

Left Progressive Media Inside the Propaganda Model

By Peter Phillips and Project Censored

Introduction

In *Manufacturing Consent* (1988; and updated in Herman, 1996). Ed Herman and Noam Chomsky claim that because media is firmly imbedded in the market system, it reflects the class values and concerns of its owners and advertisers. According to Herman and Chomsky, the media maintains a corporate class bias through five systemic filters: concentrated private ownership; a strict bottom-line profit orientation; over-reliance on governmental and corporate sources for news; a primary tendency to avoid offending the powerful; and an almost religious worship of the market economy, strongly opposing alternative beliefs. These filters limit what will become news in society and set parameters on acceptable coverage of daily events.

The danger of these filters is that they make subtle and indirect censorship all the more difficult to combat. Owners and managers share class identity with the powerful and are motivated economically to please advertisers and viewers. Social backgrounds influence their conceptions of what is “newsworthy,” and their views and values seem only “common sense.” Journalists and editors are not immune to the influence of owners and managers. Journalists want to see their stories approved for print or broadcast, and editors come to know the limits of their freedom to diverge from the “common sense” worldview of owners and managers. The self-discipline that this structure induces in journalists and editors comes to seem only “common sense” to them as well. Self-discipline becomes self-censorship—independence is restricted, the filtering process hidden, denied, or rationalized away.

Chomsky (1989) points out that the propaganda model is a structural theory that shows how large or significant interests in society influence decision making by simply being powerful in their own right. He does not claim that government or corporate media owners directly and systematically dictate news coverage perspectives to editors and producers.

Numerous media advocacy organizations including Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), Project Censored, and the Center for Media Democracy have maintained an on-going analysis of corporate media biases and continuing structural censorship in the US for at least the past two decades. Books like *Into the Buzzsaw* document overt situational censorship inside corporate media (Borjesson 2002). Continuing research leaves little doubt that the propaganda model still serves us well as a theoretical understanding of why important news stories fail to appear, contain obvious bias, or lack socio-historical context.

In this study researchers at Project Censored explore the degree to which the propaganda model of understanding self-censorship extends throughout the media culture including left-of-center independent media organizations. We examine the deepening propaganda model pressures inside the corporate media and hypothesize the potential for these pressures to impact left progressive media in the US.

Twenty Years of the Propaganda Model and Accelerated Media Concentration in the Context of 9/11

Examining the propaganda model today requires full consideration of the structural influence of media consolidation and the sensitivities of a post-9/11 media culture. Both have strongly influenced how media works in the US today.

Consolidation of media has brought the total news sources for most Americans to less than a handful, and these news groups have an ever-increasing dependency on pre-arranged content. Since the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, a gold rush of media mergers and takeovers has been occurring in the U.S. Over half of all radio stations were sold in the first four years of the Act, and the repeatedly merged AOL-Time-Warner-CNN has become one of the largest media organizations in the world. Less than ten major media corporations now dominate the U.S. news and information systems. Giant companies, such as Clear Channel, own over 1200 radio stations. Ninety-eight percent of all cities have only one daily newspaper and these are increasingly controlled by huge chains. (Bagdikian, 2004)

The 24-hour news shows on MSNBC, Fox and CNN are closely interconnected with various governmental and corporate sources of news. Maintenance of continuous news shows requires a constant feed and an ever-entertaining supply of stimulating events and breaking news bites. Advertisement for mass consumption drives the system and pre-packaged sources of news are vital within this global news process. Ratings demand continued cooperation from multiple-sources for on-going weather reports, war stories, sports scores, business news, and regional headlines. Print, radio and TV news also engage in this constant interchange with news sources.

The preparations for and the following of ongoing wars and terrorism fits well into the kaleidoscope of pre-planned news. Government public relations specialists and media experts from private commercial interests provide on-going news feeds to the national media distributions systems. The result is an emerging macro-symbiotic relationship between news dispensers and news suppliers. Perfect examples of this relationship are the press pools organized by the Pentagon both in the Middle-East and in Washington D.C., which give pre-scheduled reports on the war in Iraq to selected groups of news collectors (journalists) for distribution through their individual media organizations.

Embedded reporters (news collectors) working directly with military units in the field must maintain cooperative working relationships with unit commanders as they feed breaking news back to the U.S. public. Cooperative reporting is vital to continued access to government news sources. Therefore, rows of news story reviewers back at corporate media headquarters rewrite, soften, or spike news stories from the field that threaten the symbiotics of global news management.

Journalists who fail to recognize their role as cooperative news collectors will be disciplined in the field or barred from reporting, as in the recent celebrity cases of Geraldo Rivera and Peter Arnett during the early invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Symbiotic global news distribution is a conscious and deliberate attempt by the powerful to control news and information in society. The Homeland Security Act, Title II Section 201(d)(5) specifically asks the directorate to “develop a comprehensive plan for securing the key resources and critical infrastructure of the United States including... information technology and telecommunications systems (including satellites)... emergency preparedness communications systems.”

Corporate media today is perhaps too vast to enforce complete control over all content 24 hours a day. However, the government's goal is the operationalization of total information control, and the continuing consolidation of media makes this process even easier to achieve.

Newly expanded public relations firms in service to governments and private corporations support and feed the post-9/11 media system. The public relations industry has experienced phenomenal growth since 2001 after several years of steady consolidation. There are three publicly traded mega-corporations, in order of largesse: Omnicom, WPP, and Interpublic Group. Together, these firms employ 163,932 people in over 170 countries. Not only do these monstrous firms control a massive amount of wealth, they possess a network of connections in powerful international institutions with direct connections to governments, multi-national corporations, and global policy-making bodies.

Omnicom maintains an enormous group of subsidiaries, affiliates, and quasi-independent agencies such as BBDO Worldwide, DDB Worldwide, and TBWA Worldwide, GSD&M, Merkley Partners, and Zimmerman Partners along with more than 160 firms through Diversified Agency Services division, including Fleishman-Hillard, Integer, and Rapp Collins.

WPP, a UK-based conglomerate, also touts an impressive list of subsidiaries such as Young and Rubicam, Burson-Marsteller, Ogilvy and Mather Worldwide, and Hill and Knowlton along with numerous other PR, advertising, and crisis management firms.

Before the first Gulf War a propaganda spectacle took place courtesy of Hill & Knowlton. Hill & Knowlton helped create national outrage against Iraq by the recounting of horrifying events supposedly caused by Iraqi soldiers in Kuwait. A young woman named Nayirah claimed in Congressional testimony and before a national audience that she saw "Iraqi soldiers come into the [Kuwait] hospital with guns, and go into the room where 15 babies were in incubators. They took the babies out of the incubators, and left the babies on the cold floor to die." What the public was not told is that Nayirah was the daughter of Sheikh Sand Nasir al-Sabah, Kuwait's ambassador to the US. The public also wasn't told that her performance was coordinated by the White House and choreographed by the public relations firm Hill & Knowlton on behalf of the Kuwait government.

The big PR firms are closely interconnected with corporate media. Four members of the WPP group sit on the Council on Foreign Relations. One Omnicom board member holds a position at Time-Warner, and another holds a lifetime trustee position at PBS.

The public relations company Rendon Group is one of the firms hired for the PR management of America's pre-emptive wars. In the 1980s, the Rendon Group helped form American sentiment regarding the ousting of President Manuel Noriega in Panama. They shaped international support for the first Gulf War, and in the 1990s organized the Iraqi National Congress and handpicked Ahmed Chalabi. The Rendon Group created the images that have shaped support for a permanent war on terror, including the toppling of the statue of Saddam, Private Jessica Lynch's heroic rescue and dramatic tales of weapons of mass destruction.

Public relations contracts during the George W. Bush administration, compared to the Clinton years, increased from millions to billions. In 2000, the last full fiscal year of the Clinton Administration, the federal government spent \$38.6 million on 64 contracts with major public relations agencies. In 2001, the first year of the Bush Administration, the federal government spent \$36.6 million on 67 contracts with major public relations agencies. By 2002, the first fully budgeted year of the Bush Administration, federal spending on PR contracts increased to \$64.7 million on 67 contracts. Upon realization that the Bush administration had indiscriminately paid people to represent the "No Child Left Behind" campaign, Rep. Henry Waxman's requested a GAO investigation into the use of funds for media efforts. The report concluded that from 2003 through half of 2005, the administration spent \$1.6 billion on 343 contracts with public relations

firms, advertising agencies, media organizations, and individual members of the media. The biggest spender was the Department of Defense with \$1.1 billion in contracts.

Certainly media consolidation, 9/11 tensions, and the expanding PR industry are shaping the media in ways that we are only beginning to understand.

Independent Media Responds

Media Democracy activists have been merging as an international movement for media reform and grass roots news. (Hackett 2001) Core to this movement is the understanding that corporate media undermines freedom of information, and that democracy can only be maintained with full governmental and corporate transparency. (McChesney 1999) Several national media reform conferences have occurred in the US since 1997 and independent media outlets on the web have mushroomed worldwide. (www.freepress.net) Indymedia sites now exceed 160, and *Democracy Now!* is broadcasted on over 500 stations. (Phillips, 2003, 2004) (Project Censored 1999, 2003) The success of independent media are significant. However the question becomes to what extent the independent media themselves are imbedded in the propaganda model. Are independent media strong enough to operate outside the dominate filters of corporate media in the US?

Research Questions

Given corporate media's culture of compliance with governmental and corporate PR efforts and the post-9/11 atmosphere of media cooperation with the War on Terror the question for this study is to what extent this transformation impacts liberal independent media. Does the propaganda model extend to the liberal press in areas where news stories are seriously denigrated or ignored by the corporate media? Do these news stories become too sensitive or difficult for liberal independent media to cover? Do labels like "conspiracy theory" deter liberal media from covering the factual aspects of key news stories? Are some news stories so sensitive that coverage is deemed too costly to independent media's credibility?

Researchers at Project Censored have examined these questions by conducting a content analysis of ten well-known liberal media sources on eight key news stories denigrated or ignored by the corporate media. In addition we interviewed thirteen media reform experts at the National Media Reform Conference in Memphis in January 2007, asking them why certain news stories just don't seem to make it into the media.

We have great respect for each of these independent media organizations in this study. We consider them some of the strongest advocates for democratic media reform, governmental transparency and grassroots empowerment in the US today. This is the reason we hope that by doing this research the best can improve for the betterment of all.

THE NEWS STORIES

Corporate Media Distorts Israel-Palestine Death Rates

IfAmericansKnew.org has conducted extensive content analysis of corporate media reporting on the Israel-Palestine conflict. They undertook a statistical analysis of the *New York Times*, NBC, CBS, ABC, and Associated Press in various years from 2001-2004, looking at the number of Israeli and Palestinian deaths reported. They focused on the headlines and lead

paragraph. They found that there is a strong correlation between corporate media coverage of a person's death and that person's nationality. For example, in 2004 there were 141 reports of Israeli deaths in AP headlines and lead paragraphs, while in reality there were only 108 Israeli deaths. The difference comes from reporting a death more than once. During this same period, the AP reported Palestinian deaths at 543, but at the time in reality 821 Palestinians had been killed. The ratio of actual Israeli conflict deaths to Palestinian conflict deaths in 2004 was 1:8. Corporate media tends to reported deaths of Israelis to Palestinians at a 2:1 ratio. For example, AP reported 131% of Israeli deaths, whereas they only reported 66% of Palestinian deaths in 2004.

Source: www.ifamericansknew.org

Physicist Challenges Official 9-11 Story

Research into the events of 9-11 by former Brigham Young University physics professor, Steven E. Jones, concludes that the official explanation for the collapse of the World Trade Center (WTC) buildings is implausible according to laws of physics. In debunking the official explanation of the collapse of the three WTC buildings, Jones cites the complete, rapid and symmetrical collapse of the buildings; the horizontal explosions (squibs) evidenced in films of the collapses; the fact that the antenna dropped first in the North Tower, suggesting the use of explosives in the core columns; and the large pools of molten metal observed in the basement areas of both towers.

Among the reports other findings are:

- No steel-frame building, before or after the WTC buildings, has ever collapsed due to fire. But explosives can effectively sever steel columns.
- WTC 7, which was not hit by hijacked planes, collapsed in 6.6 seconds, just .6 of a second longer than it would take an object dropped from the roof to hit the ground.
- With non-explosive-caused collapse there would typically be a piling up of shattered concrete. But most of the material in the towers was converted to flour-like powder while the buildings were falling.
- Steel supports were “partly evaporated,” but it would require temperatures near 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit to evaporate steel—and neither office materials nor diesel fuel can generate temperatures that hot.
- Molten metal found in the debris of the WTC may have been the result of a high-temperature reaction of a commonly used explosive such as thermite.

Two professors of structural analysis and construction from The Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH) — the Swiss equivalent of Cal Tech or MIT — have recently expressed their support for Jones' conclusions. Dr. Hugo Bachmann stated on September 9, 2006 that, "WTC7 was, with the utmost probability, brought down by controlled demolition done by experts." Dr. Jörg Schneider also interprets the available videos of the building's collapse as indices that WTC7 was brought down by explosives.

Sources: *Deseret Morning News*, November 10, 2005

Title: “Y. Professor Thinks Bombs, Not Planes, Toppled WTC”

Author: Elaine Jarvik

Why Indeed Did the WTC Buildings Collapse?”

Author: Steven E. Jones, http://www.wtc7.net/articles/stevenjones_b7.html

Deseret Morning News, January 26, 2006

Title: "BYU professor's group accuses U.S. officials of lying about 9/11"

Author: Elaine Jarvik

The Cuban 5 and Media Bias in the US

The Cuban 5 are a group of five Cuban men sent by the Cuban government to Miami to infiltrate anti-Castro terrorist groups. Their main objective was to join Cuban exile groups who had been regularly challenging Cuba with violent attacks, airspace intrusions, and broadcasted and aerial dropped propaganda. Over 4,000 violent incidents have occurred against Cuba since the 1959 revolution including bombing, assassinations, and biological warfare. Cuba had informed the U.S. multiple times of these infractions, yet the U.S. did nothing. Cuba felt infiltration were necessary in order to prevent further attacks.

The US Government arrested the Cuban 5 in September of 1998 and charged them with 26 different crimes, including fraud, the use of false names, and not registering as agents from another country, and conspiracy to commit espionage. The five were charged with actual espionage, as not one piece of confidential U.S. information was ever found to have been collected. The five were convicted and languish in US Federal prisons today.

Corporate media coverage of the Cuban 5 since 1998 is brusquely one-sided; Cuba's viewpoint is deemed unworthy of consideration and the context of the events surrounding the trial is poorly reported.

Source: *Superpower Principles*, 2005, Edited by Salim Lamrani
Media Bias and the Cuban Five: By Jeff Huling, Chapter 6

US Operatives Torture Detainees to Death in Afghanistan and Iraq

The American Civil Liberties Union released documents of forty-four autopsies held in Afghanistan and Iraq October 25, 2005. Twenty-one of those deaths were listed as homicides. The documents show that detainees died during and after interrogations by Navy Seals, Military Intelligence, and other government agency (OGA). "These documents present irrefutable evidence that US operatives tortured detainees to death during interrogation," said Amrit Singh, an attorney with the ACLU. "The public has a right to know who authorized the use of torture techniques and why these deaths have been covered up."

Additionally, ACLU reports that in April 2003, Secretary Rumsfeld authorized the use of "environmental manipulation" as an interrogation technique in Guantánamo Bay. In September 2003, Lt. Gen. Sanchez also authorized this technique for use in Iraq. So responsibility for these atrocities goes directly to the highest levels of power.

A press release on these deaths by torture was issued by the ACLU on October 25, 2005 and was immediately picked up by Associated Press and United Press International wire services, making the story available to US corporate media nationwide. A thorough check of Lexus-Nexus and Proquest electronic data bases, using the keywords ACLU and autopsy, showed that fewer than a dozen of the 1,700 daily papers in the US picked up the story.

Sources: American Civil Liberties Website, October 24, 2005

Title: "US Operatives Killed Detainees During Interrogations in Afghanistan and Iraq"

Tom Dispatch.com, March 5, 2006

Title: "Tracing the Trail of Torture: Embedding Torture as Policy from Guantanamo to Iraq" by Dahr Jamail

Widespread Voter Fraud in 2004 Election

The official vote count for the 2004 election showed that George W. Bush won by three million votes. But exit polls projected a victory margin of five to seven million votes for John Kerry. This ten-million-vote discrepancy is much greater than any possibility of error margin. The overall margin of error should statistically have been under one percent. But the official result deviated from the poll projections by more than five percent—a statistical impossibility. The discrepancy between the exit polls and the official count was considerably greater in the critical swing states.

This exit poll data is a strong indicator of a corrupted election. But the case grows stronger if these exit poll discrepancies are interpreted in the context of more than 100,000 officially logged reports of irregularities and possible fraud during Election Day 2004.

Sources: In These Times, 02/15/05, "A Corrupted Election" by Steve Freeman and Josh Mitteldorf

No Paper Trail Left Behind: the theft of the 2004 Election, By Dennis Loo, In *Censored 2006*
Was the 2004 election Stolen? By Steven Freeman and Joel Bleifuss, 2006

National Impeachment Movement Developing in US

Impeachment advocates are widely mobilizing in the U.S. Thousands of letters to the editors of major newspapers have been printed in the past year asking for impeachment. William Dwyer's letter in the Charleston Gazette says, "Congress will never have the courage to start the impeachment process without a groundswell of outrage from the people." City councils, boards of supervisors, and local and state level Democrat central committees have voted for impeachment including the California Democrat Party in April 2007. The city and county of San Francisco, voted Yes on February 28, 2006. The New Mexico State Democrat Party convention rallied on March 18, 2006 for the "impeachment of George Bush and his lawful removal from office." The national Green Party called for impeachment on January 3, 2006

Polls show that a growing majority of Americans favor impeachment. In October of 2005, Public Affairs Research found that 50% of Americans said that President Bush should be impeached if he lied about the war in Iraq. A Zogby International poll from early November 2005 found that 53% of Americans said, "If President Bush did not tell the truth about his reasons for going to war with Iraq, Congress should consider holding him accountable through impeachment."

New avenues of resistance are emerging to challenge the illegal occupants in the White House. On February 17-18 2007 some twenty-five organizations met in New York for an emergency impeachment conference. The result of the weekend planning was the formation of a new coalition of activists to pursue the impeachment of Bush and Cheney through an increase in public pressure, lobbying, media activism, advertising, creative actions and civil disobedience.

Impeachment was the theme at massive marches in major cities on March 17-18, as well as a chain store shopping boycott April 15 (tax day) to April 22 (Earth Day).

Sources: www.worldcantwait.org, www.wearenotbuyingit.org, www.a28.org.

US Government Had Extensive Pre-Warnings of the 9/11 Attack

While news stories about 9/11 pre-warning were covered in the corporate media, there has been no follow-up on the likelihood that the Bush Administration actually knew in advance that the 9/11 attacks were imminent. Afghanistan, Argentina, Britain, Cayman Islands, Egypt, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, Russia, as well as the U.S. intelligence community all warned of imminent terrorist attacks.

9/11 pre-warnings include:

—June of 2001: German intelligence warned the CIA, Britain's intelligence agency, and Israel's Mossad that Middle Eastern terrorists were planning to hijack commercial aircraft and use them as weapons to attack “American and Israeli symbols which stand out.” [[Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 9/11/01](#); [Washington Post, 9/14/01](#); [Fox News, 5/17/02](#)]

—June 28, 2001: George Tenet wrote an intelligence summary to Condoleezza Rice stating, “It is highly likely that a significant al-Qaeda attack is in the near future, within several weeks.” [[Washington Post, 2/17/02](#)]

—June-July 2001: President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and national security aides were given briefs with headlines such as “Bin Laden Threats Are Real” and “Bin Laden Planning High Profile Attacks.” The exact contents of these briefings remain classified but, according to the 9/11 Commission, they consistently predicted attacks that would occur “on a catastrophic level, indicating that they would cause the world to be in turmoil, consisting of possible multiple—but not necessarily simultaneous—attacks.” [[9/11 Commission Report, 4/13/04 \(B\)](#)]

—July 26, 2001: Attorney General Ashcroft stopped flying commercial airlines due to a threat assessment. [[CBS, 7/26/01](#)] The report of this warning was omitted from the 9/11 Commission Report [[Griffin 5/22/05](#)]

—Aug 6, 2001: President Bush received a classified intelligence briefing at his Crawford, Texas ranch, warning that bin Laden might be planning to hijack commercial airliners, entitled “Bin Laden Determined to Strike in the United States”. The entire memo focused on the possibility of terrorist attacks inside the U.S. and specifically mentioned the World Trade Center. [[Newsweek, 5/27/02](#); [New York Times, 5/15/02](#), [Washington Post, 4/11/04](#), [White House, 4/11/04](#), [Intelligence Briefing, 8/6/01](#)]

—August, 2001: Russian President Vladimir Putin warned the U.S. that suicide pilots were training for attacks on US targets. [[Fox News, 5/17/02](#)] The head of Russian intelligence also later stated, “We had clearly warned them” on several occasions, but they “did not pay the necessary attention.” [[Agence France-Presse, 9/16/01](#)]

—September 10, 2001: a group of top Pentagon officials received an urgent warning that prompted them to cancel their flight plans for the following morning. [[Newsweek, 9/17/01](#)] The 9/11 Commission Report omitted this report. [[Griffin, 5/22/05](#)]

Sources: *The Global Dominance Group: A Sociological Case for Impeachment of George W. Bush and Richard Cheney* By Peter Phillips, Bridget Thornton, Lew Brown, and Andrew Sloan, *In Impeach the President*, 2006

9/11 and American Empire, David Ray Griffin and Peter Dale Scott, 2006

NORAD's Failure to Prevent the 9/11 Attacks

North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) failed to prevent the attacks on 9/11 and has given us three contradictory explanations for this failure. The military's first story was that no planes were sent up until after the Pentagon was hit. This would mean that the military leaders had left their fighters on the ground for almost 90 minutes after the FAA had first noticed signs of a possible hijacking. Within a few days, the military had put out a second story, saying that it had sent up fighters to intercept the airliners, but that, because the FAA had been very late in notifying the military about the hijackings, the fighters arrived too late. Even assuming the truth of late notification, the military's fighters still had time to intercept the hijacked airliners before they hit their targets. To try to defend the military against this accusation, *The 9/11 Commission Report* gave a third version, according to which the FAA, after giving the military insufficient warning about the first hijacked airliner, gave absolutely no notification about the other three airliners until after they had crashed.

Source: 9/11, *The American Empire and Common Moral Norms*, By David Ray Griffin, In *9/11 and American Empire*, 2006

Liberal Media Coverage of the Stories

These news stories have been ignored or heavily denigrated by the corporate media in the US. In each case either the stories were covered in an extremely biased fashion, ignored all together, or dismissed as conspiracy theories or worse. Each story has factual content that contributes to its appropriateness as a contemporary news story.

Project Censored's research team has verified the accuracy of the news stories. We do not make judgments on the implications of the stories such as NORAD failures and voter fraud. The news stories stand alone. If correct, there may be actors contributing to the implementations of the events, however interpretations in that regard must remain for further investigation and discovery. Nonetheless, we believe that freedom of information is necessary in a democratic society and that it is inappropriate for media both corporate and independent to ignore stories because of implications that reach beyond the specifics of the events.

The following chart describes the coverage of these news stories by ten liberal media outlets.

Codes for Table 1

Yes: Coverage of the core issues

No: Did not cover the story

Yes-P: Partial coverage of the story but left out key points

Yes-N: Opinion statement against the story or negative coverage

Yes-D; Coverage of the story as a debate between antagonists

TABLE 1: Liberal Media Coverage of Sensitive News Stories

SOURCES	DEATH RATES	9/11 BLDG 7	CUBAN FIVE	US TORTURE	2004 VOTER FRAUD	IMPEACH MOVEMEN	9/11 PRE-WARN	NORAD FAILURE
IN THESE TIMES	NO	YES-N	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
BUZZ FLASH	NO	NO	YES-P	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
THE PROGRESSIVE	YES-P	YES-N	NO	NO	YES-P	YES	YES-N	YES-N
MOTHER JONES	YES	YES-P	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES-P	NO
ALTERNET	NO	YES-N	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES-P	YES-N
THE NATION	NO	YES-P YES-N	YES	NO	YES-P	YES	YES-P YES-N	YES-P YES-N
TRUTH OUT	NO	YES-P	YES	YES	YES	YES-P	YES-P	YES-P
COMMON DREAM	YES-P	YES-P YES-N	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES YES-N	YES YES-N
DEMOCRACY	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES-D	YES-D
Z-NET	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES-P	YES	NO	YES-N

The results of our research show a mixed coverage of the eight news stories by the ten liberal media organizations. Voter Fraud and Impeachment are by far the best-covered issues among the sample stories. This is encouraging in that the corporate media has essentially dismissed any coverage of widespread fraud in the 2004 election as unsubstantiated. While Liberal media widely covered vote fraud issues in Ohio, but full coverage of the depth of election fraud in numerous other states was not highlighted in all articles.

The impeachment movement is still ignored by the corporate media, as evidenced by the lack of coverage of the California Democrat Party resolution for impeachment April 28, 2007. Finding solid coverage from the ten liberal media organization is a positive step to recognizing the importance of liberal media addressing issues outside of the two party system of power.

Puzzling to us is the failure of six of ten liberal media outlets to cover ACLU's torture story, especially since the evidence was so widely available through Associated Press, and completely ignored by the corporate media in the US. The ACLU report provides absolute proof of widespread torture in Afghanistan and Iraq at multiple sites during 2002-2004. We must question if some of the same propaganda model pressures at work within the corporate media are extending to the editorial processes within liberal media as well. Torture is a sensitive story in that it totally contradicts the generally held belief that abuse of human rights is seldom deliberately perpetrated by US troops abroad. The public wants to believe that crimes against humanity only occur in times of extreme pressure and in individual situations in which a few soldiers overstep the boundaries of human decency. Torturing someone to death is not part of the traditional American value system and the learning of such news is upsetting to the sensitivities of most people. By covering such a story a news source is running the risk of being challenged as

unpatriotic and threatening to the values of the United States of America. This risk was surely a consideration for some of the 97% of the corporate media editors/producers who ignored the story completely, and it may well be a factor in why six of ten liberal media groups didn't cover the story as well.

Equally sensitive is the coverage of Israel-Palestine death rates. Eight of ten of the liberal media groups did not cover the massive imbalance of deaths occurring in the recent Intifada. Two liberal media groups did partially cover the story, but corporate media and most of the liberal media provided coverage that relayed messages of equal death rates between Israel and Palestine.

“The Israel Lobby” (Mearsheimer and Walt 2006) examines the historical unwavering US support for Israel. According to Noam Chomsky the “Israel lobby gets its inputs in large part because it happens to line up with powerful sectors of domestic US power.” (1991) Given this overlap it seems that the propaganda model explains editorial decisions inside the corporate media when covering the Israel-Palestine conflict, but it leaves a question regarding why most liberal media ignore this story as well. The Israel lobby includes the ability to influence campaign contributions and donations among the broad Jewish communities in the US. Perhaps a concern of losing Jewish community donations is influencing liberal publication editorial decisions?

The US corporate media has widely denigrated the Cuban Five for years. (See Chapter 6). However, the case of the Cuban Five has only recently been covered by *The Nation* in a special report on Cuba (May 14, 2007) and it is unclear why three major liberal media organizations have not found this story news worthy over the five years the events have been occurring.

The corporate media in the US has widely supported the 9/11 Commission's report and ignored, denigrated or openly challenged the questioning of events around 9/11 as loony conspiracy theories. The three stories related to 9/11 in our sample contain factual information to more than substantiate the legitimate reporting of these stories and conducting of additional investigative research on the events. Yet, we see an almost uniform response inside the liberal media to the difficulties of covering 9/11 news stories. When partial cover occurs as in the case of Building 7 with four liberal outlets, there is counter-balancing negative coverage on the same story from three of them. The *Progressive* takes denial lead by dismissing all three stories as conspiracy theories at their worst. *Democracy Now!* distinguishes itself by covering two of the stories as a debate. The label of conspiracy theory by the corporate media seems to make it particularly difficult for left liberal media to cover 9/11 related news stories. Widespread support for the 9/11 Commission's report within corporate media seems to extend the propaganda model pressures to left liberal media as well.

Media Reform Conference Interviews On Difficult to Cover Stories

Project Censored research staff conducted thirteen interviews at the Media Reform Conference in Memphis in January of 2007. We asked interviewees why our sample stories, voter fraud, impeachment, and 9/11 issues were so difficult to cover.

Robin Anderson, Associate Professor of Communications Media Studies: Fordham University: On 9/11— “Whatever we think about its veracity, we need to have those stories out into the public sphere because the public should be allowed to apply their own judgment...based on the evidence, not based on opinions arguing it's completely implausible.”

Joel Bleifuss, Editor of *In These Times*: On Voter Fraud—“...to question the legitimacy of the 2004 presidential election, or the 2000 presidential election for that matter, is something the mainstream press and even some of the independent press is afraid to do...it is sort of a taboo topic and so people become accepting of the boundaries of permissible thought.”

On-9/11, “we basically think that while there is a lot that can still be said about the knowledge the administration had and the failures of intelligence prior to 9/11, we’ve been fairly skeptical of some of the 9/11 theories that are out there.”

Jeff Chester, Center for Digital Democracy. On 9/11—“The US system of journalism has failed the public countless times. It failed to warn the US public prior to 9/11... (media) consolidation leaves laid off journalist and closed bureaus...”

Sarah Olson, Independent Radio Producer, Oakland, CA, On voter fraud—“It was largely ...the corporate media saying there is nothing. The independent media saying there was massive fraud, unfortunately it has become a us versus them debate.”

On 9/11—“...no one really covers it terribly seriously except the people... who believe it isn’t true. Very often people dismiss the questions around 9/11 in a way that’s probably isn’t helpful. Good journalism always fosters meaningful debates. That is something that hasn’t happened well on any of the subjects you brought up.”

Anna Belle Peevey, *Ashville Global Report*, Ashville, North Carolina, On Impeachment—“the coverage has been very slim, it is probably marketed as a crazy decision by the liberal people of the world and liberal media to throw a monkey wrench in the administration’s plan to win the war on terror and protect America’s freedom. Independent publications...offer a much different stance...and are the voice of the people.”

On-9/11—“the major news media dispels the exact same information that the government did, which was these people came, they attacked us, and we fought back...”

Sunsara Taylor, World Can’t Wait, Reporter for *Revolution Newspaper*, On Voter Fraud—“They said, this is a loony conspiracy theory and ...there was no engaging the substance what was very well documented investigations on voter fraud.”

On-9/11—“I definitely think that there has not been a truthful, unencumbered search exploring the questions. ...the Bush administration would have no hesitancy to do harm to people around the world or people in this country if they felt it was politically expedient.”

What was consistent among the people interviewed in Memphis was a general belief that the corporate media has failed or refused to cover issues around voter fraud, impeachment and 9/11. To varying degrees the independent press has attempted to address some of the issues but some major gaps still exist.

Conclusion

Based on the evidence presented we conclude that media concentration, PR consolidation, and post-9/11 sensitivities have all contributed to the continuation of strong support for the propaganda model theory as a significant way to understand corporate media in

the US. We understand also that this theory may contribute to the news story selection process inside the left liberal media as well. Further investigation of this evidence will likely continue to develop over the next decade of media research.

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