



The Media Part III

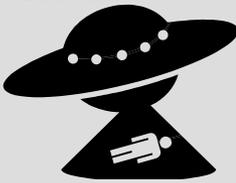
Those who rule have always had an interest in shaping the perceptions of those they wish to rule. But never in the history of humanity has their toolbox been so full. Advances in technology and psychology have enabled the messages of the rulers to permeate our consciousness to a degree no prior society could have imagined.

James Rozoff



The Media's Influence on the Public

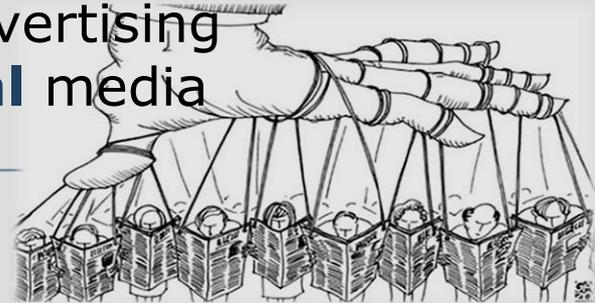
- There have been a number of theories concerning media's influence on the public.
- **hypodermic needle hypothesis**: 1930s idea that media inject their messages straight into a passive audience that is immediately affected by these messages
- **mass panic caused by *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast**: reactions were diverse and largely determined by situational and attitudinal attributes of the listeners, led to research disproving hypodermic needle hypothesis
- **minimal effects theory**: people generally choose what to watch or read based on what they already believe ... assumption that voters have clear positions on issues and know where candidates stand on issues so that political campaigns only marginally persuade and convert voters ... based on early research into voting behavior between the 1940s and the 1960s





The Media's Influence on the Public

- Empirical research since the 1980s has suggested that voters do **have uncertainties** about candidates' positions and these uncertainties do **influence voters' decisions**.
- **class-dominant theory**: media reflect and project the view of the minority elite, who own and control corporations that own media ... a few people then have the ability to manipulate what public sees or hears ... issue of **sponsorship** adds to problem ... advertising dollars fund most media, networks aim programming at the largest possible audience to make it easier to sell air time to advertisers, may shy away from negative stories about corporations that finance large advertising campaigns ... true of **local and national** media





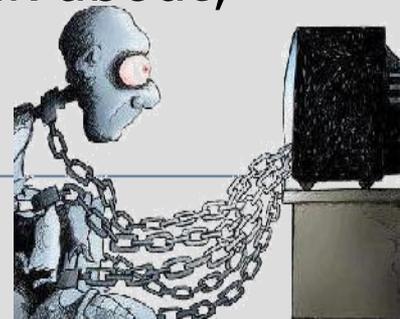
The Media's Influence on the Public

- **culturalist theory**: people interact with media to create their own meanings out of images and messages they receive ... sees audience as playing an active rather than passive role in relation to mass media ... while a few elite may exert significant control over what information media produce and distribute, personal perspective plays a more powerful role in how audience members interpret those messages
- recent use of **big data analytics** to identify user preferences and to send tailor-made messages to individuals, has led to re-interest in hypodermic needle hypothesis ... Today's massive databases allow for the mass customization of messages. So it is not one generic mass media message, but many individualized messages.



The Media's Influence on the Public

- Reporting may not be deliberately spun or intended to sway audience one way or another. Rather, **space or time limitations** in print or broadcasts will often result in **unintended media effects**.
- Reporting can sway people who are **uncommitted** and have no strong opinions.
- Media have a much greater impact on **topics far removed** from the lives and experiences of readers and viewers.
- News organizations can help tell us what to think *about*, even if they cannot determine what we think.
- fuel **cynicism**: adversarial or attack journalism





The Media's Influence on the Public

- Media's power to shape citizen's perceptions can influence a politician's success.
 - **Election Night 2000**: media projection of a Bush victory based on inconclusive Florida returns led to Gore concession even though race was far from decided
 - **experts and consultants**: increasing use of experts, commentators and consultants who are not trained journalists and do not follow journalistic rules ... **the Fox effect**: Fox News used right-wing media consultant John Ellis (a first cousin of George W. Bush who was in touch with the campaign throughout the night) to analyze the race, led the network to prematurely call the election for Bush, that caused other networks to follow suit, that led to confusion about the race and set in motion the dynamic that Bush had already won creating the perception that Gore's attempts to get a recount made him a sore loser ... [Fox News Election Night Coverage](#)





The Media's Influence on the Public

- **group media and narrowcasting**: advent of cable and satellite transmission of news and internet has reduced broadcasting to *narrowcasting*, with smaller audiences and content deliberately designed to attract a specific, narrow demographic audience (*group media* are aimed specifically at small target audiences) ... **permanent fragmentation** of mass market media ... climate in which anyone can find a “news” program that tells him what he wants to hear without listening to anything that contradicts his preconceived notions ... **propaganda** designed by publicists masquerading as newscasters who have learned to divide the nation in order to conquer public opinion ... [So how are we going to govern the country if everyone is operating on different facts?](#)
- If you're interested, look at Thomas Patterson's [Diminishing Returns](#), an excellent and readable look at mass media's election night coverage.



The Media's Influence on the Public

- **media effect:** influence of the media's political coverage on the average citizen's thoughts or actions
- Modern theories of media influence point to four main **media effects that largely shape a citizen's viewpoint:**
 - **filtering:** journalists' and editors' decisions about what information to report
 - **slant:** giving favorable coverage to one candidate or policy without providing a balanced perspective
 - **priming:** the altering of the public's image of a candidate caused by negative or positive coverage of the candidate ... media alter the standards people use to evaluate political figures



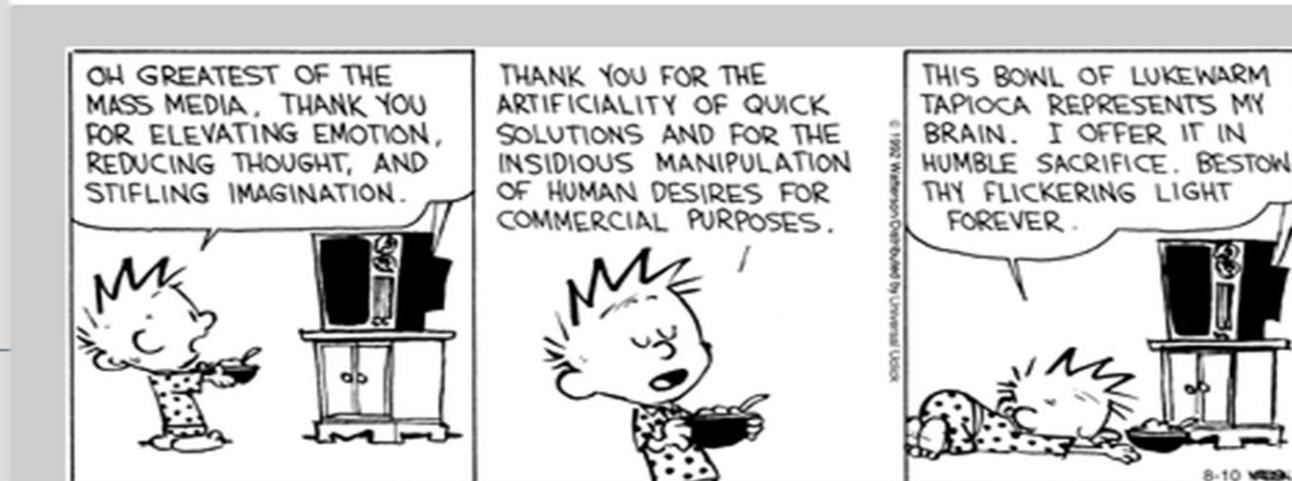
Priming theory - exposure to media messages exerts an immediate and short-term influence on subsequent judgments and behaviors.



The Media's Influence on the Public

- Modern theories of media influence point to four main media effects that largely shape a citizen's viewpoint:
 - **framing**: influence as a result of the way a story is presented, including or excluding details, explanations or context ... power to set the context, to frame the issue, to interpret the facts and potentially to provide legitimacy for people, issues or groups ... Interpretation affects how people think about various issues.

Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson





How Strong Are Media Effects?

- Effects, like agenda setting, framing and priming, depend on both the characteristics of the audience and the nature of the information.
 - Those who are uninterested in and uninformed about politics are most susceptible to agenda setting.
 - Partisans are inclined to think in terms of issues at the core of their party's concerns.
 - media can have impact but it depends on...
 - who is being reached
 - what is being covered
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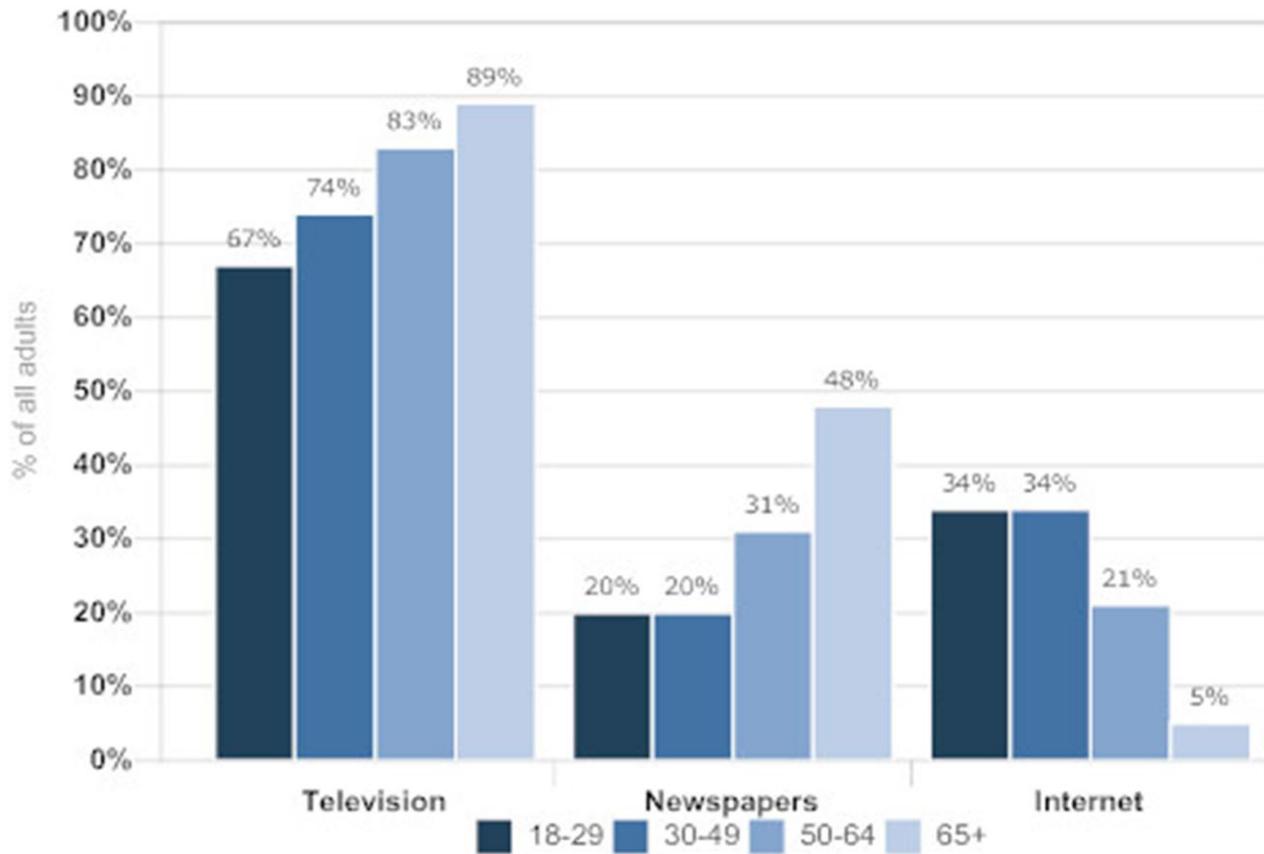
How Strong Are Media Effects?

Audience Profiles: Young and Old News Audiences

■ 18-29 ■ 30-49 ■ 50-64 ■ 65+

	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Colbert Report	43	37	12	6
Daily Show	39	36	16	7
New York Times	32	31	21	12
Wall St. Journal	24	40	19	15
Economist, etc.	23	41	16	17
TOTAL	23	33	26	17
CNN	21	33	28	15
News magazines	20	30	25	24
USA Today	19	43	25	12
Fox News	19	27	29	24
Daytime talk	17	31	28	22
New Yorker, etc.	17	31	25	21
MSNBC	16	25	34	23
News blogs	15	43	26	14
Rush Limbaugh	14	31	24	27
NPR	13	39	30	17
Local TV news	13	31	32	22
Daily newspaper	12	30	30	26
Morning news	12	29	36	21
Rachel Maddow	12	28	32	25
O'Reilly Factor	12	20	24	40
Sunday shows	10	26	38	25
Network evening	9	31	34	25
Hardball	7	32	31	28
Hannity	6	27	24	42

Most important sources of campaign or election news (among all adults, up to two mentions allowed)





How Strong Are Media Effects?

factors that limit media influence on public opinion

- **political socialization**: As children, we see how politics work through our parents, siblings, teachers, etc and develop our sense of politics from what we learn.
 - Only a small number of people follow media closely.
 - **recall and comprehension**: audience remembers news only if it is salient ... most really don't understand what they've heard/read
 - **audience fragmentation**: the diffusion of audiences across multiple media venues
 - **selectivity**: both in terms of the media consumed and the information perceived
-





How Strong Are Media Effects?

factors that limit media influence on public opinion

- **needs**: why people use media
 - **selective exposure**: individuals' tendency to favor information which reinforces their pre-existing views while avoiding contradictory information
 - **selective perception**: process by which individuals perceive what they want to in media messages while ignoring opposing viewpoints ... broad term to identify the behavior all people exhibit to tend to "see things" based on their particular frame of reference
 - Much media content is **shallow and unrelated** to public affairs.
-
- Stations are selective in what they cover.



Public's Perception of the Media

- Terrorist attacks shifted public opinion positively for a period.
- Most still view the national news media as credible.
- value the watchdog role of the news media but relatively critical overall
- **perceive media to be...**
 - politically biased (77%)
 - roadblocks to solving problems
 - inaccurate in their reporting (66%)
 - unwilling to admit mistakes
 - influenced by powerful people and organizations (80%)





Public's Perception of the Media

- many in public accuse media of...
 - increasing tension between the races
 - biased attacks on public officials
 - sleaze and sensationalism
 - increased violence





Public's Perception of the Media

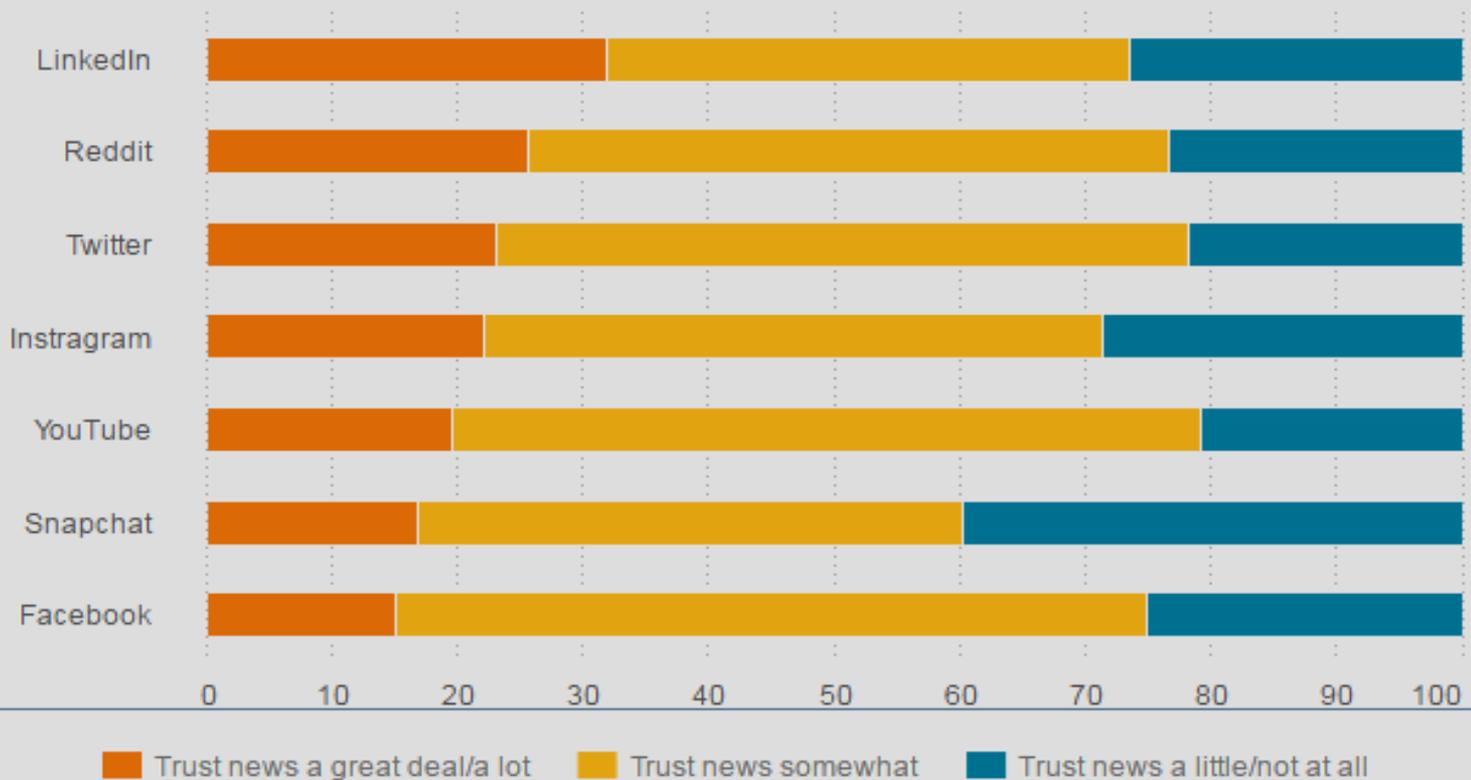
EVALUATION OF THE MEDIA HAVE WORSENERD

New organizations generally . . .	1985	1999	2002	2005
	%	%	%	%
Are moral	54	40	39	
Are immoral	13	38	36	
Care about people they report on	35	21	30	
Don't care	48	67	55	
Are highly professional	72	52	49	
Are not professional	11	32	31	
Protect democracy*	54	45	60	47
Hurt democracy*	23	38	19	33
Stand up for America		41	49	42
Too critical of America		42	35	40
Are politically biased		56	59	60
Are not politically biased		31	26	28
Pretty Independent	37	23	23	21
Often influenced by powerful people and organizations	53	71	70	73
Favor one side in politics*	53	67	67	2
Deal fairly with all sides*	34	27	26	21
Get the facts straight	55	37	35	36
Stories often inaccurate	34	59	56	56
Too much attention to bad news	60	67	67	67
Report stories they should be covering	35	24	25	23
Care about how good a job they do*	79	69	78	
Don't care*	11	22	14	



Public's Perception of the Media

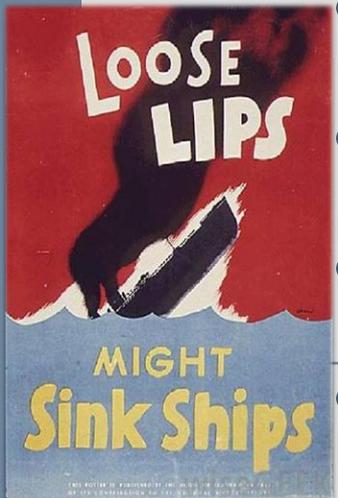
Most people who use social media to get news do not have a lot of trust in the content





US Government Regulation of the Media

- Government has less legal control over media in US than in most other countries.
- In US, only government officials/employees can be prosecuted for divulging classified information ... no such rule for journalists.
- media shield laws: protect reporters from having to reveal their sources, in 31 states and DC
- **print media**
 - 1st Amendment provides protection but not complete freedom.
 - Alien and Sedition Acts (1798): government attempts to censor media
 - **prior restraint** generally not permitted except in rare circumstances
 - wartime controls have been tried with varying degrees of success





US Government Regulation of the Media

electronic media: government licensing of the airwaves ... considered public property, leased by federal government to private broadcasters, limited in supply, without regulation they would interfere with each other

- **Radio Act of 1927:** created Federal Radio Commission (FRC) to regulate radio use in US "as public interest, convenience or necessity requires"
- **Federal Communications Act of 1934:** transferred FRC responsibility, as agency for managing radio spectrum, to **Federal Communications Commission** (FCC) ... change in power was needed to develop a better way of determining who got to use what radio bands and for what purposes





US Government Regulation of the Media

electronic media

- **Telecommunications Act of 1996**: provides for a pro-competitive, de-regulatory national policy framework designed to accelerate rapidly private sector deployment of advanced information technologies and services to all Americans by opening all telecommunications markets to competition ... added and changed some rules to account for the emerging internet
- growing FCC concerns about **media decency**
- **equal time rule**: US radio and television broadcast stations must provide an equivalent opportunity to any opposing political candidates who request it
- **regulation of ownership** to prohibit monopolies, _____ although obviously hasn't been enforced in recent years



US Government Regulation of the Media

electronic media

- **Fairness Doctrine** (1949): FCC policy that required holders of radio and TV licenses to insure that different viewpoints were presented about controversial issues or persons (repealed in 1987 with advent of cable TV and Reagan administration's antiregulatory campaign)
- **public service broadcasting**: radio, television and other electronic media outlets whose primary mission is public service

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING





US Government Regulation of the Media

internet

- lots of debate, little governmental regulation
- 1st Amendment protections extend to the internet and as a result very little government mandated technical filtering occurs in the US
- **Reporters Without Borders (RWB) list of *Enemies of the Internet***: US added to list because US “has undermined confidence in the internet and its own standards of security” and “US surveillance practices and decryption activities are a direct threat to investigative journalists, especially those who work with sensitive sources for whom confidentiality is paramount and who are already under pressure” (aimed at practices put in place by Bush administration following 9/11)



US Government Regulation of the Media

internet

- With the exception of child pornography, **content restrictions tend to rely more on the removal of content than blocking**. Most often these controls rely on the involvement of private parties, backed by state encouragement or the threat of legal action.
 - **intellectual property**: system to remove infringing materials ... US practices forceful seizures of domains and computers, at times without notification
 - **Trading with the Enemy Act**: blacklist published by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) ... list accused of being inaccurate, tactics accused of being heavy-handed
-



US Government Regulation of the Media

internet

- government has attempted to shut down some sites but has so far been barred by the courts ... has instead banned government employees from accessing those sites
- **net neutrality** (2015): bars service providers from creating paid "fast lanes" on the Internet ... put the internet in the same regulatory camp as the telephone by classifying it like a public utility, meaning providers like Comcast or Verizon would have to act in the "public interest" when providing a mobile connection to a home or phone ... defers a decision on applying a service fee to internet bills, much like that applied to phone bills .
leaves open question of price controls





Efforts to Regulate Media Practices Around the World

- **dictatorships**: media serve as carefully controlled outlet for “approved” messages from those in charge to those being governed without consent
- **constitutional monarchies**: media cooperate with a monarch in a mutually beneficial relationship.
- **Great Britain**: Nation’s main electronic medium, the BBC, is owned by the country.
 - Subjected to unusually strict regulation on the publication of governmental secrets.
 - Official Secrets Act of 1911: makes it a criminal offense to publish any facts, material or news collected in that person’s capacity as a public minister or civil servant





Are the Media Biased?

- Modern journalists present themselves as objective. Most professional journalists strive to be fair and unbiased in their reporting.
- They are supposed to report events and conflicts accurately so that voters can make informed judgments.
- Yet many observers believe that the media do skew the news.
 - **ideological bias**: bias toward or against an individual, race, religion, social class, political party, ideology ... **spin**
 - **selection bias**: bias in the selection of events and stories that are reported and how they are covered.
 - **professional/corporate bias**



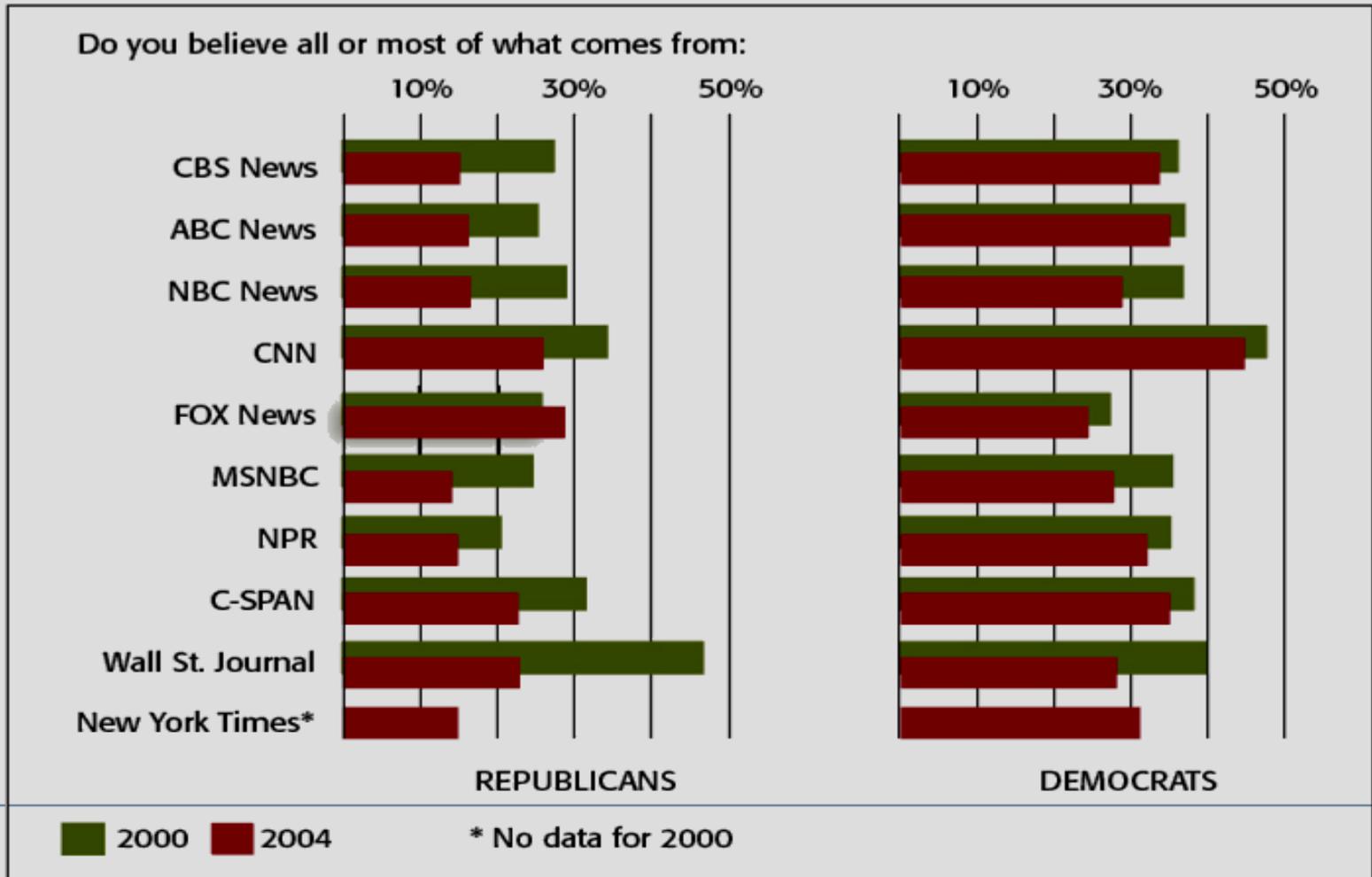


Are the Media Biased?

- 1980s-1990s argument that media were liberally biased because of the sheer number of journalists who leaned to the left. Another argument focused on corporate interests and their influence on what is covered.
- Observers disagree about whether the media are biased in a liberal or a conservative direction.
 - **liberal reporters** ... Reporters are generally more liberal than the average American.
 - **not-so-liberal owners and corporations** ... Media are owned by corporations, who typically are more conservative than the average American.
- Generally not very biased toward a particular ideology ... biased toward **what will draw the largest audience** (good pictures and negative reporting)
- **Ideological fragmentation** is viewed as a negative trend by those who believe that the mass media are essential to providing the facts to educate the public about policies.



Are the Media Biased?





Are the Media Biased?

- **What constitutes bias?**
 - reporters dependence on official sources
 - marketplace
 - profit motive
 - Recent media bias may be intentional and a **response to increasing fragmentation and competition** among media.
 - Mainstream media **losing market share** while online, ethnic and alternative media are growing.
 - market position
 - CNN: 50% of Democrats, 16% of Republicans
 - Fox News: 40% of Republicans, 22% of Democrats
 - Media bias may be...
 - reflection of **how news organizations work** as a business
-
- choices (impact, conflict, novelty, familiarity) about stories to cover in order to **attract and hold viewers**





Do Americans Trust the Mass Media?

In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media -- such as newspapers, TV and radio -- when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?

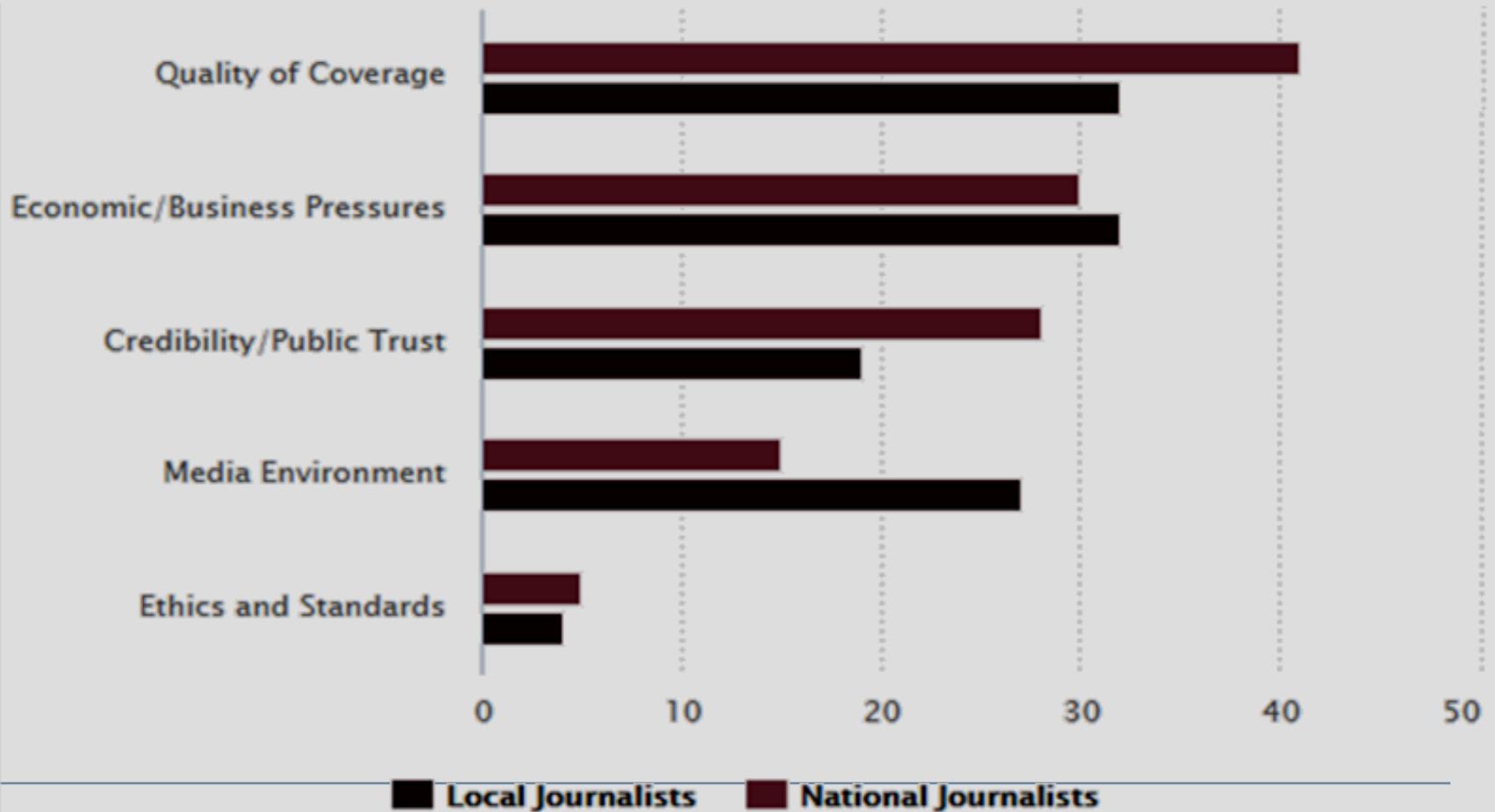
■ % Great deal/Fair amount



Gallup trend since 1997



Top 5 Problems Facing Contemporary Media

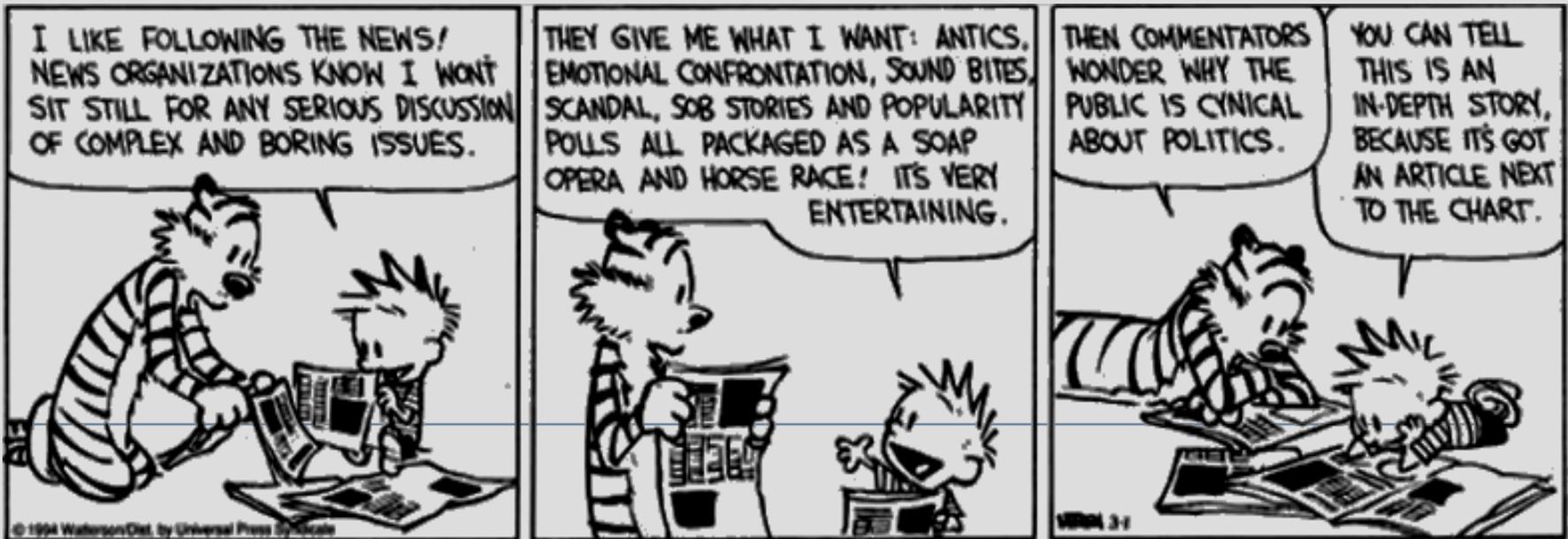




Prospects for Change

News media are private, profit-making enterprises. As such, they respond to public demands.

However, they are likely to change only if the public demands such change.





My Favorite Journalism/Media Quotes

More than illness or death, the American journalist fears standing alone against the whim of his owners or the prejudices of his audience.

Lewis Lapham

Journalism consists largely in saying Lord James is dead to people who never knew Lord James was alive.

GK Chesterton

Journalism can never be silent: that is its greatest virtue and its greatest fault. It must speak, and speak immediately, while the echoes of wonder, the claims of triumph and the signs of horror are still in the air.

Henry Anatole Grunwald

There can be no higher law in journalism than to tell the truth and to shame the devil.

Walter Lippmann

Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.

Thomas Jefferson



DON'T LET
OTHERS
INFLUENCE YOUR
THOUGHTS

The End