“It is our view that, among their other functions, the media serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them.”


This leads to ‘editorial self-censorship’, but without ‘overt coercion’ in 5 ways, the ‘Five Filters of Editorial Bias’

1. Media Ownership: Mass media firms are big corporations. Often, they are part of even bigger conglomerates. Their goal is Profit. And so it’s in their interests to push for whatever guarantees that profit and guarantees their ‘market share. Therefore, critical (investigative) journalism must take second place to the needs and interests of the corporation.

2. Advertising: Media costs a lot more than consumers will ever pay. So who fills the gap? Advertising revenue. And what are the advertisers paying for? Audiences. And so it isn’t so much that the media are selling you a product — their output. They are also selling advertisers a product — YOU.” Do you think, in that context, that media organization will be critical of their own advertisers?

3. The Media Elite: Journalism cannot be a check on power because the very system they work within encourages complicity. Governments, corporations, big institutions know how to play the media game. They know how to "influence the narrative". They feed/leak media scoops, official accounts, interviews with the ‘experts’. They make themselves crucial to the process of journalism. So, those in power and those who report on them are “in bed with each other”.

4. Flak: If you want to challenge power, you’ll be pushed to the margins and denied access to the leaks that the ‘elite’ (no. 3) control. When the media — journalists, whistleblowers, sources — stray away from the consensus, they get ‘flak’. When the story is inconvenient for the powers that be, you’ll see the flak machine in action discrediting sources, trashing stories and diverting the conversation. They’ll do anything to get you to look in the other direction...

5. The Common Enemy: To manufacture consent, you need an enemy — a target. That common enemy is the fifth filter. Communism, Terrorists, Immigrants, Muslims, Travellers, European Bureaucrats… Anyone will do! A common enemy, a bogeyman to fear, helps corral public opinion. While this is directly relevant to media, it overlaps with ‘identity’ also, particularly Edward Said’s “Covering Islam”. What examples of a ‘common enemy’ can you identify in the media today?

Using the ‘Five Filters’ consider what impact these ‘self-censorship’ issues might have on the following people:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A ‘Regular Joe/Jane’ News Consumers:</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Rookie Newspaper Reporter:</td>
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<tr>
<td>A ‘Cable’ TV News Anchor:</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Newspaper Editor</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Media Corporation owner/shareholder:</td>
<td></td>
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<td>A Corrupt Politician:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A Media ‘Spin Doctor’:</td>
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Do you think that these pressures would be greater (or less) in the age of ‘Social Media’? In particular, consider ‘Clickbait’ and the impact that this might have upon news reporting.
**Thinker’s Background**

- Chomsky, born in 1928, is an American linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist, historian, political activist, and social critic. Sometimes called "the father of modern linguistics".
- He is best known as a professor in the prestigious M.I.T. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) where he was a professor of Linguistics for more than 50 years!
- He was famously opposed to the Vietnam War and spoke and published frequently about it, particularly in his amazing essay “The Responsibility of Intellectuals” where he lays out some of the ideas that would late go on to be a part of “Manufacturing Consent” https://chomsky.info/19670223/
- He identifies politically as a “Libertarian Socialist”. How does that fit in with other key thinkers?
- Manufacturing Consent was written during the 1980s at a time when America was becoming actively more engaged in wars in Central and Latin America (such as Nicaragua)
- From the 1990s onwards, he became an even more visible political activist, particularly for peoples of East Timor.
- After 9/11 Chomsky argued that the ensuing ’War on Terror’ was not a new development but a continuation of the U.S. foreign policy and concomitant rhetoric that had been pursued since at least the Reagan era
- He’s still alive, and if you want to, you can find hundreds of hours of his talks and interviews on YouTube about almost every topic under the sun!

**Personal Response**

There have been many films made about the operation of media in all forms from Print, TV, and Radio, right down to more modern takes on Social Media. We do, however, have to remember that these films might be considered a good way of 'Manufacturing Consent' in their own way. When you have the chance take a look at a few of the following films and jot down your responses to them, asking yourself “What would Chomsky say about this???”

1. Citizens Cain (1941)
2. All the President's Men (1976)
3. The Insider (1999)
5. Good Morning Vietnam (1987)
7. The Post (2017)


**Links to other aspects of the course**

For many other key thinkers, media is a part of what they talk about, but not the main focus of their work. In many ways, that’s how you should also view this issue – having a ‘healthy scepticism’ about anything you read in the media, particularly asking yourself “what have they left out/what is this report NOT telling me?”

1. Edward Said – Said wrote a book call "Covering Islam" about how the Western Media covers terrorism. Consider how the media contributes to the idea of “othering”
2. Benedict Anderson – Anderson thought that the emergence of Print media, and newspapers in particular, helped to form ‘National Identity’. With newspapers, we can share opinions with others in our ‘imagined community’ because chances are we’ve all read the same paper and share those opinions.
3. Sylvia Walby – “The Media” is one of the main ‘Patriarchal Cultural Institutions’. Media companies owned by men portray women in a certain light and reinforce gender stereotypes. ‘You can’t be what you can’t see. See also Laura Mulvey’s ‘Female Gaze’.
4. Marx (See Below)
5. See if you can identify any patterns in the way that YOU engage with the media, and whether there are ways that you can improve your own media practices???

**Video Tip:** There’s one YouTube video from ‘Al Jazeera’ that outlines what Chomsky thinks about Manufacturing Consent. To be honest, it’s really, really freak with these orange disembodied talking mouths. If you can get past the weirdness of the video, you should be able to find it REALY useful 4 ½ minutes of your time well spent! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34LGPHxU5M

**Favourite Moment:** If you really want to get your head into the weeds of some of the ways in which politicians think about the media, and get an overview of some of the historical shifts in how the media has changed with the advent of social media, there’s no better place to look than Episode 11 ("The Filter") of The Wilderness podcast, written by Obama speechwriter Jon Favreau. https://crooked.com/podcast/chapter-11-the-filter/
A Suitable Starting Point?  
*The Hutchins Commission*

**The Commission on Freedom of the Press**
During World War 2 many Americans were concerned about the degree to which the media, then mainly newspapers and radio, should be critical of the government. At what point did the fact that a WAR was on, mean they should be patriotic and not harm the ‘war-effort’? Or should they continue to be critical of government and/or the Armed Forces in a way that might undermine morale?

At this time, many of the powerful publishers were viewed with suspicion by the American public, and criticisms of the ‘Fourth Estate’ focussed on the ideas that they wanted to ‘monopolize’ the media market, and didn’t represent the interests of minorities who were not like themselves. People also worried about the ‘commercialization’ of the news and that business would be seen as more important than keeping the public well informed.

After WW2, Henry Luce who was the publisher of the massive “*Time*” and “*Life*” magazines wanted to enquire about the “proper function of the media in a modern democracy”. Many of the findings of the commission inform how the media went on to develop in most modern democracies.

After 4 years of deliberations they found that:
- It was imperative (demanded) that a commitment to ‘social responsibility’ be imposed on the mass media
- It was in the interests of both the free media and the public for them to provide citizens with the information they needed for good government, otherwise the government would need to regulate the media
- That there should be a strengthening of the editorial and journalistic “Code of Ethics”
- The Media should consider “their moral obligation to consider the overall needs of society” that created the greatest good. In other words, they had to balance multiple (often competing) perspectives when deciding what to publish.

To what extent do you think that these findings still apply today, particularly considering the role of Social Media?

**Key Quote:** “Civilized society is a working system of ideas. It lives and changes by the consumption of ideas. Therefore, it must make sure that as many as possible of the ideas which its members have are available for its examination.” Hutchins Report (1947), p.6.

### Give 2-3 examples of each of the following types of media:
- **Broadsheet** Newspapers
- **Tabloid** Newspapers
- **Public** TV Stations
- Commercial Radio
- Social Network Sites
- ‘Vloggers’
- ‘Podcasts’

Now, however, the media landscape is a lot more complex. Today, depending on who you ask, you might get very different answers as to the question “**What is the Role of the Media?**” Examine the perspectives below and consider which perspective best aligns with your view of the media?

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**The Role of Media**

- **Informs, educates and connects society**
- **Supports a functioning democracy**
- **Promotes trade and commerce through advertising**
- **Provides many opinions on particular issues - providing a voice**
- **Watchdog to ensure governments etc are acting ethically**
- **Transmit cultural values, and entertain**
- **Part of a 'superstructure' - Karl Marx**
- **Male gaze - Laura Mulvey**
- **Media projects complicated images of women and men**
- **Underrepresented in sports, politics and business related content**

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**Unconventional Perspective**

- **Socialisation process - reinforces social norms and values**
- **Keeps track of what's happening, interpret information**
- **Concerned with media ownership**
- **Build and reinforce mini-communities (digital media)**
- **Imagery**
- **Media caters to the male audience e.g. women objectified**
- **Women often underrepresented in media - confined to the cult of domesticity / limited roles / highly sexualised imagery**

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**Marxist Perspective**

- **Promotes existing inequalities/injustices**
- **Reinforces capitalist viewpoint**
- **Underrepresentation of working class - negative representations**
- **Alternative viewpoints rarely heard; often presented as troublesome**
- **Mass media vested interested in maintaining status quo**

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**Feminist Perspective**

- **Promotes existing inequalities/injustices**
- **Reinforces capitalist viewpoint**
- **Underrepresentation of working class - negative representations**
- **Alternative viewpoints rarely heard; often presented as troublesome**
- **Mass media vested interested in maintaining status quo**

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Different Media have particular Characteristics (strengths & weaknesses) in how they relate to their consumers and convey their message. Examine the table below and in the final space suggest which types of news story might be particularly suited to each type of media.

**Personal Reaction:** Try and come to a firmer view of how YOU view the media and its responsibilities. One useful technique for ‘synthesising’ different perspectives is to decide how you would ‘rank’ them...

**Rank the ‘Roles of the Media’ in your own order of importance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>To inform: offering citizens a reliable source of information.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>To serve as a ‘watchdog’ for the people, a check against powerful institutions and individuals in society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>To function as a forum for the public (letters to editor, social networking, blogging, microblogging, reader comments online).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To act as a provocateur, encouraging debate &amp; offers a dissenting view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To help produce a sense of ‘national’ or group identity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Define the following terms:** (Possible Short Questions)

- ‘the freedom of the press’
- ‘the social responsibility of the press’
- ‘the accountability of the press’

**THINKING MORE ABOUT THE ‘FREEDOM OF THE PRESS’**

Every year (since 2002) a group called ‘Reporters Sans Frontier’ (Reporters without Borders) issue a report called the **World Press Freedom Index**. It is an important advocacy tool based on the principle of “emulation between states”. Because it is well known, its influence over governments is growing. Many heads of state and government fear its annual publication. The Index is a point of reference that is quoted by media throughout the world and is used by diplomats and international entities such as the UN & WB.

The WPFI ranks 180 countries and regions according to the level of freedom available to journalists. It is a snapshot of the media freedom situation based on an evaluation of pluralism, independence of the media, quality of legislative framework and safety of journalists in each country and region. It does not rank public policies even if governments obviously have a major impact on their country’s ranking. It is not a measure of the quality of journalism in each country or region.

Rankings: Unsurprisingly, the top ranked countries are (1) Norway, (2) Finland, (3) Sweden. The WPFI notes that the US is currently falling down the rankings at 48th (down 3 from 2018) (why?). The bottom countries include (177) China, & (179) North Korea.

Ireland falls into the top category of a ‘Good’ ranking at 15th (only 8% of countries have this description). “The highly concentrated nature of media ownership remains the single largest threat to press freedom in Ireland. Independent News and Media (INM) controls much of the daily and Sunday newspaper market, while broadcasting is dominated by the semi-state company RTE. The 1937 constitution guarantees media freedom, but defamation suits are common... The vote by referendum in October 2018 to decriminalise blasphemy was a welcome move for press freedom.” (WPFI Report, 2019)