

# **7. Mass Media**

# 1. Introduction

- Political Power of TV

- : National people + global people

- : CNN broadcast in 200 countries including North Korea

- : CBS Evening News + ABC Nightline + NBC Nightly News

- ex) Media affected **US foreign policy**

- TV pictures of children starving + killing

- > Bush sent soldiers to **Somalia** (1991).

- ex) Horror pictures of **Vietnam War**

- > Contributed to antiwar sentiment + pressures for withdrawal

## **Q. How Gov responded to media reports during war?**

- : During Persian Gulf War, Pentagon restricted news coverage + suspended regular press briefings.
- : Public would have been told less and later.

## **Q. Does open press coverage of foreign conflict unduly hamper military conduct of war?**

- : Freedom of press important to democratic gov.
- : But news media also complicate governing process.

## **2. People & Gov & Communication**

### **o Communication**

- : Process of transmitting info from one individual/group to another

- **Mass communication**

: Process by which info transmitted to large + dispersed audiences

- **Mass media**

: Means for communicating to large + dispersed audiences

ex) print media + broadcast media

- 1) **Print media**

- Communicate info through publication of words + pictures

ex) daily newspapers + popular magazines (not books)

- 2) **Broadcast media**

: Communicate info electronically through sounds + images

ex) radio + TV (not telephones + computer? )

### **3) Functions of mass media**

- a) Reporting news
- b) Interpreting news
- c) Influencing citizen's opinion
- d) Setting agenda for gov action
- e) Socializing citizens about politics

### **4) Means of communication between citizens + gov**

- a) Mass media
- b) Schools
- c) Campaigning in election/Voting/Political parties/Interest groups

## 3. Development of Mass Media

### 1) Newspapers

#### a) 37 newspapers (1775)

: Promoting revolution against Britain

ex) "Gazette of the US" (Federalists)

ex) "National Gazette" (Anti-Federalists)

: 1,000 copies + expensive

: political organs financed by political parties

#### b) Independent newspapers

: 1830s

ex) "New York Sun" + "New York Herald"

### **c) Telegraph** developed (1837)

: Simultaneous publication across country

: 971 daily newspapers + 8,633 weekly papers (1880)

### **d) Yellow journalism**

: Later 1800s

: **Sensational reporting** with photographs + comic strips + sports sections + advice to the lovelorn + stories of sex + crime

### **e) Less competition among papers**

: 1960s

: New York (3 papers)

: Reading papers dropped (30%).

: “Wall Street Journal” (2 M copies)

: “New York Times” (best newspaper, 1 M copies)

## f) Advertisements

- : 60 M copies of newspapers circulate daily.
- : 60% of content is advertising.

## 2) Magazines

a) Cover news in a specialized manner than papers

: Forums for opinion, not strictly for news

: Small circulations + selective readerships

ex) “Nation” + “McClure's” + “Harper's” (mid-1800s)

: Arguments against slavery + stories about political corruption + business exploitation

## b) Muckrakers

: Reporters writing **investigative** stories about gov + business

: Lengthy critiques of existing political + economic order



### 3) Radio

ex) KDKA (Began in 1920 in Pittsburgh)

NBC network (1926)

- Millions heard Roosevelt's fireside chat (1933).

### 4) TV

- TV shows people + events.

- TV determines news that TV chooses to cover.

- TV news personalities became greater celebrities.

ex) Walter Cronkite (CBS Evening News)

- 23 TV stations (1940)

- 1,300 TV stations (1990)





**FDR shortly after giving one of his famous  
fireside chats**

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fireside\\_chats](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fireside_chats))



**Walter Leland Cronkite, Jr.**  
(November 4, 1916- July 17, 2009; aged 92)  
([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter\\_Cronkite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Cronkite))

- First color TV (1951)
- Most Americans have TV sets (9% in 1950 → 87% in 1960)
- Americans watch TV for 4 hours per day
  - : 90 min for news or documents
  - : 150 min for entertainment, movies or sports

## 5) Two-step flow of communication

### a) 1<sup>st</sup> step

- : Media influence group leaders (policy/opinion elites)
- ex) union or industry leaders

### b) 2<sup>nd</sup> step

- : Leaders of these groups influence mass opinion indirectly.

## 4. Private Ownership of Media

### 1) Private ownership of media acceptable

- : Offers more stable + continuing forum for gov criticism.
- : Currently public radio + TV stations compete with private stations.
- : public TV (300 TV stations + 300 radio stations)
- : private TV (1,100 TV stations + 4,700 radio stations)

### 2) Gov ownership not acceptable in US

- : One-way communication from gov to citizens
  - : Cannot represent public opinion
- ex) China, North Korea, former Soviet Union

### 3) Consequences of Private Ownership

- More political freedom
- : Even a president can be kicked out of his office.
- : Dependent on advertising revenues to cover costs + make profits

### 4) Concentration of Private Ownership

- Media owners can make money by increasing their audiences or by acquiring additional publications or stations.

### 5) Cross Ownership

- : The same corporation owns a TV station + a radio station + newspaper in the same area.

ex) **Gannett Company** operates 23 TV stations + 9 FM + 7 AM stations + 90 daily newspapers + 1,000 weekly newspapers

## 6) Newsworthiness

- Story's political significance + educational value + broad social importance
- Newsworthiness decided by audience appeal + sensationalist aspect + its timeliness

# 5. Gov Regulation of Media

## 1) Technical + Ownership Regulations

- In early days of radio, stations operated on similar frequencies in same area
- : Signals often jammed each other --> broadcast not clear
- Congress passed **Federal Radio Act** (1912).
- : Public owns airwaves + private broadcasters can use airwaves only by obtaining license from Federal Radio Commission.

- Congress later passed **Federal Communications Act** (1934).
- > Created Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

- o **FCC**

- : 7 members
- : Regulates interstate + international communication by radio + TV + telephone + cable + satellite
- : Rules that ownership limit to 12 of each type of broadcast media.
- : One source of pressure is technological.
- : Growth of cable television has lessened need to parcel frequencies for TV broadcasters.
- : Traditional media companies increasing cross ownership by acquiring cable stations.
- ex) Merger of “Time” & “Warner Communications”(1991)
  - magazines + books + film + HBO + Cinemax+ Warner Cable



## **2) Regulation of Content**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment to Constitution

- : Freedom of Press

- : Press has freedom to publish + broadcast info + events + opinions that it finds newsworthy.

## **3) Exception**

### **a) Military**

- : Strategic info during wartime (TV + radio + newspaper)

- : Sailing schedules of troop ships or movements of troops in battle

### **b) Equal Opportunities Rule (TV + radio)**

- : Broadcast station providing time to a candidate should make equal amount of time under same conditions available to all other candidates

## 6. Reporting & Following News

### 1) Covering National Politics

- Firsthand reports from journalists on the scene
- : Washington has biggest press corps in the world.
- : 6,000 reporters (2,500 from newspapers, 2,400 from radio/TV & 1,025 from magazines,)
- : 75 reporters in White House press room
- : President's relationship through Office of Press Secretary
- : Daily briefing at 11:30 AM
- : **News release** from offices



**Jay Carney**

Incumbent (29<sup>th</sup>) Press Secretary of White House  
(since February 11, 2011)

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White\\_House\\_Press\\_Secretary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_House_Press_Secretary))

## 2) Presenting news

### - Gatekeeper

- : Media executive + news editors + prominent reporters function as gatekeepers.
- : Deciding which events to report + how to handle element in stories.

### - Time limitation

- : severe constraints on TV news.
- : 20 min to news + 10 min commercials for each 30 min news program
- : Average story lasts about **1 min.**
- : Editors carefully choose lead story + group stories.
- : 7.30 min for president & departments
- : 1 min for Congress
- : 1/2 min for the Court

## - **Horse race journalism**

- : Media covers mostly on who is ahead in polls + who is raising most money during election periods.
- : Media gives less attention to issues in election coverage

## - **Media event**

- : Situation that is too newsworthy to ignore
- ex) organized protests + violent conflict + demonstration, candidates' visiting elementary schools etc

# 7. Where Public Gets Its News

## 1) **Facts about Media**

- a) 2/3 of public get main news from TV
- 1/2 “ from newspapers.

b) TV as most common news source

Newspapers as source of specific news stories

c) People likely to trust major national newspapers + magazines than local TV.

: People likely to trust news anchors than TV networks.

## **8. What People Remember and Know?**

**1) How much political info do people absorb?**

: Not much

ex) Q. Which party controlled House of Representatives in 2010?

: Fewer than 50% correctively identified Republicans.

2) Those **more attentive to news** answer more **political knowledge.**

: People knowing more on politics tend to choose **print media.**

3) TV to blame for **low level of people's knowledge** about public affairs.

: TV shows public policy issues only for **1-2 min.**

: Viewers **feel better at visually** identifying candidates than at explaining positions on issues.