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BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION AND MASS MEDIA NEWS LITERACY: A THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Juris Dilevko¹

This article suggests that bibliographic instruction (BI) librarians consider integrating a mass media news literacy and awareness component into their teaching duties. As the concentration of media power in the hands of a small number of corporate entities increases and as market-driven management imperatives dominate publishing practices, students should possess the skills to evaluate effectively and critically mass media sources such as mainstream newspapers and magazines. To this end, a theoretical framework for understanding mass media news influence is offered. The concepts of agenda setting, priming, framing, asymmetrical selection, binary oppositionalism, and institutional hegemony are explored in a survey of relevant literature from the fields of journalism and communications. A teaching strategy incorporating these concepts is sketched out. The strategy highlights one news event, and compares how different news sources report that event. Through such an exercise, students will be able to recognize how different news frames affect understanding of the topic in question. Ultimately, the successful BI program will be defined by the extent to which students move away from a passive reading of news media sources to a position where they are able to decode the social context of mainstream news production and develop informed and negotiated reading practices.

Introduction

In the past two decades, bibliographic instruction (BI) has become an important component of library reference work [1]. There has been a concomitant increase in the number of articles dealing with some aspect of BI [2]. Two main trends, the first much larger than the sec-

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ond, are evident in this literature. As Sherri Edwards has noted in her study of fifteen years of BI articles in library publications, "a clear majority of [these] articles continue to be position papers, status reports, and 'how-we-did-it-good' papers" describing the best ways to familiarize students with the intricacies of various print and electronic sources [2, p. 77]. At the same time, a relatively small number of researchers have called for the incorporation of critical thinking skills into BI classes, despite the "Model Statement of Objectives for Academic Bibliographic Instruction," published by the BI Task Force of the Association of College & Research Libraries in 1987. This statement recommended that one of the goals of BI should be to make users aware of "how information sources are structured" and how "the publisher's reputation may affect the usefulness of the source" [3, p. 258].

To be sure, influential voices have called for a strong focus on critical thinking skills in BI programs. Cerise Oberman believes that "analysis, synthesis, and evaluation must be overt educational goals" in BI if students are to end up with "the cognitive tools to make informed choices" [4, pp. 197–200]. In another article, Oberman cautions librarians against focusing too much on technology during BI classes, urging them instead to develop lessons which allow students the "opportunity to learn the politics of information" [5, p. 38]. Taylor Hubbard suggests that information must be studied "in the context of the academic discourse that creates it" [6, p. 439]. He states that BI librarians would do well to go back to Foucault's central question, raised in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), in order to structure their teaching efforts. Foucault's question is simple: "Who is speaking?" Asking this question would result in BI that is radically different from current practices. "If information has its roots in human activity and its expression in human action," Hubbard writes, "the questions of authority . . . are worth considering in what we teach about information" [6, p. 445]. A close examination of the assumptions underlying the text and its discourse should therefore play an essential part in teaching students about information sources, Hubbard believes. Diane Nahl-Jakobovits and Leon A. Jakobovits have developed a holistic approach to BI whose premise is that critical thinking skills must precede information retrieval, information use, and what they term "information success" [7, p. 79].

Some concrete applications of the critical thinking movement have recently appeared. For example, Virginia Chappell et al. discuss a series of library-based "Evaluating Sources Workshops," which make use of a number of historical and bibliographic sources about the meaning of war in society to help students "uncover the history and terms of inquiry for a given issue and thus introduce processes of inquiry that are knowledge-building, not merely library-using." The specific advan-

tage that these workshops enjoy is that they contextualize the text in order to make sense of it. This form of “rhetorical reading” thus “highlight[s] the sociorhetorical constraints on discourse . . . and help[s] students’ understanding of the rhetorical strategies involved in the forwarding of knowledge claims” [8, pp. 210–11]. In a similar vein, Sonia Bodi created an exercise which helps students distinguish between scholarship, defined as a “fair minded attempt to represent a point of view,” and propaganda, defined as a “deliberate attempt to mislead or exaggerate.” Some of the indicators of scholarship that she identifies are a willingness to describe the limits of the data, to present alternative views, to provide data that are not favorable to the preferred view, and to admit ignorance [9, pp. 22–23].

While BI librarians are right to concentrate on teaching students how to approach academic sources critically, it is nevertheless true that an important part of university-level research deals with mass media information sources—newspapers, magazines, and television. Yet library literature fails to deal specifically with the need to discuss with students critical thinking skills and strategies that they could apply to mass media news sources. However, as Len Masterman points out, the need for mass media education is pressing. He cites four main factors: (1) the all-pervasive presence of the Internet, television, radio, magazines, and newspapers in both private and public spheres; (2) the high consumption of these forms of media by the public; (3) the ability of the media to set agendas and to influence consciousness through their power of presenting issues and images in circumscribed ways; and (4) the rush to privatize information so that it becomes a commodity and hence subject to the supply and demand pressures of any ordinary commodity good in the private marketplace [10, p. 59]. Scholarship in the fields of journalism and communications theory, however, has provided a rich theoretical framework about the structure and workings of mass media news. Moreover, calls for renewed efforts to teach media awareness have recently given rise to a number of textbooks aimed at secondary-school and university-level educators [11, 12]. Librarians, especially those formally involved in BI activities, should also have some understanding of the issues involved in the development, structure, and influence of mass media news sources.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to provide a brief overview of mass media news theory that may be of use for BI librarians as background material when they create instructional exercises dealing with

the popular press. I also provide a short example of a possible teaching strategy that could be used to illustrate these theoretical concepts. The methodological approach adopted in this article takes as its starting point the work of Jurgen Habermas on the public sphere. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas argued that, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in Europe, there existed a true, if limited, public sphere, centered around coffee houses and salons, that encouraged political critiques of the status quo based on reason and sound argumentation. This dialogue, defined as “the pursuit of truth through an intersubjective dimension,” was compromised, however, by the emergence of monopoly capitalism, represented by the commercialization of the press, in which “specialized journalists who were governed by the private interests of the proprietor” replaced rational public discourse [13, pp. 49–50]. In addition, Habermas suggests that, because capitalism was very good at framing all issues “as essentially technical or strategic questions, questions of the most effective means by which a given end can be attained,” society as a whole was unable to address those issues that had “to do not with means, but with ends” and standards of conduct [14, p. 19]. In effect, capitalism portrayed itself as the normative social system, and its dominance was achieved unconsciously through what Louis Althusser labeled the concrete social processes embodied in the “ideological state apparatus”—family, school, church, and media [15, p. 24]. These processes, by definition, are ubiquitous, and therefore vastly influential in the lives of individuals. This article thus privileges what Denis McQuail identifies as the dominance-mediation model of mass communication, in which an elite class has a concentrated ownership stake in a standardized, routinized, and controlled media whose selective content is decided from “above” and whose main thrust is confirmative of the existing social order [16, p. 68].

I survey the numerous interconnected strands of this theory, fully realizing that there is an opposite tradition, called the pluralist model [17, pp. 20–21], which argues that “competing political, social, and cultural interests and groups” are responsible for bringing forth numerous independent media voices that offer competing and diverse views that are “responsive to audience demand” [16, p. 68].² As

2. The liberal-pluralist model has, in the United States, been based on policies codified by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The ASNE expects its members to serve the “general welfare” by enabling people “to make judgments about issues of the time, be independent from vested interests, be impartial in the sense of making ‘a clear distinction between news reports and opinion,’ and to practice fair play by having ‘respect for the rights of people involved in the news . . . and giving opportunities for reply’ ” [18, pp. 38–39, 50–51]. The FCC imposes

John B. Thompson [19, pp. 75, 94, 118] convincingly demonstrates, there is no question that, on balance, the proliferation of newspapers, magazines, and electronic broadcast outlets has created “new forms of interaction, new kinds of visibility and new networks of information diffusion in the modern world.” Because these diverse media allow modern individuals “to interact with others and observe persons and events without ever encountering them in the same spatial-temporal locale,” people have not only extended the heretofore circumscribed “space-time frameworks of their everyday lives” but also developed the ability to negotiate between numerous and different space-time frameworks in such a way as to “relat[e] their mediated experience of other times and places back to the contexts” of their ordinary lives. One result of this is that news media have helped to create “a world in which fields of interaction can become global in scale and the pace of social change can be accelerated by the speed of information flows” [19, pp. 75, 94, 118]. A positive aspect of the exponential expansion of media forms is that what were formerly localized struggles to express a viewpoint or complaint have now been universalized and “constituted as struggles for visibility within the non-localized space of mediated publicness.” As the civil rights and women’s movements eloquently bear witness, “the struggle to make oneself heard or seen . . . is not a peripheral aspect of the social and political upheavals of the modern world; on the contrary, it is central to them” [19, pp. 246–47].

To be sure, the dominance-mediation model is highly critical of the ability of news media organizations to offer an independent and diverse view of world events, but it is precisely this quality of skepticism that should make this model attractive to BI librarians. After all, BI practitioners spend a great deal of time showing students how to evaluate critically such academic sources as scholarly serials, monographs, subject databases, and reference works. Accordingly, it only seems logical that this same critical attitude should be adopted with respect to mass media news sources, and it is the dominance-mediation model that provides a powerful set of tools for BI librarians to work with as they attempt to find the best ways to teach academic library users about the intricacies of mass media news.

A likely question at this point would be, Is it more powerful and useful than the pluralist model? I believe that the answer is yes, and

on its licensee the obligation to make “diligent, positive, and continuing” efforts to “discover and fulfil the tastes, needs, and desires of [the] service area” through particular attention to maintaining balance “between various interest groups in respect of some controversial policy issue” and to ensuring heterogeneity and diversity [18, pp. 38–39, 50–51].

for the following two reasons. First, the overwhelming amount of information presented daily to the public has, according to theorists such as Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard, made that information into a series of commodified images and representations that are mere simulations because they are divorced from their social context. In short, these images have become thinglike spectacles, to be consumed as if they were any other object. As Nick Stevenson observes, "The problem is that the spectacle gives human misery and suffering the appearance of unreality." The proliferation of images becomes a wall of "enforced distraction" so that the individual becomes "deep frozen" beneath "the cacophony of information flows" [13, pp. 147–48, 157]. Thus, those very aspects of the liberal-pluralist model—diversity and a lack of bias—that potentially make it a motor for social change also create the conditions for passive consumption of undifferentiated informational representations.³

Second, the dominance-mediation model, broadly speaking, holds that the media have powerful effects on those consuming it, so much so that fundamental challenges to existing social structures are frustrated and marginalized. The pluralist tradition subscribes to an "active-audience" approach, which states that mass media have minimal effects on people, that individuals are able to pick and choose what they want from the mass media, especially television, and that, moreover, they make use of numerous private strategies which allow them to construct their own interpretation of events [21, 22]. In this approach, the media—no longer monolithic, as a result of the proliferation of electronic and print choices—have only a limited effect because heterogeneous members of the audience actively engage with media images, negotiating independent meanings based on their own unique experiences.⁴

3. Another criticism of the dominance-mediation model is that it has been superseded by recent developments in electronic technologies such as the Internet. On this reading, the increased channel capacity (whether through television or web sites) has led to audience fragmentation; this situation is termed "the new media environment" in which unlimited channels of communication offer content "on a timetable of the individual's choosing." The concept of a "mass audience" that can be simultaneously targeted and influenced thus disappears. However, as James Webster and Patricia Phalen point out, it has been erroneously assumed that the creation of a mass audience presupposed "simultaneous delivery" of media content. But this "temporal restriction" is not necessary, since advertisers, for example, spend a great deal of time trying to reconstitute the fragmented groups into a mass commodity "by aggregating it across time" (20, pp. 65–66, 100, 114).
4. In a certain sense, this line of thinking is an outgrowth of Paul Lazarsfeld's work in the 1940s and 1950s in which he argued that Americans paid little attention to mass media, that most information originally broadcast by mass media is received through one or more layers of opinion leaders by word-of-mouth messages, and that these messages are more or less accepted or discarded on the basis of the prior belief systems of the people receiving

While this may be true for specific cultural products viewed or read in a delimited time and space, proponents of the “active audience” approach neglect the effect of what Lai-si Tsui terms “the combination of various cultural means in the existing totalizing information-cultural environment” [24, p. 163]. In addition, the emphasis on the ability of the individual to “negotiate” meaning when confronted with mass media does not take into account the fact that “negotiation takes places between parties who are aware that negotiations are occurring and of what’s at stake” [25, p. 14]. It also does not take into account the sheer size and corporate ownership structure of the news and information media—factors that skew any attempt at a balance of power. As William Seaman argues, unless people are “genuinely aware of the sorts of information, perspectives, analyses, beliefs and images that are systematically filtered out of the mainstream media, it is simply wrong” to suggest that they are “truly free in their decisions to act” and to negotiate meanings. Insofar as they have been manipulated by a “system of causal constraints,” they must at least have some knowledge of the assumptions undergirding that system of exclusion and inclusion in order to orient themselves in it and to undertake negotiations from an equal position of power [26, p. 307].

If BI is to teach, as Oberman recommends, the “politics of information” [5, p. 38], then it is important to understand the broad sociopolitical context in which mass media news operates and how this context affects content. The dominance-mediation model is particularly good at describing the connections and hidden relationships that form this sociopolitical context and that, ultimately, form a combinatorial and totalizing information environment. It has the advantage of creating, in the individual reader or viewer, an interlocutory perspective that is the necessary precursor to any act of negotiation. In other words, since the mass media news apparatus has an “enormous advantage in the struggle over meaning” because of its very ubiquity [25, p. 14], knowledge of some of the directions and thinking prevalent in dominance-mediation research may allow the individual student, first, to realize that a process of negotiation ought to take place when she reads or views mass media and, second, to be able to undertake that negotiation armed with a

the messages. It has been pointed out, however, that a hidden political agenda was behind Lazarsfeld’s development of minimal effects theory. Namely, it served to legitimize American democracy in the immediate postwar years. “Not only were the media not very influential, it was found too that opinion leaders were not necessarily the wealthy and the powerful high-status members of society. Different people were the leaders of opinion in different areas of choice—power was in no way concentrated in the hands of any particular group or elite. The pluralist idea of power dispersed across the population was apparently verified” (from D. Barrat, *Media Sociology*, quoted in [23, pp. 40–41]).

number of tools that may permit her to detect some of its conscious or unconscious biases. Taken as a whole, the insights from journalism and communication theory that constitute this critical model can be the foundation for developing mass media news literacy skills in BI classrooms.

An Overview of Critical Media Theory

Corporate Control of Media

Ben Bagdikian [27] has provided compelling evidence about concentrated corporate ownership of mass media newspapers, magazines, and television in the United States. The total number of corporations dominating all major media, including motion pictures and book publishing, is twenty-three. Fourteen corporations dominate the daily newspaper industry, while only three dominate magazine publishing [28, 29]. Dennis Mazzocco [30] identifies the interlocking corporate ties that permeate the television and radio industries. Neil Hickey [31] discusses the far-reaching implications of media cross-ownership. In the wake of the Telecommunications Act (1996), which raised the maximum market penetration for one media company from 25 percent to 35 percent of all households nationwide, mergers that further increase market consolidation have been frequent. For instance, one firm, the Tribune Company, will now own sixteen television stations nationally, accounting for market penetration in 33.4 percent of American households. In radio, the top three conglomerates own 244 stations nationally; after a recent merger, the biggest chain, Westinghouse, has 32 percent of advertising revenue in the ten biggest U.S. markets [32]. Mark Crispin Miller [33] documents even more increased media concentration and cross-ownership with the formation of such huge information-entertainment colossi as General Electric–NBC, Time Warner–Turner Broadcasting, and Disney–ABC. Chris Barker [34] charts the rise of global television networks, especially that of Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation, and describes how these multimedia giants have become conduits for “a one-way flow of news” selected by transnational corporations, flowing from and reflecting the narrative, symbolical, and ideological concerns of the developed world. These attempts at industry “synergy,” in which one corporation owns broadcasting outlets, print media, and entertainment properties, creates the potential that organizational marketing imperatives will dictate news content and emphasis.

Ralph Negrine [35] presents similar statistics for Britain, where five corporate groups control almost 100 percent of the so-called daily “popular” papers and some 60 percent of the “qualities.” In Australia,

only four ownership conglomerates control all state and metropolitan and national dailies [23]. In Canada, eleven publishers control ninety-five of 106 daily newspapers. One chain, Hollinger, Inc., which also has significant ownership stakes in print media properties in Britain and Australia, controls fifty-eight papers by itself. From the vantage point of circulation, conglomerates sell 93 percent of the total 5.3 million daily newspapers in Canada; three chains control 72 percent of circulation [36–38]. Distribution channels are also dominated by corporate entities. James Sterngold [39] relates how “emerging behemoths” are in the process of ensuring control of “about 90 percent of the business of supplying magazines to supermarkets and other retail chains.” There is widespread concern that smaller titles and niche publications will be delisted as large distribution wholesalers concentrate only on profitable journals.

In the new medium of the Internet, agent-based customizable news gathering services that deliver selected items to individual computer users are becoming more popular. Although these services may seem at first blush to offer extremely personalized news because the user herself sets the retrieval criteria, they still rely on the content generated by the same corporate content providers active in print and television [40].⁵ As Edward Herman and Robert McChesney make clear, the developing model for the World Wide Web is an elite commercial “web within the web,” where the major media firm websites have “assured recognition and audiences” and where “less well-endowed websites drift off to the margins.” This model, they argue, will become entrenched with the further propagation of a concept called “push technology,” in which preselected “channels” (websites) are broadcast directly to personal computers [42, pp. 124–25]. Already many major media conglomerates are present on Microsoft Explorer’s “Active Desktop.” John Markoff [43] notes that such prime placement on the browser screen, in addition to being “tantamount to an advertisement,” means that the sites of these companies “will get even heavier traffic.” Ken Auletta [44] traces the numerous interlocking links between Microsoft and five other American media companies, showing how they collaborate, through joint ventures and horizontal cross-ownership stakes, in providing much of the world’s entertainment and information. The homogenization of content, he notes, is in danger

5. For instance, CNN offers a personalized news service called CNN Custom News that, at the end of 1997, drew on approximately one hundred ten news sources [41]. However, only six of these sources could be considered to be alternative or independent media (the *Nation*, *Mother Jones*, *Harper’s*, *Africa News Service*, *InterPress Network*, and *Environmental News Network*), while some forty-seven of the sources were business publications.

of leading to a form of cultural imperialism. For all these reasons, Herman and McChesney conclude that “the substantive content of this commercial media in the Internet or any subsequent digital communication” will not resemble a public sphere outside of corporate control; rather, quoting Frank Beacham, they foresee that the bright promise of a participatory medium has already become “a broadcast medium where corporations deliver consumer-oriented information” [42, p. 135].

Cultivation Theory and Agenda Setting

The figures summarized above suggest that corporate control of media outlets is a well-established fact. Nevertheless, should such domination be viewed in a negative light? Some survey evidence exists that corporate control is counteracted by the liberal biases of the reporters covering the news [45, 46]. But James Lemert argues that the preoccupation with biases caused by the political ideology of individuals fails to account for the “genuine, systematic, institutional biases” [47, p. 23] permeating the journalistic craft. Two complementary research avenues within the critical media effects model explore these biases. The first—centered around cultivation theory, agenda setting, and agenda-priming studies—concentrates on the power exercised by the media on the individual. The second pathway focuses on the ways in which work routines, organizational prerogatives, and hegemonic ideology—all external forces—shape the news even before it is disseminated to a vast audience.

The claim that print and broadcast media set the agenda for what viewers and readers think about, believe, and consider to be of primary importance may be traced back to cultivation theory [23, pp. 44–48]. This theory argues that television in particular is extremely influential in determining what people believe and assume about the external world [48]. It is an outgrowth of the work done by George Gerbner and various colleagues in a project called Cultural Indicators. Starting in 1967, they recorded week-long samples of network television drama programming and subjected these samples to content analyses. They then asked randomly selected individuals with differing television viewing habits to make statements about numerous aspects of social reality. On a consistent basis across many sets of experiments and interviews, and controlling for other demographic variables, television viewing makes “independent contributions to viewer conceptions of social reality” [49]. In other words, television has the effect of reiterating, confirming, nourishing, and cultivating its own values and perspectives. Hawkins and Pingree [50] have termed this the cultivation of “value systems,” whereby the steady messaging absorbed through continued

exposure to mass media content shapes belief systems and ideological approaches to the world. Indeed, there is a clear mainstreaming effect, where “heavy viewing may . . . override differences in perspectives and behavior that ordinarily stem from other factors and influences” [49, p. 28].

The early work of cultivation theory focused on the cumulative effects of repeated television watching of drama programs, but it has recently expanded in order to consider how cultivation is mediated by such factors as personal experience, interpersonal relationships, demographics, and specific programs and genres [48]. This notion of cumulation undergirded what has come to be known as agenda-setting research, which examines whether long-term and repeated exposure to certain types of news stories has an effect on those thus exposed. The central thrust of agenda setting rests on the premise that the amount of space or time devoted to an issue by media outlets can be measured, and this measurable amount will be positively correlated with the importance individuals attach to social and political issues. As Qualter [51] points out, it does not so much matter which particular viewpoint the media takes on any individual issue; rather, it is the very fact that the media has determined that a specific issue is part of the daily or weekly agenda.

Some two hundred studies about the agenda-setting role of the print media have appeared in the last twenty-five years [52]. In the first such study, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw [53] examined the effect of print sources on undecided voters living in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, during the 1968 presidential elections. Using content analysis of the media these people employed in their daily lives and constructing a rank order of salient issues, McCombs and Shaw found that the political agenda of these voters was determined by the agenda of the media they read and watched. The 1968 findings were replicated during the 1972 election, using a sample of voters from Charlotte, North Carolina. Cross-lagged correlations provided evidence “to infer a causal relationship” between print media (but not television) content in June and voters’ ranking of important issues in October just before the presidential election [54]. Studies focusing on other aspects of public life besides elections have also found a substantial correspondence between what the media deemed important and what the public thought were the most significant problems facing the nation [55–57].

Marc Benton and Jean Frazier [58] noted that agenda setting by print media works beyond general issue naming; it also functions at the level where respondents mention specific problems, causes, proposed solutions, and pro-con rationales for proposals. Aileen Yagade and David Dozier [59] detected a variation in the power of agenda setting,

determining that media coverage of concrete issues (e.g., drug abuse) is more prone to agenda-setting effects than coverage of abstract issues. Lutz Erbring, Edie Goldenberg, and Arthur Miller [60, p. 19, 44] created a more nuanced version of the agenda-setting model, one that included "for each particular issue, individual/collective audience characteristics and/or real-world conditions likely to affect issue salience." Nevertheless, they concluded that "primary media coverage of a new issue clearly provides the initial impetus for a more pervasive secondary diffusion based on informal communication." In essence, the topics of conversation among groups of acquaintances are originally stimulated by media outlets, although in time this informal secondary diffusion will become the chief means of information dissemination. The conclusions of this study complement the work of Donald Shaw and Shannon Martin [61], who were able to offer evidence that increased use of mass media leads to increased group consensus, within similar gender, racial, age, and education-level subgroups, on issues of public concern.

Beyond Agenda Setting: Institutional Sources of Power

But, as Oscar Gandy [62] relates, agenda-setting research is subject to a whole host of caveats. Different variables and different contingent conditions lead to results that display varying strengths of relationship between media content and the public agenda. He lists numerous other methodological concerns, ranging from the effect of an increased number of items in a rank list to the debate over the ideal temporal relationship between a media and public real-world agenda, that have bedeviled agenda researchers. In addition to focusing on the "lack of enhancing or limiting variables," Gerald Kosicki draws attention to the possibility that agenda setting is merely agenda reflection of important problems and suggests more concerted study of the opinions people hold before and after exposure to media reports [63, pp. 108–10]. Accordingly, these two authors believe that agenda-setting research may only be considered as a necessary first step to a complete understanding of media power. Following Gerbner, Gandy suggests that media content must be used to draw inferences about "managerial assumptions" on the basis of "consistencies or patterns of attention and emphasis that characterize some sources and not others" [62, p. 267]. Kosicki urges a thorough examination of "the conditions under which media content is decided" and "the process by which issues are defined and popularized" [63, pp. 111, 118]. McCombs [64] also understands that agenda-setting research should move beyond determining the source of the public agenda to discovering who sets the news agenda. What is needed, he believes, is an "institutional process analysis" of the production of an object, in this case a newspaper or

magazine. Moreover, that object, as all other physical objects, possesses a socially constructed “symbolic structure” that may be decoded. And, to the extent that “regularity in content” is a defining feature of media outlets, it is proper to delve into the “various institutional pressures imposed on the media by various sources of power” that give rise to that regularity [62, p. 268].

What are these sources of power? Pamela Shoemaker and Steven Reese [65] identify a number of levels of influence, including media routines, organizational economic goals, and ideology. W. Lance Bennett [66] offers an insightful analysis of how the daily work routines and professional norms of journalists contribute to news bias. He details the insurmountable pressures reporters face to cooperate with official sources, lest they be denied information later; the “insider” syndrome that favors official views; formula writing and standardization; group pressure on reporters to submit similar stories; and the propensity of the media to give prominence to fully controlled or partially controlled news situations. One inevitable media routine is the constant looming of deadlines. As Herbert Gans demonstrates, newsmakers are well aware of the time constraints faced by journalists and thus work to provide both “available” and “suitable” material that will make reporters’ lives less frantic [67, pp. 81–91].

The principle of journalistic balance too functions as an inhibitor of real understanding. Herbert Altschull claims that the code of objectivity is limited “largely to criticisms of individuals [while] fundamental institutions are beyond the frontiers of censure” [68, p. 67]. Stephen Reese and Bob Buckalew [69], focusing on the media treatment of anti-Persian Gulf War protestors, dissected the way in which the practice of giving both sides of an issue equal time and space functions to marginalize viewpoints not consonant with current established thought. They describe how a large, well-organized antiwar rally in Texas was given equal treatment with a much smaller and more disorganized prowar demonstration, as well as how the relatively brief appearance of the spokesperson for the antiwar side was juxtaposed with the patriotic and emotionally wrought sister of an active-duty serviceman. Analyzing the *New York Times* op-ed treatment of the U.S. decision to go to war with Iraq, Benjamin Page [70] outlines how a seemingly diverse collection of opinions in reality was not only a “narrow band” of thought that “mirrored official debate.” He argues that the editors constructed the debate about Iraq around their own centrist viewpoint by failing to admit to the op-ed columns’ voices of real dissent such as labor officials, peace advocates, and radicals.

In addition, the creation of “beat” reporting is an answer to the economic imperative of efficiently filling the daily “news hole.” Reporters must be assigned “to events and beats that are sure to produce

enough acceptable stories to fill up the news hole by the day's deadline" in an efficient and predictable manner.⁶ Reliance on sources and routine channels is therefore high. Leon Sigal [72] has shown, through a content analysis of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, that either domestic or foreign government officials provided 77 percent of all news content; only about 15 percent of all news came from non-governmental sources. In addition, about 80 percent of all news stories are derived from source-controlled situations such as press conferences, interviews, press releases, and official proceedings. In a famous study, William Hoynes and David Croteau [73] demonstrated that two influential television news shows, *Nightline* and the *McNeil/Lehrer News-Hour*, overwhelmingly favored a tightly knit circle of white conservative males representative of elite status quo opinion as guest commentators and experts on the issues of the day. Similar conclusions were reached by Jane Brown, Carl Bybee, Stanley Wearden, and Dulcie Straughan [74] in their examination of national and local papers in 1979–80. They found that not only more than half of the sources employed in all surveyed front-page news stories were governmental but also that only 4 percent of sources were ordinary citizens. Further, they detected, in examining the organizational status of sources, a heavy reliance on business executives. Finally, they found that only 10 percent of the quoted sources were women. Steven McShane [75], studying source bias in a large sample of U.S. and Canadian business magazines, found a massive overrepresentation of male business executives as sources in almost all occupational groups, together with a marked tendency to favor spokespeople from northeastern population centers. The resulting picture is one of heavy dependence on male elite sources in news coverage, which legitimizes an existing power structure and vitiates claims of pluralism.

6. Phyllis Kaniss, exploring how the culture of the local newsroom leads to superficial news coverage, notes that in-depth investigations of complex events are often not undertaken because reporters fear infringing on the territory of the writer "within whose beat the story technically falls" [71, p. 95]. Lack of release time to work on investigative projects and a weak institutional memory caused by a high turnover rate among beat reporters are two other factors that detrimentally influence the quality of local reporting. Her *Making Local News* is an indispensable and nuanced examination of the many pressures confronting local newsrooms as they try to find answers to "the dilemma of how to overcome the fragmentation of local identity that has occurred with suburbanization in order to find news and major issues of common interest to their diverse and dispersed audiences" (p. 221). Most recently, a *New York Times Sunday Magazine* cover story described the difficulties that a television station in Orlando, Florida, is experiencing as it tries to reorient its local newscasts away from an emphasis on violence and sensationalism and toward coverage that explores, in a thoughtful fashion, public policy issues. See Michael Winerip, "Looking for an 11 O'Clock Fix," *New York Times* (January 11, 1998), sec. 6, pp. 31+.

The Theory of Framing

Elite governmental and business sources thus are able to “frame” news issues so that their interests and concerns are reproduced. Robert Entman has defined framing as “select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” [76, p. 52]. Todd Gitlin sees media frames as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual” [77, p. 7]. Bennett discusses the way in which four basic tenets of journalism provide structural frames that bias any news story. The move toward personalized news obscures structural issues and offers the public incentive to eschew in-depth analysis by offering “vicarious psychological relationships” [66, p. 51]. Dramatizing the news has a similar effect, as it emphasizes immediate and often personal conflict that mitigates against true understanding of inherently complex issues whose roots may go back years and even decades. News fragmentation isolates individual items so that a clear picture of interconnections is difficult. Finally, news normalization functions by bringing to the fore reassuring pronouncements that all problems and situations can be resolved.

The result is image making through such processes as message composition, controlled access, staged events, and spin control. Intimidation is not unknown. For example, Michael Massing [78] documents the story of how the Reagan administration was upset at news reports on the El Salvador political crisis written by Ray Bonner. Bonner had developed his own sources among rebel leaders fighting the American-backed government and did not choose to use official U.S. government-supplied press releases. After high-level intervention, Bonner was quickly replaced by a reporter with no experience in Central American affairs. The tenor of news coverage immediately changed to reflect U.S. national security interests.

Empirical studies have revealed the same type of framing process. Conrad Smith [79] examined coverage of the Exxon Valdez oil spill by the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Anchorage Daily News*. The majority of the sources employed by these papers represented governmental personnel, on both the federal and state level, and executives of the American oil industry, all of whom had “an interest in defining the event for the news media in ways that obscured some of its past activities that may have made the spill and subsequent ineffective cleanup efforts more likely” (p. 393). Sandra Dickson [80] investigated major newspaper coverage of the Nicaraguan

conflict and found that about half of all sources cited were official government sources who had a stake in the outcome; “contra” sources were rarely cited. And when there was critical coverage, this criticism “centered primarily on the means of achieving stated U.S. policy goals rather than on the appropriateness of the policy itself.” Daniel Hallin, Robert Manoff, and Judy Weddle found an “extreme” dominance, in reporting on national security issues, of statist government sources who are implicated in the military and intelligence bureaucracies [81, p. 763]. Dickson [82] also studied the U.S. invasion of Panama and its coverage in the *New York Times*. Although the paper did indeed provide a forum for criticism, it nevertheless allowed the government to define the parameters of the debate. Janet Steele explained how reporters covering the Persian Gulf War selected sources on the basis of “operational bias” that stressed the views of a tight coterie of experts who “framed the conflict in a narrowly technical and logistical interpretive context” [83, p. 809]. Carol Liebler and Jacob Bendix [84] examined broadcast coverage of the old-growth forest and spotted owl controversy in Oregon, Washington, and California. They found that source use and reporter wrap-ups predominantly reflected the procut frame to the detriment of the prosave side.

Sourcing Practices

When journalists do go beyond official governmental sources, they rely to a great extent on theoretically independent think tanks and foundations. But here, too, a clear bias is evident. Eric Alterman [85] and Michael Dolny [86] offer statistics drawn from a 1995 database search of Lexis/Nexis to show that even so-called liberal-oriented writers and reporters cite conservative sources substantially more than they do liberal/progressive sources. For instance, William Kristol, a leading conservative intellectual, was cited 1,095 times in the national press in 1995, far and away the leader in this regard. The American daily and weekly press cited the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, the Cato Institute, the RAND Corporation, and the Hoover Institute—all conservative think tanks—a total of 7,792 times in 1995, whereas readily identifiable progressive think tanks such as the Economic Policy Institute, the Institute for Policy Studies, Worldwatch, the Joint Center for Political Studies, and the Center for Defense Information received 1,152 citations, less than a sixth of the conservative total. The Heritage Foundation alone received almost twice as many citations (2,268) as the combined total of the progressive foundations. Centrist think tanks were cited 6,361 times. Thus, when centrist and conservative citations are added together, their cumulative weight is more than ten times that of progressive/liberal voices. In Canada, Clive Thomp-

son [87] describes how the right-wing Fraser Institute has not only succeeded in manipulating mainstream newspapers and radio but has also produced a \$2.5 million five-year media plan to penetrate even further into print outlets by providing syndicated columns and news releases to “downsized, overworked editors.” Clearly, a small spectrum of official and conservative news sources dominates the pages of influential newspapers.

Krishna Rau [88] has identified yet another way in which conservative foundations are unduly influencing the direction of press debate. Simply put, they are providing start-up funds and continuing operating expenses for a number of magazines, journals, and think-tank publications that purport to offer objective and independent thought. She relates, for instance, the impact of the Donner Foundation in the creation of the Canadian quarterly the *Next City* and the interlocking set of ties that bind some of the key authors writing for that journal to large-circulation mainstream Canadian publications.

Gandy [89] coined the term “information subsidy” to describe the growing dependence of the mass media on press releases and other public relations efforts by various organizations. The result is what Ian Ward [23] terms “manipulated journalism.” Because such subsidies are less expensive than enterprise or investigative reporting efforts, they are looked on in a positive light by media entities. William Martin and Michael Singletary’s study [90] tracked some two-hundred press releases issued by a governmental department. They found 497 stories that were largely based on the releases, including 20 percent that were verbatim reports. Judy Turk [91] followed press releases from a number of Louisiana governmental departments and discovered that fully half were subsequently used as the basis of stories in eight local papers. John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton [92] have detailed the numerous and sophisticated ploys public relations departments of private companies have used to manipulate reporters and cause them to be more favorable to industry-generated news releases and business points of view. Yet another instance of information subsidy is the increased use of attributed reports that were originally gathered by another news organization. For instance, Daniel Riffe, Charles Aust, Rhonda Gibson, Elizabeth Viall, and Huiuk Yi [93] used content and trend analysis to show that, although foreign news coverage in the *New York Times* has decreased significantly in the past decade, reliance on the reporting of others has significantly increased.

Economic Imperatives

Another central determinant of news coverage is the primacy bestowed on economic goals by media organizations. In addition to corporate

control of the news media, there is a broad corporatization ethos. As C. Edwin Baker shows, the influence of advertising is pervasive, especially since an increasing proportion of mass media revenue streams come from advertising dollars. While advertisers discourage "partisan positions on controversial issues," they encourage the adoption of the commonsense perspectives of the affluent citizen that favor "a view of most societal problems as nonsystemic and resolvable by good-faith individual initiative" [94, pp. 44–70].

The fear of the potential loss of advertising by important local industries is particularly keen. Kevin Swisher and Stephen Reese [95] looked at how newspapers in tobacco- and nontobacco-growing regions framed their headlines differently when dealing with events of particular concern to the tobacco industry. They determined that headlines in tobacco regions gave substantially less emphasis to behind-the-scenes machinations of the tobacco industry to control and limit federal efforts at tobacco regulation than did headlines in northern and western states. Coverage of antismoking crusades was also curtailed in tobacco regions in comparison with other areas, and coverage of prosmoking events was proportionally heavier. Lauren Kessler [96] detected a relationship between advertising by tobacco conglomerates in six women's magazines and the presence or absence of editorial content discussing the dangers of smoking. Although all of the magazines devoted many pages to general health issues and all accepted tobacco conglomerate advertising, there was almost no coverage of the specific harm done by smoking.

Robert Hays and Ann Reisner [97] surveyed reporters who work for farm journals and found that 66 percent knew of instances where their journal was threatened by advertisers and half knew of instances where advertisements had actually been withdrawn because of a story. Doug Underwood [98], citing specific cases in St. Louis and Oregon, summarizes how newspapers across the United States have foregone stories that could cast negative light on their major advertisers. He also highlights common practices such as the commissioning of feature length stories about the virtues of companies that coincidentally happen to have large advertising accounts with the newspaper or magazine in question as well as the growing trend to joint news and marketing promotions. The expansion of business sections relative to other sections may also be seen as part of this trend, as can the insertion of advertorials compiled and written by the publication's staff writers.

Beyond the relatively straightforward advertising issue lies the fact that the newspapers and magazines are for-profit entities ultimately responsible to boards of directors and shareholders. The underlying philosophies and guiding principles of management therefore have a sub-

stantial effect on the way the news is gathered and presented. The tone is set at the very top, where the concerns of a cohesive group of corporate leaders dominate. Peter Drier and Steven Weinberg [99] demonstrate that the top twenty-five U.S. newspaper companies controlling over 50 percent of the nation's circulation have direct "interlocking directorships" with some 200 other large corporations. James Winter [100] identifies a similar situation in Canada, where the presence of executives of financial and insurance institutions on newspaper boards is particularly noticeable. Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky [101] point out that banks and other large institutional investors own some 44 percent of the shares of publicly owned newspapers and 35 percent of broadcasting stock. These circumstances may in part be responsible for increasing instances of news self-censorship, whether for fear of prolonged and expensive law suits or fear of external institutional pressure. As Shoemaker and Reese note, "Deciding where organizational boundaries stop in this complex network of interlocking interests can be very hard indeed" [65, p. 144].

While profit has always been a concern of newspaper and magazine owners, the trend toward chain- and cross-ownership of media outlets has made it the primary focus. Underwood [98] and John McManus [102] present voluminous evidence suggesting how so-called market-driven journalism has become the norm in newsrooms. Underwood's discussion turns on two main points. First, newspapers are no longer run by editors steeped in journalistic practice but by graduates of management schools whose central motivation is tight administrative oversight and relentless attention to profit maximization. Second, organizational structures have been changed so that news and advertising departments have become seamless wholes. Sterngold [103] and Iver Peterson [104] point to the recent reorganization at the *Los Angeles Times* that will allow "editors and journalists to consult regularly with advertising and marketing executives, breaching a wall that has long separated the two" [103, p. C11] as a disturbing continuation of a trend stressing financial performance instead of editorial integrity. McManus' focus is on television, but his analysis also reveals that media firms "will seek to produce a mix of news content that attracts the largest possible audience at the least cost" (p. 71). After closely studying four network affiliates, he concludes that decisions about what is and is not newsworthy are filtered through a money-making crucible and that, as a result, consumers are likely to learn less from the news, to be misled, to become more apathetic about politics, and to find themselves at the mercy of manipulative news sources [102, pp. 71, 184-97]. Saul Hansell [105] describes how "some of the biggest news organizations have begun linking advertisements to news on their

World Wide Web sites" so that, for example, ads for giant online bookstores offer to sell books "tied directly to the topic of the news stories they abut." Thus, even within the new electronic media, there is danger that the independence of news reporting could suffer as "publishers and advertisers become more intertwined."

As Susan Faludi [106] observes, market-driven journalism has meant a reorientation of newspapers toward consumer and lifestyle issues as publishers chase what they perceive to be an eroding readership base. She terms this "the malling of the media," where surveys determine what stories will appear and where a tabloidization mindset ensures a steady stream of trivial and entertainment-based information. Shoemaker and Reese [65] review studies that show editorial meetings to be routinely attended by marketing and promotion managers. McManus calls attention to the importance of demographics for market-driven journalism, which, he says, is characterized by an almost exclusive attention to the concerns "of the wealthy and young over the poor and old because news selection must satisfy advertisers' preferences" [102, p. 197].

Not surprisingly, market-driven journalism is often characterized by a lack of financial commitment to news-gathering functions. Kimberley Fradgley and Walter Niebauer [107] conclude that newspaper reporting patterns are substantially different between corporate and independent newspapers in England. Independents cover stories requiring more "reportorial effort," have more staff-bylined articles, and use more enterprise news sources. David Coulson and Anne Hansen [108] offer similar findings from their study of a previously independent newspaper in Louisville taken over by a conglomerate. After the ownership change, average length of stories dropped, hard-news coverage declined, and wire-service reports exceeded staff-written articles. In a study of Minnesota papers, George Donahue, Clarice Olien, and Philip Tichenor [109] concluded that local reporting of government issues was substantially greater in locally owned papers than out-of-state chain papers. Martha Matthews [110, p. 351] found that publicly owned newspaper chains exert more control over editorial and managerial decisions than do privately owned chains. Most significantly, these publicly owned chains "place greater pressure on their publishers to generate revenues for their parent companies than privately-owned companies do." Gene Roberts [111] describes how the *Winston-Salem* (North Carolina) *Journal* hired efficiency consultants to increase newsroom productivity. These consultants mandated how many stories of each type were to appear in the paper. For instance, an "A-1 story" was to be six inches or less, use press releases and two cooperative sources as background,

and be written in such a way that a reporter could produce forty of them in a working week.

Such findings are in line with Dennis Hale's observation that chains do not make changes on the editorial pages of the papers they buy because that would be too noticeable. Instead, changes are made in "other, less-obvious areas such as the size of the reporting staff, the size of the local news hole, salaries of news staff, or amount of coverage of local controversy" [112, p. 175]. With the decrease of intramarket competition, Stephen Lacy [113] notes that newspapers faced with competitors used significantly more wire services than do newspapers operating in monopolistic situations. Dominic Lasorsa [114] discovered that a significant determinant of diversity of opinion on public issues was residence in either a monopoly-newspaper community or a competitive-newspaper community, even controlling for socioeconomic status, population density, and racial and ethnic mix. Stephen Lacy and Todd Simon, after a thorough review of the literature pertaining to the informational and intellectual changes wrought by the advent of quasi-monopolistic ownership, identify two ways in which a chain's discretionary power is manifested. First, news-editorial department budgets are slashed, thus reducing "quality of information." Second, "newspapers owned by some groups are less likely to pursue controversial issues than independent and other group newspapers" [115, p. 157]. Informational poverty is often the result, as the newspaper becomes a commodity where least-cost methods of production determine content.

Even David Demers [116, 117], who claims that corporate ownership is not an inhibiting factor in editorial autonomy and, indeed, that it contributes to the development of activist editors who privilege quality over profits, acknowledges that the corporate newspaper is "a mechanism of social control" that "at times accommodates the needs and interests of challenging groups but that usually does not dramatically alter the power of dominant groups in the short term" [114, pp. 319–23]. This admission goes to the heart of the issue of how ideology has penetrated mainstream corporatized publications, because the manner in which any issue is defined and framed necessarily affects how that issue will be understood by the public.

Social Control and Ideology

Daniel Hallin states that social control is exercised through a three-fold division of all possible newsworthy events into those for which a

consensus has been reached, those around which there is legitimate controversy, and those which society "reject[s] as unworthy of being heard" [14, pp. 53–55]. While there can be great differences of opinion in the media on issues of legitimate controversy (e.g., Watergate), such issues do not fundamentally threaten existing capitalistic relations and therefore can be debated rigorously from many opposing perspectives. However, events that fall into the deviance sphere are not treated in a neutral fashion and, in fact, are mocked and delegitimized. Pamela Shoemaker [118] suggests that dominant groups function as agents of social control by identifying threats to the status quo and then demonizing them. The mainstream media are the representatives of dominant groups and thus present those stories which will not ultimately call into question their social control.

As Shoemaker and Reese state, "Media content constitutes a rough mapping of power relations in society" [65, p. 224]. Synthesizing previous work, they discuss how those power relations are fundamentally and "systematically asymmetrical," benefiting the "convergent interests" of business, economic, political, and military elites whose cohesive ideology forms "a set of commonsensical values and norms that [serve] to reproduce and legitimate the social structure through which the subordinate classes participate in their own domination" [65, pp. 228–37]. The Italian neo-Marxist scholar Antonio Gramsci [119, p. 323] identified this exercise of power to which the public unconsciously gives its consent as a hegemonic practice. Control is maintained through everyday language by the tacit creation of a "spontaneous philosophy which is proper to everybody" and which "consists of a totality of determined notions and concepts" that cannot help but seem to be "common sense and good sense." In explicating Gramsci's ideas, Robert Bocock defines hegemony "as occurring when the intellectual, moral and philosophical leadership provided by the class or alliances of classes and class fractions which is ruling, successfully achieves its objective of providing the fundamental outlook for the whole society" [120, p. 63]. Gitlin has termed it the "systematic (but not necessarily or even usually deliberate) engineering of mass consent to the established order" [77, p. 253]. Herman and Chomsky see hegemony as inseparable from a propaganda model of the mass media, explaining that inequality in the command of resources is able "to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public" [101, p. 2]. Shaw and Martin [61] suggest the media perform this task very effectively indeed, observing that media public-issue agendas displace the "unique historical agendas" (those connected with, for example, gender and race) of readers and viewers. And even though they view this

process through an optimistic prism, their conclusions are not inconsistent with the hegemony approach insofar as a leveling of discourse to a common denominator has occurred.

Creation of Stereotypes

One of the ways hegemony functions in the media is through the creation of stereotypes that become cultural myths by constant repetition. Caryl Rivers [121] identifies the various ways in which the “twin myths” of female weakness and female strength are enforced. She also documents how the media deal negatively with issues of multiculturalism, affirmative action, welfare recipients, and poor single women, while implicitly accepting the basic premises of the family-values movement. Faludi [122] outlines how the op-ed pages of major newspapers privilege the views of counterfeminist women writers and those with ties to conservative organizations. Lana Rakow and Kimberlie Kranich [123, pp. 13, 16–22] explain that women, when they do appear as sources in the news, always function as the semiotic sign for “woman” as a social aggregate, “unlike men, who do not ordinarily carry meaning as ‘man’ because the culture assumes maleness as a given.” More specifically, women, when they are not simply passive reactors or examples of uninformed public opinion, are used “to illustrate the private consequences of public events and actions” or “to endorse an action or policy because of their organizational or institutional affiliations.” Furthermore, those women who are allowed to have strong views are framed as “unusual signs,” that is, they are white feminists whose “dissatisfaction with their social place” is made to be an “essential personality trait of woman.” In addition, when mainstream news outlets do cover women’s issues, the typical framing device of such stories is one of conflict between two women on opposite sides of an issue. The story thus serves to accentuate the disagreement between women rather than the general applicability of the specific problem to women in daily situations.

Other feminist media scholars have criticized the fact that race, gender, and class are viewed as “essential categories” that are “often studied in isolation and opposition to each other” [124]. The framework of analysis into which the news is put is one of binary oppositions, that is, issues are treated from the perspective of rich/poor, black/white, masculine/feminine, gay/straight, local/global, and so on [125]. This practice of creating binary oppositions with mutually exclusive categories detracts from the possibility of seeing interrelationships across categories, from adopting a multicultural and “multicentric perspective” that would allow for a different type of news story [124, pp. 45–46]. Indeed, the news media are dominated by a masculine narrative struc-

ture [123] that does not develop issues “within the context of [non-elite] women’s daily lives, questions, and social participation” [126, p. 116]. There is evidence, in fact, that women journalists undergo a socialization process in which they adjust to male-defined “professional norms [that tend] to reaffirm a conservative status quo, less by clear cut instruction than by more subtle messages about ‘professional journalism.’” Any preexisting feminist values are, in the process, made to seem deviant and unprofessional [127, pp. 57–58]. A great need exists, therefore, for projects such as the Women’s Feature Service, a United Nations–sponsored initiative that trains woman journalists in developing countries to “expand woman’s voice in international news” [126, p. 106].

African Americans have also been victims of stereotypical news portrayals. Robert Entman [128], through his study of the local news on four Chicago television stations, concludes that racism is indirectly encouraged by crime and political stories, while the presence of high profile and authoritative black news journalists lulls the audience into a denial of racial discrimination. With respect to crime stories, African Americans are depicted as more physically threatening and less individually human than whites. In political stories, African Americans are depicted as more demanding and as addressing issues that strictly concern their own “special-interest” community, whereas whites are conveyed as being the representatives of the entire community. Continued exposure to local newscasts presents viewers “with an accumulation of images that make blacks appear consistently threatening, demanding and undeserving of accommodation by government” [128, p. 359]. Entman, in looking at the portrayal of blacks on network news, found similar evidence of indirect racism. Chief among his results was that nearly half—46.4 percent—of all sampled stories on the three major networks depicted blacks as sources or victims of trouble. While perhaps individually accurate, such news images, when cumulated, further “stereotyped cognition” [129, p. 517]. Christopher Campbell, through an analysis of local television newscasts in twenty-nine American cities during the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday weekend, concludes that these news broadcasts perpetuate both traditional and “modern” forms of racism. Taking his definitions from contemporary racism theorists, Campbell identifies these modern forms as symbolic racism, enlightened racism, aversive racism, and everyday racism [130, pp. 24–25]. Local television news, he argues, enforces both a myth of marginalization—“people of color exist at the periphery of mainstream society and do not merit the attention granted to whites”—and a myth of assimilationism—“when news organizations . . . implicitly accent the values and determination of socially and economically successful mi-

nority Americans, they feed the . . . notion that that success is equally accessible to all” [130, pp. 57, 132–33].

Paul Lester and Ron Smith [131] and Lester [132] adopted a different unit of analysis from that of Entman and Campbell, but their conclusions were similar. Lester and Smith analyzed African-American photo coverage in three national magazines for the period 1937–88. Lester analyzed photo coverage in four major newspapers between 1937 and 1990. In both studies, the depiction of blacks over time increased, but the content of their coverage relegated them to three stereotypical portrayals: criminals, sports figures, and entertainment subjects. In another example, Jimmie Reeves and Richard Campbell [133] extensively document the manner in which the Reagan presidency and the nascent neoconservative movement used mainstream media to advance and legitimize the “war on drugs” by framing it as a national scourge that could be eliminated by individual action and the embracing of family values rather than by concerted attention to deeply ingrained economic and social structural deficiencies.

Racial stereotypes in the news are just as common in Canada and Britain as in the United States. Only the target groups have changed.⁷ Warren Skea [135] outlines how Canadian newspapers typically construct their reporting of aboriginal issues around a law-and-order framework that fails to include native viewpoints. Lorna Roth, Beverly Nelson, and Kasennahawi David [136, pp. 77–78], writing about the Oka crisis between the native Mohawk community and the Canadian and Quebec governments in the 1990s, detail how the news media “turned to governmental discourses of thuggery and terrorism and symbolically placed all Mohawks within a system of categories of violence.” On a more general level, they discuss, quoting playwright Drew Hayden Taylor, how the native community is typically characterized by the press in terms of a four-fold division: the sidekick, the radical, the borderline psychotic, and the mystic. Frances Henry, Carol Tator, Winston Mattis, and Tim Rees [137, p. 235] explain how the Asian and African-Caribbean communities in Canada are persistently shown either as having or creating problems “that require a disproportionate

7. This is not to say that aboriginal peoples have not been the victims of media stereotypes in the United States. For instance, Mary Ann Weston documents how news media constructed and reported such incidents as the Alcatraz uprising, Wounded Knee, the Bursum Bill and the Ceremonial Dance controversies of the 1920s, and the Menominee termination in the 1950s. She notes how, through tone, language, organization, form, and selection principles, the press created and perpetuated negative as well as romanticized images of native peoples, always paying attention to “the loudest, most aggressive sources” and failing “to add the layers of historical and cultural context that would truly explain the meanings of events” [134, p. 164].

amount of political attention or public resources to solve," or as "the outsiders within." Both of these tropes reinforce the "we-they mindset" that works to forestall equitable treatment of ethnic populations. Teun Van Dijk [138], examining the coverage of various nonwhite ethnic groups in British and Dutch tabloids, concludes that, through their choice of subjects, wording of headlines, and even syntactical and rhetorical constructions, these newspapers consistently define minorities as threats to a longed-for status quo.

In the economic realm, probusiness explanations are given prominent display while alternative economic explanations appear only as fragments. D. J. B. Overton, investigating media images of the unemployed in Canada over the past fifteen years, presents evidence of persistent negative stereotyping and stigmatization of the unemployed. Various interest groups, he argues, have often been responsible for the presentation of these negative images "in a direct effort to stimulate public support for conservative political moves to reform income support systems" [139, p. 30]. Robert Hackett [140] compared coverage of business and labor groups. In general, business was presented much more favorably than labor in terms of the vocabulary associated with each side and the number of negative events or conflicts attributed to each side. He discusses, moreover, how the news virtually ignored those significant aspects of the economic system which call into question its justice and efficiency, how labor-originated solutions to economic problems were hardly ever mentioned, and how the overarching frame of reference in coverage of strikes was their precipitation by unions neglectful of the inconvenience of the public. Greg Philo, Peter Beharrel, and John Hewitt [141] studied coverage of the economic crisis besetting England in the early 1980s. Of the three explanations and solutions that economists offered to extricate the country from the throes of inflation, the one that gained the most coverage in the news, by an eight-to-one margin, blamed labor as the root cause of inflation and proposed wage restraint as a primary solution.

Agenda Priming and Cognitive Psychology

Does the creation of stereotypes by the mainstream press affect readers and viewers? An approach called agenda priming, which grafts a cognitive psychology framework onto agenda-setting research, has tried to provide an answer. Agenda-priming scholarship sets out to manipulate news stories in the same way that the press is selective in its choice of what to report and the degree of emphasis it assigns its reported stories. It attempts to replicate the gatekeeping function of mass media news—

assigning prominence to some stories, casting others in a certain light, or choosing to downplay and ignore others—and then to see how people's attitudes change toward what they have been exposed to.

Two works are of particular importance. Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder [142, pp. 63, 72, 119] devised sophisticated experiments whose outcomes indicated that news broadcasts have a priming effect on the audience. "By calling attention to some matters while ignoring others, television news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged" across a range of issues such as inflation, national defense, and energy policy. In a series of sequential and assemblage experiments, they edited regular-length network news programs so that they differed according to the emphasis—defined as the number of news stories—placed on a certain issue and, later, the degree to which a single factor—in this case, the president—was responsible for the problem at hand. They then showed these edited tapes to participants in a number of viewing situations—consecutive days or a single sitting. In all instances, the viewers rated the manipulated issue as the one that concerned them the most. Those subjected to periodic exposure, which "represents more faithfully the ordinary citizen's actual encounter" with the news, revealed the greatest priming effects. In addition, Iyengar and Kinder demonstrated that a significant factor in agenda priming was the position of the story during the broadcast. Lead stories were more influential than were those positioned elsewhere. Priming thus helps in determining a national agenda by highlighting some issues and casting others into the shadows. In other words, news can "alter the priorities Americans attach to a circumscribed set of problems, all of which are plausible contenders for public concern." As mainstream publications in the early and middle 1990s focused on the deficit/debt and the necessity of cutting social programs to reduce the deficit to the exclusion of almost all other solutions, the notion of how the media organize coverage around a limited set of explanations takes on added significance.

In another set of experiments, Iyengar [143, pp. 3, 137] examined the manner in which news outlets frame an issue. He asked whether episodic or thematic treatments of news stories such as crime, terrorism, poverty, unemployment, and racial inequality had a differentially influential effect on how viewers attributed responsibility for the problem in question. With the exception of employment, thematic reports across a spectrum of political and cultural issues "increased attributions of responsibility to government and society," whereas episodic treatments increased the likelihood that individuals alone were held responsible for a diverse amalgam of problems, a finding that has particular significance in the case of news depictions of minorities. Iyengar

concludes that television news is "a significant resource for political elites [because] event-oriented and case study news coverage effectively insulates incumbent officials from any rising tide of disenchantment over the state of public affairs" (pp. 3, 137). He therefore sees his work as providing support for the hegemonic model of public communications. Taken together, these experiments suggest that the media have become an imposing authority shaping political and social views in pervasive ways that maintain existing power structures.

If the work of Iyengar establishes priming in the hegemonic context, that is, if news audiences can indeed be primed to change their opinions, and if the work of Rivers, Entman, Philo and others outlines the hidden assumptions behind news coverage, then it is a small step to argue that the information derived by a person who is primed can be applied by that person to other situations. Jeff Greenberg and Tom Pyszczynski [144] demonstrate that people who were exposed to racial slurs were subsequently more negatively judgmental about the capability of an unrelated African American to perform a task than people who had not been exposed to such slurs. Shari Kirkland, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski [145], extending the work of Greenberg and Pyszczynski [144], provided evidence that an individual who is associated with the target of a racial slur is judged more negatively than is an individual in the company of a target who has not been subject to a slur. Patricia Devine [146] went further. She primed participants "at an exposure threshold below conscious awareness" with stereotypical words describing African Americans. Some of these words were "musical," "lazy," and "athletic." Other participants in the study were primed with non-stereotypical traits. On a subsequently assigned task, the group primed with stereotypical images were more prone than the group primed with nonstereotypical images to judge an unrelated black male subject's actions as hostile. Gerard Power, Sheila Murphy, and Gail Coover [147] showed that counterstereotypical portrayals of an African-American male "led participants to subsequently make more external or situational attributions of responsibility to other African American males involved in unrelated media events, whereas stereotypical portrayals led to more internal or personal attributions" (p. 36). Such cross-contextual priming has also been shown to be true when study participants are exposed to gender stereotypes. Christine Hansen and Randal Hansen [148] found that, after being shown rock music videos featuring women as sex objects, men reacted more stereotypically to a female with whom they later had a conversation than did men shown neutral videos.

Studies arguing that what we see on television and hear on radio is instrumental in inducing aggression must also be taken into consider-

ation. A summary of such work is provided by Leonard Berkowitz and Karen Rogers [149] and Eunkyung Jo and Berkowitz [150]. Whether individuals listened to aggressive or nonaggressive humor affected the tone of their evaluation of job applicants; whether spectators watched an aggressive contact sport or a nonaggressive sport affected their subsequent feelings of hostility; whether teenagers played an aggressive or nonaggressive video arcade game determined their levels of hostility; and whether experimental subjects were exposed to high imagery–aggressive or low imagery–aggressive words substantially affected subsequent actions. In sum, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting the inseparability of lived experiences and subsequent direct application by individuals of such experience to their expressed opinions and daily life patterns. On the basis of these psychological findings, it is not out of the realm of possibility that stereotypical portrayals of various societal groups in news coverage have the potential to affect thoughts and actions.

From Theory to Practice

A Possible Teaching Strategy

It would be difficult to do justice to these theoretical concepts in a few short bibliographic instruction classes. The best approach, I therefore believe, is to present this overarching media framework through a concrete example that illustrates many of its component parts. One way to do this is to isolate a single news story and then compare how that story is treated in two or three different news sources. Once different stories about the same event have been located, they can be compared in order to understand the way in which ideological assumptions pervade their structure. Bibliographic instruction librarians thus have to pay close attention to a wide variety of newspapers, magazines, and wire services in order to identify likely teaching tools. Usually students stop searching for information on a particular topic once they have located one or two articles from what they consider to be authoritative sources. Bibliographic instruction librarians should therefore not only make the case that such authoritative sources contain hegemonic ideological assumptions that bias the way they perceive and present the news, but also urge students to go to less well-known and perhaps less consulted sources that may be free of such assumptions.

As an example of what such an exercise could look like, I want to focus on how the 1997 civil war in the African country of Congo-Brazzaville was reported by various news organizations. If it is known at all, Congo-Brazzaville is remembered for being a former French colony

and for its vast oil deposits. Denis Sassou-Nguesso ruled until 1992, when Congo-Brazzaville held an election, which brought Pascal Lissouba to power. Observers hoped that the country was on its way to becoming a democracy, though, as the events of 1997 showed, such optimism was not warranted.

The war occurred mostly during August and September 1997. From the perspective of news content analysis, the war was a limited-duration event that, in the months of October and November 1997, generated a small number of overview articles examining some of its underlying causes. In addition, a second, highly novel circumstance makes this particular topic a useful teaching tool. On November 26, 1997, the leader of the losing forces in the civil war, Lissouba, brought a lawsuit in the French courts against the Paris-based oil company Elf-Aquitaine and its executive officers, claiming that the firm had played the leading role in fomenting the civil war in which his elected government was overthrown by the forces of the previous president, Sassou-Nguesso, and in which thousands of people lost their lives.⁸ Accordingly, a good indicator of which ideological news frame a media outlet chose to adopt in its overview articles about the Congo-Brazzaville civil war is the way in which, and if, it mentioned, prior to November 26, 1997, the alleged participation of Elf-Aquitaine in the conflict.

Both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of this question can be made. From a quantitative perspective, Lexis/Nexis can be used to demonstrate the frequency with which Elf-Aquitaine was mentioned in conjunction with the civil war in U.S. newspapers. The following two searches, which are exactly the same except for the addition of the term "Elf" in the second search, were performed on the "Major Papers" file:

1. Congo and Nguesso and war and date aft 07/31/97 and date bef 11/27/97
2. Elf and Congo and Nguesso and war and date aft 07/31/97 and date bef 11/27/97

The first search generates 154 hits, while the second search, which adds the concept Elf-Aquitaine, generates only fifteen hits. Clearly, just 10 percent of the total number of stories provide any indication that a large multinational company with vested business interests in the region may have been an underlying cause of the war. Here, then, is a

8. It is also interesting to note that, in the two weeks immediately following the announcement of Lissouba's lawsuit, only three newspapers in the United States chose to run stories about it. These papers were the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Dallas Morning News*, and *Raleigh News & Observer*. Moreover, all three stories were positioned in foreign news compendia sections on the back pages, and ranged in length from eighty-four words to 171 words.

first indication of how media outlets are choosing to frame this story. It is not an exaggeration to say that even the possible complicity of a multinational business entity in internal political events is downplayed.

What is emphasized, on the other hand, is the brutality of a senseless conflict pitting two long-time antagonists involved in a personal power struggle. In other words, readers are presented with a neocolonialist discourse of a corrupt and uncivilized Africa that is unable, even in the late twentieth century, to manage its own affairs. A good example of this is an article entitled "Ghost City," which appeared in the November 22, 1997, issue of the *Economist*, a highly respected international business publication. The first two paragraphs set the tone of what is to follow. Congo-Brazzaville is not only depicted as a desolate and ravaged land but also one that is, in some ways, pathetically amusing. Consider the following passage: "Crunching on broken glass and spent cartridges, a man picks his way across the square with a lavatory bowl on his head, upside down as if it were a hat. . . . Scavengers have to make do with what they can find. . . . Electric switches have already been torn from the walls; now looters are ripping out the wiring" [151, p. 49].

In this description, the man with the lavatory bowl on his head who is walking through the streets of what once was the "pleasant little African capital" of Brazzaville but that now looks like "a futuristic after-the-bomb-dropped film set" becomes the shuffling symbol of a still ungovernable Africa about which readers can only shake their heads in bemused resignation. In stark contrast to the destruction depicted textually, the sole picture accompanying the story depicts a laughing General Nguesso with a champagne glass in his hand. Here, then, is the equally familiar image of a decadent dictator seemingly unconcerned about the fate of his people. For all intents and purposes, these items activate a series of racial and colonial stereotypes that, collectively, function as the semiotic frame for the entire article.

These stereotypes are reinforced when, later in the article, the civil war is shown to be the result of a power struggle between Lissouba and Nguesso. Lissouba is described as an "incompetent . . . tribalist" who reneged on certain "preelection deals" with Nguesso, thus triggering the latter to retain "a substantial and well-armed militia." In the last four paragraphs of the story, much is made of the fact that France, the former colonial power, did not actively intervene in the conflict because such intervention would have meant supporting the sitting president Lissouba. Yet, because of a personal friendship between French President Jacques Chirac and Nguesso, France recognized Nguesso's victory, judging it to be a *fait accompli*. The *Economist* thus suggests that political struggles and outcomes can best be understood as the

result of shifting personal friendships and alliances. Pointedly omitted from the discussion is any mention that larger structural and economic factors may have played a part in the Congo-Brazzaville war. Indeed, the only mention of Elf-Aquitaine in the *Economist* article is a two-line statement that it was given exclusive rights to oil production in the 1960s and that it has the "lion's share" of the recent discovery of a major offshore oil reserve.

An alternate approach to reporting the war was taken by the *New York Times* in two different articles. In an October 18, 1997, story entitled "Africa Finds Old Borders Are Eroding," the author, Howard French, positions the Congo-Brazzaville conflict as one example among many of violent "political struggles spilling across borders as states intervene militarily in their neighbors' affairs in ways that were once uncommon" [152, p. A7]. The story explains how Angola assisted the winning side in Congo-Brazzaville, and the bulk of the article traces the intricate skein of power alliances and interventions that have marked the bloody recent history of Rwanda, Uganda, Zaire, Angola, and Congo-Brazzaville. Such cross-border intervention, the article reveals, marks not only the creation of a new political paradigm but also the opening of "a Pandora's box of conflicting interests, defined most broadly as having sympathetic leaders running neighboring states" (p. A7). Not surprisingly, this new model of ruling is sharply criticized. The article quotes a senior African diplomat as saying that "nobody seems to have bothered to think this through very carefully . . . [since] what we are witnessing is a scrapping of all the old rules, with nothing coherent being put in their place. Where all this ends, no one knows" (p. A7).

Western involvement in such developments, by contrast, is presented as "more subtle," though "no less self-interested," than in the past. The implication is that the West has thought things through in a careful fashion and has decided to intervene because Africans, left to their own devices, will only engage in endless violent power struggles across national borders. As an example of such "subtle" and "discreet" intervention, the case of Elf-Aquitaine is mentioned in the last paragraph. Because France and other Western countries no longer want to intervene militarily in Africa, they employ "big industrial or commercial corporations" to look after their political interests.

As the article unfolds, there is a thematic movement from chaos to a semblance of restored order. The chaos is specifically associated with the numerous examples of African states involving themselves militarily in bordering countries, while restored order is symbolically made equivalent to a judicious and subtle Western interventionism through corporate proxies. Again, the article's framing structure and discourse

serve to perpetuate the stereotype of benign and paternal colonial powers having to ride to the rescue of floundering and violence-prone African states. Ultimately, there is no attempt in this article to link the violence to the past actions of Western political and corporate powers.

In the second *New York Times* article (“In Africa, There’s More Than One Great Dictator” [October 5, 1997]) [153], the endemic corruption besetting certain African countries, especially Congo-Brazzaville, is put in the spotlight. While there is an explicit acknowledgment that “outsiders” such as Elf-Aquitaine played an “important role” in Congo-Brazzaville by “helping keep friendly autocrats financially satisfied so as to maintain its hold on one of the world’s richest petroleum zones,” and while there is brief mention of other American and German firms who “play similar games,” the focus remains squarely on detailed accounts of the lavish and opulent lifestyles of numerous African leaders (p. 16). The reader is meant to see that the problem of corruption is a widespread one and, despite the allusive headline of the article, to associate that corruption with a long list of self-indulgent African presidents.

The article ends with a consideration of how such corruption can be forestalled. The significant point to note here is that all the solutions assume that it is Africans themselves and their faulty institutions that are to blame for the corruption and, given this fact, that it is only right that the preponderant burden for change should fall on them. The World Bank, the article points out, wants to cut off development funds to corrupt countries and has already adopted this approach with Kenya. Another expert, Robert E. Klitgaard, the author of a book called *Tropical Gangsters* [154], states that a fundamental transformation of African “systems” is needed so as to eliminate situations where a person, or presumably a state itself, has “monopoly power over a good or service and [thus] has discretionary power over whether you get it” (p. 16). Once this monopoly power no longer exists, corruption, it is implied, will also disappear.

For all intents and purposes, the second *Times* article blames the victims for any difficulties that befall them. Firms such as Elf remain abstract entities that are somehow involved in the corruption, though the extent of their involvement is never concretely delineated. Accordingly, nowhere is it suggested that structural and profit-driven economic interests such as those represented by Elf-Aquitaine should be held accountable for the problems they have caused in various African countries. Rather, these countries should be made to conform to Western economic development patterns. More important, it is never assumed that the structural economic interests that Elf-Aquitaine represents should be forced to change.

Alternative readings of the Congo-Brazzaville situation are available, and it is here that the role of the BI librarian becomes crucial. Students should be encouraged to search for such alternative readings and interpretations and should be provided with lists of possible publications to examine. In the case of Congo-Brazzaville, good sources of alternative views are French-language newspapers and magazines contained, for instance, in the "Presse" subfile of the "Europe" library on Lexis/Nexis. I want to refer briefly to three such articles: "Sassou Nguesso in Pointe Noire: Victory for Oil?" *Agence France Presse*, October 15, 1997; "Congo/Angola: La pax pétrolière," *L'Événement*, October 30, 1997; and "Le jeu ambigu d'Elf au Congo," *Le Monde*, October 30, 1997 [155–57]. Taken as a group, these articles provide much detail about the extensive, intricate machinations of oil companies in central African countries as well as the geoeconomic considerations undergirding their actions. The article titles alone indicate the central place that oil economics played in the civil war. Moreover, the use of the word *jeu* in *Le Monde* suggests that Elf's relationship with African countries displays the characteristics of "the great game" that nineteenth-century imperial powers played with their colonies.

Congo-Brazzaville is presented not just as being under the influence of Elf, but rather as a pawn in a high-stakes battle among Elf, Chevron, Exxon, Shell, Total, and Occidental Petroleum for the vast oil fields along the Angola-Congo border, in areas known as Cabinda and Pointe Noire. Thus, both the United States and France are portrayed as manipulating political outcomes on the basis of their economic and energy interests in an area of the world whose oil reserves rival those of the Caspian Sea. The overall "take-no-prisoners" strategy (*impitoyable politique*) of these companies is described in terms of "always having two irons in the fire" (*d'avoir toujours deux fers au feu*) as they compete for exploration permits and project financing—a strategy that cannot but destabilize national interests. Congo-Brazzaville has, in effect, become their private preserve, so much so that oil receipts make up 60 percent of its state resources. "Everybody has paid everybody else, the merciless world of the oil firms knows no limits," states the *Agence France Presse* report [157]. Elf's role in the Congo-Brazzaville war is presented at length. Meetings between high-level company officials and political leaders are recounted to an extent that leaves little doubt that Elf, in a very real sense, micromanaged the war. Elf executives are depicted as making flying visits to key locations, giving orders, and then leaving to arrange affairs in nearby Gabon.

In sum, the three English-language articles recount a very different world than the three French-language reports. For the first group of

articles, the war is but one more example of a long line of personal power struggles between African leaders, whether within or across national borders. Certainly, Western corporate involvement is broached, but only to denounce the rampant and flamboyant corruption of African political leaders. Indeed, African corruption is painted as being much worse than Asian corruption, since “in Asia profits from corruption tend to be invested in productive activities [while] in Africa the capital is consumed wastefully, or banked overseas” [153, p. 16]. The responsibility of Western multinationals is therefore elided, and the fault is placed squarely on stereotyped African dictators. In a very real sense, the reporting of events in the *Economist* and the *New York Times* is filtered through a news frame characterized by a neocolonialist discourse and rhetoric that perpetuate what Shoemaker and Reese call “systematically asymmetrical” power relations [65, p. 224]. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, moreover, argue that such rhetoric is complicit in entrenching a “hierarchical global system” in which First World countries, together with multinational corporations, “simultaneously generate both the wealth of the First World and the poverty of the Third World” [158, pp. 2–3]. In other words, these sources have, in Entman’s formulation, selected “some aspects of a perceived reality” and made them “more salient” in order to “promote a particular definition [or] moral evaluation” [75, p. 52]. In the French-language reports, on the other hand, the emphasis is clearly on Western corporate responsibility for the civil unrest in Congo-Brazzaville. The news frame here is constructed so as to stress the frenzied activities of multinationals caught in the gearworks of implacable market forces. The reader is brought to the realization that the real culprit in the civil war is an economic system predicated almost exclusively on extracting profits, no matter the cost to the well-being of host countries.⁹

Conclusion

Hegemony and the News

Adherents of the hegemonic approach have been criticized for being static economic determinists insofar as they argue that culture “is a reflection of the economic base and [perceive] that all aspects of life

9. Any interpretation such as the foregoing should be accompanied by a series of cautionary words such as those offered by Christopher Campbell. “The news, like other cultural artifacts, lends itself to multiple interpretations. . . . But I would welcome those interpretations [that are different from mine] as an ongoing discussion of how the news contributes to and generates myths . . . and how it constructs ‘reality’” [130, p. 134].

under capitalism are a mirror reflection of the systemic need of capitalism" [26, p. 167]. These critics point to the changing face of the postindustrial service economy as evidence that the relations evident in industrial capitalism are no longer applicable. However, as Herbert Schiller [159, p. 53] reminds us, "the fundamental dynamics" and "underlying mechanisms" of the economic order remain, even though capitalism itself has undergone many changes and is beset by numerous contradictions. More than an economic system, capitalism, Schiller contends, is an evolving social formation subject to an intricate play of "relations of domination and subordination" which can take different forms in different historical periods. Indeed, as Gitlin writes, hegemonic ideology can only flourish "by absorbing and domesticating conflicting values, definitions of reality, and demands on it" [77, p. 256]. Thus, while the dominant frames of hegemony alter as historical processes unfold, the superstructure is constant. Schiller's ideas thus dovetail neatly with Gramsci's preoccupation with a "total social authority" that is able, imperceptibly and incrementally, to win the consent of the governed to its assumptions and priorities. One agent of this struggle for consent is the mass news media, which is socialized to privilege corporate and elite interests and to exert ideological domination [77].

This article presents a large body of scholarship whose cumulative thrust suggests that what has generally been thought of as objective news reporting by mainstream media outlets is, rather, agenda driven by corporate and governmental entities. The theoretical framework offered by the dominance-mediation model of research, in conjunction with the insights into media source distribution, management policies, financial imperatives, and work routines, provides a powerful lens through which to approach critically television and mainstream print publications [160]. What makes the news, what is considered to be important in the news, and how the news is presented may be seen as socially constructed perceptions of reality very often replicating the concerns of an elite class intent on camouflaging and/or furthering structural inequities.

The hope, of course, is that bibliographic instruction librarians will make use of some of these theories in their teaching duties. Before decoding of media news messages is possible, students need to understand what goes into the message, that is, the sum total of what is encoded in it. As Stuart Hall [161, p. 130] argues, the encoded "meaning structure" of media communication discourse should be seen against the background of the "technical infrastructure" and the "relations of production" that allow it to be broadcast or printed. These "relations of production," in turn, give rise to certain "frameworks of knowl-

edge." Only at this point, then, is the communicated discourse, or message, complete. Accordingly, trying to understand a media news message without this background knowledge results in an incomplete and passive decoding of its content. For Hall, this is, at best, circumscribed decoding, since it amounts to accepting "dominant definitions . . . and grand totalizations," to taking for granted the inevitability and naturalness of the social order. A richer decoding approach, however, is one which has some awareness of the sociopolitical and socioeconomic context of media production and thus is able to create a "negotiated" or "oppositional" position to its content by "retotaliz[ing] the message within some alternative framework of reference" [161, pp. 136–38]. This, then, should be one of the key instructional objectives for BI: to move from a passive decoding of media content to a "negotiated" decoding.

Bibliographic instruction librarians are keenly interested in teaching students how to orient themselves with respect to diverse scholarly and reference sources and how to evaluate their contents. After all, university and college libraries contain an untold wealth of such sources. But, since most academic libraries also have extensive collections of newspapers and magazines, as well as access to a number of massive news and information databases such as Lexis/Nexis, orientation strategies and practical exercises that deal specifically with popular news and magazine sources and that provide students with the tools to make critical, negotiated, and even oppositional evaluations of their contents should not be overlooked.

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