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Organizational Culture and Its Influence on the News: Class Ideology in Newspapers and Chains

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RUNNING HEAD: "Ideological Bias in Newspaper Chains"

ABSTRACT (145 words)

A case study of 14 Ohio newspapers offers quantitative evidence that ideological content has significant and substantial effects on story prominence. Ideology is operationalized in terms of 11 hegemonic and oppositional themes – latent in taken-for-granted background assumptions rather than manifest in political biases or partisan opinions. In most newspapers, stories with more hegemonic themes run more prominently. Mult-level regression analysis shows that newspaper chains vary in ideological content and chain differences over-ride identifiable ideological differences among individual newspapers. Controlling for organizational ideology, no noticeable ideological differences are found in stories within a given edition, consistent with professional claims and reader experiences. Gannett and Thomson newspapers play down stories with many hegemonic themes. And yet the two largest chains in that period seem to represent an inner circle of media corporations, which act to universalize an upper class ideology and to adapt to emerging contradictions.

Organizational Culture and Its Influence on the News:

Class Ideology in Newspapers and Chains

In Shoemaker's synthesis (1987) of theories about news content drawn from case studies and surveys conducted during more than 30 years of empirical work, she acknowledges the centrality of Altschull's view (1984) that mass media content reflects the ideology of those who finance the media.¹ She (1987:3, 20) points out that few empirical studies have tested ideological hypotheses. Nevertheless, the effects of ideology in the news and in organizations have been widely observed (Carragee 1991; Goldman & Rajagopal 1991; Jensen 1987; Mumby 1988; Schiller 1978). The aim of the present study is two-fold: to respond to the lack of quantitative work by demonstrating the power of empirical indicators of ideology and to test falsifiable ideological hypotheses. Multi-level regression analysis is used to disentangle the complicated and often unnoticed effects of ideology on news content.

The argument here is that ideology is a characteristic of a collectivity, group, community or organization and is not solely a property of individuals and their belief systems. So, if there are ideological aspects to the news, they vary as a function of the newsroom and news organization. The mainstream ideology has different effects at different organizational levels, effects that remain largely unnoticed by those who routinely work for or read one newspaper.²

Shoemaker (1987:2) explains the production of news content in terms of five kinds of variables: social reality; media routines; journalists' socialization and attitudes; social and institutional influence; and ideological positions.³ Shoemaker argues that all five kinds of variables affect news content, but to the extent that news content deviates from the view of social reality presented by other sources of information, news is a result of effects among the other four variables. Even more concisely, she (1987:29-30) says,

"[T]he issue-specific ideology of those who finance the mass media interact to influence mass media

content through relationships with social and institutional forces such as advertisers, audiences, and government; through ideological influences on the socialization and selection of journalists; and through the ways in which content is gathered, shaped, and transmitted." [Italics added by authors for emphasis.]

The interaction of those who finance the mass media and their issue-specific ideology becomes a key integrating construct. Social and institutional forces, socialization and attitudes, media routines, and mediated portrayals of social reality, all depend on those who finance the mass media and their issue-specific ideology.

"Those who finance" the news could refer to an individual or group, but the notion of "issue-specific ideology" seems to suggest that ideology exists somehow fundamentally as an individual-level property in the sense that ideological issues emerge in a single instance or around a single issue. One of three mechanisms of influence is "through ideological influences on the socialization and selection of journalists" - again indicating that ideological positions are held as attitudes or beliefs of individuals.⁴ Yet the concept of "ideology" is heuristic not because it is issue-specific or a property of individuals but rather because it refers to a number of related views of individuals in a group, organization, institution or society. Altschull (1984) defines ideology in terms of support for and reproduction of an overall socio-political system.⁵ Concretely, in the United States, the "dominant ideology" of those who finance the news media is capitalism.⁶

Shoemaker and Reese (1991:184) describe key values in the dominant ideology:

"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."

Sometimes the dominant ideology represents an articulate upper class consensus; sometimes it's an

unremarked arrangement. Support for a bi-partisan anti-Communist foreign policy have been part of the U.S. capitalist consensus from World War I to the 1989 fall of the Soviet Union.⁷ Sociologists have repeatedly shown that pro-growth business coalitions drive local politics while metro section stories usually frame policy proposals as issues of local non-partisan "good government" (Domhoff 2006; Feagan 1988). So, reducing the meaning of ideology to the social psychological notion of the "opinions and beliefs" of those who finance the news (or of the idiosyncratic news selections or socialization of the gatekeepers they hire) leaves out unwritten newsroom policy, the broader downtown corporate culture and the "weltanschauungen" of the civil society at large. If "issue-specific" ideology refers to narrowly defined issues, such as, support for or opposition to a sitting president or to the use of ground troops in prosecuting a regional war, then the holistic and macro-level concept of ideology would seem irrelevant.

Shoemaker's notion of "issue-specific ideologies" seems to rest on pluralistic assumptions. Her idea makes sense in a mass society model of partial, cross-cutting and countervailing interests of secondary institutions.⁸ She (1987:31) says she "does not predict a nation-wide hegemonic ideological influence on media content in most instances, but instead predicts that a multitude of conflicting vested interests will interact to produce content unique to each country in some ways, but similar across countries in many others." From the pluralist perspective (Dahl 1961; Madison [1788] 1961; Rose 1967), a multitude of factions and interests are cross-cutting. The key metaphor is the perfect market of ideas.⁹ Special interests, pressure groups and stakeholding constituencies are legally free to express their ideas, and supposedly, the extent to which a point of view is disseminated is determined by audience/consumer demand. Shoemaker and her colleagues have made major contributions by enumerating the factors and influences that qualify this model. Specifically, her phrase "those who finance the news" seems to recognize the influence of those who have concentrated ownership of media corporations or who advertise through the mass media. Unanswered is the question: how are the beliefs of owners and sponsors in news organizations linked to the newsroom.

In contrast, "structuralists" like Domhoff (1979, 1983), Schwartz (1987) and Useem (1984) point to importance of class ownership and management in achieving ideological domination. Bluhm (1974:10) differentiates levels of ideological conflict, distinguishing between forensic and latent ideologies--the former is a matter of individual conscious choice; the latter is presumed and institutionalized. A forensic ideology is a rational, partially consistent, articulated and proselytizing set of ideas, for instance, conservatism or socialism; and those who believe in a such an ideology are partisans, espousing or disseminating a view of policy issues, political parties and electoral candidates. In periods of rapid change and widespread conflict, such proselytizing, rationalized ideologies tend to emerge. Such "political ideologies" focus on specific issues and may divide the upper class in a society. The term has pejorative connotations associated with self-interest, bias, societal conflict and disruptive change. Meanwhile, a latent ideology is implicit in the taken-for-granted meanings, underlying factual assumptions, presumed relevances, background expectations, value standards and institutional arrangements of a culture or sub-culture, especially during more settled times.

Ideology in the taken-for-granted sense will be called the "mainstream ideology" and is defined as a view of life about the way things are and ought to be that is routinely taken for granted as the background assumptions by a group of people. The mainstream ideology is more than the idiosyncratic preferences or biographical commitments of individuals; it is a property of an organization, community, class or society. News reports are considered either "hegemonic" or "oppositional" in regard to a dominant set of latent expectations in an organization or community. The term "mainstream ideology" is used here in preference to the concept of a "dominant ideology" since the degree of consensus among power brokers in a society and the dominance of that consensus among subordinate groups, who adopt common-sense views and accept status-quo arrangements, cannot be demonstrated in this study. The point is that political ideologies may be the domain of legitimate controversy, whereas the mainstream ideology is an area of consensus, usually

closed to question or debate. Perhaps because it tends to remain unnoticed and taken for granted, Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner (1980), Carragee (1991) and Gitlin (1980), all stress the contradictory character of hegemonic ideology. The dominant ideology changes over time in response to external factors, and in detail, its precepts and presuppositions may be logically inconsistent.

The concept of "organizational culture" (Deal & Kennedy 1983; Jelinek *et al.* 1983; Pacanowky & O'Donnell-Trujillo 1983; Schneider 1990) is useful in locating ideology as a characteristic of organizations and not only of individuals. However, organizational culture can also be defined from multiple theoretical perspectives.¹⁰ Of the five uses of the term that Smircich and Calás (1987:228-265) differentiate, organizational culture is defined here to refer to culture as "shared knowledge," that is, an all-pervasive system of cognitive structures, meanings or understandings that accompany the behaviors and practices of members of a particular organization and that they share and help create. This usage coincides with what they call an interpretive perspective (1987:234, 239-241): "(T)he symbolic constitutes what is taken for granted as organizational life. Culture and communication are vehicles through which reality is constituted in organizational contexts." Their "interpretive" definition is similar to the "structuralist" approach in Riley's study (1983) of two firms. She identifies the deep structures of meaning within an organization as generative rules and resources that produce and reproduce regularized relationships and that constitute in their instantiation the political (i.e., competitive) culture of an organization.

Of course, organizational cultures overlap. Cross-cutting organizational identities and constraints produce role conflict, status inconsistency and cognitive dissonance, according to "reference group" theory.¹¹ Journalists are members of a news organization and a profession. The ideology of professional journalism constrains newswriters in manufacturing the news, demanding that their stories be fair and balanced in terms of political bias, that they not editorialize in the news columns and that they take a middle-of-the-road stance between two sides of a story. Yet both critical and functionalist theorists would expect there to be

effects from the latent or "mainstream" ideology of socially constructed, shared meanings and taken-for-granted patterns of symbolic discourse of overlapping organizational cultures. The notion of organizational culture posits a partially integrated, conflictual and generative system of subcultures.

However, the literature on the upper class and the power structure of American society suggests that corporations may be increasingly homogeneous. A consensus has emerged from many studies that argue:

(1) Corporate control of the national economy has become increasingly more concentrated and unified (Allen 1974; Mizruchi 1982; Mizruchi & Koenig 1986).

(2) Corporate elites dominate the political and cultural life of the country (Dye 1995; Burris 1987; Clawson, Neustadt & Bearden 1986; Domhoff 1967, 1970, 1990; Exxo 1987; Hellinger & Judd 1994; Mills 1956; Sabato 1990; Schwartz 1987; Useem 1979, 1981).

(3) Corporations have become more ideologically mobilized since the 1970s (Clawson & Neustadt 1989; Mizruchi 1989, 1990; Useem 1984).

(4) An inner circle of corporations represent the general interests of an upper class and have sufficient unifying power to overcome social cliques, regional competition and institutional autonomy (Baltzell 1964; Levine 1980; Oglesby 1977; Ratcliff 1987; Soref & Zeitlin 1987; Useem 1982, 1984).

(5) Media corporations are increasingly concentrated (Albarran & Chan-Olmsted 1998; Bagdikian 2004; Compaine & Gomery 2000; Picard *et al.* 1988; Sanchez-Tabernerero & Carvajal 2002).

Furthermore, because of the nature of newspapers in setting the media agenda, news portrayals may have broad and direct effects in reproducing widespread assumptions about reality (beyond the horizon of personal experience). The question of ideological domination is one of specificity.

Research Question: Are the shared assumptions of those who finance the news media universalized and disseminated in news portrayals? More specifically, to what extent and in what manner do newspaper corporations differ ideologically, express a degree of autonomy, represent a mainstream consensus, or

articulate the classwide interests of an upper class?

The question leads to a strategy of research analysis. The expectation in this study is that a mainstream ideology in the news is a primary component of culture in news organizations but that it has separate effects at the level of professional news workers, newspapers and newspaper chains.

The argument here is that ideological variables have different effects at different organizational levels, effects that usually remain unnoticed by news workers and readers. Variables, including ideology, that influence a story's content and prominence may have direct (as well as interactive) effects at one or more of three organizational levels: among members of the profession; within the newsroom or newspaper; and in the corporation or newspaper chain.

HYPOTHESES

The strategy of data analysis is to examine the effects of hegemonic news content on story prominence and to test for effects that differ among news organizations.

1. The mainstream ideology is expected to have a significant positive effect on story prominence.
2. The effects of mainstream ideological content on story prominence are expected to vary among newspapers.
3. The effects of mainstream ideological content on story prominence are expected to vary among newspaper groups.

Hegemonic story content that has the same effect on story prominence across all newspapers will be considered evidence of the influence of the mainstream culture of the journalism profession or the entire industry. If hegemonic news content influences the prominence of stories differently in different news organizations, the inference is that different organizational cultures accept or reject the mainstream ideology in differing degrees.

METHODS

The sample consisted of 224 news stories drawn from 14 different newspapers, which in turn were members of five different newspaper chains or groups. Sixteen stories were selected at random from specific page locations within a composite of four weekday editions in February 1988. It could be argued that the stories were not independent because their presence and prominence on specific page locations mutually constrained their occurrence elsewhere within any designated newspaper edition. Thus, the question of the unit of analysis was central to the decision to use multi-level regression analysis in this study. Even though the multi-level analyses conducted in this study assume independence of errors across stories within newspapers, at least nested analysis allows for an independent error estimate at each level of sampling, so that effects of variables can be accurately estimated at each level of analysis.

A stratified sample of newspapers in southwestern and central Ohio was selected on the basis of circulation size and ownership.¹² There were four independently owned papers; three chains were each represented by either two or three papers; and a residual category of three corporate-owned papers consisted of chains that had only one property within the sampling area. Circulation size, chain membership and regional location largely predetermined the choices of newspapers selected for the sample.

TABLE 1
NEWSPAPERS IN THE SAMPLE^a

Corporate Ownership	Circulation/Community Size^b		
	Metro Daily	Middle-Sized City Daily	Small Town Daily
1. Gannett	Cincinnati Enquirer	-----	Chillicothe Gazette
2. Cox	Dayton Daily News	Springfield News-Sun	-----
3. Thomson	(Canton) Repository	Middletown Journal	Xenia Daily Gazette
4. Miscellaneous Chain Newspapers^c	Cincinnati Post	-----	-----
	-----	(Lima) News	-----
	-----	-----	Beavercreek Daily News
5. Independents	Columbus Dispatch	-----	Troy Daily News
	(Toledo) Blade	-----	(Celina) Daily Standard
<hr/> N=14	<hr/> 6	<hr/> 3	<hr/> 5

^a There were 224 stories in the sample (16 stories for each of 14 papers). Four stories were drawn at random from specific page locations on each of four days of a composite week.

^b In 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.

^c Scripps Howard owns the *Cincinnati Post*; Freedom Newspapers owns the *News* in Lima; and Times Publications had only recently acquired the *Beavercreek Daily News*. The Times group was new and in the midst of a bankruptcy process during the summer of 1989. The paper was not part of the group during the February 1988 data collection period. It is, therefore, considered an independent or at least on the borderline between independents and chains.

Multi-Level Regression Analysis

To demonstrate that the mainstream ideology has effects on story prominence, this study used multi-level analysis, as implemented in the computer programs "PROC MIXED" (SAS Institute Inc., 1992) and "ML3," developed by Goldstein, Prosser and Rasbash (1989).¹³ In single-level regression analysis, independent variables have direct and/or interacting effects on the outcome measure. In this study, single-level regression analysis would have to assume that stories are independent of one another. In multi-level analysis, measured characteristics of the units at a higher level alter the relations among variables at lower units. Thus, multi-level analysis does not require independence across stories, but attempts to model the dependence among stories and thereby produce appropriate significance tests without aggregating across stories to create a single observation for each newspaper. Failing to address the problem of dependent observations leads to inflated Type I error, whereas aggregating data results in a loss of power.

These relations are generally described by the following set of simultaneous equations, showing the effects of story-level variables on story prominence and the effects of paper and organizational variables on these effects.

Equations:

$$[1] Y_{ijk} = \beta_{0i} + \beta_{1jk} X_{1ijk} + \beta_{2jk} X_{2ijk} + \dots + \beta_{pjk} X_{nijk} + R_{ijk}$$
$$[2.1] \beta_{0jk} = \delta_{00} + \delta_{01} Z_{1jk} + \delta_{02} Z_{2jk} + \dots + V_{0jk}$$
$$[2.2] \beta_{1jk} = \delta_{10} + \delta_{11} Z_{1jk} + \delta_{12} Z_{2jk} + \dots + V_{1jk}$$

Equation [1] describes the effects of story-level variables on story prominence. Y_{ijk} is the prominence score for story i in paper j in organization k . The set of X variables are story-level characteristics that determine story prominence, (e.g., hegemony, political conservatism and other variables not present here), and β_{pjk} represents the effect of characteristic p on prominence in newspaper j in organization k . To simplify the presentation, the only story-level content characteristics being considered here are mainstream ideological variables. These regression coefficients are fundamentally the same as the more familiar regression

coefficients of multiple regression with one difference. Namely, the subscripts j and k on β indicate that the effect of characteristic p on prominence is newspaper specific, that is, the effect varies from one newspaper to another. This variability in the effect of X_p is potentially related to characteristics of the newspapers or a characteristic of a higher level organization to which the paper belongs, such that the effect of characteristic X_p can be predicted from these newspaper and/or organization level variables (Z_{jk}). This latter set of relations implies a second set of equations that explain the β_p in terms of the Z_{jk} . This latter set of equations is given by Equations 2.1 to 2. p . In these equations, the δ_{pq} represent the effect of Z_q on β_p . In actuality, not all of the β_p need be random (i.e., some story-level characteristics may exert the same influence on story prominence for all newspapers), and not all of the β_p need to be explained by the same set of newspaper and organizational characteristics. Taken together the full set of equations describes story prominence in terms of characteristics of the story as well as characteristics of the newspaper and the organization to which the newspaper belongs.

In the present study, stories are found in newspapers which, in turn, are part of chains. Each content variable can be measured as a property of each individual story, of all stories in a newspaper, or of all stories in all papers in a chain. Consequently, the effects of content variables on outcomes at the story-level may vary from one newspaper to the next and may vary as a result of higher-level organizational characteristics of the newspapers.

Variable Definitions

Dependent variable. News content has been variously studied in terms of the portrayals, imagery, structure, themes, orientations and prominence of messages that make truth claims about the "real world." News content is defined here in terms of the prominence of stories in a newspaper. A story's prominence was a score combining its length and its location in the paper. Length is measured in square-inches and includes text, headlines and accompanying graphics; the log of the square-inches is used to reduce skew.

Page location gives a story a weight of 1.0, 1.5 or 2.0. A story on page one above the fold received a weight of two points; for being on page one below the fold or on any section front it received a weight of 1.5 points; and a story on an inside page received a weight of one point. The prominence score for a story was the product of its log length and its weight. There were no substantial differences in results, using a variety of weighting methods.

I. Story-level independent variables. The mainstream ideology was operationalized in terms of the hegemonic and oppositional orientation of each story. On each of 11 dimensions, a story could be hegemonic, oppositional, neither or both. Because hegemonic and oppositional themes could both be present in a story, dichotomous dummy variables were constructed. Each story was given separate additive hegemonic and oppositional scores based on the number of themes present. Stories were evaluated in terms of themes of present-time orientation, popular demobilization, conformity, normality, individualism, sexism, racial consciousness, middle class values, boosterism, consumer orientation and private property rights.¹⁴

Since many empirically-oriented researchers avoid the notion of hegemonic ideology as tautological, contradictory or just vague, definitions of each end of dimensions are given here. The dimensions of the mainstream consensus overlap and refine the eight "enduring values" that constitute the eight elements of ideology of the news developed by Gans (1980:39-55). Conceptually, the 11 dimensions seem to fit into four broad domains that refer to common-sense assumptions and expectations about (A) spatio-temporal reality, (B) human nature, (C) interpersonal relations and (D) collective arrangements.

A. Spatio-temporal assumptions. "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 "why" or interpret current developments in terms of broader societal linkages, their global context, historical origins or causal complexity are considered oppositional.

B. Assumptions and expectations about human nature. "**Normality**" themes are present when being rational, sane, mature, 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 social control. For example, moderation is considered normal; extremism is not; and those who indulge or abstain to excess are often portrayed in pejorative terms or a satirical tone. "**Individualism**" means that self-made "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 credited to a political personality. "**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. Oppositional stories include representations of spiritual, intellectual, naturalistic, artistic, environmental or humanistic values.

C. Assumptions and expectations about interpersonal relations. "**Conformity**" themes refer to the implied consensus between authorities and publics -- since everyone agrees about what is good and proper, private citizens are portrayed conforming to authorized policies and accepted practices. Some stories recognize that individuals do violate the law and deviate from the proper standards of conduct but that such incidents are exceptions, for example, crime and "scandal" stories. Gans says exposés of the misbehavior of public officials and notables represent a search for and defense of the moral and legal order. Oppositional stories are at least non-judgmental about incidents or expressions of radical disagreement with normal, natural and/or legal arrangements or authorities. For Gans, social oppositional news deals with activities which disturb or threaten the public peace or weaken valued institutions. "**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 protective and chivalrous males. Sexist stories may provide physical and emotional characteristics of different sexes. Sexist characterizations of 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 sometimes by focusing on women who lead active, enterprising, competent or successful lives. "**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 or criminals, for instance. Oppositional stories are color blind, leaving out the racial, religious, linguistic, national or ethnic identity of participants. Some oppositional stories explicitly portray successful, harmonious or intimate relationships among people of different ethnic backgrounds. According to Gans, hegemonic stories pay attention to the official norm of racial integration rather than behavioral regularities, thus portraying an idealized democracy.

D. Assumptions and expectations about collective arrangements. "Popular demobilization" means that in a story public authorities and officials are acting and resolving problems, issues or crises, so that people don't need to act. Gans says mainstream news implicitly credits and judges leaders for initiating and producing societal results. Oppositional stories portray the actuality or possibility of direct popular participation in public policy-making by explicitly or implicitly mobilizing the citizenry by taking a shocked, adversarial or advocacy stance. "**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. Owners have a presumed 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. Oppositional stories elaborate on the benefits and costs to the working class, labor groups or so-called little people. Gans (1980:61-62) says,

"[Hegemonic] 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 [major corporations, prestigious professions or elite universities]; and with the late-middle-aged cohort that has the most power among age groups."

"Boosterism" refers to patriotic or chauvinistic stories, where local groups and individuals (those from one's own neighborhood, city, state and 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. Divergent social groups or social systems are sometimes labelled as foreign, subversive, Communist-inspired, Marxist-led or anti-democratic. Hegemonic stories may assume a definition of the community or national interest that benefits the local or national elites, justifies inequitable power relationships with external groups and/or at the same time denies the inequitable or imperialistic nature of such relationships. Countries are judged by the extent to which they live up to or imitate American practices; domestic problems are treated as exceptions with the implication that normal American ideals remain viable. Oppositional stories have an internationalist or cosmopolitan orientation, celebrating groups with divergent geographic origins or representing heterodox arrangements or programs. **"Private property"** themes refer to the preference for individual as opposed to collective solutions and initiatives. Hegemonic stories focus on private rights, owner privileges and self-interest as the only way the system could operate. To extend Gans, the news treats responsible capitalism and "perfect market" competition as if they were the actually existing norm. 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 effects of other story-level independent variables were examined but results are not presented here. The variables were political conservatism, political liberalism, news values such as conflict, immediacy and proximity, and 30 social issues or topics.

II.-III. Organizational-level independent variables. Sixteen stories were drawn from each of 14 newspapers. The newspaper was treated as the second-level unit of analysis. Chain membership, corporate membership and circulation size were considered third-level organizational characteristics.

Each newspaper was characterized in terms of its chain membership, a third-level characteristic of a story. The Cox and Gannett chains were each represented by two newspapers, and three papers were members of the Thomson group. A mixed chain category combined one paper each from the Cincinnati-based Scripps Howard group, California-headquartered Freedom Newspapers and the small Texas-based Times Publications. Four independently owned newspapers constituted a residual non-chain group.

Estimates of variance within each chain based on only two or three cases may be expected to be unstable. Consequently, no attempt was made to estimate variance in effects across papers in chains. Rather, the model included a set of "interactive" variables that test whether story-level variables functioned differently in predicting story prominence in papers in different chains.

Besides classifying papers according to chain membership, newspapers may part of a generic corporate culture. Corporate-owned papers were distinguished from the "independents," defined as single newspapers owned by an individual or family.

Another characteristic of newspapers included in the models was circulation size. The circulation size was directly related to the size of the metropolitan area, city or town, in which the paper was distributed and which presumably constitute distinct cultural milieu. The log of the circulation size of each paper was used in place of circulation size to reduce skew.

Coding and Reliability

One of the investigators and two research assistants coded 224 stories on all the content variables.

Content analysis of a 20 percent subsample of stories showed intercoder reliability among the three coders at the 80.9 percent level (Krippendorff 1980). Intercoder reliability was defined as the mean of the means, using the number of elemental variables that were coded the same by any two of three coders over the number of variables coded the same or different for each pair of coders for each story.¹⁵

Strategy of Data Analysis

To evaluate the hypotheses, a series of multi-level regression analyses were run to examine the effects of story-level variables on prominence. Variables' effects were examined individually and in conjunction with other story-level variables. Findings for only the ideological variables are presented here. If effects of story-level predictors were found to differ from newspaper to newspaper, organizational measures were investigated as a basis for these differences. However, because of the small sample size with respect to newspapers, interactions of story-level variables with chain membership were tested even if variance in the effect of story characteristics was non-significant.

Given the number of variables and the sample size, the strategy was to evaluate combinations of variables. The researchers first looked for fixed and random effects of individual variables across all the stories. An effect is fixed if a variable exerts the same influence in all papers; a random effect of a variable exerts a different influence in different papers. For a fixed-effects variable, the size of the effect (the beta weight) is the same in all newspapers; for a random-effects variable, the effect (the beta weight) varies from one newspaper to another. Variables, whose estimated effects were not statistically different from zero, which showed no evidence for variability in their effects across newspapers, and which did not interact with chain membership, were eliminated from further consideration. A few variables were found to have random effects. These effects were then examined in the presence of other story characteristics to determine if the effects could be accounted for in terms of other correlated story characteristics, whose effects did not vary

across newspapers. Those variables with robust random effects were fitted into a combined model, containing variables with fixed and random effects.

AN EXAMPLE

A Feb. 11, 1988, front-page story in *The Repository* from Canton, Ohio, illustrates how the coding definitions were applied. The story says a municipal court clerk, Tom Harmon, claims he was slandered by Don Diamond, an undercover police lieutenant. According to the story, Diamond told a subordinate that Harmon took reputed organized crime money to lobby for Diamond's removal as agent-in-charge of the Metro narcotics unit. Harmon complained to a county prosecutor who, as head of an oversight board, agreed to review the charges. Comments from all sides are given, but the story highlights Harmon's point of view, beginning with the headline, "Diamond lied, Harmon says." The story is all about the authorities rangling among themselves to resolve public matters, but the public is not involved. The coders agreed the story was an instance of popular demobilization.

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics for the principal variables were examined. The outcome variable, prominence, is reasonably symmetrical and so roughly meets the assumption of normality. The prominence score (the placement score times the weighted log of the number of square inches in a story) varies from minimum of 0.7782 to a maximum of 1.1303. The mean prominence score for all the stories in any given newspaper varies from 1.375 to 1.650 with an average prominence score across all 224 stories of 1.500. The values for the predictive variable of interest, hegemony, are given in Table 2. The hegemonic score is a count of the number of hegemonic news themes in each story in each newspaper in each chain. The number of hegemonic themes in any given story varies from a minimum of zero to a maximum of eight. The mean hegemony score for any given newspaper ranges from 3.44 to 5.75; and the average hegemony score for all 224 stories is 4.42. All higher level analyses (e.g., grouped by corporate-vs.-independent, circulation size or

chains) can be derived from the newspaper-level parameters.

**TABLE 2. EFFECTS OF THE HEGEMONIC SCORES^a ON STORY PROMINENCE:
 FOUR COMPETING MODELS OF MULTI-LEVEL REGRESSION**

MODEL 1		ESTIMATE	STANDARD ERROR	Z SCORE
FIXED EFFECTS	UNSPECIFIED			
RANDOM EFFECTS				
LEVEL 3	UNSPECIFIED			
LEVEL 2	CONSTANT	0	0	
	HEGEMONY	0.6261	0.6446	0.97
LEVEL 1	CONSTANT	22.81	2.144	

Key: * = p < .05
 ** = p < .02
 *** = p < .001

N: Level 1 = 224 stories
 Level 2 = 14 newspapers
 Level 3 = 5 news groups

^a A "hegemonic score" is a count of the number of hegemonic news themes in each story in each newspaper in each chain.

^b "Fixed" means that the effect of the variable is measured for all cases (newspaper stories) at a given level of organization (for example, all stories in each newspaper).

^c "Random" means that the effect of the variable is measured for all cases in the entire sample regardless of whether the story occurred in a particular newspaper or chain.

TABLE 3. EFFECTS OF THE HEGEMONIC SCORES^a ON STORY PROMINENCE:

MODEL 2		ESTIMATE	STANDARD ERROR	Z SCORE
FIXED EFFECTS^b				
	CONSTANT	0.0021	0.0787	
	HEGEMONY	-0.249	0.0535	4.65***
RANDOM EFFECTS^c				
LEVEL 3	UNSPECIFIED			
LEVEL 2	CONSTANT	0	0	
LEVEL 1	CONSTANT	1.388	0.131	

Key: * = $p < .05$
 ** = $p < .02$
 *** = $p < .001$

N: Level 1 = 224 stories
 Level 2 = 14 newspapers
 Level 3 = 5 news groups

^a A "hegemonic score" is a count of the number of hegemonic news themes in each story in each newspaper in each chain.

^b "Fixed" means that the effect of the variable is measured for all cases (newspaper stories) at a given level of organization (for example, all stories in each newspaper).

^c "Random" means that the effect of the variable is measured for all cases in the entire sample regardless of whether the story occurred in a particular newspaper or chain.

TABLE 4. EFFECTS OF HEGEMONIC SCORES ON PROMINENCE

MODEL 3		ESTIMATE	STANDARD ERROR	Z SCORE
FIXED EFFECTS				
	CONSTANT	8.208	0.3201	
	HEGEMONY	0.04036	0.2656	0.15
RANDOM EFFECTS				
LEVEL 3	UNSPECIFIED			
LEVEL 2	CONSTANT	0	0	
	HEGEMONY	0.6412	0.07769	8.25***
LEVEL 1	CONSTANT	22.94	2.171	

Key: * = p < .05
 ** = p < .02
 *** = p < .001

N: Level 1 = 224 stories
 Level 2 = 14 newspapers
 Level 3 = 5 news groups

^a A "hegemonic score" is a count of the number of hegemonic news themes in each story in each newspaper in each chain.

^b "Fixed" means that the effect of the variable is measured for all cases (newspaper stories) at a given level of organization (for example, all stories in each newspaper).

^c "Random" means that the effect of the variable is measured for all cases in the entire sample regardless of whether the story occurred in a particular newspaper or chain.

TABLE 5. EFFECTS OF HEGEMONIC SCORES ON PROMINENCE:

MODEL 4		ESTIMATE	STANDARD ERROR	Z SCORE
FIXED EFFECTS				
	CONSTANT	8.419	0.389	
	HEGEMONY	0.555	0.27	2.06**
	CHAIN 1	0.314	0.92	0.34
	CHAIN 3	-0.703	0.762	0.92
	CH1/HEG	-1.458	0.69	2.11**
	CH3/HEG	-1.205	0.46	2.62*
RANDOM EFFECTS				
LEVEL 3	UNSPECIFIED			
LEVEL 2	CONSTANT	0	0	
	HEGEMONY	0	0	
LEVEL 1	CONSTANT	22.38	2.133	

Key: * = p < .05
** = p < .02
*** = p < .001

N: Level 1 = 224 stories
Level 2 = 14 newspapers
Level 3 = 5 news groups

^a A "hegemonic score" is a count of the number of hegemonic news themes in each story in each newspaper in each chain.

^b "Fixed" means that the effect of the variable is measured for all cases (newspaper stories) at a given level of organization (for example, all stories in each newspaper).

^c "Random" means that the effect of the variable is measured for all cases in the entire sample regardless of whether the story occurred in a particular newspaper or chain.

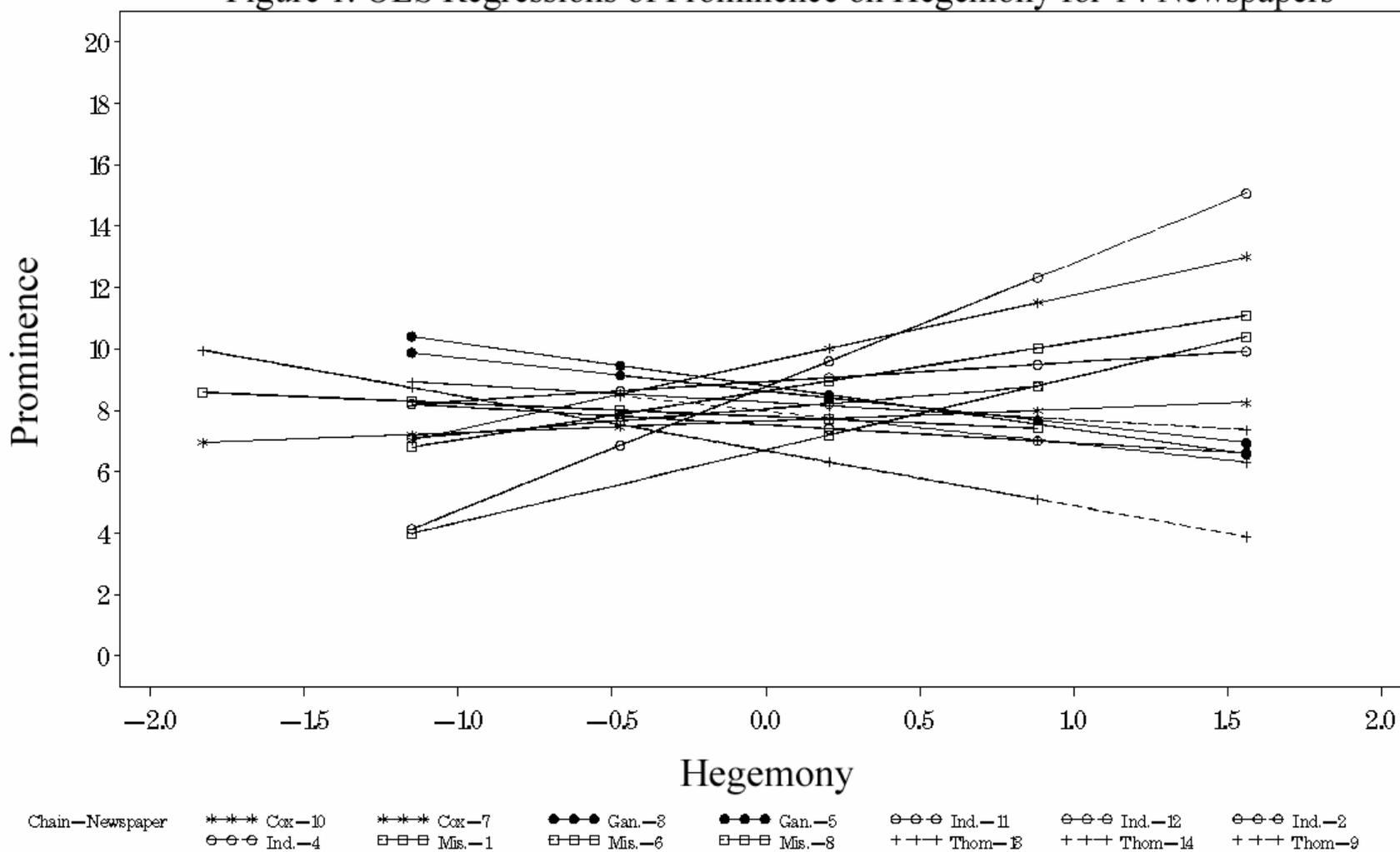
^d "Chain 1" refers to Gannett Co. Inc. newspapers and "Chain 3" refers to Thomson Newspapers.

^e "Ch1/Heg" and "Ch3/Heg" are interactive terms counting the number of hegemonic news themes for Gannett and Thomson newspapers, respectively.

Table 2 shows that hegemony has an average effect on story prominence that is not different than zero. However in Table 3, hegemony is the only variable that exerts a differential effect across newspapers. None of the competing variables, those derived from three well established theories of news content but not shown here, could distinguish between the news content of different newspapers. Table 4 shows average and newspaper-specific effects together, but newspaper effects disappear once chains are introduced. Table 5 reveals the effect of the interaction between hegemony and chain membership on prominence. Examination of the effects of hegemony within chains reveals that stories are given less prominence in the Gannett and Thomson chains as hegemonic content increases. Stories of average hegemonic content are given more prominence in these chains. There was no direct effect of oppositional story content on prominence.

The log of the circulation size had no effects on story prominence. Aggregating papers into corporate and independent groups did not explain the effects of hegemonic content on story prominence. Also, there were no significant differences among newspapers in terms of the number of oppositional themes.

Figure 1. OLS Regressions of Prominence on Hegemony for 14 Newspapers



The complexity of the results may be shown more clearly in Figure 1, which shows the random effects of hegemony within each newspaper (see Table 4). The figure plots the ordinary least squares regression line between hegemonic content and story prominence for each newspaper. As hegemony scores increase, prominence increases markedly for a few papers, decreases sharply for a few and has little effect for a number of papers with relatively flat slopes. In other words, for some papers the relationship between hegemonic content and story prominence is positive; for other papers it is negative; and for still other papers there is no effect. The second-order relationships show that the commitment to the mainstream ideology differs significantly from one paper to another. When interactive terms combining hegemony and chain membership are introduced, papers in the Gannett and Thomson chains tend to show a negative effect of hegemony on story prominence, whereas papers in other chains tend to show no effect or a slightly positive effect of hegemony on prominence.

Figure 2. Effect of Hegemony on Story Prominence Differs Among Five Newspaper Chains

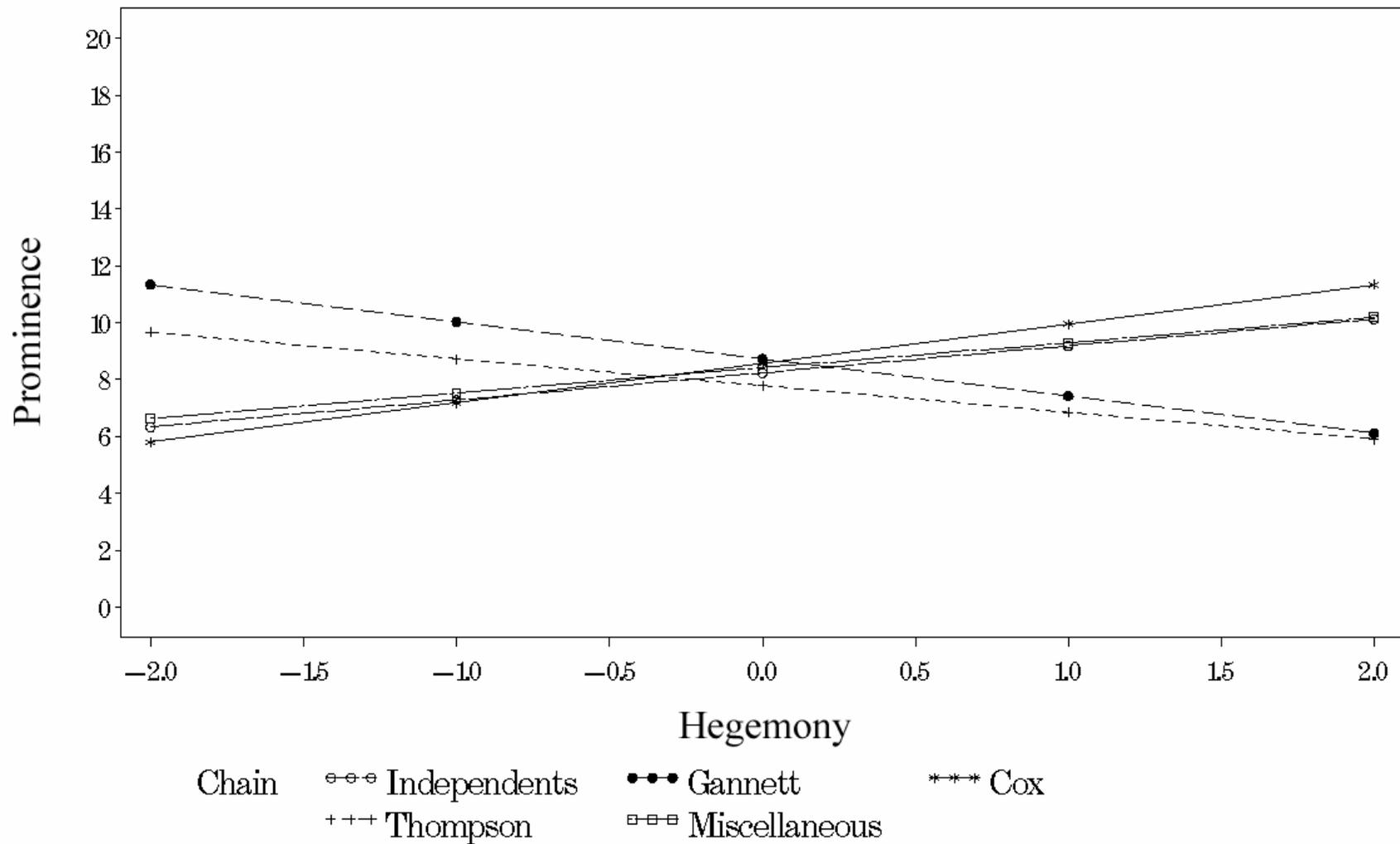


Figure 2 shows the interaction between hegemony and prominence at the level of the chains. The figure graphically demonstrates that the Gannett and Thomson chains actually give less prominence to stories with high hegemony scores while Cox, the miscellaneous chain papers and the independents give more prominence to stories with many hegemonic themes. If the stories from the latter three groups are combined into a group representing the rest of the industry, the residual effect of hegemony on story prominence is positive and significant.

In short, Hypothesis 1 is not supported; hegemonic content does not have a consistent direct effect on story prominence in all papers. Hypothesis 2 is also not supported; the effect of hegemony is not significantly different among newspapers once the interaction between the chains and hegemony is controlled. However, the power of the test must be considered low, given the small number of papers and stories used in the study. Hypothesis 3 is supported; the effect of hegemony is significantly different among newspaper chains.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The argument here is that the mainstream ideology represents the interests of an upper class (Altschull 1984; Hartz 1955) defined on the basis of ownership and management of the largest capitalist corporations, some of which own or finance the news (Bagdikian 2004; Parenti 1995) and that the news media play a role in universalizing the interests latent in the mainstream ideology to include a dominant coalition of core ethnic and regional groups (Burnham 1970; Deutsch 1953; Gramsci 1971). Studies of corporate behavior and culture suggest that an inner core of corporations (the biggest of big businesses, especially financial firms) takes a longer term, more classwide approach to societal problems than small businesses and medium-sized corporations (Domhoff 1979, 1983; Dreier 1982; Useem 1984). The inner core may also be more tolerant toward individual reporters who go outside the hegemonic consensus, and it may be more able to coopt them. The inner core does not stand in opposition to the hegemonic consensus but may be more politically and tactically flexible. Hardline repression and "flak" (Herman & Chomsky 1988) are also almost always part of the corporate upper class response to ideological opposition. The key to the dominant

ideology is defined as support for actually existing capitalism. The conflict between the inner core and the small- and medium-sized corporate establishment is often mistakenly perceived as pluralism.

Abercrombie *et al.* (1980), Carragee (1991) and Gitlin (1980) show that the dominant ideology thesis is partial, contested and contradictory. To say that the newspaper industry is not monolithic is not to imply that it is pluralistic. Perhaps a better term would refer to locally-established versions of the dominant ideology.

The newspaper industry does stories about high-level wrong-doing (Gans 1979) and legitimate controversies (Hallin 1986). Journalistic norms sanction the press to cover stories about socio-political issues, electoral campaigns and political personalities in a politically neutral way -- without favoring one party, one candidate or one side of the issue. The establishment press covers liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans (but not socialists). The commitment of news media corporations to a limited range of diversity of political ideologies is not at issue.

The counter-intuitive paradox consists in that corporate cultures vary in their commitment to the mainstream ideology and at the same time the mainstream ideology excludes and precludes oppositional viewpoints. If Gannett and Thomson are part of the inner circle of a transnational corporate world-system, they seem to have more leeway to deviate from the mainstream ideology but not perhaps to the extent of portraying an oppositional ideology. If they are at the dominant center of a transnational system and the rest of the industry is on the fringe, then inner circle corporations at the forefront may do the most to adapt, change and universalize the mainstream ideology to reflect and retain the support of a locally and temporally shifting coalition of dominant class, ethnic and regional groups.

In the end, the concept of "organizational culture" may best specify the effects of ideology. The journalistic profession, each newspaper and each media chain are reference groups that have overlapping and competing organizational cultures. Each such subculture tends to develop a distinctive outlook or ideology.

What becomes news is a product of publishers, editors, reporters, sources and advertisers, each of whose influence is not idiosyncratic but reflects collective constraints -- profit motives, corporate expectations, professional norms, newsroom policies, political affiliations, career-interests and issues management. News items are the final product, resulting from decisions about assigning, reporting, killing, running, placing and trimming a story within the commercially available news hole.

The thesis that ideological differences are locally dominant within given organizational cultures is supported by the fact that ideological news content is significantly correlated with the story prominence among chains. The “locally-established dominant ideology thesis” is further supported by the finding that hegemony is the only variable (of a score of variables derived from other theories of news content but not presented here) that significantly affects story prominence at the third level, that is, among different chains. Yet, the thesis is made problematic by the absence of any robust effects among individual newspapers or within corporate culture per se. Organization-level effects suggest that ideological orientation is not determined by the transient management team within a given newspaper nor by an overall corporate culture. Rather the locus of power is at the level of the corporate unit as a whole, that is, the chain.

Such conclusions are based not on the so-called elite newspapers in a few leading urban centers. Rather, the Ohio sample consists of newspapers from the middle of the country in a semi-peripheral Midwestern industrial state. Perhaps ideological adaptation depends upon an inner circle of media corporations and does not reside in a core of so-called elite media, which so often constitute a limited convenient sample for media scholars to study (Gans 1979; Lichter, Rothman & Lichter 1986; Parenti 1995). One inference is not that the relationships discovered trickle down from the name-recognition elite papers to the rest of the country but that they may be embedded in the inner circle of the corporate structure.

Further Research

A study using a national sample of local-monopoly newspapers stratified by chain ownership is needed

to confirm the existence of organizational culture that gives prominence to ideological stories. The examination here of mainstream ideological variables demonstrates significant effects that have been largely neglected in other quantitative content studies. McChesney (1992) argues that researchers have systematically failed to study the consequences of corporate concentration in media organizations. The taken-for-granted ideological consequences of corporate media concentration need to be studied quantitatively just as political bias has been studied. Studies might also examine ideological assumptions in the upper class communities and the existence of a class-wide ideology among senior executives and owners of "big business" corporations.

The results of this study are clear enough to warrant further investigation, particularly into the effects of ideology variables in different organizational contexts. Having operationalized the concept, empirical questions can be addressed: whether, over time, local varieties of the mainstream ideology become dominant because they are adapted, transmitted and propagated by an inner circle of the largest media corporations, by a bi-coastal core of elite papers, or by a hardline mainstream culture of medium and small news organizations in the heartland. Given that there is a range of variation in mainstream ideological commitments, further research needs to focus on the role of the inner core of media corporations in reformulating the dominant ideology and in adapting it to changing conditions.

CONCLUSION

Notably, mainstream ideological themes have no consistent influence on story prominence across all stories. There are ideological effects on the prominence of stories that differ from one newspaper to another, but differences in the ideological effect among individual newspapers do not persist once news chain differences are introduced. Two chains, Gannett and Thomson, seem to have distinct organizational cultures that undervalue hegemonic stories. Meanwhile, in the rest of the industry represented by the other chains and independent papers, the more mainstream themes are present, the more prominence a story is given.

Corporate-owned newspapers do not generally differ from independent papers in terms of the prominence given to stories with hegemonic themes, nor do newspapers of differing circulation size treat hegemonic stories differently. That is to say there is no evidence of the existence of a corporate culture per se, characterizing the corporate-owned newspapers. Stories in the independently owned papers in the Ohio sample were just as hegemonic.

On a national level, Gannett is the largest chain in terms of circulation size, and Thomson was the largest in terms of the number of newspapers in the United States at the time. Together these two chains may represent an inner circle as compared to the other chains and independents, which constitute the bulk of the corporate establishment in the heartland. While the rest of the industry seems to be hegemonic, Gannett and Thomson are least willing to play up hegemonic stories. None of the papers or chains can be distinguished by a willingness to run stories with opposition themes.

In other words, stories in newspapers owned by the two largest chains can be differentiated ideologically, but the most prominent stories on average have no more ideological themes than minor stories. Indeed, the effects of ideological interests can only be seen among the chains, which wash away the differences among newspapers. The effects of the mainstream ideology cannot be seen at all except by examining the prominence given to stories in the Gannett and Thomson newspaper chains. Confirming common-sense experience, newswriters and readers may routinely fail to notice which stories are played up and repeated and which ones are buried or are one-day items. The professional image of objectivity may be perpetuated among newswriters and readers who are not aware of the differences in story prominence unless they have another chain's newspaper as a standard of comparison. Given the monopoly position in their local markets of 98 percent of all American newspapers, the ideologically slanted nature of coverage is too subtle to be observed by those who focus their attention at the story-level.

Media critics of the left and the right tend to look for purposive political bias and reject self-serving

claims that coverage is only but always influenced by ignorance, error, idiosyncratic staffing, limited space or inadequate resources. The results of the multi-level analysis in a sample of Ohio newspapers suggests that less hegemonic stories may be given more prominence in the papers in the largest chains. In a sense, the critics from the right may be correct that the biggest print media have an anti-mainstream bias or at least are less hegemonic, and at the same time, critics of the left may be correct that the majority of the press promotes a mainstream or status quo orientation. A mainstream ideology may dominate most of the corporate establishment even though a less hegemonic orientation is possible in the inner circle of media corporations.

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ENDNOTES

1. She also recognizes that her typology of constructs derives in part from the work of Herbert J. Gans (1979) and Todd Gitlin (1980).
2. Organizations are not treated as a separate set of variables as Shoemaker does in her book-length reformulation with Reese of the theory of news content. Organizations are treated as a level of complexity at which variables operate.
3. In a book with co-author Stephen D. Reese (1991), the cluster of social and institutional influences are further elaborated, so that organizational influences and influences from outside of media organizations are dealt with separately. Shoemaker (1987, 1991) has sought to explain the influences on media content as opposed to the media effects, which deals with the effects of content on audiences.
4. In the public opinion literature, beliefs are issue-specific while attitudes are more generic predispositions. For example, see Erikson, Luttbeg, and Tedin 1991.
5. Altschull (1984, chapters 5, 6 and 7) deals with centrally planned, capitalistic and developing countries.
6. The "dominant ideology" comes from Antonio Gramsci's notion (1971) of hegemony: a ruling class dominates other classes and ethnic groups as much through their ideological consent and cooptation as through force, law and coercion. Gitlin (1980:253) defines "hegemony" 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." In democratic countries, the term "ruling class" seems anachronistic. In capitalist democracies, the economic elite usually prequalifies or disqualifies those who become the visible leaders and political representatives; and in general, a core coalition tends to emerge and to perpetuate their wealth, status and power privileges by universalizing and legitimating unequal arrangements in the terms and presumptions that are supposedly good for subordinate groups. In most periods, most individuals and organizations take for granted a common set of legitimate values, established norms and status quo arrangements that differentially benefit an upper class. In the United States, the dominant ideology universalizes the interests of oligopolistic, multi-national corporate capitalism and of a coastal coalition of organizations and institutions dominated by white Anglo-Saxon Protestant middle-aged males. The dominant ideology thesis derives from structural and critical assumptions. Also see Aronowitz (1973), Hanninen and Paldan's reader (1983), and Jameson (1988).
7. The empirical question is not whether the general public agrees with established policies or arrangements but rather whether there is a consensus among members in an upper class in a specific country. An ideology that represents upper class interests is said to be "dominant" or "hegemonic" to the extent that subordinate classes and ethnic groups consent to, and identify with, policies and modes of organization that dominate them. The majority of the public does not have to agree (when asked for individual private opinions) in order for an ideology to dominate the public discourse.
8. For a classic statement of the mass society model, see William Kornhauser (1959).
9. No one group, such as big business, holds the balance of power nor consistently benefits from status quo arrangements. The fact that every media market is controlled by oligopolistic corporations is ignored (Biagi, 1992; McChesney, 1992). Gans (1980) refers to the idealized democracy in the news. From the framers of the Constitution (Madison [1788] 1961) to modern social scientists (Dahl 1961; Rose 1967), the self-concept of American democracy is pluralism. A class structure tends to consolidate and integrate interests. Hartz (1955) points out the American republic has had no history of an aristocratic class; everyone tends to identify with the middle class (initially, self-employed merchants and small farmers), and coordination and collaboration by the big business upper class are considered

inconsequential. Supposedly, the society is classless; class barriers are permeable; only incremental differences separate individuals and groups (by income, education, etc.); life chances are roughly equal in the melting pot; each member of each generation is free to achieve based primarily on his or her own abilities. Class conflicts tend to aggregate conflicts, are considered extreme and threaten the system, whereas ethnic groups are special interests, whose limited grievances are manageable.

10. Trice and Beyer (1993) synthesize much of organizational culture research from a functionalist point of view in their *The Cultures of Work Organizations*. Trice and Beyer (1993:33) say, "[T]he actual content or substance of a culture resides in its ideology. ... [M]eanings are embodied in ... cultures as ideologies--shared, interrelated sets of beliefs about how things work; values that indicate what's worth having or doing; and norms that tell people how they should behave." They define ideologies as "shared, relatively coherently interrelated sets of emotionally charged beliefs, values, and norms that bind some people together and help them to make sense of their worlds." Functionalists (Etzioni 1961; Parsons 1951, 1956) tend to define culture as a unified set of values and norms and to define ideology in terms of individual beliefs.

11. For symbolic interactionists (Fine and Sandstrom 1993; Mead 1967; Steinberg 1993; Turner 1981), culture and ideology are features of collectivities. Orientations pertain to social-psychological features of individuals. Orientations are embedded in the socialization, motivation, attitudes, opinion and beliefs.

12. In news content studies, cluster samples from Midwestern states have been chosen as a common alternative to the using so-called elite newspapers (Deutschmann 1959; Stempel 1959; Windhauser 1976, 1977).

13. "PROC MIXED" software and documentation are available from SAS Institute Inc., SAS Campus Dr., Cary, NC 27513. For "ML3," contact The Multilevel Models Project, Department of Mathematics, Statistics, and Computing, Institute of Education, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL, England.

14. Complete operational definitions of each of the 11 mainstream consensus dimensions are available from the first author. Also see Schiff (1996) and Schiff and Reiter (2004).

15. 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, 2003, in press). 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.

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