

MA MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

JOURNALISTIC OBJECTIVITY AND *THE DAILY SHOW WITH JON STEWART*

RYAN HARRIS PARKER

---

Gene Allen

The Major Research Paper is submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Joint Graduate Program in Communication & Culture  
Ryerson University – York University  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Wednesday, May 6, 2009

Journalistic Objectivity and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*

*I do not know whether you are practicing an old form of parody and satire or a new form of journalism.*

Bill Moyers to Jon Stewart (11 July 2003)

The press is a constitutive part of our society. It helps create national identities and formulates society's understanding of itself and its place in the world. Moreover, a free press is indispensable for ensuring the vibrancy of a democracy. For these reasons, a close inspection of news, and an evaluation of its performance, is crucial.

We must look to the development of the mass press at the turn of the twentieth century to locate the beginnings of journalistic objectivity and the type of news we are familiar with today. The first section of this paper offers a review of accounts of this transformational period, placing opposing theories within the larger framework of the frictions between cultural studies and political economy, and underscores the need for a holistic understanding of the period.

The second section chronicles the press's articulation of its new professional tenets, offers a definition of journalistic objectivity, and reveals its intrinsic limitations. The third section details how the modern press's ideal democratic mandate has been compromised, with the influence of the press being used instead to ensconce powerful interests. And the fourth section outlines the calls for a redefinition of journalism in light of the failures covered in the preceding section.

Finally, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* is offered as an alternative journalistic form that transcends the dangerous dogma of traditional news outlets, allowing it to fulfill the democratic responsibility of the press by encouraging a critical and astute citizenry.

### The Dawn of the Mass Press

The modern conception of journalistic objectivity is a product of the transformational era at the turn of the last century that delivered a truly mass press for the first time in the history of news. This section offers a review of literature concerned with the shift to a mass press and the resultant effect on newspaper content so as to contextualize journalistic objectivity within the technological, political, economic and cultural milieu from which it began to take form.

Political economy and cultural studies have enjoyed a rather troublesome association, and similar tension is evident in the ensuing accounts of press transformation. We can use the articles by Garnham (1995) and Grossberg (1995) to characterize this quarrel. For Garnham:

Political economists find it hard to understand how, within a capitalist social formation, one can study cultural practices and their political effectiveness—the ways in which people make sense of their lives and then act in light of that understanding—without focusing attention on how the resources for cultural practice, both material and symbolic, are made available in structurally determined ways through the institutions and circuits of commodified cultural production, distribution, and consumption... How is it possible to understand

soap operas as cultural practices without studying the broadcasting institutions that produce and distribute them, and in part create the audience for them...?

How can one ignore the ways in which changes in the nature of politics and of struggle are intimately related to economically driven changes in the relationship of politics to the institutions of social communication such as newspapers and broadcasting channels, and to the economically driven fragmentation of social groups and cultural consumers? If this is reductionist or economistic, so be it. It is, for better or worse, the world we actually inhabit (71).

Grossberg responds to Garnham's criticisms by acknowledging the utility of economics to cultural studies, but dismissing common political economy frameworks:

No one in cultural studies denies the economic realities of racism or sexism, although they are likely to think that such inequalities cannot be directly mapped by or onto class relations. Moreover, they may also think that those inequalities are constructed in a variety of ways, along a variety of dimensions, besides the distribution of labor and capital, and that some of those other ways centrally involve cultural practices (78).

Grossberg continues:

But in the end, what is at stake is not so much the relations between cultural studies and political economy, but rather the ways in which questions of economics—and of contemporary capitalism in particular—are to be articulated into analyses of the politics of culture. For in a sense, cultural studies did not reject political economy, it simply rejected certain versions of political economy as inadequate. And such versions are characterized... by their reduction of

economics to the technological and institutional contexts of capitalist manufacturing... by their reduction of the market to the site of commodified and alienated exchange, and by their rather ahistorical and consequently oversimplified notions of capitalism... Contemporary cultural studies is, I believe, returning to questions of economics in important and interesting ways.

Such work needs to be encouraged and developed even further (80).

Grossberg says cultural studies is *returning* to questions of economics because he acknowledges that many cultural theorists have been known to go to great lengths to omit or deny economic roles for fear of being branded as reductionist by their disciplinary peers.

We can take from this exchange that what is chiefly in dispute are paradigmatic assumptions and the extent to which the economic is privileged over the cultural, and vice versa, in each respective discipline. But we must note that not only can economic and cultural theories each be valid, but each can benefit from supplementation by the other. We find such interdisciplinary tension in the following review of literature concerning the advent of the mass press. In this section we will find theories that are chiefly economic in nature, and those that are chiefly cultural. More importantly, however, we end with those who advocate a more holistic approach. The goal of this section is to stress the inherent myopia of explanations that neglect either the economic or the cultural, and the importance and capacity of the economic and the cultural to explain phenomena when used complementarily.

This section begins with accounts of the period that privilege economic factors. Though the next three thinkers all focus on economic determinants, their analyses lead to

quite different conclusions. Sotiron (2003) and Baldasty (1992) are chiefly concerned with the commercialization of newspapers around the turn of the last century and see it having a detrimental effect on the quality of news. On the other hand, while Hamilton (2004) also focuses on market forces and their effect on newspapers during the same period, he draws relatively positive conclusions.

We begin with these accounts of press commercialization because commercialization was a necessary precursor to journalistic objectivity, in that commercialization allowed for a milieu of greater party independence within which such professional tenets needed to be articulated for the first time.

Sotiron's account of commercialization is a lament. He analyzes daily newspapers from 1890 to 1920—an era he puts forward as representing that of press transition. There is much scholarship concerning the early American press during this time, and this account is refreshing in that it examines the Canadian newspaper environment. Sotiron identifies what he sees as Canadian publishers' detrimental turn to sensationalistic journalism in an effort to maximize audiences and advertising revenue at any and all costs.

According to Sotiron, by 1920 major Canadian dailies markets had reached their saturation point. In an effort to increase circulation, newspapers were introducing colour, as it was found to attract readership (Sotiron 27). But upgrading to equipment capable of this ability incurred high costs. Sotiron also notes that there was a fifty percent average increase in page numbers from the 1890s to the 1900s. Add to this increasing circulation and we see that just the raw materials made newspaper publishing quite costly. New extensive and aggressive news gathering techniques were employed to keep competitive

as well, which raised labour costs. The Toronto Telegram, for instance, almost doubled its employee numbers over a seventeen year period (ibid 28). Newspapers also engaged in a number of expensive public relations campaigns at this time: statues were built, and documentaries which lauded the fourth estate and their specific 'glorious' institutions were produced, further contributing to a newspaper's outlay of capital. Sotiron also explains how the unionization of mechanical workers and the advent of the eight-hour work day increased overhead as well (ibid 30). Given all of the above, Sotiron argues that the large amount of capital involved in operating a newspaper outlet necessitated the conceptualization of the newspaper as a commodity like any other. Publishers had to put the editorial aspects of the paper on the back burner and first and foremost become entrepreneurial businessmen who could anticipate economic trends to make a profit. Because of intense competition for readership in crowded markets, and of increased machinery and labour costs, it was necessary to trade politics for sheer profit-generation.

Sotiron further fleshes out this era by chronicling the internal management structure of newspapers, which changed to cope with these new demands of competition, and increased capital and labour costs. Taylorist methods were phased into the newspaper business to scientifically manage operations: the entrepreneurial capitalism of the nineteenth century was traded in for the preferred corporate capitalism and bureaucracy—run by professional middle managers—of the twentieth century (ibid 40). It was management consultation expert Albert Haynes who advocated splitting a newspaper into two distinct halves—the editorial and mechanical departments overseen by the managing editor, and the circulation and advertising departments supervised by the business manager. It is at this point, Sotiron observes, that the most successful publishers

were those who took control of their business operations and began to remove politicians from influential positions. Sotiron asserts that by the early twentieth century, the newspaper's editor was eclipsed by the power of the business manager (ibid 47). He offers the example of the Toronto Globe in 1910, where the business manager had final say in editorial decisions. Though the business staff was the chief concern of publishers, tight control was still exercised over both sections, the editorial department included. So for Sotiron, partisan influence gave way to control by capital. Sotiron also speaks of journalists who observed what they saw to be the degeneration of their profession into a mere trade, working as though in a department store. In this account, come the twentieth century, newspapers became commercial enterprises like all others, solely concerned with the amassing of profit (ibid 51).

And of course, advertising was the chief means of accruing this revenue. Again, circulation was key—the greater the circulation, the more could be charged for advertising. To this end, Sotiron relates just how obsessed newspapers were, to the point of comedy, in exaggerating and proclaiming their circulation numbers. By 1898 advertising revenue of Toronto newspapers accounted for seventy-three percent of their revenue (ibid 58). And by 1905, according to Sotiron, a new generation of consumers had learned to seek out advertising. So the 'Laurier Boom' of rapid industrialization and urbanization, and the need for an increased market of consumers, helped to raise advertisement revenues. Advances in technology and content, such as the ability to change format and copy of advertisements on a daily basis facilitated by the linotype, further encouraged manufacturers and retailers to advertise in newspapers. Moreover, placing a newspaper ad was much cheaper than distributing flyers. And so by the



twentieth century, it was common to find full page ads on the back of newspapers for major department stores like Eaton's and Simpson's (ibid 59). Sotiron notes that these big, regular advertisers were encouraged by, and benefited from, a lower, bulk advertising rate. Sotiron also offers evidence that newspaper administrators discovered that advertisements attracted readers just as much as the news did. And after 1910, newspapers graduated from merely promoting goods to literally selling them; an example of which being the reimbursement of train fare to those who purchased an advertised item. Newspapers also created promotions departments to facilitate the collecting of even more advertisers (ibid 61).

Sotiron speaks to a number of ethically suspect practices that accompanied the increasing role of advertising. In an effort to persuade John Eaton to advertise in the *Globe*, for example, the business manager altered the news to better suit his interests. Also, in Maclean's *'World'* in 1905, Bell Telephone received favourable coverage to entice them to purchase advertisement space, and when Bell declined to purchase advertisements, negative editorial coverage quickly followed (ibid 64). This speaks to the difficulties of trying to reinvent journalism as objective, and how inconsistent the application of objectivity could be. For Sotiron, with newspapers conceived as pure businesses that rely heavily on advertising revenue the line between news copy and business promotion increasingly blurred. He shows that newspapers were complicit in printing fraudulent advertisements, revealing that the revenue generated by advertisements was apparently more important than being honest to readers (ibid 62). There was also little graphical distinction, if any, between news copy and advertisements,

and it was common practice to ignore or censor news that was unfavourable to an advertising client.

Sotiron also identifies the posture of civic boosterism that newspapers adopted during this time (ibid 65). Simply put, a prosperous local economy provides a healthy market from which to gain more newspaper subscriptions, thereby increasing circulation. It was therefore in newspapers' best interests to become self-appointed spokespeople for economic growth and community well-being. But such a role brought with it complications, such as the struggle by the Calgary newspapers on whether or not to publish an article on the rising number of welfare claimants in 1911 (ibid 66). A number of 'specials' were also published during this time for virtually no reason. Special editions were practically one big advertisement in a news format, often completely produced by the business office without the help of the editorial department. All of this goes to Sotiron's point that newspapers at the turn of the last century became recognized as an essential adjunct to the business activities of the community. The better the newspaper, the better the city would inevitably be. The essential function and power of the newspaper had changed because, instead of the partisanship of the nineteenth century, advertising was now the financial motor of newspapers after 1920 (ibid 69).

Sotiron focuses on the loss of editorial autonomy to business departments, ostentatious public relations displays, and outright dishonesty when it comes to circulation numbers, the line between news and advertisements, and the way in which news was filtered in the interests of advertisers. Sotiron seems to possess a nostalgia for a more reputable, pre-commercialized press—a press that may never have existed—that inspires his damning account of the press's commercialization.

Baldasty (1992) examines the same period, and offers an account similar to Sotiron's in that he is chiefly concerned with the economic determinants of the press's transformation, and also tells of unimpressive results. Like Sotiron, Baldasty's aim is to depict newspapers as wholly sensationalized following the press's commercialization. For him, newspapers began to cater to two audiences—namely advertisers and readers—by emphasizing content that was interesting, entertaining and diversionary in order to appeal to a mass audience now conceived, supposedly, as nothing more than consumers. He juxtaposes this conception of the news audience against that of the earlier, partisan press wherein he believes readers were considered voters first and foremost. Echoing Sotiron, Baldasty also explains that newspapers advanced the marketing interests of advertisers—article content and advertisers were increasingly linked; newspapers covered businesses in flattering light to lure advertisements; and readers were encouraged to celebrate the spirit of consumerism.

An important aspect that Baldasty touches on that Sotiron overlooks is the role of women as a new target demographic of the newspaper audience. Since women generally influenced the purchasing of household and family goods, this gave women a prominent role in the budding market economy.

What Baldasty sees in newspapers during this period is a resultant hodgepodge of content, with politics becoming an increasingly de-emphasized fraction of what amounted to a mishmash of entertaining content designed to appeal to the widest possible number of consumers. As he puts it: "the American newspaper became a cafeteria of information" (Baldasty 122), with overt partisanship being seen as an economic liability.

We turn now to Hamilton, who establishes that this conception is quite narrow. Hamilton also focuses on economic factors spurring the advent of the mass press, but where Sotiron and Baldasty decry the debasement of newspapers, Hamilton's rather reasoned account identifies greater editorial independence resulting from commercialization. This is a crucial finding, for where Sotiron argues that newspapers went from being controlled by political parties to being controlled by the market, Hamilton shows that it was these very market forces that emancipated newspapers from their former party bosses and allowed for a huge increase in independent-identified newspapers. It is this editorial shift to an independent brand of mass newspaper that necessitated a re-articulation of the press's *raison d'être*, leading to the advent of journalistic objectivity.

Hamilton identifies five crucial developments that fomented the shift to a mass press: the number of potential newspaper readers increased; the cost of paper declined; printing technology drastically increased in cost; printing capacity grew exponentially; and advertising really began to take hold (40). The high capital costs involved with the new presses necessitated an increase in circulation to spread this cost across the sale of more newspapers. The speed of these expensive new presses made reaching the required larger audience possible, and this large circulation was very attractive to advertisers who could now place a single ad and reach more potential consumers more cheaply than they could have previously when negotiating with a number of newspapers in smaller markets. These changes increased the economies of scale involved in newspaper production. Advertising quickly supplanted subscription fees as the chief source of revenue, allowing newspapers to slash subscription fees further encouraging circulation increases.

As an economist, Hamilton's theory of news is obviously born of his economic paradigm. As is the case with most economic theory, the logic and simplicity of his analysis is quite seductive. His economic account may, in fact, be adequate in explaining the development of the mass press. But when dealing with the development of editorial independence—which is a confluence of both economic and cultural processes—an economic explanation alone would be too reductionist. Of course, the economics must not be dismissed since an awareness of how financial matters affected editorial independence is essential. Since market forces provide a necessary, but not sufficient, explanation of the turn to editorial independence, this account must be complemented with others. Nonetheless, Hamilton's economic theory is quite helpful.

It is commonly understood that nineteenth century North American newspapers were decidedly partisan, openly proclaiming that their take on news was coloured by their partisan affiliation. To be independent from partisan influence was unnecessary (Pasley 2003). But this state of affairs would soon change. It is in this climate that a turn to editorial independence began to gain currency. When studying the newspaper markets of the top fifty American cities from 1870 to 1900, Hamilton found that thirteen percent of daily newspapers in 1870 claimed to be independent, and that that figure had climbed to forty-seven percent by 1900 (38).

Editorial independence was unquestionably on the rise, and market forces surely helped to influence this shift. Hamilton goes one step further, asserting, "objective news coverage is a commercial product that emerges from market forces" (37). Six factors are identified as contributing to a newspaper's decision to be partisan or independent:

The political preferences of potential readers in a city; the size of the potential audiences for news coverage; the technology and costs of information generation and transmission; the varieties of products offered by competitors; the demand by advertisers for readers as potential consumers; and the size of partisan subsidies or favors (ibid).

Hamilton argues that since increased circulation translated into increased profits, partisan newspapers were at a distinct disadvantage. A Democratic or Republican newspaper really only appeals to the party-faithful, so circulation can only be increased so much until it plateaus. On the other hand, “if a paper adopted a non-partisan take on political news, it could draw on a larger segment of the population if readers from either party could be attracted to the outlet” (ibid 42). With circulation becoming as crucial as it did, the turn to independence was the most practical means of newspapers increasing their circulation dramatically.

Hamilton also identifies an institutional change that affected the newspaper market—an institutional change also rooted in economics—that further encouraged the move to the independent brand: patronage from political parties provided to newspapers declined during this time. Given the economies of scale possible with the cutting edge presses, the revenue stream afforded by advertising, and the expansion of readership, “parties may no longer have been able to offer terms attractive enough to win editorial support” (ibid). Unlike the old party newspapers that had one editor and one small press, mass circulation newspapers were increasingly insulated from political influence.

Hamilton gathers much empirical evidence that demonstrates how independent news coverage grew alongside the increasing importance of scale economies. He also

shows how newspapers chose their type of coverage based on the returns they could hope to amass from local party affiliation and the adoption of new production technology. As expected, Democratic newspapers enjoyed wide circulation where the Democratic Party did well at the polls, and Republican newspapers had a large audience where their affiliated party fared better. Hamilton acknowledges that this could be seen to show the influence the most popular newspaper in any given market has on the voting habits of its readership. The quantitative data he offers, however, also reveals that one of the reliable determinants of market share of Democratic and Republican newspapers from market to market was local demographic characteristics. For example, in markets with a substantial foreign-born or black community, Democratic newspapers enjoyed larger circulation numbers than Republican newspapers. We can infer from this that political preferences in these communities were extant, and that a newspaper seeking popularity in such a market would be remiss not to position itself as Democratic (ibid 38). It was in the larger cities that independent newspapers enjoyed larger circulations, showing that it was in these larger markets, where advertising played a bigger role and where scale economies could be achieved, that newspapers found it most advantageous to brand themselves as independent. The most pronounced growth Hamilton discovered of independent newspapers was from 1870 to 1880:

Among papers whose circulations ranked in the top 10% of those analyzed, independents accounted for 25% in 1870 and 75% in 1880. For a given city population, a paper was more likely to achieve a scale economy size (e.g., a circulation in the top 20% or top 10% nationwide) if it chose an independent affiliation (ibid 39).

The advantages of large-scale circulation were apparent. Per square inch, newspapers with the largest circulations were cheaper for consumers, and generated higher subscription revenues for owners. They also earned the highest total subscription revenues. In terms of advertising revenues, newspapers with the largest circulations commanded higher advertising prices, as did those located in major urban centres, considering the larger number of potential advertisers and consumers. Paying more for advertisement space in these larger newspapers proved more economically expedient for advertisers, since it worked out to be a rather cheap rate in terms of the cost per thousand readers. "As more consumer products were developed with brand names supported by national advertising, companies sought to reach consumers through newspaper advertising" (ibid 41). The number of readers continued to rise, thanks to the low subscription costs resulting from the economies of scale and advertiser support. "In 1870, .25 daily papers per person circulated in the fifty largest cities, while this increased to .55 by 1900" (ibid 39). Most significantly, independent newspapers employed more people than the partisan newspapers, and those independent newspapers, the ones with greater circulation, were more likely to have Congressional correspondents based in Washington, D.C.

Of course, even with the number of independent newspapers on the rise, partisan newspapers could still turn a handsome profit in large cities. The larger the city, the more potential newspaper readers there are who could cover the fixed costs involved in operating a newspaper outlet. "The relative attractiveness of adopting a Republican, Democratic, or independent approach to the news will depend on the number of outlets already serving a particular constituency" (ibid 41). Those looking to start up a



newspaper will undoubtedly consider the branding of the existing newspapers before establishing themselves in the market. Just the same, those newspapers that are already established will take into account changing market conditions when deciding to re-brand themselves differently, if at all.

There is not space in this section to review it all in detail, but over the course of twenty-five pages, Hamilton clearly presents the extensive data he gathered on the newspaper markets of the top fifty American cities in 1870, 1880, 1890 and 1900 and offers a careful statistical analysis. Hamilton soberly catalogues the commercial forces that led to increasing press independence, and also finds that independent newspapers continued to cover politics, albeit it in a less partisan way. Where Sotiron and Baldasty lament what they see as increased sensationalism and the loss of editorial rigour brought on by commercialization, Hamilton's analysis refrains from judging the value of newspaper content. He is wholly concerned with the economic considerations affecting newspapers at the time, and he finds these forces encouraged a transition to a new mass press which increasingly enjoyed editorial independence. As we will see, journalistic objectivity was invented as a means to codify the mandate and methods of this new independent press.

The preceding accounts are quite helpful in revealing a number of economic factors that encouraged the development of this commercialized, mass, independent press. But for a complete picture of this turn to editorial independence, such accounts must be supplemented with analyses that go beyond the economic.

Allen (2008) refutes the accepted shorthand of a pre-1880 'partisan' press and a post-1900 'commercial' press, declaring it oversimplified, inadequate, misleading, and

approaching an economic determinist perspective (147). He explains that newspapers were necessarily 'commercial' before 1880 and have remained partisan, or politically minded, in one form or another after 1900 as well, stressing the folly of presuming that it was a pre-1880 partisan press that addressed readers as citizens, and a post-1900 commercial press that treated readers as mere consumers, such is the assessment of Sotiron and Baldasty. But Allen's account is not incompatible with Hamilton's, for while Hamilton employs the partisan/commercial dichotomy like Sotiron and Baldasty, his analysis refrains from value judgements such as theirs while confirming the continued political awareness of the mass press. Allen also suggests that twentieth century newspapers address their audience as both consumers and citizens—pointing to the advent of the Women's Sections of newspapers, which, to be sure, were developed solely to create new consumers as Baldasty notes, but consequently cast women into new public roles (ibid 148).

The issue of citizen versus consumer, and newspapers as public versus for-profit organizations, is quite a complex issue. For Allen, the partisan/commercial dichotomy put forward by Sotiron and Baldasty is a gross oversimplification. He points out that the commercial model of the post-1880 press is wholly concerned with the supply of news, but does not examine the demand for it. Newspapers do not simply give readers what they want any more than audiences will consume any sensationalistic drivel put in front of them. Allen calls for an integration of both business and cultural history as the only means of providing a reliable account of the evolution of news. It is only within such a holistic account that we can properly contextualize the advent of journalistic objectivity. Allen shares the concerns of Kaplan (2002) and Schudson (1978), both of whom are

weary of analyses of the transition to mass-audience journalism which see it as a natural evolution resulting from modernization and commercialism. Such functionalist frameworks ignore the cultural shaping of news (ibid 149).

To illustrate his argument, Allen examines two Toronto newspapers, the populist *Telegram* and the professional *Globe*, from both 1870 and 1930—during the supposed ‘partisan’ and ‘commercial’ periods. He establishes that commercially-motivated newspapers began to address issues of power, privilege, wealth and class in an effort to expand their circulation into different social strata, like the working class. Furthermore, newspapers were early proponents of public-interest consumerism, commercial order and social control, and organizational conflict resolution. So for Allen, it was this very commercial, market-driven press which also enjoyed a socially and ideologically broader view of the public interest with its progressive, radical and labour-oriented journalism (153). What is more, while readers of partisan papers are supposed by Sotiron and Baldasty to be engaged and addressed as active participants in politics, they were not necessarily well-informed or open to genuine political debate.

Allen also directs us to the absolute amount of news covered in the *Globe* and *Telegram* in 1930. It was through such local coverage that popular journalism was contributing to the emergence of a municipal public sphere (ibid 157). Moreover, since ten percent of news coverage in the *Globe* and the *Telegram* was foreign news, Allen sees readers being cast as members of many public spheres, including those where they had no influence. Both newspapers also increased the absolute amount of public, civic and associational life covered. Twentieth century journalism also saw large institutions being publicly scrutinized. All these examples speak to the treatment of readers as citizens—

citizens at a time when Baldasty and Sotiron would characterize them as mere disengaged consumers. It is these cultural interpretations of community and publicness that Baldasty and Sotiron are sorely lacking.

Allen continues that newspaper content needs to be read more carefully to discern its cultural implications. What at first may seem to be a mere report of a soldier's death can be interpreted as an exercise in the active construction of national memory and purpose (ibid 158). James Carey's ritual view of communication is apt here, where reading a newspaper is seen "as attending a mass, a situation in which nothing new is learned but in which a particular view of the world is portrayed and confirmed... it is a presentation of reality that gives life an overall form, order, and tone" (Carey 20-1).

What Baldasty may see as a 'sensational' crime or court report can be evidence of a community articulating its boundaries. Allen demonstrates that any attempt at straightforward classification of content fails to capture the complex notion of community. Back on the topic of women, he also points to Lange (2003) and her suggestion that the ghettoization of women's subjects and female journalists to the Women's Section of newspapers, in an effort to set them apart from the broader sphere of public affairs, actually had the significant effect of instigating a broader, more socially oriented public sphere (ibid 160).

Further reinforcing the positives of the commercial press, Allen remarks that in 1870 most readers looked at the same material, but by 1930 newspaper readers made up distinct and overlapping communities of readership. So for Allen, the basic partisan/commercial dichotomy, as it is understood by Sotiron and Baldasty, identifies some changes, but is unable to appreciate the new ways readers were addressed as a

public. Changes in the structures and practices of the newspaper business were not solely responsible for determining the newspapers' new content or their cultural role. Allen advocates the integration of both business and cultural histories, for only through the integration of the two can the historical evolution of newspapers be understood (165). The commercialization of the press, therefore, did not lead to a readership of obtuse consumers. Advertising and circulation concerns necessitated an entertainment factor, surely, but readers were informed and constructed as a public, more so than they ever were previously.

Schudson (1978) offers a valuable social history of newspapers that is more sophisticated than the previous reductionist accounts rooted in economics. He identifies in such accounts a common anti-commercial bias that plagues much work in journalism history (Schudson 1997, 466). And Allen has just shown how such a bias leads to erroneous conclusions. Schudson is more in line with Allen's call for a cultural perspective, but he falls short of achieving a truly integrative journalism history by privileging the social at the expense of the economic. In this sense, while undoubtedly offering much insight, it is nonetheless just as limited as the accounts that privilege the economic for only part of the picture is painted. For his part, Schudson advances the following:

Professional allegiance to a separation of facts and values awaited, first, the rising status and independence of reporters relative to their employees, a change in journalism that developed gradually between the 1870s and World War I, and second, the emergence of serious professional discussion about "objectivity," which came only after World War I. Only with these developments was there the

social organizational and intellectual foundations for institutionalizing a set of journalistic practices to give “objectivity” force (ibid 468).

As does Allen, Schudson notes that while Baldasty emphasizes the decline in the *percentage* of political news from 1830-1900, the *total* amount of political news actually increased dramatically (ibid 466). But where Allen stresses the problematic nature of trying to define neat ‘partisan’ and ‘commercial’ categories of newspaper history, Schudson joins Hamilton in declaring the arrival of the ‘independent’ press. And for Schudson, the ‘independent’ press is free from political and commercial influence alike. He explains that it was cultural, not economic, reasons that spawned the change:

In their allegiance to facts, reporters of the late nineteenth century breathed the same air that conditioned the rise of the expert in politics, the development of scientific management in industry, the triumph of realism in literature, and the “revolt against formalism” in philosophy, the social sciences, history, and law (Schudson 1978, 71).

Schudson’s cultural take on press ‘independence’ is valuable, and serves as an excellent retort to economic reductionism. Though he does pay lip service to the significance of commercial forces, stating that, though he disputes reductionist conclusions, “none of this suggests that economic or technological factors are irrelevant to explaining this central case of social change in American journalism” (Schudson 1997, 469), his is an account strongly on the cultural studies side of the squabble with political economists. As such, Schudson’s account does not qualify as holistically integrated, which, in joining with Allen and Kaplan, is the appeal of this paper.

Kaplan endorses the use of political and cultural sociology to help in understanding the dynamics of the transformation of the press, asserting that press and polity are tandem institutions of the public sphere. Kaplan notes that after breaking historic ties with the two major parties, American journalism in the twentieth century adopted a new ethic of objectivity and public service (5). Further, he sees the press as an economic entity, a political resource, and a cultural product. Power, profit, and ideology disturb journalism's ideal commitment to serve the public without fear or favour (Kaplan 6). Kaplan, like Allen, also warns against historians who ignore the roles of power and culture in the constitution of the news, and conceive change in simplified, dichotomous terms like "free" versus "controlled" media.

Kaplan also cautions against adopting a progressive historiography like that which was popular in the early twentieth century, proclaiming a teleological evolution of the press culminating in political independence and objectivity (ibid 7). In this conception, free from corrupting editors and parties, journalism became a professional public service assisting democracy. Schudson also dismisses this natural history conception since it ignores journalism's relationship to culture and political institutions, but we do see Hamilton striking this teleological tone somewhat.

Kaplan criticizes Baldasty's stance that commercialization created a depoliticized news that addressed its audience as consumers, not citizens. For Kaplan, this account is deterministic and straightforward—the source of funding for the press is wholly important, and culture and power are missing in his history. A simple interplay of money and content is too simple, considering that profits do not necessarily expel partisanship or political advocacy, and that partisan papers may enjoy more circulation than supposedly

independent ones (ibid 9), which Hamilton and Allen confirm. Kaplan sees the cultural expectations of readers and the structure of the market determining the press's response to democracy's need for diverse perspectives and reliable information. So Baldasty's intense inspection of journalism's commercialization insufficiently captures the social forces shaping journalism at the end of the twentieth century. This, we can gather, Allen and Schudson would agree with.

However, Kaplan criticizes Schudson and his 'consensus history,' wherein the rise of liberal individualism and a burgeoning commercial market were crucial for the emergence of modern American journalism. Kaplan explains that the Consensus School sees the U.S. as possessing a cultural consensus of acquisitive individualism (ibid 10). The press supposedly went from publicly contemplating the common good to publicly scrutinizing matters of private interest. So for Schudson, cultural and political factors are constitutive of American journalism. But Kaplan notes, Schudson overlooks the continued partisanship of the late 1880s, and puts forth his own 'natural history' because his press achieves independence and remains unencumbered by political influence. For Schudson the hegemony of liberal individualism is seen as a natural and ideal aspect of modernity, where for Kaplan it is just a historical construction (ibid 12).

In Kaplan's judgement, it was after the 'critical elections' of 1894-96 that the power of parties diminished enough to allow for a journalistic revolt. Parties lost legitimacy and control of resources, and the progressive movement attacked 'party machines.' This allowed newspapers to establish their independence from parties, and an elaboration by journalists of a new occupational ethic of objectivity and authority drawn from the progressive reform movements soon followed (ibid 16). This ideology



reconstructed the public sphere and justified the press's new political role in public communication.

Kaplan does not deny that economics played a role in changing the nature of newspapers but, contrary to Baldasty and Sotiron, he offers substantial proof of the press's continued partisan nature, challenging the notion of a rapid departure from partisanship. Kaplan speaks to the familiar theme of the highly competitive, saturated market, in analyzing the Detroit press. Along the same lines as Hamilton, market forces are used to explain the demand placed on newspaper publishers to segment the market and refine their appeal to select readers. These segments were divvied up along class, ethnic and party lines, with such segmentation also encouraged by politicians who invested heavily in newspapers (ibid 55). Kaplan asserts that the interplay between both market and political forces of change must be acknowledged.

Again, echoing Hamilton, Kaplan shows that it is not always economically advantageous for publishers to try to be all things to all people. A general journal will lose readers to a specialized one that more closely resembles those particular readers' interests. In this sense, there is no incentive to be neutral in a saturated market. Market segments must be carved up, much like radio stations, along class, ethnic, and partisan lines (ibid 56). So even with the withdrawal of government and party subsidies, the increasing importance of capital, and the rise of advertiser influence, the press remained quite political.

Kaplan establishes that the political expectations of readers and politicians, and their threat of boycott, the risk of surrendering a market share monopoly to a rival newspaper, and invested political capital all helped to persuade newspapers to pursue a

specialized, partisan appeal. For Kaplan, “a complicated economic machinery, underpinned by political resource and identities, generated a vigorously partisan press” (68).

Even today we can confidently categorize different news outlets into respective camps of political proclivity, which shows just how difficult it is to define what it means to be objective. Sotiron and Baldasty convincingly outline the economic forces that transformed the newspaper industry, but they falter when identifying what effect this change had. Sotiron’s press is either slavish to partisan whim before the transformation, or to ‘damaging’ market forces afterward. Baldasty’s newspaper audience, once politically engaged, become automata consuming sensationalistic drivel, with political coverage seen as a commercial liability. Schudson’s account is more optimistic in that he identifies the American cultural milieu of the time as that which led to an objective press, free from partisan and business influence. Allen and Kaplan rightfully dispute these accounts since they rely on questionable dichotomies: politically engaged audiences become consumers of pap, and party mouthpieces turn into objective journals. For Allen, in combining business and cultural histories, an early twentieth century newspaper reader can be seen as both a consumer and citizen. Commercialization allowed for a new type of political engagement that was impossible during the partisan era. And as Kaplan points out, contrary to Baldasty’s assertion, market segmentation, not generality, could prove a profitable business model.

Although Sotiron and Baldasty reach the wrong conclusion regarding the quality of newspaper content following commercialization, an overemphasis on cultural considerations that lead to an enlightened press can be equally problematic. Surely both

accounts are important and teach us something, but the cultural cannot be considered independent from the economic. Schudson's analysis does little more than acknowledge the relevance of economic forces, but Allen and Kaplan recognize the significance of commercial imperatives and complement them with a cultural analysis of newspaper readership. The accounts of Allen and Kaplan are convincing amalgams of both cultural and economic analyses. Matched with these, Hamilton's account, though solely an economic analysis, is tremendously helpful as it remains unprejudiced. As an economist, he obviously would not be inclined to lament commerce's supposed defilement of the newspaper. And to do so he would have to argue against his own extensive quantitative evidence that reveals just the opposite effect. He catalogues an explosion of independent newspapers directly resulting from the press's commercialization, alongside a continuing partisan press that flourished in markets where such branding proved profitable. Taken with Allen's argument that even newspapers with distinct partisan appeal could still contribute to the creation of a more vibrant public sphere, we are left with a picture of the modern press—one that avoids a dystopic view of commodification and moves beyond an equally problematic Whiggish conception of an enlightened press—that is at once a commercialized, increasingly diverse and independent press that profits from entertaining and engaging the new citizenries it helped create.

This section focuses on the commercialization of the press, not because it subscribes to a deterministic notion that the economic pressures of the time were wholly responsible for driving the move to journalistic objectivity, but because commercialization is commonly misunderstood by some as a harmful force and by others as inconsequential—both erroneous notions that demand elucidation. The

commercialization of newspapers created a mass press for the first time—this revolutionary development must not be underestimated. The commercial nature of this new mass press was a significant factor in wresting control away from political parties. Economic imperatives coupled with the progressive reform movement to encourage increasing numbers of independent newspapers, which were delivered to a vast readership like never before. It is this new environment, created by a confluence of economic and cultural factors, from which journalistic objectivity emerged. In an era of progressive reform and decreased partisan control, the press needed to establish its new role and articulate its methods. The doctrine of journalistic objectivity was invented to serve these purposes.

### Journalistic Objectivity and its Limitations

While the press of the early twentieth century created new publics and was more independent than it had ever been before, the new professional standards this independent commercial press articulated for itself had the effect of squandering its democratic potential, thereby harming the very health of the democracy it purported to service. This section clarifies further what objectivity entails, and explains that the failure of journalism's democratic mission is due to objectivity itself. The veneration of facts and journalists' supposed ability to be detached recorders of events ignores the influential role of culture and disguises the legitimization of powerful institutions and actors.

Kaplan explains that the classic ideal of the press is one that fosters an "open and unlimited rational debate among equal concerned participants" (190) and that the partisan

press failed in that capacity. With a reduction of partisan influence in the public sphere came the associated decline in the ability of parties to encourage continued overt press partisanship. This novel political context demanded newspapers invent “new compelling reasons to justify their prominence in the public arena and to mask the arbitrariness of their reporting” (ibid).

As mentioned by Schudson, journalists breathed the air of the reform movement, adopting a new professional ethic that borrowed many components from Progressive ideology. Kaplan describes a new objective press, professing to be an “impartial, expert recorder of the day’s most important events,” (191) with journalists casting themselves as “professional technicians, experts at gathering information and separating truths from half-truths, distortions, and outright lies” (ibid 192).

Gans’ (1979) participant observation research of newsrooms supports this description. He explains that journalists base their objectivity on the scientific method, which limits news to facts and attributed opinion, making them “the strongest remaining bastion of logical positivism in America” (184).

Mindich (1998) identifies the five distinct components of objectivity: detachment, nonpartisanship, the inverted pyramid, facticity and balance. There is much insight shared between Gans and Mindich, particularly the ideas of detachment and facticity. For instance, Mindich echoes Gans’s observation of journalism’s positivist bent, citing Michael Schudson’s notion of “naive empiricism” (5).

The problem with objectivity is that, as Mindich notes, it is an ideal goal more than it is an achievable practice. Objectivity is hampered by its reliance on positivism, it is inherently difficult to implement or, in fact, can be outright incapable of addressing the

moral importance of a given issue depending on its historical context. Mindich offers a detailed account, historically contextualized, of when the tenets of objectivity have ill-served the news audience. In regards to the balance component of objectivity, for instance, Mindich demonstrates just how negligent such a principle can be by pointing to the *New York Times* and other newspapers in the 1890s that sought to strike a balance in their coverage of lynchings: “on the one hand lynching is evil, on the other hand ‘Negroes are prone’ to rape” (14). Objectivity, in this example, is unable to “put together a reasonable understanding of lynching” (ibid 137). Facticity—the reverence of facts—itsself is rooted in the belief that scientism can reveal a knowable world, but culture always colours one’s vision of reality (ibid 143), reminding us that objectivity is an ideal for which journalists strive but can never truly achieve. Gans also identifies culture as a major consideration affecting news selection by journalists. This paper will be focussing further on culture’s important role in news shaping in the next section.

Gans also makes the common judgement that economics reinforces objectivity, since a news outlet deemed biased would be unprofitable, and that the Associated Press may have invented objectivity in order to sell its homogenous wire-service to politically disparate local newspapers (186). This account is refuted, however, by Schiller (1981) who points out that the telegraph was “superimposed on a news-gathering system that *already* placed a premium on apparent factual accuracy” (4, italics his).

The popular conception that journalism supplies factual and reliable information to the citizenry is a fallacy. As Kaplan notes, by clinging to objectivity journalists imply that the news can actually be an account of an observable reality. These depictions, which involve “the collection of facts, their interpretation and subsequent ordering into a

narrative account, supposedly require no literary craft, interpretive labor, or theoretical perspective” (Kaplan 184-5). Moreover, the claim of objectivity obscures the inherent political entanglements of journalism. Or, more insidiously, “objectivity only allows politics to infiltrate reporting in a more disguised and unimpeded form” (ibid 185). The identification of particular facts and events, and articulation of social issues, implicitly depends on a worldview. Gans agrees, noting that when it comes to story selection and interpretation, value exclusion is always accompanied by instinctive value inclusion (182). Mindich contends that objectivity is not feasible, and Kaplan agrees, maintaining that “the news as a construct of a detached professional is thus an unworkable illusion” (ibid).

So where the press purported to deliver an objective, indexical account of the world, the reality is that twentieth century newspapers conveyed very limited, specific perspectives—those endorsed by the “institutions of political and social authority” (ibid 192). Herman and Chomsky (1988) are offered in the next section to further elaborate this view. Kaplan identifies three limitations of the objective press. Firstly, by sticking to “just the facts” the news unavoidably removes civic life from its broader political context. Secondly, this reliance on facts also necessarily leads journalists to gather authoritative information, which legitimates those in power, whether governmental or private. These power centres then become the embodiment of national ideals and identity. This system reinforces itself since, as the “official purveyor of governmental publicity,” journalists are imbued with power and prestige of their own. And thirdly:

In their passion for rigorous objectivity, in their disavowal of any particular viewpoint, in their commitment to standing as external observers to the deceptions

and diatribes of public life, reporters lost their past capacity to interject their own evaluations and judgements; provide overarching interpretations; and explore controversial or, conversely, taken-for-granted social viewpoints. They lost the ability to independently set the news agenda (Kaplan 193).

Simply put, when confronted with economic, political and cultural influencers, objectivity is weakened to the point that it is incapable of giving journalists the tools needed to carry out their democratic mission. We will see in the final section of this paper that *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* reclaims this once-acclaimed journalistic ability to independently evaluate and judge.

Undoubtedly the press was in a position to dramatically increase its democratizing potential when it found itself both decreasingly beholden to party interests and enjoying audience sizes like never before. But by establishing objectivity, and all it entails, as its professional ethic, the power of the press was systemically usurped by institutional and political authority. The reliance on facticity, the decontextualization of events from their broader political framework and historical juncture, and the unavoidable cultural biases of newswriters, inevitably led to the privileging of particular authoritative social actors and institutions. The next section continues this exploration of the pressures ailing modern journalism vis-à-vis its reliance on the unworkable, and undemocratic, ideology of objectivity.



## Objectivity in Practice: Television News and Hegemony

Unlike any other medium, television enjoys a seemingly natural authority commanded by its ability to immediately transmit a moving audio and visual record of a supposedly observable reality to all corners of the globe simultaneously. While much television content does not take advantage of this ability, it is the newscast that exploits this potential to the fullest. With “breaking news” and “developing stories” and journalists reporting “live from the scene,” the liveness and instantaneity of television is emphasized most during the news telecast. And though the deliberate impression given is one of reality, television news is a highly constructed text much the same as a fictional program. This constructed nature of television news is incongruous with its self-proclaimed indexicality. For while, to use Tuchman’s (1978) term, “news is a window on the world,” (1) even windows come in different shapes and sizes, and face in particular directions. Accordingly, “the news frame produces and limits meaning” (ibid 209). Television mediates the news, and in turn colours and shapes the presented reality.

This section addresses theories of news that demonstrate the hegemonizing potential of news as a consequence of its mode of construction. It must be acknowledged that specific motivations and pressures are present in the newsroom that help to construct television news in such a way that the interests of some are privileged over others, so suspicion of the supposed reality presented in television news is both healthy and essential. What follows is a review of theorists who researched news construction using various methods—structural analysis, participant observation, and content analysis—but arrived at similar conclusions that reveal the hegemonic authority of news.

Just as in the first section, we would do well here to recognize the value of combining competing modes of scholarship. Althusser (1969) and Herman and Chomsky offer structural economic explanations of news construction that are helpful bases on which to begin a discussion of television news, for such accounts provide foundational systemic frameworks of control within which journalistic objectivity satisfies mere operational requirements. These accounts are complemented nicely by Hallin (1986), who takes a chiefly cultural view of television news construction. Where in the first section a holistic approach—combining both political economy and cultural studies frameworks—improves our understanding of the development of journalistic objectivity, so too here will the same process better our sense of television news construction and the resultant hegemonic implications. Hallin is joined by Tuchman and Gans in putting forward a powerful critique of objectivity as manifested within the systems described by Althusser and Herman and Chomsky.

Althusser's notion of the Ideological State Apparatus is an important conception with which to begin. Althusser takes the Marxist differentiation between the economic base and the superstructure and develops it further. The superstructure includes the political and legal institutions, such as the government and law enforcement agencies, as well as ideology, such as religious, political, and legal ideology. This superstructure enjoys relative autonomy from the base, for while it cannot exist without it, the superstructure can still survive a transformational change of the economic base (Althusser 135). Althusser builds on Marx's premise, adding that ideology is more omnipresent than previously believed. Althusser makes a distinction between ideological state apparatuses and repressive state apparatuses. Examples of repressive state

apparatuses include the government, military, police, courts, and prisons (ibid 142-3). These organizations, while supplemented by ideology, predominately function through the use of violence, and are commonly seen to exist in the public realm.

Ideological state apparatuses, on the other hand, exist in the private realm, are decidedly less centralized, and predominately function through the use of ideology, though violence can sometimes play a role. Examples of ideological state apparatuses include religion, school, family, and, most importantly for our purposes, the culture and communications industries (ibid). Common between all ideological state apparatuses is a shared ideology that serves the interests of the ruling class. It is the hegemonizing power of the ideological state apparatuses that allows the ruling class to exercise continued control of the repressive state apparatuses (ibid 146). Of course, just as the structural economic explanations for the form of the mass press in the first section reduce the transformation to a mere matter of market forces, we can see that Althusser's conception here leaves little, if any, room for cultural autonomy or the agency of individual actors.

According to Althusser, all ideological state apparatuses "contribute to the same result: the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation" (154). As for the communications apparatus specifically, Althusser notes that the populace is administered "daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc, by means of the press, the radio and television" (ibid). In terms of the education ideological state apparatus, he finds a reigning ideology of the school system as "a neutral environment purged of ideology" where teachers reveal "the path to the freedom, morality and responsibility of adults by their own example, by knowledge, literature and their 'liberating' virtues" (ibid 156-7). So too the press, given that it also

teaches about the world and our place within it, cannot be seen to reproduce the relations of production, and so professes an equally neutral environment devoid of ideology. In this conception, the news must necessarily claim to be objective, for like the school system, it plays an important role in reproducing the relations of production. Nobody would put their children in a school system, or would watch a television newscast, that boasted of the inculcation of relations of exploitation. But as Althusser explains, being wrapped in an ideology of neutrality does not make it so. The previous section makes clear that true objectivity is unattainable, and its attempted application actually serves to undermine the press's ideal democratic mission by legitimating societal power centres. This must not be misunderstood as conspiratorial, for in doing so important lessons would be disregarded. Simply put, any discussion of news construction would be remiss in not recognizing that the people, institutions, routines and structures that facilitate the construction of news are influenced by power, technological, economic and cultural considerations, and that the resulting news product is necessarily supportive of the status quo. This section builds on the previous, offering further evidence of objectivity's perils.

Herman and Chomsky offer a persuasive account of the press's proclivity for serving the interests of who they term the "dominant elite" in the form of their influential propaganda model. Chomsky famously declared that "propaganda is to a democracy what the bludgeon is to a totalitarian state" (Media Control 20-1). In Althusserian terms, power is maintained in dictatorships by reliance on the repressive state apparatus of unchecked military force to maintain the societal structures of the economic base, whereas in self-described democratic states, where blatant force is less tenable (though sometimes used), the hegemonizing ideological state apparatuses must be employed to

achieve the “manufacture of consent” (Lippmann 248) of the body politic. Herman and Chomsky appropriated the phrase “manufacture of consent” from Lippmann’s seminal work *Public Opinion* (1922). Lippmann argues that democracy is an illusion—a means by which the dominant elite protects the ignorant masses from themselves. The mob is a nuisance that must be sated with the illusion of control so the sophisticated elite can manage matters of state unencumbered. According to Herman and Chomsky, the dominant elite in the U.S. today shares this view of democracy, and the mass media are a key tool available to the dominant elite to manufacture consent in today’s society.

The propaganda model is a structural economic explanation that identifies mass media behaviour as systemic. Again, political economy is privileged over cultural explanations of the press’s conduct. The propaganda model “traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages out to the public” (Herman and Chomsky 2). The dominant media players are firmly entrenched in the market system—they are businesses which legally must maximize profit above all else. This profit is garnered from other profit-driven corporations by means of advertisement revenue, making it very much in the best interests of mass media to deliver a supportive selling environment to its advertisers. As a result, corporations are able to financially pressure media by threatening to withdraw advertisements. The government, as the regulating body overseeing broadcasting licensing, as well as a steady source of official news, is also positioned to be able to exert pressure on media, whether it be with the threat of license revocation or by denying a particular outlet access to a once reliable official source of news. Moreover, while Herman and Chomsky do not deny the agency

of individuals working in news production, they see such actors as being very much part of the dominant culture, which necessarily makes it difficult for journalists to think outside the box of the prevailing ideology, no matter how well intentioned. As a result, the types and angles of stories covered are often presumed as being entirely commonsensical, when in fact an internalized selection process is at work that may be far from rational. Herman and Chomsky identify these five filters of the propaganda model (ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak and anti-communist ideology) as those through which information must pass, thereby shaping the final news product. According to Herman, the propaganda model illustrates a “decentralized and non-conspiratorial market system of control and processing” (“The Propaganda Model” 102-103). We can see from this that Herman and Chomsky find journalistic objectivity to be a relatively inconsequential concept, given that their model describes a story determination process occurring well before journalists puts pen to paper. A discussion of journalistic objectivity in light of such structural economic accounts is offered later in this section.

Herman and Chomsky are chiefly concerned with coverage of geopolitical news vis-à-vis U.S. foreign policy, dedicating over two-hundred-and-fifty pages to such case studies in *Manufacturing Consent* (1988). Predictably, countries allied with America receive favourable media treatment, while enemies of the U.S. (read countries opposed to American imperialism with an inhospitable trade environment) are vilified by the press. So the news treats some war victims as “worthy,” while others are not. Rigged elections in El Salvador and Guatemala are deemed “legitimizing,” while Nicaragua’s democratic elections are understood to be meaningless. Herman and Chomsky also reveal the press’s

fabrication of a “Bulgarian connection” to the Pope’s attempted assassination, and expose just how jingoistic the coverage was of Vietnam.

In the case of Vietnam for example, according to the propaganda model, one would expect the acceptable bounds of the controversy to be established by Washington, as the chief, official source of news regarding the conflict. And this is what Herman and Chomsky found, for during the U.S. intervention of 1965, editorial support was nearly universal. At this time, U.S. combat forces were deployed in Vietnam, and North Vietnam underwent regular bombing, as did South Vietnam at triple the scale. In this context, Herman and Chomsky point out that

neither then, nor before, was there any detectable questioning of the righteousness of the American cause in Vietnam, or of the necessity to proceed to full-scale “intervention.” By that time, of course, only questions of tactics and costs remained open, and further discussion in the mainstream media was largely limited to these narrow issues. While dissent and domestic controversy became a focus of media coverage from 1965, the actual views of dissidents and resisters were virtually excluded (172).

Vietnam is a fascinating historical example of the construction of television news in the service of the prevailing ideology. Hallin’s (1986) account of the television news treatment of Vietnam in the early years of U.S. involvement is telling.

Hallin watched thousands of hours of network broadcast television coverage of the Vietnam War, and conducted an extensive content analysis on hundreds of hours. He agrees with Herman and Chomsky, in that he also sees the reliance on official Washington sources, and the prevailing Cold War-era anti-communist ideology, framing

news events in such a way as to make the questioning of American policy impossible (Hallin 109-10). Hallin sees the practice of journalistic objectivity being employed quite inconsistently. He identifies three spheres: the Sphere of Consensus, Sphere of Legitimate Controversy, and Sphere of Deviance. When operating within the Sphere of Consensus, journalists celebrate shared values, feeling no need to remain impartial. Within the Sphere of Deviance, the journalist condemns or excludes those who challenge the status quo, thereby setting the parameters of what constitutes acceptable dissent. It is really only in the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy that journalists remain neutral and strive for balance in reporting. Objectivity, of course, operates on a sliding scale in the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy, ranging from a strict recitation of official facts to intrepid investigative journalism—it all depends on how close the story is to the adjacent Spheres (ibid 117-8). See Figure 1.

Hallin also identifies a thematic quality specific to television news that shaped Vietnam coverage as “a dramatic contrast between good, represented by the American peace offensive, and evil, represented by Hanoi” (118). He attributes this to the fact that television is organized in time rather than space—a familiar theme in much of television theory. As opposed to a newspaper article, the audience of television news must be given a linear narrative to follow to be carried through to the end of the story, making a dominant theme essential (ibid). This leads Hallin to remark that, in 1966, “when contrasting interpretations were rarely being reported, what jumped to the foreground in television’s simple, thematic presentation was the administration’s own rhetoric” (119). In fact, “ABC occasionally ran stories in which no reporter appeared at all, and the narration was done entirely by a military official” (ibid 139). So, here we see television



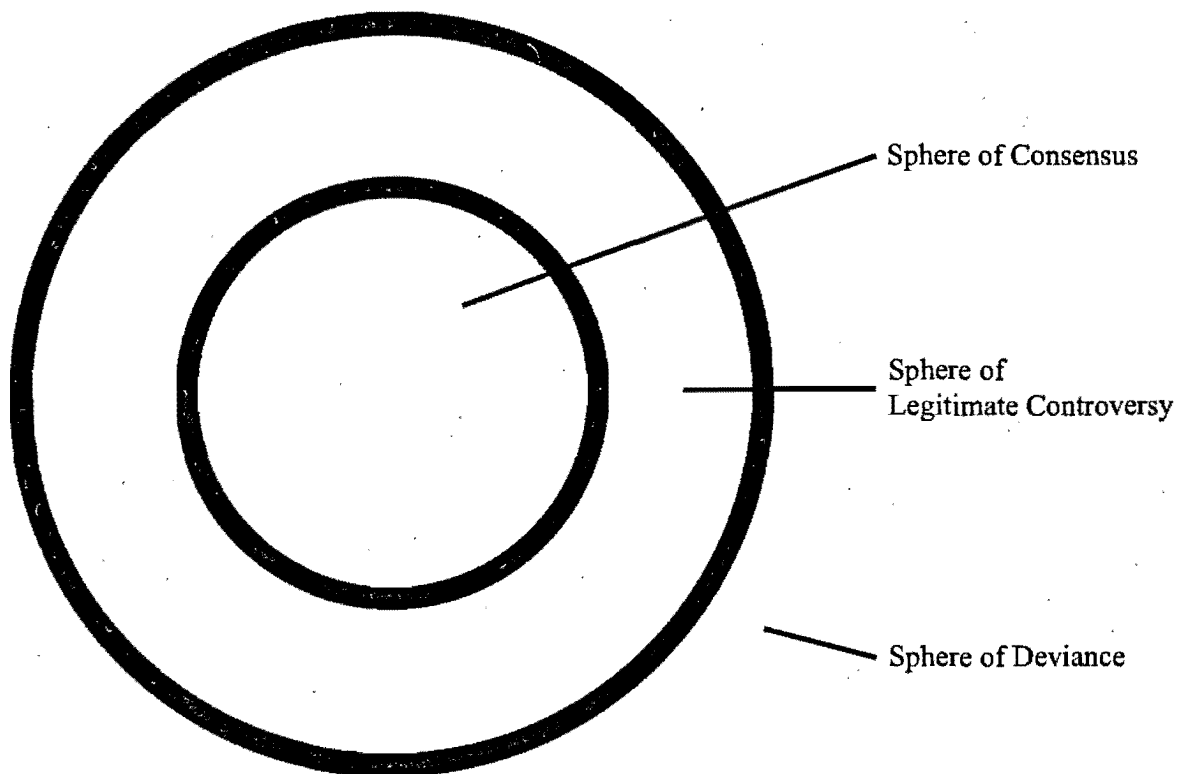


Figure 1 Hallin's *Three Spheres* model of journalistic objectivity.

news operating very close to Hallin's Sphere of Consensus, where objectivity is inapplicable. The combination of the seductive unity of a narrative with the official rhetoric of the dominant elite allows for an incredibly ideological medium, and television news that conveys a very particular world view.

But this thematic quality of television—the need for a story line—does not in itself determine how action is framed and what roles in which the news actors are cast. Who the “good guys” and “bad guys” are, and what the “moral of the story” is, all “depends on the prevailing ideology of the society as well as on the particular historical conjuncture, which brings certain elements of that ideology to the fore and pushes others into the background” (ibid 124). And for these news stories about war, “the best material

for television drama are the ones in which Good and Evil can be represented as clear and separate, where the source of conflict can be located outside the National Family” (ibid 125). By framing the war as a righteous Manichean battle, those at home watching the drama on their screen cheer on their “brothers” in combat, and rally behind the National Family’s patriarch, the President. In terms of who the audience was to root against, the enemy was established as a clear, evil *other*. “Television coverage dehumanized the enemy, drained him of all recognizable emotions and motives and thus banished him not only from the political sphere, but from human society itself. The North Vietnamese and Vietcong were... ‘halfcrazed.’ They were... vermin” (ibid 158). So we see television news providing an ideological framework for its audience, along with headlines and entertainment, delivering “symbols that represent the basic values of the established political culture” (ibid 125). And in the early years of Vietnam coverage, these symbols often took the form of the American soldier in the field. Since television journalists reported the war from the soldiers’ point of view, so long as they were supportive of it, television would tend to be so as well.

Hallin observed that practically all television news coverage of Vietnam after mid-1965 was about Americans “in action.” This makes sense, since the television audience would find this quite interesting and entertaining. Moreover, the dramatic imperatives of the medium necessitate the identification of sympathetic characters to personalize the news. But what is deemed a mere journalistic story-telling device also has political implications: “it meant that the war would be covered from ‘inside’ American policy, from the point of view of those carrying it out, with very little critical distance” (ibid 134). And so war coverage, again, found itself very close to the Sphere of

Consensus. Hallin continues: “the tendency was strong for reporters to identify with young Americans like themselves, whose dangers... they would often share” (135). These observations have never been more relevant, as the implications of embedding journalists with “the troops” are still wrestled with today. The themes of the stories told are quite familiar. Many were “hero stories.” Heroes of combat, heroes of technology, but also “moral” heroes: “television loved little vignettes about Americans, often doctors, who helped to ‘win hearts and minds’ by working with Vietnamese civilians” (ibid 139).

Stressed in much of early television news coverage of Vietnam were the professionalism, proficiency, compassion, and high spirits of the American soldiers. The war was made entertaining, personal, dramatic and exciting, complete with heroes, villains and a virtuous goal. Absent was conflicting ideology. Dissent was reported superficially, but not given serious consideration. Hallin found that “once the war was under way, its political purposes were taken for granted and public attention focused on the effort to win it” (ibid 142). Many parallels can be drawn between Hallin’s historic account of Vietnam in 1965 and what many believe to be the laziness (at best) or the complicity (at worst) of the press leading up to, and during the early months of, the American invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Even though Hallin (1994) seems to draw a number of the same conclusions as Herman and Chomsky, he criticizes the propaganda model as too deterministic. Herman responds that all models contain some deterministic elements, and that “this criticism is a straw person unless the critics also show that the system is not logically consistent, operates on false premises, or that the predicative power of the determining variables is poor (“The Propaganda Model” 107). According to Herman, such criticisms “do not

show where the alleged determinism leads to error nor do they offer or point to alternative models that would do a better job" (ibid).

Hallin feels that the propaganda model is weakened because it does not take into account the role that journalistic professionalism and objectivity play in constructing media content. Professionalism, Hallin asserts, is "central to understanding how the media operate" ("We Keep America" 13). However, Herman sees the concept of professionalism as one that is a product of media owners. It adds an air of legitimacy to journalism by assuring audiences of an objectivity that is uninfluenced by owners, advertisers or their own biases, and also reinforces the reliance on cheap official sources of authoritative news. For Herman, it seems plain that giving too much weight to notions of journalistic professionalism and objectivity only serves to distract from the larger picture, within which such concepts are only limitedly exercised. For Herman, professionalism and objectivity "are not likely to override the claims and demands of deeper power and control relationships" ("The Propaganda Model" 106). Hallin seems to betray the significance he applies to journalistic professionalism himself acknowledging that during the Central America crisis, the U.S. administration was able to "prevail in the battle to determine the dominant frame of television coverage" ("We Keep America" 64), not to mention his account of Vietnam just covered. Of course, Hallin's point is that the propaganda model's structural explanation cannot account for every circumstance, and that journalistic objectivity can sometimes serve to hamper the desired messaging of official sources.

Hallin, it should be mentioned, was required reading for Herman and Chomsky when putting together their chapter on the media coverage of Vietnam. His

*The "Uncensored War"* (1986) is cited several times throughout. Clearly, Herman, Chomsky and Hallin are in agreement on a number of points, which is evident by the compatibility of their two models. The Sphere of Legitimate Controversy simply contains acceptable debate, Herman and Chomsky would argue, as established by the dominant elite who set the parameters. The propaganda model also forecasts mass media's near unanimity of those topics that fall within the Sphere of Consensus. In terms of the U.S.'s foray into Indochina, Hallin has established that considering it an act of aggression was unfathomable, and so would be considered within the Sphere of Deviance. The propaganda model both forecasts and confirms this media treatment as well.

Though Herman and Chomsky do not feel journalistic professionalism and objectivity are all that useful for the purposes of predicting media behaviour, it is worth exploring the analyses offered by Hallin and others who invest more in the role of the individual actors who produce the news. However, Herman argues that such research yields little in the way of insight, since journalists will have internalized the source of their bias and will only tend to rationalize their behaviour ("The Propaganda Model" 105), adding that journalists are "oblivious to the compromises with authority they are constantly making' (ibid 106). Hallin's three spheres model addresses this nicely as well.

Gans echoes Herman and Chomsky's sourcing filter by recognizing journalists' need for regularly available and authoritative sources. The president of the U.S., for example, is at the top of the rank-ordered hierarchy that is the national government. "National news media cannot report all stories that affect the nation or the national audience they serve; consequently, they need an exclusionary consideration that

automatically limits the number of suitable stories" (ibid 147). So for very practical reasons, attention is often focused onto the president and the federal government to symbolically represent the nation—convenient for a national news telecast. Some may argue that Herman and Chomsky's position on this point is a rather economic determinist one, in that they attribute journalists' reliance on the White House as a news source to a basic need for cheap information. While this may in fact be true, Gans improves upon our understanding of news sourcing by recognizing the necessity of creating a product that has mass appeal. Of course, Herman and Chomsky would argue that the creation of a national audience is a priority of the dominant elite—preferred by government leaders, and advertisers alike—no matter what the journalist's own rationale is for such an audience. Also noteworthy is one of Gans' explanations for story selection: efficiency. Contrasting Herman and Chomsky's sole focus on economic necessity, Gans notes that "journalistic efficiency is not the rationally calculated commercial or industrial kind associated with profit-calculations" (ibid 282). News is sold to advertisers, and its value lies in its immediacy and newness. Inefficiently produced news would not meet the daily deadline. Economics plays a role, but the need for immediacy and the ability to allocate scarce resources such as print space or air time must also be considered.

Like Gans, Tuchman also offers a sociological account of news construction. Through extensive participant observation, Tuchman identifies the relationships between who she calls newswriters, their sources, and each other, as well as time constraints and professional journalistic tenets as those things that help to shape the news. And though she focuses on the individual actors who create news, she comes to a conclusion familiar to political economists: "news both draws upon and reproduces institutional structures"

(210), given that newswriters locate centralized sources of information and in turn create legitimated social institutions of them. When newswriters wed themselves to specific beats, they practically decree them as the preferred sites wherein reliable information should be collected. As a result, governance and official sources of information are privileged. Tuchman finds that journalistic objectivity transforms information into empirical facts—"facts as a normal... description and constitution of a state of affairs (ibid 211). We can recall here the facticity component of objectivity identified by Mindich, rooted in the positivist certainty of a knowable world. Tuchman finds that by identifying these facts with their sources, "newswriters create and control controversy; they contain dissent" (ibid). The result is news that disguises social realities instead of exposing them. As Tuchman puts it, television news "confirms the legitimacy of the state by hiding the state's intimate involvement with, and support of, corporate capitalism" (210). She is chiefly concerned with the fact that news is an ahistorical account of happenings of specific institutions in which the news industry is embedded, and that "we fail to realize how that embeddedness militates against the emergence of new forms of news" (196). News continually reaffirms its legitimacy, and the legitimacy of the institutions it covers, maintaining the status quo.

Echoing Hallin, Tuchman also describes the important role the use of symbols plays in the further reaffirmation of the status quo. Often, these symbolic representations of reality are framed as uncontrollable external forces. Economic forces, for instance, are reified and equated with the weather—a fluctuating, powerful, natural force. This reification "affirms that the individual is powerless to battle either the forces of nature or the forces of the economy... the news consumer is encouraged to sympathize or to

rejoice, but not to organize politically” (ibid 214). So when problems are created by these reified forces, the news audience is reassured that the authorities are managing the dilemma, since newswriters cover the story from the perspective of their centralized sources. Failure symbolizes just how powerful a force authorities are up against, whereas success symbolizes the legitimacy of their position and their activities. So in terms of an economic crisis, such as we see today, news consumers are reassured that while “they are ill equipped to deal with reified forces... legitimated experts.... are doing everything they can” (ibid).

In sum, Tuchman explains that newswriting is routinized to allow for the continual delivery of events-as-news. The value in news as a commodity is its very timeliness and newness. Old news is but mere information. This routinization—the centralization of legitimated sources, the typifying and categorization of events, all the structuring aspects of news organizations—not only defines the news, but practically predetermines it. As a result, “if an occurrence does not readily present itself as news easily packaged in a known narrative form, that occurrence is... dismissed by the limits inherent in the news frame. To do otherwise, news professionals would have to... recognize the inherent limitations of the narrative forms” (ibid 215). In this way, the news is “attuned to specific understandings of social reality. Those understandings, constituted in specific work processes and practices, legitimate the status quo” (ibid 216). Tuchman reveals the inner-workings of the newsroom that lead to a news product very much in line with Althusser’s notion of the press ISA.

This Althusserian conception of mass media is important to understand because it seems likely that the analyses of television news offered by Herman and Chomsky,



Hallin, and Tuchman are influenced to a greater or lesser extent by his reflections on Ideological State Apparatuses. For Althusser, the communications apparatus assists in the reproduction of the exploitative capitalist relations. Herman and Chomsky explain that this is accomplished through the systemic behaviour of the market-entrenched mass media, which marginalizes dissent and privileges the messages preferred by the dominant elite. Within these frameworks, journalistic objectivity is but a set of practices that at once ensure and disguise the functions of the system. Hallin's content analysis of early U.S. television news coverage of Vietnam provides a striking illustration of television news at work in this context. And Tuchman improves upon this scholarship with the addition of extensive participant observation, explaining how ideology and daily work demands in the newsroom further determines the hegemonizing form and content of news.

Hallin is quite right to insist that the role of journalistic professionalism and objectivity must also be considered. The propaganda model is perhaps too dismissive of this factor. But Tuchman and Gans do focus on the sociocultural where Herman and Chomsky do not, and yet they reach similar conclusions. And we also see just how simpatico Hallin's three spheres model is with the propaganda model. Though Herman and Chomsky may dismiss the importance Hallin, Gans and Tuchman place on cultural explanations of news construction, their work helps to flesh out, and impart more value, to insight gleaned through structural and institutional analyses that privilege the economic. Again, as established in the first section, a blend of political economy and cultural studies is essential—in this case, to best understand the construction of news and the hazards of journalistic objectivity.

## The Need for a Redefinition of Journalism's Form and Function

The previous section paints a very dismaying picture of news, in that there appears to be little, if any, room for dissent. News is established as an Ideological State Apparatus that manufactures consent, sets the parameters of acceptable political debate, legitimates power, and ensures the status quo. The inherent shortcomings of journalistic objectivity have allowed for a confluence of hidden political influence, the reification of institutional authority, and the insertion of naturalized cultural biases that validate the status quo and the powerful interests that have learned to exploit objectivity's limitations to the fullest. Given this, we must consider alternative forms of journalism that would better serve the public and democracy.

Herman and Chomsky stop short of articulating a new form of journalism; they stress the importance of grass-roots democratic activism to ensure continued and increasing access to public, non-profit media, while vigorously opposing the further deregulation and commercialization of media (307). Though a noble goal, the implication is rather reductive in that it is presumed that the market is incapable of delivering a democratizing press. This paper disagrees with that assessment, as do Gans and Kaplan.

Gans calls for what he calls multiperspectival journalism, wherein national news would no longer simply be equated with the activities of the federal government, but attention would rather be focused on all members of society—not just the elite—and the effects of national policies on the general public of all walks of life would be examined (313-4).

Kaplan echoes this call and builds on it further, asserting that the press needs to re-establish its links to the myriad voices, perspectives, concerns, and debates of society that exist outside of the usual power centres. By reintegrating with the public sphere, the press can encourage, and become a part of, inclusive political conversations. If redefined as a political medium, instead of a just a technical account, the usual allegations of bias and partisan spin would be inapplicable. Instead, “the partisanship with which the press could then be accused would be only partiality for democracy” (Kaplan 195). A press that celebrated a pluralistic public debate would include many of the voices which are now excluded so as to prevent allegations of bias. This new, democratic press “would offer new grounds for engagement to a citizenry which sees itself as marginal to the currently contrived debates of politicians and media professionals” (Kaplan 196). And as mentioned previously, Kaplan calls on journalists to provide interpretative insight and judgement.

The next section puts forward *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* as the finest contemporary example of satirical television news that reformulates journalistic objectivity, thereby avoiding the litany of undemocratic pitfalls catalogued thus far.

#### *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*

*The Daily Show* airs Monday through Thursday evenings on Comedy Central in the US and is simulcast on the Comedy Network in Canada at 11:00. The timeslot itself is telling, as it places *The Daily Show* in direct competition with conventional news telecasts while also ensuring it precedes the network late night talk shows. In Canada,

*The Daily Show* airs sixty-five minutes later on CTV making it, in Canada at least, a national over-the-air network telecast.

*The Daily Show* follows a familiar structure. The show is hosted, or anchored, by Stewart. He presents the top news stories from behind a desk at the top of the show, with the usual related graphic displayed over his shoulder. Often the particular story being covered is first satirized by the pun placed within the accompanying graphic. *The Daily Show* also employs a number of comedians who serve as the show's reporters, either reporting 'on location' with the aid of a chroma key green screen, setting up a pre-packaged field report at the desk across from Stewart, or simply acting as an 'expert' for a particular issue engaging in dialogue with Stewart at the desk. The replication of this familiar format allows *The Daily Show* to mock television newscasts, and amuse its audience, more effectively. Finally, *The Daily Show* also includes an interview segment near the end of the show similar to that found on late night talk shows. This segment seems out of place compared to the rest of the show at first. But while the requisite celebrity does appear regularly to promote their latest film, Stewart's guests are more often authors, journalists, and politicians. Though usually there to promote their book, television show or election campaign as well, the interview segment also often proves to be the most astute part of the show, showcasing Stewart's interview skills and sophisticated knowledge of complicated political issues.

*The Daily Show* has won a number of Emmy Awards honouring the calibre of its comedy, but more importantly, it has also twice won a Peabody Award, each for their coverage of the US Presidential election in 2000 and 2004, its dubious "fake news" self-descriptor notwithstanding ('The Peabody Awards'). The ratings also speak to *The Daily*

*Show's* success. In 2004, Comedy Central reported that the average audience for *The Daily Show's* first-run episode was 1.2 million with another 800,000 people watching the subsequent reruns (Baym 260). The figure of 2 million people per day is for the US alone. To this we can add the Canadian audience, as well as the international audience since *The Daily Show* is also syndicated around the world. Though not enjoying an audience size comparable to the vast audience share of more traditional newscasts, *The Daily Show* is definitely a news show that cannot be ignored. Moreover, Mutz (2004) finds that "as many people in the under-30 crowd cited *The Daily Show*... as a place where they got presidential campaign news as cited all three of the network news programs combined" (34, emphasis mine).

Mutz argues that *The Daily Show* has effectively eradicated the line between entertainment and news. Far from a lament, with increasing numbers turning away from conventional television newscasts, she sees *The Daily Show's* entertainment value as that which allows it to inform and educate. They come for the comedy and stay for the news, as it were. But it is not the same kind of news that would be found on a traditional television newscast. Baym (2005) agrees with Mutz, arguing quite clearly that *The Daily Show* has indeed reconstructed the television newscast and reinvented journalism. For Baym, *The Daily Show* is an example of "alternative journalism, one that uses satire to interrogate power, parody to critique contemporary news, and dialogue to enact a model of deliberative democracy" (261). In an age of discursive integration where the languages and practices of news, politics and entertainment have largely become indistinguishable, *The Daily Show* challenges journalism's traditional conventions. Furthermore, by never claiming to be a conventional television newscast, *The Daily Show*

is able to routinely violate and question journalistic conventions in important ways (ibid 264). McKain (2005) reaffirms this important point, succinctly stating that it is *The Daily Show*'s "insistence that it is 'fake news' that may protect it most," continuing that "this mantra allows it to dodge the formal constraints that News has trapped itself in, while staving off the... criticisms that, in part, created the News's formal constraints" (429).

The first of Baym's observations is that *The Daily Show* is able to effectively interrogate power. It does so by rejecting the usual convention of selecting succinct clips of politicians who are clearly on message. Conventional television newscasts select concise clips for the sake of a professional and tidy narrative. This reflects an assumption that what politicians say makes sense. Since official sources are deemed to be legitimate, the mediated treatment and delivery of their message is deferential. The danger of this practice, however, is that politicians benefit from the tidying up and resulting amplification of their message. The conspicuous absence of moments of silence "contributes significantly to the perception that those appearing on the air always have the answers" (McKain 420). Here McKain echoes Tuchman's earlier point regarding legitimated experts and their supposed mastery over reified forces. In *The Daily Show*'s case, clips from the same news conferences will be used, but attention is often drawn to verbal stumbles and awkward pauses. Such instances would be simply ignored by conventional journalism as being unusable. But on *The Daily Show*, the sincerity or honesty of authority figures are often called into question through the use of their own words and actions—words and actions which would otherwise receive no attention on conventional television newscasts. In this way, Baym suggests "*The Daily Show* achieves a critical distance that cannot be said of the networks" (265). Moreover, the

unconventional selection of footage, what McKain calls *The Daily Show's remediation*, "consistently disrupts government officials' cultivated images of assurance and knowledge" (419). Professional politicians are quite adept at capitalizing on the networks' quote selectivity and "*The Daily Show's* refusal to abide by standard practices may offer a measure of resistance to manipulation, a counterbalance to the mutual embrace between press and politics" (Baym 265). Though using the same sources as the mainstream press, *The Daily Show* uses them in a different way so as to effectively illegitimize the traditionally central sources of authority that are privileged by other news outlets. By doing so, *The Daily Show* comes closer to Kaplan's democratic ideal of journalism with the interjection of an expressed perspective and assessment.

Stewart then takes this unconventional clip selection further and forces it into dialogue with him (see Appendix I for a typical example). In so doing, rhetorical strategies of politicians are exposed, and Stewart's interspersed comments and questions challenge the monologic truth seen on conventional television newscasts. Again, we see the de-sanctification of public figures continuing. What is important to note here is that Stewart does away with the detachment component of objectivity identified by Mindich earlier. He does so by expressing open attachment to democracy and honesty—the desirable biases of Kaplan's ideal journalism. Traditional objectivity would prohibit a conventional journalist from critically commenting on an egregious example of political doublespeak. But *The Daily Show* and Jon Stewart specifically

uses humour as the licence to confront political dissembling and misinformation and to demand a measure of accountability. In so doing, the program is attempting to revive a spirit of critical inquiry and of the press as an agent of

public interrogation that largely has been abdicated by the post-September 11 news media (ibid 268).

In this way *The Daily Show* serves as a “new form of critical journalism, one which uses satire to achieve that which the mainstream press is no longer willing to pursue” (ibid).

*The Daily Show* further critiques the news media by attacking the conventions and pretensions of the press. *The Daily Show*’s comedians who play the role of journalist often do so under absurdly ostentatious titles such as ‘Senior Subterranean Structural Analyst’ and ‘Senior Russian Maritime Correspondent.’ The use of these designations expose the fact that similar titles conferred on actual journalists are equally absurd and they too, in fact, are playing a role. *The Daily Show* conspicuously uses a green screen to chroma key their reporters ‘on location,’ which again, challenges the conventional newscasts’ method of trying to convey immediacy and greater supposed knowledge apparently only gleaned through proximity to a symbolic location. McKain wisely ascribes the satiric payoff of this technique to the Bakhtian *defamiliarization*, or Shklovskyan *enstrangement*, of this ridiculous device (418). During the pre-packaged field reports, *The Daily Show*’s reporters often place themselves at the centre of the story being covered, making the report as much about them as the supposed news being reported. Again, the commentary here is that this is also an unfortunate tendency of conventional television newscasts which obscures that which is actually important. In a particularly damning instance of news media criticism on 23 August 2004, Stewart asked one of his reporters why he was not trying to determine the validity of a spurious allegation lobbed at one politician by another to which the reporter explained: “I’m a journalist, Jon. My Job is to spend half the time reporting what one side says and half the



time reporting the other. A little thing called ob-jec-tivity. You might want to look it up someday” (Baym 270). This exchange criticizes how the balance component of objectivity often restricts points of view to the pre-approved reductive binaries of the Democratic and Republican positions (McKain 422)—the parameters of acceptable debate being established within Hallin’s Sphere of Legitimate Controversy—even if one of the allowable arguments is demonstrably false. In exposing the shortcomings of conventional television newscasts in their reliance on these contemporary devices, *The Daily Show* warns of the increasing irrelevancy of television news, the threat to democracy such complacency poses, and contends that there can be a new alternative (Baym 270). In fact, *The Daily Show*’s methods impugn blatant dishonesty where traditional television newscasts are prevented from doing so because of their adherence to objectivity itself.

Where Jon Stewart excels is during his interview segment. Admittedly, sometimes the interview is trivial, with actors promoting their latest project. But more often, it is during the interview that Stewart readily engages with problematical issues, having conversations concerning national issues without trying to beat his guest rhetorically. And in his effort to understand the problems and potential solutions being discussed, topics are often placed in an historical and intellectual context unseen on conventional television newscasts. Seldom does one hear Chomsky, Zinn or Marx referenced on television at all, but on *The Daily Show*, this is not unusual. *The Daily Show*’s interview segment, Baym asserts, seeks to connect to the national conversation, serving as a portal to a Habermasian public sphere (272). As noted above, Stewart is irked by political doublespeak and invites guests to have honest conversations with him.

The implication here being that partisan talking points and spin doctoring serves more to muddy the waters of beneficial discourse. As an example, on 28 June 2004 Stewart chastised Terry McAullife, then the Chair of the Democratic National Committee, for insulting George W. Bush and continued to ask him to explain “the breakdown in civility” of the presidential election campaign (ibid). Further, on 01 October 2008, Stewart interviewed former Reagan speechwriter and Wall Street Journal columnist Peggy Noonan. Though far from political bedfellows, both Stewart and Noonan lamented the “deeply uninspiring” and “narrowly partisan” presidential race. Stewart asked why politicians and the electorate cannot have conversations “honestly like adults and not pretend like we’re all talking this weird code-language around each other?” In a newscape preoccupied with the superficial spectacle of a presidential horse race, *The Daily Show*’s damning of mediated bombast offered up as though actual discourse is both refreshing and responsible. Again, we see Stewart’s abandonment of the detachment tenet in condemning the narrow and harmful speech that journalistic objectivity helps produce.

Sometimes Stewart adopts a more aggressive posture during his interview if he feels an especially grievous transgression has occurred, while somehow remaining quite disarming—Stewart’s recent interview with CNBC’s Jim Cramer on 12 March 2009 being the most recent example. This interview took place at the behest of the executives at CNBC who apparently felt Cramer needed an opportunity to respond to the criticisms lobbed at CNBC by *The Daily Show* (“Cramer boosts ‘Daily Show’ ratings”). The week before on 4 March 2009, in typical *Daily Show* fashion, Stewart presented a packaged piece which condemned CNBC’s stock market cheerleading by juxtaposing clips of the

network's personalities encouraging the purchasing of stocks against the plummeting DOW figures, and of proclamations of companies' health and stability against their liquidation mere days later. The piece also put on display the apparent lapdog (as opposed to watchdog) interviewing skills of CNBC's reporters when questioning CEOs on their businesses—whose pronouncements of strength and resiliency went unchecked. Stewart's commentary included the remark: "Wow. If I had only followed CNBC's advice, I'd have a million dollars today... provided I'd started with a hundred million dollars." The remediation of CNBC's own footage along with Stewart's commentary makes for a damning indictment of the press's reliance on those sources that reify the capitalist system.

The press was abuzz over *The Daily Show's* contemptuous assault of CNBC's complicit role in the sub-prime mortgage crisis and ensuing economic meltdown. Cramer's subsequent appearance on *The Daily Show* drew 2.3 million U.S. viewers—a top ten showing (ibid). Stewart was passionate and incisive. His mission was to reaffirm the importance of a press accountable to the public. For him, CNBC, as a self-proclaimed financial news network, had a responsibility to deliver sober reporting and warn of market improprieties, but failed in that capacity:

These guys at these companies were on a Sherman's March through their companies, financed by our 401ks, and all the incentives of their companies were for short term profit. And they burned the fucking house down with our money and walked away rich as hell, and you guys knew that that was going on. Cramer defended CNBC's journalistic standards, maintaining that the economic collapse could not have been forecasted, to which Stewart responded:

Listen, you knew what the banks were doing and yet were touting it for months and months. The entire network was and so now to pretend that this was some sort of crazy, once-in-a-lifetime tsunami that nobody could've seen coming is disingenuous at best and criminal at worst.

But most disconcerting to Stewart is what he sees as two stock markets, a spurious one for the average investor, and an actual one for the powerful. The first one

has been sold to us as long term... Put your money in pensions and just leave it there. Don't worry about it. It's all doing fine. Then, there's this other market; this real market that's occurring in the back room. Where giant piles of money are going in and out... it's transactional and it's fast. But it's dangerous, it's ethically dubious and it hurts that long term market. So... it feels like we are capitalizing your adventure by our pension... And that it is a game that you know... is going on. But that you go on television as a financial network and pretend isn't happening.

Cramer was obviously unprepared for the interview, doing little more than apologizing for not doing a better job. Stewart, on the other hand, was clearly well researched. He had a solid grasp of the issues and confronted Cramer with damning footage—footage of Cramer advocating the very improprieties he claimed to be fighting against. See Appendix II for a complete transcript of the interview.

What we can take from this is that though Stewart recognizes the failures of journalistic objectivity in practice, he nonetheless seems to believe that some form of professional ethic is required to deliver socially responsible news. What *The Daily Show* does is provide a commentary on the failures of traditional journalistic objectivity, and

we can read the show as an example of how the press can reconceptualize and reformulate objectivity's components to restore journalism's democratic charge.

Let us return to Mindich's components of objectivity (detachment, nonpartisanship, the inverted pyramid, facticity and balance). This paper has shown that Stewart is far from detached. Rather than taking the statements of official sources at face value, *The Daily Show* offers critical analyses—often contrasting official statements against contradictory ones of the same source—and draws conclusions. Nonpartisanship is an interesting component in relation to *The Daily Show*. Though the show's chief bias would be one of entertainment, its comedy is rooted in a classic liberalism that values progress, reform and the defence of civil liberties. Just as the mass newspaper was released from overt partisan control, so too is *The Daily Show* unaligned with any political party explicitly. Mind you, the Democratic Party is obviously closer to *The Daily Show*'s political proclivities, and as a result the Republican Party often finds itself in the program's crosshairs for reasons of policy, whereas the Democratic Party is criticized for being unorganized and weak in countering Republican machinations (this focus has changed somewhat given that the power shift in Washington of the last couple of years provides less comedic fodder of this type). However, *The Daily Show* does practice a form of nonpartisanship in that it is chiefly concerned with the effect abuses of power, hypocrisy, and the corruption of the two-party state, has on the health of democracy. In this sense, both parties come under fire for being part of the same problematic system, even if one party is more often considered the lesser of two evils for comedic expediency. So while some may identify a superficial partisanship, what is

important is that *The Daily Show* chiefly exhibits a politically engaged bias of democratic advancement—a bias of which Kaplan would surely approve.

The inverted pyramid describes a style of news writing that has been in fashion for well over a hundred years wherein what are deemed the most important facts are put forward first, replacing the chronological narrative style, complete with enticing leads and lyrical flourishes, that preceded it (Mindich 65-6). What we should take from the use of the inverted pyramid is the deemed importance, and de facto entrenchment, of facticity. This paper has shown how the journalistic veneration of facticity has led to state entanglements that render the press increasingly incapable of providing a check on power. *The Daily Show* is highly critical of the press's lazy reliance on official 'facts,' as evidenced by the exchange on "a little thing called ob-jec-tivity" mentioned earlier. That example also serves as a criticism of objectivity's use as "strategic ritual" wherein objectivity is used as a defence by journalists to protect themselves from criticisms of bias (Tuchman 1972). By excluding her own voice—letting quotations and facts 'speak for themselves'—the journalist's goal is self-preservation in a profession that rejects subjective interpretation. But while *The Daily Show* rejects facticity, it demonstrates a belief in immutable facts, or self-evident truths, that journalistic objectivity neglects in favour of a balance of competing *versions* of the 'facts.' This belief that there is a truth being obscured by society's elites and the press that cover them is the impetus behind *The Daily Show*'s brand of satirical critique. This is especially evident in the Cramer interview. Stewart's indictment of CNBC addresses many of the pitfalls of traditional journalistic objectivity outlined in this paper: a reliance on the official 'facts' provided by authoritative sources reified economic forces and served to legitimate and naturalize the

status quo while disguising the actual structures and systems in play. Had CNBC practiced an ideal form of democracy-supporting journalism like that advocated by Kaplan, or a multiperspectival journalism like that called for by Gans, a diversity of thought from the citizenry could have been solicited, official pronouncements could have been investigated, questioned and challenged, and the reality—the facts—buried under the spin could have been discovered.

The components of journalistic objectivity in their current formulation and application are simply unworkable. If we recast journalism in a democratizing framework, then detachment must be discarded. Detachment encourages a journalistic passivity that is too easily manipulated. The defence and improvement of democracy demands passionate journalists who take this responsibility seriously and feel personally invested. The ‘balance’ of reductive binaries could then be reformulated as a true balance of disparate voices, with the journalist exercising the important duty of assessing the value of different viewpoints, and offering judgements as to the utility or veracity of competing claims. Nonpartisanship could then transcend a mere disavowal of party affiliation, allowing for a press that scrutinizes the overarching political structures of society. And facticity, which leads to positivist ideas that an actual account of the world can be gleaned through the accumulation of official ‘facts,’ could then be transformed into a hermeneutic exercise that recognizes the fallibility of official ‘facts’ and empowers the journalist to defend what most sensible people would understand to be a true account of reality in the face of illusory claims from society’s power brokers.

This represents a revolutionary change to journalism, and *The Daily Show* comes closest to realizing this democratizing journalistic form by revealing the inherently

undemocratic deficiencies of television news in its current incarnation and fostering a sophisticated scepticism of the dominant elite's mediated messaging.

## Conclusion

The structural economic accounts of the role of media in capitalist societies presented by Althusser and Herman and Chomsky do not appear to allow for a mediated form of popular dissent like *The Daily Show*, so we must attempt to account for this inconsistency. For Althusser, the communications apparatus assists in the reproduction of the exploitative capitalist relations, and Herman and Chomsky explain that this is accomplished through the systemic behaviour of the market-entrenched mass media, which marginalizes dissent and privileges the messages preferred by the dominant elite. So what accounts for the criticism and dissension embodied by *The Daily Show*?

The structural economic explanation would be that *The Daily Show* has not found a way to circumvent the five filters of the propaganda model. That it is as much part of the press ISA as any other newscast. That it too reaffirms the status quo or is at the very least insignificant. Democratic realists like Lippmann would argue that the presence of dissent is deliberate, for it gives the impression of celebrated public debate to the masses, thereby maintaining the illusion of democracy, while also allowing for a pressure relief mechanism of sorts. Chomsky supports this claim. The University of Windsor hosted a conference in May 2007 entitled *20 YEARS OF PROPAGANDA?* concerning the continued relevance of Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model. Chomsky delivered the keynote address on May 17, for which I was in attendance. During the question and



answer section following his address a questioner asked how one could reconcile the popularity of *The Daily Show* vis-à-vis the propaganda model, to which Chomsky responded, after admitting having never seen the program despite the enthusiastic recommendations from his grandchildren: “There is a tradition of the court jester from medieval times who is given leeway. He can mock the king. In fact it’s his job... satirists are just allowed some more leeway and some of them use it pretty intelligently.” So according to Chomsky, *The Daily Show* is sanctioned by the dominant elite. And since he says *The Daily Show* is simply “just allowed some more leeway,” we can take from this that Chomsky does not believe its critiques are of any major consequence.

Further still, given that a large part of *The Daily Show*’s appeal is in its ruthlessly sardonic dissection of television news, the stories covered are necessarily those same stories covered by conventional television newscasts. *The Daily Show* is limited to “always responding retroactively to what the news was” that day, and is limited to what it can cover by its own genre and structure (McKain 419). So with the acceptable agenda already established by mainstream television news, *The Daily Show* follows suit, along with the telling of some jokes sanctioned by the dominant elite.

The downfall of these structural explanations of *The Daily Show*’s allowance is the underestimation of the power of its critique. Remember, *The Daily Show* does enjoy the ability to set its own agenda. The Jim Cramer interview is a case in point. *The Daily Show* made CNBC’s failings mainstream news—not the other way around. As we have seen, *The Daily Show* does far more than tell mere jokes in response to the news of the day. It subverts the polished messages of the legitimated authorities, undermines the self-conferred legitimacy of traditional television news and their establishment of acceptable

parameters of debate, and encourages discourse vital to a healthy public sphere. *The Daily Show* represents a bona fide challenge to the status quo, not hollow grumbles.

We would do well not to dismiss the valuable insight afforded by the structural economic explanations offered by Althusser and Herman and Chomsky simply because *The Daily Show* is somewhat problematical within that framework. As is the overarching call of this paper, structural economic explanations are indispensable when studying media, but a more complete understanding of the mediascape is afforded when complementing such theories with a cultural studies approach. The works of Althusser and Herman and Chomsky provide valuable insight into the hegemonic role of television news, and their structural explanations are complemented nicely by Hallin and Tuchman, who arrive at quite similar conclusions while offering less determined cultural explanations that afford greater agency to individual newswriters.

As Herman and Chomsky tell us, mass media are very much a part of the market system, so the paramount goal is profit generation. And *The Daily Show* commands a large audience, making it quite profitable. So it is free to practice its sanctioned dissent unchallenged so long as an audience is delivered to advertisers, and so long as advertisers desire the attention of the delivered demographic. However, it is arrogant to presume *The Daily Show's* dissent, criticism of legitimating newscasts, and call for civil public dialogue to be innocuous—that it is but a whisper buried in an otherwise cacophonous medium, as Chomsky seems to think. By considering *The Daily Show* an allowable form of protest within the democratic illusion that is designed to act as a surrogate voice for the disenchanted, thereby controlling dissent (organizing politically being unnecessary if Stewart is on the case), apathy on the part of the citizenry is presumed. But one can

deduce that *The Daily Show*'s sizable audience watches because it is sympathetic to its message of dissent. Chomsky admits the court jester can use his leeway quite effectively, but he underestimates just how significant *The Daily Show* is. The court jester—or pressure relief valve—allowance in political economy explanations is a weak attempt at maintaining the integrity of structural economic theories when confronted with evidence of actors operating outside of supposed comprehensive systems. Cultural studies helps us fill this gap in political economy by offering an improved understanding of *The Daily Show*'s allowance. *The Daily Show* confirms for us that newswriters do indeed enjoy agency, and that journalists have the power to rearticulate journalistic objectivity in the service of democracy. Political economy is undoubtedly an important consideration in this regard, but a transformation to a journalism of praxis is necessarily first and foremost a cultural enterprise.

## Appendix I

*The following is an excerpt from the 4 March 2009 airing of The Daily Show with Jon Stewart wherein Stewart presented the extensively researched, and scathing, packaged piece that criticized the calibre of CNBC's financial news reporting. This short segment is an excellent example of The Daily Show's remediation of footage, and its usual rhetorical device of enacting a satiric dialogue with the clip to expose the press's failure at interrogating institutional power.*

STEWART: Perhaps the network's finest hour was its interview with Sir Allen Stanford, whose bank and wealth management firm was posting oddly positive results in a down market because... it was... a fraudulent Ponzi scheme.

*-Clip of CNBC interview on 13 May 2008-*

QUINTANILLA: *You managed to avoid the sub-prime debacle almost entirely, didn't you?*

STANFORD: *A hundred percent, we avoided the sub-prime debacle.*

QUINTANILLA: *What told you it was not a wise move?*

STANFORD: *Well, it's very simple...*

*-End clip-*

STEWART: I RAN A PONZI SCHEME!

*-Audience laughs-*

STEWART: INSTEAD OF INVESTING THE MONEY, I—STOLE—IT! Eight billion dollars worth of it. I'm bad.

*-Audience laughs-*

STEWART: Come on, CNBC's Carl Quintanilla. You got one of the biggest white collar criminals in history live on the air. Don't let him off the hook.

*-Clip of interview-*

QUINTANILLA: *Before we let you go...*

*-End clip-*

STEWART: Here it comes... the million dollar question...

*-Clip of interview-*

*QUINTANILLA: Is it fun being a billionaire?*

*STANFORD: Well, uh, yes, yes, yes, I have to say it is fun being a billionaire.*

*-End clip-*

STEWART: Fuck... You!

*-Audience laughs and cheers-*

STEWART: You know, between the two of 'em, I can't decide which one of those guys I'd rather see in jail. We'll be right back.

## Appendix II

*The following is a transcript of the interview that took place during the 12 March 2009 airing of The Daily Show with Jon Stewart between Jon Stewart and Jim Cramer of CNBC's Mad Money.*

STEWART: So let's get to the main event. What we've all been waiting for. Or, one-hundred-and-fifty or so people here. The host of CNBC's *Mad Money*, please welcome to the program, Jim Cramer! Sir!

*-Audience applauds while Cramer enters-*

STEWART: How the hell did we end up here, Mr. Cramer? What happened?

CRAMER: I don't know. I don't know. Big fan of the show. Who's never said that?

STEWART: Well, many people. Let me just explain to you very quickly one thing that is somewhat misinterpreted. This was not directed at you, per say. I just want you to know that. We threw some banana cream pies at CNBC. You got a little, obviously, schmutz on your jacket from it. Took exception...

CRAMER: I think that everyone could come in under criticism, because we all should have seen it more. I mean, admittedly this is a terrible one. Everyone got it wrong. I got a lot of things wrong because I think it was kind of one in a million shot. But I don't think anyone should be spared in this environment.

STEWART: So, then, if I may, why were you mad at us?

*-Audience laughs-*

CRAMER: No.

STEWART: Because I was under the impression that you thought we were being unfair.

CRAMER: No, you have my friend Joe Nocera on and Joe called me and said, 'Jim, do I need to apologize to you?' and I said, No. We're fair game. We're big network. We've been out front, and we've made mistakes. We've got seventeen hours of live TV a day to do. But ah—

STEWART: Maybe you could cut down on that.

*-Audience laughs-*

STEWART: We're going to go away, we're going to come right back with Jim Cramer, right after this.

*-Commercial break-*

STEWART: Hey! Welcome back to the program. We're here with Jim Cramer. So let me tell you why I think this has caused some attention. It's the gap between what CNBC advertises itself as and what it is and the help that people need to discern this. Let me show you... This is the promo for your show.

CRAMER: Okay.

STEWART: Alright. So this is Jim Cramer's promo.

*-"In Cramer We Trust" promo plays-*

*Voice Over: An economy in freefall. Investments on the brink. When you don't know what to do, don't panic. Cramer's got your back. Mad Money with Jim Cramer.*

*-End promo-*

STEWART: Isn't that, you know, look—we're both snake oil salesmen to a certain extent—

CRAMER: I'm not disagreeing...

STEWART: But we do label the show as snake oil here.

*-Audience laughs-*

STEWART: Isn't there a problem with selling snake oil and labeling it as vitamin tonic and saying that it cures impetigo, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera? Isn't that the difficulty here?

CRAMER: I think that there are two kinds of people. There are people that come out and they make good calls and bad calls that are financial professionals and then there's the people who say they only make good calls and they're liars. I try really hard to make as many good calls as I can.

STEWART: I think the difference is not good call/bad call. The difference is real market and unreal market. Let me show you... This is... You ran a hedge fund.

CRAMER: Yes I did. For many years.

*-2006 video of Jim Cramer being interviewed on TheStreet.com-*

*CRAMER: You know a lot of times when I was short at my hedge fund and I was positioned short, meaning I needed it down, I would create a level of activity beforehand that could drive the futures. It doesn't take much money.*

-End video-

STEWART: What does that mean?

CRAMER: Okay, this was a hyperbolic example of what I was trying to get people— You had a great piece about short selling earlier.

STEWART: Yes, I was—

CRAMER: I've been trying to reign in short selling, trying to expose what really happens. This is what goes on, what I'm trying to say is, I didn't do this but I'm trying to explain to people this is the shenanigans—

STEWART: Well, it sounded as if you were talking about that you had done it.

CRAMER: Then I was inarticulate because I did trade... I barely traded the futures. But I will say this: I am trying to expose this stuff, exactly what you guys do, and I'm trying to get the regulators to look at it.

STEWART: Well, see, that's very interesting because, roll two-ten.

-210 video-

*CRAMER: I would encourage anyone who is in the hedge fund unit 'do it' because it's legal. And it is a very quick way to make money and very satisfying. By the way, no one else in the world would ever admit that but I don't care.*

*UNKNOWN: That's right and you can say that here.*

*CRAMER: And I can't... I'm not going to say it on TV.*

-End video-

-Audience groans-

CRAMER: It's on TV now.

STEWART: I want the Jim Cramer on CNBC to protect me from that Jim Cramer.

-Audience applauds-

CRAMER: I think the way you do that is to show—Okay, the regulators watch the tape, they realize the shenanigans that goes on, they can go after this. Now, they didn't catch Madoff. That's a shame, but—



STEWART: Now why, when you talk about the regulators, why not the financial news network? That's the whole point of this. CNBC could be an incredibly powerful tool of illumination for people that believe that there are two markets: One that has been sold to us as long term. Put your money in 401ks. Put your money in pensions and just leave it there. Don't worry about it. It's all doing fine. Then, there's this other market; this real market that's occurring in the back room. Where giant piles of money are going in and out and people are trading them and it's transactional and it's fast. But it's dangerous, it's ethically dubious and it hurts that long term market. So what it feels like to us—and I'm speaking purely as a layman—it feels like we are capitalizing your adventure by our pension and our hard earned... And that it is a game that you know... That you know is going on. But that you go on television as a financial network and pretend isn't happening.

CRAMER: Okay. First, my first reaction is absolutely we could do better. Absolutely. There's shenanigans and we should call 'em out. Everyone should. I should do a better job at it. But my second thing is, is I talk about the shorts every single night. I've got people in Congress who I've been working with to try to get the uptick rule. It's a technical thing but it would cut down a lot of the games that you're talking about. I'm trying. I'm trying. Am I succeeding? I'm trying.

STEWART: But the gentleman on that video is a sober, rational individual. And the gentleman on *Mad Money* is throwing plastic cows through his legs and shouting "Sell! Sell! Sell!" and then coming on two days later and going, "I was wrong. You should have bought," like—I can't reconcile the brilliance and knowledge that you have of the intricacies of the market with the crazy bullshit I see you do every night.

*-Audience laughs-*

*-Edit point-*

*-Onscreen text reads: WATCH THE ENTIRE INTERVIEW AT [www.thedailyshow.com](http://www.thedailyshow.com)-*

STEWART: That's English. That's treating people like adults.

CRAMER: How 'bout if I try it?

STEWART: Try what?

CRAMER: Try doing that. I'll do that.

STEWART: Listen, that'd be great, but it's not just you. It's larger forces at work. It is this idea that the financial news industry is not just guilty of a sin of omission but a sin of commission. That they are actually in bed with... this idea—

CRAMER: No, we're not in bed with them. Come on. I don't think that's fair. Honestly. I think that we try to report the news and I think that some people—

STEWART: A couple of guys do. This guy Faber.

CRAMER: He's fabulous, Faber.

STEWART: And maybe two other guys.

CRAMER: He's fabulous and he's done some things that have really blown the cover off a lot of stuff.

STEWART: But this thing was ten years in the making.

CRAMER: Right.

STEWART: And it's not going to be fixed tomorrow. But the idea that you could have on the guys from Bear Sterns and Merrill... and guys that had leveraged thirty-five-to-one...

CRAMER: I know.

STEWART: And then blame mortgage holders. I mean, that's insane.

CRAMER: I never did that.

STEWART: No, but the network itself...

CRAMER: I'm sorry. You're absolutely right. I always wished that people would come on and swear themselves in before they come on the show. I had a lot of CEOs lie to me on the show. It's very painful. I don't have subpoena power.

STEWART: But don't—You're pretending that you are a dew-eyed innocent. Watch. Roll... I mean, if I may...

CRAMER: It's your show for Heaven's sake.

STEWART: Just roll two-twelve.

CRAMER: No! Not two-twelve!

-212 video-

CRAMER: *Now you can't ferment. That's a violation of...*

UNKNOWN: *Ferment?*

CRAMER: *You can't foment. You can't create yourself, an impression that a stock's down... but you do it anyway because the SEC doesn't understand it. That's the only sense that I would say this is illegal...*

*-End video-*

STEWART: Now two-sixteen.

*-216 video-*

UNKNOWN: *Another stock that a lot of people are focused on right now seems to be Apple.*

CRAMER: *Ya, Apple's very important to spread the rumor that both Verizon and AT&T have decided that they don't like the phone. That's a very easy one to do. It's also you want to spread the rumor that it's not going to be ready for MacWorld and this is very easy because the people who write about Apple want that story and you can claim that it's credible because you spoke to someone at Apple, because Apple is—doesn't register.*

UNKNOWN: *They're not going to comment.*

*-End video-*

CRAMER: You know...

STEWART: I mean, I gotta tell you. You know, I understand you want to make finance entertaining, but it's not a fucking game.

*-Audience applauds-*

STEWART: When I watch that I get, I can't tell you how angry that makes me, because what it says to me is, you all know. You all know what's going on. You know, you can draw a straight line from those shenanigans to the stuff that was being pulled at Bear and at AIG and all this derivative market stuff that is this weird Wall Street side bet.

CRAMER: But Jon, don't you want guys like me that have been in it to show the shenanigans? What else can I do? I mean, last night's show—

STEWART: No, no, no, no, no. I want desperately for that, but I feel like that's not what we're getting. What we're getting is... Listen, you knew what the banks were doing and yet were touting it for months and months. The entire network was and so now to pretend that this was some sort of crazy, once-in-a-lifetime tsunami that nobody could've seen coming is disingenuous at best and criminal at worst.

*-Audience applauds-*

CRAMER: But Dick Fuld, who ran Lehman Brothers, called me in... he called me in when the stock was at forty because I was saying, look, I thought the stock was wrong, I thought it was the wrong place to be. He brings me in, lies to me, lies to me, lies to me. I've known him for twenty years.

STEWART: The CEO of a company lied to you.

CRAMER: Shocker—stop trading.

STEWART: But isn't that financial reporting? I mean, I guess, what do you feel is the role of CNBC?

CRAMER: Look, I have called for star chambers—I want kangaroo courts for these guys. I really do. I want indictments. We've not seen any indictments. Where are—Where's the indictments for AIG? I've been try—I told the Justice Department, "Here's the way you get the indictments."

STEWART: But it's very easy to get on this after the fact. The measure of the network, and the measure of the mess—CNBC could act as—You know, in some ways, look—Nobody's asking them to be a regulatory agency, but can't—but whose side are they on? It feels like they have to reconcile, is their audience the Wall Street traders that are doing this for constant profit on a day-to-day, the short term. These guys at these companies were on a Sherman's March through their companies, financed by our 401ks, and all the incentives of their companies were for short term profit. And they burned the fucking house down with our money and walked away rich as hell, and you guys knew that that was going on.

*-Audience applauds-*

CRAMER: I have a wall of shame. Why do I have banana cream pies? Because I throw them at CEOs. Do you know how many times I have pantsed CEOs on my show?

STEWART: But this isn't, as Carly Simon would say, this song ain't about you.

CRAMER: Okay. All right. You're right. I don't want to personalize it. I think that we have reporters who try really hard. We're not always told the truth. But most importantly, the market was going up for a long time and our real sin I think was to believe that it was going to continue to go up a lot in the face of what you just described. A lot of borrowing. A lot of shenanigans and I know I did, I'll bring it up, look, I didn't think Bear Stearns was going to evaporate overnight. I didn't. I knew the people who ran it. I always thought they were honest. That was my mistake. I really did. I thought they were honest. Did I get taken in because I knew them from before? Maybe to some degree. The guy who came on from Wachovia was an old friend of mine who had helped hire me.

STEWART: But honest or not, honest or not, in what world is a thirty-five to one leverage position sane?

CRAMER: The world that made you thirty percent year after year after year beginning from 1999 to 2007 and it became very—

STEWART: But isn't that part of the problem? Selling this idea that you don't have to do anything. Any time you sell people the idea that, sit back and you'll get ten to twenty percent on your money, don't you always know that that's going to be a lie? When are we going to realize in this country that our wealth is work? That we're workers and by selling this idea of, "Hey man, I'll teach you how to be rich." How is that different than an infomercial?

CRAMER: Well, I think that your goal should always be to try to expose the fact that there is no easy money. I wish I had found Madoff...

STEWART: But there are literally shows called *Fast Money*.

CRAMER: I think that people... There's a market for it and you give it to them.

STEWART: There's a market for cocaine and hookers.

*-Audience laughs-*

*-Edit point-*

STEWART: *Interesting edit point. We'll be right back with the rest of the interview.*

*-Commercial break-*

STEWART: *Welcome back. And now, the thrilling conclusion of the Jim Cramer interview. Take it.*

*-Edit point-*

STEWART: What is the responsibility of the people who cover Wall Street? Who are you responsible to? The people in the 401ks and the pensions and the general public, or the Wall Street traders, and by the way this casts an aspersion on all of Wall Street when I know that's unfair as well. The majority of those guys are working their asses off. They're really bright guys. I know a lot of them. They're just trying to do the right thing and they're getting fucked in this, too.

*-Audience applauds-*

CRAMER: True. True. I think, that as a network, we produce a lot of interviews where I think that we've been—there've been people who've not told the truth. Should we have

been constantly pointing out the mistakes that were made? Absolutely. I truly wish we had done more. I think that we have been very tough on the previous Treasury Secretary, very tough on the previous administration, how they didn't get it, very tough on Ben Bernanke. But at the same time...

STEWART: But he's the guy, Paulson's the guy who wrote the rule that allowed people to over-leverage.

CRAMER: Well, I trash him every night. I've called him a liar on TV. What am I going to do? Should we all call him liars? I'm a commentator. We have—and you can take issue with the fact that I throw bulls and bears and I can still be considered serious. I'm not Eric Severat. I'm not Edward R. Morrow. I'm a guy trying to do an entertainment show about business for people to watch. But it's difficult to have a reporter say I just came from an interview with Hank Paulson and he lied his darn fool head off. It's difficult. I think it challenges the boundaries.

STEWART: Yeah. I'm under the assumption, and maybe this is purely ridiculous, but I'm under the assumption that you don't just take their word at face value. That you actually then go around and try and figure it out.

*-Audience applauds-*

STEWART: So again, you now have become the face of this and that is incredibly unfortunate.

CRAMER: I wish I had done a better job trying to figure out the thirty-to-one and whether it was going to blow up. It did. Once it did, I was late in saying that it was bad.

STEWART: So maybe we could remove the financial expert and the "In Cramer We Trust" and start getting back to fundamentals on the reporting as well and I can go back to making fart noises and funny faces.

CRAMER: I think we make that deal right here.

STEWART: *Mad Money* airs on CNBC weeknights at six. Jim Cramer.

*-Commercial break-*

STEWART: That's our show! Oh, join us all next week at eleven. I hope that was as uncomfortable to watch as it was to do.

*-Audience laughs-*

## Works Cited

- Althusser, Louis. Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969.
- Allen, Gene. "Business, Culture and the History of News, 1870-1930: A Case Study of the 'Political/Commercial' Dichotomy." Essays in Honour of Michael Bliss: Figuring the Social. Eds. Elsbeth Heaman, Alison Li, and Shelley McKellar. Toronto, University of Toronto Press: 2008.
- Baldasty, Gerald. The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press: 1992.
- Baym, Geoffrey. "*The Daily Show*: Discursive Integration and the Reinvention of Political Journalism." Political Communication. 22 (2005): 259-76.
- Carey, James. Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society. New York, Routledge: 1988
- Chomsky, Noam. Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002.
- Cramer Boosts 'Daily Show' Ratings. 13 March 2009. *Variety*. 7 April 2009.  
<<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118001235.html?categoryid=1236&cs=1>>.
- Garnham, Nicolas. "Political Economy and Cultural Studies: Reconciliation or Divorce?" Critical Studies in Mass Communication 12.1 (1995): 62-71.
- Gans, Herbert J. Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek & Time. New York, Pantheon Books: 1979.

Grossberg, Lawrence. "Cultural Studies vs. Political Economy: Is Anyone Else Bored with this Debate?" Critical Studies in Mass Communication 12.1 (1995): 72-81.

Habermas, Jürgen. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society. Trans. Thomas Burger. Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press: 1991.

Hallin, Daniel C. The "Uncensored War": The Media and Vietnam. New York, Oxford University Press: 1986.

---. We Keep America on Top of the World: Television Journalism and the Public Sphere. Oxford: Routledge, 1994.

Hamilton, James T. All The News That's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information into News. Princeton, Princeton University Press: 2004.

Herman, Edward S. and Noam Chomsky. Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media. 1988. Toronto: Random House of Canada Limited, 2002.

Herman, Edward S. "The Propaganda Model: A Retrospective." Journalism Studies 1.1 (2000): 101-12.

Kaplan, Richard L. Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920. New York, Cambridge University Press: 2002.

Lang, Marjory. Women Who Made the News: Female Journalists in Canada, 1880-1945. Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press: 2003.

Lippmann, Walter. Public Opinion. 1922. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1991.



McKain, Aaron. "Not Necessarily Not the News: Gatekeeping, Remediation, and *The Daily Show*." Journal of American Culture. 28.4 (2005): 415-30.

Mindich, David T. Z. Just the Facts: How 'Objectivity' Came to Define American Journalism. New York, New York University Press: 1998.

Mutz, Diana. "Leading Horses to Water: Confessions of a *Daily Show* Junkie." Journalism & Mass Communication Educator. 59.1 (2004): 31-35.

Pasley, Jeffrey L. The Tyranny of Printers: Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic. Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press: 2003.

Schiller, Dan. Objectivity and the News: The Public and the Rise of Commercial Journalism. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press: 1981.

Schudson, Michael. Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers. New York, Basic Books: 1978.

---. "Toward a Troubleshooting Manual for Journalism History." Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly. 74.3 (1997): 463-76.

Sotiron, Minko. From Politics to Profit: The Commercialization of Canadian Daily Newspapers, 1890-1920. Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press: 2003.

The Peabody Awards. 7 April 2009.

<<http://www.peabody.uga.edu/winners/details.php?id=1397>> and

<<http://www.peabody.uga.edu/winners/details.php?id=1268>>

Tuchman, Gaye. Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality. New York, Free Press: 1978.

---. "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity." The American Journal of Sociology. 77.4 (1972): 660-79.