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The Dominant Ideology in the Press: Run-of-the-Paper Background Assumptions in 14 Ohio Newspapers

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ABSTRACT (110 words)

The study examines the explanatory power of ideology in accounting for what stories are run in different newspapers and how stories are played. Hegemonic stories are not played more prominently within a given newspaper edition. And yet, based on discriminant analysis of stories from 14 Ohio newspapers, ideological themes account for substantial differences in the run-of-the-paper content among newspapers. The study operationalizes the concept of the dominant ideology as taken-for-granted background assumptions. Despite the limits of the sample, it offers quantitative evidence of the importance of ideology in determining what becomes news and in distinguishing the news content of different papers.

KEYWORDS

news, news content, newspapers, ideology, dominant ideology, hegemony

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American newspapers regularly run stories about crime, scandal and the misdeeds of the rich and powerful. Business and government scandals are investigated. Yet much press criticism focuses on the extent to which the news reflects a pro-business, rah-rah American, status quo orientation.

Most empirical studies of news content seem to assume the "standard model" of the press that supposedly plays an independent and adversarial role in a pluralistic society of interest groups that, in turn, compete for power and influence on a free and roughly equal basis (Dahl 1961; Carroll 1985; Doll & Bradley 1974; Sasser & Russell 1972; Schudson 1978; Smith & Becker 1989). Meanwhile, a substantial body of critical theory argues that the press is inherently ideological, supporting an enduring concentration of wealth and power in any society (Glasgow 1973, 1980; Hackett 1984; Hall & Curti 1976; Hallin 1986; Herman & Chomsky 1988). In support of the critical paradigm, this article quantitatively evaluates the extent to which American mainstream ideology accounts for news content in 14 newspapers in Ohio, a medium-sized state in the industrialized "heartland." Ideological dimensions are identified and defined. Standard empirical procedures are used to examine one of the most central theses in critical theory. Can the existence of a "dominant ideology" be shown to exist in its effects on news coverage? To be more specific, can ideology account for news play among newspapers and among different groups of newspapers?

CRITICAL PARADIGM OF THE PRESS

J. Herbert Altschull (1984, 298) argues that the news media are agents of those who exercise political and economic power in all societies. He says news content always

reflects the interests of those who finance the press. Specifically, in industrialized market economies, advertisers subsidize the largest share of the cost in most news media.

Newspapers, magazines, radio news shows, broadcast and cable TV news programs, and online news sites are advertising vehicles to sell products. According to Altschull, although the press has the potential to exercise independent power (and occasionally takes an adversarial and reformist stance toward individual official, corporate or governmental corruption and incompetence), the press generally reinforces the capitalist ideology in Western industrialized countries. In his terms, centrally planned countries (in the former Soviet bloc) and developing countries generate still other dominant ideologies.

Despite national and regional differences, he says, the ideological content of each news system reflects the interests of those who finance the press. Altschull's argument rests on the concept of ideology. Ideology provides the frames, limits and contents of the news.

Ideology is an elusive concept. Gramsci (1971) and Schutz (1962-73) agree that in all societies there exists an underlying and pervasive ideology. Gramsci focuses on the enduring "hegemonic" effects of a dominant ideology while Schutz deals with a congruent concept, the common-sense worldview of everyday life. Gramsci recognizes that the active assent of subordinated classes is central to the support of the ruling order. In the phenomenological tradition that informs Schutz, cognitive sociologists (Cicourel 1974; Pollner 1987) speak of competent members of a society presuming, apperceiving, sharing and using socially-available categories of language to perform common-sense tasks. Arriving at a similar point, Bluhm (1974, 10) distinguishes between latent and forensic ideologies. A forensic ideology is a more or less rationally consistent, articulate and proselytizing set of ideas in periods of social change. Latent ideologies (which is the

construct being used here) are implicit in spoken language and behavior during more settled times. The terminological point is crucial. A latent ideology refers to taken-for-granted meanings, presumed relevances and shared expectations of a culture about what is and should be. In this analytic sense, the taken-for-granted view of reality is the mainstream ideology.

Meanwhile, the forensic sense of the term ideology is more common and has negative connotations. In this usage, ideology is often considered deceptive and extreme. A political ideology is forensic or polemical to the extent that opinions and beliefs arise and are advocated in contrast to other ideas and arrangements. The overarching political ideology in the United States is institutionalized in terms of a liberal-conservative dichotomy, as political commitments and partisan biases (Kerlinger 1984; Lowry 1974; Russo 1971). Political ideology usually refers to support for (or opposition to) public policies, government programs, elected officials, candidates, social movements and political parties that are usually differentiated in terms of their liberal or conservative orientations. Of the two uses, "ideology" is used henceforth to refer to everyday common sense, mainstream assumptions and background expectations that can conveniently be described in terms of an inventory of taken-for-granted.

The term ideology is also used here in preference to the rationalist and positivistic notion of a "system of beliefs" (which are studied as "opinions" by behaviorists or "attitudes" by social psychologists)(Converse 1964; Kerlinger 1980; Schiff 1994). Phenomenologically, all social categories typify or "frame" features of reality that are bracketed in inherently evaluative terms, and those evaluative connotations are routinely unrecognized by those who use the social categories. The "essentialist" point is that

human beings almost always "apperceive" reality. That is, in order to observe or even to be consciously aware of any aspect of reality, humans use language categories that they have learned from and share with members of a specific social group. Garfinkel (1967, 4-7) describes these social categories as ambiguous indexical expressions, symbols or gestures.¹

An ideology is usually said to embody the worldview and to represent the interests of a class or ethnic group (Weber 1935). Gramsci realizes that an ideology, which represents upper class interests, is "dominant" to the extent that subordinate classes and ethnic groups consent to politics and identify with modes of organization² that dominate them. Gitlin (1980, 253) extracts a definition of "hegemony" from Gramsci (1971) as "a ruling class's (or alliance's) domination of subordinate classes and groups through the elaboration and penetration of ideology (ideas and assumptions) into their common sense and everyday practice." For Gramsci, the active reproduction of a capitalist ideology is crucial to maintaining cohesion and subordination in modern industrial society.³

In the United States, the dominant interests underlying the mainstream ideology are identified with white Anglo-Saxon Protestant males who own or control the largest industrial, commercial and financial firms, mostly headquartered in bicoastal cities. This "upper class" can be defined empirically in the United States as the top 0.5 percent of wealthy individuals and their immediate families, who own approximately one-third to two-thirds of the country, depending upon what is counted as wealth (Kloby 1987; Phillips 2002).⁴ Wealth and power are based on class position as shareholders and senior managers in the largest U.S.-headquartered corporations, i.e., in the *Fortune* 500

industrial and 500 financial corporations. Moreover, Domhoff (1979, 2002), Mills (1956) and Schwartz (1987), all argue that the economic elite dominates other elites. Those business executives who own and manage the biggest corporations dominate elites from government, the military, media and non-profit organizations.⁵ In the "free market" of ideas and influence, political and media elites are routinely dependent upon, co-opted by, or participants in, big business. In the conflict among special interest groups, the press uses mainstream political elites as sources to frame social and governmental policy alternatives and to set the public agenda. Furthermore, news media organizations have become integrated into leading corporations (Bagdikian 2000; Dreier 1982). Publishers of daily newspapers are usually among the elite of each community or city and often members of the local upper class. Those who own and manage newspapers are, in the long term, more able to shape news policy and to have their views enter into the news than subordinate news personnel. Thus, the mainstream ideology is based on the class-interested characterization of social reality but is daily reproduced as common sense assumptions in news stories about social events that are outside the field of direct experience of ordinary members of the public.

In terms of power and in a temporal sense, those who own and manage papers hire and fire editors who, in turn, assess stories in terms of content characteristics that determine, in turn, whether and where stories are used and how long they are. The news and editorial staffs in news organizations presumably exist prior to the stories being assigned, written or edited. To the extent that a local culture exists in each newsroom and that newsrooms socialize and sanction individual journalists, news organizations tend to produce and select stories with specific content characteristics,⁶ including ideological

characteristics.

In the United States, Hartz (1955) explains the monolithic nature of what he calls the American "liberal tradition" as a mainstream ideology that was the expression of the bourgeoisie (that is, traders and export-crop planters) in the New World, where their unchallenged political and cultural dominance developed in the absence of an aristocratic or noble class (at least since 1783). By "liberal," Hartz is referring to classic liberal philosophy, which encompasses a range of mainstream perspectives common to both major U.S. political parties. Because the meaning of the term has changed, many contemporary Americans and academics do not understand the liberal origins and common elements of the current two-party polarization. Hartz traces the philosophical unity of this ideological tradition from John Locke (and, he might have added, from Adam Smith) through its institutionalization in successive political party doctrines. He follows American ideological development through the 19th century Whigs and the "democratic capitalism" of Reconstruction Republicans to New Deal Democrats. In his usage, the liberal tradition covers a range of views -- from 19th century market darwinism to welfare liberalism. The American worldview Hartz describes has evolved into support for corporate capitalism and middle-class consumer culture.⁷ The cultural result, called here the "mainstream ideology," is the consolidation of a shared, class-interested definition of the American way of life.⁸

Repeatedly, media case studies have documented the creation, manufacture, invention or mediation of a reality portrayed in the news (Altheide 1976; Epstein 1974; Fishman 1980; Nimmo & Combs 1983; Tuchman 1978). Often organizational routines and institutional biases are the sources of news content, whereas the ideological element

in the news product is less recognized (Jensen 1987). Those who have attempted to show the systematic existence of a mainstream ideology in the news (Carragee 1991; Herman & Chomsky 1988; Parenti 1986) are sometimes discounted, allegedly for using illustrative evidence or qualitative methods. Indeed, the concept and manifestation of a mainstream ideology eludes most journalists, editors, news consumers and media researchers, perhaps because there is no legitimate class-based alternative ideology in the United States. Thus, a substantial body of theory suggests the importance of ideology in perpetuating the class structure and particularly in influencing news content.

And yet despite almost 50 years of empirical work on news content, Shoemaker's summary (1987, 20) of the literature notes the absence of ideology as a variable influencing news content in most quantitative empirical studies. She says, "Of the few studies we identified which actually test ideological hypotheses, two present evidence against the ideological approach while one supports it."

In their catalog of "influences" on new content, Shoemaker and her colleagues (1987, 1991) identify ideology as the most inclusive variable, ranked in terms of five levels of generality. In contrast, the study of political bias in the news content constitutes a more common line of research (for instance, Bagdikian 1972; Cirino 1971; Johnstone, Slawksi & Bowman 1976; Lee 1985; Lichter, Rothman & Lichter 1986; Lowry 1974; Russo 1971-2; Weaver & Wilhoit 1986, 1996; Windhauser 1976, 1977). The conceptual confusion may be why mainstream ideological variables are studied so rarely. In any case, the task of evaluating the power of political ideology is not pursued here.

HYPOTHESES. The dominant ideology thesis suggests that dominant narrative elements are to be found in most items in most commercial newspapers most of the time.

Mainstream news elements are pervasive but not uniform. Commercial newspapers may all be mainstream but not to the same extent. A demonstration of the effects of ideological elements would need to show that they are most heavily present in the most prominent news items (as opposed to less visible items), in the largest newspapers (compared to smaller papers) and in the corporate-owned papers which own the most newspapers (rather than in the independently owned papers). To test such inferences, newspaper groups are characterized in terms of circulation size and corporate ownership.

Hypothesis¹: Stories with more hegemonic ideological content tend to be prominently played in newspapers.

Hypothesis²: Story differences in hegemonic ideological content are highly associated with differences among individual newspaper organizations.

Hypothesis³: Story differences in hegemonic ideological content are highly associated with differences among newspaper groups.

Hypothesis^{3.1}: Story differences in hegemonic ideological content are highly associated with differences among newspapers, grouped by circulation size.

Hypothesis^{3.2}: Story differences in hegemonic ideological content are highly associated with differences among newspapers, grouped by ownership type (corporate-owned vs. independent family-owned).

Hypothesis^{3.3}: Story differences in hegemonic ideological content are highly associated with differences among newspapers, grouped by chain membership.

Two outcome variables are considered: story prominence and story presence. "Prominence" or news play can be quantified in terms of story length and the position of a story in any given edition (e.g., front page vs. inside page). "Presence" can be

quantified in terms of the set of prominent stories present in any given group of newspapers as compared to other newspapers. The sets of stories (all those gathered from one news organization compared to all those from another) may differ in the amount of hegemonic ideological content or in characteristic types of hegemonic content.

All the hypotheses state that news organizations are expected to accept and use mainstream ideological elements to different degrees because they are all middle-class managed and capitalist owned. Differences derive from the notion that the self-interest and self-identity of organizations produces different organizational cultures. Upper class publishers or owners hire and fire editors, who in turn establish unwritten and routinely unnoticed newsroom norms, which socialize and sanction news workers, who produce the stories. Hypothesis² focuses on differences among individual newspapers. Under Hypothesis³, differences are examined at the firm level. Corporate ownership is expected to differentially influence the use of highly ideological stories. The bigger capitalist entities may have different interests and identities within the mainstream ideology than smaller organizations. Horizontally integrated chains may be closer to or further from the inner circle of the most powerful capitalist corporations that may be the main defense of the mainstream ideology. Corporate-owned papers may differ from independent newspapers in outlook and news content. Throughout, the assumption to be tested is that different forms or relationships of capitalist control should produce different ideological outcomes, observed in the news content.

METHODS

Newspapers and television remain the two most used news sources. I chose to study newspaper stories rather than television stories for two reasons. First of all, on

empirical grounds, newspapers remain the most frequently used source of news, according to measures compiled by the Newspaper Association of America (2004). Secondly, based on data-collection considerations, I lacked the resources to gather local television stories for a sample of cities.

In 98 percent of U.S. cities, there is only one newspaper, whereas there are typically multiple cable channels, independent TV stations and at least four networks that offer news shows. Broadcast and cable audiences are, therefore, more fragmented. The ratings for prime-time half-hour news shows for all the broadcast networks combined fell to 38.2 percent in 2003, compared to 53.4 percent of adults who spent a half hour on average reading a newspaper each weekday.⁹ Even adding in the 14.4 percent who watch cable news, newspapers have a bigger audience and a more consolidated audience. Furthermore, readership is higher than circulation figures since 2.3 people read each newspaper copy on average, and most people read every section (NAA 2004, 3,8). As for online news users, the NAA (2004, 20-21) cited two findings: (1) "Newspaper Web sites reach more local online users than other local media sites in 22 of the top 25 U.S. cities" (The Media Audit, April 2004). (2) "[Forty-five] percent of U.S. adults who went online for any kind of news last week visited a newspaper-affiliated Web site" (Harris Poll, May 2004). In 1988, no newspaper had an online edition, and even in 2004, online readership remains a fraction of hardcopy readership.

Regarding data collection, the Television News Archive at Vanderbilt University has kept videotapes from national network news shows since 1968. But there is no available archive of verbatim records from local television news programs. I would have needed to gather broadcast stories, monitored on the same days from geographically

dispersed cities. I collected newspaper editions as a more feasible option and was able to order editions for the same days.

Admittedly, newspaper audiences are not the same as television audiences. Compared to TV viewers, newspaper readers are more upscale, have higher educational attainment and higher incomes, are older, and are more likely to own their homes rather than rent. Given the scarcity of empirical studies of taken-for-granted ideological assumptions, the research presented here may serve as a baseline for further comparative work.

SAMPLE. Out of 87 daily papers in the state of Ohio, 14 newspapers are chosen based on three factors: first of all, circulation size, which correlated with community size; secondly, chain membership with preference being given to chains with papers in different circulation size categories; and finally, corporate vs. independent ownership of the newspapers. None of the papers is a member of the so-called elite or prestige press.¹⁰ No claim is made that the sample is representative of Ohio newspapers nor of all U.S. papers.

A cluster of factors limit newspaper selection. I had 14 weeks during the summer to collect data. The author spent a week at each paper interviewing the staff, sitting in on news meetings, observing editor-reporter conversations, giving out questionnaires and collecting field notes. As a practical matter, each site had to be within a three-hour drive of Dayton, Ohio, so the papers are all located in the southern or central part of the state (except for Canton). Since senior managers and news editors typically work 12-hour days and my objective was to observe the entire news cycle, I often put in 14- to 16-hour days including drive time.

TABLE 1

NEWSPAPERS IN THE SAMPLE			
Circulation/City Size^a			
Corporate Ownership	Metro Daily	Middle-Sized City Daily	Small Town Daily
Cox	Dayton Daily News	Springfield News-Sun	-----
Gannett	Cincinnati Enquirer	-----	Chillicothe Gazette
Thomson	(Canton) Repository	Middletown Journal	Xenia Daily Gazette
Scripps Howard	Cincinnati Post	-----	-----
Freedom	-----	(Lima) News	-----
Independents	Columbus Dispatch	-----	Troy Daily News
	(Toledo) Blade	-----	(Celina) Daily Standard
Times Publications ^b	-----	-----	Beavercreek Daily News

^aIn 1988, the circulation size of newspapers in the metro daily category ranged from 60,000 to 250,000; city dailies ranged from 23,000 to 39,000; and small town dailies ranged from 5,000 to 15,000.

^bTimes Publications had only recently acquired the *Beavercreek Daily News*. The group itself is new and was in the midst of a bankruptcy process during the summer of 1989. In the discriminate analyses, the newspaper is included in the group of independent newspapers even though it might be considered to be borderline between independents and a miscellaneous group of chain newspapers (single properties owned by Scripps Howard and Freedom).

Another factor affecting newspaper selection is that few chains own newspapers in different circulation size categories (discussed below) in the state. Only the Thomson group has three papers in the sample, and it was necessary to choose Canton to include the third. Of chains that had dailies in two different sized markets, the Gannett and Cox chains are included, but for distance reasons, not Ingersoll. Other than the chains mentioned, no other major chains had newspapers in more than one circulation size category. Scarcest among the 87 Ohio dailies are the 17 middle-sized newspapers with

circulations between 20,000 and 60,000. For these reasons, the sample is unbalanced with twice as many stories from metro papers as from middle-sized city papers. There are six metropolitan papers, three medium-sized city papers and five small-town papers.

Although the study uses a purposive sample of newspapers, randomization rules are used to select the newspaper editions and stories to include for analysis.

A stratified, random sample of stories is drawn from weekday editions of the 14 selected newspapers. The unit of analysis is the news story. The sample contains 224 news stories (14 newspapers x 4 weekday editions x 4 stories/edition). The dates are selected at random for four weekday editions during February 1988, a presidential election year. A reconstituted week consists of one randomly selected Wednesday out of all the Wednesdays in the month, one randomly selected Friday out of all the Fridays, etc.¹¹ Mondays are excluded since a skeletal staff usually works Sundays. Weekend editions are also excluded since some of the papers are five-day or six-day products. The papers produced for a four-day week (Tuesday through Friday) represent decision making by comparable, fully staffed news organizations. Stories are picked from the general news pages. Special pages and special sections, such as, sports, business, food, lifestyle, weather or entertainment, are excluded. Editorials and columns are excluded. Four stories are selected from designated page locations, ranked in terms of prominence (e.g., front page, inside page).¹² On a designated page, stories are numbered and picked at random.

OUTCOME VARIABLES. Two different dependent variables are used, the "prominence score" and "run-of-the-paper presence."

The **prominence score** is based on story location and length. Each story is given

a score (from one to four points), depending on one of four page locations: A lead story from the front page above the fold receives four points. Three points are given to a page-one story below the fold. (If there are not at least two stories below the fold, then a story is selected from a succeeding section front.) Two points are given to a story from the city or metro page. (If there is neither a local page nor local section, then a story is selected from page 2, page 3 or the last page of the first section.) One point is given to a generic "inside story" from page 6 of the general news section. (If that page has a full-page advertisement or is a special section page, then selection is made from the next eligible succeeding page.) An additional point is given to local or inside stories that are promoted on page one.

Stories on each page are numbered in clockwise direction, spiraling to the inside of the page. A table of random numbers is used to decide which story should be sampled from among the numbered stories. A page must have at least two stories to be used.

Stories are also given points depending on their length -- measured in square inches of text, jump-page text, headlines, accompanying photos and graphics. Newsrooms typically count story length in terms of the number of words or column inches, but graphic and typographic elements are included here as a better measure of story play. One to four points are allocated: one point for briefs (less than 12 square inches or approximately 200 words), two points for less than one column, three points for between one and two columns, and four points for more than two columns. Items less than six square inches are excluded.

The score for story length in square inches is multiplied by the score for story prominence. The sum and product of these two factors are highly correlated. The score

is dichotomized by a median split. Alternative coding schemes do not substantially alter the results.

The second measure of the dependent variable is a dummy variable for the presence of stories anywhere in the newspaper. I created the concept of a **run-of-the-paper story** that comes from a similar advertising term. For display ads, an advertiser normally buys a certain amount of space, chooses what section the ad goes in but cannot specify which page or page location within the page, so such ads are called run-of-the-paper ads, or ROP ads. ROP news is a measure of the day-in, day-out content of a paper as a whole. Operationally, each paper is represented as a mix of stories that are present. The most fundamental level of a story's prominence is its presence in a paper; editors consider a story worthy of being covered, edited and printed, or not. A news organization has an ideological profile (what it chooses to cover or omit). Essentially, ROP news is a categorical variable differentiating papers (or types of papers and presumably their staffs) in terms of the themes in stories that they repeatedly ignore or censor vs. those they routinely include or promote. Since it is not possible to determine what stories are left out nor probable that the same pool of stories are considered for inclusion, the treatment of the stories in each edition is conceived of as a reflection of a news organization's culture (Deal & Kennedy 1983; Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo 1983). Treating 14 newspapers as a categorical dimension presumes that organizations differ in terms of an unstated and unarticulated news policy, which staff members learn through years of example and socialization (Breed 1955; Janowitz 1975). Organizational control is operationalized in terms of the sets of stories that are present in each paper or group. The assumption is that all of the stories, taken together in

a given newspaper or group of newspapers, are indicative of the indirect influence of organizational culture in determining its news content.

PREDICTIVE VARIABLES. The independent variable of interest in this paper is the hegemonic content of the news, called "news ideology." The news ideology is defined in terms of 11 thematic indicators: present-time orientation, popular demobilization, social conformity, normality, individualism, sexism, race consciousness, boosterism (local chauvinism as well as nationalism), middle class values, consumer orientation and ownership interest (Schiff 1996). These 11 thematic dimensions redefine and partially overlap the enduring occupational values described by Herbert J. Gans in *Deciding What's News* (1980, 39-69). He lists eight enduring values: altruistic democracy, national leadership, social order, small-town pastoralism, individualism, ethnocentrism, moderatism and responsible capitalism.

DEFINITIONS OF MAINSTREAM THEMES IN NEWS IDEOLOGY.

1. "**Present-time orientation**" is seen in a story's immediate, event-centered approach, which assumes the existence of contemporary relationships or reiterates common-sense causes for facts without using evidence. Stories that try to explain or interpret current developments in terms of broader trends, societal linkages, their global context, historical origins, causal complexity or purposive intent -- stories that try to explain why -- are coded as oppositional. Gans does not mention this orientation.

2. "**Popular demobilization**" means that in a story authorities and public officials are acting and resolving problems, issues or crises, so that people don't need to act. Oppositional stories portray the actuality or possibility of direct popular participation in public policy-making with the story explicitly or implicitly mobilizing the citizenry by taking a shocked, outraged or critical stance regarding current events, trends and patterns. "Objective" or "value-neutral" stories are news without such an adversarial or advocacy context.

Gans says the news puts faith in "national leadership." He says the news is implicitly based on the notion that leaders initiate and shape societal activities. Leaders are given credit and judged for the results even though group members, followers, bureaucrats and subordinates are the ones who do most of the work. Gans finds that the leaders in the news tend to be white, male, middle aged, situated in upper and upper-

middle class strata, and located in national or "nationalized" institutions (public agencies, major corporations, prestigious professions or elite universities). Oppositional sources include youth, women, working class people, minorities, social movement and labor activists, Third World people and "unworthy victims."

3. "**Social conformity**" themes refer to the proper relationship and implied consensus between authorities and publics. The idea is: Since we all agree on what is good and proper, private citizens should conform to authorized policies and accepted practices. In a second hegemonic variant, stories recognize that individuals do violate the law and deviate from the proper standards of conduct but that such incidents are exceptions or scandals. Crime stories and exposés are the best examples of scandal stories. Oppositional stories are at least non-judgmental about incidents of opposition to legitimate authorities or about expressions of radical disagreement with normal, natural and/or legal arrangements.

Gans describes this dimension in terms of "social order." He says, "Social disorder news deals with activities which disturb the public peace and may involve violence or the threat of violence against life or physical property; it also includes the deterioration of valued institutions, such as the two-parent family. Moral disorder news reports transgressions of laws and mores which do not necessarily endanger the social order" (p. 53). He says exposés of the misbehavior of public officials and notables represent a search for and defense of the moral (and legal) order.

4. "**Normality**" themes are present when being rational, sane, conscious, under control and unaffected by illegal drugs is considered valuable or is demonstrated by respect for authority, established rules, and law and order. The dimension refers to attitudes expressed by authorities or popular attitudes toward authorities with a positive value on psychological control. Oppositional stories see deviance as normal or view defiant or rebellious behavior as having positive social consequences.

"Moderatism," according to Gans, is an enduring value in the news that discourages excess and extremism through pejorative adjectives or a satirical tone. He says the news does not favorably portray those who indulge or abstain to excess. It is not kind to highbrows or lowbrows; atheists or zealots; the self-serving or the do-gooders; party hacks or political mavericks (unless they're successful). Gans adds, "[I]nsofar as the news has an ideology of its own, it is moderate. ... [T]he ideology in the news is implicit, however, and not a deliberate or integrated doctrine" (p. 52). One journalistic convention is that there are two sides to every issue and that the probable truth lies somewhere in between. So, extremes cannot be valid, and anti-establishment sources often are construed as extremists or portrayed as ridiculous. Hegemonic stories often construct a "false balance" that over-emphasizes rare exemplars as defining polar opposites.

5. "**Individualism**" means that personalities (self-made individuals or voluntaristic "stars") make the important decisions, changes and differences in life, society and history. In oppositional stories, the agent of social action or historical change

are impersonal forces or collective efforts by groups. For instance, inflation is often treated as a force of nature while the causes for a governmental policy change are usually personalized or attributed to a particular political figure.

Gans says, "[O]ne of the most important enduring news values is the preservation of the freedom of the individual against the encroachments of nation and society. ... [T]he most pervasive way in which the news pays homage to the individual is by its focus on people rather than on groups" (p. 50). He notes the value the news places on hard, task-oriented work and the devaluation of the forces that may rob people of their initiative as individuals, such as, technology, bigness of mass society or the conformity of the suburbs. The small is favored over the big; individual initiative over organizational power; markets over bureaucracies; free entrepreneurs over egalitarian social movements.

6. "**Sexist**" themes are present in stories where men are normally and naturally expected to be leaders, take initiative, take risks, show strength, produce and succeed. Hegemonic stories are sometimes tales of bravery, courage and honor associated with praise-worthy aggressive or violent male behavior, or with protective and chivalrous males. Sexist stories may attribute physical and emotional characteristics to different sexes. Characterizing people as emotional, weak, submissive, diminutive and/or deferential may be paternalistic or homophobic. Oppositional stories are gender neutral, leaving out the gender identity of the participants or specifically confounding gender expectations by focusing on women or gays who take initiative, achieve success and/or lead active, dynamic, competent or enterprising lives.

In describing whose "social order" is in the news, Gans says the news reflects a white male social order and it tends to value the middle aged and the old against the young. He recognizes that patriarchal preferences may be as intrinsic in the news as they are widespread in the rest of the society.

7. "**Racially conscious**" stories include ethnic typifications and simplifications associated with individuals or groups. Individuals are identified by race or ethnicity and said to be leaders, criminals or whatever. Oppositional stories are color blind, leaving out the racial, religious, linguistic, nationalistic or ethnic identity of participants. Other oppositional stories explicitly portray successful, harmonious or intimate relationships among people of different ethnic backgrounds.

Under "altruistic democracy," Gans mentions that the news pays attention to the ethnic identities of participants. The official norm of racial integration as part of its support for an idealized democracy.

8. "**Middle class values**" or themes appeal to private property rights or concern benefits to owners, managers or white-collar workers. Hegemonic stories systematically omit considerations of who benefits from policies, actions or arrangements in class terms. Hegemonic stories appeal to the rights of private property or the norms presumed by the middle classes. Some hegemonic stories only describe the benefits from the point of view of owners, managers and middle class groups and ignore sources in other class groups. Owners have a right to benefit from or dispose of their property; those who are

rich and famous deserve their rewards because of their own past hard work and their conformity to middle class standards, ideals and goals. Affluence is a visible manifestation of an inward grace. Those who are well off deserve it. Oppositional stories elaborate on the benefits and costs to the working class, labor groups or so-called little people. Other oppositional stories presume or elaborate on the rationality and validity of populist expectations (which are anti-government or anti-big business).

Gans says, "[T]he news supports the social order of public, business and professional, upper-middle class, middle-aged, and white male sectors of society. ... [T]he news pays most attention to and upholds the actions of elite individuals and elite institutions. ... [T]he news deals mostly with those who hold the power within various national and societal strata; with the most powerful officials in the most powerful agencies; with the coalition of upper-class and upper-middle-class people which dominates the socioeconomic hierarchy; and with the late-middle-aged cohort that has the most power among age groups" (pp. 61-2).

9. In "**booster**" stories, local groups and individuals (those from one's own neighborhood, city, state or country) are presented as the best, are expected to triumph or have the successful solutions. Hegemonic stories support groups and programs with local identities or national characteristics. Local chauvinism and nationalism may include the privileged positioning of sources and their frames of reference. Divergent social groups or social systems are sometimes labelled as foreign, subversive, Communist-inspired, Marxist-led, socialist-affiliated, anti-democratic, or linked to drugs or terrorism. Hegemonic stories may assume a definition of the national interest that benefits the local or national elites, justifies inequitable power relationships with external groups and/or at the same time denies the imperialistic nature of such relationships. Oppositional stories have an internationalist or cosmopolitan orientation, celebrating groups with divergent geographic origins or representing heterodox arrangements or programs.

Gans describes this orientation as "ethnocentrism." Other countries are judged by the extent to which they live up to or imitate American practices. In stories critical of domestic arrangements, any deviant conditions or cases are treated as exceptions with the implication that normal American ideals remain viable. Part of "ethnocentrism" is secular patriotism and another part is the presumed superiority that privileges white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant individuals and civilizational values.

10. "**Consumer-oriented**" stories promote a materialistic lifestyle. The acquisition, accumulation and display of material consumer goods are the primary marks of success, achievement and the good life. The public interest is identified with consumer interests, not with the interests of citizens in the "commons." Oppositional stories include representations of spiritual, intellectual, naturalistic, artistic, educational, environmental or humanistic values. Gans finds a nostalgia for "small-town pastoralism" in the news; suburbia may not supply much hard news, but it does offer lifestyle concerns and an upscale image counterpoised to inner-city urban problems.

11. "**Ownership-interested**" themes refer to the preference for individually owned enterprises or activities as opposed to government solutions and collective initiatives. Hegemonic stories focus on private rights, owner privileges and self-interest as the only way the system could operate. Oppositional stories consider actions and arrangements in terms of the public interest, neighborhood effects, the advantages of cooperative solutions and the rights in the public domain.

The ideological news themes defined here are like Gans' enduring news values in that they are properties of the news, not properties of individual newswriters.¹³ Also, the notion of taken-for-granted ideological dimensions is consistent with what Gans calls "para-ideology," which he defines as the "aggregate of only partially thought-out values which is neither entirely consistent nor well integrated" (p. 68). Neither list is comprehensive. Gans leaves out "motherhood values," for instance (p. 42). He says the list changes somewhat over the years and is only partially consistent. Gans says that news values are rarely explicit, and negative connotations are often implicit in the description of the events or activities. In fact, he says that a consensus on values may not exist in society, which is another way of saying that value judgments represent a publicly acceptable dominant worldview. In public, social norms are enforced and values advocated, but counter-values are held and acted upon by subordinate groups in every society. In industrial democracies, a so-called consensus may be limited to upper class elites. Oligopoly media corporations disseminate claims about majority consent, but in the United States, declining voter turnout has meant that a majority of eligible adults have rarely ever elected their representatives -- at least not since the 1920s. Before that, most adults were not eligible.

Gans says the news supports responsible capitalism, altruistic democracy, small-town pastoralism or Progressive reformism. These four values seem to represent more

integrated, self-conscious doctrines than elemental, latent dimensions like present-time orientation or material consumer values. See Table 2 for a comparison of the dimensions and values.

TABLE 2

NEWS CONTENT CATEGORIES			
MAINSTREAM IDEOLOGICAL THEMES			
	“NEWS IDEOLOGY”		HERBERT GANS’ “ENDURING VALUES”
	HEGEMONIC	OPPOSITIONAL	
1	Present-Time, Event Orientation	Trends/Context/ Cause/Intent/Why	-----
2	Popular Demobilization	Advocacy	National Leadership
3	Social Conformity	Rebellion	Social Order
4	Normality	Deviance	Moderatism
5	Individualism	Collectivist Causes/Solutions	Individualism
6	Sexism	Gender Neutral	-----
7	Race Conscious	Color Blind	Altruistic Democracy
8	Middle Class Values	Populist Values	-----
9	Boosterism	Cosmopolitan	Ethnocentrism
10	Consumerism	Humanistic Values	Small-Town Pastoralism
11	Ownership Interest	Community Effects/Interests	Responsible Capitalism

To repeat, the taken-for-granted mainstream ideology is unrelated to political ideology. Kerlinger (1980, 1984), for example, measures the underlying structure of political ideology in the opinions of the general public in terms of conservative and liberal factors. Competing theories of news content (e.g., agenda setting) are examined using the Ohio data, but the results will not be presented here.

On each taken-for-granted ideological dimension, a story tends to support or oppose a mainstream orientation. A hegemonic theme supports a mainstream value orientation. An oppositional theme diverges or deviates from the mainstream point of view. Hegemonic and oppositional themes are considered to be categoric alternatives that are defined separately. A story or segment of a story may contain both hegemonic and oppositional thematic elements. Alternatively, a story may contain neither theme. Each theme is treated as a separate indicator, dimension or elemental variable. Coding categories for each thematic pair may be considered categoric, unidimensional but not mutually exclusive. Different ideological characteristics are not highly intercorrelated, using Cohen's alpha to measure inter-item reliability. No decision is made about the overall hegemonic or oppositional nature of a given story. Since there is no basis to weight one ideological element more than any other, separate summary indexes count the number of hegemonic and oppositional themes in a story. Among the 11 ideological themes, there is no assumption about the existence of common underlying or reflective factors of classical regression models. The ideological categories might better be conceptualized as production factors of variables described in latent trait theory (Hambleton & Swaminathan 1985).¹⁴ The latent traits that together constitute the mainstream ideology should be considered independent.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONSTANTS. Like demographic characteristics, organizational characteristics serve as a way to describe the structure of the data, but they may also act as "intervening" constants that need to be considered in assessing the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The basic organizational facts, such as circulation and ownership, come from *Editor & Publisher International*

Yearbook (1988).

In terms of **size of circulation**, which correlates with size of the city, papers are either metropolitan, medium-sized city or small town dailies. Circulation size figures are based on publishers' statements for the six months, ending Sept. 30, 1987, as reported by *E&P*. The circulation size of newspapers in the metro daily category ranged from 60,000 to 250,000; city dailies ranged from 23,000 to 39,000; and small town dailies ranged from 5,000 to 15,000.

Newspapers are categorized into five **chains** or groups. The Thomson group has three papers; Gannett and Cox are each represented by two papers, and a miscellaneous group of chain-owned papers includes one paper each from Scripps-Howard and Freedom groups. The five family-owned independents are lumped together.

A third dimension dichotomizes the sampled dailies into two ownership types, consisting of nine chain-owned **corporate** newspapers and five **independent** family-owned papers.

PROCEDURES. Discriminant analysis is used because the dependent variable, the "grouping variable," can be nominal or ordinal scale (Stevens 1986). Discriminant analysis is a measure of the degree of association, that is, the strength of the relationship.

Other regression methods require interval-scale dependent variables -- even if only dummy variables (Kerlinger & Pedhazur 1973). Because of their scaling assumptions, analysis of variance and multivariate analysis of variance would be fine to predict story prominence but, importantly, could not test the strength of relationships with ROP story presence, which is the dependent variable in the second and third sets of hypotheses.¹⁵

News organizations and newspaper groups (and the sets of stories that they publish) are

qualitatively different from one another.

In discriminant analysis, stories are grouped into known membership categories. Then, through successive approximations or iterations, variables are combined and weighted into a predictive function that best separates or classifies stories into their correct membership groups, which is known ahead of time. The function is composed of weighted variables and explains the differences between groups of stories. Variables are added to, or dropped from, the function using Wilks' step-wise method based on their between-group coefficients. The strategy of the analysis is to examine ideological variables to see whether and to what extent they predict prominence and ROP presence. Using the step-wise processes, a set of elementary and summary variables is found that produces a significant function that most successfully classifies cases into each of the dependent variable groups. Functions are compared to find the most parsimonious set of variables, which combined yield the highest possible percent of explained variance on the dependent variable. The explained variance is adjusted to discount the number of independent variables used in the function.

Discriminant analysis is based on comparisons of the group centroids of ordinal scale variables. Even though the content variables are coded into nominal categories, dichotomous categorical variables may be treated as ordinal to the extent that either side of the dichotomy can be considered more or less of an underlying common dimension. As they are defined and operationalized, the content variables can properly be considered quantifiable and continuous (but not interval) and so are accepted in discriminant analysis.

INTERCODER RELIABILITY. Content analysis of a 20 percent subsample of

stories shows observed agreement among three coders at the 80.9 percent level.¹⁶ That figure represents an average for three coders taken two at a time for 44 stories for all hegemonic and oppositional variables. Observed agreement is defined as the number of elemental variables that are coded the same by two coders over the number of variables coded the same or different for each pair of coders for each story. Many content characteristics do not fit given stories and are purposely coded as absent. After three one-hour training sessions, coders have little difficulty recognizing ideological elements in stories. Through definitions, examples and practice coding with borderline cases, the coders are trained to become conscious of taken-for-granted assumptions for each ideological element. Coders decide separately if hegemonic and oppositional elements are present in a given story.

STANDARD OF INDUCTIVE "PROOF." In the multivariate interactive models usual in social science, a single variable usually explains only a small fraction of the total variance. Hypothesis² and Hypothesis³ are propositions about the degree of association, not merely statements about statistical significance. One standard of comparison was established by McCombs and Shaw (1972), who used measures of association. In their now classic study of the relationship between the media agenda and the public agenda of 100 undecided voters on major issues in the 1968 presidential race in Chapel Hill, N.C., McCombs and Shaw found that the average of the sum of the squared correlation coefficients was 0.53 (in their Table 4). The agenda setting thesis has been accepted for 30 years. That same standard for degree of association will be used to adjudicate the hypotheses here.

FINDINGS

The objective of this article is to evaluate the strength of different clusters of ideological characteristics in explaining the prominence and presence of news stories. The functions combining mainstream ideological variables are presented separately for each dependent variable.

When stories are grouped into a dichotomous measure of high and low prominence score, no combination of mainstream ideological variables yields a significant function. Hypothesis¹ is clearly rejected.

TABLE 3

DISCRIMANT FUNCTION: MAINSTREAM IDEOLOGICAL VARIABLES								
GROUPING VARIABLE: 14 NEWSPAPERS								
Function	Variables in the Function ^a	Adjusted Percent of Explained Variance ^b	Canonical Correlation Coefficient	Number of Cases	Wilks' Lambda	Degrees of Freedom	Level of Significance	Percent of Cases Correctly Classified
H ₂ I.	Mainstream Ideology	20.3	0.470	224	0.5654	65	0.001	16.5
1	Total Hegemonic Themes ^c		0.654		0.8585			
2	Individualism Themes		0.509		0.7638			
3	Humanistic/Consumer Themes		-0.054		0.6795			
4	Present-Time Orientation		0.510		0.6053			
5	Rebellion/Conformity Themes		-0.059		0.5654			
II.	Consumer Ideology ^d	9.5	0.340		0.7260	48	0.03	

^aTwo functions are significant. The same variables have different coefficients in each function.

^bThe square of the standardized canonical correlation coefficient (R) is analogous to the percentage of explained variance. The adjusted R² discounts for the number of variables used in the function and also is given as a percentage. Where N is the number of cases and p is the number of independent variables in the function, the formula is:

$$\text{Adjusted } R^2 = \frac{p(1 - R^2)}{N - p - 1}$$

^cA dichotomous measure of the number of hegemonic themes in each story.

^dOf the p number of independent, simultaneous discriminant functions, only two are significant. According to Stevens (1986), a discriminant function is to be characterized or named for those variables that have the highest pooled within-group correlations with the discriminant function itself rather than for the highest standardized canonical coefficients.

To test Hypothesis², newspapers are used as the grouping or criterion variable, which means that what is to be explained is the difference between run-of-the-paper stories that tend to appear in one newspaper as compared to those stories that tend to appear in other newspapers. The groups are the 14 newspapers. See Table 3. Five ideological variables produce two significant functions.¹⁷ The first function seems to measure overall hegemonic content. Most strikingly, it explains 20.3 percent of the variance.¹⁸ The number of hegemonic themes as well as themes dealing with individualism, humanistic/consumer values, present-time orientation and deviance/normality expectations seem to differentiate newspapers. This function is the most powerful found in the data. Note that for the sake of simplicity of presentation, both the oppositional and hegemonic sides of a thematic dimension are mentioned when the correlation is negative, but only the hegemonic themes are listed for those variables with positive correlation coefficients in the function. A second function (significant at the 0.03 level) is more closely associated with consumer values and explains 9.5 percent of the variance.¹⁹ The combined functions can correctly classify 16.5 percent of the stories; just by chance 7.1 percent of the stories can be sorted by newspaper.²⁰ Hypothesis² is fully supported.

TABLE 4

DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION: MAINSTREAM IDEOLOGICAL VARIABLES								
GROUPING VARIABLE: THREE CIRCULATION-SIZE CATEGORIES								
Function	Variables in the Function	Adjusted Percent of Explained Variance ^a	Canonical Correlation Coefficient	Number of Cases	Wilks' Lambda	Degrees of Freedom	Level of Significance	Percent of Cases Correctly Classified
Steps								
H _{3,1}	Mainstream Ideology	3.1	0.230	224	0.9127	10	0.03	46.9
1	Consumerism Themes		0.738		0.9727			
2	Total Hegemonic Themes ^b		0.639		0.9527			
3	Relatively High Number of Oppositional Themes ^c		-0.896		0.9398			
4	Individualistic Themes		0.639		0.9229			
5	Present-Time Orientation		0.343		0.9127			

^aThe square of the standardized canonical correlation coefficient (R) is analogous to the percentage of explained variance. The adjusted R² discounts for the number of variables used in the function and also is given as a percentage. Where N is the number of cases and p is the number of independent variables in the function, the formula is:

$$\text{Adjusted } R^2 = R^2 - \frac{p(1 - R^2)}{N - p - 1}$$

^bA dichotomous measure of the number of hegemonic themes in each story.

^cA dichotomous measure of the same or fewer oppositional themes as compared to hegemonic themes in each story.

When differences among newspaper groups (by circulation size, chain membership, and corporate/independent ownership) are examined, the ideological variables are significant but do not have as much explanatory power.

In Hypothesis^{3.1}, stories are grouped according to the three circulation size categories of the newspapers. Table 4 shows that a function composed of ideological variables is significant at the 0.03 level and explains 3.1 percent of the variance. The function correctly classifies 46.9 percent of the stories; just by chance 33.3 percent of the stories could be sorted into three circulation size categories. The variables in the function are similar and include themes of consumer values, individualism and present-time orientation. Again, the number of hegemonic values is important. A summary measure contributes to the function by dichotomizing stories between those with mostly hegemonic themes and those with at least one and up to the same number of oppositional themes. Hypothesis^{3.1} is partially supported and partially rejected: mainstream ideology variables are significant in differentiating newspapers by circulation size but the relationship is not substantive.

TABLE 5

DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION: MAINSTREAM IDEOLOGICAL VARIABLES								
GROUPING VARIABLE: FIVE NEWSPAPER CHAINS^a								
Function Steps	Variables in the Function	Adjusted Percent of Explained Variance ^b	Canonical Correlation Coefficient	Number of Cases	Wilks' Lambda	Degrees of Freedom	Level of Significance	Percent of Cases Correctly Classified
H _{3.2}	Mainstream Ideology	7.6	0.317	224	0.8402	24	0.04	40.6
1	Individualism Themes		0.729		0.9527			
2	Race Conscious Themes		0.484		0.9226			
3	Consumer Themes		0.383		0.8996			
4	Present-Time Orientation		0.366		0.8776			
5	Advocacy/Demobilizing Orientation		-0.515		0.8560			
6	Social Conformity Themes		0.186		0.8402			

^aThe square of the standardized canonical correlation coefficient (R) is analogous to the percentage of explained variance. The adjusted R² discounts for the number of variables used in the function and also is given as a percentage. Where N is the number of cases and p is the number of independent variables in the function, the formula is:

$$\text{Adjusted } R^2 = R^2 - \frac{p(1 - R^2)}{N - p - 1}$$

^bThe chains are Gannett, Thomson, Cox and a miscellaneous group of Freedom and Scripps-Howard papers, plus a fifth group of family-owned independents.

Table 5 shows that, when ROP stories are grouped by newspaper chain, six variables produce a function that is significant at the 0.04 level and that explains 7.6 percent of the variance. The function can classify 40.6 percent of the stories correctly compared with 20 percent of the stories that could be classified by chance. Three of the same mainstream ideological themes appear in the function: individualism, consumerism, and present-time orientation. In addition, race conscious themes, an advocacy/demobilizing orientation and social conformity are important. Hypothesis^{3.2} is supported. It is correct in that a function composed of ideological variables is significant in differentiating chain newspapers but the function does not yield powerful effects.

TABLE 6

DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION: MAINSTREAM IDEOLOGICAL VARIABLES								
GROUPING VARIABLE: CORPORATE VS. INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS								
Function Steps	Variables in the Function	Adjusted Percent of Explained Variance ^a	Canonical Correlation Coefficient	Number of Cases	Wilks' Lambda	Degrees of Freedom	Level of Significance	Percent of Cases Correctly Classified
H _{3,3}	Mainstream Ideology	8.7	0.225	224	0.9493	5	0.05	64.3
1	Total Hegemonic Themes ^b		-0.668		0.9815			
2	Color Blind/Race Conscious Themes		-0.328		0.9756			
3	Social Conformity Themes		0.537		0.9700			
4	Total Oppositional Themes ^c		0.673		0.9638			
5	Ownership Interest Themes		0.626		0.9493			

^aThe square of the standardized canonical correlation coefficient (R) is analogous to the percentage of explained variance. The adjusted R² discounts for the number of variables used in the function and also is given as a percentage. Where N is the number of cases and p is the number of independent variables in the function, the formula is:

$$\text{Adjusted } R^2 = R^2 - \frac{p(1 - R^2)}{N - p - 1}$$

^bA dichotomous measure of the number of hegemonic themes in each story.

^cA count of the number of oppositional themes in each story.

Grouping ROP stories between corporate-owned and independent family-owned papers yields similar results. See Table 6. A mainstream ideology function composed of five variables is significant ($\alpha < 0.05$) but not substantive (the adjusted $R^2 = 8.7$). About 64.3 percent of the stories could be classified correctly as compared with 50 percent by chance. The number of hegemonic themes and the number of oppositional themes each enter the function. Color blind/race conscious themes, social conformity and ownership-interest themes are present in the function as well.

So, for the relationships between the mainstream ideology and the presence of run-of-the-paper stories found in newspaper groups (defined by circulation size, chain membership or corporate affiliation), the adjusted percentages of the explained variance are 3.1, 7.6 and 8.7, respectively. The effects of corporate ownership and corporate identity are more than twice as strong as newspaper size. Hypothesis^{3.1}, Hypothesis^{3.2} and Hypothesis^{3.3} are partially supported; the relationships are significant but not substantial when compared to the agenda-setting standard established by McCombs and Shaw.

CONCLUSIONS

The key finding is that newspapers or newspaper groups can be differentiated and characterized ideologically by taking all the ROP stories together. The approach taken here has two virtues: It offers operational definitions for a multiplicity of ideology dimensions. It quantifies the presence of taken-for-granted assumptions in the news. The results demonstrate the importance of a mainstream ideology in the organizational cultures of the news.

The news ideology has numerous dimensions, and newspaper cultures differ in

the extent to which they promote some mainstream assumptions more than others. An important conceptual step is to differentiate taken-for-granted ideology from self-consciously political ideology. The TFGs are the background assumptions, expectations, relevances and arrangements that are routinely unnoticed by both news workers and news consumers and that are embedded in the news texts and assorted graphic features.

The measurement of the importance of the mainstream ideology comes from the discriminant functions for individual newspapers. The functions account for more than a fifth of the variation of stories among different individual newspapers.

The discriminant functions composed of mainstream ideology indicators suggest a pattern in which consumer values, individualism, present-time orientation, race consciousness and social conformity differentiate mainstream newspaper content. However, individual ideological themes are usually not enough. A count of the number of hegemonic themes is a primary component in most of the functions.

Of numerous discriminant analyses, the extent to which ideological variables can explain the differences between newspapers are of similar magnitude for more than one summary measure of the variables. But the study found no methodological basis for a global judgment about whether a single story is hegemonic or oppositional.

QUALIFICATIONS.

A sample of 224 news stories drawn from 14 newspapers is relatively small although most of the variables in the current study are dichotomized, reducing the property space that needed to be examined. As far as identifying each ideological dimension, intercoder reliability is within a few percentage points between any two of the three coders. The newspapers that are in any one chain or in any given circulation size

category in the sample may or may not represent most members of that category. More newspapers owned for longer periods by the same chains should be sampled.

One further ambiguity concerns the level at which ideological content is present or absent in the data set. The newspaper stories are nested in 14 newspapers, raising the question of interdependence of the stories from the same paper. The findings of a multi-level regression analysis for nested models will be presented elsewhere to separately estimate the variance at the story level, the newspaper level and the chain level (Rasbash, Prosser, & Goldstein 1989).

Thus, the findings are limited to specific newspapers in Ohio and by methodological qualifications regarding sample size, the number of degrees of freedom, intercoder reliability and the unit of analysis. Despite these limitations, the findings constitute a prima facie case for the importance of the mainstream ideology in determining news content.

EMPIRICIST INTERPRETATIONS

LOGICAL GAMBITS TO DISCOUNT CRITICAL RESEARCH.

In the social scientific community, a unified paradigm has failed to emerge. The community is divided by what might be described as radically opposed empiricist and structuralist worldviews. The broad dissensus in the social sciences ante-dates the critiques of survey research by the Frankfurt School in the 1930s and by ethnomethodologists in the 1960s. Revisionist histories, heterodox economics and neo-Marxist class analyses still challenge econometric, stratification and great-man models. In empiricism, "social facts" are natural features of reality that have clear and distinct existence and that can be quantified by dispassionate, neutral observers. In a

critical approach to structural questions, "facts" exist, are accepted (or rejected) as evidence, are given salience and have implications. The difference is that, in critical theory, all factual claims exist within a wider interpretative context, frame or worldview. For Gramsci and Schutz, the facts themselves are the cognitive products of individuals whose interpretive frames, points of view, and everyday lives are shaped by their class-cultural experience and the historical moment. The thrust of established science in sociology, political science and communication studies in the United States is to consistently discount "anomalous" findings about the existence and power of the dominant ideology, about the unity and control of an upper class, and about the coercive use of domestic laws and market power to enforce cultural homogeneity. I shall, therefore, consider here a number of standard, predictable empiricist arguments that might otherwise discount my findings.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT: NOT GENERALIZABLE. Without studying national news organizations like *The New York Times*, how could valid inferences be made from any findings to a national scale?

After all, the counter-argument goes, national news organizations tend to set the "news agenda" for local outlets. Many of the most important studies have concentrated on the corporate liberalism of the so-called "elite media" (Epstein 1974; Gans 1980; Lichter, Rothman & Lichter 1986; Nimmo & Combs 1983). The term usually refers to the major television networks, national weekly magazines, wire agencies based in New York City, and a dozen "named" metropolitan newspapers, located mostly on the east or west coasts.²¹ The elite media may bring a story or issue into the national political forefront, but the way it is covered may still be locally determined.

To show that the elite media offer stories laden with capitalist, middle class assumptions would not be surprising. But to generalize, it would seem necessary to show a wider influence. So, to show the generality of the dominant ideology thesis, it is necessary to show that stories in heartland and local papers are also laced with hegemonic themes. Unfortunately, media scholars have repeatedly used convenient samples, commonly limited to the prestige papers and, at least implicitly, have made claims about what the national press is doing. *Ipsa facto*, the elite press does not present the newspaper content read by most Americans.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT: OHIO PAPERS NOT NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE.

To repeat, no claim is made here that the 14 papers represent Ohio newspapers nor those in the entire nation. The only claim is that they represent a wide spectrum and that they represent an important segment that cannot be easily explained as more of the same. No state is "representative" of the country, but Ohio is a middle-sized state in middle America. Ohio is the sixth most populous and prosperous state with both industrial and agricultural importance. Furthermore, Ohio has a long and substantial journalistic tradition (Emery 1950). Owners of Ohio newspapers are numerous among the founders of the American Newspaper Publishers Association. Short of a nationally representative sample of newspapers, any claim about "general" processes ought to be strengthened by findings purposively drawn from deep within the journalistic heartland rather than from the elite press.

At a minimum, the Ohio case study constitutes *prima facie* evidence. If ideology is clearly present in news content and is a powerful predictor of newspaper content

differences, no further study can properly omit taken-for-grant ideological assumptions from among the possible primary factors that influence news content.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT: WHY BOTHER? Isn't a demonstration that heartland media are penetrated by the mainstream ideology "obvious"?

Perhaps, but if so, ideology variables should be used systematically as predictors of news content. Journalists' self-consciously claim to use market factors like newsworthiness as objective, non-partisan, consumer-driven criteria of news selection. The agenda setting thesis conveniently puts social scientists in a position of knowing more about professional journalists than they know about themselves (McCombs & Shaw 1976; Shapiro & Williams 1986; Shaw & McCombs 1977; Zhu 1992). But, perhaps for methodological reasons, researchers have been reluctant to consider ideological assumptions implicit in the news. The "objectivity" of conscious news decisions by journalists is part of the "source trap" for self-identified "empirical" social scientists who claim their own work is value neutral. The empirical study of dominant ideology thesis challenges scholars who recurrently ignore their own taken-for-granted prejudgments (e.g., Demers 1996).

If hegemonic themes are in fact powerful predictors of the differences between newspapers, then again ideology is a variable that should be routinely and systematically relevant in any national analysis of news content.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT: A SPURIOUS CORRELATION. FOR MIDWEST AND ELITE PAPERS, SAME NEWS WHOLESALERS, SO MUCH OF SAME CONTENT.

If Ohio papers have similar ideological content as elite papers, part of the reason

may be that they both run stories from The Associated Press and from wire services driven by the large, metropolitan papers in their respective chains. If "consonance" in news sources were the common reason for similarities, then it remains hard to explain the variation in differential news content. True, it's variation within a range. But again, the best explanation for the variation in the type of news coverage is ideological variation.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT: TAUTOLOGICAL, SO CAN'T BE MEASURED. If a taken-for-granted ideology is omnipresent and defined to include the entire range of beliefs, how can finding ideological elements in stories prove anything about news selection?

The omnipresent nature of mainstream ideology does not make it tautologically inclusive. The mainstream ideology differs in centrally planned and developing countries; it is selectively absent in the news from "alternative" news outlets; and the argument here is that it is (measurably) present to different degrees in different local-monopoly daily newspapers.²² The point is to treat mainstream ideology as a variable, which means that some news organizations as well as some class communities and ethnic groups presume it as common sense to a greater or lesser extent.

COUNTER-ARGUMENT: ASSUMPTIONS CAN'T BE OBSERVED, SO THE ARGUMENT IS NOT FALSIFIABLE.

"Oppositional" perspectives co-exist. Heterodox belief systems exist in "deviant" sub-cultures and anti-establishment social movements. In everyday reality, subordinate class and ethnic ideologies exist and are expressed. And yet, in the public sphere, their expression is marginalized.

In colonial America, for instance, the common sense of the dominant culture was

not shared by the majority of people. To be testable, contrasting assumptions have to be explicit.

At the level of a sentence, passage or story, readers can be trained to become conscious of assumptions embedded in texts. Although human beings recognize matters of degree, cognitive sociologists seem to argue that social memberships and social characteristics are usually categoric, binary and dialectical. Therefore, for the dominant ideology thesis to be falsifiable, an oppositional dimension must exist for each taken-for-granted assumption. So, for each of the mainstream background assumptions, the coders characterized each news story or textual passage in terms of the presence or absence of hegemonic elements as well as the presence or absence of oppositional elements along each specific ideological dimension.

At the level of class, ethnic and regional sub-cultures, the locals may be radically oppositional. The metropolitan centers have no monopoly on critical ideology as 19th century Populist movements demonstrate. The centers of Populism were in the Midwest and South. An oppositional ideology challenges taken-for-granted expectations, relevances or arrangements. In the 1880s and 1890s, leftist social movements through much of the heartland were outside the liberal-conservative consensus.

Plausibly in the late 20th century, heartland newspapers might share the assumptions of ascendant radical right conservatives (Havers & Wexler 2001). Since the news media recognized the role of social and religious conservatives with the candidacy of Barry Goldwater in 1964 and the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, the neo-conservatives have triumphed in 1994 congressional races and appear to have consolidated control through the presidency of George W. Bush.

Perhaps newspaper corporations simply accept established political facts as a basis for adapting the current common sense. As long as the New Deal Democratic coalition put its programs and issues at the center of the political spectrum for 50 years, the news media may adopt the view of corporate liberalism. As the political center changes increasingly after the 1970s, corporate partisan identity and the newsworthy perception of reality may change as well (along with editorial policy objectives, labor-management relations and financial performance).

So rather than represent the dominant hegemonic view of liberal corporate big business, the sampled Ohio newspapers might present the taken-for-granted common sense of a rising managerial-professional class, whose would-be advocates are described as social and religious neo-conservatives. To the extent that the newspapers do not take on the perspective of those who radically reject many assumptions of the dominant culture, the chosen sites of study actually strengthen the argument presented here.

If newspapers in a middle-sized Midwestern state show signs of reproducing and propagating the mainstream capitalist ideology, then there are grounds to consider the process "dominant," not limited to opinion leaders in core regions or to so-called elite media (see for example, Deutschmann 1959; Stemple 1959; Windhauser 1976, 1977)

CRITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Ironically, the findings make sense of the common-sense perception that the news is "objective" and not ideological. From the point of view of a news consumer who rarely reads a second newspaper (given the local newspaper monopoly in most cities and towns), hegemonic stories do not get greater play. Fundamentally, the choice of leading stories (and in general, the prominence given to individual stories within any edition of a

newspaper) does not seem to perform an ideological function, whereas stories running throughout the paper over the long term seem to be thoroughly and powerfully ideological. Ideological variables are most important in characterizing the differences among stories that tend to appear in different newspapers. (Of all the predictive variables examined but not presented here, mainstream ideological variables are the most powerful when it comes to explaining which stories will run in which papers.) In addition, ideology does predict to a limited extent the presence or absence of stories depending on whether they are in papers that have a particular circulation size, chain affiliation or corporate ownership (as opposed to being independent family owned). In a multi-causal world, ideology is undeniably significant and influential, depending on the news organization.

FURTHER RESEARCH. Finding that ideology is imbedded deeply in the news pages of the non-elite commercial press suggests a direction for further study -- the multi-level analysis of stories nested in organizational contexts. The evidence suggests that the Ohio newspapers sampled still have a considerable amount of autonomy from their chain-owned parents and from a generalized corporate milieu. The ideological nature of the organizational culture of individual papers may be crucial. An inference might be that ideological orientations in newspapers, when expressed, seem to depend on local organizational culture since the ideological slant is not the same for other papers within the same chain or for all papers with corporate ownership. The interactive effects of mainstream ideology in different organizations suggest a need for a more detailed ideological analysis of the structure and culture of media corporations.

Dreier (1982) describes the orientation of "an inner circle" of major corporations

as "corporate liberalism." He says leading corporations "have sought to forestall challenges from below and stabilize the long-term foundations of capitalism by implementing strategic reforms to co-opt dissent." Dreier differentiates the liberals from more conservative leaders of small and medium size businesses that have opposed unions, social welfare, foreign aid and government regulation in all forms. He shows that the most prestigious and politically-influential newspaper groups have the most interlocking directorates to leading oligopolistic corporations and the most affiliations to upper class social clubs, elite universities and business-sponsored policy groups. The corporate liberal papers are less concerned with the narrow interests of any one industry, corporation or region, he finds. In terms of news content, they are more likely to criticize or expose particular corporate or government practices or officials as harmful to the legitimacy and long-term stability of the entire system. The newspaper chains most closely linked to what Dreier calls the U.S. power structure are not the largest in terms of sales, profitability, total daily circulation, number of newspapers or number of market areas. Of the 24 largest newspaper groups, the most liberal chains are among the so-called elite papers (like *The New York Times*, *Washington Post* and the former *Times Mirror* group). "Liberal" here includes Fordism in the workplace and moderate Republicanism. Dreier suggests that, with the accelerating trends toward concentration, conglomeration and centralization within the newspaper industry and with the takeover of founder-run family-owned independents by the chains, the monopoly or near-monopoly papers try to appeal to a broader audience and increasingly take a liberal corporate outlook. The data here suggest an alternative interpretation: More than differences in political ideologies, local news organizations may differ in the extent to

which they reproduce the mainstream ideology. Note that the corporate cultures of commercial newspapers differ in the degree of support for the mainstream ideology; the newspapers do not differ to the extent of supporting an oppositional ideology. The anomaly is consequential. Variation among the newspapers means the dominant ideology is not monolithic. The dominant ideology may vary, but its prevalence and prominence contradicts its own claim to ideological pluralism. There are no oppositional voices. The mainstream news ideology is still dominant in all the Ohio newspapers studied. However, the inner circle of agenda-setting papers may be more flexible in adapting the mainstream ideology to changing socio-historical circumstances.

SOCIAL SCIENCE CONSENSUS AS VALIDITY.

Ultimately in any science, social norms of community consensus arbitrate what constitutes valid theory and what findings are accepted. In the United States, news professionals have an ideological investment in objective journalism, and many media researchers are ideologically invested in the objectivity of social science empiricism. The ideological influence on news content is contrary to the norms, protestations and self-conceptions of newswriters and even of their media critics, who usually see bias as a regrettable but temporary lapse from the otherwise neutral search for fair, balanced and accurate reports. Nor do communication researchers whose careers are invested in competing theories of news content (for example, agenda setting) readily concede the point that ideology is a primary component of the news. In doing content analyses, pluralistic social scientists who conceive of their work as objective, value-free and empirical have rarely included ideological variables that might detect a taken-or-granted commitment to corporate capitalism and middle-class consumer society. The indicators

developed here for mainstream ideological content are categoric, global, subtle and overlapping. However defined or operationalized, the systematic exclusion of ideology variables makes for weaker models of news content. To exclude ideological variables from empirical analyses may simply reveal the biases of researchers who ignore the mainstream ideology in the press and then deny that their own work is ideological.

The findings indicate that mainstream ideology and organizational culture interact as predictors of news content. The data examined deal with the latent content of news stories. The final news product is the net result of a series of decisions about content by sources, reporters, editors, newspaper executives and advertisers. Each newspaper culture seems to act (in yet undetermined ways) to produce the underlying ideological content of stories. Competition between newspapers and news groups includes mainstream ideological differences. The point is that the ideological content does not color the most prominent stories nor is it blatant political bias. Rather, ideological bias is subtly present in the portrayals throughout the paper. The strength of the relationships suggests that the role of the press in reflecting and reproducing the mainstream ideology is a determinant of news content. The empirical evidence supports the broader critical cultural argument that the primary role of the press is ideological management.

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ENDNOTES

1. Garfinkel (1967, 4-7) argues against the promises and claims made in the "exact" sciences that their terms, sentences and expressions are "objective." He says objective assessments are always and irremediably accomplished only for practical purposes through professional practices for a socially managed demonstration. He says a virtually unanimous consensus exists among logicians, linguists and ethnographers whenever they study the practical actions and practical reasoning of scientists. Garfinkel points to similarities in the everyday activities and reasoning of laymen and professionals, and of social and natural scientists. He doubts the claims and promises that scientists use a technically distinct, superior or precise terminology that is free of the social context of its use. Hence, ethnomethodology radically undermines scientific claims to methodological rigor and the substitutability of quantitative results and assessments.
2. In discussing the notion of a "mode of organization" that dominates subordinate classes in the United States, Gramsci (1971, 285-287) uses as an example Fordism -- that is, the rationalized factory with relatively high wages and social benefits -- and local craft unions that "[have] left the American popular masses in a backward state" as compared to the national industrial unions of Europe. His point is that craftsmen in unions with restrictive entry practices, assembly line rate breakers and upwardly mobile professionals who succeeded through educational attainment are likely to identify with management and with business owners.
3. Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1980) question the historical dominance of a mainstream capitalist ideology but concede it is more widespread in the 20th century than earlier when working class communities were more cohesive. Abercrombie and his colleagues as well as Dahrendorf (1959) argue that class conscious ideology and class conflict diminish in the mature stages of industrialization. So, as ideology based on a consciousness of class neighborhoods and class interests is weakened, the dominant ideology would most likely become stronger. From a post-modernist perspective to the contrary, Laclau (1983) argues the pro-capitalist "discourse" is no more central nor more privileged than other "discourses" in advanced industrial societies.
4. Between 1963 and 1983, the top 0.5 percent of super-wealthy individuals gained an additional 9.7 percent of total U.S. wealth. In the 1980s and 1990s, transfers resulting from the savings and loan bankruptcies, leverage buyouts, tax reductions on income, inheritance and dividends, windfall profits from war and oil, and corporate mergers and acquisitions, all accelerated this trend, which is probably underestimated by the 1983 figures (Phillips 2002).
5. "Elites" include government officials, notable persons in non-profit institutions and celebrities with high social status. Political elites are persons inside government offices as well as persons competing in major parties for those positions. Economic elites are owners and senior managers of major private corporations and state-owned firms. Elites are, in general, members of the upper class. Factions of the upper class compete to control policy. They control both parties and define the range of legitimate political and social alternatives even when they are not represented in government. The only elites not in the upper class are "oppositional" leaders of subordinate class and ethnic groups.
6. Lacy, Chang and Lau (1989), for example, show the effect of a number of non-ideological organizational variables on foreign coverage.
7. Shoemaker and Reese (1991, 184), whose work specifically deals with news content, describe the mainstream ideology in similar terms: "Fundamental is a belief in the value of the capitalist economic system, private ownership, pursuit of profit by self-interested entrepreneurs, and free markets. This system is intertwined with the Protestant ethic and the value of individual achievement. The companion political ideology centers around liberal democracy, a system

in which all people are presumed to have equal worth and a right to share in their own governance, making decisions based on rational self-interest." The range of legitimate controversy has shifted since the end of World War II with the growing influence of evangelical Christians and so-called neo-conservatives. Market darwinism and deregulation, tort reform benefitting "corporate persons," and low-tax smaller-government policies have been championed by Republicans under Goldwater, Reagan and the Bushes and by New Democrats like Clinton.

8. The phrase "mainstream ideology" is preferred here, so that the question of its dominance remains to be shown. A strong version of the dominant ideology thesis would require two demonstrations, to wit, (1) the mainstream ideology constitutes the ideology of a unified upper class and (2) it is incorporated at least in part into the "common sense" of the white-collar and blue-collar working classes.

9. NAA figures (2004, 18-21) are based on data from Simmon Market Research Bureau Inc., 1980-1997, and Scarborough Research, Top 50 Market Report, 1998-2003.

10. Critics and professionals often identify a dozen or so newspapers that qualify as "elite." The usual list includes *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *St. Petersburg Times*, *The* (Baltimore) *Sun*, *Boston Globe*, *The* (New Orleans) *Times-Picayune* and *Los Angeles Times*. Others might compile a slightly different group. Professional prestige is supposed to be based on the quality of coverage over time, for instance, on the number of Pulitzer Prizes won or on a record of investigative work that results in breaking major stories.

11. All the Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays in February are numbered, and a table of random numbers is used to select a reconstituted four-day week.

12. The randomizing rules are described in the next section. More detailed coding instructions are available from the author.

13. Gans infers that the enduring values are an occupational ideology, whereas I infer that the taken-for-granted assumptions are part of a society-wide dominant ideology. To test that point would require more than an analysis of news content. It would require a comparative study of news professionals, upper class elites and subordinate class groups. Questionnaire surveys would probably not be adequate because they tend to rely on consciously held beliefs. A systematic comparison of everyday conversations in naturally occurring social groups (Gamson 1992) might more fully expose the assumptions that competent members of class-cultural groups take for granted and share.

14. An example of a variable defined by production factors is the notion of the "geographic locus" of stories. Editors consider the local focus of a story, or what they call local news, to have greater news value in making judgments about running or placing a story. Findings from this study but presented elsewhere show that local focus is highly predictive of a story being prominent. Yet stories that are local may simultaneously be state, national and international stories (for example, an Army advisor from a small town in Texas captured with Contras in a cross-border raid into Nicaragua from Honduras). Geographic locus is a categoric variable with no inter-item scale reliability. The four components of geographic locus are latent traits that may be used to form patterns but not an underlying scale.

15. Indeed, communication models and sociological interpretations of the complex cultural differences among organizations are usually explained in nominal categories and ideal types. Although loglinear models also meet the scaling assumptions, a lot of power is lost in making only categoric comparisons (Aldrich & Nelson 1984; Press &

Wilson 1979).

16. Scott's *pi*, the accepted standard for intercoder reliability for nominal data, discounts the level of "observed agreement" by the level of "expected agreement" by chance (Scott 1955). However, the *pi* formula under-estimates the degree of agreement for coding schemes where 85 percent or more of the categories are absent, inapplicable or missing (Schiff & Reiter 2004). The authors present simulations that show that even at the same level of observed agreement, the likelihood that categories are not applicable effects the level of agreement that is required to satisfy Scott's *pi*. In coding schemes where a content category is absent 90 percent of the time, coders would have to agree in 97 percent of the cases to reach the 80 percent level of *pi*. Arguably, the issue of inter-coder agreement in text analysis is not the level of abstraction or simplicity of the content categories since inter-coder agreement can be demonstrated among judges appraising diamonds, rating Olympic divers or reading spectroscopic plots of distant stars. If the definitions for content categories are clear and explicit, the question of reliability is to what degree coders can be trained to recognize the same subjective and implicit features of a story. As a measure of reliability, Scott's *pi* ignores the problem of "zebras" -- to wit, content categories may occur only relatively rarely in stories. Consequently, one widely cited methodologist (Stempel 1981, 128) recommends using observed agreement while Wimmer and Dominick (1997, 130) say that *pi* values at the 75 percent cut off are acceptable and Keyton (2001, 113) says a "reliability coefficient" of .70 or above is acceptable.

17. The number of potentially independent, simultaneous functions is equal to the number of groups minus one ($k-1$). All of the functions are not usually significant. The same variables have different standardized canonical correlation coefficients in each function. The degrees of freedom is a product of the number of independent variables (p) times the number of groups (k) minus one $[(p)(k-1)]$ and in succeeding functions $[(p-1)(k-2)]$, $[(p-2)(k-3)]$, etc.

18. All other things being equal, the more independent variables in the function, the higher the standardized canonical correlation coefficient (R). The square of the correlation coefficient (R^2) is proportional to, rather than a direct measure of, the percentage of explained variation between groups. However, a better estimate is the adjusted R^2 , which takes into account the number of variables in the function(s) and the size of the sample. So, more independent variables also tend to lower the explained variance, that is, the adjusted R^2 . According to Stevens (1986), one limiting consideration in the proper use of discriminant analysis is the size of the sample, such that the number of cases divided by the number of variables in the function should not exceed 20. With $N=224$, therefore, as many as 21 variables might be used.

19. According to Stevens (1986), a discriminant function is to be characterized or named for those variables that have the highest pooled within-group correlations with the discriminant function itself rather than for the highest standardized canonical coefficients. The function is named on the basis of the strongest within-group correlation coefficients, which are between the function and materialist consumer themes. Zinkhan and Hyman (1987) discuss methods of evaluating functions to select the most descriptive discriminant variables.

20. Obviously, the percent of cases correctly classified by the function(s) into the criterion groups tends to diminish with more grouping categories. For example, it is more difficult to classify stories into 14 newspaper groups than into two prominence categories. This estimate is overly optimistic, however, since the variable coefficients maximize the group separation for this particular data set. A more reliable estimate is available if the function derived from the test data set is applied to a validation data set.

21. The phrase "media elite" refers to the influence of the media, whereas the terms "prestige press" or sometimes "elite press" convey a sense of superior quality.
22. For example, the news media cover "deviance" but rarely present the point of view of the out-group in an empathetic or authentic way. See Cohen & Young (1981); and Ericson, Baranek, & Chan (1987).

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