

## Media Studies: 8

### Newspapers: 2

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## Outline

- Models of 'news'
  - Production as a 'market'
  - Selection / 'gate-keeping'
  - News values
- 'Bias'
- Polarisation



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## Models of News Production

- What is 'news'?
  - The stuff that appears in newspapers
  - Certain types of events that happen in the world
- How do 'newspapers' produce news?
- If we want to understand the process, what should we focus on?

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## Models of News Production

- "an attempt to reconstruct the essential framework of the event" (Schramm 1949)
  - The relationship between an event and the way it is reported is straightforward, 'journalistic'
- "Gatekeeping" (Manning White)

Schramm 1949, The Nature of News, *Journalism Bulletin*, 26(3): 259-269  
Manning-White, 1950 The 'Gatekeeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News. *Journalism Quarterly*, 27(4):383-390

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## Models of News Production

- Media Routines
- Organisational 'self-interest'
- External influences (Gans, Bagdikian)
- Ideologies / social ideas (Altschull, Herman & Chomsky)

Gans, H. J. (1980) *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, 'Newsweek' and 'Time'*. Vintage, New York.  
Bagdikian, B. H. (1983) *The media monopoly*. Beacon Press, Boston.  
Altschull, J. H. (1984) *Agents of power: The role of the news media in human affairs*. Longman, New York.  
Herman, E. S. and Chomsky, N. (1988) *Manufacturing consent: A propaganda model*. Pantheon, New York.

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## McManus: Market-driven Journalism

- "common and central to all the relationships in the model is **a way of reasoning that is essentially economic**. In other words, there is a 'bottom line' to each of these relationships"
- Newspapers operate in **four 'markets'**

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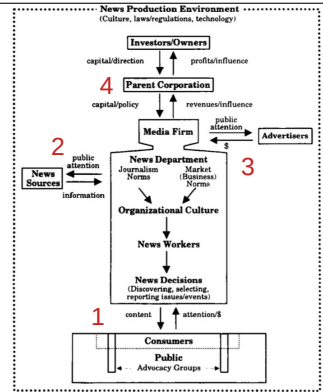
## McManus: Market-driven Journalism

1. **Readers** exchange attention/cash for 'content'
2. **Sources** exchange information for exposure
3. **Advertisers** exchange money for attention
4. **Owners/investors** exchange(?) capital for profits and ongoing growth (they hope!)

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## McManus: 3

1. **Readers**
2. **Sources**
3. **Advertisers**
4. **Owners/investors**



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## Example 'Actor': Newsroom workers

- Newswriters are **employees** with few of the characteristics of semi-independent professionals such as doctors, engineers, lawyers, or tenured professors.
- In few newsrooms will it be *written* that a reporter may not initiate critical coverage of major advertisers

## News selection

McManus, p327

### The probability of an event/issue becoming news is:

- Inversely proportional to harm the information might cause investors or sponsors
- Inversely proportional to the cost of uncovering it
- Inversely proportional to the cost of reporting it
- Directly proportional to the expected breadth of appeal of the story to audiences advertisers will pay to reach

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## Media content processes

- **Selection**
  - eg. *what* gets chosen for production, to be made into a show, to appear on the news, to be interviewed etc
- **Processing**
  - *How* whatever is chosen is treated – how it is processed for final presentation to the public

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## "Gatekeeping"

- Kurt Lewin, 1951

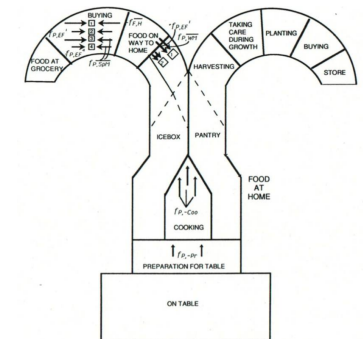


Figure 1.1. Kurt Lewin's (1951, p. 175) model of how food passes through channels on its way to the table.

## Gatekeeping for News

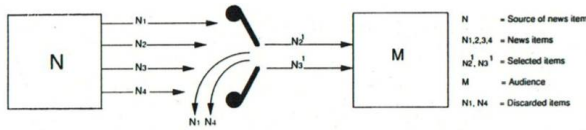


Figure 1.2. David Manning White's version of gatekeeping (from McQuail & Windahl, 1981, pp. 100-101). Used by permission.

- David Manning White: "Mr Gates" Study (1950)

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## More complex models...

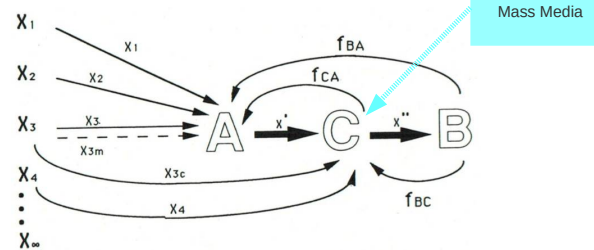
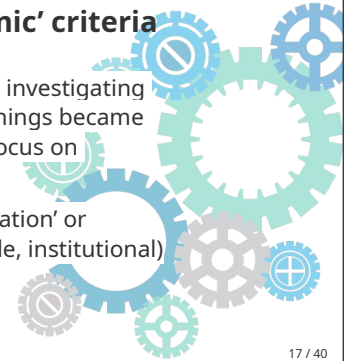


Figure 1.3. Westley and MacLean's (1957, p. 35) model of the mass communication process, showing "C" as the gatekeeper. Used by permission.

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## 'Subjective' vs 'Systemic' criteria

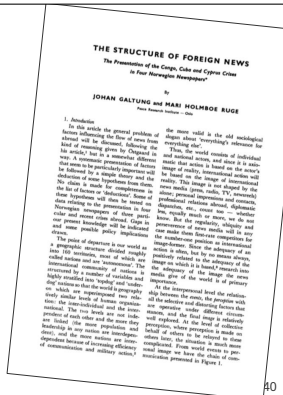
- Early studies interested in investigating the reasons why certain things became news and others didn't (focus on *individuals*)
- Later focus on 'standardisation' or systemic influences (stable, institutional)



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## 'News Values'

- Galtung, J. and Ruge, M. H. (1965) The Structure of Foreign News. *Journal of Peace Research*, 2(1):64-91
- Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge



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## 'News Values'

- F1 - frequency
- F2 - threshold
  - F2.1 - absolute threshold
  - F2.2 - intensity increase
- F3 - unambiguity
- F4 - meaningfulness
  - F4.1 - cultural proximity
  - F4.2 - relevance
- F5 - consonance
  - F5.1 - predictability
  - F5.2 - demand

the more similar the frequency of the event is to the frequency of the news medium, the more probable that it will be Recorded as news by that news medium

"the bigger the dam, the more will its inauguration be reported ceteris paribus; the more violent the murder the bigger the headlines it will make."

In the sense mentioned here 'news' are actually 'olds', because they correspond to what one expects to happen - and if they are too far away from the expectation they will not be registered, according to this hypothesis of consonance.

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## 'News Values'

- F6 - unexpectedness
  - F6.1 - unpredictability
  - F6.2 - scarcity
- F7 - continuity
- F8 - composition
- F9 - reference to elite nations
- F10 - reference to elite persons
- F11 - reference to persons
- F12 - reference to something negative

the unexpected **within** the meaningful and the consonant that is brought to one's attention

once something has hit the headlines and been defined as 'news', then it will continue to be defined as news for some time even if the amplitude is drastically reduced.

News Editors strive for 'balance': "if there are already many foreign news items the threshold value for a new item will be increased."

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## Galtung and Ruge: 3 Hypotheses

- The more events satisfy the criteria, the more likely that they will be registered as news (**selection**)
- Once a news item has been selected, what makes it newsworthy according to the factors will be *accentuated (distortion)*
- Both the process of selection and the process of distortion will take place at all steps in the chain from event to reader (**replication**)

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## Harcup and O'Neill

- 1. THE POWER ELITE. Stories concerning powerful individuals, organisations or institutions.
- 2. CELEBRITY. Stories concerning people who are already famous.
- 3. ENTERTAINMENT. Stories concerning sex, show-business, human interest, animals, an unfolding drama, or offering opportunities for humorous treatment, entertaining photographs or witty headlines.
- 4. SURPRISE. Stories that have an element of surprise and/or contrast.
- 5. BAD NEWS. Stories with particularly negative overtones, such as conflict or tragedy.

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## Harcup and O'Neill

- 6. GOOD NEWS. Stories with particularly positive overtones such as rescues and cures.
- 7. MAGNITUDE. Stories that are perceived as sufficiently significant either in the numbers of people involved or in potential impact.
- 8. RELEVANCE. Stories about issues, groups and nations perceived to be relevant to the audience.
- 9. FOLLOW-UP. Stories about subjects already in the news.
- 10. NEWSPAPER AGENDA. Stories that set or fit the news organisation's own agenda.

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## Defining 'bias'

- What is 'bias'?
  - Are the interests of one group within society *systematically* favoured by a particular media outlet?
- Contrasted with:
  - truthful, impartial, objective, balanced
  - 中立、不偏不党、公平

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## Typology of biases

		Intention	
		1. Explicit and intended: <b>Partisan Bias</b>	3. Explicit and unintended: <b>Unwitting Bias</b>
Explicitness		2. Implicit and intended: <b>Propaganda Bias</b>	4. Hidden and unintended: <b>Ideological Bias</b>

McQuail, Mass Comm. Theory 25 / 40

## Levels of analysis

### At what 'level' should be looking for bias?

- Individual statement
- Individual Program
- Series of editions of same program
- Channel
- Medium (tv, papers etc)
- Media system as a whole

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## Observing bias: What to look for?

### Quantity

- Should amounts of coverage reflect some numerical characteristic of the world? (what?)
- Population? Size of economy? Popularity?

### Quality

- Maybe the quality is more important: positive coverage is better than negative coverage (?)
- Then, who decides whether a story is 'negative' or 'positive'? (-ve or +ve 'for who?')

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## Who's 'bias'?

### Thatcher death coverage prompts competing accusations of BBC bias

BBC receives 268 complaints saying coverage biased in favour of Thatcher, and 227 saying it was biased against her

John Plunkett

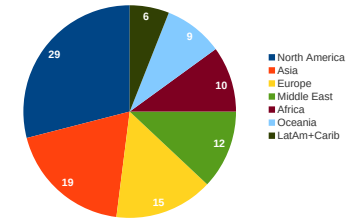
theguardian.com, Wednesday 10 April 2013 17:38 BST

Biased 'in favour': 268  
Biased 'against': 227  
'Too much coverage': 271



## Which 'quantity'?

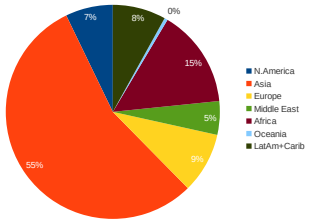
"The content of 19 digital and terrestrial TV bulletins, 5 radio bulletins and 6 online sources were recorded over a period of 2 weeks, from Monday Feb 9 to Sunday Feb 22, 2009."



Scott, M. (2009). The World in Focus: How UK Audiences connect with the wider world and the International Content of news in 2009. Commonwealth Broadcasting Association / International Broadcasting Trust, London.

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## Which 'quantity'?

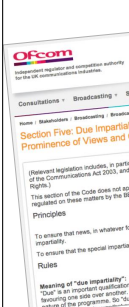


Proportion of world population in each region

Scott, M. (2009). The World in Focus: How UK Audiences connect with the wider world and the International Content of news in 2009. Commonwealth Broadcasting Association / International Broadcasting Trust, London.

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## Impartiality: Regulations and laws



### Principles

To ensure that news, in whatever form, is reported with due accuracy and presented with **due impartiality**.

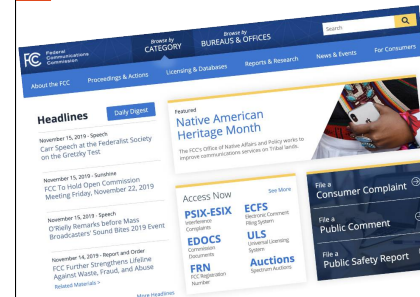
5.1 **News, in whatever form, must be reported with due accuracy and presented with due impartiality.**

5.2 Significant mistakes in news should normally be acknowledged and corrected on air quickly. Corrections should be appropriately scheduled.

5.7 **Views and facts** must not be misrepresented. Views must also be presented with due weight over appropriate timeframes.

5.8 Any **personal interest of a reporter or presenter**, which would call into question the due impartiality of the programme, must be made clear to the audience.

## US: 'Fairness' and 'Equal Time'



https://www.fcc.gov/media/policy/political-programming

'Equal Time Rule' Communications Act of 1934

'Fairness Doctrine' (1949)

- Broadcasters should cover matters of public interest. Contrasting views should be presented.
- Effectively revoked 1985
- Formally revoked 2011

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## Japan: Broadcast Law (1950)

### Article 3-2.

- (1) Any broadcaster shall, in compiling the broadcast programs for domestic broadcasting, follow what is laid down in the following items:
  - i) Shall not disturb public security and good morals and manners;
  - ii) Shall be **politically impartial** [ 政治的に公平 ];
  - iii) Shall broadcast news without distorting facts;
  - iv) As regards controversial issues, shall clarify the point of issue from as many angles as possible.

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## Academic studies of 'bias'

- Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG)
  - 'Bad News' series
- Herman & Chomsky's 'Propaganda Model'
  - *Manufacturing Consent*



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## Critiques of bias studies

- Any re-presentation of reality has to be partial so *all* stories are 'biased'.
- There is no universal 'independent' reality to make comparisons with.
- Any study of bias is bound to be ideologically tainted.
- News stories are nothing more than competing descriptions of real-world events.
- Would 'unbiased' news actually be of 'interest' to anybody?

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## Balance across media systems

Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017

- "We now have some preliminary evidence to suggest that **polarisation is increasing in some countries**, but also that there is large national variation in the degree to which the audiences for the most popular news brands are polarised along the left-right spectrum."

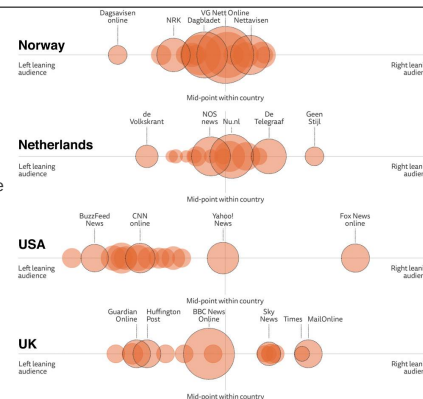
<http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/>  
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## Polarisation

### Result of 2 questions in survey

Q1f. Some people talk about 'left', 'right' and 'centre' to describe parties and politicians. With this in mind, where would you place yourself on the following scale?

Q5b. Which of the following brands have you used to access news ONLINE in the last week?



## Be aware of 'bias' (distortion red flags!)

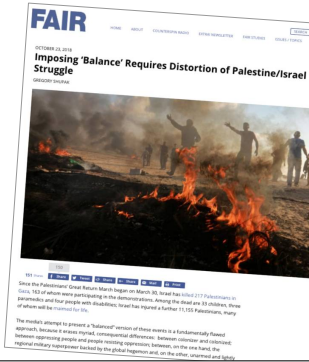
- Who are the **sources**?
- Is there a lack of **diversity**?
- From whose **point of view** is the news reported?
- Are there double **standards**?
- Do **stereotypes** skew coverage?
- What are the unchallenged **assumptions**?
- Is the **language** loaded?
- Is there a lack of **context**?
- Do the headlines and stories match?
- Are stories on important issues featured **prominently**?



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## FAIR Studies (Balance?)

The media's attempt to present a "balanced" version of these events is a fundamentally flawed approach, because **it erases myriad, consequential differences: between colonizer and colonized; between oppressing people and people resisting oppression**; between, on the one hand, the regional military superpower backed by the global hegemon and, on the other, unarmed and lightly armed protestors.



## Dealing with 'bias'

- In most cases **we cannot compare the media report of the event with the 'event' itself.**
- Studies of bias may assume a **unquestioned reality** that we do not have access to for comparison.
- In many cases we can only access 'reality' by **building up a picture** through a broad selection of 'biased' reports.
- Theoretically, after building up this picture we then might be able to assess individual reports as more or less 'truthful'.

## Summary

- Mass media texts are made by real people in real situations
- Newspapers are collections of reports of events made by people
- Evaluation of the 'truth' of media reports is complicated and requires sustained effort

Ends