality is avoided; relevance is avoided. The great tragedy they see is their self-censorship (Pursch 1975). They either become hacks who do the networks' bidding, even though they may struggle against the system, or they quit the medium (Talbot 1977).

#### 4.3.3 COVERAGE OF THE POWER STRUCTURE: BIAS AND CENSORSHIP

##### 4.3.3.1 Coverage of the Trilateral Commission, Bilderbergers and Council on Foreign Relations

In a previous chapter we mentioned that the

Bilderbergers, the Trilateral Commission (TLC) and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) are at the core of the U.S. Ruling Cartel political power institutions and that members of the Establishment mass media participate in these organizations. If this be the case, certainly these groups would fall into the category of "all the news that's fit to print." However, there has been an almost complete blackout of the Bilderbergers, with only the smallest coverage of the other two organizations in the mainstream press. The three groups simply do not exist for the TV networks. So far as is known, no documentary has been produced on them, and only the Trilateral Commission has been mentioned in newscasts--one time each by CBS and ABC (Vanderbilt University Library 1981).

The member selection process is vital to this result. Not only are the participants highly screened before being admitted to membership or even to occasional attendance, but it is made very clear that the meetings are secret and that any violation of the secrecy pledge will result in the person either not being asked to attend any further meetings or in being expelled from the organization (Liberty Lobby [1975]).<sup>6</sup> So far there have been no major defections.

Bilderbergers

The most significant phenomenon of the Bilderbergers from the mass media aspect is that there has been a definite and generally successful attempt at effecting a news blackout of the meetings. Although many reporters, editors, publishers and heads of the TV networks have attended the Bilderberg meetings over the years, only a tiny amount of information has been published. The former front man for the Bilderbergers once remarked that the reason they asked publishers and the top men from the networks to attend was to insure that their employees did not print or broadcast anything about the organization.

It has been mainly through the intelligence-like operations of the right wing organization Liberty Lobby and its active publicity and pressure on Congress and the news media that the Bilderbergers have relented slightly, but only to the extent of having a perfunctory press conference after the meeting is over. The only mainstream publications to have occasional articles on the Bilderbergers have been the Atlantic Monthly (Lydon 1977; Novak 1977) and the "men's magazines" such as Qui (Karpel 1977a), Penthouse (Karpel 1977b) and Gallery (Wemple 1977) which occasionally do some populist muckraking. Except for Wemple's story these few articles focus primarily on the Trilateral Commission and mention the Bilderbergers only in passing. (So far as is

known, no representative from any of these publications has ever been to a Bilderberg meeting.)

Censorship has been a continuous, conscious effort from the very beginning of the organization. The New York Times Index shows only two entries, and a computer search indicates that the Times has had only four stories. A similar search shows three other articles in Establishment papers and magazines since 1972. One was a tiny notice that the meeting in 1976 was cancelled; another was an answer to a Liberty Lobby write-in and ad campaign in the Washington Post against a congressman who had attended a Bilderberg meeting; and the third was an article by the maverick, Libertarian columnist Nicholas von Hoffman (1975), the latter's article being the only one with substantial information in it.

There has not been a complete news blackout in the entire U.S.. A trickle of information has been available, mainly from right wing sources (See Endnote 6; Chesterton 1967; Schlafly 1964; Skousen [1972]; Sutton and Wood 1978 and 1981; Quigley 1966).<sup>7</sup> A significant breakthrough occurred in 1974, mainly as a result of the unrelenting efforts of the Liberty Lobby in putting pressure on the wire services and various newspapers in the country. Articles in the Chicago Tribune, the first mention in the Associated

Press, and stories in the Scripps-Howard chain (two months after the meeting) occurred in 1974. Both the UPI and AP covered the 1975 meeting along with representatives of Reuters and Agence France Presse. (The AP also provided secret news service to the 1975 meeting.) The Liberty Lobby was the only other U.S. representative.

This, of course, was all on the outside. Inside the meeting were two columnists--Sulzberger from the New York Times and William Buckley from the National Review. Nothing about the meeting appeared in either of those two publications.

Still, the almost complete blackout remains in the Establishment press, with the New York Times saying in 1976 in response to a Liberty Lobby letter that the meetings are "closed to the press" (Liberty Lobby [1975]). CBS also responded by saying that there was no news value in the organization. So, the Bilderbergers go unreported and the general public does not know about them. Such is the power of the media.

#### Trilateral Commission

Because the TLC is only semi-secret and because it publishes books and papers, the media cannot ignore it to



the extent they do the Bilderbergers. A computer search shows that from 1973 to 1979 the Washington Post published 10 stories, the New York Times 21, the Christian Science Monitor 6, and the Atlantic Monthly 3. (An index search from 1977 through 1981 indicates 17 stories for the Times and 14 for the Post.) Esquire had an article written by Gore Vidal (1980). Except for one article in the Nation (Bird 1977), liberal magazines have been silent as has the business press. The Wall Street Journal had two articles and Business Week none.

With two exceptions, the articles on the Commission by the New York Times and Washington Post are either favorable or not anti-TLC. The Post articles reveal an interesting blend of themes: the participants are the movers and shakers of the multinational capitalist world who have long been determining U.S. foreign policy; many members (usually specified) occupy important positions in Western governments, especially in the U.S.; and only paranoids from the radical left and right see a conspiracy (Washington Post 19771; Greider 1978; Rowan 1978; Goshko 1970; Cannon 1981). In other words, the data in the articles support the conclusions of the "paranoids." The Post published its articles generally on the front page in the late 1970s and early 1980s, whereas the Times never placed its stories so

prominently.

Another curious phenomenon occurred during the short-lived period in the 1980 Republican nomination campaign when Reagan accused his opponents, including Carter, of being Trilateral Commission members. The New York Times mentioned this, but according the Post Index, the Washington, D.C., paper did not. Interestingly, whereas the Post provided a great deal of information and data and only poked fun at the conspiracy theorists, the Times, in articles as well as on the editorial page, curtly and rather irascibly dismissed the people who raised the issue as radical kooks, even though one of these people who discussed the TLC in a letter to the editor was Nobel laureate and peace activist George Wald (New York Times 1980c; Rockefeller 1980). It was this situation which finally prompted two of the three networks to mention the TLC for the first (and last) time.

#### The Council on Foreign Relations

Because the Washington Post Index does not have a category entry for the CFR, one must find articles indirectly, such as in looking under the name of David Rockefeller. This method only provided one article from 1976

through 1982—a story prompted by Henry Kissinger's non-reelection for the CFR board (Washington Post 1981). Although referring to the CFR as the "leadership elite" of America's "foreign policy establishment," the article did not go into the total significance of this statement and the terms used. However, the writer did provide interesting insights into the internal political and personality conflicts within the Council.

The New York Times articles are eighty-four in number since 1962, but only two are extensive in showing the nature and power of the organization and its members: the large number of members in various governmental administrations; the interlocks of the CFR personnel in social clubs, multinational corporations and the huge transnational banks; and some of the great decisions which originated in the organization (Lukas 1971; New York Times 1966). Although saying that the Council significantly influenced foreign policy the past thirty years, the writers scoffed at the left and right wing "conspiracy theories." Hence, the coverage is much like that about the Trilateral Commission. The articles are interesting from another aspect: they reveal the great number of Times writers who are members of the CFR, none of which wrote the articles which appeared in their newspaper.

### Conclusion

Coverage of these three elite Ruling Cartel organizations places the Establishment newspapers in a bind. If they report the information straight and provide historical background, the conclusions are obvious: the controllers of the large multinational corporations, the largest banks and the elite Wall Street law firms form a small, cohesive group which places its members in the key ruling positions of government and which largely determines foreign policy. But this must not be allowed. So, two actions are taken. The first is to try to minimize the significance of the groups by calling the organizations "establishment booster clubs" (Washington Post 1977a) and saying that the organizations are merely places where innocuous, informal discussions by concerned citizens take place. The second action is to resort to name calling: the people who see the reality are labelled paranoid kooks from the radical fringes of the opinion spectrum.

The TV networks have the easiest solution. They simply do not report on the organizations.

The significant factor is that the key Establishment media have not shown the Ruling Cartel in its whole form or

even in most of its partial aspects. By not revealing the existence of a system of economic, social and political interlocks in which the mass media play a significant, though secondary role, the media are hiding and obfuscating the existence of the Cartel. Thus, they are playing their expected role as part of the system.

#### 4.3.3.2 The Best Censored Stories

In 1976 Carl Jensen, Associate Professor of Media Studies at Sonoma State University in California, started "Project Censored." Its aim was to "explore and publicize the extent of censorship in our society by locating stories about significant issues of which the public should be aware, but is not, for one reason or another" (Jensen 1983). The goal of the project was to stimulate more media coverage of these issues and to alert citizens of the existence of these phenomena so that the people could demand better coverage from the media they use.

Although the panel which chooses the Top Ten stories (plus about fifteen which are considered under-reported) varies from year to year, there are a few who have appeared several times. With minor exceptions the people come from the liberal, educated stratum of society and from the

Establishment media such as the New York Times, CBS and Washington Star. At least one has attended a Bilderberg meeting, and others have written muckraking books about the media. Included are such well known names as Ben Bagdikian, media author and professor from the Journalism School at the University of California at Berkeley (and an ardent foe of public access); Mike Wallace, of CBS' 60 Minutes; Nicholas Johnson, media author and former activist FCC Commissioner (and originator of public access requirements on cable); Robert Cirino, media author and teacher; a consumer advocate; a president of the liberal lobby Common Cause; Hodding Carter, who was former State Department spokesperson in the Carter administration and who now has a program on PBS analyzing press coverage; and Ed Asner, the TV actor and star of the liberal program Lou Grant, whose political activism in the actors' union and in support of the rebels in El Salvador resulted in his show being cancelled by CBS (Guardian 1982a). The only person who might be considered a true radical is Noam Chomsky, professor at MIT. It is from this group that the Ten Top Stories emerge.

The result is a compilation of the more gross and comprehensive, systematic corporate and governmental scandals which have been covered up by the traditional media. The stories range from severe violations of civil

liberties and ecological disasters to the dangers of nuclear war. The civil liberties selections include the corporate war against unions, the conditions in U.S. prisons, and the support of repressive regimes abroad. Many stories result from the corporate drive for profits regardless of the consequences to the health of the people or the ecology of the earth. Some of the events, noted particularly the "Other Censored Stories of the Year," mention the role of the big banks and David Rockefeller. The panel does not merely look at isolated events, but puts some of them together to make a broader picture, such as the role of multinational monopoly capitalism and militarism as the main reason for the Western world's economic troubles and the cause of the destruction of competitive free-enterprise. The panel even listed the Trilateral Commission one year as a top censored story.

It is ironic that, with a very few minor exceptions, the sources of these stories were from the alternative press--such publications as the Progressive, Inquiry, In These Times, The Nation, Mother Jones and even the "men's" magazines such as Penthouse. So, it is not as if the information were hidden and not available to the Establishment media. Even after the representatives of the traditional press participate in Dr. Jensen's panels and

become fully aware of these stories, their employers (and they, themselves??) continue to ignore the censored and under-reported material.

Yet, there is even more information which could be available to the panels if they had the desire to use it. They could look at magazines and newspapers which are further to the left of the liberal, Democratic Socialist and New Left publications. They could consider the the Marxist Guardian and the Socialist Workers' Party's Militant. Additionally, they could review the right wing populist newspaper Spotlight. Each of these publications could provide more Top Ten Stories.

However, the lists show that one cannot be informed without reading the alternative press. Project Censored is a damning indictment on American mainstream journalism and the smug attitude implied in the statement "All the News that's Fit to Print."

Perhaps the supreme irony is that Professor Jensen has written a book based on Project Censored, but all thirty publishers who have been approached have rejected it. As Jensen says, "The U.S. press simply is not excited about providing coverage to research that is so critical of it."



#### 4.3.3.3 The Permitted Opinion and Information Range

All the various aspects of media content control mentioned in this chapter result in the narrowing of the range of information and opinions presented or favorably reported on in the traditional media. There are several revealing studies at various levels in the media bureaucracies, research which deals with different aspects of the media and which substantiates the information range restriction and which indicates why this occurs. First, studies of the media owners, particularly at the local level of individual publishers, show that they are affluent, prominent, conservative businessmen with similar attitudes (Sandman, Rubin and Sacheman 1972, 38; Donohew 1965). Political affiliation makes no difference. At a lower level it was shown that newspaper editors and TV news editors have attitudes that are much alike (Clyde and Buckalew 1969).

When it comes to hiring news personnel in TV, it has been observed that the people employed have middle class values and adhere to the Protestant work ethic (Fang and Gervail 1971). Epstein's (1973, 189, 205-215) study showed that network correspondents had similar profiles of background and attitudes. There were no activists or advocates, and they had few connections with political organizations or causes. Their viewpoints were moderately

liberal or moderately conservative. Many took a detached, non-ideological stance.

If these attitudes and socialization of TV personnel are much the same, if the news sources are basically the same, and if the same corporate and news values exist in all three networks, it stands to reason that the newscasts would be similar in content. A study (Lemert 1974) using 1971 material showed that 70% of the stories in weekday newscasts was duplicated by another network and 58% was duplicated on all three networks. A very similar study two years later (Fowler and Showalter 1974) revealed that 41% of the stories was carried on all three networks, three-fifths were duplicated by two newscasts, and one-third of the stories were exclusive. The correlation of appearance order of the stories in the newscasts also was significant.

In the print media, research into the nature of content of columnists reveals the following evaluation of 1,861 columns (Cirino 1971, 180, 181):

- 29% very conservative
- 20% conservative
- 42% middle-of-the-road/mildly liberal/mildly conservative
- 8% liberal
- 1% very liberal

Cirino's (1971, 167-213) research is particularly relevant. He established a categorization of opinions,

placed them in a spectrum, then observed how much newspaper space and air time each of these categories was permitted on the media. His spectrum was as follows:

1. Radical Right (John Birch Society, Carl McIntire [The Liberty Lobby would also be in this category.] )
2. Solid Conservatives (William Buckley and most southern politicians [Ronald Reagan and his Reaganomics supporters like Congressman Jack Kemp could be included]
3. Moderate Conservatives (Nelson Rockefeller, Time, Newsweek, Los Angeles Times and the three broadcast networks)
4. Moderate Liberals (Hubert Humphrey, most Washington and foreign correspondents and newspapers such as the Washington Post, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the New York Times)
5. Solid Liberals (I.F. Stone, Dick Gregory and Dr. George Wald)
6. Radical Left (Students for a Democratic Society [SDS], Communist Party USA, and the Black Panthers).

Cirino notes that the only real competition among ideas allowed in the mass media is between Moderate Conservatives and Moderate Liberals. Since the Radical Right and Solid

Conservative viewpoints have much in common with that of the Moderate Conservatives, some of their opinions are heard. However, the Radical Right is generally frozen out of direct, continuous access to the national mass media.

But, since the Radical Right has great financial support from corporations, foundations and wealthy individuals, and since many local broadcasting station owners and newspaper editors and publishers sympathize with the Radical Right point of view (and perhaps need their advertising revenue), spokespersons for the Far Right are able--and allowed (a very significant fact)--to purchase time on local radio and TV outlets. A 1971 comparison of major radical groups on the far ends of the opinion spectrum showed that the top ten Radical Right groups had 1,806 radio and 150 TV outlets compared with 44 radio stations and one television outlet for the top Radical Left groups. Cirino also notes a 1967 survey which showed that the Radical Right elements made over 10,000 TV and radio broadcasts each week across the country.

As a result, Cirino says that the nation "is awash" in the Moderate Liberal, Conservative and Radical Right points of view. Those people and groups with Solid Liberal and Radical Left opinions are almost frozen out by comparison. Still, the Radical Right and Solid Conservatives seem to

have a valid complaint when it comes to the major mass media, particularly TV. Cirino documents many cases where people were denied access to newspapers and broadcast media even when they were willing to pay for time and space.

But the right has advantages the left does not: money and access. Yet, when the Solid Liberal groups try to purchase broadcast time or newspaper space, they are frequently turned down. Even when the TV networks present a documentary which is controversial and critical of some of the opinions or institutions highly regarded by the right, the conservative owners of the affiliated network stations occasionally refuse to carry the programs. This occurs on public TV as well as with commercial television. The result is that most Americans have access to only a narrow range of opinions and information, a range which is supportive of the status quo.

#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

What we see and hear on the mass media is a result of an extremely complex process of decision making. There are many strata of inputs, filters and controls at the macro and

micro levels. They range from the highest level of the capitalist societal umbrella--which is the most basic part of the total hegemonic system which supports the existing social, economic, political and power system--to the lowest level of the individual employee who makes a decision as to which piece of information will be included in the day's or week's output. In between is a dense, interactive relationship of many factors: the type of corporate ownership and management; the personality of the media owner; basic capitalist requirements for profit; the socialized newsroom and various "rules of the game" in producing programming and printed content; and the outside influences such as the government, advertisers and people and institutions which can exercise some power and influence over the media corporation.

The whole framework and process comes to focus particularly during the functions of agenda setting and gatekeeping. Sometimes it is a matter of socialization, sometimes of corporate policy, and occasionally of direct censorship. But the end result is the same: informational output is restricted. The most blatant censorship occurs on matters which relate to the basic nature of the U.S. power system itself, especially the existence and activities of the basic Cartel organizations such as the CFR,

Bilderbergers and TLC.

Domhoff (1971) and Weinstein (1968) have noted that the spectrum of legitimately recognized opinion within the American ruling class ranges from conservative to moderately liberal, and it is within this spectrum that our democratic process takes place. (Molotch and Lester (1974, 57) assert that an "issue" is an area of disagreement within the ruling class.) Anything on either side of these boundaries is "radical" and thus proscribed. Domhoff (1979) shows how the policy formation process in the U.S. narrows the range of acceptable options and opinions by the interaction of the Cartel's elite organizations and by the interface of them and their members and followers in the government.

The Establishment media legitimate this by responding favorably on the results. Alternatives are eliminated either by not reporting on them or by severely criticizing them or brushing them aside. This interlocking political-media relationship serves to exile to the alternative press the kind of information and perspectives which are out of the Cartel-controlled spectrum. We have seen this with the Sonoma State material and with Cirino's studies. Because the masses of the people and the government personnel do not read the alternative press, they remain unknowledgeable of, sceptical of, or hostile to the

material which is not endorsed by the Establishment media. Thus, alternatives are not considered, reality is hidden or obfuscated, ruling class hegemony is reinforced, and Ruling Cartel control is maintained.