



How Power and Wealth influence the media

Although A Propaganda Model was already published in 1988, it already discussed vital specifications of the American Media System. It focusses on the "inequality of wealth and power and it's multilevel Effects on mass-media interests and choices". They show that „money and power are able to filter out the

news fit to print". Therefore, the mass media don't or can't choose and interpret the news objectively; the filters occur so naturally that the media news people don't even realize it themselves.

Most of the Media is owned by large corporations

In the United States, most of the 25,000 media entities were subject to common ownership in the 80s. „The 29 largest media systems account for over half of the output of news." Today, there are only ten leading companies, accountable for all American radio and TV stations, with only two additional companies involved in the printing press. Those companies are primarily profit-seeking and are subject to outside pressures like stockholders or bankers.

Therefore, they always have to consider the profitability of the news they're publishing. Critical news might not only offend stockholders; it might also be less profitable than news that favor investors interests. Furthermore, the diversification and geographic spread of great media companies have shifted their interests.

The example of GE and Westinghouse, two media giants that are also heavily involved in weapon production and nuclear powers, shows that those companies will focus on news that „will get the business message across". They are unlikely to publish critical stories about weapon production for example, as it would interfere with their own business.

At the same time, the media companies are dependent on the favor of the government. For starters, radio and TV companies require government licenses. But the government also plays an important role in foreign sales and the companies depending on „diplomatic support for their rights to penetrate foreign cultures with U.S. commercial and value messages and interpretations of current affairs."

Supporting the 'buying mood'

„With the growth of advertising, papers that attracted ads could afford a copy price well below production costs." The interference of advertising companies prevented lots of newspapers to perish in the free market, therefore, „the advertisers choice influence media prosperity and survival." Papers or media companies that publish „worthy" news and attract many „buyers" are more likely to be financially supported by advertisers.

The magnitude of this support is measured in the change of audience gain or loss: For a TV network, a gain or loss of one per cent „translates into a change in advertising revenues of \$ 80- \$100 million a year." Those numbers are from the 80s – they would obvious be much higher nowadays, when worldwide TV advertising is said to increase by \$10 billion.

The networks try everything they can to present an advertising-friendly program that will attract an audience willing to spend money. Therefore, most networks hold off on serious news, which might interfere with the „buying mood".

How PR departments can control the news

Economics dictate that the media concentrate their resources where significant news often occur. That gives institutions like the White House and the Pentagon the chance to influence the news output in their favor. All of the major institutions now have PR departments that provide easy-accessible, reliable news. Coincidentally, they also ensure that the right message comes across. Critics are seldom heard because of their lesser availability and because using their statement would probably offend their governmental sources and „disturb a close relationship". So-called experts are „bought" by funding their research or offering them jobs to ensure that they tell the desired side of the story.

To underline their statement, Chomsky and Herman provide many different examples that show how exactly the filters work. They proof that news have been knowingly altered to show a specific, mostly governmental-friendly side of the story. This alteration can be found in print media, TV productions and even movies – the US department



of Defence, for example, has a department for entertainment media to facilitate the cooperation with Hollywood.

No free press in ‘the land of the free’

According to the authors, the five filters „narrow the range of news [...] and even more sharply limit what can become „big news”“. Only „worthy” news can make it through the filters. Their hypothesis is that „worthy victims will be featured prominently and dramatically [...] in contrast, unworthy victims will merit only slight detail”. Their propaganda model suggests a highly political control in news coverage. The main goal is to support „Domestic power interests”.

There’s no such thing as truly free press in America. The media companies have to be profitable first and foremost. And the truth isn’t always profitable, especially in a country like the United States, with strong beliefs and powerful political systems. Even though the text was written in the late 80s, it’s still current today. If anything, the dichotomization on „worthy”and „unworthy” news is even stronger.

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