

# Politics

[Media](#), [Television](#)



Nowadays mass media plays significant role within the society structure and has grand influence on its development. Media already is tightly intervened with all the spheres of our everyday life. It is generally accepted that the press form public opinion and understanding. Media also has the power to shape even the country's policy. Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman examine all these burning questions and give even more information in their book "The Press Effect: Politicians, Journalists and the Stories that Shape the Political World". Their central thesis is that the stories the press tells are shaped not by a "liberal agenda" or a "right wing conspiracy" but rather by the desire, even pressure, to cast the news in a dramatic, easily packaged form.

Jamieson and Waldman produce an incisive analysis of political media coverage, and how the press and the people both fail to think critically about one of the most important components of our political process - politicized media. "The Press Effect" makes a nonpartisan, well-documented, and very persuasive case that the mainstream media doesn't so much report the news as create it. Focusing mostly on the 2000 presidential campaign and its aftermath, and on coverage of 9/11, the book also touches on historical issues and their presentation as well.

Wide-ranging and accessible, "The Press Effect" is a must for news junkies and political buffs, and an excellent addition to any journalism, social studies, or government classroom. To illustrate more vividly the events the authors represent numerous recent examples, from media participation in spreading fabrications during the election campaign to the weight of

journalists on the outcome of the 2000 presidential election in the United States.

Too often, authors argue, reporters merely analyze the strategies used by the opposing instead of sorting out the facts behind the issues. While acknowledging that the truth can be indefinable and very subtle, the authors cite a few exemplary cases of journalistic truthfulness and reliability and fact-finding. This important book, makes obvious the fact that media misrepresentation is far too complex and subtle to be explained by mere liberal or conservative bias, belongs in all journalism collections.

The authors of “ The Press Effect” suggests that the media frames issues and political figures in a way that their future stories on the matters or subjects will tend to fit neatly inside the predetermined scene. In view of the fact that the media is a follow-the-leader game, once a frame takes hold it doesn't let go very easily. Jamieson and Waldman utilize this speculation mainly to explore the 2000 Election between Gore and Bush.

Unfortunately, there are simply no trustworthy ways of establishing definite effects of mediaproducts on public, opinions, attitudes or behavior. There are few credible analyses of how different media events, or the outcomes of particular media organizations, produced particular perceptions in media audiences. Taking into consideration the conformity between media representations and public opinion considered within the work “ The Press Effect” puts an interesting question and not an answer.

All in all, the title of the work is rather bold, for it speaks for itself and highlights how important the press is in shaping not only politics but also the

society structure. But, apteral, it is not very understandable who is telling these “ stories” that actually shape the political world and who in point of fact are the authors of them, or where they come from. Authors of this work also represent a critique of the media’s deep inclination for close psychological examination of foremost celebrities. In addition they review in brief some techniques of media effects research that are being used throughout the media world, at the same time emphasizing their confines and flaws.

They pay attention to the fact what qualities a story should possess to influence strongly the public opinion. But what they are describing is better viewed as connections, mediated in both directions through political characters, representatives of press and public, rather than as direct causal effects. Yet Jamieson and Waldman do try to build up a more detailed approach. They combine critiques of media content with analysis of political rhetorical strategies, including opinion and survey data, thus the authors build up a persuasive and disturbing illustration of media unfairness and offailureto tell the full story. In other words they what to communicate to the reader that not always the media is a liable source of getting true information.

Nevertheless, throughout the book the authors make references to praiseworthy exceptions and admit that there are still many professionals whose commitment to truth is undisputable. But we should mark that the prevailing idea of Jamieson and Waldman’s study is to raise deep concern about the state ofhealthof American journalism.

Jamieson and Waldman outline six critical and very essential functions that the media and the press in particular perform in American society: storyteller, amateur psychologist, soothsayer, and shaper of events, patriot, and custodian of fact.

In a function of a storyteller driving by the natural desire to tell a consistent story, journalists have a natural inclination to omit information that is somehow at odds with the general scene. For example, social scientists tell that the media circles create a particular outline or a frame for an event or a person, and all the data that does not comply with this frame is very often tends to be neglected. As an example we make take the following fact from the analyzed book. During the 2000 election course Gore was represented, as a liar so any report he made that could not be verified at once was believed to be a misrepresentation.

Bush on the other hand appeared as an intellectually challenged person with a lack of knowledge. Consequently, we see the confirmation to the statements relayed within the “ Press Effect” the media can easily shape the character either true or misinterpreted but it is immediately is believed by the public and it is very difficult to change that formed image. Here we may firmly assert that the media failed to serve the public in way of representing vital and burning information.

As the Amateur Psychologist the media makes sometimes a monkey business. Rather than examining essential facts and characters the press instead analyzes the motives and strategies of moves made by a political figure sometimes irrelevant to the moment. The result is that an emphasis is made not on issues of importance, but on questions of technique and

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strategy. Very often the media seizes such facts as what one particular figure is wearing and how it moves rather than the aim he is trying to achieve.

Even today, if one political figure announces a new program or political agenda, the mass media is inclined to focus its attention on analyzing why he chooses this particular moment to make the announcement rather than to analyze the suggestion itself. Again we see that the authors try to communicate to us that the media fails to serve the public especially when it attempts to attribute motives to politicians instead of analyzing their proceedings and their policies.

Taking into consideration the function of a custodian of fact imputed to the media it is important to say that it is a natural task of the mass media to explain or even uncover the data, hypothesis, and calculations behind declarations made by political figures in an election or officials in their offices. The media again fails to serve in relaying information to the public when it accepts the basically prejudiced accounts of a political actor and transfers them to the public without challenge.

The authors put the question whether it is a fault of media in its unsuccessfulness. In fact, it is the blunder of all three participants within the structure of political system: politicians, mass media, and the electorate. Jamieson and Waldman conclude by stating, “ We believe that if democracy is to thrive, holding journalists to the highest standards is not only reasonable but essential”. It has been observed on many occasions that we “ get the government we deserve”, Jamieson and Waldman make a strong statement that we “ get the media we deserve” as well.

The key concept within the work is “ framing,” which seeks to define what aspects of particular stories are given weight in their telling in the media. Analyzing print and broadcast media on a series of issues over elections 2000, the authors reveal how story may shape the whole attitude of the public. Media coverage of the 2000 presidential election campaign is often said to have assumed the outline of Gore-as-liar and Bush-as-stupid. In part, it is attributed to the media’s need for personality profiling. In describing how the media treated recent political chapters, Jamieson and Waldman are being neither exceptional nor exceptionable.

Jamieson and Waldman observe, reasonably, that the press highlights political strategy over policy and also how and why, rather than the what and who. But they are on icy ground when they claim that the responsibility of the press is to determine whose claims were correct. Policies, and any judgments on them, are matters of interpretation rather than statements of fact. The authors are definitely correct to say that media representatives play an essential role in serving the public make sense of policy choices, but that may as often involve judgments on motivation as arbitrations on fact.

Telling stories is a bulky part of how we cooperate and how we make sense of things. It is rather significant to take into consideration the specific role of the press and to measure its performance against stated standards. It is a different thing to dispute that the press is the strongest linkage in the story-generating chain or to argue that it is deviating from its primary responsibility in telling stories or to argue that it accommodates too comfortably to the politically dominant story-frames. Jamieson and Waldman are ambitious and daring in seeking to argue all of these schemes, and even

more. In addition, they offer much helpful evidence that others will want to scrutinize too. But, on balance, their case is unproven.

As to investigate the issue further we should say that one of the most troublesome things about journalism nowadays is how normally and regularly lies and misrepresentations broadcasted on all sides of the political scale. To a great extent, this is the fault of journalists, whose primary job is or has to be to find out and report the truth about the most important issues of the day. Democracy is not supposed to function in well-organized manner if the public is constantly misinformed.

Simply giving account of few opposing views also does not help the public find out the truth. There is general tendency that truth telling has to be rewarded and deception has to be punished. Unfortunately, this is not happening now, it is just the goal we are trying to achieve. The task of a real journalist is not to repeat the "spin" but to find the truth of the particular event and communicate it to public.

Here we are bound to cite the authors of the "Press Effect" "Reporters should help the public make sense of competing political arguments by defining terms, filling in needed information, assessing the accuracy of the evidence being offered, and relating the claims and counterclaims to the probable impact of the proposed policies on citizens and the country". Undoubtedly this is the hard work to do. It is much easier to make emphasis on the horse race and characters than to give a definite account and analytical information on the subject.



Concluding we may say that this book can be of use not only for amateur readers but also for all journalists and concerned citizens. It gives an interesting and new approach to the problem of mass media truthfulness. It makes one think it over again about the facts we see on the TV, read in newspapers and listen over the radio. It gives the food for meditation over the fact whether we should rely completely on the media sources. “ Press Effect” is the right book for those readers who are just entering the subject of media and are freshmen to the topic.

In “ The Press Effect”, Jamieson and Waldman carefully document the interaction between politicians or other political actors, such as press secretaries or campaign consultants and the media in the process of building up an overall message that is supposed to be communicated to the public. From the first sight it may probably come to one's surprise that the media have actually failed in their task to both politicians and the public. But why and how it is still for us to decide.

In this scrupulously researched and documented work Jamieson and Waldman have represented a chain of problems that come about when the media let down the public. The most noticeable and evident effects of this malfunction embrace cynicism about political figures in general, distrust of the government, doubt in the objectivity of journalists, and actually overall voter indifference. In about 200 pages of prose Jamieson and Waldman describe the causes, history, and consequences of the mass media's failures, including well-documented and unbiased examples.

Jamieson and Waldman show that when political campaigns evade or reject to engage the facts of the opposing side, the press often fails to step into the

void with the information citizens require to make sense of. “ The Press Effect” is, ultimately, a wide-ranging critique of the press's role in mediating between politicians and the citizens they are supposed to serve.

#### Reference

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