

Concentrated media ownership assignment



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Concentrated media ownership in today's society is doing much more harm than good. As a democratic nation, there are many values and freedoms that we are entitled to and with this concentration, these rights are being infringed. The value of news is also in jeopardy as the diversity and localism of the news media diminishes. Both of these things together form a platonic pair that should be a concern of all democracy loving Americans. According to an FCC regulation that is currently being revised, TV stations are not allowed to own a newspaper or be owned by a newspaper in the same city that its broadcast license is held (Cooper 159).

The purpose of ownership limits such as this are to promote diversity and localism. Some of these regulations obligate the TV stations to show kids shows, public affairs programming, community affairs, and political debates (Cooper 159). Because mass media is the primary means people gather their news, a concentrated media is dangerous. It reduces the diversity of local reporting because most of the news is coming from the same big corporations. With these corporations in control of most of the media, this gives dominant firms a huge amount of power in influencing political decisions (Cooper 162).

Being in control of what the world sees or reads when they are looking for current news is a huge responsibility that seems to be abused more often than it should. Under the 1st Amendment, Freedom of Speech is clearly stated. However it is being interpreted in many different ways during this Age of Electronic Media. Media owners are complaining that these ownership limits are infringing on their Freedom of Speech as well as the need for an

open market. “ The objective of the commercial marketplace is to exchange goods and services to improve efficiency and produce profit” (Cooper 169).

From the point of view of media owners, this is exactly what they are doing as they continue their processes of news giving. They are the producers, and the viewers are their consumers and these media owners are simply exchanging their services for a profit. However, it seems that the profit has become more important than the service provided, which should be objective news coverage. Media concentration decreases the number of visible viewpoints because all the channels are getting their information from the same corporations that own them all.

As a result of these closely related channels, “ pack journalism,” becomes a problem. This is when stories are covered in the same way, with out any dissenting views. In other words, the news channels are all spitting out the exact same information with out variance in views, opinions, or the information in general. This becomes a big problem when tragedies happen in the news. Overreaction to media scares threatens our liberty in a huge way. Out of control emotions when in the hands of powerful people can have a very negative affect on the public good (Radford 208).

An example of this is the Columbine shootings. Emotions ran wild as the media forced the nation into a state of fear. The freedoms and basic liberties of Americans were pushed to the side as the frenzy continued. Antonius Brown, an 18 year old Atlanta student wrote about a fictional story about a school shooting before Columbine even happened. He was suspended for 20

days and his first day back at school was the day of the shootings on the other side of the country.

Simply because of this coincidence, two days later he was jailed for three days, and ordered to leave the town for two weeks (Radford 208). A 14 year old girl in Pennsylvania simply said that she could understand how these boys from Columbine could snap after the treatment they endured and she was suspended (Radford 208). Student profiling also became a huge issue. The FBI created a list of traits and students who even generically fit such traits were suspended, counseled, or transferred from the school (Radford 209).

Schools became filled with metal detectors, locked doors, and personal searches. Schools felt like jails and as a result to this unsettling feeling, more violence occurred. This is a huge infringement in the democratic rights of Americans and because the media created such an atmosphere of fear, this violation was seen as necessary. The fear that the media instills in us with its hype fools Americans into not feeling safe in their own country. They are convinced that more prisons are the way to go as they feel with more prisons, more violent offenders will be taken off the streets.

It is a fact, however, that half of the prisoners in our jails are in there for non violent crimes, mostly drug associated crimes (Radford 196-7). Mythmaking in the media encourages this hype as they scare the country into thinking things that aren't true. For example, after September 11, 1999, there were many falsehoods brought forth by the media. There was a connection made

between Bin Laden and Hussein which proved to be false, as well as the reason for the war in the first place (Radford 215).

The aftermath of this date also brought forth the myth that all terrorists are foreigners, which proved to not be entirely true as there are many reported terrorist attacks from those who are in fact American citizens; one of the most popular being the Oklahoma City Bombings in 1995 (Radford 215). As the media hypes these political issues, they have a large impact on the campaigns and elections in America. Rupert Murdoch has an audience of 4.7 billion people, which is roughly 2/3 of the entire world population (Outfoxed). Not only is this man running what we watch on the TV news, but also what we read in newspapers and also on the internet.

Murdoch has perfected his ways of controlling the media in a few outstanding ways. The first being the memos which surfaced from FOX news. In these memos Murdoch was quoted as pressuring his team to dig deeper for a more interesting story. He knows what is interesting to his viewers so rather than giving what needs to be heard, he gives what wants to be heard. By showing some candidates in negative lights FOX news influences the democratic process in a bad way. Rather than bringing all cards to the table, only one suit is shown extensively and the viewers see what the news wants them to.

Blending news with opinion is another tactic used. Beginning a sentence as simply as “ some people say” turns this random opinion into a believable “ fact” just by adding this to the beginning. Also guests sharing the same opinion as the broadcast forces this one sided information the nation is fed

daily. The concentration of media is an apparent downfall to the democracy of America. However this constant battle is going to be difficult to resolve because of the huge amount of power that the corporations hold. As a nation of the people it seems ridiculous to me that the “ people” in this case seems to be big businesses.

Unfortunately America has to get their information somewhere and that place happens to be run mostly by a republican tycoon. Americans have the responsibility to be able to understand fact from fiction and get information for themselves, rather than being spoon fed such “ news. ” Works Cited
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