

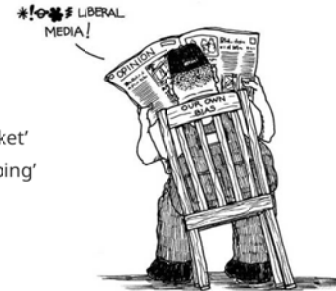
Media and Society: 8

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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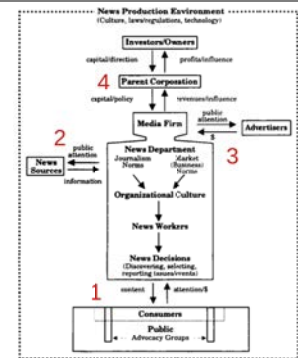
McManus: Market-driven Journalism

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



Example 'Actor': Newsroom workers

- Newsworkers 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

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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:	3. Explicit and unintended:
Explicitness		Partisan Bias	Unwitting Bias
		2. Implicit and intended:	4. Hidden and unintended:
		Propaganda Bias	Ideological Bias

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

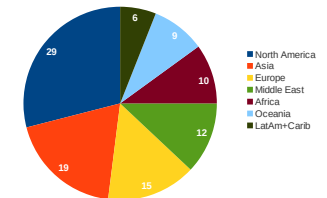
theguardian.com, Wednesday 10 April 2013 17:38 BST

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



Which 'quantity'?

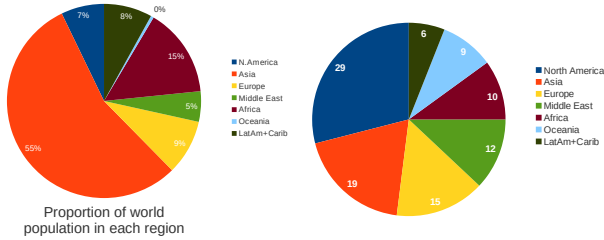
"The content of 19 digital and terrestrial TV bulletins, 5 radio bulletins and 6 online sources were recorded over a period of 2 weeks, from Monday Feb 9 to Sunday Feb 22, 2009."



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'?



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

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code/section-five-due-impartiality-accuracy>

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-representation 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."

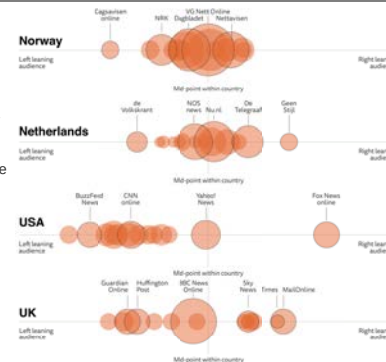
<http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/>
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Polarisation

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