The Market is the Medium: The Political Economy of the Mass Media

by

Steven J. Anderson

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how market forces influence the political roles of the mass media. The approach is interdisciplinary, employing a political-economic methodology that draws upon literature in communication studies, the philosophy of technology, and political theory. The study focuses on how the political roles of the media are imperiled by the free market and specifically the concentration of ownership. It is argued that media content is a commodity produced by media institutions, the finished good resulting in content that rather than informative is infotainment: the assimilation of information into entertainment to maintain audience levels. But, rather than this being a process executed by hegemonic institutions inherent in our society, the thesis contends that infotainment is the result of consumer sovereignty. In the affluent liberal states media content is primarily consumed by citizens as a private activity. In this context, information, as a commodity, procured by the mass media serves not only to entertain the individual, it impedes their ability to sufficiently disclose relevant issues, concerns and problems. The thesis concludes, firstly, that media firms need to accept a social responsibility if they favor the continuance of accruing profit. It is only within a liberal democratic polity, which promotes the free market, that media firms can economically flourish. Secondly, the thesis concludes that citizens must accept their responsibilities as free citizens residing in a liberal democratic polity and demand information that better informs them rather than using the mass media solely as a leisure and thus a pacifying activity.

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DEDICATION

For

David and **Branden**

May you two grow with open, curious, analytical *and* critical minds

Watch Out World !!!

Introduction

Ill news has wings, and with the wind doth go,
Comfort's a cripple and comes ever slow.
-- Michael Drayton, year unknown --

Writing in 1995, Richard Parker observed that it is "the issue -- the economics of news -- that again and again seems now to be shaping the evolution of the technologically feasible into the practically enduring."[1] This study seeks to increase the level of understanding of this 'issue' through an analysis of how market forces influence the political roles of the mass media. For purposes of this project, the mass media refer principally to those technological vehicles through which information is disseminated. It is the creation of messages, the means in which the messages are conveyed and the involvement of large numbers of individuals consuming such messages. Employing this generic label of the mass media is useful as it indicates similarities between different mediums of communication. A prominent example of those forces at work is found in the way in which the increase of the global concentration of ownership in the information age imperils the democratic process by way of disseminating information that entertains rather than informs. The mass media are agents of socialization and legitimization for political and economic institutions. Moreover, they occupy a "contested terrain of public space; such that their conditions of operation and actual performance remain of no less concern than in the past."[2]

Contemporary times have seen an ever-growing trend in the concentration of commercial ownership of media firms on a global level. Operating under the market mechanism, these new media behemoths give precedence to profit over informed citizenship and democracy. But do not owners of media enterprises have a legal right to attain profit? For instance, is not the growing trend in the oligopolistic nature of liberal democratic media a natural outgrowth of economic Darwinism?

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[1] Richard Parker, *Mixed Signals: The Prospects For Global Television* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1995), 85.
[2] Denis McQuail, "Mass Media In The Public Interest: Towards a Framework of Norms for Media Performance," in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, eds., *Mass Media And Society* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), 70.

For some, the mass media should be free to operate in both national and international economies, supplying a commodity (information and/or entertainment) to consumers who demand it (citizens). Proponents of this libertarian model contend that by allowing, and encouraging competition, a 'free marketplace of ideas' will flourish and citizens will consume information from numerous sources, thereby formulating their personal ideologies relating to their social environment.

However, a more critical approach to the development of the mass media has led to an examination of the nature of the relationships of the concentration of ownership, the mass media and democracy. Such critics contend that the mass media should serve a public role and fulfill a 'social responsibility' to citizens to ensure that the circulation of relevant political information is not forsaken for profit maximization. They argue that leaving the democratic responsibilities of the media to the free market results in an intellectually malnourished populace, incapable of making informed political decisions.

This project is situated within this critical context and examines only the mass media in the advanced capitalist economies of the western world. In exploring the nature of the relationship between the mass media, globalization, and democracy, this project examines a number of issues. Chapter one is a conceptual history of the relationship between the mass media and democracy, which involves a consideration of the historical overview of democracy, both the libertarian and social responsibility normative assertions of the media and a summary of the development of the mass media. The second chapter offers a theoretical examination of popular commentators of the mass media and whether or not they pay sufficient attention to how market forces influence the political roles of the media. Chapter three discusses the changing nature of the globalization of the mass media, paying particular attention to how market forces detract from the democratic process. At this point, it is argued that infotainment severely hinders the potential reasoning capacities of citizens to make informed decisions because the majority of media content is sensationalistic and does not adequately explore vital issues.

The mass media in the information age is the subject of chapter four. Exploring various economic, governmental and technological challenges the media face in the information age the chapter finds that the media face a paradox. They have a right to accrue profit while simultaneously have a responsibility to report events in an informative and professional manner. Moreover, the project concludes that infotainment is predominantly the result of consumer sovereignty: most citizens prefer infotainment over information. Media firms merely supply the product that is demanded by the mass of citizens. Chapter four ends with a brief exploration into the role the Internet might have as a new form of mass media to bridge the chasm between infotainment and information. The thesis concludes that the working model of the mass media, offered by James Curran, with his emphasis on a core media sector encircled by satellite sectors, provides the firmest foundation for both the fulfillment of the political roles of the media and the right of private media firms to strive for incremental profit achievement in the information age. Lastly, it is contended that citizens should demand a higher caliber and quality of news from media organizations so that they may better develop their personal belief systems.

Chapter 1

Democracy and the Mass Media

Information has been described as the currency of democracy.
--- Arthur Siegal, 1983 --

Foundations and Concepts in Liberal Democratic Thought

The goal of many political ideologies is democracy: a technique of decision-making whereby citizens govern by way of majority rule. Democracy, both the word and form of political life, originated in ancient Greece. The Greek noun demos (common people) combined with the Greek verb kratein (rule) gave birth to demokratia -- the rule or government of society by the common people. From its conception in theory and inception in practice in ancient Greece, democracy has been synonymous with forms of majority rule. However, majority rule within Greek civilization meant that only adult males who were both free and Athenian could participate in political affairs. Majority rule and thus democracy in Greece differed enormously from our contemporary Western notion of democracy based on universal adult suffrage.

Dispute regarding the stability of democracy became readily apparent by the fifth and fourth century BC. Plato (427-347 BC) argued that democracy was unstable and even volatile because placing political power into the hands of the majority was granting power to the ignorant. Plato believed this granting of power inevitably led to the misuse and abuse of power. This type of political institution would lead to civil strife, war and ending in despotism.

A second individual who believed that democracy was both short-sighted and selfish was Aristotle (384-322 BC). A student of Plato, Aristotle believed that the "common people will recklessly pursue their own interests by taking property, wealth, and power from the few with no regard for the peace and stability of the polis as a whole."[3] In an attempt to counter such rioting, Aristotle

[3] Terence Ball and Richard Dagger, *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 26.

developed the conceptual apparatus he called the polity. The polity, Aristotle's preferred form of majority rule, differed from democracy because it mixed elements of rule by the few with elements of rule by the many. Amalgamating these two elements, each group was to act as a 'check' on the other. Therefore, neither class could pursue its interest at the expense of the other. As Aristotle was celebrating his political regime the polity, Greek democracy was experiencing an upheaval by a larger political unit, the Hellenic Empire. From the outset of the Hellenic Empire under the rule of Phillip of Macedonia (382-366 BC) until the birth of the Renaissance in Italy in 1250 AD, democracy as a political institution and form of rule was non-existent.

The Renaissance, beginning in Italy in 1250 AD, brought back to life the dying breaths of democracy and the city-state. During this period of time the world saw the works of Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael, wonderful discoveries in mathematics that sparked the scientific revolution, Luther rebelled against particular doctrines of the Catholic Church and Columbus discovered the New World. "Such a prodigious development of human consciousness and culture had not been seen since the ancient Greek miracle at the very birth of Western civilization."[4] Moreover, the city-states which were blossoming with commercial and cultural energy provided a new stage on which political life might perform. The state, during this time of rebirth, was viewed as an instrument to be controlled by human will and intellect. Based on the writings of Aristotle, there was a call for the return of civic life where high-spirited and rejuvenated citizens could once again participate in the governance of their cities. Fundamental to the revival of Greek democracy were the concepts of liberty, virtue and corruption.[5] No one wrote more extensively on these concepts than Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527). Machiavelli, in his book the Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titius Livy, expounded a political vision that attempted to harness together observations of despotism and ideas about the law, liberty and the state.[6] It is in this text that he expounds upon the old Republican system of government and endorses a mixed government as the ideal instrument for governing society.

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[4] Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), 224.
[5] Ball and Dagger, *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal*, 31.
[6] Roger Scruton, *A Dictionary Of Political Thought* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 279-280.

The revival of the Republican system, as endorsed by Machiavelli, as the ideal form of government spread from Italy into Great Britain in the seventeenth century and then into the American colonies in the eighteenth century. Democracy became increasingly popular throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries respectively. "Modern democratic rule emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the breaking of the private franchise on political rights held by the royalty and nobility of Western nations."[7] Its popularity may be attributed to a number of social and economic developments that the Industrial Revolution brought. Most importantly were the growth of the city, improvements in communications technology and the spread of public education; all incited interest in political matters.[8] "Although the approaches to democratic rule varied from nation to nation, the concerns expressed by citizens remained the same: to set the citizen above the state and to provide maximum liberty for individuals while treating all citizens equally."[9] Democracy returned as a preferred system of governance but owed its success to liberalism.

Liberalism is more than three hundred years old. Its penultimate goal is the promotion of individual liberty and freedom. Humans, within this doctrine, are seen as rational individuals who know what and where their self-interest lies. Moreover, this view of human nature stresses that if individuals are not inhibited to pursue their self-interests, they will achieve their goal if given the opportunity.

Liberalism originated and developed in opposition to the hierarchical political and social institutions of the despotic monarchies in Medieval European society. Its foundation was based on a reaction against two prominent features of Medieval Europe.[10] First, ascribed status fixed an individual's social standing at birth. This form of social and political organization provided the foundation for feudalism and the hierarchical nature of European society. Liberalism attacked this alienating social instrument by arguing for a rollback of state power and the creation of a civil society where "social

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[7] Robert G. Picard, *The Press and the Decline of Democracy* (London: Greeenwood Press, 1985), 5.
[8] Ball and Dagger, *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal*, 39.
[9] Picard, *The Press and the Decline of Democracy*, 6.
[10] Ball and Dagger, *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal*, 39.

relations, including private business, nonstate institutions, family and personal life could evolve without state interference."[11] This argument rested on the foundations of a free market and the right to own private property. Of utmost importance in its struggle against ascribed status was giving the middle-class (bankers and merchants) the economic opportunity to participate in their domestic economies. The belief that the best way to promote and advance the common good was to permit individuals to pursue their private interests soon became the cornerstone of liberal economic thought. Secondly, religious conformity was the second feature of European society that liberalism was a reaction against. Both religious and political authorities reinforced the doctrines of the Roman Church. Liberals advanced the argument that state power cannot be based on divine right but on the will of the sovereign people. Consequently, this argument necessitated the revival of democracy because mechanisms of political representation needed to guarantee that those who held power were placed there by popular support and to provide a check on their power. Liberalism fought for the natural rights of individuals and for individual liberty against the hierarchical social, political and economic institutions of Medieval Europe.

In the affluent liberal states of the Western world, the desires and goals of early liberals are deeply engraved in its political institutions. Liberalism is committed to democracy insofar as that it has maintained its fundamental tenet -- individual equality. Liberals stress this principle and believe that the way to achieve this goal is through limiting the power and functions of the state. The state should be neutral, leaving individuals free to pursue their self-interest. The tradition that became liberal democracy, based upon liberalism's two criticisms of Medieval European monarchies, was "liberal first (aimed at restricting state power over civil society) and democratic later (aimed at creating structures that would secure a popular mandate for holders of state power)."[12]

The earliest model of liberal democracy was conceived in the early nineteenth century by two of its founding contributors, Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. Devising a new model was essential, as Levine notes,

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[11] Georg Sorenson, *Democracy and Democratization: Processes and Prospects in a Changing World* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1993), 5.
[12] Ibid.

> The social and political reorganization of seventeenth - and eighteenth century Europe -- the dissolution of feudal society, the emergence of the nation state and the imitations of popular power -- all cast traditional notions of authority and obligation into crisis. The old inherited assumptions proved inadequate to the new social experience. Political life had to be rethought, its foundations reconstructed and its fundamental assumptions transformed.[13]

Bentham's and Mill's model was premised on two distinct beliefs: (1) citizens should be protected against the abuse of power by government and (2) that those in power would pursue the policies that the citizens desired. John Stuart Mill, son of James Mill, further developed the original model of liberal democracy by advocating a more prominent role for democracy, persuasively arguing that democracy was a vital instrument for achieving free human development. Liberal democracy emphasizes the importance of individual rights and liberty. For the liberal, everyone is supposed to be free to participate in public life if they desire.

Liberal democracy has become a legitimate and widely accepted form of government only when united with the ideals and implementation of the rule of law. Democracy in advanced capitalist societies has come to imply freedom in the form of social, political and economic rights. Liberal democracy denotes,

> a system in which the majority chooses rulers, who must govern them within the rule of law. This is what Aristotle meant by polity. The term liberal democracy must be carefully interpreted. It refers to liberalism in the broadest sense, without distinguishing it between classical and reform liberalism. Whatever their disagreements about laissez-faire, social justice, redistribution, or government intervention, classical and reform liberals are united in their support of constitutional procedures, the limited state and a private sphere of personal freedom.[14]

Liberal democracy then is a system of government where citizens rule themselves indirectly through elected representatives who themselves are subject to the rule of law.

As Dickerson and Flanagan (1994) observe, liberal democracy operates on four main principles: equality of political rights, majority rule, political participation and political freedom. Equality of

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[13] Andrew Levine, *Liberal Democracy: A Critique of its Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 14.
[14] Mark O. Dickerson and Thomas Flanagan, *An Introduction to Government and Politics: A Conceptual Approach* (4th ed.) (Scarbourough: Nelson Canada, 1994), 191.

political rights implies that every individual in a democratic society, regardless of race, sex or creed has "the same right to vote, run for office, serve on a jury, speak on public issues, and carry out other public functions."[15] "Equality has to do with 'sameness' and its proper recognition: things (persons, groups or whatever) are equal if they are the same in important respects and the principle of equality demands that things which are the same in relevant important respects ought to be treated equally."[16] The interrelationship between democracy and equality is so strong that democracy itself is defined in terms of political equality. This first operating principle leads into the second, majority rule. Majority rule assures each citizen that their vote is counted equally against other votes. Derived from the principle of political equality, majority rule is a major mechanism of decision-making in democracies whereby the preferences of the majority are to be promoted by government.

It is pertinent to note that various mutations of the principle of majority rule do exist and are exercised in liberal democratic societies. One such mutation is the election to public office by way of plurality. Plurality is the winning of office by the successful candidate with the largest number of votes irrespective of the fact that if the number of votes may be less than fifty-one percent. Canada, Great Britain and the United States of America are examples of liberal democracies which employ plurality as an instrument to decide who is victorious in election. A second mutation of majority rule and the antithesis of plurality is a qualified majority. In this species of majority rule, greater majorities than fifty percent plus one are normally required to settle matters in order to protect the rights of minorities. Because a qualified majority is more difficult to achieve it becomes increasingly arduous for the majority to act against the minority. "The qualified majority, while a constraint against democracy, is within the spirit of the rule of law. It is incorporated in most modern democracies as part of the process of constitutional amendment, on the assumption that the fundamental laws of the state are so important that they should not be easily altered by a simple majority."[17] Irrespective of the type of majority rule used in a democratic society, the practical task of motivating citizens to vote is the third operating principle of a liberal democracy.

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[15] Ibid., 192.
[16] Bary Holden, *Understanding Liberal Democracy* (New York: Phillip Allan Publishers, 1988), 15.
[17] Mark O. Dickerson, *An Introduction,* 195.

Political participation is the crux of democracy. However, with the size of our mass society, our complex economy and heterogeneous culture, the implementation of a representative form of government is more necessary than ever before. Representative government is so closely aligned with democracy that a large percentage of society views them as synonymous. Representative government allows democracy in mass societies because of its ability for elected officials to represent the interests of their constituents.

This form of liberal democracy attempts to achieve direct democracy in a symbolic way. Because all citizens cannot always be present to participate in the actions of their government, "their presence must be metaphorical in form. That is, practices and institutional arrangements must be adapted that allow the practice of government *as if* the people were directly involved and in control of things."[18] The primary act of political participation by the mass of citizens becomes that of voting. "Individuals are free not just when they are unsubjected to the processes of government but also when they participate in, and thereby help to take charge of, these processes. The idea can also link up with other conceptions of the way in which self-government enhances liberty."[19] Granted, there are a number of means in which individuals may and do participate in the political process and many of them were developed as the concept of equality of opportunity was conceived. As unfortunate as it may be, most citizens do not take the opportunity to participate directly in the political process. Elected officials are agents for the citizenry whose authority and power is made legitimate through the instrument of elections. When the concerns of a constituency, its needs and problems are properly addressed, and all views regarding such matters given reasonable consideration, political representation is said to occur. "Practices and institutional arrangements that make these aspects of direct participation by the citizenry 'present' in the indirect conduct of government would thus be seen to provide political representation of that citizenry."[20]

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[18] T.C. Pocklington, *Representative Democracy: An Introduction to Politics and Government* (2nd ed.) (Toronto: Harcourt-Brace and Company 1991), 16.
[19] Holden,*Understanding Liberal Democracy* , 21.
[20] Ibid., 18.

The fourth operating principle, political freedom, is a necessary condition for liberal democracy to exist. "An infallible test for political freedom is the legitimacy of opposition: freedom is only meaningful if it extends to those whose opinions differ from the opinions of those in authority."[21] Opposition in a liberal democracy is also bound to the rule of law just like the individuals in power. Synonymous with freedom is liberty, "liberty means freedom in a social context. The term 'individual liberty' then refers to the freedom of individuals with respect to their social -- and particularly their political -- environment."[22] Political freedom is characterized by numerous aspects: freedom of speech, thought and religion, the freedom to criticize government, freedom to form and join political parties other than the one in power. Arguably the most important freedom a citizen in a liberal democratic society is entitled to is the freedom of information. That means the freedom to have available the maximum possible range of information and analysis on issues affecting an individual's social, economic and political surroundings. The primary institution that performs these functions is the mass media.

Political Roles of the Mass Media in Liberal Democracies

Liberal democracy requires a free press, one that provides information-rich news and diversity in its analysis of public affairs. Freedom of the press is understood to mean that journalists are seriously constrained by neither government nor private interests. Because we live in such a heterogeneous and complex society, most 'events' fall outside a citizen's direct experience; citizens require accessible sources of information and interpretation of such 'events'. Consequently, citizens depend on the mass media for information and analysis from which their understanding of political, economic and social issues of society, their personal ideologies and their political decisions partially derive.

Arguably, the size and complexities of liberal democratic societies mean that we need the mass media just as we need representative government. The size of our society is not conducive to direct democracy. If it were there would be no need for today's mass media as a conduit of political

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[21] Dickerson and Flanagan, *An Introduction*, 200-201.
[22] Holden, *Understanding Liberal Democracy*, 18.

information. In a direct democracy the medium that would provide the flow of information would be oral in the form of conversations, discussions, meetings and arguments among its citizens.[23] But if a representative form of government is desired or needed then, as Gilsdorf asserts, "it goes without saying that there has to be a free and open system of various kinds of media of mass communication ... to put forward ideas, to contest with or oppose others, to be informed to the fullest extent possible, to have access to information and different points of view."[24] Establishing this democratic system of communications to transmit ideas of differing viewpoints, the media have to be free from state control. Some state regulation to promote diversity is not bad but the media must strive to avoid only presenting particular interests in society.

Modern Western democracy brought many changes, one of the most important being a change in the qualifications necessary to rule. This profound change was based on the spread of information. As time passed, citizens were able to govern their affairs, indirectly, in the name of the 'common good' by way of informed decision making. "As a consequence, information institutions became and have remained essential to democracies because they inform the public about the important issues of the day and the various solutions proposed by competing elites who wish to rule."[25] In contemporary times, the mass media are fully integrated and indispensable in our modern society providing an essential service to all layers of society.

The liberal-pluralist view of the media contends that the media should be one set of institutions with a plurality of interests that comprise a democratic society.[26] Within this perspective the media are referred to as the "fourth estate" whose mandate is "the pursuit of information in the name of the public good"[27] and to preserve liberal democracy by disseminating information to all layers of society and providing an arena of discussion and debate to incite public participation in the political process. "In their liberal democracy the press was to act as though everyone was not only capable

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[23] Bob Gilsdorf, "The Mass Media," in T.C. Pocklington, ed., *Representative Democracy*, 358.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Rowland Lorimer and Jean McNulty, *Mass Communication in Canada* (2nd ed.) (Toronto: McCelland and Stewart Inc., 1992), 70.
[26] Ibid., 71.
[27] Ibid.

but likely to make independent judgments about public affairs according to individual appraisals of truth and social worth."[28] Historically, this view of the media as 'watchdog' derives from a period when the mass media were highly politicized and adversarial. Free speech was viewed as a defense against absolutism and the 'watchdog' role only applied to the state because its formulation derived during a time when that state was unresponsive to the needs of its citizens.[29] "The mass media are social institutions that function within particular political and legal constraints, employing a distinctive mixture of trained personnel, following specific information-gathering procedures, to create material for either visual, auditory or conceptually-oriented media."[30] Thus, it does not follow that they are neutral transmitters of information; nor does it follow that, as an instrument of the democratic process, they provide a smooth and equal two-way flow of communication between citizens and their government.[31] Despite its shortcomings, the media play a vital role in liberal democratic societies.

A free and responsible press is a rational press, a press that employs the method of reason.[32] What makes the media free is that its functions are executed by free individuals who "draw on moral insight, intellectual skills, and their special gift of communicating clearly and impressively so as to educate their readers about important matters of the day and the relevance of those matters to the higher aims and ideas of a civilized society".[33] As both Lorimer (1994) and Newman (1989) observe, the mass media are not completely free, they are owned and operated by individuals who exert influence in its day-to-day operations; nonetheless it has come to be called free because it does inform the public more freely than other sources. Historically, this 'freedom' of the mass media is derived from one of the most fundamental rights to which an individual living in a democratic society is entitled -- freedom of speech.

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[28] Edwin R. Black, *Mass Media as the Enemy Within: Reflections on Democracy in W.J.S.'s Writings*, (Mimeo, 1995), 3.
[29] James Curran, "Mass Media and Democracy: A Reappraisal," in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, eds., *Mass Media And Society* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), 86.
[30] Rowland Lorimer, *Mass Communication: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 39.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Jay Newman, *The Journalist in Plato's Cave* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1989), 142.
[33] Ibid., 148.

Most people defend freedom of speech and freedom of the press with the same breath. Contending that freedom of the press is an off-spring of freedom of speech, they consider it to be one of the most fundamental freedoms upholding our democratic society. It must be observed that the mass media, by way of freedom of the press, enhance the flow of ideas and information but also inhibit it. "Nothing guarantees that all valuable information, ideas, theories, explanations, proposals and points of view will find expression in the public forum."[34] Lichtenberg furthers her criticism that freedom of the press is not freedom of speech by stating that freedom of the press should "be contingent on the degree to which it promotes certain values at the core of our interest in freedom of expression generally."[35] Most individuals treat or equate the media as the 'voice of the people'. Defending the media within this perspective is equivalent to defending an individual's right to freedom of speech. However, it is incorrect to presume that defending freedom of speech is tantamount to supporting freedom of the press.

A means of differentiating between the two freedoms is to ask: what do we mean by free speech? Lichtenberg (1990) proposes two main principles: (1) the noninterference principle where people be allowed to communicate without interference and (2) the multiplicity of voices principle contending that there should be many different ideas being communicated throughout society.[36] To assist our understanding of these principles it is beneficial to parallel them to liberalism's conceptions of positive and negative freedom. Isaiah Berlin, in his influential work Four Essays on Liberty (1969), argues that to understand negative freedom one must ask: "what is the area within the subject -- a person or group of persons -- is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?"[37] By positive freedom Berlin poses the question: "what, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?"[38] In short, the notion of negative freedom implies the freedom from

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[34] Judith Lichtenberg, "Foundations and Limits of Freedom of the Press,' in J. Lichtenberg, ed., *Democracy and the Mass Media* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 102.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 107.
[37] Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays On Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 121-122.
[38] Ibid.

obstacles while the notion of positive freedom is concerned with the source of obstacles that impede an individual from striving after their own interests.

Using Lichtenberg's goals of free speech, it is possible to describe the differing commitments as two basic principles whose roots were planted in liberalism's two conceptions of freedom. The first principle is the noninterference principle. When paralleled with negative freedom both contend that an individual should be uninhibited to think, speak, hear and believe as one wishes. When viewed in tandem with positive freedom, the second principle, the multiplicity of voices, argues that the ideal of freedom of speech is realized when a diversity of view points flourishes in the 'marketplace of ideas'. It is similar to the notion of positive freedom insofar as it accepts a certain degree of government intervention to advance the multiplicity of ideas existing throughout society just as positive freedom allows government intervention to reduce inequalities in life so individuals are entitled to equality of opportunity in their pursuit of self-interest.

Our deepest interest in free speech lies within the *leitmotif* of liberalism -- autonomy. At its most primal level, autonomy stresses the need for an individual to act without interference from others. It contends that a person be entitled to think for him or herself and not be subjected to another's will. Moreover, our fundamental interest in freedom of speech extends not only to the belief that individuals be permitted to think for themselves but also to communicate their thoughts and beliefs to others.

Citizens residing in a democratic polity, as those deciding who shall be elected to power, need a lot, if not full information, to make intelligent political choices. Alexander Meiklejohn, in his book Political Freedom: The Constitutional Powers of the People (1960), stresses two functions of freedom of speech.[39] The first is the informative function which ensures that free speech and the flow of information permeates all levels of society whereby citizens have sufficient information to make informed decisions regarding matters affecting them. A second democratic role the

[39]Alexander Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom: The Constitutional Powers of the People* (New York: Harper, 1960), 8 - 28.

informative function performs is that it provides information to political representatives who can then better understand their constituents' concerns. The second function, the critical function, is primarily performed by the mass media who serve as the people's 'watchdog', ensuring a diversity of information and viewpoints. "Moving from the individual to the society, an enlightened society is one in which, following on public dialogue and debate, a balance has been struck between conflicting interests. Enlightenment is thus inseparable from the democratic process."[40]

How are Lichtenberg's principles of free speech and Meiklejohn's two functions of freedom to be implemented to advance democracy vis á vis a working model for the freedom of the press? Any model that depicts how the mass media in a democratic system should function is purely normative. Bernard Cohen (1963) identified six roles the mass media play in liberal democratic societies.[41] The media can act as an informer, an interpreter, an advocate of government, a critic of government, an advocate of its own policies or a worker with the government in policy formulation. "The informer and interpreter roles of mass media constitute the core of daily news activities...the remaining roles of the press relate to the decision-making process."[42] Investigating and reporting news, voicing citizen concerns and making subjective comments regarding the accountability of the government to its citizens, the mass media convey information to the citizenry and the government.

Responsiveness on the part of the elected government to the public will is a vital component of liberal democracy. It would be extremely difficult for democracy to flourish without a mass media system capable of conveying a diversity of opinions and information. How such a system is to operate in a liberal democratic society has been the source of abrasive debate. Are the media to operate uninhibited as in Lichtenberg's noninterference principle, paying heed only to the 'invisible hand' of the free market to ensure a variety of information and opinion thus fulfilling its democratic responsibilities? Or, is the media to act in a socially-responsible manner where the need for

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[40] Lichtenberg, *Democracy and the Mass Media*, 113.
[41] Bernard Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 17-47.
[42] Walter C. Soderland, "Mass Media in Canadian Politics: Basic Issues In A Contemporary Context," in R. Krause and R.H. Wagenberg, eds., *Canadian Government and Politics* (2nd ed.) (Toronto: Copp-Clark, 1995), 328-329.

government regulation is necessary to guarantee a 'multiplicity of voices' that provides information-rich news and diversity, thus providing incentive for citizen participation in the political process?

The Libertarian and Social Responsibility Theories of the Press

"The importance of the press in the democratic process has been recognized since the seventeenth century."[43] Today the relationship between the mass media, government and society is complex but necessary to understand. The nature of this relationship is explored according to the two dominant theories of the mass media in Western liberal democratic societies. The seminal work in this area and a basic reference for this section is Four Theories of the Press (1971) by Frederick Siebert.[44] The libertarian and social responsibility theories of the press prescribe the normative roles the mass media should execute in liberal democracies. "The ideal of the press as a civic institution made its way from the inter-war critiques of liberal democracy into the midcentury dogmas of the liberal elites."[45] The libertarian theory of the press derives from the concept of natural rights and the self-fulfilling reasoning individual. Composed from much of the arguments of John Locke, John Milton and John Stuart Mill, its premise lay in the 'invisible hand' of free enterprise. In contradistinction, the social responsibility theory of the press arises from the inadequacies and fallacies of the libertarian theory. Developed in 1947 in the United States by the Hutchins Commission on the Freedom of the Press, this doctrine postulated that the mass media was being overtaken by big business, and the advent of radio and television as new instruments of mass communication required government regulation to ensure the democratic responsibilities of the mass media were fulfilled.

Libertarian Theory of the Press

The mass media within the libertarian theory of the press operate under the dogma of liberalism. Principles of this theory are based on arguments put forth by some of the prominent thinkers of liberalism, primarily John Locke who argues that humans are rational individuals who seek their

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[43] Picard, *The Press and the Declince of Democracy*, 12.
[44] Frederick Siebert, *Four Theories of the Press* (U.S.A.: University of Illinois Press, 1973).
[45] Edwin R. Black, *Politics and the News* (Toronto: Buttersworth, 1982), 27.

own well-being and happiness. "As it developed ... the libertarian theory required a society with a free marketplace of ideas and information in which all people might develop to the full their gifts of reason and judgment."[46] The fulfillment of an individual's self-development and interest becomes the ultimate goal. Therefore, the prime function of society is to advance the interests of its individual members. "The state exists as a method of providing the individual with a milieu in which he can realize his own potentialities."[47] Liberal philosophy made important contributions to the status and function of the mass media, most influential were "the insistence on the importance of the individual, the reliance on his powers of reasoning, and the concept of natural rights of which freedom of religion, speech, and the press became a part."[48]

The nineteenth century witnessed the enactment of libertarian theory of the press into practice. During this century, the authoritarian system in Western societies, of the press was in drastic decline. The transfer from authoritarianism to libertarian ideals of the media did not occur quickly. "The main battle to establish freedom for the media was fought in the eighteenth century, and in the vanguard of that fight were the printers and publishers of newspapers."[49] The call to battle was signaled on two fronts. The first was the ever-present threat of the media being charged with seditious libel (the printing of stories which were perceived to incite people to rebel against the government); the second dealt with publishing government documents or, rather, the inability to report and print parliamentary proceedings.

The governments in both Britain and the United States, at the time, sought to control open criticism of their activities through prosecutions for seditious libel. "During the eighteenth century, the courts adhered to the principle that publishing material attacking government policies or personnel tended to undermine that state and therefore was illegal."[50] Another problem, a subsidiary of the first, was the question of whether a publisher had the right to publish information that was harmful in nature, but grounded in truth. Could a publisher print their opinions? "Libertarian principles

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[46] Black, *Mass Media as the Enemy Within*, 3.
[47] Siebert, *Four Theories of the Press*, 40.
[48] Ibid., 44.
[49] Ibid., 47.
[50] Ibid., 48.

finally triumphed with the establishment of truth as a defense in America by constitutional provisions and in England by a Parliamentary Act (1843)."[51]

The second front of the battle, the right to publish government proceedings, was decided in Britain, in favor of libertarian principles near the end of the eighteenth century. The media of the time argued that because members of parliament were representing the interests of the people, the media, as carriers of information, had the right to inform the public of the happenings in parliament. The battle between the mass media and government resulted in a victory for openness. "The contest for recognition of libertarian doctrines as they affected the press culminated in the formulation and adoption of Bills of Rights which included provisions establishing press freedom."[52] Protections for the media to publish government proceedings, through the doctrine of the freedom of the press, in both Britain and the United States were enshrined in law and the issue of the limitations of the press became a topic of fierce debate. While the libertarian theory of the press argued that "all should have access to the 'market' little thought was given to how this might be done beyond the assertion that above all the state must refrain from suppressing any communication unless everybody agreed that it threatened the continuance of the free society itself."[53]

To recapitulate, the philosophical foundation of the libertarian press system was formulated by prominent liberal thinkers such as Locke in the seventeenth century, "the details were worked out and put into practice in the eighteenth century; and the system spread throughout the world when liberalism was at its zenith in the nineteenth century."[54] Under the rubric of the libertarian theory of the press, the mass media are foremost to inform and second to entertain. A third function, the sales function, assures media institutions financial independence thus diminishing the influence, reliance and role of the government. A fourth function of the media was to provide a check on government and keep it from abusing its authority. "Basically the underlying purpose of the media

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 49.
[53] Black, *Mass Media as the Enemy Within,* 3.
[54] Siebert, *Four Theories of the Press,* 50.

was to help discover truth, to assist in the process of solving political and social problems by presenting all manner of evidence and opinion as the basis for decisions."[55]

The libertarian theory of the press acknowledges the reality that not all information reaching the public would be factual. Regardless, libertarians believed that the state should not have the right to suppress information, even information of unsound nature. Rather, the alternative road taken by libertarians was, similar to Lichtenberg's multiplicity of voices principle, to let the public "be subjugated to a barrage of information and opinion, some of it possibly true, some of it possibly false, and some of it containing elements of both."[56] Because individuals are self-interested creatures with the capacity to reason, they could be trusted to sift through the glut of information and use that which was relevant to their purposes. This 'self-righting' process was essential to democracy because in a society where a multiplicity of voices dominated the lines of communication, it was vital that an individual possess the skills necessary to deduce what was in their interest and the community's.

The economic component of the libertarian theory of the press rested upon that of liberalism's free-market and the 'invisible-hand'. It argued that any citizen who had the means and the desire could own and operate an institution of the media. "It was also assumed that the mass media would operate in a capitalistic society in which free enterprise was the guiding principle. This meant that the instruments of communication would be privately owned and would compete in a free market."[57] The state was to provide a secure foundation for the multiplicity of voices to be heard, individuals to interact and for the mass media to execute their natural rights. In the end it was the self-interested, rational individual who determined the success of the enterprise based on its adequacies of providing the citizen with relevant, pertinent as well as entertaining information to assist them in their pursuit to full self-development.

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[55] Ibid., 51.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 52.

The history of the libertarian theory of the press has "paralleled the development of democratic principles in government and free enterprise in economics."[58] The libertarian's greatest shortcoming was its failure to promote standards and operating procedures for the mass media in their daily operations. This led to an abuse of liberty whereby not every citizen had the opportunity to hear differing viewpoints and arguments on the events of the day. Rather, the economic philosophy of the marketplace of ideas led to a concentration of ownership in the mass communication industries and displaced the responsibilities of the media as a vital instrument in the democratic process.

Faith in the libertarian theory of the press declined and the theory soon became the object of criticism. Much of the criticism targeted the libertarian theory of the press' adherence to the economic dogma of the free market; critics lamented that the media became subservient to big business, owners pursued their own political ends and that media content became superficial, not informative, in its reporting. As the media became an economic mammoth of mass communications in the twentieth century, issues of the moral responsibilities of the media, its owners, editors and journalists and their duties to ensure the public's right to know came into question. A theory which sought answers to such issues as well as the media's moral responsibility, above and beyond profit was the social responsibility theory of the press.

Social Responsibility Theory of the Press

The social responsibility theory of the press represents significant changes from the libertarian theory. The social responsibility theory stipulates that the mass media have a moral responsibility to the public, whereas the libertarian theory of the press never established this priority or mandate. The title social responsibility "aptly describes the model evident in recommendations made by groups such as the U.K. Royal Commission on the Press (1949), the unofficial but prestigious American Commission on the Freedom of the Press (1947-49), and similar groups in those and other English-speaking countries."[59]

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[58] Ibid.
[59] Black, *Politics and the News*, 28-29.

The social responsibility theory of the press was conceived in the twentieth century. The functions of the press under this model are to "provide a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events. They should project the diverse views and opinions of society's different groups to each other and provide a general forum of comment and opinion."[60] The functions of the media under this doctrine are similar to those of the libertarian theory of the press as Peterson writes:

> Six tasks came to be ascribed to the press as traditional theory evolved: (1) servicing the political system by providing information, discussion, and debate on public affairs; (2) enlightening the public so as to make it capable of self-government; (3) safeguarding the rights of the individual by servicing as a watchdog against government; (4) servicing the economic system primarily by bringing together the buyers and sellers of goods and services through the medium of advertising; (5) providing entertainment; (6) maintaining its own financial self-sufficiency so as to be free from the pressures of social interests.[61]

The libertarian and the social responsibility of the press may appear to be one and the same because they adhere to some of the same principles. However, the latter differs from the former in that it disagrees on the interpretation of these principles by owners of the media. The social responsibility endorses the political roles of the media and safeguarding informed citizenship. It even accepts the media operating in the free market but it resents the media giving economics and the quest for profit precedence over promoting the democratic process.

The social responsibility paradigm severs itself completely from the libertarian philosophy by acknowledging the possibility, but only if necessary, of government intervention to ensure a multiplicity of voices in the free marketplace of ideas. What the social responsibility theory "sought from the press was a public warehouse of facts that would supplement, even if not replace, the retail marketplace of ideas."[62] It is this principle that establishes this doctrine as an independent theory of the media. As previously cited, the heritage of the social responsibility

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Theodore Peterson, "The Social-Responsibility Theory of the Press," in Frederick Siebert, ed., *Four Theories of the Press*, 74.
[62] Black, *Mass Media as the Enemy Within*, 3.

theory rests in the Royal Commission on Freedom of the Press in Britain (1949). But where did the rationale for the social responsibility theory of the press derive?

As stated, the theory was conceived in the twentieth century. A century earlier, an event that changed the face of existence and encouraged the need for the social responsibility theory was the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution fostered technological and social changes, the magnitude of which we are still experiencing. Both affected the mass media because technological innovations increased the size, speed and efficiency of the old media. Advancements in technology also gave the media the ability to serve a diverse and diffuse audience as never before experienced. However, communication industries also became increasingly expensive to start and run; the result being the concentration of ownership.

As the mass media grew, readership increased while the number of competing papers decreased, criticisms of the media increased in number and intensity. Themes of such criticism were that the media had accumulated massive power which its owners used to pursue their own interests, that the press resisted social change, that the media endangered public morals, that it was controlled by an elite socio-economic class and it emphasized entertainment over the significant.[63] Thereafter, critics found fault in the declining numbers of daily circulations which threatened the flow of ideas, the emphasis on sensationalism in the media, the domination of radio and television programming by a select few networks and the monopolistic practices of the motion picture industry.[64] A different direction from which the media drew criticism and one that facilitated the growth of the social responsibility theory of the press was the intellectual arena. The libertarian theory of the press was a creature of its time; it was influenced by the natural rights philosophy of Locke, advancements in science and the doctrine of classical economics. This theory "accommodated itself to the world view of the Enlightenment .... (b)ut the revolution in modern thought has all but demolished the world view which supported the libertarian theory of the press."[65]

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[63] Peterson, *The Social-Responsibility Theory of the Press*, 78.
[64] Ibid., 78-80.
[65] Ibid., 80.

The social responsibility theory of the press represents a collectivist theory of society which presupposes that society might sometimes take priority over the individual. The media are to act against both concentrations of economic power and totalitarianism, each enemies of liberal democracy. The idea further postulates that the "major means of communication become 'common carriers' rather like telephone and telegraph or railway and highway systems, all of which carried whatever traffic they picked up without bias towards anyone."[66] The fundamental premises of democratic capitalism, the free market and the law of supply and demand, underwent reconstructive surgery within the social responsibility theory of the press, the result being the media developing a sense of accountability and a mission to serve the general welfare.

According to the 1949 Royal Commission, society called on five requirements from the social responsibility theory of the press for liberal democracy to prosper.[67] The first requirement was to provide information in a true, informative and meaningful context. By doing so, citizens could draw an accurate picture of the day's happenings from a variety of sources, thereby expediting the 'self-righting' process. A second requirement was for the media to serve as a forum for public conversation, debate and criticism. The media, acting as common carriers of public discussion, should attempt to represent all viewpoints while simultaneously identifying all its sources of information. Moreover, all news was to be reported impartially and with the greatest objectivity. "Objective reporting meant presenting information as impersonally and completely as possible. Everything was to be done to enable the reader as citizen to build his own picture of reality for himself on the basis of the facts and nothing but the facts."[68] A third requirement was that the media accurately portray social groups. This requirement is vital if the media wishes to convey truthful information to its audience. Presenting and clarifying goals was the fourth requirement. This colossal responsibility was to be executed in editorial columns and impartial reporting. The final requirement of the media was that they provide full access of information to citizens. Expounding upon the individual's right to 'freedom of information', there must be a wide

[66] Black, *Politics and the News*, 28.
[67] Peterson in Siebert, *Four Theories of the Press*, 87-92.
[68] Black, *Politics and the News*, 28.

distribution of news and opinion and it was the social responsibility of the media to break down barriers to the free flow of information and news.

To accomplish these five operating principles successfully, assistance from one institution may be required -- one that would appall all proponents of the libertarian theory of the press, the government. The government, proponents of the social responsibility theory attest, would acknowledge that the media must remain in the hands of the private sector but that it could help the media fulfill its obligations to citizens by providing the type of communications system needed to successfully achieve its social and moral responsibilities to society. "Social responsibility theory of the press holds that government must not merely allow freedom; it must actively promote it..."[69] Government must exercise its legal power to ensure satisfactory media performance. Ways in which governments can provide this service are many. "It may enact legislation to forbid flagrant abuses of the press which 'poison the wells of public opinion,' for example, or it may enter the field of communications to supplement existing media."[70]

The social responsibility theory "rests on a foundation of thought which has amended certain fundamental assumptions of libertarian theory and which has largely rejected others. The concept of liberty which it represents is fundamentally different from that which traditional theory represented."[71] Again it is beneficial to parallel the two theories discussed above with negative and positive freedom. The libertarian theory of the press was borne out of negative freedom; the freedom from external restraints. In contradistinction, the social responsibility theory of the press derives itself from the concept of positive freedom; freedom resulting from the influence of external restraints. The libertarian model contended that self-development would inevitably occur through the 'self-righting' principle of the media -- as long as the media remained unhampered from external restraint. The social responsibility paradigm and positive freedom, viewed negative freedom as inefficient; it is necessary to provide an individual with the means to achieve their goals and self-fulfillment, hence government intervention.

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[69] Peterson in Siebert, *Four Theories of the Press*, 95.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., 93.

"The rather general labeling of the libertarian and social responsibility doctrines as 'theories' does not mean that they are in any way explanatory of the way the mass media acted ... the liberal theories were wholly normative in character and simply prescribed codes of preferred moral conduct for the mass media."[72] To help understand how the media have acted and thus appreciate their impact on societies and the democratic process, it is useful to discuss a summary of the development of the media beginning with print culture and the Gutenberg press in 1455 AD.

Summary of the Development of the Mass Media

Communication is an exchange of ideas, opinion and information. As an activity, communication has evolved from non-verbal body gestures to a system of spoken language. As societies grew in number and intellect the development of a communications system became necessary to store, retrieve and disseminate information. Progressing from stone, to clay, to bamboo and finally to papyrus as the favored object for documentation, writing was the major cultural and technological innovation that transformed the landscape of the world. Printing marks the transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern era. However, it was the arrival of the remarkable invention the printing press that facilitated this change.

The origin of the printing press is ambiguous. Even the correct spelling of the last name of the individual credited for its conception is an area of contest. Johannes Gansfleisch zur Laden zum Gutenberg's printing press became the prototype for mass production and "impacted directly on the world of ideas by making knowledge widely available and by creating a space in which new forms of expression could flourish."[73] Gutenberg's invention dealt a serious blow to 'vernacular literacy' where the majority of written communication was produced and possessed by the church. Acquiring literature was now a one-step process and with the assistance of paper written communication became, to borrow a term from Harold A. Innis, "spatially biased". This is to say

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[72] Black, *Politics and the News*, 30.
[73] Paul Heyer and David Crowley, *Communication in History: Technology, Culture, Society* (New York: Longman, 1991), 80.

that in the form of books, information was easily transported, much more easily than clay or stone. Gutenberg's innovation of the printing press helped spread literacy quickly across Europe,

> in Basel in 1466, Rome in 1467, Venice in 1469, Paris, Numemberg and Utrecht in 1470, Milan, Naples and Florence in 1471, Cologne in 1472, Lyons, Valencia and Budapest in 1473, Cracow and Bruges in 1474, Lubech and Breslau in 1475, London in 1480, Antwerp and Leipzig in 1481, Odense in 1482 and Stockholm in 1483![74]

Printing took the manufacturing of information from the scribe's or copyist's desk to the printer's workshop. As control of who produced information changed hands, as the circulation of books encouraged literacy and education, as 'commoners' recognized the potential emancipating power of literacy and as universities became dense with eager pupils, the printing press ignited a flame that lit the way for the development of the modern newspaper.

Print Media

Newssheets, singular pieces of paper containing information for public consumption, were conceived during the Tung dynasty in China in the tenth century B.C.[75] The Pao or reports were posted on designated signposts throughout the town; they reported relevant events of interest to those who were literate in deciphering pictograms. Newssheets also existed in Rome during its tenure of power. The Roman *Acta Diurna* was a "daily hand-written document posted in various public places in this great city as early as 59 B.C."[76] The first British coranto was published in London by Thomas Archer in 1621. Arthur was imprisoned after the publication because he did not have a license. Archer's associate Nathaniel Butler did receive a license and successfully published the journal *Corante*, with help from Archer, for twenty years. However, the document was not a daily publication.

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[74] George N. Gordon, The Communications Revolution: A History of Mass Media in the United States (New York: Hastings House, 1971), 8.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

"In the 1830s, the introduction of the steam driven printing press not only altered the newspaper landscape but also produced major changes in the way politics was conducted."[77] And, reporting as a model for gathering and presenting information was invented in the nineteenth century.[78] This new occupation was based on two-parts; either anchoring stories in entertainment or providing pure 'information'. The former model, referred to as the "new journalism", defined its role as providing an aesthetic function. The newspaper was to allow its reader to relax and enjoy the aesthetic value that the stories brought, it was to act as guide for individuals to interpret their own lives and surroundings not have the media dictate to them what the world is and should be. In contrast, the "information" model purports to present the 'facts and nothing but the facts'. Stories are to be presented in an understandable and comprehensible manner in which the world is spelled out to the reader. Newspapers that have emphasized this model associate their journalists as fair, impartial and 'objective'. Both ideals described above believe in providing reliable and trustworthy news but differ in mandates. It was one individual who changed the format, presentation, context and even operating procedures used in the newspaper industry: Joseph Pulitzer.

Pulitzer, an Austrian Jewish immigrant, began his newspaper career in St. Louis. A lawyer by education, he wrote for a German-language newspaper and in 1878 bought the St. Louis Dispatch where he served as editor, publisher and business manager.[79] Over time, Pulitzer brought about changes in the social organization of the business side of the industry. He began selling advertising space based on circulation rates, helped introduce advertising in the format of illustrations and initiated the printing of headlines in larger and darker print. Pulitzer also endorsed that circulation of a Sunday paper -- one that would be filled with entertainment and stories that "would appeal directly to the interests of readers on the day of rest."[80]

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[77] Lawerence K. Grossman, *The Electronic Republic: Reshaping Democracy in the Information Age* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 72.
[78] Michael Schudson, "The New Journalism," in P. Heyer and D. Crowley, eds., *Communication in History: Technology, Culture and Society* (New York: Longman, 1991), 137.
[79] Ibid., 139.
[80] Ibid., 141.

As newspapers seek to adapt to the changing world to maintain their readership and thus their profits, their adjustments correspond to the perceptions and aspirations of its audience. Doing so, means "an enlargement of the "entertainment" function of the newspaper, but it also meant the expansion of what has recently been called the "use-paper" rather than the newspaper..."[81] Today, certain newspapers still pay heed to this approach. Newspapers on the today's market are as diverse as there are target audiences. Particular newspapers take the "information" model as their guide; papers such as the New York Times in the United States and the Globe and Mail in Canada follow this journalistic orientation, while others follow the "entertainment" approach.

However, by the end of the nineteenth century the world had become 'wired' through the communication inventions of the telephone and telegraph. "As a result, news was packaged differently and had a new emphasis, as did popular entertainment."[82] Influenced by urbanization and the move into an industrial economy resulted in the "emergence of 'mass society'. The local and regional lost its hold as more uniform ideas, images and patterns of consumption ushered in the twentieth century."[83]

Broadcast Media

The transition to the "mass society" was fueled by radio during the 1920s. Invented by Guglielmo Marconi in the latter years of the 1890s, his original goal was to transmit Morse code over the Transatlantic. Like many innovations in communications technologies, the use it became famous for (voice transmission) was not the use originally intended. "What began as a hobby became an entertainment experience, greatly facilitated in the early 1920s by the emergence of an increasing number of corporate stations that broadcast on a regular basis."[84] Radio altered the media industry because it enabled citizens to experience events occurring in distant locations firsthand. Giving the listener a greater sense of immediacy affected newspapers, which could not provide readers with a human link to the newsworthy occurrences of the day.

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[81] Ibid.
[82] Heyer, *Communication in History*, 151.
[83] Ibid., 155.
[84] Ibid., 184.

There exist four prominent reasons for the rapid rise and popularity of the radio as new instrument of the media: (1) the novelty of hearing a 'voice' describing the day's events; (2) literacy was not a prerequisite to attaining knowledge; (3) it was not required to purchase broadcasts daily as was the case with newspapers -- this aspect was crucial to radio's success during the depression and (4) newspapers of the day had lost credibility and influence with the public. "By the late thirties, radio journalism, though only in its teens (the first scheduled newscast was in 1920), had come of age."[85] Reasons for the credibility of radio included that, citizens, skeptical of the newspaper industry, believed it was publishers who decided what was news; they doubted the sincerity of the reporter and believed that owners used the newspaper to further their own benefit.

Radio transmitted news and information three ways.[86] First it would broadcast 'on-the-spot' news. This type of reporting by broadcast media had a definite advantage over print media for the obvious reason that print media was incapable of reporting events as they happened. The second type of news used by broadcast media were bulletins which were précis's of the wire service dispatches such as Reuters and Associated Press which gave accounts of international news. The final type of news were commentaries but these varied greatly from newspapers editorial columns. Radio commentaries, unlike editorials, were broadcast as objectively as possible. There was no desire to spark controversy; radio stations and broadcast media were novices in the media industry, they did not wish to lose their audience nor cause trouble with the government over regulation issues.

"The difference between the two media is plain. Radio is people talking to us (or apparently us). Newspapers are articles in uniform typeface. Radio is direct ... Newspapers are unimaginably indirect; they are writing, to begin with ... it is report of experience, not the experience. Radio provides experience..."[87] Radio established itself as a trustworthy and responsible medium of communication by two methods of persuasion -- directly and by example.[88] Radio was able to

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[85] William Stott, "Documenting Media," in P. Heyer and D. Crowley, eds., *Communication in History: Technology, Culture and Society* (New York: Longman, 1991), 199.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., 200.
[88] Ibid., 201.

"present the facts firsthand -- on the spot or nearer the spot -- yet did so usually through an observer or commentator."[89] Both fact and observer reinforced the validity and truthfulness of each other. But radio, at its pinnacle of acceptance and popularity, was about to face its ultimate challenge. As radio displaced newspapers, television superseded radio.

Electronic Media

When radio hit the frequency spectrum in the early twentieth century, audiences had to adapt their media consumption habits. Consumption of the daily news became an inter-personal activity for many and often an entire family would listen to broadcasts together. For the first time the mass media was being mass consumed by mass society. These patterns of consumption dealt a lethal blow to radio because the mass audience that was enamored with radio easily adapted to television during the fifties.

As newspapers gave permanence to speech, radio gave a voice to word, television gave a face to voice. Ironically, television newscasting is similar to oral society in the communication of information: one individual telling others what has occurred. The necessary technology for television to become a medium of mass communication was developed by 1941, however its acceptance into the household was delayed by the Second World War. By 1949 individuals living within range of the approximate one hundred television stations could tune their dials and choose between "... CBS TV News, with Douglas Edwards, and NBC's Camel News Caravan, John Cameron Swayze. The visuals on these newscasts consisted of mostly 'talking heads': shots of somber Edwards or the boutonniered Swayze reading to the camera."[90] Newscasts rarely transmitted news footage of the events the anchorperson was describing because there was little personnel comprising the film crew, camera equipment was extremely bulky, heavy and awkward to carry and the developing of film was a time-consuming process. Despite these obstacles, audiences were enthralled with the ability to witness events and have a guest come "into their homes" nightly and inform them of the day's events.

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Mitchell Stevens, "Television Transforms the News," in P. Heyer and D. Crowley, eds., *Communication in History: Technology, Culture and Society* (New York: Longman, 1991), 237.

Television, as a mass medium, was able to provide some degree of representation of events no matter how primitive the equipment. Even the most basic reproduction of sights and sounds was enough to capture the audience, already hypnotized by the new media. Reproducing any event for the television screen was far more sophisticated than the print on the newspaper or the voice on the radio. Correspondents and camera crews were stationed in the larger cities where important political campaigns and conventions were covered.

Today, television news still captivates its audience as it has for decades. "Our interest in this "pretty toy" has, if anything, increased as it has brought us images of inner-city riots and of men hopping on the moon; images in color and via increasingly portable videotape equipment, from the scene of famines and earthquakes, from John Dean's doorstep; images via satellite, from Iran; images, live and then replayed endlessly on videotape, of a space shuttle disintegrating."[91] The advent of satellites and twenty-four hour news sources such as the Cable News Network (CNN) and the Canadian Broadcasting Company's CBC Newsworld are testimony to mass society's attraction to television news -- we cannot get enough. Like radio, television does not require its audience to be literate; images and "sound-bites" convey the message for the viewer.

Television has significantly affected journalism. News programs predominantly cover stories of crime, sex, violence and disaster. How these stories are reported is what has impinged on journalistic newsgathering procedures. Because of the technological biases inherent in the medium, stories must provide images and sounds that retain the viewer's attention. Television journalists have little room and time to get the information and significance of the story to the audience. Depth of coverage in electronic media stories are shallower than print media because television journalists have fewer words to work with. "Whether communicating by print, newsletter or cry, journalists are not often endowed with the time or the endurance to delve deeper."[92] A mammoth effect television has had on journalism is its displacement of distance.

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[91] Ibid., 239.
[92] Ibid., 241.

Television newstories have eliminated the chasm between the reporter and the viewer; reporting 'live' from whatever country to the audience who sit, most often than not, peacefully in their homes watching the contemporary 'town crier' read aloud the particular events. Television brings an abundance of information into our homes daily with breathtaking speed. The development of television has been the apex of an efficient means of communicating news and disseminating information about current events.

Conclusion

The consumption of the mass media by society has become so customary that it may be described as a social ritual. The media now have the responsibility, whether social or economic, to report and maintain these rituals. All messages of the mass media contain information that is intended to maintain audiences who use the 'facts' of the media to create and interpret their own reality of their community, country and of the world. Institutions of the media are supposed to act, according to the mandate set out by the social responsibility theory of the press, in a morally and socially responsible manner to promote the good of society, promoting and enhancing the democratic process while simultaneously striving to attain profits.

A relative degree of citizen participation in the political arena is a necessary prerequisite for a democratic polity to exist, especially in the vast and complex societies of the affluent liberal states. By way of participating in mass communications and thus the mass media, citizens can be expected to learn about the significant social, political and economic issues facing them and their community. The media, if operated in a professional fashion and if freedom of the press is acknowledged, respected and exercised, can raise the consciousness level of its citizens and increase the participation level that liberal democracy, if to exist, is dependent upon. Many prominent commentators have made arguments and critiques of the mass media and its roles and functions in democratic societies. The area of focus in the next chapter is a critical analysis of some of the more prominent commentators and their arguments, or lack of, on the influences market forces have on the political roles of the mass media in liberal democratic societies.

Chapter 2

Historical Background

Society can and does execute its own mandates; and if it issues wrong mandates instead of right, or any mandates at all in things in which it should not meddle, it practices a social tyranny more formidable than many kinds of political oppression, since, though not usually upheld by such extreme penalties, it leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself.

-- John Stuart Mill ,1859 --

John Stuart Mill

The most famous text written by Mill, and concerning the role of freedom of thought and discussion, is On Liberty. The introductory chapter of this work begins by examining the relation between democracy and liberty. Mill was concerned with the possibility of the 'tyranny of the majority'. Heavily influenced by Alex de Tocqueville's Democracy in America (1835), Mill recognized that a tyranny of the majority could present itself through the actions of public officials and representatives either politically or socially. "Mill did not believe that government posed the greatest threat to freedom ... (h)e was, however, convinced we should never be complacent about the danger of state oppression, and he cautioned that it could occur in a democracy. Nevertheless, he was far more concerned with the power of public opinion."[93]

Liberty of Thought and Discussion, chapter two of On Liberty, gives attention to the ideal of "moral equality among self-determining individuals implies unrestricted liberty of criticism."[94] Chapter two is set in a broad moral context. It concerns itself with the emancipation of the individual by way of freedom of speech which was, according to Mill, the vehicle for truth. "Possession of truth permits us to function as well as possible in our converse with all of the events of our experience."[95] It is necessary to outline, briefly, some of Mill's major concepts prior to discussing his arguments concerning freedom of speech and liberty.

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[93] James Gorenlock, *Excellence in Public Discourse: John Stuart Mill, John Dewey and Social Intelligence* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1986), 7.
[94] John Skorupski, *John Stuart Mill* (London; Routledge, 1991), 338.
[95] Gorenlock, *Excellence in Public Discourse,* 8.

The Liberty Principle refers to the use of coercion in societies. For Mill, coercion, either physical or non-physical, was only justified if it was employed to prevent harm from others. Individuals should be permitted to act uninhibited as long as they do not infringe on the rights of other individuals. To coerce an individual for their own good was unacceptable. "That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."[96] Although it was oppressive to coerce an individual, Mill believed it acceptable to reason, persuade or rationalize with the individuals but not to compel them.

Autonomy is a second concept that Mill took serious time contemplating. Autonomy is the capacity to make one's decisions in life. Defined, capacity is the use of reason or rationality by individuals to decide what is their best path to follow. With the right to autonomy comes the responsibility of virtue or moral freedom. "It is implicit in Mill's view of practical reasoning that a will to do right is a will to do what is rationally required. His doctrine is that the Utility Principle is the foundation of practical rationality."[97] Autonomy, and rationality, is understood only if exercised in a naturalistic environment. Chapter two of On Liberty argues precisely for such an environment to flourish by way of freedom of thought and discussion. The notion of autonomy, to Mill , means that individuals are free to make independent decisions about life without fear of coercion or social ostracism, and to exercise their moral responsibility to refrain from restricting others.

The third, and final concept to be addressed, is Liberty of Expression. "Mill says that his defense of liberty of thought and of speaking and writing in chapter ii of *Liberty* is a single 'branch' of the 'general hypothesis' ... that is the Liberty Principle."[98] In Mill's own words: "Liberty of expression is a particular liberty, infringed by particular types of restriction on acts of expression. It is not the complete liberty to announce any opinion we like in any manner we like ... Nor is the obligation to refrain from pointlessly hurtful remarks -- however true."[99] Thus, Liberty of

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[96] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (London: Penguin, 1974), 68.
[97] Skorupski, *John Stuart Mill*, 354.
[98] Ibid., 369.
[99] Mill, *On Liberty*, 68.

Expression claims that individuals should be free to speak uninhibited but shoulder the responsibility of respecting others. The Liberty Principle is not possible without liberty of expression.

In chapter two of On Liberty, Mill stresses three arguments concerning the suppression of information: (1) a person is deprived of an opportunity to replace an error for truth; (2) the opportunity is lost to gain a clearer understanding of the truth through vigorous discussion and debate and; (3) one is never sure if the information being suppressed is false because it never enters the arena of debate. The first argument presupposes an infallibility by those who censure information because they make the arrogant mistake of accepting their version of reality as truth. The latter two encompass moral considerations.

Information is the vehicle to ascertain truth; for truth to be of any value or significance it must undergo a social process in which claims, opinions and arguments must endure public forums and debates where their relevancy is discussed in terms of dominant and prevailing systems. Not only does truth help attain autonomy, it also facilitates social stability because it permits individuals to know how and why other individuals act. "Individuals must be free to inquire into and discover the grounds of belief in any judgment. If the judgment is indeed true, it is that much better supported. If it false, it is now identified as such. Either way, habits of curiosity, inquiry, and verification are exercised and rewarded; and mindless complacency has had no support."[100]

For an individual to develop the best position to ascertain the truth and strive to attain and exercise autonomy we should, Mill contends, put issues, opinions and arguments to public debate between contending parties. "The personal intercourse of submitting opinions to intersubjective scrutiny is vital to the very process of stimulating and developing the intelligence of individual persons."[101] Moreover, Mill argues that truth and self-fulfillment flourish only when debate and discussion inhabits an unbiased platform. All discourse must occur in an uninhibited manner.

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[100] Gorenlock, *Excellence in Public Discourse,* 12.
[101] Ibid., 13.

> Not that it is solely, or chiefly, to form great thinkers that freedom of thinking is required. On the contrary, it is as much and even more indispensable to enable average human beings to attain the mental stature which they are capable of. There have been, and may again be, great individual thinkers in a general atmosphere of mental slavery. But there never has been, nor ever will be, in that atmosphere an intellectually active people.[102]

It is important to note that liberty, to Mill, did not entail everyone running around and doing as they pleased. Rather, as mentioned, there exists a moral variable that is manifested in the social sphere; a variable that excludes doing harm to others and involves individual responsibilities. "When there is freedom in public discourse, the individual can participate in inquiry and conversation in a manner that will his intellectual powers and consequently his powers of action."[103] Despite Mill's claim that all opinions and arguments should be placed in a public forum for debate, he neither endorses nor condones no limitations on freedom of speech. Rather, he asserts that,

> opinions lose their immunity when the circumstances in which they are expressed are such as to constitute their expression a positive instigation to some mischievous act. An opinion that corn dealers are starvers of the poor, or that private property is robbery, ought to be unmolested when simply circulated through the press, but may justly incur punishment when delivered orally to an excited mob assembled before the house of a corn dealer, or when handed about among the same mob in the form of a placard.[104]

Mill's emphasis on the freedom of thought and opinion rests upon his belief that any kind of rational confidence in an argument must be predicated on it being open to criticism by all members of society. Focusing on the importance of open channels of communication for information to be disseminated and how freedom of opinion is a necessary condition for liberty, Mill argues that free discussion can correct previous 'wrongs' and help discover self-fulfillment. "He is capable of rectifying his mistakes by discussion and experience. Not by experience alone. There must be discussion to show how experience is to be interpreted."[105] Thus, it is the individual's responsibility and duty to search for the truth. "After more than a century of social change it may seem clear that he (Mill) greatly underestimated the pace of technical and scientific change, and the

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[102] Mill, *On Liberty*, 95.
[103] Gorenlock, *Excellence in Public Discourse,* 17.
[104] Mill, *On Liberty*, 101.
[105] Ibid., 80.

creative dynamism it would produce; nevertheless the questions remain central for liberal democracy still."[106]

"Because he has felt that the only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes, in which it can be looked at by every character of mind."[107] Contemporary media do not give citizens the opportunity to approach knowing the whole of a subject. Market forces have come to dictate content because the majority of news' content is superficial. Mill writes: "The beliefs which we have most warrant for have no safeguard to rest on but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded."[108] Market forces impede these safeguards of debate because citizens are not given all the sides of a story. Mill argues that censoring any opinion is against an individual's right as it impedes their quest for truth. As Mill's three main arguments regarding the suppression of information makes clear, it is wrong for others, especially those in positions of power to assume infallibility because they deny an individual's right to truth. "It is the undertaking to decide that question for others, without allowing them to hear what can be said on the contrary side. And I denounce and reprobate this pretension not the less if put forth on the side of my most solemn convictions."[109]

Mill is as concerned for the development of clear, strong, intellects as he is for the pursuit of truth; and the basis for both conditions is the same: freedom. Freedom must be supported by an ethic that pervades the entire society. This ethic of rationality that Mill endorses does not exist. Individuals are dependent on the media for information. A contemporary legal guarantee of individual freedom, as written in constitutions, is the freedom to search -- there is no guarantee that an individual will find what they are looking for.

To summarize Mill's arguments, his first axiom is concerned with how the full development of individuals can only be attained by full freedom of thought and expression. Secondly, he

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[106] Skorupski, *John Stuart Mill*, 339. Parentheses added.
[107] Mill, *On Liberty*, 80.
[108] Ibid., 81.
[109] Ibid., 83.

emphases virtue, the moral responsibility an individual must exercise for freedom to be effective and meaningful. If freedom is to be meaningful and, therefore, desired, individuals must show and exhibit respect for one another by not infringing on one another's liberty in their quest for truth. In the present day, unfortunately, the tactics or procedures for freedom of thought and discussion that Mill endorses are rarely exercised. Although Mill has had an enormous impact on normative political theory and arguments concerning the freedom of thought and discussion and thus liberty, in practice we witness few traces of his influence.

Mill's arguments for freedom of opinion and the expression of opinion rest on four pillars. In Mill's words they are:

> First, if any opinion is compelled to silence, that opinion may, for aught we can certainly know, be true. To deny this is to assume our own infallibility. Secondly, ... it is the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied. Thirdly, even if the most received opinion be not only true, ... it will, by most of those who receive it, be held in the manner of a prejudice, with little comprehension or feelings of its rational grounds. And not only this, but, fourthly, the means of the doctrine itself will be in danger of being lost or enfeebled.[110]

He goes on to discuss the responsibilities associated with freedom of thought and discussion.

> Undoubtedly, the manner of asserting an opinion, even though it may be a true one, may be very objectionable and may justly incur severe censure. But the principal offenses of the kind are such that it is mostly impossible, unless by accidental self-betrayal, to bring home to conviction. The gravest of them is, to argue sophistically, to suppress facts or arguments, to misstate the elements of the case, or misrepresent to opposite opinion.[111]

Disseminating information that is predominantly entertaining but 'selling' it as informative is, arguably, one of the principal offenses that Mill discusses. Firstly, information that is sensationalized makes it extremely difficult to "bring home to conviction" the importance of a story when its significance is cloaked in an entertaining garb. Secondly, conviction is hard to attain precisely because information has become the collective mediocrity or dogma of assumed rationality that Mill warned against. Thirdly, the injustice to individuals when information and discussion is misrepresented or suppressed occurs in contemporary media because market forces

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[110] Ibid., 115 - 116.
[111] Ibid., 116 - 117.

influence which information will attract and retain the greatest audience for advertisers, thus giving priority to commercialism rather than the Liberty Principle. The presentation of superficial stories operates both explicitly and implicitly in the media industry. The result of this misrepresentation, although may be "done in perfect good faith", again leads to a collective mediocrity among citizens. An example of this mediocrity, in the present day, is the low political participation rates by citizens residing in liberal democratic societies and the dominant, yet false, belief that they cannot do anything to change the system for the better.

Mill argues that, despite the grave injustices misrepresentation inflicts on the Liberty Principle, "still less could law presume to interfere with this kind of controversial misconduct."[112] Thus, privately owned media firms have the legal right to make a profit even at the expense of individuals who do not search for relevant information. Mill continues to write "that what is commonly meant by intemperate discussion ... and whatever mischief arises from their use is greatest when they are employed against the comparatively defenseless ..."[113] Allowing market forces to influence the political roles of the media imperils the reasoning potential of the majority of citizens who do not have diverse viewpoints put in front of them by the mass media. Those diverse opinions are, however, readily available but they must be sought out by individuals in their pursuit for the "truth".

One can infer from Mill that the social responsibility functions of the media will inevitably succumb to market forces because many media enterprises will present information that will entertain an audience rather than inform them. In doing so, media firms are guilty of committing some of the "gravest offenses" by way of omitting particular viewpoints not conducive to maintaining the audience and by misrepresenting stories by way of sensationalism.

Mill even addresses the issue of why dissenting voices do not get heard and if they do, why they are not seriously considered. "Those who hold any unpopular opinion are peculiarly exposed,

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[112] Ibid., 117.
[113] Ibid.

because they are in general few and uninfluential, and nobody but themselves feels much interested in seeing justice done to them, ... they can neither use it with safety to themselves, nor, if they could, would it do anything but recoil on their own cause."[114] Moreover, "... unmeasured vituperation employed on the side of the prevailing opinion really does deter people from professing contrary opinions and from listening to those who profess them."[115]

In sum, Mill argues that the freedom of thought and discussion are necessary for individual self-development, autonomy and liberty. He emphasizes both the right to voice opinions uninhibited and the virtue individuals must exercise to keep freedom of speech and the Liberty Principle alive. Mill continues by arguing that neither law nor authority have any business in restraining either dominant or dissenting opinions. It is up to the individual to decide or rationally deduce their own verdict of what is 'truth'.

The Frankfurt School

The writings of the Frankfurt School offer a distinctive and persuasive account of the nature and role of ideology, by way of mass communications, in modern societies. Typical of this approach is the work of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno who gave particular attention to what they call the 'culture industry'. "Horkheimer and Adorno use the term 'culture industry' to refer to the commodification of cultural forms brought about by the rise of the entertainment industries in Europe and the United States in the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries."[116]

The Institute for Social Research was formally established on 3 February 1923. The founding of the Institute was based on the beliefs of left-wing intellectuals who felt that it was pertinent to reassess Marxist theory, especially the failed prophecy of the proletariat attaining a 'class consciousness'. The Frankfurt School and critical theory "is generally understood as a body of social thought both emerging from and responding to Marxism, and the work of critical theorists is

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[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] John B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 98.

recognized as having made significant contributions to the study of cultural (and superstructural) phenomenon, areas not usually attended to by more orthodox approaches."[117]

Horkheimer became the director of the institute, in 1930, prior to its departure to the United States and established its philosophical mandate. Adorno, in contrast, had loose affiliations with the Frankfurt School until he became a full-time member in 1938. Their adherence to social philosophy as the main preoccupation sought to enquire into "important questions to be investigated by these sciences and as a framework in which the universal would not be lost sight of."[118] Moreover, this 'critical' base proved to be the foundation for 'critical theory' which rejects the procedure of determining objective facts with the aid of conceptual systems, from a purely external standpoint."[119] The fundamental task of this new critical theory was to reveal and convey the existing class alienation throughout the world and to disseminate a consciousness to the working class. Moreover, it was to unite the proletariat under the class consciousness that failed to emerge in previous decades.

The Frankfurt school focused upon cultural phenomena because of its belief that it is within such phenomena that human consciousness, alienation and liberation are manifested. "A preeminent place was occupied by the criticism and rejection of positivism/empiricism, and more broadly of any conception of a 'science of society' to which was opposed a philosophical idea of 'reason', as capable of discovering the essence of phenomena by contrast with appearance or mere facticity."[120] The Frankfurt School believed that the dominance of scientism led to technological rationality as a new form of domination. Moreover, reason, which the Frankfurt School likened to freedom, was repressed by positivism insofar as that an individual's ability to reason had been confined to 'cause and effect' processes.

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[117] Joan Alway, *Critical Theory and Political Possibilities: Conceptions of Emancipatory Politics in the Works of Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), ii.
[118] Ibid., 15.
[119] Ibid., 16.
[120] Ibid., 23.

Both Horkheimer and Adorno make the generalization "that the rise of the entertainment industries as capitalistic enterprises has resulted in the standardization and rationalization of cultural forms, and this process has in turn atrophied the capacity of the individual to think and act in a critical and autonomous way."[121] They also recognized that content was to a large extent dictated by market forces whereby the "dependence of the most powerful broadcasting company on the electrical industry, or of the motion picture industry on the banks, is characteristic of the whole sphere, whose individual branches are themselves economically interwoven."[122] Moreover, the 'culture industry', specifically the mass media, do not see individuals as citizens but rather as consumers. "The public is catered for with a hierarchical range of mass produced products of varying quality, thus advancing the rule of complete quantification."[123]

According to Horkheimer and Adorno the 'culture industry' is an important instrument employed by elites that renders individuals incapable of autonomous thought, making them dependent on social processes which further indoctrinate them. "The effrontery of the rhetorical question, "What do people want?' lies in the fact that it is addressed -- as if to reflective individuals -- to those very people who are deliberately to be deprived of this individuality."[124] Furthermore, the two commentators contend that the 'culture industry' and the development of consumer culture has stifled individuals' imagination and revolutionary potential and makes them susceptible to indoctrination and manipulation by elites who are primarily interested in profit realization. "Nevertheless, the culture industry remains the entertainment business. Since all the trends of the culture industry are profoundly embedded in the public by the whole social process, they are encouraged by the survival of the market in this area."[125]

Horkheimer's and Adorno's analysis of the 'culture industry' is a bold attempt to understand the consequences of mass communication and specifically the mass media in modern societies. Their

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[121] Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture,* 98.
[122] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1944) Reprinted, 1993, 123.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid., 144.
[125] Ibid., 136.

investigations examine how mass communications have affected social and political life as well as transformed the nature and role of ideology.[126] However, there are a number of flaws or oversights in their observations and theory of the 'culture industry'. In their assessment of cultural goods, those commodities that are mass produced with the goal of profit-realization, Horkheimer and Adorno give a generic label to individuals; "in all cases the recipients are regarded as little more than potential consumers whose needs and desires can, with suitable means, be manipulated, stimulated and controlled."[127] In doing so, Horkheimer and Adorno limit themselves to abstract processes of mass communication. The particular workings or procedures of social organizations such as mass media firms are not given attention. Neither is attention given to the differences between media institutions such as print and broadcast organizations.

Horkheimer and Adorno are correct to argue that technological innovations in mass communications have had a significant impact on the nature of ideology in modern societies. They are also correct to promote their contention that ideology is no longer limited to political elements and studies must now account for symbolic forms such as music and images. However, their assessments are limited because their claims concerning the 'culture industry' are, at minimum, presumptuous. Because individuals consume and digest products disseminated by the 'culture industry' does in no way mean that they are compelled to act in accordance with elite interests.

Horkheimer and Adorno rightly argue that free enterprise media have resulted in an oligopolistic form of ownership which have had potentially disastrous consequences for the development of individual freedom and reason. The 'culture industry' has impeded the development of a critical public because mass communication industries disseminate information without it being subjected to critical reflection. "Under monopoly all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin to show through ... the fusion of culture and entertainment that is taking place today leads not only to a depravation of culture, but inevitably to an intellectualization of amusement."[128] For Horkheimer and Adorno, the construction of an entire industry around supply

[126] Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture*, 101.
[127] Ibid., 102.
[128] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 121 - 143.

and demand means a retreat from thought because the 'culture industry', defending itself on the grounds that it is supplying citizens with what they want, delivers information in an entertaining light leaving it to be consumed during an individual's leisure time. "The liberation that amusement promises is freedom from thought and from negation."[129]

The political implications of these activities by the 'culture industry' are: (1) using mass media as a leisure activity decreases time for critical self-reflection; (2) culture and politics are employing similar procedures of administration based on market surveys or opinion polls and; (3) language is being condensed into clichés and slogans which removes their meaning and issues an instant reaction by the consumer. Thus, market forces decrease the informative and political functions of the media because information becomes a product of technically calculated pleasure. All that is left for citizens to realize is that their interests are the same ones the 'culture industry' disseminates. This phenomenon occurs any time an individual consumes media content as a leisure activity. "By craftily sanctioning the demand for rubbish it inaugurates total harmony. The result is a constant reproduction of the same thing."[130] This process is executed almost subliminally and is repressive.

Horkheimer and Adorno both make 'blanket judgments' on the critical capacity of individuals. They do not explore if and how individual consumers of information may interpret content differently. Particular studies of the mass media focus on the role of the individual as an active consumer of information and that individuals can and do indeed have varying interpretations of media products.[131] A second issue arises out of the first. In making blanket judgments concerning the impact of mass communications and content, both commentators also overlook the impact of news programs and their organizational processes. Neither critic extends his discussions to include such processes. Although it is possible to critique individual newscasts based within Horkheimer and Adorno's blanket judgments (that the media dull critical self-reflection through an onrush of images, sounds and words and that all stimuli are sensationalized further detracting the political significance of stories and events). There exists a chasm between their blanket judgments and

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[129] Ibid., 144.
[130] Ibid., 134.
[131] For example, see Doris Graber, *Processing the News: How People Tame the Information Tide*, second edition (New York: Longman, 1988).

condemnation of the 'culture industry' as a whole and the reality that not all information is intrinsically predisposed toward a pacifying role on the population. Horkheimer and Adorno's arguments only carry weight and usefulness when they locate the mass media within a particular industrial or commercial matrix. Contending, as well as providing evidence, that the 'culture industry' operates to supply the demands of individuals who want to become detached from their everyday environment, with the unintended result being the decline in critical self-reflection, is a much more palatable argument. A contemporary critic of the media whose arguments are similar to those made by Horkheimer and Adorno but more thoroughly grounded in the daily operations of the mass media is Noam Chomsky.

Noam Chomsky

Noam Chomsky offers a challenging critique of the political economy of the mass media. His case studies are meticulously researched and documented. Much of what Chomsky has to say is indeed important. However, there exist many shortcomings within his methodology and resulting criticisms, leaving behind both philosophical and practical quandaries.

In his book, co-authored with Edward S. Herman, Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy Of The Mass Media (1988), Noam Chomsky offers a comprehensive analysis of the workings of the American mass media. Chomsky employs a propaganda model to describe the activities of the media which, he feels, operate to support elite and special interests such as the government and multi-national corporations. These agencies, he argues, dominate state and private activities. The Chomsky model consists of a set of media 'filters' through which possible news stories and coverage of such stories must pass through prior to their dissemination as content. These filters include such constraints as the size of the organization, the nature and concentration of ownership, influence and the media organization's overall profit orientation.[132] Each filter affects the range and quality of news coverage produced by various media venues. Other filters examined are: advertiser influence, the overall reliance by the mass media on government press releases and

[132] Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy Of The Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), 1 - 37.

privately-funded think-tank organizations; 'flak' criticizing the media by influential lobby organizations and the U.S. national ideology of anticommunism. These filters, Chomsky contends, influence, if not manipulate, the mass media in its choice of content resulting in an uninformed populace and the media being controlled by select elite interests. Content is structurally filtered to marginalize dissent.

Chomsky sets his explanations of media performance, by way of the propaganda model, within a free-market paradigm. Content is largely the outcome of the workings of market forces. "Most biased choices in the media arise from the pre-selection of right-thinking people, internalized preconceptions, and the adaptation of personnel to the constraints of ownership, organizations, market and political power."[133] The propaganda model "traces the routes by which money and power are 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."[134]

The first filter -- the size of ownership and profit orientation of the mass media -- illustrates how there has, for over a century, been a decline in the plurality of media ownership. Local and small privately owned enterprises are dependent on wire services for content. Operating under the principle of profit realization, Chomsky illustrates how "media companies are fully integrated into the market, and for the others, too, the pressures of stockholders, directors and bankers to focus on the bottom line are powerful."[135] "The stock value of firms becomes the focal point for owners who disseminate biased information to attract investors and advertisers."[136]

Further, Chomsky argues that owners have abandoned the social responsibility concept of the media as "independent and committed to discovering and reporting the truth, and that they do not merely reflect the world as powerful groups wish it to be perceived."[137] In addition, deregulation has lead to an increase in takeovers and concentration of ownership. Media firms, Chomsky

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[133] Ibid., xii.
[134] Ibid., 2.
[135] Ibid., 4.
[136] Ibid., 5.
[137] Ibid., xi.

states, "have lost some of their limited autonomy to bankers, institutional investors, and large individual investors whom they have had to solicit as potential white knights."[138] It is these control groups who have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo because they desire to maintain their wealth and status.

The structural organization of the media, Chomsky asserts, makes itself reliant on external agencies for information, particularly the government. The media are dependent on the government for licenses, and the leasing of airwaves, for example, and this "technical legal dependency has been used as a club to discipline the media, and media policies that stray too often from an establishment orientation could activate this threat."[139] Thus, the first filter identifies how dominant media firms are, in all practicality, businesses, and are subject to economic demands and constraints as any other free market enterprise.

The second filter, the advertising license, illustrates how advertisers are, too, licensing authorities the media are dependent upon because without such sponsors the media would cease to be economically viable enterprises. "For this reason, an advertising based system will tend to drive out of existence or into marginality the media companies and types that depend on revenue from sales alone."[140] In order for media firms to attract advertisers it is essential that content is entertaining and thus maintain a relatively large audience. As such, the media compete for advertisers' patronage who promote them with subsidies. The losers in this competition are citizens who are not exposed to enough 'hard' news to help them create their own informed ability to hold governments to account.

The question of sources for the media is the third filter. Economic necessity draws the media into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information. "Economics dictates that they concentrate their resources where significant news often occurs, where important rumors and leaks are abound, and where regular press conferences are held ... government and corporate sources

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[138] Ibid., 8.
[139] Ibid., 13.
[140] Ibid., 14.

also have the great merit of being recognizable and credible by their status and prestige."[141] In effect, these large organizations reduce the operating expenditures of media firms who do not have to investigate 'leads' and provide routines for media organizations.

'Flak', the fourth filter, "refers to negative responses to a media statement or program."[142] Produced on a grand scale, either by individuals or groups, 'flak' can prove costly for media organizations because advertisers will be inclined to withdraw their patronage. 'Flak' is related to power -- the power of dominant groups to influence the media's agenda by way of criticism; it "conditions the media to expect trouble (and cost increases) for violating right-wing standards of bias."[143] The effects of 'flak' enforce the influence, and at times demands, of corporations and government authorities in the decision making processes of media organizations.

The final filter is the ideology of anticommunism. "This ideology helps to mobilize the populace against an enemy, because the concept is fuzzy it can be used against anybody advocating policies that threaten property interests ..."[144] Anticommunism helps imperil advances made by left-wing oriented organizations such as labor unions. Portrayals of left-wing bodies, Chomsky argues, reinforces conservative values and ideas held by wealthy interests. Thus, anticommunism acts as a veil that shields the public's eyes from the hierarchical and oppressing nature that comprises the United States' social, political and economic environment.

The effects of all media content having to be processed through these five filters is a narrowing range of view or content that is available to individuals. The portrayal of issues becomes dependent on economic variables. In addition, it is predominantly elite corporations and the government that have the resources to sharply limit what becomes news. "Messages from and about dissidents and weak, unorganized individuals and groups, domestic and foreign, are at an initial disadvantage in sourcing costs and credibility, and they often do not comport with the

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[141] Ibid., 18 - 19.
[142] Ibid., 26.
[143] Ibid., 27 - 28.
[144] Ibid., 29.

ideology or interests of the gatekeepers and other powerful parties that influence the filtering process."[145]

Chomsky highlights a further effect -- dichotomization in news content. Dichotomization in the sense that stories that further advance the government and large corporations receive popular and positive attention in mainstream media. Even agencies or affiliates of dominant interests will be featured prominently. Any stories surfacing that portray preferred interest groups in a negative light will not stay news for long. Dichotomization in news includes portraying 'opponents' of industry and government with "slight detail, minimal humanization, and little context that will excite and enrage."[146]

In sum, Chomsky and the propaganda model accord primary attention to the role of market forces impeding the political roles of the media. His arguments are based entirely within a free market model which he uses to extrapolate and discuss how content is in actuality propaganda intended to indoctrinate the masses.[147] To the extent that it represents one's vision of reality, Chomsky's propaganda model is a damning account of long-time media control by an elite group of powerful factions. Analyses made by way of the propaganda model are concise and thorough.[148] Chomsky does not, however, describe or define what the political roles of the mass media are. He assumes that they have a social responsibility to citizens yet he fails to accord any attention to what exactly these responsibilities might entail.

Chomsky's attention to the role of market forces offers many insightful observations and accusations of the media forfeiting its social responsibilities. Yet, again, he does not give sufficient, if any, attention to the rights of media firms as private enterprises. Chomsky does not

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[145] Ibid., 31.
[146] Ibid., 35.
[147] Chomsky is clear to state that not all media convey propaganda consciously. Rather, biased content arises through an internalization of values and self-censorship. In Chomsky's words: "We do not contend that this is all the mass media do, but we believe that propaganda function to be a very important aspect of their overall service." Chomsky and Herman, *Manufacturing Consent*, xi.
[148] Chapters two through seven in Manufacturing Consent analyze particular cases studies of the, according to Chomsky, massive and systematic dissemination of propaganda to serve political ends.

mention the right of privately owned firms to strive for profit. In addition, he does not consider particular sources or 'newsbeats' as being part of the operational processes of journalists. The third filter, sourcing mass media news, may just as validly be a filter of efficiency whereby time and space demands placed on journalists and editors do not permit them to follow as many leads as they would like to. Nor does he acknowledge the types of decisions editors and journalists make everyday might be determined more by the sheer volume of information rather than by information that coincides with elite agendas.

A third criticism of Chomsky has to do with the indoctrination process. His scathing criticisms of the media's shortcomings amount to a 'witch-hunt' against the American government and its political and corporate allies. Chomsky loses sight of the fact that the media operate under the market mechanism. The way his lamenting progresses implies that editors succumb to the demands of corporate and government interests at whim. The process of decision-making by media personnel is not the 'cut and dried' process that Chomsky describes. Decisions are based on a number of variables, of which government and corporate influence and demands are only a part. A final criticism resembles one made against the Frankfurt School: the underestimation of a critical public. Chomsky ignores the critical capacity of citizens; he assumes that they are being led, like lambs to a slaughter, solely by the indoctrination process. The minds of individuals are not some 'tabula rasa' that the powerful interest groups manipulate with ease. Individuals can and are active consumers of information and who have varying interpretations of content.

Conclusion

The three commentators discussed in this chapter all accord some attention, either implicitly or explicitly, to the influence that the market has on the mass media. For Mill, ideas, thought and discussion must flow freely throughout society for individuals to develop their reasoning abilities. It is the media that help fulfill this task of liberty. The media, according to Mill, must not impeded by any entity, otherwise it conflicts with an individuals 'greatest happiness'. If the market can operate freely, then a 'marketplace of ideas' will flourish as will liberty. Mill emphasizes both the

right to voice opinions uninhibited and the virtue individuals must exercise to keep freedom of speech and liberty alive.

The Frankfurt School takes a different approach to the role of the market and its relationship to the media. Arguing that the negation of autonomous thought began during the Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno contend that the 'culture industries' forfeit moral responsibilities for profit. The market, they feel, reinforces the 'culture industries' who, subsequently, bombard citizens with information. This bombardment is the result of owners of the media, the bourgeoisie, striving to attain profit maximization. The result of such is the suffocation, if not extinction, of mass society's emancipatory powers.

The propaganda model which Chomsky uses, illustrates how news content is filtered through multiple devices, all of which operate to support corporate and government interests. Content is the result of the workings of the free market. Owners, who operate in economic tandem with elites, strive to maintain the status-quo. According to Chomsky, the result of the media operating within the free market is the dichotomization of news coverage which serves to reinforce our social, political and economic environments which are oppressive and alienating.

This chapter has discussed particular theoretical and philosophical overviews of the mass media. One school of thought that has not been considered is feminism. There are two primary reasons why this paradigm was not addressed. Firstly, there exists the problem of the generic label of 'feminism'. There exist many factions of feminism, all with their separate and distinct analyses of the loci of power in society. It is this factionalism that limits the space given to this worthy dogma. Secondly, all the contributions of feminist literature that discusses the relationship between the mass media, gender and patriarchy is enormous.[149] To significantly assess both its strengths and weaknesses is a thesis in itself. Feminist media studies, and feminism as a whole, is a new, valid,

[149] For example, Klein (1984); Burt et. al (1993); van Zoonen (1994) and; Creedon (1995). This is by no means an exhaustive list. Rather, it gives those who are intrested in this subject area a starting point.

necessary and refreshing paradigm and it is with regret that an analysis is not undertaken in the few short pages which comprise this thesis.

Chapter 3

Globalization of Contemporary Mass Media

The dichotomy between information and entertainment has ended
-- Marshall McLuhan, 1962 --

Technological Changes Affecting Globalization

Harold A. Innis (1972), the Canadian economic historian and communications scholar, argued that all societies have been shaped by the production and distribution of knowledge.[150] Writing in 1969, Marshall McLuhan observed that the electronic environment that constitutes our social surroundings is as imperceptible to us as water is to a fish.[151] For McLuhan, innovations in communications technology have brought about significant changes to our social and cultural identities. By way of communication technologies, McLuhan asserts, we are experiencing a tribalization process in the sense that new technologies are socially unifying because they bring the world into our living rooms. For example, news media can transmit happenings in Haiti or post-Soviet Russia instantaneously into our homes; to a certain degree we experience what they experience -- we share the moment. Such changes are "bringing about equally radical changes in the quality of social culture and in the character of politics."[152]

This interrelationship between public and private spheres of society via communications technology create what McLuhan called the 'global village'. By this he meant that we would soon have the information gathering capacity to be intimately aware of the happenings of all people in the world. "Everyone in it will be concerned about all others because of television's ability to involve millions in the problems and emotions of people both near and far."[153] Although newspaper and radio have the capacity to circulate and transmit information globally, primarily it is television that gives individuals the illusion that they can witness events around the world as they happen.

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[150] Harold A. Innis, *Empire and Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).
[151] Marshall McLuhan, *Counterblast* (New York: Hartcourt, Brace and World, 1969).
[152] Edwin R. Black, *The Political Biases of InfoTech* (Prince George: University of Northern British Columbia Press, 1995), 42.
[153] Ibid., 43.

Broadcasting media are dependent upon three technological innovations that give them ability to disseminate information around the world. They are communication satellites, computers and digitization. All three have had a substantial impact on global communication as well as assisted in the globalization of contemporary mass media.

Technological innovation is a primary impetus of social and economic change. The transitions from agricultural to industrial society and from industrial to the present 'information society' have all been stimulated by the advent of technologies. The significance of the steam-driven mill stimulating the transition from agricultural to industrial society may be paralleled by the advent of computer technology stimulating the momentous shift from the industrial to the information society. These three shifts were the direct result of technological innovation. Our move into the information age has been accompanied by the establishment of a global communication system built on computers, satellites and digitization of text, sound and pictures.[154] The former Soviet Union launched the first artificial satellite, *Sputnik* , in 1957. Since then, the number of satellites launched has been great. By 1990, more than three thousand satellites had been put into orbit.

Today, through geostationary satellites, live transoceanic transmission programming of radio and television is now routine. "Satellites provide cable networks such as HBO and Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) a low-cost method of networking thousands of cable systems in the United States."[155] The deployment of satellite technology is being replicated elsewhere throughout the globe. In Europe, satellite service and Direct Broadcast Service (DBS) reached approximately two million homes in 1988 and in a number of Asian countries such as Japan, Malaysia, The Republic of Korea and Thailand satellite technology is expanding consumer access to media products.[156]

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[154] Robert L. Stevenson, *Global Communication In The Twenty-First Century* (New York: London, 1994), 319.
[155] U.S. Department of Commerce: National Telecommunications and Information Administration, *Globalization of the Mass Media* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), 32.
[156] Ibid.

Fibre optic cable is another communication innovation that is making more efficient the production and distribution of information. Fibre optic cable employs the use of light waves to carry data through thin glass tubes. Fibre optic cables transmit voice, data and video signals with short bursts of light; their transmission capabilities offer much greater information carrying capacity than its predecessor, analog data transmission. One fibre optic line, the width of a human hair, can transmit up to thirty thousand individual phone calls simultaneously. Not only does fibre optic cable allow for increased capacity of data and transmit it more rapidly, it is also the most secure method of data transportation.[157] Information can be transmitted without being subjected to electromagnetic or radio interference. Fibre optic transmission lines are being employed both domestically and internationally. Internationally, submarine lines are growing in number. Submarine lines are fibre optic lines that are transoceanic because they are installed at the bottom of oceans thereby connecting continents. Fibre optics is slowly being integrated into present communication technologies and methods. One reason for the delay is that many households still have analog systems installed.

Another technological innovation that has influenced and induced the globalization of media firms is digitization. This innovation enhances analog delivery systems. Analog systems are those

> ...that mimic the workings of the human ear and translate sound waves into minute vibrations. The vibrations are then converted into a weak electrical current that reproduces the original wave. The current wave produces an analog of the sound wave, that is, if you could see them both, the pattern of the current would look very much like the original sound wave. The electrical current can be transferred to a permanent storage system for later playback .[158]

Digital technology is possible because machines read information "in a series of 1s and 0s like computers. Digital ways to create, transmit and store information are used in personal computers, compact discs, televisions and phone messages."[159] Digital technologies may soon even replace analog technologies entirely as "General Instrument announced a prototype", in June 1990 of a "fully ATV transmission system for consideration by the Federal Communication Commission's

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[157] Ray Eldon Hiebert et. al, *Mass Media IV: An Introduction to Modern Communication* (New York: Longman, 1991), 619.
[158] Stevenson, *Global Communication in the Twenty-First Century*, 326 - 327.
[159] Kevin Maney, *Megamedia Shakeout* (New York: John Wiley& Sons, 1995), 6.

(FCC) Advisory Committee on Advanced Television (ATV) Service as the U.S. transmission standard for terrestrial broadcasting."[160] Digitization is far superior because it is capable of capturing more information from the sound wave and is not subject to deterioration. "The key is that when something is digital, it can be rearranged, cut apart, and mixed with anything else that is digital."[161] New communication technologies are being introduced to both the public and private sectors of the world at an alarming rate. The technologies introduced in this section are by no means comprehensive, rather they are the more significant ones that have accelerated the globalization of media firms.

How do these innovations facilitate the globalization of mass media institutions? All of the aforementioned technologies help convert most forms of communication -- pictures, sounds and text -- into a common code that is easily transmitted over all mediums of communication. In the information age, information can now be compressed and then sent to its destination, freeing up space in fibre optic lines. It is this compression that allows the possibility of the much heralded arrival of the '500-channel' television system. Satellites, fibre optics, telephone lines, simultaneous broadcasts all contribute to a merger of different mediums simultaneously or "multimedia". Owners of goliath media firms have understood the enormous advantages that "multimedia" offers to making their operations run more efficiently, increase their profits and size, distribution and overall scope and power of their companies in the global economy.

Modes of Globalization

Many citizens in both developed and developing nations grow up unaware of the dynamics and complexities of media firm behavior, their expansion strategies as well as who owns the copious amounts of media they consume daily. The globalization phenomenon of media institutions is a result of the changing political, socio-economic and demographic environment. Increases in life-expectancy, consumption of commodities and leisure time are all variables that motivate media conglomerations to expand their scope and power into the international arena. Understandably, the

[160] U.S. Department of Commerce: National Telecommunications and Information Administration, *Globalization of the Mass Media*, 34-35.
[161] Maney, *Megamedia Shakeout*, 6.

incentive to expand services into the global market has led to an increase in global competition among media moguls. Thus, this section provides a basic framework for understanding the workings related to the development of competitive strategies used by contemporary mass media firms.

Hassan and Kaynak (1994) in their text Globalization of Consumer Markets: Structures and Strategies identify four major factors influencing the competitive advantage of global industries: (1) the supply side conditions; (2) demand side factors; (3) scope of segmentation and; (4) degree of globalization.[162] The supply side assists industries in attaining greater economies of scale and market penetration. "To these firms, global competitiveness is demonstrated via the ability to standardize research and development, product design, manufacturing, assembly, and packaging procedures."[163] The demand side facilitates competitiveness in the global economy because it helps conglomerations understand their consumer audiences and preferences. Scope of segmentation is a vital instrument for an international company. "The importance of segmentation to the global strategy is consistent with two key trends: the emergence of specific global segments, and the usefulness of segmentation to global strategy."[164] The degree of globalization "dictates the degree of standardization of the marketing program and process."[165] Keeping this framework for competitiveness in the global economy in mind, it is possible to observe the dominant trends and strategies being utilized by media firms in their effort to expand the scope and power of their media firms in the international economy.

Complementary expansion is when one institution is "engaged in the production of complementary products in different countries."[166] Products are considered complements of each other when supply or demand in one product changes it produces the opposite effect in the other. For example, when compact disc players first became available on the market they were quite

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[162] Salah S.Hassan and Erdener Kaynak, eds., *Globalization of Consumer Markets: Structures and Strategies* (Binghampton: International Business Press, 1994), 19-25.
[163] Ibid., 20.
[164] Ibid., 22.
[165] Ibid., 23.
[166] U.S. Department of Commerce: National Telecommunications and Information Administration, *Globalization of the Mass Media* , 53.

expensive to purchase because of the electronics and circuitry necessary for operation. However, as technology advanced and compact disc players became cheaper to produce and offered new options (i.e., multi-player as opposed to single) and were cheaper to consume, the price of the compact discs (CD's) was raised because of increased demand now that more consumers could afford compact disc players.

The mutual dependence certain products have on one another sometimes entices media firms to merge to reduce 'demand externality'. A demand externality exists "whenever the market demand for one firm's products is influenced, positively or negatively, by the decisions made by another firm and, moreover, the latter firm cannot realize the benefits or costs of these decisions."[167] A merger may take place in the attempt to inhibit demand externalities, increase the firm's efficiency and increase profits. By pooling all resources under one corporate umbrella it is easy to see how,

> complementarity may induce foreign direct investment (FDI) and , therefore, globalization. Complementaries exist over a wide range of media products (e.g., computers and software programs, compact discs (CDs) and players, and cameras and film). Moreover, the firms that produce such complementary products are typically located around the world. Media firms may attempt to capture additional producer surplus by internalizing the demand externality through merger, acquisition, or joint venture.[168]

The second mode of globalization, horizontal expansion, takes place when one media institution sells the same product in at least two different foreign markets. Within this mode of globalization companies do not buy or sell to one another, as in complementary expansion, "but are a number of enterprises, usually in different locations, doing the same business."[169] All attempts of horizontal expansion are premeditated corporate strategies with the primary motivation to attain firm-specific advantages.

Firm-specific advantages are benefits a firm receives when entering a foreign market as well as advantages over rival companies; the type and degree of advantage depends on both the company

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[167] Ibid., 54.
[168] Ibid., 55.
[169] Lorimer, *Mass Communication*, 86.

and the product. For instance, a firm expanding into a new market yet keeping its management philosophy and team may reduce operating budgets. A second firm-specific advantage may be the decision to locate a firm overseas or across borders in order for the firm to reduce distribution costs because the expansion allows the firm to distribute the product itself. Being both producer and distributor reduces long-term operating costs.

The final mode of globalization, and the most recent management fad, vertical expansion, occurs when an institution is involved in successive stages of production and where one or more of the stages are located in different countries. Engagement in the stages of production is primarily done through either foreign direct investment or long-term contracts.[170] Within this mode of globalization companies buy and use products from the same owner.

One motive stimulating vertical integration is said to be improvement of economic efficiency. "Specifically, some transactions are more efficiently completed within the governance structure of a single firm rather than through a market."[171] Vertical integration is often more efficient because its internal management structure and organization can control and direct the firm's behavior in all aspects of the production process as well as the distribution process. A prominent characteristic of vertical integration is the interdependence the different stages of the production process have on one another; it is essential that open channels of communication exist so different groups in the production process can communicate freely in order to maximize profits.

Vertical expansion has occurred in almost every facet of the media, from the manufacturing of television sets to the distribution of films and compact discs. Corporations such as Time-Warner, and Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. have engaged in vertical integration in order to increase efficiency and reduce vertical externality. Vertical externality, like horizontal externality, diminishes the possibility of confusion and miscalculating marketing strategies. A second form of vertical integration, long-term contracts, is also employed by media firms to increase efficiency.

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[170] U.S. Department of Commerce: National Telecommunications and Information Administration, *Globalization of the Mass Media* , xi.
[171] Ibid., 64.

Contracts, similar to joint ventures, are signed between producers and distributors for long durations of time to distribute a media institution's product. Most often, the producers will work with only one distributor to ensure a lasting and open relationship, one that fosters trust and openness between the two parties.

"Those countries that develop a comparative advantage in the production of such (mass media) products will increase the economic welfare of their inhabitants."[172] But who are these media behemoths that have come to dominate the international media market? How did they get there? What are the media economics they abide by? What are the consequences of their actions for the democratic process? These questions are addressed in the final two sections of this chapter.

The Globalization of Media Firms -- Media Economics

Economics is the study of how finite resources are allocated to satisfy the infinite needs and wants of a particular society or audience. Further, economics can be compartmentalized into micro and macro economics. Microeconomics considers the market system in operation, analyzing the economic activities of producers and consumers in specific markets. In contrast, macroeconomics studies operations of the entire economic system on a national level. Both share the goal of better understanding the interrelationship between supply and demand. Media economics refers to the business and economic activities of media firms operating within the media industry. It includes the operations involved in both the production and distribution of information services. However, as the globalization of media firms continues, making the distinction concerning the primary type of industry the particular company participates in becomes convoluted.[173] Specifically, "media economics is concerned with how the media industries allocate resources to create information and entertainment content to meet the needs of audiences, advertisers and other societal institutions."[174]

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[172] Ibid., 68. Parentheses added.

[173] There is a tremendous amount of economic activity occurring in the media industry, proving difficult to illustrate the specific selling, buy-outs and joint ventures occurring. The deals and maneuvers are so pervasive that any given day can amount to multiple business announcements from major companies. For the purpose of this study it is only the dominant owners and companies in the globalization of media firms that are investigated.

[174] Alison Alexander, James Owen and Rob Careth, eds., *Media Economics: Theory and Practice* (New York: Lawerence Erlbaum Associates, 1993), 3.

All financial undertakings a media firm engages in, regardless of the country the firm operates out of, are subject to rules established by political, legal, economic and social institutions. "The overall nature of a country's political organization is clearly a fundamental factor in the determination of the media industries and business practices of media firms."[175] The activities of media firms investigated in this study are capitalist ventures, operating in a "mixed-capitalist society" whereby the majority of firms are privately owned and operate within a capitalist economy. To better understand the economic environment that media firms operate in, it is beneficial to focus on the microeconomic element. The benefits of doing so are two-fold: (1) it allows an investigation into the economic and organizational philosophies media firms adhere to and (2) it assists in the understanding why firms are expanding into the global economy.

Awareness of the microeconomic principles provides a conceptual framework for understanding the operations of media firms. "Economists assume that individuals maximize their *utility*. Utility refers to satisfaction and enjoyment from the consumption (today or in the future) of a particular good or service."[176] The microeconomic activities of media firms concerns itself with how individuals (consumers) make decisions in the consumption of information and entertainment content. It also focuses on the supply and demand and price of particular goods and services.

The day-to-day operations of media firms may be compartmentalized into three principles; organization and production and distribution.[177] Organization is the coordination of activities that require a structured and interdependent environment in order to successfully achieve the firms goals and directives. Typically, the organizational structure of a media firm, within a mixed-capitalist system, is headed, theoretically, by the stockholders. The stockholders appoint a board of directors who represent the collective interests of the stockholders. It is the duty of the board of directors to appoint a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is responsible for the ongoing operations of the entire firm, often referred to as 'line and staff' duties. Line refers to the actual physical

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[175] Ibid., 5.
[176] Ibid., 7.
[177] The number of principles that can be compartmentalized vary. Other principles include technology use, accounting and information systems, financial management and, transactions in the financial system.

involvement in the production of goods and services whereas staff describes those functions that are not directly involved in the physical production of the good. To fulfill this mammoth responsibility the Chief Executive Officer appoints numerous personnel to supervisory positions. For example, the Chief Executive Officer would employ a vice-president of programming whose duties include making certain that all programming was reaching its intended market.

Production and distribution refers to the creation of the good or service being produced for the market by the organization. "The process of creating a product to distribute to a market varies widely across the media industries. In the case of newspapers, for example, production is by necessity compressed into a few hours. Most processes ... must take place in a compressed time frame. In contrast, the time for a book may be years."[178] The means employed by media firms to distribute a finished product also vary according to the media industry being considered. For example, a large percentage of television programming is distributed by the network that produces the program, therefore, distribution is a major area of concern to the producers of television content. However, the production and distribution of goods and services will not attain profit if the firm does not comprehend what needs it serves and more importantly, who's needs it attempts to satisfy.

Media organizations operate in the economic system to meet both private and public needs.[179] Private needs are those needs that are essential to an individual's survival (shelter, food and clothing). However, individuals are neither complacent nor satisfied with only private needs. Once an individual's subsistence needs are met, they desire convenience needs -- ones that make life easier and more comfortable. Goods which satisfy convenience needs include cars, money and entertainment. In contrast, public needs are those goods and services that make society's way of life more convenient and secure. For example, bridges, military and public education are public goods because all of society may consume them.

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[178] James Owen, Alison Alexander and Rob Careth, *Media Economics: Theory and Practice*, 15.
[179] Robert G. Picard, *Media Economics: Concepts and Issues* (Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, 1989).

To fulfill these differing needs, media firms serve four groups: (1) media owners; (2) audiences; (3) advertisers; and (4) media employees.[180] The needs of the four groups are diverse. Owners desire both maximum profit and preservation of the firm. Audiences wish high quality information and entertainment services at a low cost. Advertisers pay services for access to their intended target audiences. And, employees call for good working conditions and a non-discriminatory work environment. Moreover, the media also deliver a public service by providing forums for ideas and discussions to take place for the democratic process to prosper.

Meeting all the demands placed on a firm requires media organizations to operate in dual markets. Institutions of the media produce one good but participate in two service markets. Content is the good that is provided to both markets; media content may be a song, a news program or an editorial piece. Content is the delivery of the information and entertainment package that the particular medium manufactures. The commodity is then marketed to two different consumers. First, content is marketed to individuals. This involves attracting their attention to the product in exchange for their time and money. The second market the media sell their commodity to is the advertising industry. "Although some observers may casually conclude that media sell space or time to purchasers of advertising, a more precise and descriptive explanation is that the media sell *access* to *audiences* to advertisers."[181] [182]

The dynamics of media economies are premised on one fundamental tenet -- profit. In economic terminology, the goal of all media organizations is the 'maximization of shareholder wealth'. Operating in a 'mixed capitalist system', the media compete with each other to provide choices to consumers and access to audiences. "The number of producers in a given market is important because it is an indication of the market power that firms possess and their ability to control and influence the economic operations in that market."[183] The structure of a market may be analyzed by using four types of market environments: (1) perfect competition; (2) monopolistic competition; (3)

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[180] Ibid., 9.
[181] Ibid., 18.
[182] Not all media participate in the advertising market. Rather, those who do not reley on product sales alone and some depend on contibutions such as the Public Broadcasting System.
[183] Picard, *Media Economics*, 31.

oligopoly and; (4) monopoly. Perfect competition exists when economic competition for advertisers and audiences is uninhibited. Monopolistic competition occurs when "there are a number of sellers of similar goods and services, but the products are differentiated and each product is available only when the firm makes it."[184] Oligopolies are when the market structure is dominated by a few select media firms competing against one another and whose goods are either homogenous or differentiated. A monopoly market structure is denoted when only one producer has complete autonomy over economic functions of the market structure and all consumers are dependent on that one firm for goods and services to fulfill their private and convenience needs. Competition is one of the pillars that a capitalist economy is built upon. Therefore, all producers strive to 'corner the market'. To remain competitive and be profitable many media firms constantly restructure their internal dynamics. Restructuring can take form in two ways: (1) downsizing; or (2) increase their holdings. Circumstances inciting the decision to restructure are numerous, ranging from current market conditions and technological innovations to corporate takeovers or 'raids'. However, efficiency and increasing the scope and power of the particular firm are the primary motivations behind such decisions. It is the latter influence that has led to the increase in the globalization of media firms. This globalization began in the late 1980s and continues in the present day. The multimedia communication mergers that dominate media economics have begun a journey whose destination is unknown as are the implications on the democratic process.

Major Players

Media companies have been aware of technological convergence -- the amalgamation of communication mediums like the television, telephone, satellites and computers to create an interactive, easy access information and entertainment industry -- for many years. However, they were ignorant of the speed at which the rate of innovation would develop. The plethora of innovations in communication technology has occurred in a very brief period of time. Beginning in the mid-1980s enormous mergers, buy-outs and joint ventures became the norm in the day-to-day operations of media economics. By 1992, the economic philosophies of media firms changed

[184] Ibid., 32.

completely. "Companies altered their strategies and set off in new directions. New leaders took over and visibly led the charge."[185]

These new leaders or media behemoths compete in research and development in communications technologies to make the '500-channel' television reality. Regardless of who controls the production of hardware it is the software that consumers desire. Thus, the daily operations of media firms and media economics is a battle by corporate strategists for control over content.

Walt Disney Co.

The nineteen billion dollar acquisition of Capital Cities/ABC by the Walt Disney Co. in August of 1995 introduced the world's largest entertainment empire and the second largest player in global entertainment to the global economy. In the U.S.A., Disney owns the Disney channel, a specialty cable station with fourteen million subscribers. Capital Cities/ ABC Inc. owns eighty percent of the ESPN sports network, twenty-one radio stations, shares in the A&E (Arts and Entertainment) channel and a publishing group with seven daily newspapers. The most severe threat to the U.S. democratic process the merger arises from the Walt Disney Co.'s ownership of the ABC television network's eight television stations and their two hundred and twenty-five affiliates.

Time-Warner Inc.

The merger between the book publishing mogul Time and the film and television company Warner, in June of 1989, created one of the largest media enterprises in the world. Time bought Warner for thirteen billion dollars. As Bagdikian (1992) and Hiebert et al. (1991) illustrate; Warner controlled fourteen percent of the sixty-six hours of prime-time television each week, had forty-four movies on the market, fourteen first run shows on television and was a major supplier of cable.[186] The motivation to buy-out Warner was based on economic security. Time, forecasting minimal growth in its magazine industry, wanted to diversify but felt underdeveloped in areas relating to

[185] Kevin Maney, *Megamedia Shakeout* (New York: John Wiley& Sons, 1995), 6.
[186] Ben H. Bagdikian, The Media Monopoly (4th ed.) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992). Ray Eldon Hiebert et. al, *Mass Media IV: An Introduction to Modern Communication* (New York: Longman, 1991).

communications technology. Warner had been successful in its records and music division as well as film production. The new media behemoth, as Bagdikian (1992) notes, now own assets exceeding the combined gross domestic product of Bolivia, Jordan, Nicaragua, Albania, Liberia and Mali. Time-Warner is an excellent illustration of the evolution from information to infotainment because it is the integration of a journalistic enterprise (Time) with the entertainment industry (Warner).

Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation

Australian businessman Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation has the greatest global reach of newspaper circulation, owning: two-thirds in Australia, one-half in New Zealand and one-third in Britain. Murdoch's conglomerate is composed of newspapers, magazines, films, satellites and cable services around the globe. Controlling the Financial Times, Viking, Penguin Books, Harper-Collins in both the United Kingdom and United States, the Fox Broadcasting network and seven percent of Reuters news agency allows Murdoch to attain profits up to fourteen billion dollars annually. Moreover, Murdoch has been open about giving right-wing politicians, like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, advantageous press coverage. Both Thatcher and Reagan returned the favor by granting leniency in laws and regulations concerning media ownership. Thatcher even allowed Murdoch to circumvent the United Kingdom's Monopolies Commission, allowing him to buy the London Times, thus enhancing his reign of power in the United Kingdom.

Bertlesmann AG

The German media giant, Bertlesmann AG, is the biggest player in the global entertainment industry and the third largest integrated media company in the world, next to Disney-ABC and Time-Warner. Its operations are so decentralized that although the name Bertlesmann may be unfamiliar to most, some of its companies may not be. Bertlesmann owns RCA, Ariola Records, Doubleday Publishing and Bantam Books, with sales exceeding some seven billion annually.[187] All the companies Bertlesmann devours are left in their original name. Bertlesmann's power and

[187] Anthony Smith, *The Age of the Behemoths* (London: Twentieth Century Fund, 1993), 41.

influence are based on self-concealment; thereby reinforcing the image of diversity in consumer choice.

Silvio Berlusconi

Italian businessman, Silvio Berlusconi, entered the media industry in 1976 and by the early 1980s had acquired all three private national networks in Italy and four specialty channels. In 1984 he had managed to purchase all three publishing houses in Italy. Also in 1984, the Italian courts ruled nationwide private television ownership illegal; it appeared that Berlusconi would have to sell most of his networks. However, then Prime Minister Bettino Craxi intervened and reversed the law permitting Berlusconi to keep his empire. Berlusconi's Finivest company owns forty-five percent of Kabel Media located in Munich and its audience reach is approximately two and a half million.

These dominant media firms are large multi-national, profit-seeking corporations. Other colossals include Westinghouse-CBS, Sony-Columbia and the Thomson Corporation. These information czars operate in tandem with the corporate community whose market strategies of infotainment, operating on the principle of supply and demand, detract from the political roles of the mass media and thus the democratic process.

Infotainment and Market Forces

Writing in 1951, Harold Innis observed that "enormous improvements in communication have made understanding more difficult."[188] The relative abundance of political information about local, national and international issues has important implications for the theory and practice of informed citizenship and thus democracy in the affluent liberal states. In contemporary times, the citizen is deluged with more information than ever before. This section is a theoretical examination of how the globalization of mass media institutions affect the political roles of the mass media.

Vigilant and independent media are indispensable in a modern democracy, that is, a system of rule where political power resides in the citizenry and is exercised by them either directly or through

[188] Harold A. Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951), 31.

representatives. Citizens require objective information to formulate opinions on political, social and economic issues. Democracy, according to J.S. Mill, requires a free press; one that provides information-rich news and diversity. A test of a healthy democracy is the degree to which a political system can tolerate and encourage freedom of expression. Some preliminary comments are in order about the meaning of informed citizenship and its relation to democracy. Informed citizenship means more than an individual receiving information on political, economic and social concerns; it implies the motivation to become informed. Normatively speaking, citizens become motivated because they realize they are agents possessing interests, rights and responsibilities. Pertaining to democracy, the desire to be informed rest upon the citizen's ability, upon the acquisition of appropriate information, to initiate actions that influence the democratic process.

Unfortunately, the ideal of informed citizenship has never existed in practice. Citizens are not motivated to participate in the democratic process: think of low voter turn-out in recent elections. Numerous attempts have been made to explain this circumstance. One interpretation rests on the assumption that citizens feel they do not have any influence or effect on the democratic process: "Like my vote is going to change anything!" Moreover, this interpretation identifies, quantitatively, the percentage of national voter turn-out. Withholding information, relevant to the democratic process, is the premise of a second school of thought. Illustrating the hegemonic relationship between political and civil society, its proponents argue that informed citizenship is impossible because elites censor information in the attempt to impede the populace from attaining class-consciousness. A third explanation, one that will provide the foundation for this investigation, argues that it is not a lack of available information per se but the quality of information that makes the attainment of informed citizenship difficult.

Institutions of the media are in a current process of change. The increase in cross-ownership by a select few media moguls has led to a concentration of large international companies dominating the mass media industry. The consequences of this transformation are unknown. What requires investigation are the political and social consequences these oligopolies have on democratic societies.

Globalization of media firms in the sense of an increasing concentration of international companies procuring previously locally owned information and entertainment enterprises is still in its early stages. It is important to investigate patterns of media ownership and their consequences because they link economic structures to cultural and political ones. "More particularly, they connect a productive system rooted in private ownership to a political system that presupposes a citizenry whose full social participation depends in part on access to the maximum possible range of information and analysis and to open debate on contentious issues."[189] With the arrival of satellites, fibre-optics and other technological innovations, media moguls publish and broadcast information from all over the world at faster speeds and lower costs.

A representative democracy requires a citizenry that is both informed and has an opportunity to voice concerns. "In general, capitalism makes no allowances for relations between cultures and economic institutions"[190]; the consequence of such is that media content, rather then being informing, is entertaining because owners wish to create greater profit margins regardless of the damage they inflict on the democratic process. "The problem is not that television presents us with entertaining subject matter, rather the problem is that all television content is", because of market demands, "presented as entertaining."[191] Infotainment, the assimilation of information into entertainment to maintain audience levels, is the economic blueprint all private-sector media institutions obey. No matter what the content, the overarching presumption is that it is there for entertainment, thus fulfilling economic mandates. Television is the primary source of public information and constructs the stage for other mediums, such as radio, magazines and specialist newspapers, to perform. Before investigating the consequences the globalization of media firms has on democracy, a theoretical discussion of the ideal of freedom of the press is required.

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[189] Graham Murdock, "Redrawing the Map of Communication Industries: Concentration and Ownership in the Era of Privatization," in Majorie Ferguson, ed., *Public Communication: The New Imperatives: Future Directions for Media Research* (London: SAGE Publications, 1990), 4.
[190] Lorimer, *Mass Communication*, 75.
[191] Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 87.

The use of information is the crux of ethical and moral questions involving media and journalistic practices. However, the quality, composition and depth of information used to inform the citizenry will not necessarily be determined by the twin virtues of balance and fairness (however defined). An investigation of the degree of freedom the press experience, in any society, requires asking two questions: (1) to what extent is the press limited in its ability to disseminate information to the public and (2) what is the impact of ownership and control mechanisms (i.e., regulation) on media content.[192] Both of these questions have implications on the public's interest in political, social and economic issues.

"Public means open and available, not private or closed."[193] A necessary condition for the existence and activity of a public discourse is the availability of adequate means of communication. "Public communication are those processes of information and cultural exchange between media institutions, products and publics which are socially shared, widely available and communal in character."[194]

Freedom of the press is a structural condition. The "operation of the media is often guaranteed (or limited) by provisions of society in the form of constitutional clauses or laws."[195] The existence of a free press system, as McQuail notes, requires three categories; rights, conditions and duties.[196] *Rights* imply that media institutions be permitted to: publish news for profit, report on public meetings, convey alternative and conflicting viewpoints of the state and refuse to publish material without castigation. *Conditions* essential for freedom of the press are the absence of censorship and interference from sponsors and government. *Duties* of media organizations include: serving the public good, expressing alternative and dissenting views and presenting the opportunity for citizens to express their opinions. Objectivity in news practices, normatively speaking, is the fundamental tenet executing these processes. However, tenets do not execute processes.

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[192] Dennis McQuail, *Media Performance: Mass Communications in the Public Interest* (London: SAGE, 1992).
[193] Ibid., 2.
[194] Majorie Ferguson, ed., *Public Communication: The New Imperatives: Future Directions for Media Research* (London: SAGE Publications, 1990), ix.
[195] McQuail, *Media Performance*, 2.
[196] Ibid., 99-100.

Objectivity is a professional ideal of a certain type of journalist. The idea of objectivity may be traced to Plato who was concerned with the influence of poets and playwrights on the Greek populace.[197] By the 1920s journalists adopted objectivity, in the sense of dichotomous balance, as an ideal.[198] Closely associated with truth is objectivity; indeed these two words have long been the cardinal "buzzwords" of journalism. Moreover, objectivity, as understood by the communicator, signifies more than truth; it implies thoroughness. Aristotle emphasized his ethical normality the "Golden Mean". By this he meant that moral virtue is a mean between two extremes; one involves excess and the other deficiency. Establishing equilibrium or balance between the extremes provided a foundation for individuals to behave responsibly. Moderation, Aristotle argued, was the key to excellence. This argument is an exemplary example of the journalistic practices necessary for freedom of the press. Objectivity may be paralleled to Aristotle's 'Golden Mean"; it is discovering the equilibrium between excess and deficiency in reporting. Equilibrium compels proper focus, organization and unbiased selection of facts. Unfortunately, this ideal of freedom of the press has been sacrificed to the cardinal zeal of capitalism -- the quest for profit.

The economic structure of a medium governs the shape and transmission of information as well as its source. It is pertinent to note that any private media institution operates in response to the interplay of supply and demand. Like any other private enterprise, owners of media seek to satisfy consumer demand at the lowest economic level and in ways which maximize their economic welfare.

The "culture industry" is dominated by a select number of companies. The dynamics of its industrial structure -- the effects of owning the means of production, distribution and presentation -- involve conglomerations, combining a variety of corporate linkages, usually integrating horizontally and vertically integrated companies. This pattern of ownership became prominent during the early 1970s when media corporations began to diversify into ventures not associated

[197] Black, *Politics and the News*, 13.
[198] Nick Russell, *Morals of the Media: Ethics in Canadian Journalism* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994), 25.

with their original enterprise. Inciting the economic desire for conglomeration derives from two sources: first, media conglomerates reduce costs by way of vertical integration where they sell products to themselves.[199] An example of this is Sony-Columbia, which manufactures the necessary hardware for the music and recording industry. Sony-Columbia owns CBS records. Demand for their hardware is maintained through themselves. Second, and more relevant to the democratic process, is 'cornering the market'. Horizontally integrated companies do not have to worry about access for their products, especially in key demographic areas; thus diminishing audience concerns. There exists a consistent pattern of expansion in the growth of media behemoths. First, they become dominant in their own countries, sometimes with the assistance of politicians. Then, after solidifying their operations in their home countries, expand, thanks to the amelioration of borders in the information age, into the international arena.

Television in the 1950s united societies by way of news broadcasts, educated citizens and thus was a harbinger of the democratic process. A critical trait of a representative democratic form of government must always be borne in mind: accountability of those in power to those who elected them. One form of accountability, other than voting, is the role the mass media, as 'watchdogs', execute. Normatively speaking, as the social responsibility theory of the press contends, objective reporting serves as a check on authority and political power. Informed citizenship is dependent upon the mass media to furnish this service and provide differing viewpoints on relevant issues so that citizens may, based on the acquisition of appropriate information, make informed judgments and evaluations of political issues and elected officials.

However, the structure and role of private-sector media ownership are founded on cost-efficiency. As previously mentioned, the economic aims of a media organization dictates content. Therefore, content, with the arrival of conglomerates has become nothing more than infotainment because owners of media corporations need to maintain their audience in order for sponsors to keep purchasing air-time. On radio and television there is little space for discussion; when stories run an

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[199] Ray Eldon Hiebert et. al, *Mass Media IV: An Introduction to Modern Communication* (New York: Longman, 1991), 54-70.

average of forty-five seconds there is no time for contemplation or question the validity of the story itself. The goal of newscasts, aside from maintaining captive audiences for advertisers, is acclamation not contemplation. Televised media provides citizens with a selective view of the world about what is important and what is not. Market incentives lead to a selection of news portraying an image of the world with striking homogeneity. Networks and news coverage are now composed of personalities (Dan Rather, Diane Sawyer, Peter Jennings, Barbara Walters and Wolf Blitzer) and news stories are animated graphics displayed at rapid speeds. A news program and its formats are designed to entertain not educate. Everything in a newscast exemplifies this: opening theme music, the perfect hair and good looks of broadcasters and the use of images not commentary. What do music and attractive anchorpersons have to do with news? Nothing, they provide the aesthetic value for infotainment.

The media reproduce one vision of reality without subjecting it to critical reflection. Affixing the obstruction of informed citizenship with infotainment, merely requires the realization that for entertainment to remain pleasing, it must not demand any personal effort. It suppresses critical thought in citizens. Most important about infotainment is that people *watch* it; they watch its moving pictures of short duration and variety. Citizens watch or "join" the newscaster every evening despite all the violence, tragedy and barbarism. The onrush of images that viewers experience is a distraction, disrupting thought and preventing contemplation. Infotainment has no intentions of stories having any implications, if it did, it would require the audience to think thus restricting attention to the following story -- or worse, the next commercial. Contemplation and introspection are in contradiction to infotainment. Equal in importance is that infotainment assumes that citizens are capable of separating truth from images by using their reasoning and deductive abilities that liberalism purports, thereby excusing the mass media from any liability they have caused to the democratic process.

In the advanced capitalist states, information is primarily geared towards privatism and consumption. A paradox immediately presents itself between the democratic process and information. In this context, information obtained through the mass media serves not only to

"inform" the individual, it isolates the citizen from political problems because it detaches them from issues. Infotainment detaches the individual by placing issues of public concern within the private realm of the home, hindering public discourse and participation by decreasing interpersonal communication. Simultaneously, it provides infotainment that trivializes issues pertinent to the development of informed citizenship.

The media, as agents of socialization, hinder informed citizenship on account of their ability to personalize, fragment, isolate, and normalize news stories.[200] Technology allows journalists to compress vast amounts of information into "media frames", selected stories for presentation, that audiences effortlessly decode and digest as commonsense.[201] The media impede the political capacity of citizens as Horkheimer pessimistically writes, "... the giant loudspeaker of industrial culture... endlessly reduplicate[s] the surface of reality."[202]

The mass media play a significant role influencing citizens. The patterns of individual use and consumption of the media, in everyday life, help mold citizen's attitudes and opinions. Unfortunately, most patterns of usage occur during an individual's leisure time that serves to detach the individual from their community. Also, using the media as a form of leisure stifles the opportunity for critical thought and discussion with members of the populace. The result of these structural and systemic conditions inhibits participation precisely for the reason that participation is not encouraged. Citizens know that despite the fragmented nature of news, commercials will appear and defuse any relevance, continuity or importance of the preceding story. Citizens are accustomed to discontinuity, they expect the disruption of commercials.

Within the surrealistic environment of the media is a paradigm that abandons logic and reason. A fundamental concern is that the paradigm of infotainment is being accepted as reality. Fragmented, irrelevant and entertaining "reality" deprives citizens of information vital to their social well-being.

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[200] Lance W. Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion* (4th ed.) (New York: Longman, 1988).
[201] Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: mass media in the making and unmaking of the new left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 9.
[202] Max Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Continuum, 1947), 142.

The decline in critical awareness ameliorates the autonomous individual -- the crux of liberal democratic theory. The media undermine the rational individual through the quest for profit, the reproduction of reality, a barrage of images and incomprehensible political rhetoric.

Conclusion

In conclusion, informed citizenship in the information society remains elusive. Infotainment bombards citizens with an abundant amount of information and images, leaving them detached from the community -- resulting in a rationalized public, not reasoning individuals. As future technological innovations make the transmission and consumption of information increasingly efficient and market incentives increase the amount of infotainment, the outlook for increased informed citizenship is bleak. "We are presented not only with fragmented news but news without context, without consequences, without value, and therefore without essential seriousness; that is to say, news as pure entertainment."[203] The rise of media oligopolies and the accompaniment of infotainment imperils the individual's ability to critically assess media content thus making political decisions increasingly difficult. Hence Horkheimer's assertion: "As their telescopes and microscopes, their tapes and radios become more sensitive, individuals become blinder, more hard of hearing, less responsive and society more opaque, hopeless ... than ever before."[204]

Aside from the aforementioned consequences to the democratic process resulting from infotainment, there exists another consequence. As the concentration of ownership continues for reasons of profit and power, owners are slowly infecting themselves with a potent economic disease. Owners are undermining the very process in which their ability to achieve profit derives. Tightening an economic noose around the neck of the free market, media moguls detract from the liberal democratic system in which the free market depends upon for survival. The present day environment of the oligopolistic media suffocates liberal democracy, competition and the free market. If this implication is not adequately addressed, not only could the oligopolistic environment of media industries evolve into a monopoly but media owners will erode the very

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[203] Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, 100.
[204] Max Horkheimer, *Dawn and Decline: Notes 1926-1931 and 1950-1969* (New York: Continuum, 1978), 162.

foundation in which their ability to accrue profit is built upon. The result could not only be the extinction of competition in the media industry but a serious blow to liberal democracy.

The obligations of the media to adequately inform citizens does not necessarily derive from societal responsibilities but out of their own self - interest. If owners of huge media conglomerations favor the continuance of a free mass media system, they require a liberal democratic polity; in turn, such a polity requires informed citizens. Media moguls want the present oligopolistic media system but they cannot have it. It is doubtful that any arguments like the one presented in this project will persuade these owners. But many other, smaller firms, need to realize that their economic survival depends on liberal democracy and the free market which, at present, is being eroded.

As innovations in communication technology make the transmission of information more rapid and as government de-regulation of the mass media industries increase the concentration of ownership into the hands of the few, it is pertinent to address the issue: how has the transition into the information age affected the political roles of the mass media? This is the area of investigation in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

The Mass Media in the Information Age

Today, given the long-term trend from manufacturing to knowledge based economies, few forms of power are as forceful as media, information and cultural industry ownership, or command over trade in the distribution of their products.

-- Marjorie Ferguson, 1995 --

The Information Society

Information is the 'thing' to own, sell and trade in the 1990s. Affluent liberal states have, within the last two decades, begun a significant shift from the tangible to the intangible -- from a manufacturing toward an information based economy. As we near a new millennium much of the world's economy will be driven by the processing of information, the effects of which will affect every citizen. Information's marriage to technology has resulted in what some refer to the 'commodification' of information.[205] Industrial manufacturing is being replaced as the primary economic activity in advanced capitalist societies, by the production, distribution and consumption of information and its related services and technologies. This chapter has five goals. The first is a theoretical examination of the concept of the information society. Second, it highlights the economic, governmental and technological challenges the media are facing in the information society. Third, it addresses the issue of concentration of ownership impeding the political roles of the media. Fourth, it addresses the issue of accountability by the mass media. Lastly, how and to what degree can the internet become a new form of mass media?

For some, the coming of the "information society" represents the final achievement of the "good life". Martin (1978) contends that the proliferation of information technology will provide for a better informed citizenry, enhance the political process and participation, increase wealth and decrease human drudgery.[206] The Japanese scholar Yoneji Masuda has even heralded the arrival of 'computopia', which he defines as: "Computer Utopia, an ideal global society in which multi-

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[205] Vincent Mosco, "Information in the Pay-Per Society," in Vincent Mosco and Janet Madison, eds., *The Political Economy of Information* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988)

[206] James Martin, *The Wired Society* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1978), 15.

centered, multi-layered voluntary communities of citizens participating voluntarily in shared goals and ideas flourish simultaneously throughout the world."[207]

A critical approach conceived, in opposition to optimists of the information age, has led to a re-examination of the relationship between power and class within the information age. Proponents of this paradigm argue that, "... technologies are a political and cultural product, and argue that its implementation and use will serve those in power."[208] Certain theorists argue that the information society is characterized by large corporations and conglomerates who are the only entities that can afford high priced technologies, discouraging the needs of the populace which cannot invest in such technological goods.[209]

The major forces of production and consumption, including knowledge, have historically had a determining influence on the nature of political, social and cultural relations of any given society. Theorists such as Toffler (1980) and Naisbitt (1982) contend that the proliferation of information technology will provide for a better informed citizenry and an invigorated political participatory process.[210] Both Toffler and Naisbitt assert that innovation produces positive social, economic and political developments and the implementation of user friendly and easy access technology would "de-massify" society as it enhances individualism.

The "information society" has both proponents and opponents. It is necessary to examine prominent thinkers on both sides to illuminate the theoretical debate that exists in the present day. Although they differ in opinion on the implications of technology, they agree that technological innovation is the primary force of societal, economic and political change. Furthermore, they agree

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[207] Yoneji Masuda, *The Information Society as Post-Industrial Society* (Tokyo: Institute for the Information Society, 1980), 159.

[208] Charles Steinfeld and Jerry L. Salvaggio, "Towards a Definition of the Information Society," , Jerry Salvaggio, ed.,*The Information Society: Economic, Social and Structural Issues* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989), 8.

[209] For example see: Salvaggio, *The Information Society: Economic, Social and Structural Issues* ; Vincent Mosco, *The Pay-Per Society* (1988) and; Herbert I Schiller, *Who Knows: Information in the Age of Fortune 500* (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1986).

[210] Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1980) and John Naisbitt, *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives* (New York: Warner Books, 1982).

that the most influential element in advanced capitalist societies is information technology.[211] Information technology, and its impact, began receiving earnest attention commencing with the changing world of post World War II. Despite this attention occurred in the formative years of the information age, certain theorists, such as Jacques Ellul, Marshall McLuhan, Daniel Bell and Herbert Marcuse, merit attention because their knowledge and contributions establish the theoretical foundation for the post-industrial society debate.

Jacques Ellul prophesied the existence of autonomous technology. This evolution of technology would undermine cultural values, creating a social environment where individuals and communities were subservient to the machine.[212] The core of Ellul's theory rested on "technique", which he defined as, "... the totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency in every field of human activity."[213] Technique incorporates itself into every facet of human activity and creates a social world devoid of abstract thought; it functions solely to promote the technical means and functioning of a given society. Technique assimilates itself into the human psyche, ceases to be external and therefore becomes the individual's very substance.[214]

Marshall McLuhan, a theorist of communication thought, was another scholar who identified dominant features of the oncoming post-industrial society. He believed that technology was reaching an apex in its ability to reproduce human consciousness and, in effect, facilitate the process of knowing.[215] The outcome of such facilitation is what McLuhan termed the global village. According to McLuhan; "... our current translation into the spiritual form of information seem[s] to make of the entire globe, and of the human family, a single consciousness."[216]

Ironically, McLuhan uses the metaphor global village to express his view that certain aspects of the world, because of technological innovation, are reverting to tribal-like societies. The global

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[211] Jerry Salvaggio, ed., *The Information Society: Economic, Social and Structural Issues*, pp. 2 - 3.
[212] Jaques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1954), x.
[213] Ibid., xxv.
[214] Ibid., 5-6.
[215] Marshal McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Penguin, 1964), 19.
[216] Ibid., 67.

village, for McLuhan, is devoid of social structures and mediums of communication shape the values and normalities societies. McLuhan bluntly states his position with the aphorism, 'the medium is the message'.

Close to twenty years after World War II, what had been thought and opinion on the role of technology in advanced capitalist societies was becoming reality. During this period, the most definitive piece of work, within the liberal post-industrialist tradition, on the information society was produced.

Daniel Bell's, Coming Of Post-Industrial Society (1973) argued that five generalizations characterized the post-industrial society.[217] Firstly, the transition from industrial to post-industrial society was the shift from a goods producing to a service economy. An increase in professional class employment was in correlation with the decrease in labor-intensive occupations. This was due to innovation in the workplace, the second generalization, and the need for educated personnel to understand the operations of new automated technologies. The third generalization the "axial principle", the source of theoretical knowledge, served as the catalyst of innovation and policy formulation. Fourth, the increase in governmental regulation of technology and the implementation of technological assessment would assist in educating the citizenry through social and governmental policies. Finally, Bell observed that "intellectual technologies" would facilitate decision making in the technocratic arena.

For Bell, post-industrial society offers rational problem-solving through informational and technological innovations.[218] The result of this, for Bell and other liberal observers, is increased political participation, more educated citizenry, and a thriving global economy. However, some theorists differ in opinion regarding the social implications of the information society.

To this debate Herbert Marcuse brings the perspective of critical theory. As a member of the Frankfurt School, where critical theory was conceived, Marcuse argued, not against obvious social

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[217] Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 14.
[218] Ibid., 349,

changes that were taking place because of technological innovation but rather that the detrimental social and political effects of such innovation were being not being sufficiently analyzed. Against the capitalist argument that innovation bred progress and rationality, Marcuse contended that, ... this society is irrational as a whole. Its productivity is destructive of the free development of human needs and faculties, its peace maintained by the constant threat of war, its growth dependent on the repression of the real possibilities for pacifying the struggle for existence..."[219]

Irrationality is said to be an informal means of social control. While it does not employ coercion, it is subversive because what appears logical is, in effect, alienating. For example, the threat of nuclear war helps maintain international peace. Attempts to make real progress, Marcuse argues, have to occur outside the dominant paradigm and outside the status quo. Marcuse even argues that 'rational' innovation exists to contain and sanitize such attempts to change the social order.[220] Technology is the driving force restricting political participation to mere discussion or to movements which are portrayed, as radical, by civil society institutions such as the media. The result, he said, is to encapsulate individual thought and interpersonal communication within a superficial status quo.[221]

To recapitulate, liberal post-industrialists, such as Bell, argue that technological innovation fosters individual autonomy, freedom from manual labor, enhances the democratic process and increases the degree of political participation. Conversely, critical post-industrialists, such as Marcuse, dispute the notion that innovation fosters personal enlightenment and that the essence of capitalist innovation is repression. As Marcuse notes, "The slaves of developed industrial civilization are sublimated slaves, but they are slaves."[222] This overview sets the stage to investigate challenges that the mass media face within the information society.

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[219] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), xi.
[220] Ibid., 16-17.
[221] Ibid., 1-18.
[222] Ibid., 32.

Challenges to the Mass Media

The mass media, in the information age, are facing numerous challenges. These challenges manifest themselves primarily within economic, governmental and technological forms. Economically, firms must continuously adapt to the changing face of innovation and try to stay 'one step ahead' of their competitors. These fiscal hurdles require that firms take necessary measures to maintain their competitiveness. The main governmental challenge that media are encountering is deregulation. The effects of deregulation, the lessening of governmental intervention in the media, industry, are two-fold: (1) it is facilitating the concentration of ownership in the mass media on the global level and (2) on the periphery it is an accessory to the growing trend of infotainment. The final challenge is the technological innovations that are stimulating changes in the processes of newsgathering and presentation.

For a media firm to be competitive, it must choose a particular strategy within the industry. Porter (1990) identifies two prominent strategies of international competition.[223] A media firm can either choose a competitive advantage strategy or a competitive scope position. The former is achieved when a firm offers consumers the lowest costs or a superior product than their competitors. The latter strategy is employed by two methods: broad or narrow scope. Broad scope refers to a firm attempting to reach the widest possible audience. Narrow scope means that the firm wishes to market very specific attributes of a product to a target audience. Internationally, media firms predominately strive to attain the competitive advantage wherein they try to capture the largest audience. To achieve this goal many media firms merge with others or buy their competitors, hence the recent increase in the globalization of media firms.

To secure the largest audience, many media firms have turned increasingly to the international marketplace for revenues. "The trend began when Australian media baron Rupert Murdoch (News Corporation) acquired newspapers such as the *New York Post*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and the *Boston Herald American*, the Metromedia broadcast station group, and the Fox production and

[223] Porter in James Owen et al, *Media Economics*.

syndication divisions."[224] Changes in the global marketplace have increased media firm's incentives to expand internationally and as the three dominant types of ownership, those described in the preceding chapter, indicate, the dominant players have adopted a globalization strategy to achieve their goals. Media firms have been reorganizing in recent years -- all with the goal of increasing efficiency and profit. Circumstances dictating the reorganization structure of a firm include the nature of the particular firm and the technology, or its lack, in its various operations. There have been four 'waves' of business activity in the globalization of media firms to overcome economic challenges. The four 'waves' are: (1) business combinations (mergers and acquisitions); (2) business separations (divestitures and sell-offs); (3) realignment of financing (leveraged buy-outs) and; (4) variations of sell-offs.[225]

Very briefly, business combinations refer to companies that engage in a joint venture, striving towards the same goal and audience. In business combinations there is consent by all corporate parties and they are dedicated to improving results without formally or legally merging firms. Business separations include divestitures, spin-offs and liquidations. All three involve a process of reducing the size and scope of the firms operations. The motivations for business separations "vary from a need for cash in order that the corporation may survive, to having received offers so attractive that even prime assets such as 'cash cows' are sold."[226] The remaining two 'waves' involve the partial substitution of debt for equity. Associated with sell-offs and spin-offs, these 'waves' can occur without changing management personnel or philosophies and occur after a 'raid' in the attempt to increase the value of the firm. Regardless of the adopted strategy, all have implications for the global integration of the mass media.

The 1980s was the decade of corporate mergers and the media industry was not immune to this phenomenon. To remain successful and profitable media firms must find "... partners who are philosophically compatible from an editorial point of view, as well as financially compatible, and

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[224] James Owen et al, *Media Economics*, 336-337. Italics original.
[225] Ibid., 37.
[226] Ibid., 39.

who have a long-time orientation."[227] The mass media will encounter many obstacles in their attempts to globalize and they range from philosophical to practical in nature.

If successful partnerships are to emerge from the globalization of media firms they will have to maintain a competitive advantage over their competitors. Combining hardware and software industries permits firms to circumvent operating costs and regulation. As a result of mergers that take advantage of this 'competitive edge', institutions can infuse capital into the newly acquired enterprise and aid in the ability to acquire programming rights in rival companies. Companies that are unable to gain a competitive advantage in the international arena will be engulfed by those firms that have been able to maintain their fiscal prowess. Firms that do not capitalize on the relative advantages of mergers, partnerships and buy-outs fail in the global arena.

To stay economically afloat, partnerships will also be faced with the challenge of changing management strategies and philosophies. On the surface, this appears straightforward: if you want to be successful, you have to adapt to the ephemeral market. However, particular firms possess particular corporate ideologies that act as a blueprint for their actions. If a media institution's corporate and even political ideology is static and thus incapable of adapting its life will be short lived as innovation and the concentration of ownership continues. Management philosophies have tended to be either grounded in a concentration or dispersal strategy.[228] A concentration strategy is one where all business activities take place in that company's home country and its products are exported to other countries. Dispersal strategies are used by firms whose ventures of production, transmission and distribution occur in a variety of nations to take advantage of competitive differences. In the information age, all media firms must adopt a dispersal strategy if they are to remain competitive. One of the most important reasons for adopting this philosophy is to overcome cultural and institutional barriers. If a media firm is able to mesh itself in a host country, making its content appear to have been produced in that country, the firm will stand a much greater chance of economic survival in the global jungle. A good example of a company to fail in this

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[227] Nick Nicholas, co-CEO of Time Warner in Carveth et al., *Media Economics*, 346.
[228] Ibid., 348.

endeavor is Disney-ABC's Euro-Disney. This theme park located on the outskirts of Paris, France has been a financial nightmare. Disney failed to account for cultural differences and assumed that Europe was hungry to consume American culture.

A second challenge that firms experience when implementing dispersal strategies is the demand from stockholders for an immediate return on their investments. Expansions and takeovers, especially in a foreign country take time to produce results, whether positive or negative. Moreover, a firm cannot run the risk of its content offending the new host country. Therefore, the economic demands of profit stockholders place on CEOs during sensitive alliances and 'raids' may not be produce the desired result if CEOs act too quickly and transmit content prior to all marketing research being completed.

As media mergers and take-overs continue in the global marketplace, the results of these alliances and 'raids' is yet unknown. Primary incentives to globalize are to increase revenues through access to new markets, and to increase the size and scope of an enterprise. If mergers, 'raids' and the increase in the concentration of ownership are indeed transitional phases, a colossal economic challenge media firms might encounter is that globalization may not be attainable in the long-term. "The proliferation of languages, and the stark differences in culture, especially between the Japanese and the EC-U.S. countries, makes global media content almost impossible to produce."[229]

Aside from the economic obstacles affecting the practical operations of media firms there exists one economic obstacle affecting philosophical operations of media institutions. As the globalization of media firms continues to expand the developing nations will continue to be at a disadvantage relative to developed nations.[230] "Have-not" countries will continue to depend on developed countries not only for employment but for information. Developing countries have been limited to the degree that they participate in the global economy and are thus vulnerable to developed nations

[229] Ibid., 351.
[230] Ibid., 349.

who have competitive resources and capital. Moreover, many developing countries' media systems use the authoritarian philosophy of the media and do not condone competition within their own borders. This double-edged sword citizens of developing nations face continues to impede the development of a free media system in such countries and serves to impede these countries from competing globally.

Governments have always been closely tied to the mass media. The information age has presented many challenges to both institutions and one of the major challenges the media face in the information are governments themselves. It is not by accident that 1980s was the decade that media mergers began their explosive growth. During that same decade, many European states and the United States of America initiated policies privatizing the media or increasing the privatization trends already in effect. This move came about for several reasons.

> The swing to political conservatism, and, in particular, the free-market capitalist foundation on which it was based, began to sweep across Europe. Technology, especially the dramatic increase in the use of satellite technology (such as direct broadcast satellite -- or DBS -- systems), reduced the scope of governmental control over the media within their respective national borders. Finally, the movement toward the formation of the European Community (EC) dictated a more complete opening of trade markets.[231]

The 1980s began an era of neo-conservatism and reductions in the role of governments in the media industries. Although some paternalistic systems are still present in countries such as Canada, Spain and France; ironically, the globalization of the mass media has been stimulated by government policy. The ideological shift towards neo-conservatism has opened many opportunities for the media previously restricted by regulation and anti-cartel legislation. Today, media companies have far greater room to maneuver.

The benefits of deregulation policy are received by both the media and governments. As Ferguson (1995) notes, state corporatism is experiencing a revival.[232] As governments, industries and media

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[231] Ibid., 340.

[232] Majorie Ferguson, "Media, Markets, and Identities: Reflections on the Global-Local Dialectic", *Canadian Journal of Communication* 20 (1995), 439-459.

firms join to attain mutual economic benefits the result is what Ferguson calls "neo-corporatism". "Today, the national corporate state fixation on the 'information society' appears unbounded, borne aloft by 'multimedia' and 'infohighway' scenarios and the technological realities of telecommunications, computer, and television convergence."[233] Ferguson continues by arguing that the results of neo-corporatism are either overt or covert corporatism. Overt corporatism occurs when governments involve themselves in the infrastructure-building frenzy now underway. Covert exists in activities such as deregulation.

How does covert corporatism and thus governmental actions affect the globalization of the mass media? The challenge of such governmental behavior is felt by both major and minor players in the global market of media firms. However, the smaller firms face a greater challenge than do the major players. Deregulation rewards media oligopolies while smaller firms have to protect themselves in areas previously protected by law. For example, media barons can own a greater percentage of print media in a particular country; by 1992 Rupert Murdoch owned a third of the entire print media in Great Britain.[234] Small firms not only have to worry about operation costs and keeping apace with technological innovation, they now face deregulation policy which makes them prey for takeovers and buy-outs.

As governments pursue their covert corporatist policies and interests in the information age the result is a somewhat paradoxical, if not hypocritical, environment for media firms to operate. Sustainable competition is a euphemism to promote deregulation policy for both competition and innovation to flourish. However, there is a logical inconsistency because sustainable competition "*is an oxymoron of the first order when market liberalism calls for competition, but functions by its elimination through mergers, alliances, and acquisitions.*"[235]

Deregulation raises issues and concerns not only about competing interests among private companies and nations but about public goods. Public goods are those that have a jointness of supply, for example airwaves and radio frequencies which all members of society can consume

[233] Ibid., 447.
[234] Bagdikian, *Media Monopoly*, 241.
[235] Ferguson, *Media, Markets, and Identities,* 450. Author's italics.

without inhibiting one another. "Who should own the newly created wealth opportunities resulting from deregulation and privatization of what were once public assets?"[236] Not only did the 1980s bring challenges to the media in the form of deregulation policy, they also brought challenges pertaining to the collection and presentation of news and information.

The printing press enabled the evolution of oral to print society. Presently, technical innovations such as computers have led to many changes in both print and broadcast newsrooms.[237] As the information age continues to churn out innovation after innovation, the future of newsgathering and presentation by the mass media is, at best, in a state of flux.

Many technological innovations functioning in the media industries are employed in both the print and broadcast organizations.[238] Computers were introduced into newsrooms in the early 1970s for writing, printing and typesetting.[239] Today, a reporter can type a story on a terminal and then send it to a central computer where editors can download the story for reviewing. Most often, stories appear on a split screen (the reporter's story on one side and the wire service on the other) and "... after approval, the story is sent to a photo typesetting machine that can print it at a rate of 2,500 lines or more per minute on paper strips to be posted up."[240] Computers are also used to check sources. Using databases such as the Freenet or Infomart, journalists can find, collect and analyze a plethora of information. However, these new sources are not used to their full capacity due to time constraints on journalists.

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[236] Richard Parker, *Mixed Signals: The Prospects For Global Television News* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1995), 35.

[237] For a description of newsroom procedures for gathering and presenting information in the information age's formative years see, Edwin R.Black, *Politics and the News* (Toronto: Buttersworth, 1982), 89-116.

[238] The following section is a brief exploration on how technology in the information age is impacting on newsgathering and presentation by the media. Despite the numerous organizational efficiencies innovation has brought to the media industry, an interesting study by Catherine McKercher (1995) has found that reporters at two Canadian newsrooms tend to use computers to perform traditional functions. Catherine McKercher, "Computers and Reporters: Newsroom Practices at Two Canadian Daily Newspapers", *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 20 (1995), 213-229.

[239] Catherine McKercher, "Computers and Reporters: Newsroom Practices at Two Canadian Daily Newspapers", *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 20 (1995), 213-229.

[240] Hiebert et al., *Mass Media VI*, 612,

Two prominent information technologies that have impacted on print media and consumers are videotex and fax newspapers. Both have modified how news is transmitted and presented. "Videotex is the process of transmitting millions of bits of information from a mainframe or 'host' computer for presentation on one's computer screen."[241] Subscribers to this new electronic newspaper receive the stories they want. Typing in keywords, stories relating to the search topic are displayed for the reader. Subscribers read the text of the story on their video screen. Equipment necessary for videotex includes a mainframe computer where the information is stored, transmission lines, usually telephone lines, to send the information to the subscribers computer, and a modem to convert the digital information to analog.

Fax newspapers are the second electronic medium of communication that has changed the format presentation of print media. This new media is usually consumed by private enterprises who desire specific news stories, particularly stockmarket and business transactions. Certain articles are sent to the subscriber at a prearranged time. Relevant articles, taken from that day's news, are transmitted over a fax machine to the client. Costs for this service are more than a newspaper because of the time taken to extrapolate the necessary articles and the technology used to transmit the information. Technological innovations that have facilitated the globalization of media firms have also affected the traditional methods used for disseminating news in the broadcast industry.[242]

Great inroads have been made with the advent of new technologies developed to speed up and improve the quality of news and information. Satellites have greatly enhanced both the quantity and quality of information that media institutions obtain and send. Technologically speaking, the information that a satellite receives and transmits, while it orbits the earth, is virtually error-free. Also, the size of the receiving dishes, also called terrestrial or earthstations, continues to decrease. Therefore, today it is possible to receive transmissions, enough to carry hundreds of channels, on receiving dishes whose size is equivalent to a medicine ball.

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[241] Ibid., 613.

[242] The following discussion examines how innovation has affected the broadcast industry. However, these technologies have also impacted on the print media but more in the collection and organization of information as opposed to its dissemination which is the focus here.

Satellites or relay stations are affecting the mass media in a variety of ways.[243] One impact that satellites have on media organizations is that they allow for the immediate exchange of information between news organizations. Stations now share stories with one another which reduces operating costs and frees up reporters to cover other stories. For example, it is not unusual to see on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) a story on the American government that was produced by the Cable News Network (CNN). Moreover, today it is commonplace in the media to use stories covered by overseas media firms to report on foreign events. International television news agencies play central role enabling firms to use one another's stories.[244] An extension or outgrowth of global wire services, agencies such as Visnews, Worldwide Television News and CBS-Newsfilm provide regional and national stations with news footage from around the world.

Not only do satellites give news agencies advantages in the sharing of information with one another, they also assist journalists in investigative reporting. Pictures and background stories about other countries can now be easily obtained to help reporters make independent observations about a particular event that has occurred, or even occurring, overseas. The recent military events taking place in the Chechnyn Republic in post-Soviet Russia is an example of how satellites help journalists in their investigative reporting. Recently, a group fighting for the independence of Chechnya from Russia took a bus load of Russian citizens hostage. After a certain time had elapsed, official statements from the White House in Moscow claimed that all hostages had been assassinated and that the Russian Army was to launch a full-scale assault on the Chechnyn rebels. Moreover, press releases stated that only terrorist camps were being targeted and fired upon by the Russian military. However, satellites transmitted video footage of the Russian military lambasting the entire city with bombs and artillery and even more damaging to the Russian government was footage showing the hostages were indeed still alive. This example illustrates how satellite technology has helped reporters by not only allowing them to make independent observations but also not having to rely on outside or suppressed sources.

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[243] Hiebert et al., *Mass Media VI,* 616.

[244] Michael Gurevitch, "The Globalization Of Electronic Journalism," in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, eds., *Mass Media and Society* (New York: Edward Arnold, 1994), 178-193.

A third advantage satellites give media institutions is the opportunity to cover a story 'live'. "Producers are no longer limited to in-house visuals, nor do reporters have to race back to the station with film footage to be edited before the broadcast."[245] It is now possible to film an event, send it (uplink) to a satellite that the news station leases and then downlink the footage to the studio to be broadcast into the homes of viewers. This method of 'live-remote' was used extensively during the 1991 Gulf War. Practically at any time, people could turn on their television and find some live report from Baghdad or a location close to the 'action'.

Technological innovation, especially computer technology, is greatly affecting the day-to-day operations of the mass media. No longer is it easy to keep up with these industries. Innovation has caused a blurring of the boundaries separating the different media institutions. For example, print industries now employ fibre optics and transmission lines to send their product to customers who prefer fax newspapers or videotex. The communication processes for gathering and presenting information are having important effects on the daily decision editors and journalists have to make. Ironically, the technology that is opening opportunities for reporters and media organizations is the same technology that is facilitating the concentration of ownership in the globalization of the mass media. Is the result of the concentration of ownership a threat to the free exchange of information? Does the diminishing number of owners of international media firms and, simultaneously, the global reach of information impede the political roles of the media?

Issue of the Concentration of Ownership

Some of the more overt political functions the mass media execute are those of ombudsperson, agenda-setters, regime legitmation and social stabilization.[246] As depicted by the social responsibility theory of the press, the media have been marked to fulfill the daunting task of informing citizens so they may make educated decisions on questions concerning their political, economic and social environment. Does the concentration of ownership, especially at the global level, in the media impede the political roles of the media institutions?

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[245] Ibid.,187.
[246] Black, *Mass Media as the Enemy Within*, 5.

"By the beginning of this century that age of chain ownership and the press barons had arrived, prompting liberal democratic commentators to acknowledge a growing contradiction between the idealized role of the press as a keysource for citizenship and its economic base in private ownership."[247] As the trend in ownership continues, the issues and implications of concentration are more pertinent than ever due to the global nature of this issue. Investigating the concentration of ownership is an area of importance because at the heart of any study of the media organizations "embody the processes through which the *output* of the media comes into being."[248]

There are, as Margaret Gallagher (1982) illustrates, three dominant sets of goals that confront media organizations: (1) economic; (2) organizational and; (3) professional.[249] Economic goals are those issues concerned with audience maximization and profit. Organizational goals are primarily concerned with efficiency whereas professional goals strive towards an accepted doctrine or criteria for employees to execute their duties. "The values the media profess and the values that govern executives and employees may be or may not be the same. It is hard to tell without accepted codes of ethics or genuinely shared values, no one really knows what the rules are."[250] There exists a tension or dialectic between these goals because economic imperatives most often take priority over professional duties of media personnel.

This dialectic between owners, striving for profit, and journalists, trying to execute their duties, has many consequences for the political roles of the media and their accountability to the citizenry. It is argued by proponents of the libertarian theory of the press that competition is the hallmark of the media industry because offering differing points of view allows individuals to discern their opinion. But, as new technology further fragments the audience, media firms have to do more to

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[247] Graham Murdock, "Redrawing the Map of the Communication Industries: Concentration and Ownership in the Era of Privatization", in Majorie Ferguson, ed., *Public Communication: The New Imperatives* (London:SAGE, 1990), 1.
[248] Margaret Gallagher, "Negotiation of Control in Media Organizations and Occupations," in James Curran et al., eds., *Culture, Society and the Media* (New York: Metheun, 1982), 151. Italics original.
[249] Ibid., 166.
[250] Everrete E. Dennis, *Reshaping the Media: Mass Communications in an Information Age* (New York: SAGE, 1989), 48.

attract and retain their audiences. A primary method used to keep audiences fixated to content is to present the content in an entertaining fashion. For decades concern has been demonstrated, in both academic and popular literature, about the relationship between entertainment and news. "Writers have long been abandoning journalistic norms and emphasizing, either consciously, or unconsciously, audience enjoyment in choosing and shaping news narratives."[251] The result of this 'desertion of duties' is storytelling. The political roles of the media are imperiled because of the manner in which "news executives act to cultivate audience belief in the journalistic integrity of their products while pursuing a strategy of linking news and entertainment organizations for the parent firm's profit."[252] Moreover, there is now the requirement, in the sense of economic survival, to make news pertinent to the largest audience thereby attracting the readers and viewers advertisers want to reach. News as the 'profit-centre' of media industries detracts from the firm's political roles because stories that might be of political or economic relevance are replaced by less serious stories, stories that do not inform but nonetheless captivate citizens because of their entertaining storyline.

As previously mentioned, deregulation has facilitated the concentration of ownership of the mass media both domestically and internationally. Concentration of ownership has relaxed informative doctrine standards set out by the social responsibility theory of the press and now advertising agencies "gather data to demonstrate the audience characteristics of a particular medium and its desirability as an advertising vehicle."[253] Thus, the political roles of the media are further impeded by outside agencies (advertisers and their clients) by the profit motive of privately owned news organizations who perform data and audience analysis to find what type of information will attract and maintain an audience. Everete C. Dennis (1989) refers to this as the shift from a law of large numbers (attaining the largest possible audience) to a law of right numbers (effort to reach the more affluent members of society). The result of this shift of priorities is the production of news content that is, rather than educating, commercially viable.

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[251] Joseph Turrow, "A Mass Communications Perspective on Entertainment Industries," in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, eds., *Mass Media and Society* (London: Edward Arnold, 1991), 173.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Everete E. Dennis, *Reshaping the Media*, 60.

The potential reach and power of some of the leading players in the globalization of the mass media is reaching an apex due to two interlinking movements -- concentration and conglomeration. These two actors operating in free-market economies have stifled the opportunity for the normative functions of the social responsibility of the media to be executed. The discussion presented above and the section on infotainment and market forces in the previous chapter have argued that the political roles of the media have been sacrificed for profit.

One fundamental question has yet to be addressed. The question or issue of the accountability of the media has predominantly been taken for granted. The majority of mass communication studies focuses not only on the history of the mass media and its incorporation into a capitalist economic system but also a political history of their increasing centrality to the exercise of full citizenship.[254] However, most studies neglect the rights of media owners and their freedom to attain profit. It is this issue of accountability that will now be addressed.

The Issue of Accountability

"The 'noble lie' of liberalism was that everyone who wished could find his or her version of truth and the good life. In their liberal democracy the press was to act as though everyone was not only capable but likely to make independent judgments about public affairs according to individual appraisals of truth and social worth."[255] This quote raises the extremely pertinent issue concerning the role of the citizen as the final judge of truth. Historically, in affluent liberal states, there has been some degree of independently owned media operations. The need for these private enterprises of disseminators of information rested in the fundamental tenet of the libertarian theory of the press and the 'marketplace of ideas'. The responsibility of the media, within both the libertarian and social responsibility theory of the press lay in the enterprises professionalism and ethical behavior to deliver relevant information to citizens. It is then the responsibility of citizens to make independent judgments and come to their own conclusions on pertinent matters.

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[254] Peter Golding and Graham Murdock, "Culture, Communications, and Political Economy," in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, eds., *Mass Media and Society* (London: Edward Arnold, 1991), 15.
[255] Black, *Mass Media as the Enemy Within*, 3.

The duty of journalists to provide democratically effective news to citizens is correlative to the citizen's right to information. What if the media gather and present information to citizens but this information is not consumed by individuals? What if citizens do not seek information that pertains to the social, political and economic well-being? This is the problem of consumer sovereignty.

Consumer sovereignty refers to an individual's right to consume the information they desire. T.C. Pocklington eloquently summarizes the individual's right to information in relation to democratic theory:

> If voters cannot have a right to comprehensive information, because such a right would be impossible to satisfy, they can at least have the right to seek out the best information available as to the probable consequences of opting for one alternative rather than others. And this right really resolves into two related rights ... (freedom of speech), and the right of access to the opinions of others ... consist(ing) mainly in the right of free assembly.[256]

Thus, the accountability of the majority of the media to the public and the democratic process rests in their duty to provide citizens the *opportunity* to seek information from a variety of perspectives and then deduce their own beliefs on particular issues, matters and stories. Private media enterprises, theoretically, fulfill their responsibility to the commonwealth by providing a plethora of information on diverse topics. Competition facilitates the democratic responsibilities of the media as there exist numerous sources for citizens to get their information. The media cannot coerce citizens into consuming their product, they can only present the information in the context that will attract the greatest audience. Media firms have the right to present information in a context that will draw the greatest number of consumers and thus the greatest profits. The responsibility of consuming the most relevant information lays in the hands of the citizens. Therefore, the responsibility and accountability of the media rests in these firm's abilities to present information that is important to the democratic process. The media cannot make citizens consume this information. How the particular industries present relevant information is up to the executive

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[256] T.C. Pocklington, "Democracy," in *Liberal Democracy in Canada and the United States*, T.C. Pocklington ed.,(Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985), 7-8. Parentheses original.

decision-makers in these firms. If a company is capable of generating the greatest revenue from sensationalizing stories it is their right to operate their organization as they see fit. "In doing so, journalists may aid citizens in exercising their democratic rights and responsibilities by providing the best information possible about alternative proposals for democratic choice, but they needn't do so."[257]

Citizens have the right to information and moreover, a right to information from a variety of sources. It is the responsibility of citizens to consume that information they deem important. What one citizen feels important may not be deemed important by another. For example, an individual may feel that federal government cut-backs to social programs is important to them in particular and society in general, whereas another person may fret over a possible raises in municipal taxes to repair roads. Granted, both examples are important to the democratic process, the point is that what is deemed important depends on the individual. News is relative. "What it is at any one moment depends on the observer's perspective."[258]

It is the right of an enterprise operating in a free market economy to strive to attain the greatest profit possible. How businesses do so is their prerogative. The context in which information is presented in the media depends on the particular medium, its target audience and how to increase the size of its audience. The Latin proverb *Caveat Emptor* (let the buyer beware) is an appropriate warning to those citizens seeking to find the most politically relevant information and the best coverage on such issues.

The rights of citizens to have the opportunity to search out the best information and the rights of private media firms to strive for profit are, simultaneously, conflicting and harmonious. There is, on the surface, no extrinsic problem facing the democratic process with the media disseminating information for profit and subsequently fulfilling their public role as the 'fourth estate'. But a

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[257] Greg Pyrcz, "Democracy and Freedom of the Press," in Don Carmichael et al., eds., *Democracy and Rights in Canada* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 227.
[258] Black, *Mass Media as the Enemy Within*, 5.

problem arises if citizens believe that they already have the best information that they seek on particular topics.

The reality is that the high percentage of citizens, regardless of nationality, do not have time nor choose to pursue all the available sources of information. Most people "cannot read all the newspapers at the end of the work day, and the library is seldom open long enough for them to do so all their civic homework. In this way, as well, a thin reading of the right to information is unsatisfactory."[259] It is essential that media firms be held accountable to their responsibility to the public when acting as the 'watchdog' on government or disseminating other politically relevant information. Journalists, editors and owners must all deliver the highest possible standards of information and news analysis.[260] This responsibility of the media must be carried out because not only do individuals have limited time to consume the daily news and events, most cannot make the distinction between good and bad journalism. To make such a choice requires an individual to "have, as a standard, first-hand knowledge of the event that the journalist seeks to represent. But citizens usually do not have such information upon which to choose their journalism, which is why they are dependent upon and vulnerable to the power of others."[261]

Citizens must have access to a variety of sources to assist them develop their opinions and beliefs on issues that have consequences for the democratic process. They require diverse points of view in order for them to refine their beliefs prior to executing their democratic rights, such as voting.[262] Media firms that market themselves as a trustworthy conveyor of information and protector of democracy yet fail to live up to, or even practice, this title are not assisting neither informed citizenship or democracy. Firms that sensationalize stories, resort to infotainment and succumb to market forces are not only detracting from the democratic process but undermine the entire system.

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[259] Ibid., 229.

[260] The argument raised in this section is not endorsing the view that all media firms execute the role as public 'watchdog'. Rather, it asserts that those enterprises whose content deals with political, economic and social issues fulfill their social responsibilities to the public. For example, the content of tabloids such as the National Enquirer vary considerably than that of Toronto's Globe & Mail. Moreover, the argument does not condone citizens using tabloids as their primary source of information on political, economic and socially relevant issues.

[261] Pyrcz, *Democracy and the Freedom of the Press*, 231.

[262] This, of course, presumes that citizens will use this and other democratic rights.

Stories that focus on political corruption, greed and the like rather than provide a balance with stories such as some good qualities of both politicians and government reinforce the stereotype that all politicians are criminals and that the government misrepresents the public. The inescapable terms of citizen's lives make some dependent on infotainment or soft news rather than on hard news or "thicker sources". Although, citizens are given the opportunity to seek out a variety of sources they might not be able to tell the difference between hard and soft news. It is this information of a sensationalized nature, when used by citizens to make decisions, that is detrimental to the democratic process.

A new source of information that is rapidly gaining popularity as a new disseminator of information is the internet. Hailed as possibly the savior to overcome the lack of time citizens have to seek out information, the internet has been bestowed great potential to overcome biased and sensationalized news.

Internet as a New Form of Mass Media

"We are playing on the shores of the infinite..." wrote Joseph K. Hart about the societal implications of radio.[263] This statement concerning the impact of communication technologies on societies has more validity today than when written more than seven decades ago. The potential and the actual capabilities of the internet as a medium of inter- and intra-personal communication, an instrument of mass communication, a technology of knowledge and entertainment and as an evolution of the mass media is breathtaking.

In chapter two of Understanding Media (1964), Marshal McLuhan introduced the concepts of hot and cold media.[264] Both controversial and confounding, the essence of these precepts is worth a closer examination concerning the realm of the internet as a new form of mass media. According to McLuhan, all mediums of communication contain hot and cool properties. A hot medium is one

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[263] Joseph K. Hart, "Radiating Culture," in *Survey* (March 18, 1922), 949.
[264] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Penguin, 1964).

that extends one single sense in high definition. For example, a photograph is a hot medium because all information is provided to the subject in the form of a photo. Moreover, the photo is full of visual stimuli. It is an 'eyes only' medium. In contrast, a cool medium is one that provides low definition which has to be 'filled-in' by the subject for understanding to occur. The telephone is a cool medium because it provides very little information for the ear. When in a phone conversation the listener is also a participant in the dialogue and their contributions to the conversation allow for understanding. Cool mediums are ones of low definition and require a high degree of participation by the subject for the medium's message to be comprehended. Hot media are, therefore, high in definition and require minimal levels of participation such as television.

It is pertinent to note that these terms are not static. They are not tightly defined terms and should be viewed as relative and not fixed. Consequently, the terms can and do operate in tandem depending on the medium of communication. The internet is a prime example of how a medium can and does contain both hot and cool properties simultaneously. The internet is a hot medium because it predominantly draws on the visual and the auditory senses. Depending which resource the on-line user is using, communication is delivered to the user through images -- understanding is attained through reading. In this instance, the internet is similar to television because the visual field is filled with a low degree of resolution. The internet is also a cool medium in the form of chat-lines users can log-on to. Engaging in these inter- and intra-personal dialogues the medium, as do the users, require a high degree of participation for both information and communication to be conveyed. Further, the internet is both hot and cool because meaning is derived from either a single point of intense focus (eyes) or from multiple points (eyes, ears and the extension of voice in the form of text).

What does the internet offer the mass media? The internet reaches millions of individuals daily. The media industry sees the internet as the ultimate 'cash cow'; by offering subscriptions for providing news on demand. The incentives for media industries to join the internet bandwagon are

three-fold: (1) to stay abreast of innovation; (2) maintain competitiveness and; (3) the internet provides the greatest possible audience because access can be provided to anyone.[265]

The potential of the internet becoming a new 'watchdog' on the government is feasible. The internet and the media firms that own and operate netsites could offer such services as news on demand where a diverse range of stories could be 'demanded' by users who could use the information at their convenience. Many media netsites update their coverage of stories every few hours. More promising is that the internet could provide much more in-depth coverage and reporting on stories. Since the internet does not have any temporal or spatial boundaries to restrict reporting, journalists would be able to provide more rigorous investigative reporting on stories. Arguably, the media, through its vigorous coverage, could better fulfill its democratic responsibilities to the public while capitalizing on its right to make a profit by offering a new product. Providing these services could alleviate some of the criticism the media has received in recent decades regarding it being an instrument of the state or multi-national corporations.[266]

The notion of the internet as a new form of mass media, where individuals are electronically connected to broadcasting and print media by way of netsites, indeed sounds promising. Both technically and theoretically the internet, to increase informed citizenship, is feasible. Being able to review a wealth of information, from a variety of sources, concerning political, economic and social issues, offer political ideas and criticisms through chat and feedback lines, voice concerns on social issues appears to offer a new and invigorated form of informed citizenship. Simultaneously, citizens can request information on demand while media firms can strive to increase revenues. Unfortunately, little consideration has been given to social, economic and temporal barriers associated with the internet as a new mass medium.

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[265] One has to be computer literate to enjoy the services that the internet brings. This prerequisite and others such as income and personal time involving the internet as a new form of mass media are considered later in the thesis.

[266] Literature discussing the mass media in this light is numerous. For example see: Bennett (1988); Gitlin (1980) and; Chomsky and Herman (1988).

Utilizing the blessings the internet bestows, individuals must be computer literate and able to afford the hardware, software and on-line time demanded to employ these services. Most important, individuals must be motivated to participate in these activities. At present, most individuals do not possess the personal time to learn and engage in media netsites and newsgroups. Citizens have mortgages, families and car payments, to list a few expenses, that take priority over "surfing the net".

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the mass media in the information age. Investigating economic, governmental and technological challenges the media are facing in contemporary times the chapter has argued that market forces and the concentration of ownership have indeed imperiled the political roles of the media. However, the dialectic of the right to profit and the responsibility to inform creates a recognized quandary for media firms. Media firms have the right to be commercially lucrative as well as disseminate information in a professional manner. Citizens have the right to information and be given the opportunity to seek it for themselves. Thus, it is every citizen's *responsibility* to search for information concerning their well-being and the democratic process.

The chapter also explored the notion of the internet as a new form of mass media. The internet does offer a promising future to both news organizations and citizens by way of novel newsgathering and presentation techniques. The internet is not only a new financial venture for media firms to journey but it also offers citizens news on demand and the possibility of more in-depth investigative reporting. Moreover, the internet as a new mass media can provide more comprehensive coverage of stories because of relaxed time and spatial constraints. However, the promise, at present, is a broken one. To enjoy the fruits of the internet citizens must be computer literate, afford the necessary hardware and software as well as the required on-line time. Netusers must also use the internet for information purposes rather than entertaining ones. There may be millions of people using the internet on a daily basis and the numbers may be rising but the millions using the internet are far short of the hundreds of millions who are not.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

But where danger is, grows
The saving power also
-- Johann Christian, 1979 --

In terms of media ownership, the world's information is coming from fewer and fewer sources. Where competition has traditionally marked the mass media, co-operation and partnership appear to have become the main operating principles of the world's media industry. The concentration of ownership is by no means peculiar to the mass media. Mergers and acquisitions are accepted economic practice world-wide. As our primary sources of information, however, the mass media are different from other industries. Competition usually guarantees choice. Choice does not always guarantee quality.

Discussion of the democratic role of the media is bound up within a debate about how the media should be organized. At the sake of becoming repetitious, the watchdog role of the media, according to the social responsibility theory of the media, is to take precedence over all other functions of the mass media. However, for competition to flourish and therefore for choice to be available to citizens, the media must be anchored within a free market paradigm. The benefits of doing so are, at minimum, two-fold: (1) provide choice to citizens; (2) ensure the media's independence from government censorship. The watchdog role of the media is important; however, this traditional view "derives from a period when the 'media' were highly politicized and adversarial. Most modern media are given over mainly to entertainment."[267] In addition, the traditional approach defines the watchdog responsibility in terms of being a check on the state. The consequences have been an inadequate fulfillment of the watchdog function in relation to core sectors of finance, including media industries themselves. "By implication, media conglomerates

[267] James Curran, "Mass Media And Democracy: A Reappraisal, " in in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, eds., *Mass Media And Society* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), 85.

are not independent watchdogs serving the public interest but self-seeking, corporate mercenaries using their muscles to promote private interests."[268]

Despite Curran's lamentation and condemnation, his remarks are valid. The media operating within the free market mechanism has led to the rise of the globalization of media firms, compromising their integrity and responsibility. The complex dialectic between right to accrue profit and their responsibility to provide information-rich news to citizens cannot be resolved by simplistic criticism. What is needed is a feasible working model of the media, one that strengthens the media's role as a watchdog while operating within the free market. The model that Curran endorses provides the firmest foundation for the operating principles of the mass media in the information age.

Prior to discussing Curran's model, it is worthwhile to discuss reasons why a new system is necessary. First, the rise of the globalization of media firms has led to a decrease in diversity. As illustrated in chapter three, there has been a continuous reduction of the number of major players capable of competing in the global marketplace. These prevailing trends have undermined the operations of the free market or as Ferguson labels it -- sustainable competition. Consequently, a second reason, an offspring of the first, is that entry into media industries has become restricted to a select few. An aspiring owner can, of course, enter into smaller even marginalized, sectors of the media but these have much less of an audience share. An unfortunate outcome of sustainable competition is the ideological suffocation of competing views. Dominant players in contemporary media are, for the most part, ideologically conservative. That is, they endorse the workings of laissez-faire, allowing themselves to engulf a larger 'piece of the pie'.

A third reason for the adoption of a new working model of the media is audience development in recent decades. No longer are mediums of communication inhibited by distance. Technological innovations, as discussed in chapters three and four, have enabled the mass media to reach millions of citizens. Moreover, audiences are no longer homogeneous in terms of social, political and

[268] Ibid., 86.

cultural composition. The nature of diverse audience preferences leads into the final reason for the re-formulation of the media's democratic role. Because audience tastes are characterized by a collage, media firms adapt to these by disseminating infotainment: conveying generic content to satisfy the diverse tastes of millions. The consequences of infotainment to the democratic process are, as mentioned, unknown. What is known is that the traditional view of the mass media is outdated and if contemporary media wish to be profitable, accountable and representative a new working model of the media's democratic role has never been more pertinent.

Explicit in these reasons is that the media should perform two primary democratic functions: (1) plurality -- presenting information from multiple perspectives and; (2) representation -- media should be organized to allow access for such diverse opinions. Performing these functions does not guarantee informed citizenship but facilitates an atmosphere for citizens to assess and critique those issues that constitute their social experience. Doing so allows for the possibility of an invigorated civil society.

In Curran's model, the democratic roles of the media include organizational appendages that serve to fulfill the obligations inherent within a plural and representative media industry. Curran's model is comprised of four satellite sectors organized around a core sector. The core sector provides a forum for public debate whereby it disseminates information on a grand scale. The fundamental role of the core sector is that, in Curran's words:

> It offers an opportunity for different classes and groups to take part in the *same* public dialogue about the direction for society. It provides scope, therefore, for them to interact with one another and engage in reciprocal discussion. It also provides a single emporium in which individuals can explore where their self-interest lies, and relate this to rival definitions of the common interest. Lastly, it offsets the particularistic features of the rest of the media system by providing a common symbolic environment which reinforces ties of mutuality.[269]

[269] Ibid., 105.

The adjoining satellite sectors are comprised of more narrowly defined roles; targeting specific audiences while promoting a 'multiplicity of voices'. Curran divides the satellites into four distinct sectors: (1) private enterprise sector; (2) social market sector; (3) civic sector and; (4) professional sector. The diversity of these media is designed to feed into and invigorate the core system; it entrenches a system of checks and balances that promotes pluralism; and it strengthens the democratic institutions of civil society.

The private enterprise sector "provides a countervailing and corrective influence to that of other forces -- ranging from the journalism profession to organized interests -- that will shape the rest of the media system."[270] Situating his model within the free market, the private enterprise sector ensures competition and provides for a responsiveness on behalf of commercial media to audience demands. Furthermore, this sector enhances the media's watchdog role by way of its independence from government influence.

The social market sector, theoretically, counters market domination and economies of scale. "Its central role is to incubate new forms of competition, rooted in social forces underrepresented in the market, as a way of extending real media choice."[271] Attached to this sector is the mandate to serve minorities. This mandate can be executed in three ways. Guaranteeing diversity of output through partial subsidization and advertising revenue. "Second, a public funding agency can be established to fund challenges to the media conglomerates from groups with limited resources and a reasonable prospect for success. One sector where such an agency can have a considerable impact is local radio, where entry costs are still relatively low."[272] A final measure taken to assist the social market sector achieve its objectives is to enact tough anti-monopoly legislation.

The third sector's mandate, the civic sector, is dual in nature. It is to represent both citizen and corporate interests. Ensuring this diversity of representation requires the sector to be tiered into three components to best articulate society's views.

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[270] Ibid., 110.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Ibid.

> The top tier consists of media (such as partly controlled general interest newspapers) which are linked to collective organizations but are aimed, in principle, at least, at a general audience with the intention of winning wider support ... The second tier consists of subcultural media (such as magazines for gays and lesbians) which relate to a constituency rather than an organized group. But they can have, nonetheless, an important organizational role ... The third tier consists of organizational media (for example, a national trade union journal or a newsletter of a local parents association) which serve as channels of communication between members of a group.[273]

Contemporary civic sector media do not facilitate such representation. The increase in infotainment severely detracts from the media's political roles. Furthermore, the civic sector, at present, does not provide much access or opportunity for marginalized groups despite their relevance, and more importantly their rights, in society. Stimulating the civic sector to fulfill this dual role of representation may be accomplished in a number of ways. For example, through legislation, it can be made compulsory for civic media to give access to these groups; similar to Canadian content rules for television and radio. The point is that the civic media has to be invigorated in a morally responsible manner; how to do so depends on the social, cultural and ethnic minorities involved as well as the severity of oligopoly in the commercial media.

Finally, the professional media sector is a satellite that "speaks to the public in a different way. It can relate to society not in terms of organized groupings ... but as an aggregation of individuals in a voice and idiom that it can define."[274] Simply put, the professional media sector will revive the 'multiplicity of voices', permitting, indeed encouraging, diverse voices and opinions and expanding the boundaries of our social consciousness. This sector also fulfills the watchdog role of the media. "Public service broadcasting is linked to the state; the market sector is dominated by big business; the civic sector -- or, at least, the most influential part of it -- is controlled by collectively organized interests. There is a need for a professional sector which is a bedrock of independence

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[273] Ibid., 108.
[274] Ibid., 109.

and which can be relied upon to maintain a critical surveillance of all power centres in society, and expose them to the play of public opinion."[275]

To conclude, Curran's model offers a viable alternative for the re-invention of a commercial media system based on plurality. This model is not only desirable but feasible. Despite a relative degree of association to government, market-led pragmatists have little ground for arguing that this model impedes freedom of speech or any other lifeline of a free media system. In contrast, such a system provides the necessary foundation for a representative media industry and political pluralism. It represents, normatively of course, a system of 'give and take' that provides protection for citizens, owners of commercial media and journalists. Establishing a core media sector surrounded by private and public networks strengthens the capabilities of the media, citizens and the free market. Thus, it offers the firmest foundation for the democratic process to build upon in the information age.

However, implicit in Curran's model is the *motivation* for all parties involved to partake in a revamping of the commercial media system. Few would dispute the important democratic functions the media should execute. Few less would dispute their rights to consume politically relevant information. And yet, the majority of citizens are not concerned with the increase in infotainment that dominates commercial media content.

It is evident that there is an explosion occurring on a global level. People throughout the world want more news -- look at the successes of the Cable News Network (CNN) and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) Newsworld. What is striking is that citizens continue to accept infotainment to satisfy their demands. Citizens have the right to demand particular styles and news content, this consumer sovereignty allows citizens to exercise their choice between a number a divergent views. Recalled from chapter four, citizens enjoy a democratic right to have the *opportunity* to seek politically relevant information.

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[275] Ibid., 109 - 110.

At present, the mass of society does not demand the type of information from commercial media that is beneficial to the democratic process. Rather, citizens remain content to consume infotainment. The consequences of such are a dulling of an individual's capacity for critical self-reflection, the continuing trend of globalization by a select few media giants and a serious blow to representative democracy. Until citizens begin to exercise their democratic right of consumer sovereignty in a socially responsible manner, commercial media will continue to supply what is demanded from them -- infotainment. It is ironic that the victors of this dialectic are the citizens, who receive what they ask for. But they do not ask for infotainment for reasons of truth, self-realization or democratic responsibility, but for entertainment. We reap what we sow.

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