Chapter 6

INTERPRETATIONS

We have presented considerable empirical evidence and extensive evaluation on the subject of the U.S. power structure and the mass media. It perhaps now would be advisable to re-evaluate the subject from the empirical and theoretical standpoints in light of material which has been presented.

6.1 EMPIRICAL

A significant question remains: if the Ruling Cartel is in a position to dominate or control the basics of economic and political life, why does there seem to be so much ineffectiveness, strife, failure, indecision, unfulfillment of goals, and even occasional impotence in the management of the system? The answer is complex and lengthy. There are

many reasons. First, there is the nature of capitalism itself. There are the built-in contradictions and weaknesses which provide for inherent instability. Both the Marxists and the defenders of the system recognize this, even though both sides may call certain phenomena by different names. Basic to the nature of capitalism is competition. This causes instability and unpredictability. Capitalists have tried for centuries to eliminate competition whenever possible. On of the reasons for the merger movements was not just to eliminate competition and to make super profits, but to center economic power in fewer hands (theirs), thereby making the system more manageable.

But in doing so they accomplish several undesirable things. As cartelization of national and international capitalism grows, as fewer and fewer corporations and banks control more of the economic activity of the world, and as government more frequently intervenes directly and indirectly to serve the Cartel interests, a fragmented, competitive, flexible international economy becomes one interrelated system. When this occurs, the instabilities and contradictions are magnified, and severe economic and business shocks can bring down the whole system, because the system's ability to adjust, bend, compensate and recover is gone.

It also produces the situation which has baffled mainstream economists for years: stagflation. Recession and inflation can occur simultaneously when the economy is cartelized rather than competitive. Even though a recession occurs, prices can be maintained or increased, because the market power of the corporations allows them to administer prices almost as they wish rather than to adjust them downward to either meet decreased demand or to try to stimulate demand. They simply lay off workers and perhaps also take their money and invest it overseas where the profits are greater.

This creates popular discontent as the middle class is slowly impoverished and the poor become more desperate. Yet, as the centralization of power becomes more apparent and as the dominators of the economic system move more openly into direct control of the state apparatus and use it to their benefit, it becomes possible for the people to get a clearer picture of how the system operates and for whose benefit. The contradiction is that, although the public can seldom touch the corporate world, it can sometimes influence the government. Thus, with the government more deeply involved in the total system, it gives the people more direct leverage on the system, which can result in more instability and civil strife. This in turn requires heavier

indoctrination of the public and control over the press.

As these fail to do the job and as people continue to struggle to improve their situation, heightened repression is resorted to in the form of pitting class against class, group against group, and race against race; by raw police repression such as the FBI's COINTELPRO program; continued repression of minorities; coordinating and manipulating activities of right wing terrorist groups such as the Klan, Nazis and Cuban exile groups such as Omega 7; continuing to permit foreign intelligence organizations to operate in the U.S., particularly in their terrorist activities against progressive members of their emigre communities; and by lowering of the economic standard of living so that people will have little time left over for anything but making a living and living in fear of losing their jobs (Singletary 1984; Taylor, J.F., 1981; Wolfe 1973). Students also become preoccupied with obtaining an education, mainly to enable them to get a good job. If the Cartel can also keep the country out of the war, the students should remain quiescent. (The resistance to draft registration shows the folly and arrogance of the decision makers.)

A second basic instability of the system is that, because it is based on the extraction of wealth from its workers, it must continuously expand. This necessity to

expand is a point on which Marxists, mainstream economists and businessmen agree. (Indeed, any economic system today must extract a surplus of wealth from its workers to pay for the costs of government, national defense, loan repayment, and imports, if there is a balance of payments deficit.) Otherwise, people would not have the purchasing power to buy the goods being produced, corporations could not meet their debt payments, and there would be more recessions.

A third problem results from the treatment of the Third World by the Trilateralists and their corporate institutions. For most large corporations, their large profits depend on their business activities overseas. Continued exploitation of these Third World peoples and resources is of prime concern to the Cartel leaders. Their attempts to stabilize the situation in these countries by a combination of co-opting the local elites into the system, the production of a docile, cooperative middle class, and the maintenance of a hard hand to deal with the masses, cause severe economic deprivation, mass unrest and repression. The Trilateral support of unpopular, bloody dictatorships only increases the danger to long-range hegemony of the global corporate system. The uncompromising, disruptive stance against countries whose people choose to organize themselves in ways which either

are inimical to the ideology of the Trilateralists (such as in Cuba), or who try to stay within the system but control it and modify it enough to create greater wealth and well-being for their people (such as Manley's Jamaica, Allende's Chile, Bishop's Grenada and the Sandinistas Nicaragua), only leads to greater uncovering of the multinational capitalist system and how it works. This also makes it necessary for the American government and Establishment press to go further and further in obfuscating the reality of what is happening in the world and in justifying what the U.S. is doing overseas and at home. Additionally, it makes it necessary for the U.S. government to resort more frequently to covert activity by increasing CIA operations and by using surrogates in various regions of the world, proxies such as the Shah's Iran, Morocco, South Africa, Israel, Argentina and Honduras.

Fourth, the Trilateralists are very aware of the competitive challenge of the socialist countries, particularly the Soviet Union. This threat has been blunted to a significant degree in many of the Eastern European countries, particularly those which have turned to the West to get the funds, the technology, and the investment for developing their countries and for loosening their dependence on the USSR. However, this has caused further

instability in these countries, as attested by the unrest in Poland and by the economic problems of inflation and debt to Western banks which countries such as Romania and Hungary have faced.

A fifth source of instability is competition, stress and disagreement within international capitalism itself: Japanese import tariffs and sales in U.S. markets; Rockefeller banks destabilizing the dollar (Multinational Monitor 1982); competition for arms sales, nuclear plants and technology; the new economic muscle of Europe; former President Nixon's "national" approach to economics; David Rockefeller's control over and handling (some say mishandling) of the huge amount of petrodollars (Karpel 1978a and 1978b); the maintenance of high interest rates in the U.S. which creates havoc in European financial circles and exacerbates the problems of Third World debtor countries; the instigation of the oil crisis by David Rockefeller via Henry Kissinger and the Shah of Iran, causing severe economic dislocation and hardship; the use of the U.S.-controlled International Monetary Fund (IMF) to destabilize and discipline European and Third World countries; differing outlooks among Trilateral countries as to relationships with the Soviet Union; and the huge loans which the transnational banks have made to Third World

countries, non-repayment of which threatens to bring down the whole international banking system.

These are just a few of the sources of strain on the system. The Spotlight (Nicholas 1978a) reported that in a Bilderberg meeting a severe tongue lashing was administered to a tight-jawed David Rockefeller by European members because of the megabanker's activities.

In short, there still seems to be a combination of mismanagement, duplicity and a low-keyed, occasional power struggle at the highest levels of international capitalism. Although the U.S., via the TLC, pays homage to interdependence and cooperation, and although it states that the America is not so powerful as to be the totally dominating force it once was in the world, it seems that the American rulers, particularly the Rockefellers, cannot resist occasionally taking as much as they can, when they can, and improving their financial power position at the expense of their Trilateral friends.

The sixth source of instability, which the Trilatralists and other capitalists have made surprisingly clear, is the basic incompatibility of monopoly capitalism and democracy. The former can flourish only if the latter is ineffective, with the populace remaining passive and apathetic, or at least compliant. If the people do not do

this, the only solution is repression and economic hardship.

Seventh, there is conflict within the American power structure itself. This is more complex than using the simple Domhoffian axis of disagreemtent between the moderates and conservatives within the Ruling Class or between new and old wealth. There is some of this, of course, particularly when it comes to foreign policy in reagard to the USSR and in the treatment of labor and welfare matters. One one side there are anti-communist hardliners who press for huge defense spending, and on the other are less hawkish, more accomodating people who are desirous of detente with the Soviets and their allies. Even here the distinctions can be blurred where we find Russophobic men effecting lucrative business and financial deals with the USSR.

We must be careful to differentiate between genuine anti-Russian feeling and the tactic of whipping up popular anti-Russian or anti-Communist sentiment in the American people so that the populace will more willingly follow or will allow greater freedom of action to the leaders to pursue the lucrative arms race and to deal more freely overseas against Third World countries. Another reason for Red Scare tactics is to keep people's minds off hard times

at home and to accept the "sacrifices" which must be made to meet these "threats." Finally, the "Red" label can be attached to any domestic challengers of the system, although in more recent times the term "terrorist" is being used instead of "red." Another tactic is to point to any activity at home and particularly abroad as "Marxist," "leftist," or Cuban or Russian inspired. This is used then for justification for any repressive measures in those countries, including invasion using the U.S. armed forces as in Grenada, or employing the CIA in covert armed aggression as in Nicaragua.

A dichotomy among the Cartel Rulers also seems to exist among the hardliners who wish to effect their desires into policy regardless of the opposition of the people--those who prefer to let the police state take care of them--and the more enlightened members of the ruling class who see themselves as the stewards of the system which must be maintained through a combination of consensus, co-optation and sufficient concessions to the poeple to keep them from becoming so restive and desperate as to overthrow the system. Repression should be used more sparingly and selectively--particularly against those who pose a perceived potential threat to the system itself, not those who merely want to effect some degree of change within the system.

Another source of differing opinion within the power structrure--although not a clear one--is the conflict between U.S. corporations which are multinational, hence export and free-trade oriented, and those which are basically national in markets and business scope, hence desirous of import protections. The Trilateralists are the former. The auto industry is an example of the latter. The U.S. steel industry is also used as an example of the latter, but this is deceptive because, although the steel companies complain about unfair foreign competition, they iunvest in building steel plants overseas. Additionally, the banks which are big stockholders in U.S. Steel and which have interlocking directors with the company also invest in overseas steel plants.

There is another division which should be mentioned, particularly because it has not been carefully studied. This is the dichotomy between the non-upper class, high corporate executives and the blue-blooded men of the powerful financial and legal institutions. Menshikov (1969) recognizes this, showing that the corporate managers, although living in high style and having considerable power within their institutions, do not wield the final measure of power and they must bow to or struggle against the domination of the men who have ultimate control: the

financial institutions, law firms and the outside directors of their companies from the Eastern Establishment. Menshikov shows that there is considerable turnover of these high managers and that there is a great deal of grumbling among them about their status vis-a-vis the outsiders, and they hope that someday they will be admitted to the next and ultimate social level.

This analysis is buttressed by the study of interlocking directors by Soref (1976), noted previously, in which it was found that the outside directors who had interelocks with other corporations were mostly of upper class origin, whereas the management personnel on the boards generally were not of the upper class.

Another reflection of this can be seen in the book Ethics and Profits (Silk, and Vogel 1976) in which top corporate heads were interviewed about the status of the U.S., relations between business and government, relationships with workers, the nature of the economy, and U.S. society and institutions in general. These men were mostly the manager-directors and chief executive officers of the major corporations rather than the elite of the upper class. (These are the people, along with the lower-level technocrats, who Galbraith (1976) claims actually have the power--the managerial elite.) While the men interviewed

generally followed the Trilateral line on the need to more tightly control and discipline the American worker, they complained bitterly about the government interference in business. Although one could see this as the standard conservative complaints about getting the government off the back of business, particularly such requirements as safety, health and environmental and antitrust measures, it could be further interpreted as criticisms of the upper class "moderate" ruling of the country, especially since it is from this group where most of the leaders and policy makers have come since the 1930s. The interviewees also were dissatisfied because their high-pressure jobs at the top of the corporate world would last only for about six years, then they would be replaced or retired. You do not hear such complaints from the stratum of the real rulers from the upper class law firms and banks. Ethics and Profits was written by two men from the Council on Foreign Relations who look upon the top executives as another special group with which the Ruling Cartel must deal, rather than as people at the apex of the ruling heirarchy.

There are tensions created in the economy as a result of the varying effects which policy can have on different sectors of the economy. For instance, the oil crisis has been a bonanza for the petroleum industry, the megabanks

which try to recycle the petrodollars, and the multinational corporations which reap the big contracts with the OPEC countries; but it is bad for other businesses (particularly small businesses) which have to pay such high prices for energy. This burden is lessened in many of these corporations because, since they are in monopoly-oligopoly industries, they can merely pass on the costs to the consumer. But other sectors of the economy can be severely crippled or even destroyed.

Such situations can cause unrest among high corporate managers, some of whose own wealth and the future of their careers can be largely determined by the performance of their companies, not only in profits but in stock price. If the outside directors and financial institutions representing the Establishment are satisfied with lessened company performance-- if this fits into the overall interests of their other institutions--it can be a source of friction with the inside company directors.

Further hostility of managers occurs when larger corporations go merger hunting and pick the managers' businesses as game. Particularly incensing is a hostile takeover attempt, especially when the target company's banker is cooperating with the predator.

Instability is maintained in the system by the

continuation of the Cold War and the arms race. The high cost of defense results in great economic instability and hardship, huge governmental deficits, high interest rates, balance of payment problems, increased unemployment, a brain drain of research and creative personnel from the more productive areas of the economy, and continued inflation. The maintaining of economic hard times and a warlike foreign policy results in a fearful, restive, demonstrating populace and worried allies.

As people struggle, more repression is necessary along with an increased need for the mass media to help keep the people pacified with a combination of censorship and disinformation and with the constant attempt to deflect discontent from the real causes and toward the "communists, Marxists, subversives and terrorists." But the media are caught in a bind. They are firmly in the Establishment web of financial and directorate control as are the other major U.S. industries. But the media call themselves the watchdogs of the system. They have to present news; they have to do a little muckraking; they have to present some degree of reality so that they can retain their credibility. They must permit some innocuous diversity of opinion and news. But this can be difficult ot control because of overzealous reporters, pressures from the

alternative press, overt and covert revelations from governmental and private investigations, information coming from outside the country which must be deal with, and because of occurrences which are of such great magnitude that they cannot be ignored or effectively distorted immediately. Sometimes reality looms too large (Molotch and Lester 1974).

This infuriates the corporate world, including the Trilateralists. It accuses the press of being anti-corporate and as being one of the main disruptive forces in society. Coming from a world which is extremely authoritarian and heirarchical, the business moguls want a press that is a handmaiden (Silk and Vogel 1976; Silk and Silk 1980). This, of course, would destroy the media's credibility.

Key Trilateralist Samuel Huntington (Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki 1975) deals with these problems and the role the mass media play in creating and sustaining uncertainty. He feels that if the media fan the democratic flames too much; if they criticize the established authority to such an extent that the populace loses confidence in its leaders, its institutions and its system; or if too many voices are heard giving too much information and too many opinions, the whole system could be undermined. Huntington says that the media have gone too far and have acquired

dangerous power, enough to stop the Viet Nam War and to topple President Nixon. Therefore, media access to information must be curtailed and the freedom to present information and opinions must be limited. The media must be cooperative with the power structure.

The Trilatralists have said that Americans must learn to expect a lowered standard of living and limited opportunities for improvement. So, the people must be kept pacified as their economic situation deteriorates sufficiently to meet the international plans of the Ruling Cartel and the immediate profit plans of the transnational institutions, and as the populace suffers the consequences of the recessions which periodically rack the capitalist system. On the other hand the people must be made to keep buying to continue to stimulate the economy.

The people must believe in the illusion of democracy. They must be acquiescent to and have respect for their leaders. They must be properly socialized so that they will accept whatever happens and still believe that this is the best of all possible systems. But they also must believe that it is possible to make changes, that progress can be made, and that their leaders are working on it. However, the citizens must not be allowed to make a pervasive or truly meaningful attempt to participate in the democratic

process and to extract a positive response to their own needs or to effect basic change. The people must be apathetic and, above all, credulous.

The populace must not know how their economic, political and social system is truly organized, and they must not become aware of the power structure through which the Cartel maintains itself; hence, the dearth of information on phenomena such as the CFR, TLC, Bilderbergers, David Rockefeller, and the concentration of ownership of the wealth and business in the U.S..

The press must attempt to accomplish all this while maintaining the illusion that it is providing "all the news that's fit to print," thereby keeping the confidence of the people and making them think that anyone with information and opinions outside of the controlled range of subjects and opinions is either a kook or a dangerous subversive. This is the biggest function of the mass media. Up to now, they have done their job well.

So long as there is no effective, mass alternative to the Establishment media, the problem is not very severe. But the potential exists in the public access system of cable TV to present a significant alternative to the established media, particularly if people use the system on a mass basis and especially if national networking of

programming is developed. This is a danger of which the authoritiesa are well aware. Public access to mass media has been denied by the Supreme Court on each occasion a case has reached the Court. Additionally, the cable owners and their sympathizers in Congress and in various communities have been trying to clip the wings of access, or at least to severely minimize it.

At the more covert level, the FBI COINTELPRO program to destroy the alternative press during the 1960s and 1970s is a chilling reminder of how far the U.S. power system will go in preventing legitimate alternatives to the existing media. And none of them had the potential to reach a mass audience as do the programs on public access TV.

But this exciting experiment in democratic mass communications is at a very critical and vulnerable stage. It can easily be destroyed, weakened or taken over by the Establishment. Both sides must act quickly to protect their interests.

6.2 THEORETICAL

The problem with theory making is that, for the theory

to be cogent enough to work with, it must oversimplify or exclude many aspects of the real world of individual and institutional complexities. To argue that one approach is THE answer as compared with another seems to be related more to defense of intellectual or academic territoriality than of truthful, scientific, and objective scholarship. Elements of most of the various approaches can be found when studying the American power structure and the mass media. Curiously, it has only been very recently that scholars have started studying the two fields together.

The traditional media resecrchers merely accepted the pluralist paradigm as given, carried out experiments, and theorized. Parallel to this was the Marxists, who with minor exceptions, wrapped themselves in their particular brand of Marxian theory, and expounded. In the field of power studies the mass media were not extensively analyzed.

Now that the two fields are beginning to be considered together, the added multidisciplinary complexities may be a considerable burden for scholars. But it is a necessary burden to shoulder if we are going to be able to understand the total situation.

6.2.1 POWER THEORY

Let us review the theoretical positions on power which were presented in an earlier chapter and see how they look in light of the information presented in this dissertation. Marx was correct concerning the capitalist class owning and controlling and running the economic system for its own benefit. Everything starts with the economic system. In the U.S., people only have political power if they either have economic power or have been placed in a position of power by someone who is economically powerful. Marx' statement that the capitalists' ideology is the dominant one in society seems affirmed; but this is not accomplished without a combination of much effort and no little force. Finally, Marx' observations about the increasingly powerful role which banks would play have also been proven valid.

Lenin was correct in his evaluation that true democracy cannot be attained within capitalism. (Ironically, the capitalists, themselves, agree with him.) His observation that democratic political forms are a manipulatable facade shielding a repressive core controlled by the ruling class has been demonstrated time and again. However, it is mainly within the arena of these political structures that significant struggles of the people take place.

Veblen described a system of social cohesion based on the lower classes trying to imitate the life styles of the

wealthy. Today we do not see the wealthy so conspicuously as we did then. The super rich perhaps have learned to be more discreet. But the basic mechanism is still there at work: we see predominantly upper middle class, affluent families, houses and mores in TV commercials, all designed to make the great middle class and below dissatisfied with their lot and work toward the higher life style through consumption. But this is only one aspect of social control and cohesion. The later, Marxian concept of hegemony is more conprehensive and applicable to society today.

The Italian theorists Pareto and Mosca glorified the ruling elites as providing a barrier between the control of the state and the faceless, ignorant, crude masses or a rogue demogogue. Ironically, they endorsed Mussolini. Rule by elites is not a guarantee that the state will be run by people of wisdom and capability and for the good of the people. The U.S. presidency is a good example. Rule by the elites is a guarantee that the state will be run for the elites.

Some of the American followers of the elite theory tried to inject a small amount of democratic influence into the process. Ortega y Gasset advised against democratic participation, but called for the elites to be influenced by the needs of the masses. What we have in the U.S. is more

of a combination of this and what Schumpeter called for: elections to be held between competing sets of elites which would govern with a minimum degree of accountability. The elites would be insulated from the masses, which should willingly accept their leaders. This is the type of system which the Ruling Cartel would like to have.

In our system we have the facade of accountability. The press makes a big game of calling the politicians to heel, and it places them in front of cameras and on the printed pages in a supposed adversary situation. In reality, however, there is little real accountability to the populace but the constant attempt to keep discourse and political activity within the bounds of the ruling limits. Most of the U.S. system--particularly the economic sector--is not reached by the political sphere. Even though individual politicians get elected and defeated, the key leaders of the executive branch come from the same Ruling Cartel pot. Presidents are disposable. Presidents and their advisors, cabinet members and heads of the CIA and FBI can commit the most egregious, illegal acts, even violence and murder, and rarely are called to account individually.

Weber hit upon a core aspect of elite political and economic control when he made his observation about the dominant groups forming "collegial bodies" where consensus

is developed and where institutions are developed to supervise the political economy. His ideas fit perfectly the development and function of organizations such as the Council on Foreign Relations, Bilderbergers and the Trilateral Commission.

The congressional economic studies which provided considerable data on the U.S. power structure were not used by anyone to make a comprehensive picture of the American power system until Mills came along with the Power Elite in 1956. Still, his critique was based more on sociology than on economics. Domhoff followed in the same pattern, except he did introduce more economic data. The writers who analyzed corporations to see how many were under managerial control instead of family or director control simply looked at one aspect of many means of effecting corporate control. This type of research still is being made, the latest in 1981 by Herman. But interest group studies such as by Knowles and Phelps show clearly the inadequacies of the managerial revolution writers.

The information of the latter is used to show support for the pluralists, but the pluralists were describing a world which exists mainly in the myths. Even the pluralistic activity which goes on in the U.S. at the national, state and local levels is nothing like that

espoused by the pluralist writers. There is a stacked deck against ordinary people and public interest groups. The real pluralism exists at the ruling level where the Cartel people compete, jostle and compromise where necessary on what will happen and who will benefit. The pluralistic activity observed in Congress and at state legislatures is mainly a sharklike feeding frenzy of special interest groups of capitists attacking the ripe body of the fiscal appropriations, contracts and special interest laws. The other central activity is ensuring their continuing control of the political process and keeping it out of the hands of the masses. It takes a supreme effort for public interest groups to achieve their goals, and even then these victories can be lost at the budgetary and regulatory levels of government or can be overturned in court or at the next legislative session. The system is set up by and for the powerful capitalists, and they benefit the most from it.

Mills, and later Domhoff, started the power elite/ruling class school. Domhoff has continuously refined his arguments and has made some great contributions. However he has not given a significant place yet to the Trilaterial Commission and none to the Bilderbergers. Additionally, he has not looked closely or comprehensively enough at the economic side to show the myriads of

interconnections in the system. Domhoff could benefit from a session with Knowles. Domhoff also might consider blending his material with that of some of the Marxists, particularly those who study hegemony. He also might benefit from a few hours spent with his Marxist cousin, the instrumentalist Miliband.

The Marxist approaches all have something to contribute. They could be combined and blended into a comprehensive picture which would be much more relevant and revealing than each school of thought steadfastly maintaining its own territory. Today the studies of the legitimation crisis and hegemony seem to be crucial in understand the twin aspects of the problems with the capitalism and how the system sustains itself. But it is not just the Hegelian-Marxist position of hegemony which is crucial. The instrumentalist analysis of the structure and functioning of the state is needed to see hegemony at work.

As we have shown, the range of approved subjects and opinions appearing on the media generally coincides with that found within the Ruling Cartel itself. This could be termed the hegemonic range. A similar span of limitations can also be found in the activities of the Cartel think tanks and foundations. Even in the elite universities, professors who stray from the hegemonic ranges of their

disciplines--particularly if they are publicly outspoken and write in "unapproved" (non-Establishment) publications--frequently find themselves failing to receive tenure, or if tenured, they suffer various forms of penalties and harassment.

But the maintenance of hegemony is not something which is static or automatically built into the system, although the power is stacked on the side of the rulers. It is something at which the power structures at all levels must constantly work. Shielding the people from reality and fending off the counterhegemonies of the struggling masses is a difficult job which requires full-time effort.

The media are particularly crucial here because of the high acceptability and credibility by the public (especially for TV), and because of their pervasiveness. The airwaves are saturated with hegemonic ideology in both entertainment and news programming. Deviant employees are fired; censorship and distortion are rampant; newsrooms are hegemonically socialized; the authoritarian, corporate structure is used everywhere; news and events are trivialized and are dismembered from their total interconnected framework; and dissemination of disinformation from the CIA is more and more common. Pervading all this is the almost constant message of

acceptance of authority (Gerbner 1972 and 1977; Gerbner and Gross 1976).

The significance of comprehending hegemony is not just in understanding an important aspect of ruling class control. Knowing how the hegemonic process works instrumentally, it is easier to develop strategies to combat the system dominance and to provide countering information to the people through both Establishment and alternative media. The Structuralist ideas on the capitalist state's need to maintain legitimation and to promote accumulation are very instructive in understanding why the state and media function the way they do. However, the Structuralist position that the state functions relatively independently of and not just as a simple tool of thecapitalist class seems to be true in appearance more than in substance. As we have seen, it is the Cartel personnel who hold the key decision making positions in the government. Most of the laws and functions of government acivity support the interests of the institutions and individuals of the Cartel and its capitalist brethren.

The state may seem to be acting independently for several reasons. The first is ideological. As Schiller says (1973, 11,12), the people must believe that their political institutions are independent and are objectively

run for the benefit of everyone. If the government does not continually give the appearance of doing this, the democratic myths are exposed and fall apart.

Secondly, because within the Ruling Class there is a range of opinions and because there are other non-Cartel capitalists to contend with (such as the Hunts of Texas), the state must deal with these varying interests, particularly as they vary from one part of the country to another.

Third, the state is the focus of the struggles of the people through elections and special interest goups. Because the state must contend with these problems in addition to the contradictions within the system itself, it may seem that the state is independent of the capitalist economic system. But this is not the case. The use of the terms "public" and "private" sectors is a propagandistic illusion. The state is where the political and economic systems come together, and the government must work out certain problems for the benefit of the dominating forces of the system, including measures which are developed to contain the struggles of the people through a combination of consessions and repression.

Wolfe has a key insight in his analysis of American politics as an alienating system which extracts surplus

political energy from the people during their struggles. Because politics is an inside game of the capitalist class, opponents must exert tremendous efforts and resources even to obtain small victories, much less to maintain the status quo to retain gains previously fought for. So much effort goes into fighting the system, using the system's stacked rules and in the system's institutions, there is very little time, energy or money left over to establish true alternative institutions so that a serious destablization and challenge to the ruling class can be made. This is particularly true because politics does not touch the centers of power. It is next to impossible to develop a strong alternative third party, and access to mass media to directly disseminate alternative ideas is generally closed. And yet, even with all these disadvantages which the challengers of the system face, the Cartel leaders are very much concerned with these efforts of the people and with the predilection of the press to occasionally present some information on dissident activities and opinions.

The Marxian analysis of the legitimation crisis is crucial to understanding the twin necessities of the Ruling Class to closely control the key political and economic institutions, and to maintain exclusive dominance of the ideological institutions of society, particularly the mass

media. Because the economic system operates to the detriment of most of the people and because the political system is run by key capitalists for the primary benefit of themselves and their ilk, the legitimation crisis is a constant problem, particularly in hard economic times when the realities of the system can be seen with greater clarity by the people. As the legitimation crisis continues to spread and becomes more acute, the governmental rulers must resort to a combination of repression, increased propaganda and false crises in their attempts to manipulate public opinion so that the people will be supportive of Cartel policies (or at least to be apathetic or cowed) and to deflect domestic dissatisfaction.

As can be seen, there are many ideas and theories which are relevant and useful in developing a total picture of the U.S. power system and how it operates. It appears that at many points in the analyses of various writers the mass media play an important role. We will now assess media research and see how relevant it has been over the years, how it has been developing recently, and what needs to be accomplish.

6.2.2 MEDIA THEORY

As McAnany (1981, 4-15) states, although there has been considerable theorizing the past few decades regarding mass communications, it has been done in a vacuum. The state, the socio-economic system, and their relationships to the media and society have not been realistically and comprehensively described. Before this research is carried out and general societal theories are developed, no relevant communications theory can be provided.

After the first stage of constructing a macro view of society and the media are complete, McAnany believes the next step is one in which development of a micro view of the media and society is undertaken. This "process and relationships" stage looks at interrelationships and links in mass media institutions and at media systems. This dissertation is an attempt to take us through these first two stages.

Most media research has been done in response either to the requirements of the capitalist system or has uncritically taken for granted capitalism and its relationships in society. Research which looks critically, not just at mass communications, but the entire societal system, can result in a challenge to the system itself.

This type of more objective approach will undoubtedly bring down upon the writers the hostility of the defenders of the myths of both the existing political-economic system and the mass media.

The history of the development of mass communications theory shows different stages (Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott 1982). Following World War I the media were seen as pervasive and all-powerful, as evidenced by the successes of British pro-war propaganda in the U.S.. From the late 1940s through the 1960s a reverse evaluation was made. Based upon empirical studies it was indicated that the audience was not merely a mass of passive receptors of the media, but it actively interacted with them and brought different individual and group experiences, needs and information processing actions to the media experience. It was claimed that the media did not have so great an impact except to reinforce the opinions which audiences already held.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s this view was challenged from two sources. One was from researchers who looked at the old empirical data and came up with different conclusions, mainly that the media did have significant influence in a number of cases and situations. Additionally, these researchers stated that in view of the

great impact of the comparatively new medium of TV, the whole question of media effects chould be reevaluated.

The other new source of criticism of the old paradigm was the Marxists. They said that the previous research was fatally flawed because it was uncritically based on capitalist pluralism--a false perception and understanding of the real world. They said that the media are powerful, pervasive transmitters of ideology which is central to the maintenance of ruling class domination. However, as the years passed, the Marxists became more interested in empirical studies and in the complexities of ideology found at the level of the audience. As a result there was a shift away from the media as dominantly powerful, as was evident in the earlier Marxist critiques. But, in more recent years the shift of focus of media study has been made from the audience to the transmitters, i.e., the messages and how they were made and by whom. As Curran (1982, 17) stated, there were four "strands of interest:"

1. Institutional structures and role relationships
2. The political economy of media institutions
3. Professional ideologies and work practices
4. Interaction of media institutions with their socio-political environment.

These studies show that the ultimate power to shape media messages comes from the top of the corporate power system, and, therefore, the media ultimately serve the economic and power interests of the corporate elite.

The pluralists have stated that the media professionals are autonomous and work freely within a system which objectively reports the news. Marxists claim that the journalists are part of the system, subservient to the dominant ideology and that their work reflects this. Later trends seem to indicate that there are intermediate positions now being taken between these opposing views.

The fourth focus mentioned above shows that the media do not exist in a vacuum, but are part of the socio-political environment and interact with it. The news producers are therefore not just limited by the institutional and individual perimeters of possibilities within this framework, but also have a symbiotic relationship with these institutions. The pluralists see the media professionals and the power institutions as being in an equal position of mutual dependence. Marxists base their theory on the thesis that the economic base determines the nature of the other institutions in the superstructure. Therefore, they see the media as an integral part of the power system. By acting their role within the system, the

media reproduce the viewpoints of the dominant institutions.

A school of thought within Marxism began questioning this approach as being too rigid a basis for evaluating the media. In the late 1970s and 1980s some of the structuralists began looking at the media as part of a comprehensive system of inculcation and maintenance of ideology rather than as just actors within the political-economic power framework. Some writers reject the base-superstructure model and indicate that ideology is the main aspect of social cohesion, because it is ideology through which all people experience the world.

The structuralists were criticized by the political-economy oriented Marxists who said that ideology had no autonomous effectiveness. They claimed that ideology is the means through which the media are able to conceal and distort the real nature of society, thereby producing a combination of false consciousness in the people and legitimizing the system at the same time. The structuralists in turn criticized that position, saying that too much was assumed to follow naturally after showing that the economic base existed and that there was concentration of ownership and control of the media. A particular deficiency was that the political economy approach simply

left us with the simple view of the media as distorters of reality rather than actors in a complex ideological interactive framework.

Another Marxist approach has recently arisen--the culturalist. This school of thought places the prime media focus on the audience, partricularly the cultural setting and the individual experiences which people bring to the communications' interaction. The media and other phenomena of society are part of a "complex, expressive totality" (Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott 1982, 27). To the culturalist the study of how and by whom the messages are produced is not enough; the receivers are the ones who authenticate experience. The culturalists spend a great deal of time analyzing content, looking at semiological and linguistic aspects of the mass communications, assessing the hegemonic composition of the messages, and looking for contradictions.

The culturalists seem to have more in common with the pluralists such as Lazarsfeld than they do with Marxist thought. In fact, by completely deemphasizing political-economy the culturalists have almost squeezed Marx out of it. As a result, Hall has tried to combine the structuralist and culturalist approaches (Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott 1982).

The divergent opinions about the nature of the media and their place and function in society result greatly from the dual nature of the media: economic and ideological. The media are advertising institutions designed to create desires in the receivers of the messages and to motivate them to buy the products and services advertised. But ideology also permeates the press, overtly and covertly, in news as well as in entertainment. Both the economic and ideological aspects are mutually reinforcing.

But primary to both natures of the media is control. With control you can maintain dominance over both these functions. Because capitalists, particularly the Cartel, have control of the media, we get mainly capitalist ideology. Change the basic nature of the ecoonomic system and the media would present a different ideology. However, because the dominant ideology is so comprehensively hegemonic, it does take on a life and intertia of its own which make it difficult for people to accept either counter-ideologies or information on the realities of the system. This is reinforced by the dominant ideology being supported at all levels and phases of society: the workplace, educational institutions, family, churches, research organizations, government, and of course the media.

An yet, as the writers who discuss the legitimation crisis say, the people are increasingly questioning the system because of the contradictions in the system itself and the gap between reality and the myths and propaganda. It is possible that the dominant ideology could be significanly challenged if the masses of the people had easy access to alternative information from respected, authoritative sources, particularly if advances were also made on a broad range of subjects by individuals and groups challenging the system. The top Cartel people also recognize this.

Thus, it appears that the most realistic view of the media and society is compiled from certain aspects of most of these approaches, just as most of the power theorists have something relevant to add in developing the total picture of power structures. Even the writings of pluralists can be of value in showing various micro ways the system supposedly works. Even though these pluralist studies are handicapped by their false analyses (or lack of analysis) of the political-economic system, one can use these studies effectively after placing them in their proper ideological perspective. They can be used as small pieces in the great power structure-media puzzle.

Now that a comprehensive, empirical picture of the U.S.

power structure and mass media has been presented, theory building can begin with a more realistic analysis of what society is like, at least from the top down. There remains much to do in the way of reasearch, particularly in the area of the effect of the media on the people, especially in relationship to ideological hegemony. Some particularly interesting experiments could be made about the effect of counter-hegemonic information on people. A third fruitful area could be the success of usage and effect of public access in the presentation of alternative information. Fourth, the battle over public access at the national and local levels should be comprehensively chronicled so that the power structure responses to the new medium can be ascertained. It would be important to know the response of the people to viewing access. Is it different from regular TV? Are audience expectations different? Is it as credible as the regular media?

At a more macro scale there are many pressing questions regarding the media, power, society and the individual. Halloran (McAnany 1981) lists many subjects for inquiry, many dealing with the impending communications revolution. There is a terribly pressing urgency to accelerate the analysis of communications and society and to take immediate steps to intervene in the impending revolution before most

media and their relationships have been formed and solidified. If academics merely wait and see, then chart and analyze what has happened, it will be too late.

We are at an extremely significant juncture. The combination of computer technology and new communications capabilities is about to take off in a quantum jump which could very well transform society. Even now, the control of such technology is highly concentrated. The multinational corporate system would be impossible without instantaneous, widespread global communications, not only within their own organizations but with others. The international banking system is coordinated world wide, and nation states are almost helpless against it. (However, recently there are signs of the debtor nations' joining together to form a cartel in order to present a united front to the debt holding nations--especially the U.S.--and to exact some concessions, particularly to obviate the harsh terms of the IMF.) Labor unions are severely handicapped in combatting international capital because they do not have the organization or communication system to match their multinational corporate adversaries.

But this is minor compared with what can happen in the next ten to thirty years. Twin revolutions are occurring in communications delivery and in computers. Cable TV and

direct broadcast Satellites (DBS) can saturate individual and societal need and desire for informational channels and services. The impending development of "megacomputers" promises to give an enormously accelerated advantage to the possessors, perhaps more than England had in the early years of the Industrial Revolution. When the day of the "smart" and "teaching" computers arrives, the people, institutions and countries without them can be left far behind.

Thus, the question of control becomes absolutely critical. Who decides who is to have access to the super systems? Who will decide the software/content? Who will decide the use of the systems? Who will have access? Who will benefit?

The answers to these questions, and doubtless many more, cannot wait. Action must begin now. Communications and political strategies must be developed to counter the development, control and use of the new technology being concentrated in few hands.