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An analysis of political discourse elements supportive of the mass communication process in the United States with specific reference to arguments utilizing First Amendment principles

Shaver, Paul M., Ph.D.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE ELEMENTS SUPPORTIVE OF THE MASS COMMUNICATION PROCESS IN THE UNITED STATES WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO ARGUMENTS UTILIZING FIRST AMENDMENT PRINCIPLES

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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By

PAUL M. SHAVER

Norman, Oklahoma

1991

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By

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ABSTRACT

Scholars of the mass communication process in the U.S. have become increasingly concerned about the effects of the media on political institutions and processes. The explanatory power of research that relies on established social psychological constructs has not been sufficient to provide insight into the reasons for the tendency of the mass media to impact election and policy making institutions that many consider essential to the functioning of the U.S. as a democratic society. This study was undertaken to examine the ideological premises of the mass media's perception of itself as reflected in the political language of mass media managers and professionals. Journalistic practitioners and managers who were economically interdependent with the mass communication process made arguments in letters published in 1984 regarding the importance of the mass media for U.S. society. An analysis of these arguments utilizing contemporary rhetorical methods reveals several major justifications for the privileged position of the mass media as seen by these media managers and professionals. These perspectives provide insight into trends likely to impact significant media behaviors and effects in the near future.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the language of a group of mass media professionals and managers in letters written as responses to a request by the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi (1984) for statements on the topic "what a free press means to America." Examination of this language is for the purpose of identifying and analyzing arguments that explicitly and implicitly constitute political discourse. Such an analysis is important because many authorities appear to exempt language from or about the media from the kind of critical interpretation sometimes afforded political language, despite indications that the media have, in themselves, become major actors in the U.S. political process. The data examined constitute political language, but the perspectives inherent in the data

language have important implications for understanding both the news and the entertainment products media organizations provide.

The two most widely accepted views of the media do not require consideration of the political impact of the language culture of media organizations. One such view of the media is based on the premise that the media are a channel for transporting information and ideas. But that view does not account for the increasingly unpredictable behaviors and effects of a mass communication process that is becoming a more and more significant force in our society as noted by Nimmo and Combs (1983). The idealized information transfer view of the mass media that is typical of journalistic training must be replaced by a more analytical approach if a rigorous investigation of the media's present day relationship with other aspects of our society is to be possible.

A second view of media is based on the premise that media organizations are market-sensitive economic institutions with a product to manufacture, transport, and sell. As in the case of the information transfer approach, this sociological view does not account for the increasingly frequent and unpredictable purposive political behaviors engaged in by media organizations in both news and entertainment formats. Nevertheless, this approach to media has been helpful in beginning a disciplined analysis of the mass communication process by making it inescapably clear that media organizations and media vocations are sites wherein people make salaries and profits by conforming to corporate cultures and accepting the constraints of bounded organizational rationalities.

Establishing that the mass communication process shares many characteristics with other profit making activities in our society has not shed

light on why the media continues to expect, and to some degree receive, special treatment, privileges and protections in spite of vehement attacks from politicians, businessmen, special interests, and academia. Inquiry into the methods by which the media's special position is maintained politically cannot be accomplished by sociological methods that emphasize structures, roles, and concepts of political economy. Such inquiry requires instead an approach that is sensitive to the ways in which journalistic practitioners and their fellow citizens perceive the media and its products. The approach advocated and utilized in this dissertation is a modern rhetorical analysis that provides a method for examining the perspectives motivating media organizations and media professionals.

Just as the sociological account has provided important insights about the mass communication process by bringing to the surface the methods by which mass media organizations and vocational groups maintain their economic health, this study carries on the task of learning about the mass communication process by making explicit some of the methods by which media organizations and vocations maintain their political health. To this end, this study identifies the political arguments that are explicit and implicit in the language of a group of mass media professionals in letters written in response to a request by the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi (1984) and published as the book *What a Free Press Means to America*.

This study adopts perspectival rhetorical analysis (Burke 1969a, 1969b, 1970, 1979, 1985; Cherwitz & Hikins, 1986) as a useful approach to such analysis. In "Dramatism" Burke (1968) says, "the dramatistic view of terminology leads one to expect [paradoxes] on the grounds that language is primarily a species of action, or expression of attitudes, rather than an

instrument of definition" (p. 447). Further, Burke (1968) says, "Ontologically, action is treated as a function of the will. But logologically the situation is reversed: the idea of the will is viewed as derivable from the idea of an act" (p. 500).

This approach, when informed by the insights of Billig (1987), Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton, and Radley (1988), and White (1985), has three distinct advantages. First, the power of modern rhetorical analysis is brought to bear on a large-scale phenomenon, media political discourse, which is not amenable to analysis by either micro or reductionist techniques. Such incrementalist techniques are not applicable because the data in the present study constitute political arguments directed at policies and consequences that can only be considered meaningfully at a macroanalytical level. Second, a rhetorical approach has made possible the use of empirical data as the raw material of the study rather than relying on critical evaluation of extant theoretical formulations. Third, the processual nature of mass communication in U.S. society can be discerned, at least to some degree, as a result of analysis of the political language that speakers use in public discourse to create and maintain social, economic, and political realities conducive to the political health of the mass communication process. Structural-functional categories defeat such processual analysis from the beginning.

Because these arguments by mass media professionals and managers constitute political discourse, the arguments and their interrelationships manifest a set of paradoxical or dilemmatic perspectival commitments that rhetorical analysis operationalized by methods proposed by Glaser (1965) and Potter and Wetherell (1987) reveals. These perspectival commitments have

emerged during the course of this research not as a systematic, integrated ideological structure but, rather, as dilemmatic patterns created and enabled by the oppositions that are represented by the positive and negative terms that organize the data language. In Burke's (1969b) terms these oppositions compose master metaphors that are agonistic (i.e., contesting and combative).

Two levels of understanding and knowledge have resulted from this study. First, isolating the arguments that media professionals use and, presumably, consider important, necessary, and effective tells us much about the way in which the people in media organizations will act and react in the future because it tells us much about how they see themselves and their world. Second, the manner in which our mass communication process is created and maintained politically tells us something about the necessary attributes and ancillary influences of mass communication in at least one society that utilizes and depends upon the kinds of mediated communication processes characteristic of our society.

Understanding how a social or political process works does not necessarily indicate that it must work in that manner. Such understanding does indicate, however, that the process being studied can be maintained if it does so operate. This insight, in turn, tells us something about the society in which the process under study can be maintained. This research also reveals something about the bounded rationality (i.e., organizational culture) operative in some present-day mass media organizations. While such insights do not constitute universal laws, they may be the only way that humans, who are rhetorical creatures because they are language-using creatures, can come to a better understanding of our society and ourselves.

In this study, then, I examined the language media professionals and managers utilize to discuss the importance of mass media to society in order to consider three questions: (1) How do media professionals and managers see themselves and their industry? (2) How do these speakers for a free press want others to see them and their industry? and (3) What rhetorical methods do these media representatives utilize to accomplish their purpose?

Mass Media as Representation

The premise that communication processes are neutral transportation channels is endemic in much of social science literature that refers to communication at all. In the case of interpersonal and face-to-face group verbal interaction, this tendency to reduce the concept of communication to a descriptor for a channel of transmission largely has been overcome. Intersubjectivity and interactivity are simply too obviously a part of face-to-face communicative processes for the idea of communication as a mere channel to retain its credibility within that context (Reardon, 1981).

With regard to mass communication processes, however, there continues to be a reliance on the classical information transfer model (Gaziano, 1988). The effect of reliance on the information transfer approach is that mass communication is seen as a utility—a utility that serves a functional purpose for society but is not really a part of society (Wright, 1986). The variable analytic uses and gratifications approach is an extension of this functional approach into areas of individual needs and behaviors usually studied by social psychologists (Palmgreen, 1979; Rosengren, Wenner & Palmgreen, 1985).

Although the approach of Katz and Liebes (1984) shares a common theoretical origin with variable analytic uses and gratifications research,

Liebes' (1988) current cultural interpretation approach relies on ethnographically gathered viewer accounts for data rather than behavioral data or viewer response to pre-determined categorical inquiry. It is interesting that research such as Liebes' (1988) has been described as a form of rhetorical analysis (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Such a richer view of mass communication that examines the output of the mass media for evidence of societal or cultural values has been a part of mass communication research for some time (Lasswell, Lerner, & Pool, 1952; Pool, 1952).

Another traditional approach to mass communication as representational sees media as a mirror of the larger society (Deutsch, 1957, 1967). Both Epstein (1974) and Tuchman (1978) report this view as prevalent among media professionals. A more correct view may be that mass media content is a window to the perceptions of the people who make up media organizations (Berman, 1987)—much as the language of a patient tells a psychotherapist more about the patient than the world.

One accomplishment of the Yale school of media analysis (George, 1959; Hovland, Lumsdaine & Sheffield, 1949), however, is to throw grave doubt upon the rigor of analyses that look to mass media output as reflecting cultural or social characteristics. Given the substantial control over centralized media that sovereign governments and other centralized authorities appear to have, at least from time to time, reliable analyses of underlying processes based on media outputs appears to be unlikely, especially for purposes of understanding current political discourse. Even if the results of governmental exploitation of the media are often different from the conscious intention of the officials authorizing or carrying out an "information campaign," such purposive intervention into the mass

communication process by governmental and other authoritative entities nevertheless has been demonstrated to severely bias any view of cultural or societal values arising from analysis of media output (Paletz & Entman, 1981).

Elites are also proposed as creators of artificial cultural and value elements in the media culture (Domhoff, 1986; Parenti, 1986). A useful ethnographic approach to elite studies that provides substance to the claim of elite hegemonic powers is *Elites: Ethnographic Issues* (Marcus, 1983). This work supports the view that the self-interested utilization of the mass media by elites should be expected. In addition, the research of the Glasgow University Media Group (1976, 1980, 1982, 1985) indicates that news media organs of both establishment and oppositional elements of society are systematically biased.

The growing popular culture movement in communication studies relies on the artistic elements of media output to provide information about the "real" culture underlying the social and political structures of modern society (Fiske, 1987, 1988). This reliance may be misplaced, although my view is not as pessimistic as that of Ellul (1964, 1973), who sees an enculturation of statist interests to be a total and irreversible concomitant of modern society.

The popular culture approach is insufficient for purposes of political analysis because when oppositions are utilized in a political discourse, they become much more restrictive than when the same oppositions are used artistically (Bakhtin, 1981; HopKins, 1989; Volosinov, 1976). Thus, to the degree that media output is political, cultural dialogues have already been reprocessed prior to transmission. While the amount of such reprocessing may be arguable, comparative analysis of the mass communication processes

in different countries indicates that U.S. mass media organizations are a part of the society and the political process—these organizations are a "player" and not only an observer or a conduit (Hallin & Mancini, 1984). Furthermore, in addition to the purposive but often non-intended impacts of centralized initiatives on the products emanating from the media or the structural necessities of media-government relations, the constraints and characteristics of the media themselves create serious limitations for the possibility that media products are reflective of broad-based societal and cultural values (Altheide, 1985; Altheide & Snow, 1979; Smith, 1989; Meyrowitz, 1985).

Some distortions are created by purposive but putatively innocent policies and techniques. Geis (1987) presents numerous examples of the biasing effects of certain journalistic conventions. Bell (1984) and Hodge (1979) demonstrate the bias created by audience maintenance editorial techniques in radio and newspapers respectively. In sum, the "representations" of the mass media are themselves discourses (Barker, 1988).

Some theorists expand the impact of the media on culture and values beyond the influence of channel characteristics to include substantial slices of proposed reality they call "routines" (Anderson & Meyer, 1988) or "media frames" (Davis & Baran, 1981). These constructs seem akin to Burke's (1966) terministic screens but without a sufficient explanation of the process by which the constrained visions are created and maintained on a macro-sociopolitical level.

Real (1989) proposes that the media have become so pervasive and self-generative that they have supplanted "natural" culture entirely with what he sees as a transnational supermedia culture. This view seems to be a reverse

version of Ellul's (1964, 1973) nightmare, wherein media assumes governmental functions rather than government dominating media.

Mass Media as Institution

Sociological research has revealed that a media organization in the United States is similar to other business organizations (Altheide, 1976; Epstein, 1974; Gans, 1980; Gitlin, 1983; Roshco, 1975; Schudson, 1978; Tuchman, 1978). But the existence of corporate bounded rationalities and other characteristics of U.S. business organizations does not explain the unpredictability of the media, even if one should accept the idealized picture of a politically autonomous U.S. business sector answerable only to the "market."

While the media autonomy that Real's (1989) model implies is supported to some degree by Hallin and Mancini (1984), their view is that the tendency of the U.S. media to provide normative interpretation arises not only from commercial motivations but from the historical weakness of the public political discourse sector in the U.S. Hallin and Mancini (1984) argue that the media reinforce this weakness in public discourse both "through the underlying messages they convey about the nature of politics" and "through the conditions they establish for successful political representation" (p. 849). According to Hallin and Mancini (1984), the lack of formal political legitimacy that such a situation provides for the media may explain the frequent collapse of the "autonomous" U.S. media into the government. Such a collapse of the media into the state is documented by W. Lance Bennett (1989) in his paper *Marginalizing the Majority: The News Media, Public Opinion, and Nicaragua Policy Decisions*. This phenomenon of an alternatively autonomous then co-opted mass media is inconsistent with

media as representational of underlying social and cultural values or as an autonomous market-driven economic sector. Such media behavior is also inconsistent with Ellul's (1973) organic view of communication processes in modern society.

This periodic merging of the press into the government is consistent, however, with the view that much of mass media content in the U.S. today is political discourse. One explanation for the political nature of media content is that the top priority of media organizations in the present economic and political environment is maintenance of their favored status—politically and economically—with the result that more and more of media content is becoming a convergent (emergent) language system argumentatively supportive of that priority. Ironically, the lack of a politically legitimate macrosocial position for the media may have contributed to this progressive systematization of the language of the media by requiring an aggressive rhetorical posture on the part of media professionals and organizations. Hart (1987) has said that with regard to one perspective on press/president relations, " . . . certain organizational realities central to the gathering and writing of news dictate much of what will eventually be presented as news" (p. 117).

In any case, the proto-governmental aspect of U.S. media organizations is evidenced in a transnational context by such events as the role of the media in bringing about the Begin-Sadat summits and the problems of Soviet leader Gorbachev in approaching the U.S. political system for support of his reforms. Gorbachev's lack of success in this regard may be revealed subsequently as related to the reticence of the U.S. media to provide a positive forum for Gorbachev's discourse until certain commitments to a particular kind of

marketing system become part of the reform proposals. However, as Nisbett and Ross (1980) have pointed out, all errors of inference are not the result of subjective or "motivational" influences. The objective or cognitive is also a source of such error. Thus, any tendency of the media toward imperialism, either intranationally or internationally, might be perceived by the individuals engaged in those activities as being in total good faith.

Lippman (1922) was clearly correct that the media "create pictures in our heads." But the relationships between societal and cultural values, the intentions of the producers of the media, the technological and historical forms of media, the psychological characteristics of the audience, the pictures in the audience's heads, and the behaviors of audience members as individuals or aggregates, are not elucidated by the mere knowledge that the thoughts of individuals bear the imprint of the contents of mass communication.

A primary proposition of this dissertation is that the rhetorical nature of mass media outputs determines much of the effect of such outputs. The next chapter is a discussion of some of the methods by which the political rhetoric of the media has been approached.

CHAPTER 2

MEDIATED POLITICAL LANGUAGE

The position of this dissertation is that rhetorical analysis of mass media discourse improves upon analyses of media: (1) that expect media to in some way be representational of underlying social and cultural characteristics or (2) that expect institutional analysis to explain media behaviors. Such a view of the efficacy of rhetorical analysis, however, has not been generally shared.

Political Language as Rhetoric

Corcoran (1979) has argued that political rhetorical analysis, as generally defined, is not relevant to public discourse in our age of mass communication. Corcoran says:

> [the function] of contemporary political language [is] not to persuade, but to control; not to stimulate thought, but to prevent it; not to convey information, but to conceal or distort it. (p. xv)

Such a view is consistent with Shapiro's (1988) concept of depoliticization but suffers by comparison because of the implication in Corcoran's (1979) presentation that mass communication technological innovations have both enabled and required relatively determined responses by audiences and societies to mass mediated political discourse. Shapiro's (1988) nihilism is of the more generalized type characteristic of the continental post-structural thinkers such as Foucault and Derrida whose thought appears to be

important to Shapiro's conceptualization of ideological overreaching occurring in many fragmented contexts rather than at the macro-social level conceptualized by Corcoran (1979).

In either case, in an era dominated by mass communication processes that provide severe restraints on overt argument and other forms of interactive communication, ideal political discourse in Corcoran's (1979) sense or deconstruction or repoliticization in Shapiro's (1988) sense are admittedly problematic goals for anyone attempting meaningful public discourse. Corcoran's (1979) pessimism is explicit. In a post-literacy age, the logical capacities that rhetorical analysis of written texts made possible as pre-literate Greece moved into the age of literacy will be lost to a society dependent on modern mass communication. Shapiro's (1988) view is really not more optimistic than Corcoran's (1979). For Shapiro (1988), linguistic practices, written or oral or video, can be expected to implement and ratify the sedimentation of conscious political conflict into depoliticized ideological structures, which define and occupy all available legitimacy as to specific substantive areas of human activity. Thus, it appears that for both Corcoran (1979) and Shapiro (1988) the utility of modern rhetorical interpretation for avoiding the diminution of conscious and logical deliberation and countering the media trivialization of political discourse is minimal. At least part of the reason why Corcoran and Shapiro take this position, however, may be because they misapprehend the nature of the mass communication process—viewing it as a function of institutional structures rather than as a convergent language system.

Rhetoric and Modern Media

Some traditional forms of rhetorical analysis are demonstrably inadequate to provide insight into the relationship between modern media and other aspects of modern society.

Rhetorical Categorizations

Sorting and sifting experienced phenomena is the fundamental operation of inductive reasoning. Political language can be categorized in this way, as can any more or less stable set of language forms. Kinneavy (1971) has undertaken to categorize all discourse into four types and to indicate the logical operations that are characteristic of each of these types of discourse. Frye (1957) looks to long-term mainstream cultural values for analytical categories.

Simons and Aghazarian (1986) propose that genres of political discourse can be identified. Joslyn's (1986) questioning of such genre categories, however, is applicable also to such programs as Kinneavy's and Frye's. The value of all such categorization is limited inasmuch as a virtually unlimited number of variables may at any time influence the conduct of a speaker: setting, expectations and abilities of the audience, motives and purposes of the rhetor, imitation, habit, rules, the material with which the discourse is crafted, constraints on and choices by the rhetor, and so on.

Furthermore, political beliefs, worldviews, ideologies and intentions are also relevant in any talk that is purposive, as political talk most always is (Joslyn, 1986). Most important of all, all such categorical schemes are not sufficiently time specific for analysis of the nature of dialectic political processes occurring at a given time and place. Therefore, it would seem that

rhetorical analyses based on categorization do not deal with the difficulties envisioned by Corcoran (1979) and Shapiro (1988).

Limitations of Micro-Analysis

Micro methods, including those requiring special techniques or contexts or limited views of the nature of language, are also inadequate for the purpose of analyzing modern political communication. Some theorists (Graber, 1976) utilize a combination of semantic criticism and content analysis to reveal misleading uses of language leading to oversimplification and manipulation. The difficulty with this "condensation" approach is that it idealizes words, implicitly participating in the positivistic fallacy of the nominal essence and ignoring the discovery of semiotics that properly used words, nevertheless, can have different meanings as they are used in connection with various other words (Barthes, 1974; Blonsky, 1985; Eco, 1979).

While semiotic analysis can support, on the one hand, a rationalistic semantic approach, or, on the other hand, a structural deterministic approach, such an analysis need not be seen necessarily as a part of those theoretical viewpoints. Under either of these extreme positions the semiotic insight would have to be seen as requiring that words are like numbers (i.e., part of fully integrated consistent symbol systems). Attempts to demonstrate that words can be used objectively have been unsuccessful (Frege, 1948, 1956, 1970a, 1970b). Professional philosophers, such as Kripke (1982), continue to attempt to use words as objective counters despite the rather conclusive demonstration of the real nature of words provided by Wittgenstein (1968). Other thinkers, such as Pateman (1987) are not so threatened by the true nature of words. Possibly, in the case of Pateman, his

pragmatic realism allows for the probability of both internal and environmental influences on language development and use.

Wittgenstein's (1968) view in *Philosophical Investigations* is in fact not inconsistent with a modern cognitive psychological view such as Salomon's (1979) which is informed by awareness of the diversity of symbolic forms of communication that abound in modern society. Whether social forms act on individual's innate capacities or innate characteristics are constraints on social forms is not the question. Influences no doubt move in both directions. The importance of *Philosophical Investigations* for philosophy and communication studies is that Wittgenstein made an attempt to keep open the issue of the utility and relevance of language categories. While Wittgenstein (1968) believed that language is not a closed system but one which adapts to social realities, he did not view language in totally relativistic terms. Wittgenstein (1968) wrote to point out the danger that language would become a trap for a philosopher who attempted to utilize language as a closed logical system. But nothing in *Philosophical Investigations* eliminates language, of any kind, as a useful tool or way of thinking.

Such a view, of course, has implications for the concept of objectivity/subjectivity, which has been a subject of discussion for some time. In the early 1940s Alfred Schutz and Talcott Parsons exchanged letters about the nature of objectivity/subjectivity and never managed to join the issue (Schutz & Parsons, 1978)

In Thomas Nagel's recent book *The View From Nowhere* (1986), the issue of the relationship between subjective and objective knowledge constitutes the key problem for development of a modern ethics. Nagel's concern is that

while we cannot reject objectification because it can serve to expand our subjective knowledge, objectification can, on the other hand, provide rationalizations for behavior inconsistent with ethical standards which might otherwise be introspectible. Nagel's sensible conclusion is: "Objectivity need not be all or nothing" (p. 148).

Wittgenstein's (1968) view was that language was not always used in the same way. Language can be used in more or less objective systems of thought, in purely expressive and subjective enterprises, or, as in this study, in ways intermediate to objectivity and expressivity. As Wittgenstein (1968) said in *Philosophical Investigations* : "The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts—which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please" (p. 304).

Other Limiting Approaches

The same objections to objectification can be raised with regard to approaches that idealize forms of argument (Golden & Pilotta, 1987; Perelman, 1982) or contexts for argument (Habermas, 1975, 1979, 1984, 1987) rather than words themselves.

Goffman's (1959, 1961a, 1961b, 1967, 1969, 1974, 1981) analysis has limited utility for examining mass communication because it presumes the relevance and identifiability of individuals' strategic interests. Studies of the relationship between interpersonal interaction and media influence call this presumption into question, particularly with regard to macro-sociopolitical concerns (Gumpert & Cathcart, 1986). Nevertheless, in Lanigan's (1988) view, Goffman's solipsistic credentials are seriously tarnished by his utilization of micro contexts in verifying the interactive relevance of

communication patterns. Lanigan (1988) has excluded Goffman from the "phenomenologists' club" apparently on the basis that any reference to historically structured social situations is evidence of a non-reflexive, unsophisticated dependence on social determinism. Thus, Lanigan implicitly identifies the phenomenological approach as the ultimate micro context in which the subjective itself is objectified. Derrida (1973) has made a similar analysis of Husserl's implicit premises. From such premises it appears that phenomenology uses words to relate the meaning of experience rather than referring to common experience by the use of words. Yet, an interplay of the two methods (i.e., words and references to specific social contexts) seems more likely to be a reliable form of interaction about meaning than either method alone. However, because mass media discourse is macro-systemic, it cannot be objectified by reference to micro-contexts. Rather, some technique for implying context from the words themselves must be found.

The Linguistic Turn

In a later, more sanguine, work, Corcoran (1990) has set the task for modern analysts of political language:

> The conduct of research as linguists requires that we always keep in mind that what we see, the significations of what in the broadest sense we "read" in symbolic communication, is symbolic and *not true* . . . . . Quite simply, the orientation must be opposition. This is not because things spoken are simply "false," and, therefore, we should not "believe" them. What we are trying to understand arises not from "fact" or "truth"—however those terms are defined—but from symbolic discourse of all kinds, the meaning of which is grounded in a dialogue of opposing voices and evolving interests. . . . . The political linguist is there to discover, document, and attempt to clarify the differences, not prefer alternatives. (p. 77)

Corcoran's suggested approach is not inconsistent with the basic technique followed by practitioners of linguistic criticism. (Fowler, 1986;

Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979). For as Fowler (1986) says, he: ". . . encourages a view of texts as discourses, as interactions between speakers and addressees real, implied, or fictional . . . . Dialogic structures" (p. 102).

The fundamental proposition of critical linguistics is that all language is biased and, therefore, ideological (Kress & Hodge, 1979). This results from the tendency for syntactic requirements related to consistency and logical order to magnify the perspective which provides the motive for the utterance in the first place (Fowler, 1986; Simpson, 1988). While this approach is problematically structural/functional for any kind of postmodern rhetorical analysis (because it ignores the difficulty of determining the source and nature of the original motivation), I take these findings to be evidence from the field of linguistic criticism that the use of language is of itself argumentative.

The Rhetorical Turn

With the inherent argumentative nature of language in mind, Corcoran's (1979) goal of analyzing modern political language appears to be approachable by beginning with the view that all talk is rhetorical, either because all talk is narrative (Fisher, 1987) or because all talk is interactively constitutive of socially shared and limiting realities that in turn are an important factor in the development of individual consciousness (Gregg, 1984). If all language (written, spoken or pictured) is narrative and/or dialogue, rhetorical analysis becomes relevant to all mediated social and political action. Both Fisher's (1987) view of narrative and Gregg's (1984) view of the rhetorical construction of social realities are based explicitly on argumentation as a fundamental element of language processes—and symbol use is inherent in all mass media output. As Cherwitz and Hikins (1986) say,

" . . . rhetoric, or persuasive potential, is an integral part of nearly all verbal activity" (pp. 63-64).

Aristotle's views in the *Rhetoric* can be read together with his *Politics* and *Nichomachean Ethics* to support a view of rhetoric as more than a technique for discovering the best means of persuasion in any given circumstance (Adkins, 1984). The applied knowledge provided by the rhetorical viewpoint may have taken specific form given the particular context in which classical Greek rhetorical knowledge was utilized, but the view can be gleaned from Aristotle's relevant works that the classical study of rhetoric was a disciplined analysis of the capabilities and limitations of language and not only a recipe for persuasion. Classical rhetoric as well as modern rhetoric can be seen as the study of the kinds of social and political relations that can be made possible through the use of language.

The next chapter argues that the application of rhetorical theory to present day mass communication processes indicates the need for a broader view of the nature of language.

CHAPTER 3

THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE

Because language is the data under study in this dissertation, an understanding of the nature of language is relevant to this study. Rhetorical theory can be reconciled with a certain view of systems theory (Fisher, 1982; Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967) if one regards language systems as enabling as well as restricting the instantiation of meaning.

Systemic Aspects of Language

Whether one views the operative mechanisms in social, cultural, or language systems to be rules or norms or some other construct, it is the error of functional analysis to view these mechanisms as arising out of structural requirements capable of being described in freeze frame or as causal pre-conditions. It is more useful to view the sources of systemic patterning as isomorphic with observable processes (Monge, 1977), which patterning may enable and/or require certain types of interactive behavior. Particular enabling processes should not be seen as exclusive of other enabling processes, which may or may not come into play depending upon the implications of particular processes for parallel events.

The concept of enablement is elegant because it allows the behavior of other systems but only part of the environmental field in which other systems

fashion to maximize the stability of the field with the least possible disruption of the processes of total systemic interaction. Growth, reorganization, and dissolution are some of the inherent processes that proceed from the constituent elements and necessary operations of particular systems in the environmental field.

Regularities in the interaction of systems across certain axes and in certain time frames may be determinable by disciplined observation and measurement, which do not reductionistically limit the scope of units of interaction. For an example of this type of analysis applied to business organizations, see Miller and Friesen (1984). However, extreme concern with the identification of particular cause/effect relationships will skew the conceptual definitions of observed units into patterns which will have no explanatory or predictive power whatsoever except in terms of the specific operational model implicit in the experiment or research program itself as a non-generalizable social event. The replication of these "experiments" only underlines the power of language to structure social interaction without the participants being consciously aware of the actual dynamics of the situation. Examples of research of this type may be found in the work of Delia, Kline, and Bureleson (1979) and O'Keefe, Delia, and O'Keefe (1977).

Language categories are paradigmatic examples of systemic variables. But because language and other social forms are *processes*, modern rhetorical theory argues that constructs such as rules and norms are too rigid to be explanatory of dynamic social phenomena. What we think of as "institutions" are more usefully seen as patterned social behavior constructed and maintained by language symbols. These symbols and the behavior patterns they create and maintain both use and are used by human actors in their

purposive behaviors (Burke, 1969a, 1969b, 1970, 1979, 1985). Because this is so, the purposes of human behavior can sometimes be determined from the symbols used in conjunction with specific behaviors.

Because of the need for sub-system integrity and boundary definition, enablement of purpose and behavior can reasonably be seen to require restriction as well. In rhetorical terms, restriction of meaning allows focus on a perceived reality to the exclusion of all other possible realities. Defining the approved reality by reference to all other possible realities constitutes no focus at all. In contrast, differentiating between one acceptable set of perspectives and one, or a few, unacceptable sets of perspectives, which are in fact extant in the environment in some form, provides the contrast necessary, in semiotic terms, for a persuasive establishment of meaning (Burke, 1969b). Another way of saying this is that an emphasis on *parole* rather than *langue* in Saussure's (1966) terms allows for the conception of systems of meaning as interacting in a semiologically systematic way but not as closed systems.

Because of the mass media, any modern system of meaning exists within a highly competitive environment that constantly threatens its boundaries and thus its existence. In such an unstable environmental field, the most persuasive system will be the most successful in spanning the boundaries of competitive systems by co-opting and incorporating them. It is in this way that the mass media in the U.S. can be seen as enabling some types of social interraction while simultaneously opposing other types and ignoring yet other types as it elaborates itself in an entelechal (i.e., having the quality of completed actuality as distinguished from potentiality) manner.

Kenneth Burke (1979) has commented on this process within the academic setting:

> In more restricted ways, the tracking down of implications towards various perfections manifests itself in our many technological nomenclatures, each of which suggests to its particular votaries further steps in that same direction. Such expansionist ambitions are near-infinite in their purely visionary scope; but though they have no inner principle of self-limitation, their range of ideal development is restricted by the ways in which they interfere with one another, including academic problems to do with the allocation of funds among the various departments. (p. 155)

Because of the operation of these perceptual and cognitive mechanisms which arise from symbol use by human beings the rhetorical approach is necessary for the accomplishment of those goals that Corcoran (1990) would have political linguists undertake.

What is Language?

The views of cognitive psychologist Gavriel Salomon (1987) are useful at this point with regard to the question of what constitutes language. Salomon is concerned about the impact of television on cognition. Quoting Whorf (1956), Salomon proposes that the Whorfian view may be essentially correct that:

> We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language . . . . the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. (p. 212)

But Salomon believes that there are strong and weak versions of the Whorfian view that can be adopted. The weak version is that perceptions are influenced by language. The strong view is that language determines our cognitions.

Following a review of research that does not conclusively support either version, Salomon (1987) says that: "The influence of language on cognition could be better tested with stimulus categories whose attributes are assigned

by *culture* (my emphasis), not nature" (p. 131). Salomon thinks this is so because the non-interactional nature of the strong Whorfian hypothesis holds that language determines thought. Salomon asks why language cannot be seen as a tool of thought rather than the only vehicle for thought. Also, he goes a step farther to ask whether, in fact, language may not follow thought rather than determining thought.

It seems to me that part of the disagreement about the relationship between language and thought that Salomon (1987) is reacting to arises from confusion about the definition of the term *language*. Salomon's focus is not on language qua words; it is on symbols—and media symbols in particular. This confusion leads, in turn, to some lack of clarity as to the meaning of the concept *culture*. Because of Salomon's focus on audio-visual symbol systems, he is able to provide three insights. One is that "language is not the only symbol system that participates in thinking" (p. 126). Another is that non-word symbol systems appear to be internalized and used in thought. The third is that internalization can occur through observational learning as well as through interaction. Salomon says: "Thus, it appears that the internalization of language is aided by, among other things, interaction; but non-linguistic codes can be internalized through observational learning" (p. 131).

Salomon (1987) appears to have this more inclusive definition of language in mind, when, citing Fodor (1975) and others, he presents the argument between what he calls "cognitive determinists" and "environmentalists." Salomon seeks to resolve the conflict by adopting the position of Vygotsky (1962) and Luria (1976). Salomon (1987) says:

> Vygotsky does not claim that thought is created by language, as Whorf would have it. The internalization of language results in a reorganization of thinking into higher order functional systems. Still internalization serves as the key process. . . . Thus, although the conception of internalized language may still be vague, we have no plausible alternatives to replace it with. (p. 125)

If Salomon is correct, then more complex cognitive development (i.e., thought) is dependent upon a great many symbol systems rather than just language as traditionally defined. The significance for the present discussion is that there may be, in fact, substantial differences between modern audio-visual media culture and the oral culture of pre-literate Greece, despite the position taken by Corcoran (1979), McLuhan (1964), and others.

Mass Media Language

The impact of modern media languages may arise not only from their diversion of attention from printed media (Robinson & Levy, 1986), but also from their enablement of more complex and subtle language constructions which are creating, to date, poorly understood relationships between human beings. These relationships are probably associated with a reorganization of cognitive functional systems.

This implies that the hegemonic power of mass communication may wane as did the hegemonic power of literature as cognitive adjustments related to awareness of the rhetorical nature of audio-visual media occur. Such a prediction is consistent with the theory of this paper that historicity is relevant to language analysis. Most attempts to analyze mass communication have ignored historicity as a basic characteristic of all language systems.

At the very least, however, analysis of arguments made in media audio-visual symbol systems are already a part of the oral interpretation work of

speech communication scholars. More explicitly rhetorical methodologies for such work are probably emerging as well. As such methodologies do emerge, Salomon's (1987) differentiation of observational learning from internalization of non-linguistic codes may dissolve—especially if cognitive psychologists should accept the premise of this paper that communication codes are actually dilemmatic symbolizations of an argumentative character that both codify and create substantive social and political relational processes. Salomon's reference to culture seems to reflect a recognition on his part that something is involved in creating a two-way effect between language and consciousness, which is more complex than the generative grammar model he appears to be using as a general paradigm.

Under the theoretical view of this dissertation Salomon's (1987) inquiry as to whether language could be a tool of thought rather than a vehicle for thought will become the question: Is language thought? A further question is, what is the effect on thought of exposure to a multiple language environment, such as the modern condition? If the complexity of thought is increased by exposure to multiple language systems, of whatever symbolic nature; if objectivity is a systematization of a language which renders it like number systems in order to do a specific task, such as limiting the language of commercial television to a consumerist narrative; then under what circumstances and to what degree does the over-organized and confining elaboration of the language enter the conscious awareness of participants? Further, if awareness of the limitation of the potential richness of a language does occur, under what circumstances does this knowledge affect the quality of the knowers' participation? In this regard, Sproule (1989) has predicted

that a new rhetorical criticism may play a part in creating an increased awareness of the persuasive nature of new rhetorics.

These questions are helpful in approaching the views of Corcoran and Shapiro regarding the nature of modern political discourse. It may be that because of a primary focus on verbal language both of these thinkers are insufficiently sensitive to the possibility that constraints on political discourse in the current U.S. setting arise from arguments utilizing combinations of words, sounds, and pictures. These partial arguments in verbal, audio, and visual form, abet one another in a way which makes it appear that no argument is being made. The problem is not that mediated political argument creates oversimple oppositions—all rhetoric does that—but that the accompanying and supporting audio and visual arguments are not yet recognized as rhetorical. The hegemonic effect of modern media transmissions is thus very strong for the same reasons as written speeches were powerful at the dawn of Greek literacy, as described by Corcoran (1979): Persuasive relationships in the message arise from systematic language constructions to which the audience is oblivious.

Conclusion

Competent language analysis (Edelman, 1988; Fowler, 1986) has failed to reveal the arguments of mass media's political discourse in the U.S. because it has persisted in analyzing media output as if it were the verbal language of principals whose discourse was merely transmitted or reported on by mass media organizations. Any bias in such reporting has been seen as a regrettable aspect of the nature of individuals or because of the technological or institutional nature of the mass media. If, however, the output of the mass media is conceptualized as a convergent language system, then Burke's

(1966) concept of terministic closure provides an approach to the relationship between the motives of modern media organizations and the arguments inherent in "entertainment" aspects of media output as well as in the supposedly "objective" outputs of the mass communication process—including the language of media professionals and managers regarding the importance of the mass media to U.S. society that is the data for this study.

When the output of the mass communication process is conceptualized as a convergent language system, Schudson's (1976) insight provides support for the view that the insistence of media professionals and managers on the meaningfulness of the idea of objective reporting versus entertainment is an absolutely essential defensive premise of the rhetoric of modern U.S. media political discourse. The myth of objectivity is the key to fending off the perception of media output as political language because media output is characterized by media professionals and managers as either objective news or harmless entertainment. In this regard, Real's (1989) view of modern media as a meta-culture comes into focus as essentially correct provided that the term "culture" is replaced by the word "language." Under this view, media language is systematic and carefully articulated in the news or entertainment format as well as in discussions of media's role in society such as those constituting the data language for this study. In all of these formats, media outputs provide rhetorical support for the economic and political position of media organizations.

The next chapter proposes that knowledge about the perspectives inherent in mass media language is attained best by a modern rhetorical approach to language analysis rather than methods arising out of systems theory. The proposed approach utilizes the methodological power of both

Glaser's (1965) "constant comparison of categories" and Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discourse analysis. This proposed modern rhetorical approach is developed in the next chapter by reference to the work of Billig (1987), Billig et al. (1988), and White (1985).

CHAPTER 4

PERSPECTIVAL LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

While the systems metaphor utilized in chapter three is useful for conceptualizing the constant interactivity of language cultures occurring within the same macrosocial space in the modern context, systems reasoning has proven difficult to operationalize for research purposes.

The research of Miller and Friesen (1984) on organizational systems in business entities avoids some of the negative aspects of structural description and introduces dynamics into their research because they are able to compare such a large number of types of systems in terms of so many variables that interactive phenomena can be derived inductively from their model. Their comparative, descriptive method is impossible to apply, however, to singular instances.

In addition, political communication processes are less accessible than the structures of business organizations because they are characteristically ambiguous and argumentative. Because the stated purposes of political institutions are rarely indicative of actual purposes, language analysis is the one obvious way to approach political processes.

Discourse Analysis and Rhetoric

Compared to the structural approach of Miller and Friesen (1984), discourse analysis, as defined by Potter and Wetherell (1987), is directed at the analysis of particular social and political phenomena that are manifested primarily through printed, spoken, and visual languages. In addition, because this type of discourse analysis is a "non-cognitive form of social psychology" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 178), no concerns are raised about whether or not language expressions are accurate descriptions of *anyone's* mental states. Instead, the concern is with either the process of interaction in traditionally recognized political rhetorical contexts (Atkinson, 1983, 1984a, 1984b, 1985; Grady & Potter, 1985; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986) or with the manner in which ideologically significant political representations are maintained by discourse (Said, 1978, 1981; Thompson, 1984; Trew, 1979; Wetherell & Potter, forthcoming; Wetherell, Stiven & Potter, 1987).

Because, however, political representations as well as traditionally recognized political rhetorical contexts are constantly being recreated and maintained by ambiguously contextualized mass media language, it may be useful from the point of view of postmodern mass communication theory to consider this division of political communication contexts to be formal and traditional rather than analytical. A perspectival rhetorical approach such as that of Burke (1969a, 1969b, 1970, 1979, 1985) or Cherwitz and Hikins (1986) allows for the reintroduction of the concept of "meaning" into rhetorical situations, permitting language as apparently diverse as campaign speeches and organizational bylaws to be seen as useful data for political communication discourse analysis. This is so because focus on perspectives inherent in the language itself does not limit analysis to consideration of the

purposes or the contexts of speakers or writers but allows the consideration of the motivations inherent in the language itself. Therefore, the discovery of ideologically significant political representations operative in the environment can occur from analysis of discourse in dyadic interactions, public speaking, or formal statements—written or spoken.

In addition, Potter and Wetherell's (1987) approach to the coding of discourse material is supplemented for purposes of this dissertation. They say that the coding of discourse material may "be a cyclical one of moving between analysis and coding. . . . Our understanding of what should be coded out of the transcripts changed repeatedly, as our analysis became more sophisticated" (p. 167). Glaser (1965) has provided a more formalized approach to this cyclical procedure under the rubric of the "constant comparison of categories procedure."

Some modification of Potter and Wetherell's (1987) theoretical stance is also necessary for the purposes of this research. The analysis phase of discourse analysis, according to Potter and Wetherell (1987), involves a "search for pattern in the data" in terms of both variability and consistency (p. 168). They add that "the basic theoretical thrust of discourse analysis is the agreement that peoples' talk fulfills many functions and has varying effects" (p. 168).

This dissertation, however, does not take such a structural/functional view as an ontological beginning point. This research begins from the post-modern rhetorical theory of Kenneth Burke, which seeks to identify the perspectival motivations within language, itself, rather than seek functional explanations. The purpose of this research is to discover motivational perspectives within the discourse rather than speculating about the source of

such motivations or the purpose such perspectives might serve for particular groups or individuals. Such an approach is not concerned with individual motives or social structural considerations except as they appear to be explicitly or implicitly premised by the data language.

One remaining modification of Potter and Wetherell's (1987) method of discourse analysis also involves Glaser's (1965) concept of grounded theory. Potter and Wetherell (1987) propose that validation of findings can be provided by reference to the coherence, relevance, problem creating ability, and extensional explanatory fruitfulness of the linguistic categories and linguistic resources discovered by discourse analysis. This study integrates these somewhat positivistic criteria with the ongoing evaluation provided by Glaser's (1965) "constant comparison of categories" procedure. The development of such data-validated theoretical categories reveals the particular and unique perspectives inherent in the rhetorical discourse under study because, "When individuals differentiate, associate, preserve, and evaluate—that is, when they employ rhetorical discourse—they do so from a particular and unique perspective" (Cherwitz & Hikins, 1986, p. 106). However, as will be seen from the analysis of Billig (1987) and Billig et al. (1988), speakers may or may not be conscious of the perspectives from which they speak. More importantly, the coherence, relevance, problem creating ability, and generalizability of categories pertinent to rhetorical behavior are by definition particular to the perspectives created by the data language. By utilizing Glaser's (1965) "constant comparison of categories" procedure, meaningful categories were allowed to emerge from the data language rather than being imposed upon it.

Language as Argument

The perspectives that are meaningful and significant in any sample of language are not always readily apparent. After all, it is the ambiguity of political language in particular that allows political actors to garner support from apparently inconsistent sources. Only if the code of this ambiguous or dilemmatic quality of political language can be broken can perspectival analysis even begin. In the following two sections rhetorical analyses of the law and of the discipline of social psychology are provided in order to demonstrate the power of rhetorical theory to analyze language by explicating the role of argument and conflict in the creation of perspectival motivations.

Social Psychology as Rhetorical Analysis

Rhetorical analysis has been used to analyze phenomena that are usually considered the domain of the discipline of social psychology. Michael Billig (1987) and Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton, and Radley (1988) have developed a view of social psychological principles that appears to overcome the tendency of that discipline to focus on conformity, consistency, and social control in its descriptions of human thought.

For Billig (1987), the limitations of game and dramaturgical metaphors often relied on by social psychologists are overcome by approaching the concept of social behavior rhetorically. Whereas game theory cannot deal with the constant renegotiation of rules that is characteristic of empirical contexts, and dramaturgical theory cannot encompass the off-stage negotiation of roles that occurs in everyday life, rhetorical theory is seen by Billig to be directly concerned with the argumentative aspects of human interaction.

Thus, while Billig (1987) acknowledges that there exists a "rhetoric of adornment," he also agrees with Professor White (1985) that there is a "rhetoric of argument" (p. 34). Billig says of the classical study of rhetoric:

> Rhetoric was not a specialist study, confined to the ambitious few who hoped to make a career from public speaking. On the contrary, it was an established intellectual tradition, which offered practical skills of articulate expression and theoretical insights into the nature of communication. (p.31)

Billig points out that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* recognized a distinction between the practice of rhetoric and the principles underlying that practice. Thus, knowing the available means of persuasion requires understanding of:

> . . . the principles by which attitudes are retained or changed, how audiences resist or accept suggestions, how individuals who wish to make an impact should present themselves in public, etc. In fact, it can be asserted with probably little exaggeration that all the major themes of modern social psychology can be found in classical rhetoric, and in particular in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. (p.54)

Attitude

For Billig (1987), the term *attitude* is meaningfully approached only within a rhetorical context. That is, he denies the established social psychological views of attitude: (1) attitudes as reflections of emotions, (2) attitudes as habits of thinking, (3) attitudes as neurological states of readiness, and so on.

The difficulty with these definitions, according to Billig (1987), is that they are functionally analytic, centering on what an *attitude* does for or to an individual, rather than recognizing that *attitudes* exist, operate, and are played out in a social context. Because the same theoretical base underlies the uses and gratifications approach to media effects, that approach is subject to the same objection.

Thus, for Billig (1987), "an attitude refers to a stance on a matter of public debate and disagreement" (p. 177). Non-controversial common-sense beliefs are not, for him, attitudes—nor are behavioral responses. As he says: " . . . attitudes are more than visceral responses for or against a stimulus. They are stances on matters of public debate" (p. 177).

This is not to say that common sense does not contain argumentative elements. Rather, the contradictions within the community consensus we call common-sense are implicit. According to Billig (1987), common-sense is itself dilemmatic in that common-sense, like values, expresses generalities. These generalities are only meaningful because, in semiotic terms, they contain oppositional elements that serve to define one another in their contrarity.

Such areas of community agreement are identified by Billig (1987) with rhetorical topoi or common places, which are recognized to be specific to a given culture and not universals. As he says:

> The rhetorical textbooks [aimed] to offer convenient sets of common-places for defence and prosecution . . . . In presenting the contrary common-places, the textbooks were, in effect, doing more that just providing aids for the orator. They were also arranging the contents of common-sense. By their arrangement of common-places, the rhetorical theorists reveal that common-sense is not a harmonious system of interlocking beliefs, but is composed of contraries. Just as the forms of argument can be arranged in opposing pairs—categorizations opposed by particularizations, arguments of quantity by arguments of quality, and so forth—so also can the common-place content of common-sense. (pp. 204-205)

It is for this reason, according to Billig (1987), that the positivistic bias of modern social psychology sees argumentative elements of common sense to be nonrational. If in every situation one assumes that there is a correct or true position, then the constant renegotiation of meaning which White (1985)

documents would require a capability that language does not possess: the capability of meaning the same thing by the same words in different contexts.

Billig et al. (1988) say it this way:

> Not only does common sense contain maxims which conflict, but the very vocabulary at our disposal expresses conflicting themes. Many words are not mere labels which neutrally package up the world. They also express moral evaluations, and such terms frequently come in antithetical opposites which enable opposing moral judgements to be made. The risk-taker can be described as reckless or courageous: the conservative decision-maker can be labelled timid or prudent. It makes all the difference which term is chosen and the moral evaluation can only be made because a commonly sensible alternative could also have been made.
>
> It is not haphazard that common sense contains its contrary themes, or, . . . that it possesses its dilemmatic character. The very existence of these opposing images, words, evaluations, maxims and so on is crucial, in that they permit the possibility not just of social dilemmas but of social thinking itself.
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> The contrary themes of common sense provide more than the seeds for arguments: they also provide the seeds for thought itself. The justification for suggesting this is based upon the notion that thinking and arguing are closely connected. . . . In a real sense social argumentation can be seen as providing the model for social thinking. (pp. 16-17)

The implication of this for Billig et al. (1988) is that it is not just decadent modern society that is not "clear" about its values. Modern social psychology misses the mark because it presumes that consistency, conformity, harmony and balance are the natural state of the individual psyche (and in human social affairs) and that controversy, argument, negotiation, and disagreement are pathological. In fact, human thought and social discourse are made up of oppositions, dilemmatic elements, which are both explicit and implicit.

Ideology

According to Billig et al. (1988), the content of the oppositions which make up explicit and implicit dilemmas are not the same from society to society or era to era. An example of an ideological notion that exists in modern society

and has become, in part, an aspect of the lived ideology of everyday life is science.

The incrementalist approach of much modern science is very much reflected in the organizational philosophies supporting management techniques today. The managerial rhetoric that Tom Peters (1984) and Ralph Hummell (1987), each in their own way, find so destructive of human values and creativity is a lived ideology in the U.S. today. Even the professional ethic has crumbled in the face of ideological support for overspecialization and integration by conformity that characterizes the era of corporatism in which we live. In Schon's (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*, he outlines the kind of extraordinary person it takes to function in a human and creative manner in the present environment. Unfortunately, the paragon he presents is admirable but unlikely.

In any case, Billig et al. (1988) propose the existence of (1) formal, or intellectual, ideologies and (2) lived, common sense ideologies that shade into and influence one another. They see neither of these forms of ideology as non-dilemmatic. They disagree with the traditional social psychological view that ideology provides "an internally consistent pattern, so that the thoughts, beliefs, values and so on fit together into the total mental structure" (p. 29). Instead they state their position in these words:

> The dilemmatic approach, by contrast, does not start with the assumption that there is an "inner unity" to schemata or ideologies. By assuming that there are contrary themes, a different image of the thinker can emerge. The person is not necessarily pushed into an unthinking obedience, in which conformity to ritual has displaced deliberation. Ideology may produce such conformity, but it can also provide the dilemmatic elements which enable deliberation to occur. The person living within ideology need not be seen merely as a follower of rules or as a well-programmed machine. However, to uncover the dilemmatic aspects of ideology, it is necessary to look for the contrary themes of lived

> ideology. This means rejecting any assumption that the relations between lived and intellectual ideology are in any sense simple. It should not be assumed that the consistencies of theory are somehow imposed upon the schemata of everyday life, so that everyday life is a social representation of the consistent intellectual ideology, albeit in a baser, more conventional and essentially unthinking form. Instead it is necessary to consider the contradictory themes both between and within lived and intellectual ideology. (pp. 31-32)

For Billig et al. (1988), ideology has an historical dimension. Just as White (1985) considers the law to be an "inherited language," so Billig and his associates believe that dilemmas are not only inherent in social interaction but that the nature of dilemmas is that they are ideological and historical. As they say:

> Dilemmas may be constant within society, but our present dilemmas will reflect our present society. That being so, it becomes entirely feasible to pursue social action to change the basis of society, not in order that dilemmas will be removed *tout court*, but so present dilemmas might be replaced by others. In short, this means seeking to change opinions by changing what people might talk, argue and think about. (p. 148)

This point raises some interesting questions relative to the agenda setting research by McCombs (1981) and McCombs and Shaw (1972) and the media priming process studied by Iyengar and Kinder (1987).

For Billig et al. (1988), dilemmatic themes are not universal because they are ideological and historical. For them, the examination of the dilemmatic character of thought and argument is a methodology that brings to light the issues and problems in a society which is superior to asking abstract questions about "action" or "choice." This is an important insight in their view because they see many post-structural analyses as well as most contemporary philosophical, social, and psychological theory as downgrading argument. Billig et al. (1988) say, ". . . [even] . . . those traditions which have most conspicuously eschewed 'positivistic' methods, for example existentialist

and interactionist perspectives, have also failed to develop the means to analyze social argument" (p. 150).

This problem statement seems to echo Corcoran's (1990) call for political linguistic analysis that discovers, documents, and attempts to clarify the differences in the dialogue of opposing voices and evolving interests rather than an analysis which seeks "fact" or "truth."

Social scientists and communication scholars are too prone to avoid discussion of disagreements involving a clash of values for fear of charges of relativism or normative bias. As Billig et al. (1988) point out, even philosophy has come to ignore its dialectical history in matters pertaining to real historical and social processes, utilizing dialectical logic only with regard to cosmic and abstract issues.

Billig et al.'s (1988) argument is an attempt to sail between the clashing extremes of humanism and structuralism, of absolutism and relativism. For them, language is not a medium for "exchange of meanings formed prior to linguistic structures" (p. 160) or "seamless structures of meaning which somehow hold the social world together" (p. 160). For them, there cannot "be established a single truth about a phenomenon, either through a literary or historical methods or through a logical or geometric method" (p. 160); nor can a charge of relativism lie against "the recognition of the dilemmatic character of knowledge and belief" (p. 161). As they say in their discussion of ideology:

> The major studies of ideology, with few notable exceptions, though acknowledging the importance of "dialectic" and "contradiction," have tended to treat ideology as one relatively coherent and internally consistent social structure or layer contained with a wider social whole. Where there is some acknowledgement of social conflict or antagonism, the modification to the basic approach has been to say that there is more than one ideology in the society and that one of them is dominant. But this does not go far enough and therefore does not recognize the

> complexity of everyday life. . . . Some previous lines of inquiry even point to the ideological layer specifically as the site in society where social contradictions are sorted out and resolved. In opposition to these suggestions the discussion in [our] work has in effect developed the idea that Marx was wrong to formulate the question as concerning "ideological forms in which men become conscious of conflict and fight it out." It is necessary to conceive of human consciousness as arising in part of and implicated in, from the beginning, social oppositions (and consciousness is not only consciousness of something, for to begin to be conscious also implies the existence of inner oppositions which form the preconditions of inner reflection and deliberation). It is also necessary to question the highly rationalist assumption that ideological formations ever attain high degrees of internal consistency or that it would ever be desirable that they should. (p. 152)

Law as Rhetoric in Use

In James Boyd White's essay "Reading Law and Reading Literature: Law As Language" (1985), he encourages us to look at law as language which enables social relations:

> To conceive of law as a rhetorical and social system, as a way in which we use an inherited language to talk to each other and to maintain a community, suggests in a new way that the heart of the law is what we always knew it was: the open hearing in which one point of view, one construction of language and reality, is tested against another. The multiplicity of readings that the law permits is not its weakness, but its strength, for it is this that makes room for different voices, and gives a purchase by which culture may be modified in response to the demands of circumstance. It is a method at once for the recognition of others, for the acknowledgment of ignorance, and for cultural change. (p. 104)

In fact, from a modern communication perspective, all language enables social interaction. White's view is important to the argument of this paper because he is specifically concerned with a kind of language, the law, which has as part of its mystique that it is precise and certain—or at least should be.

From White's (1985) point of view, legal language and all other languages contain ambiguities and uncertainties that are not lapses but are to be expected. Serious disagreement about the meaning of texts is, in his

judgment, the purpose of the law! For White, the text does not create the community nor the community the text, but the interaction between them creates a society. Nor is White caught up in the controversy about the meaning of language being determined either by the intention of its creator or by the reader. As he says:

> Similar questions about the relationship between the intention of a writer and the meaning of his or her work are of course common in literary criticism as well [as constitutional interpretation]. [In literary criticism] it has been strenuously argued, on one side, that the subjective intention, indeed all of the author's subjective experience, is irrelevant to the interpretation of texts, each of which is to be read as if it were a separate object dropped from the sky, and, on the other, that the sole point of the enterprise is to establish an understanding of what the particular author actually meant by what he or she wrote when the work was written.
>
> In both law and literature, the questions about determinable meanings and intention are I think false ones. I believe that it is possible to read both literary and legal texts in such a way as to establish confidently shared understandings of what they mean, what they do not mean, and what they are unclear about; and in my view one may properly call the meanings so established objective, though not in any simple or extreme sense. (p. 82)

White believes that " . . . writing is never merely the transfer of information, whether factual or conceptual, from one mind to another, as much of our talk about it assumes, but is always a way of acting both upon one's language, which the writer perpetually reconstitutes in his or her use of it, and upon the reader" (p. 83).

In White's (1985) view, if language had an objective meaning in the sense that it could be restatable in simple and agreed terms, there would be no need for the more complex and subtle language constructions, which are in fact a commonplace of law and literature and well as all other human activities. In this regard, White is in disagreement with Corcoran's earlier

(1979) view discussed above that despaired of the political discourse associated with the mass communication process.

Following Austin (1975), White (1985) considers language to be *performative* in that it combines words and meanings in complex ways which create meanings for all the words utilized that did not exist before. White says, "One reason we cannot simply restate the meaning of . . . texts . . . is that much of their meaning lies in the language they have remade, and this language exists in the text and not in the world" (p. 87). For White this "textual redefinition" of our words "is a universal aspect of language use" (p. 88). It is the uncertainty created by such a process that is the real work of language; and it is the discovery of the newly created uncertainty that is the task of the literary critic, the interpreter of legal texts, or, as I am attempting to demonstrate in this paper, the analyst of political language.

As White (1985) says, "Indeed the very uncertainties [such texts] contain, and the argument they accordingly give rise to, are a central part of their meaning. These uncertainties are in fact essential to what we mean by literature and law" (p. 90). Therefore, according to White, the present day hope for a quasi-scientific approach to language must be disappointed. Useful and meaningful legal or literary language by its very nature cannot be restatable and provable in scientific terms. But that does not mean that language has no objective and determinable meaning at all. For White, it would be to allow the scientific metaphor to diminish our image of human life to take the position that the " . . . only knowledge worthy of the name must be wholly restatable in other terms and provable by the operations of deductive logic or inductive demonstration" (p. 94).

Amid the legal philosophical arguments that swirl around him as he writes, White (1985) has neither a formalist nor a critical viewpoint. He acknowledges at the beginning of his essay that his approach might seem to depoliticize the law or support the status quo. He expressly states that:

> . . . law is structurally ulterior in character, for it is always meant to affect what you say and do in relation to others, as you obey the command of the statute, for example, or correctly employ the argument underlying a judicial opinion. The law is literally and deliberately constitutive: it creates roles and relations, places and occasions on which one may speak; it gives to the parties a set of things that they may say, and prohibits them from saying other things; it makes a real social world. (p. 95)

But White implies that the positivistic view of law as a system of rules is the cause of the current collapse of legal philosophy into a school of nihilistic critical deconstruction and an establishment school which oscillates between pragmatic legal realism and positivistic formalism. White says the law:

> . . . is a culture of argument and interpretation through the operations of which [legal] rules acquire their life and ultimate meaning. . . .The law is a way of creating a rhetorical community over time: it works by establishing roles and relations and voices, positions from which one may speak, and giving us as speakers the materials and methods of a discourse. It is this discourse working within the social context of its own creation, this *language* in the fullest sense of the term, that is the law. It is a culture that makes us members of a common world. This culture is not reducible to rules, but it is objective, in the sense that it can be found and mastered and in the sense as well that it cannot be disregarded or unilaterally changed. Like the text produced by a single mind, the text produced by the culture has a genuine force and reality notwithstanding its irreducibility to rules or to scientific *knowledge*. (p. 98)

For White, then, it is a mistake for us to consider that our relations with others are artificial because they have been created by men and women using language. Considered as a rhetorical and social system, the law is an inherited language. Contested meanings within that language make it useful. The discovery of these contested meanings tells us what things are important to a community—what things are even perceived by a

community—and the alternatives considered to be legitimate ways of dealing with those things which are valued and perceived.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have considered the rhetorical nature of language and the implications of these characteristics of language for human social action. The dilemmatic nature of attitudes, ideologies, and social interaction, in general, contrasts with the views of social psychology and law that have been prevalent in popular and academic opinion. This dilemmatic insight also provides a modified view of the nature of the mass communication process.

Far from being a means for the transfer of verifiable information to a mass audience, the mass communication process is a rhetorical presentation carrying within its message oppositional elements, which serve to clarify and define each other by their very opposition. As in the case of all relatively organized communication contexts, the language culture of the mass communication process may be expected to tend toward terministic closure because of the inherent nature of the symbols which have come to be habitually utilized in the discourse as it exists from time to time (Burke, 1966).

At the present time, the mass media can be seen as contending with the legal system, and other language created and maintained systems of meaning, for a primary role in the definition of reality and the integration of society at a macrosystemic level. Whatever problems have been created by the near terministic closure or "perfection" of the legal system, the comparatively greater access of the mass media to the U.S. population raises concerns regarding the future of diversity in this country. In Shapiro's (1988) terms, the depoliticization of the U.S. political system by legal language may

be minimal compared to that which is possible for the mass media as it is presently constituted.

Michael Holquist (1981) has argued that three conceptions of the nature of language are currently dominant. The first, a rationalist, view holds that individuals "own meaning" (p. 164). It would seem reasonable to equate this view with the positivistic view that, under some circumstances at least, the truth about something can be known. The second view is that of deconstructionism and holds that "no one owns meaning" (p. 164). Holquist sees this position as holding that "meaning is ultimately impossible because of the arbitrary play of differences between signs" (p. 164). The third and middle view is what Holquist calls "dialogism" referring to it as "right-wing Saussurianism" (p. 164). Under this idea, meaning is seen as social not because convention arbitrarily provides meaning or because language dictates social forms but because the interplay of sub-languages creates as well as indicates the constant contention of centrifugal and centripetal forces in the sociocultural setting (Holquist, 1981).

At least for purposes of analysis, it may be useful to view modern mass communication, as it is occurring in the U.S., as a convergent language system that is contending for a major role in the definition of meaning in our society. From such a perspective, the full range of modern rhetorical methodology can be brought to bear on an analysis of the political language of persons committed to vocational and economic interdependency with the mass communication process as well as the language disseminated as product by mass media organizations.

This approach is proposed as a methodological premise rather than an ontological claim. To take any other position would be to contradict the

theoretical view of language upon which this research is based. Nevertheless, an ontological premise is inherent in the theoretical view expounded here to the extent that the influence of language forms is ever present in human activities as we know them. As Burke (1953a) has said:

> Once you have a word-using animal, you can properly look for the linguistic motive as a possible strand of motivation in all its behavior, even in such *actions* as could be accounted for without this motive in the corresponding *motions* of a non-linguistic species. (p. 81)

By combining the techniques of discourse analysis and grounded theory with the insights of a modern diologic rhetorical method, this dissertation attempts to discover some of the important motivational perspectives inherent in the language of 223 letters written by mass media professionals and managers. The next chapter places this analysis within an historical and philosophical context and specifies the operations that have been pursued in this research.

CHAPTER 5

OPERATIONALIZATION AND METHOD

This dissertation has as a fundamental premise that political communication is language that "expresses and sustains the institutions of governance, the polity itself (i.e. the political system), and the political culture reflected in the character of those institutions and the polity" (Nimmo & Swanson, 1990). As Thompson (1984) has said, political communication is discourse that maintains ideologically significant political representations.

The letters from journalistic professionals and managers that make up the volume *What a Free Press Means to America* (1984) contain political language directed at the creation and maintenance of ideological representations, institutional structures, and organizational cultures supportive of the mass communication process in the U.S. as it is presently operative.

Present day rhetorical theory is appropriate for analyses of current communication phenomena that provide insight into the ways in which journalistic practitioners and their audiences perceive the media and its outputs. Mass media have displaced virtually all other forms of public discourse (Hallin & Mancini, 1984; Real, 1989). This paper proposes that a rhetorical approach to mass media political discourse is useful in the

modern setting. Further, because discourse about mass communication is political language at the macro levels of our society, rhetorical analysis may be the only rigorous method by which to analyze mass media political communication.

The language analyzed in this study is in letters from journalists working in professional and managerial roles in media organizations. This language is about the importance of the mass media to society and the political system. Thus, a two-layered view of mass mediated political discourse is revealed by examining this language because it contains political arguments favorable toward constitutional protection of mass mediated language and because it is the language of people who manage the production of mass mediated language.

Categories have been established in the legal and free speech literature that are relevant to the kinds of discourse that make up the empirical data for this study. The next section is a short synopsis of some of these discourse elements that historically contextualize the discourse data examined in this dissertation.

Traditional Discourse Categories

The provision of special protection for free speech and free press is an important aspect of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Viewed from the perspective of postmodern political communication theory, such a dramatic and explicit limitation on governmental powers must be taken, provisionally at least, to be of significance with regard to the nature of political discourse in the formative years of this nation. Similarly, the current treatment of these constitutional provisions should tell something about the contemporary political environment.

From the perspective of communication theory, the question is not whether any particular legal or theoretical interpretation of the First Amendment is the correct approach, but, rather, whether or not the prevalent interpretive theories are indicators of important political communication processes in contemporary U.S. society. Thus, who claims the protection of these First Amendment provisions and the basis of such claims is useful information for discovering the manner in which public discourse is constitutive of present U.S. social and political structures.

Marketplace of Ideas

One claim on the constitutional protection for speech and press is derived from an idealistic scenario. Under this vision, free speech and free press are necessary for a marketplace of ideas to exist. The community is seen to benefit, under this argument, from the competition of ideas within the public arena. This scenario implies a great faith in rational decisionism based on a search for truth as the only safe basis for a society (Milton, 1968).

Individual Development of Faculties

A slightly different view sees constitutional freedoms as necessary to the making of proper choices by individuals within the community. While this process is seen to benefit the community indirectly, there is a strong element of concern for the development of individuals qua individuals present in this interpretation. This view often recognizes a natural right in the individual to develop his/her faculties under a general rubric of human dignity (Mill, 1975).

Dialectical/Social Evolution Model

A third view is that fundamental protection for free speech and free press was originally provided and is currently respected because, whether by conscious intent or not, such protection is sensitive to the necessity in human

societies for rhetorical space in public discourse. Under such a scenario, the protection of speech and press recognizes and provides for social and individual renewal through the creation and maintenance of social processes alternative to main stream processes. This view sees a necessity for an adjustment mechanism to deal with change that allows for individuals to avoid distrust of one another.

The argument for a structural/functional explanation for the frequent reference to First Amendment freedoms in U.S. political discourse could follow such a course as the following: Failure to provide special protection for fragile beginning efforts at redefinition of social mechanisms results in the atrophy of society's capacity for change and adjustment. Certain structural tendencies of all human societies may tend to reassert themselves under such super stable conditions. These tendencies might be: (1) reversion to well-defined social classes supported by inherited wealth and status; (2) dominance of preferred ideological discourses to the exclusion of any alternative viewpoints; (3) reduction of political processes to a ritual function; (4) religious homogeneity, and so on.

Certainly such frailties of human nature and human societies cannot be said to have been beyond the knowledge and concern of the founding fathers. Pre-revolutionary political philosophy, including the *Federalist Papers*, is replete with treatments of the difficulties provided by such apparently inherent political perversities. Further, a large part of modern thinking and research in sociology, political science, philosophy, economics, legal theory, and communication theory has been dedicated to the explicit documentation and definition of such human characteristics. It is even possible that this pessimistic view of human nature is latent within the rational decision,

individual development, and hierarchical legitimation theories of constitutional protection for free speech and press. The question raised by this theory is whether modern mass media organizations have co-opted public discourse to the point that they are the primary agency closing off alternative discourse in the U.S. today rather than providing a mechanism for the conduct of public discourse.

Elite Management Model

Alternatively, an even more negative description of the role of First Amendment provisions emerges from approaching the various interpretive views of constitutional protection for free speech and free press as communication processes that are very likely maintaining elite power. Under this view, the emphasis on equal opportunity to speak provides legitimacy for hegemonic elite processes. This theoretical perspective provides an initial and intuitive insight into possible propaganda reasons for the attention and concern so often focused on these provisions as opposed to other legal provisions (Mattelart, 1978).

Other theoretical models of the legal basis for free speech and free press are available, including a careful, logical analysis by Schauer (1982). Entering fully into the language system of legal discourse would not, however, serve the purposes of this research.

Individual Versus Institutional Perspectives

The implications of an interpretation based on negative views of human nature can be seen if one opposes a more hopeful "natural law" perspective such as Meiklejohn's (1960) with a structural analysis consistent with established political communication theories (Edelman, 1964, 1971, 1977).

Meiklejohn's (1960) view is that free speech and press were intended by the drafters of the First Amendment as public freedoms as opposed to private liberties. In his approach, life, liberty, and property are private liberties that are not guaranteed under all circumstances. Similar to the view taken by Socrates, these liberties are seen by Meiklejohn as subject to governmental appropriation as long as "due process" accompanies the appropriation. Because these liberties are subject to constraint by the community through its constitutionally established government, Meiklejohn refers to these liberties as "legal liberties" as opposed to "pre-legal freedoms." If the freedom of speech and the freedom of press are pre-legal, they are not subject to limitation even by constitutionally sanctioned executive, judicial, or legislative action by governmental bodies. This theory seems to assume the innate goodness and rationality of human nature.

The problem with this argument from the point of view of modern media organizations is, however, that the privileges and freedoms claimed by such contemporary organizations may not be pre-legal. Because such organizations did not exist at the time of the drafting of the First Amendment but have arisen under the authority of laws written under constitutional egis, they may not be able to legitimately claim pre-legal freedoms—at least under a strict constructionist approach. Such a view is problematic for the current "social responsibility" theory by which the media seem to be justifying their position in U.S. society (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947). For if modern media organizations are "property," their cooptation of First Amendment protection is arguably both inappropriate and dangerous. This is so because the institutional speech that the social responsibility theory seeks to legitimize is in fact a mere property right.

While the expansion of First Amendment protection to business enterprises can be seen as helpful to those enterprises, it can be argued that the efforts of lawyers, judges, academics, and journalists to conflate individual rights of free speech and press with the rights of modern media organizations has served the interests of institutional speakers while compromising the strength of pre-legal, individual freedoms. Thus, the development of countervailing institutional power is either destructive of or a necessary substitute for individual capabilities depending on one's assessment of human nature, the nature of mass communication, and the relationship between human nature and mass communication processes in modern society (Davis, 1990).

Impetus for the legitimation of constitutional protection and privileges for media organizations has come from the explosive growth of the mass media, necessarily dominated by institutional speakers because of economic and political factors, into the primary integrative mechanism of a polyglot U.S. population. It can be argued that the homogenization of institutional speech has been accompanied by the cultivation of dependency on the mass media by diversified mass audiences to the detriment of more complex public discourses. The difficulty and necessity of national unity that have legitimized this trivialization of public speech in the U.S. may be seen to have been provided by the external threat of hot and cold war exigencies made more immediate and dangerous by the nuclear capabilities of the nationalistic participants.

Under this view, then, mass media organizations may be seen as operating in the U.S. within an advantageous discourse that involves the parasitic co-optation of free speech rhetoric. This co-optation has been

facilitated by the legal system and by academics purportedly supportive of free speech and free press. On the other hand, it is fair and reasonable to ask where we would be without powerful mass media organizations in a world in which technology has made government more threatening than ever.

In any case, the approach in the U.S. has been to justify an autonomous profit-making mass media sector, while the European policy has been for greater or lesser degrees of formal governmental ownership and control (Nimmo & Mansfield, 1982; Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956.)

Methodology

Using these conflicting theories of free speech and free press as operational reference points, I have examined the discourse in the 223 letters, published as *What a Free Press Means to America* (1984), that constitute the data for this study for perspectives regarding free speech and free press that appear to be supportive of the media's political and economic interests. The dominating perspective that emerged from analysis does not necessary relate to particular characteristics of the various letter writers, such as newspaper journalist versus broadcaster, editor versus publisher, large organization employee versus small organization employee, and so forth. In any case, such contextual elements were not required to be considered beyond those social, political, and economical variables incorporated into the perspectives presented in the data letters themselves as-taken-for-granted premises. Rather, the dominant perspective differentiated itself in terms of the arguments and dilemmas, explicit and implicit, that are part of the language culture of contemporary mass media organizations that has developed historically by reference to the traditional discourse categories discussed above.

White (1985) has said that texts can be read with three goals in mind: to establish confidently shared understandings of: (1) what they mean; (2) what they do not mean; and (3) what they are unclear about. For the researcher, however, these apparently modest goals are difficult since communication research is by both its nature and purpose less of an integrated rhetorical community than either the legal or the literary community.

Billig et al. (1988) propose to uncover the dilemmatic aspects of ideological texts by looking for the contrary themes of lived ideology. For purposes of the present research, this approach has been implemented by treating all of the text provided in the data as part of a single discourse system. By taking as a unit of analysis any word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph that appears to be seen by the "speaker" as explicitly oppositional or that is necessarily oppositional when viewed from the perspective of one or more of the traditional approaches to free speech and free press presented above, a dilemmatic opposition frequently presented itself with regard to the following questions: (1) How do media professionals and managers see themselves and their industry? (2) How do these media people want to be perceived? and (3) What rhetorical methods do they utilize to accomplish their purpose?

Upon analysis, dilemmatic oppositions latent in this discourse were discovered by oscillating between stated arguments and apparently logically opposite viewpoints. These dilemmatic pairs implicated a dominate perspective of the political world of media organizations that accommodates the oppositional pairs. The perspective so derived has been compared with other potentially significant perspectival categories arising from examination of the data. This process of refining relevant and meaningful perspectival

categories has been modeled on that described by Glaser (1965) as informed by the procedures for discourse analysis provided by Potter and Wetherell (1987).

These perspectival categories were refined by reference to Glaser's (1965) "constant comparative method" of qualitative analysis and grounded theory development. As applied to the observation of social interaction this method is described as comprised of four stages:

1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category.
2. Integrating categories and their properties.
3. Delimiting the theory.
4. Writing the theory.

By applying this method to observed social interaction, researchers have been able to inductively develop categorical generalities about the qualitative characteristics of behavior, language, and written matter, in many substantive areas of interest.

In the present research, meaningful perspectival categories implicit in the rhetoric of arguments by journalistic managers and practitioners about the importance of a "free press" to America have been generated by use of this constant comparative method.

In the case of observable social interaction, the analyst compares incidents in order to understand the nature of particular kinds of incidents as well as the relationship between different kinds of incidents. Whereas the sociologist would code an observed incident into as many already apparent or new categories as are necessary, this research has coded words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and themes into categories arising inductively from comparison of the coded units with other units in the sample. Words,

phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and themes selected for coding are those that are of apparent rhetorical significance based on the presumption that language that is explicitly oppositional or oppositional when viewed from the perspective of one or more of the traditional approaches to free speech and free press presented in chapter five of this prospectus are amenable to rhetorical analysis.

As coding continued, the cumulative comparison of categories created insights into the characteristic properties of relevant categories. In the case of observed social interaction, these properties can be integrated by referring to ongoing social interaction of the same apparent kind. In the case of the present research, reference to traditional interpretive sources was often necessary in order to understand how elements of apparent argumentative categories have been related from time to time. Billig (1987) has suggested that asking "what if" questions of arguers can sometimes reveal the outlines of integrated perspectives. In the present research, it has often been helpful to consider best and worst case scenarios to highlight the perspectival commitments inherent in the data language. For example, questions asked many times of the data were: What if there were no large, politically powerful media organizations? Would other processes for protecting individual First Amendment rights arise? Why not? How do we know?

The third stage of the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis provides for the reduction of terminology and the saturation of categories. In the case of the present language analysis, the elimination of idiosyncratic word usage has served to encourage parsimony in the number of categories considered. Saturation of categories is indicated by the cumulative

overlap of categories arising from examination of the 223 letters in the data sample.

Substantive theory arising from the application of the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis reveals a dilemmatic perspectival system operative in the world of the journalistic manager and practitioner regarding freedom of the press. This descriptive theory provides a basis for a propositional (i.e., explanatory) theory, but an overarching theory of the political process by which the mass media maintains its power, position, and resources, will necessitate further research. Exploration of alternatives to the present system must also await further research.

A source of both difficulty and insight in the process of analysis has been the problem of distinguishing between conflicts that are part of the dilemmatic dynamics of the dominant perspective, and conflicts that indicate potentially different dominant perspectives. Burke's (1969a, 1969b) insights into the manner in which motives are both unified and expressed through language provided a tool for distinguishing sublanguages within the journalistic community from implicit oppositional elements within specific journalistic ideologies. The identification of implicit arguments and conflicts revealed premises and values that are unstated but accessible to perspectival rhetorical analysis. Despite repeated efforts to discern parallel or subsidiary oppositions involving concepts such as "fourth estate" or "watchdog press," the data imploded into the "supercitizen" master metaphor, revealing little underlying inconsistency with that dominant perspective.

CHAPTER 6

LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

This examination of 223 letters from media managers and professionals regarding the subject "what a free press means to America" has proceeded upon the premise that "human behavior is often the result and not the cause of meaning" (Cherwitz and Hikins, 1966, p. 75). The language culture of media managers and professionals has implications for their behavior. Consistency in work product and political viewpoint is also likely to arise from the rhetorical systems that contribute to the creation and maintenance of significant social and political processes through the mechanism of a "lived ideology" as described by Billig (1987), Billig et al (1988), and White (1985). In order to access the ideological elements of the data language examined in this analysis, a sample of 11 of 223 letters was selected using a table of random numbers. This random sample has been included as Appendix A. An additional sample of letters from the 223 letter data set was selected to demonstrate the range of language used by letter writers. This sample of 10 letters is included as Appendix B. In terms of the perspectives organizing the arguments in these letters, however, the "supercitizen" metaphor dominated virtually all 223 letters.

Description of Data

The first randomly selected letter argues that a free press builds a nation by offering:

> a means of communication that helps Americans feel [my emphasis] they are one people, in one society, with common interests and common goals. (1, A1)

The letter writer appears to believe that this integrative function is best served by a press that goes beyond providing information and a forum to the provision of opinion. At the same time, this letter says the press informs the people so that they can know what is happening and can make their own judgments.

Letter number 5 (A2) refers to the press as a responsible "guarantor of freedom." Letter number 49 (A3) stresses that an unfettered press can ensure "a free and productive future" by seeking and disseminating information that is necessary for civilized human existence. Letter 75 (A4) emphasizes the importance of information that is uncontrolled by government, unpopular with readers, and obtainable by and from a free press. The writer of letter number 95 (A5) sees the First Amendment as presenting a wonderful opportunity—but for what purpose is not made clear. Letter 106 (A6) says a free press means a free society because an unfree society cannot tolerate a free press. The writer sees the power of the free press as necessary for government to be held accountable and, thus, to be the protector of other freedoms.

For the writer of letter 107 (A7), the free press is a court of last resort—a place for individuals to turn when they have no other resort in their search for fairness and justice. Letter 118 (A8) stresses that a free press insures the

continuation of democracy by collecting and passing on information to the public. As front line troops, the press passes on information that enables the people to make balanced judgments in the long run—to oversee the government. But this writer acknowledges that censorship by editors and publishers and broadcast executives is increasing, partly in response to pressure from government.

For the writer of letter number 124 (A9), freedom of press and expression embodies the right to dissent—even if such dissent is poorly formed. For that writer, the freedoms of speech and press are the right to differ in opinion without fear, the "freedom to disseminate ideas and opinion, conventional or nonconformist but not anarchic," and the right to inform others without prior constraint. The author sees the responsibility of the press to defend others' rights to free speech, however disagreeable the message.

In letter number 137 (A10), a commercial theme is stressed:

> . . . anyone in the USA can create and distribute any news or information he or she wishes—and do so successfully IF the public will buy it. . . . We are talking about the freedom to create, circulate and sell ideas, the freedom to express our own individuality, in our businesses and in our private lives. That freedom has been the cornerstone to our success as a nation and as a people. . . . the marketplace—the public—will determine through the marketplace which of the public-information peddlers really deserve the freedom that we must preserve for all.

Letter number 216 (A11) says a free press is the underpinning of a democratic society because without a full public airing of topics of the day a democratic society could not exist.

Supercitizen as Master Metaphor

Although other letters from the total of 223 letters that were examined will be referenced in the discussion below, these eleven letters are representative and provide an indication of the dilemma or *agon* that will be

the concern of this analysis. This fundamental contradiction is the perceived necessity of the mass media to function as a supercitizen versus the indispensability of the media in the contemporary context as the primary avenue for dissent and debate in the public discourse arena.

The oppositional character of the concern for the media's ability to stand up to government and the provision of a forum for dissent and debate is drawn by considering the interplay between the concept of a socially responsible press and the statement in letter 124 (A9). If the freedom of the press is freedom to disseminate ideas and opinion, conventional or nonconformist *but not anarchic* (my emphasis), then a dilemma arises because one person's anarchic idea is another's proposal for reform. Who is to decide which ideas seeking access to the public debate through the mass media are anarchic?

Letter number 136 (B1) is an example of struggle with this oppositionality. In this letter, the writer details a fourth estate, watchdog, and supercitizen role for the mass media when the author refers to the press as checking governmental power that could otherwise crush individual liberties. The writer seems to say that only the media has the ability to monitor the activities of government in that only the media has the "time, resources, and expertise to do it."

Similarly, letter number 4 (B2) refers to press freedom as a right of the people designed to protect not only writers and printers and broadcasters but to assure the people's access to information. However, this writer goes on to say that because press freedom is so important that there is a tremendous responsibility imposed upon the press to exercise its power honestly and

wisely. Why is it not the people's responsibility to decide what information is honestly and wisely provided?

Letter number 167 (B3) is ominous in its definition of "responsibility," the more so because this letter is by Daniel Schorr who has felt the whip of indirect censorship in a source confidentiality contempt hearing before Congress. Schorr worries that the First Amendment might not survive a constitutional convention today, let alone a popular referendum. He says that the media are on the defensive today and should exercise restraint. Is restraint required to protect the people, the First Amendment, or the press? Letter number 57 (B4) makes an argument for financial stability as an element of responsibility. The writer says:

> . . . we should never forget that our free press is based on our system of private enterprise. For the press to be free, it must always generate enough public demand to be economically sound, and must not be crippled through taxation or government regulation.

Similarly, letter number 117 (B5) makes the point that sufficient revenues are a necessity of an independent press. It is difficult to know what this writer should be understood to mean by the following statement:

> American newspapers must never accept subsidies, whether from large corporations whose officers want a forum for their views, or from a religious body, a political party or any organization existing because it has a cause, and most emphatically not from any agency of government.

This writer's letterhead reveals his organization's ownership of five newspapers, a cable company, and a production company in three different communities. Conglomerate organization can be seen as a kind of corporate subsidy. Certainly the obligations of the press qua press are impacted by the obligations of the press as part of a business operation involving other enterprises and, presumably, having business officers whose views may seek

a forum just as much as an outside subsidizer of the press may have officers and officials whose views may seek a forum.

When the freedom to make a profit and the freedom of the press are thus conflated, it is not difficult to see that concern for the average citizen's access to the media forums of public discourse is more of a rhetorical appeal to the emotional premises of U.S. constitutional secular religion than an attempt to legitimize and operationalize any true public discourse involving individuals. Rather, this emotional appeal is being utilized rhetorically to justify the independence of the media as it pursues economic and political power. This use of *pathos* supports the logical objectification or *logos* of a media sector rationalized on free market premises. The argument justifies the media's wealth and power by pointing to its service as a fourth estate, a watchdog, or a supercitizen. This claim indicates a powerful motivation to trivialize and suppress the citizenship responsibilities of the average person.

This insistence that the individual's only involvement in the public forum be that of a mere purchaser of objective information places at the service of the self-interest of the media owner, manager, and professional the entire sanctity of the rights and privileges guaranteed by the First Amendment. Only if the media qualifies as an expert in the production of "objective" information can the presumption be sustained that media organizations are better suited than any other corporation or governmental agency to provide information to the average citizen. However, Schudson (1976) has cast grave doubt on any claim of expertise in providing objective information.

In addition, the presumption that government is the only threat to the freedoms and liberties of individuals is not well founded. In this age of corporatism, large privately owned business enterprises make or influence

many important political decisions. Neither their books nor those of their media subsidiaries or competitors in the marketplace are open to the general public. Recent disclosures about the government's careless disposal of nuclear waste may soon be eclipsed by discoveries concerning private industry's mismanagement of toxic wastes of all kinds. The fiscal and monetary irresponsibility of government so often decried by critics of big government seems relatively well-intentioned when compared with the greed and rapacity of private business interests' complicity in the present banking and savings and loan crises.

For media, however, to justify its independence on the basis of watchdog vigilance of private business corporations as well as government would too clearly reveal the potential for over-reaching inherent in the private ownership and profit motives of the the media itself. Thus, the persuasive discourse presented by these letters from media managers and professionals iterates over and over the threat to individuals presented by government with no mention of the threat to individuals constituted by all other types of organized activity as well.

Whatever may have been the degree of concern for individual interests in the formative years of presently operational large media organizations, the tendency of the language manifested in these letters toward terministic perfection renders it difficult for even small media organizations to step outside of the constraints of this powerfully persuasive discourse system. Letter writers representing both large and small media organizations reflect the same limited perspective with regard to their privileges and responsibilities. With the disappearance of more and more truly local newspapers as they are bought out by chains and large corporations,

indications are that balanced community newspapers cannot survive in the atmosphere of the present marketing-driven ideological climate. In the context of a lived ideology centering on the sale of information and goods so as to maximize business profits, a newspaper striving to present other values is suspect and unreliable—even to its readers.

Whose Right to Dissent?

Several writers in the random sample enunciate the emotional appeal to the necessity for dissent and debate. They say:

> It is our responsibility as journalists to ensure that the free flow of information is maintained, for as long as many voices raise a chorus of ideas our freedom is assured. (49, A3)

> A free press enables the people to acquire the ability "to make a judgment," as former President John F. Kennedy often said. When the people have the facts, they will be able to make balanced judgments in the long run, for the good of our nation and society. (118, A8)

As Keynes is supposed to have said, we are all dead in the long run. The wealthy and powerful are far more likely to accept amelioration of social and political inequality "in the long run" than are the poor and disenfranchised. Letter number 66 (B6) indicates the control over dissent and debate that the writer feels the responsibility to maintain:

> The free press is the eyes and ears of blacks, whites, hispanics, jews and those of any other ethnic origin.

At least a far as upper-class, white, male-dominated, general circulation media is concerned, I suspect that blacks, hispanics and jews would prefer to use their own eyes and ears when issues of importance to them are on the public agenda rather than to rely on the perceptions of such organizations. The editor of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch* John R. Finnegan is

more honest about whose dissent and debate is important in contemporary society:

> The press, today, is more and more the surrogate for the public. It is the free press, as a representative of the public, that informs readers about government activities. Consequently, it is the press that must fight to keep meetings and records of governmental bodies, including the courts, open and accessible. The principles of openness are vital to individual liberty. The ability of the public—and the press—to monitor government is essential if a democratic society is to survive. (65, B7)

The writer (137, A10) described above as presenting a commercial theme may be even more honest. If one replaces the word "information" with the word "entertainment," this commercially oriented writer's statement would read as follows:

> . . . anyone in the USA can create and distribute any news or [entertainment] he or she wishes—and do so successfully IF the public will buy it. . . . We are talking about the freedom to create, circulate and sell ideas, the freedom to express our own individuality, in our businesses and in our private lives. That freedom has been the cornerstone to our success as a nation and as a people. . . . the marketplace—the public—will determine through the marketplace which of the public-[entertainment] peddlers really deserve the freedom that we must preserve for all.

This substitution of words provides an insight into the primary motive of contemporary media organizations. Objectivity and the provision of a public forum for individuals' dissent and debate are mere buzzword justifications for the exploitation of the unfettered competitive business opportunity provided by First Amendment protection. Publication of dissent from popular views is "anarchic" because it is bad for business—whether that dissent is generated by an average citizen or a media supercitizen. If a following in the market does not exist for a point of view or a situation comedy, then such a commercial perspective makes inevitable the labeling of the unmarketable (for a profit) as anarchic, irresponsible, and destructive of press freedom and

the First Amendment. The circular reasoning that testing the socio-political system's tolerance of First Amendment rights is irresponsible results in support for the view that maximizing profitability by avoiding unpopular informational or entertainment programming is protective of the First Amendment!

Protection of Alternative Media

Not all media in the U.S. is large, corporate, and general circulation. Protection of the rights of smaller, more specialized media is also part of the justification the large media organizations utilize in support of their economic and political power. The general argument against censorship is well stated in letter 49 (A3):

> It is our responsibility as journalists to ensure that the free flow of information is maintained, for as long as many voices raise a chorus of ideas our freedom is assured. Each silencing is one less note in the song of freedom. Every book, every newspaper tossed into the fire of censorship is another step toward bondage. Only by meeting directly the challenges we face in seeking and disseminating information without fetters will we ensure a free and productive future, a future more promising than survival.

But the role envisioned by media managers and professionals in the fight against censorship is more specifically paternalistic than such a general statement would imply. Many of the data letters addressed this point but the following statements are characteristic:

> The First Amendment is the linchpin of our freedom—nothing less. And that is so because of the guarantee of a free press. The right of free speech, the right to assemble peaceably, the right to petition the government for redress of grievances are of little consequence unless what is said and complained of can be widely disseminated. When people can communicate openly across the nation, thoughts and protest represent power. (106, A6)

> A free press is a shield, protection for *Hustler* magazine and for the high school student handing out leaflets criticizing cafeteria food. It is the comfortable feeling of reading, without fear, anything our libraries can provide us. It is the politician's assurance that he may say and write outrageous things without going to jail. (11, B8)

> Freedom of the press is the only one of the listed guarantees the individual citizen cannot exercise in his own right. And an effective body of public opinion has come to depend upon institutions that rival those of government in size and complexity. (10, B9)

> I believe that Freedom of the Press in the United States boils down to one thing: protection against general interference by the government. . . . the First Amendment totally prohibits interference by governmental decree with the distribution of what *we choose to call news* [my emphasis]. (3, B10)

This arrogation of the power and responsibility to protect other forms of freedom of expression and other more specialized media includes within it two assumptions: (1) that pluralism works and (2) that the proliferation of specialized magazines and other media constitutes pluralism. With regard to the second point, the targeting of specialized media means that more often than not these publications are "preaching to the choir." These media are not perceived, and often rightly so, as objective general circulation publications or programming. Further, the large general circulation media continually but subtly undermine the impact of these specialized media through reference to all opinions but pro-business opinions as "special interests."

Under present circumstances, where the large general circulation media control the agenda of public discourse, diversity of opinion among these larger media would be necessary for pluralism even to be tested as a means of balancing various interests in the society. But as Bennett (1989) has determined, even the *New York Times* is subject to cooptation.

In the pursuit of political and economic power the large general circulation media marginalize the very specialized media and individual interests they purport to protect from government. Through the discourse system, the language, that media managers and professionals are entelechly perfecting as they compete for power and resources in our society, large and small media organizations alike are limiting access to public discourse to main-stream profit oriented business ideologies. The small media are contributing to this trend by accepting the profitable niche that specialized

readerships and viewerships provide. The large media are accelerating the trend by buying out or marginalizing more and more of the smaller local media organizations as well as by the incorporation of this discourse system into the news and entertainment products that are disseminated to their audiences.

Recent events in the Persian Gulf give evidence of this trend toward the corporatization and trivialization of the U.S. mass media. The large media organizations did not rebel against the pool arrangements forced on the press by the Department of Defense and the Bush Administration. The arrangement was ideal for them because: (1) the military made certain that the large organizations received the sound bites and interviews they needed in order to provide the kind of entertainment-style "news" that general circulation audiences and readerships have come to accept and (2) the smaller and local media organizations were frozen out completely because the free lancers that they rely on for stories tailored to a local market were not allowed on the reporting pools (Erwin Knoll, personal communication, March 26, 1991; Helen Thomas, public presentation, April 23, 1991). The net effect of these policies was to protect the competitive positions and professional reputation of the large media by eliminating the more aggressive, complete, and localized coverage that free lance reporters would have provided their clients. The desperation that local media felt in this situation is indicated by the fact that, in several instances, local reporters rewrote newswire stories originating with pool reporters in the war zone and published them under their own byline (Erwin Knoll, March 26, 1991).

Ethos and Justified True Belief

It is important to understand that the powerful discourse system postulated by this dissertation is not evidence of general bad faith on the part of media managers and professionals. As stated in chapter one, all errors of inference are not the result of subjective or "motivational" influences. The objective or cognitive is also the source of such error (Nisbett & Ross, 1980).

Golden, Berquist, and Coleman (1978) see Aristotelian *ethos* as made up of four constituent elements: character or trustworthiness; intelligence, knowledge, or expertise; goodwill or identification with the audience; and power or charisma. Trustworthiness and character are linked with apparent sincerity. Intelligence, knowledge, or expertness is linked to the perception of a speaker's manifest tension when he does not know the subject well. Goodwill or identification is related to the apparent existence of shared values, hopes, aspirations, and beliefs between the speaker and audience. Charisma and the power flowing from it arise from the speaker's observable talent, his achievements, occupational position and status, personality, appearance, style, and overall life experience.

In addition, however, Golden et al. (1978) see *ethos* as an ingredient of the message itself. The beliefs, attitudes, and values inherent in the message will thus determine, to some degree, the extent to which the persuasive intent of the speech will be successful. This is so because ethos resides not in the speaker but in the mind of the listener. And persuasive messages will not reach the audience and modify its behavior unless those messages are consistent with at least some aspect of the value system of the audience.

Aristotle's (1958) own text, however, goes beyond even this expansion of the concept of *ethos*. For Aristotle rhetoric is a search for truth serving the

political unit in a manner similar to the service of dialectic between individuals:

> For each individual among the many has a share of virtue and prudence, and when they come together, they become in a manner one man, who has many feet, and hands, and senses; that is a figure of their mind and disposition . . . . among them they understand the whole. (*Politics*, 1281b,4)

Aristotle (1984) presents a fuller view of *ethos* in his *Rhetoric*:

> Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided. This kind of persuasion, like others, should be achieved by what the speaker says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to speak. It is not true, as some writers assume in their treatises on rhetoric, that the personal goodness *revealed by the speaker* [my emphasis] contributes nothing to his power or persuasion; on the contrary, his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses. (*Rhetoric*, 1356a, 4)

Such a view seems to take into consideration the existence of a sort of dialogue between the speaker and the audience. A modern communication theorist would certainly expect the feedback loop between the speaker and the audience to include: what the speaker knew and felt about the audience, what the audience knew and felt about the speaker, and why both speaker and audience were in their respective roles in the first place. Because these three elements are often missing in the relationship between the mass media and its audience, the media in the U.S. appear to have adopted a set of arguments, a discourse system, that obfuscates the real nature of the relationship. This strategy is necessary because the media, in seeking to maximize the business opportunities of their privileged situation, have ceased to give priority to the best interests of their audience. Aristotle (1984)

commented on the impact such intentions have upon the confidence of the audience in the speaker:

> There are three things which inspire confidence in the orator's own character—the three, namely, that induce us to believe a thing apart from any proof of it: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill. False statements and bad advice are due to one or more of the following three causes. Men either form a false opinion through want of good sense; or they form a true opinion, but because of their moral badness do not say what they really think; or finally, they are both sensible and upright, but not well disposed to their hearers, and may fail in consequence to recommend what they know to be the best course. (*Rhetoric*, 1378a,7)

While Aristotle (1984) was aware that the power of public discourse could be abused, he viewed the potential for rhetoric in the public arena in positive terms:

> . . . rhetoric is a combination of the science of logic and the ethical branch of politics; and it is partly like dialectic, partly like sophistical reasoning. But the more we try to make either dialectic or rhetoric not, what they really are, practical facilities, but science, the more we shall inadvertently be destroying their true nature . . . . (*Rhetoric*, 1359b, 10)

Thus, for Aristotle, rhetoric was not a device or artifice or a science, but a faculty—a process, if you will, that is necessary and important to proper choices by groups of people just as the dialectic is necessary and important to proper choices by individuals. Seen from this point of view, *ethos* demands from public speakers nothing more than those qualities in a person that one would desire in a dialectical partner—transposed into the group decision-making process of the audience/speaker relationship.

Cherwitz and Hikins (1986) have made a similar requirement of public discourse which proposes the discovery of useful knowledge:

> Epistemologically productive rhetoric must be based on critical evaluation; it must be dialectically secured. To achieve epistemic status, rhetoric must be bilateral, affording each rhetor equality for initiative and control over lines of influence. In addition, the rhetoric must be

> corrective, harboring the assumption that the clash of differing ideas is the best means of exposing error and yielding truth. This assumption is an expression of the principle that knowledge develops cumulatively. Epistemologically productive rhetoric must also involve self-risk , where knowers risk the possibility that their views will be altered as a result of argument. Rhetoric deserving the status of knowledge presupposes that the self can be repositioned *vis-a-vis* the relata constituting the comprehended universe. This in turn allows intersubjectivity to supplant subjectivity. (p. 110)

In Aristotelian terms the failure to apply proper rhetorical methods to public address came about because the speaker was ill-intentioned. But by approaching persuasive discourse systems with the tool of perspectival analysis provided by contemporary rhetorical theory (Billig, 1987; Billig, et al., 1988; Burke, 1969a, 1969b, 1970, 1979, 1985; Cherwitz & Hikins, 1986; White, 1985), the missing element of classical rhetorical theory becomes evident: the degree to which established discourse systems, through language, reduce the ability of the speaker as well as the audience to utilize public discourse constructively.

An admonition to the media to engage in rhetoric as Aristotle defined rhetoric is unlikely to prevail. Even the press as it functioned at the time of the enactment of the First Amendment was a scurrilous and unethical activity. But the application of rhetorical theory to the language and behavior of the institutional speakers that dominate our public discourse today allows insight into the limitations and capabilities of the mass media process in the U.S. Such analysis also allows us to anticipate the trends that are likely to characterize the mass media process in the coming years.

Ideally one might prefer for the mass media process to provide for the epistemological process, the social learning process, that Aristotle views as the role of rhetoric and that Cherwitz and Hikins (1986) refer to as the search for justified true belief. But such a development cannot reasonably be

anticipated. The purpose of this dissertation has been to learn something about how the mass media process operates in the U.S. today. Hopefully, partial answers have emerged as to the questions posed at the beginning of this paper: (1) How do media professionals and managers see themselves and their industry? (2) How do these speakers for a free press want others to see them and their industry? and (3) What rhetorical methods do these media representatives utilize to accomplish their purpose? In short, media professionals are emersed in a language, a discourse system, that appears to be moving entelechly toward the "rotten perfection" (Burke, 1966, p. 16) that Burke expects of all human symbol systems. From their perspective, media managers and professionals see their media and wish others to see their media as a benign, elite supercitizen standing between the tendency of government toward despotism and the average person. But while media managers and professionals profess to be carrying on an epistemological process, the *ethos* in the relationship with their audiences has long since ceased to exist. Present day U.S. mass media organizations are rationalized on a profit-maximizing business model justified by reference to services to society and to individuals that are no longer primary purposes or results of the mass media process.

Research Applications

The result of this analysis is *an* interpretation of the language of media professionals about the importance of mass media to our society. Other interpretations of this same data are, presumably, possible. The relative value of any such interpretation should be determined by the explanatory power of the analysis for the reader. By pointing out probable motivational commitments inherent in the language of media professionals, this research

is not intended to make a final determination of the proper role or most useful perspective for individual media professionals or their organizations. But White (1985) has said that textual redefinition such as the interpretive research provided by this dissertation is creative and constitutive. In periods of rapid social change, the recreation and reconstitution of social mechanisms are facilitated by alternative interpretations.

While the results of this research may not be universally generalizable, this study does provide a compendium of descriptive and analytical categories that are not committed to a particular ideological view. One way of conceptualizing these results is to view them as constituting a repoliticization of these discourse areas in a manner similar to that described by Shapiro (1988). Another way of viewing these results is as a revealing of perspectival commitments, which are key elements in an emergent, or convergent, mass media language system. These categories may be useful to: (1) those modeling on our system (e.g., former Soviet satellite states); (2) legislators and regulators of media in the U.S.; (3) interpreters and evaluators of media impacted institutions such as elections, popular movements, public information campaigns, advertisements, etc. In these respects, this dissertation, in itself, may act as a rhetorical discourse having epistemological implications consistent with those proposed for rhetorical analysis by Cherwitz and Hikins (1986). In any case, delineation of efficacious motivational perspectives regarding any matter of public policy can lead to greater knowledge of ourselves and our world.

Further Research

This dissertation has postulated that political language supportive of the mass communication process in the U.S. is in the process of elaborating into a

discourse system, a language, of strong persuasive effect. Before the impacts, both intentional and non-intentional, of this language system can be evaluated and proper policy determinations can be made regarding regulation of existing mass media and stimulation of alternative forms of mass communication, further confirmation and description of the postulated language phenomenon must be undertaken. The present research utilized largely explicit political language as data, but future research should examine the news and entertainment outputs of the existing mass communication process for evidence of an emergent language culture consistent in its rhetorical motivations with the language examined in the present study. If rhetorical patterns and motivations consistent with the discourse system revealed by this dissertation dominate the output of the mass communication process confirmation of the findings of this study will be provided. In addition, however, such an additional finding of consistent rhetorical motivations in news and entertainment outputs will increase the urgency for attention to the media regulatory process in the U.S. This urgency will arise because, as discussed in chapter three of this dissertation, the persuasive power of television, in particular, is so great that a harmful over-elaboration of the postulated mass communication political discourse system could result from the impact of television rhetoric on average citizens, media managers and professionals, lawmakers and scholars of the mass communication process. While we cannot expect that the mass media will ever be the site of an epistemological rhetoric, knowledge of its language characteristics may allow our society to avoid a destructive terministic elaboration of existing media political rhetoric.

Conclusion

Arthur Fisher Bentley (1908) has said that the Constitution is a slice of the ongoing development of political discourse of its time and that latent within it are the competing interest positions that provided the energy flowing into its negotiation. His view has recently been restated in the language of contemporary sociological theory (Alexander & Colomy, 1985). Burke (1969a) has said that, "Constitutions are agonistic instruments" (p. 357).

This research from a communication perspective is directed at the analysis of a similar slice of discourse about the position of mass communication in our society. While substantive interest groupings are not revealed by this work, description of the living discourses at work reveal sufficient latent predispositions in the current political situation to indicate the competing trends and realities that are being actively constructed and maintained today.

These predispositions are not inevitably controlling with regard to any particular media pattern of behavior or public policy outcome. The grounding of perspectival rhetorical analysis of media political language developed in this dissertation provides a method for analyzing the potential influence of the mass communication process on specific questions of policy. After all, if a highly persuasive discourse system such as that indicated by this research is operative at a site generally considered objective and nonpolitical, insight into the perspectival commitments of that system will provide a more realistic evaluation of communication emanating from that site.

The benign, elite supercitizen image of media that has been developed by media managers and professionals may be harmless in some incidences.

However, the discourse developed in support of that image creates interpretations of events and issues that are advantageous to media but not necessarily propitious for public discourse. These interpretations, by their very presence, rhetorically limit the potential for meaningful public understanding.

The mass media may indeed be an indispensable part of contemporary society, but the importance of the media does not require that audiences, scholars, media managers and professionals, and other citizens accept the limitations of the mass communication process uncritically.

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APPENDIX A

RANDOM SAMPLE

A1 (Letter No. 1)

WORCESTER TELEGRAM THE EVENING GAZETTE SUNDAY TELEGRAM
20 FRANKLIN STREET · WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01613 · 617 / 793-9100

ROBERT C ACHORN
PUBLISHER

In pursuit of freedom, Isaiah Thomas smuggled his printing press from Boston to Worcester on the eve of the battle of Lexington. Well before the First Amendment took shape, he knew what a free press could mean to the building of a nation.

It meant then, as it means now, that the people can know what is happening in the country and in the world. With that knowledge, they can make their own judgments about public policy.

The daily newspaper at its best provides current, significant, comprehensive information to anyone who wants it. In the United States, it typically provides that information without the direction or the control of those currently in government.

The good newspaper goes beyond that. It offers its opinions about the news. It offers a forum for the opinions of others. If offers a means of communication that helps Americans to feel they are one people, in one society, with common interests and common goals.

Human nature being as varied as it is, these noble purposes are imperfectly pursued and unevenly achieved. But they exist in America, and the free press makes the pursuit and the achievement possible.

Robert C. Achorn, Publisher

A2 (Letter No. 5)

TRIANGLE PUBLICATIONS, INC.
100 MATSONFORD ROAD. P O. BOX 750, RADNOR, PA. 19088/215-293-8990

WALTER H. ANNENBERG
PRESIDENT

Our press, which today includes the electronic media, is quite simply the guarantor of our freedom. In the absence of government control, and with so many of us engaged in journalism, some excesses are to be expected. That there are so few excesses is a tribute to American journalists' awareness of their responsibility to the public.

Walter Annenberg

A3 (Letter No. 49)

The Trenton Times
500 Perry Street • P O Box 847 • Trenton, N J 08605 • (609) 396-3232 A subsidiary of Allbritton Communications Co

Linda Grist Cunningham, Executive Editor

It has been said that only the insidious cockroach will survive a nuclear holocaust. Perhaps, but let us assume, even for speculative means, that there will be those of the two-legged variety to climb from the ashes. For us, once we have established that we are, indeed, still breathing, information will be our most sought-after goal. For to live we must not only seek, but find, information. Those most basic of journalistic questions, the who, the what, the where, the when, the why and the how, beg for answers, answers we need if we are to re-build our lives.

When life is going well, when chaos appears at least manageable, we tend to forget just how central a free flow of information is to our lives. That give-and-take of information, from the simplest, across-the-backyard-fence conversation to the most erudite journal, is as critical to our survival as are food, water, shelter and clothing. We must know in order to be.

It is our responsibility as journalists to ensure that the free flow of information is maintained, for as long as many voices raise a chorus of ideas our freedom is assured. Each silencing is one less note in that song of freedom. Every book, every newspaper tossed into the fire of censorship is another step toward bondage. Only by meeting directly the challenges we face in seeking and disseminating information without fetters will we ensure a free and productive future, a future more promising than survival.

The cockroach may survive, but it will merely exist. Humankind will survive, but it will live.

A4 (Letter No. 75)

DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE • TIMES-UNION
GANNETT ROCHESTER NEWSPAPERS
55 EXCHANGE STREET • ROCHESTER NEW YORK 14614 • (716) 232-7100

ROBERT H GILES
Editor

This is a straightforward story. A bit more complex, perhaps, and certainly more important. But what it says about a free press in the United States makes it little different from thousands of other stories I've been involved with in a quarter of a century as a journalist.

What a free press means to America is information -- information that cannot otherwise be obtained and, occasionally, is unwanted or disbelieved by the readers of daily newspapers.

In July, 1970, two months after students at Kent State University had been fired on by members of the Ohio National Guard, the public perception was that the students were to blame. It was a tragedy that four had died and nine had been wounded, but the public view seemed to hold that outside agitators had whipped the students into an anti-Vietnam war frenzy and that the guardsmen had fired in self defense.

The staff of the Akron Beacon Journal continued to work on the Kent State story, believing that a satisfactory explanation of the shootings was still to be told. Late on the afternoon of July 22, our reporter in Portage County, where Kent State is located, called to say that he had seen the report of an FBI investigation into the shootings. The FBI had reached the unexpected conclusion that the campus shootings by the National Guard were "not necessary and not in order." The FBI said six guardsmen could be criminally charged.

The story was a blockbuster. It was carried in newspapers across the country. And it set off a firestorm of criticism, including a bitterly-worded letter from the late director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, attacking the Beacon Journal for publishing the information but not denying the accuracy of the story.

I have always believed that this important piece of the puzzle about the tragedy of May 4, 1970, could never have been known except in a society that honored the right of a newspaper to gather the information and publish it, and the right of our people to read it and draw whatever conclusion they may about it.

GANNETT
A WORLD OF DIFFERENT VOICES WHERE FREEDOM SPEAKS

A5 (Letter No. 35)

The Courier-Journal
The Louisville Times
525 West Broadway
Louisville, Kentucky 40202
Area Code 502 582-4011

Paul Janensch
Executive Editor
(502) 582-4611

I think our free press should be a responsible press -- and often isn't. True, newspapers in the aggregate are better than ever, but. . .

Reporting and editing are sloppy. Names are misspelled. Quotes are garbled. Verbs don't agree with subjects. Bias creeps into the copy and goes through the desk unchallenged.

The writing is turgid. Stories are too long. Sentences are too long. We adopt the jargon of the people we cover. I have grown to despise words such as "input" and "deployment."

We are inaccessible to our customers. Only two dozen newspapers have an ombudsman to field complaints from the readers. At the Louisville newspapers -- where the idea first became reality -- we now have three ombudsmen, for news, advertising and circulation. Call your newsroom sometime and pretend you have a question or story suggestion. See how well, or badly, you're treated.

Yes, we should strive mightily to preserve the First Amendment. But we could also work harder to take advantage of the wonderful opportunity it presents to us.

Paul Janensch

Paul Janensch

A6 (Letter No. 106)

The Miami News
A COX NEWSPAPER
P.O. BOX 615 MIAMI, FLORIDA 33152-0615

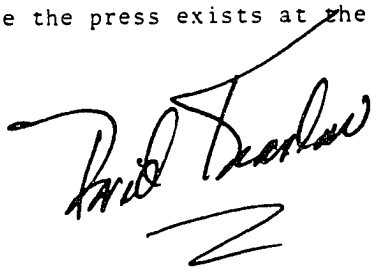
DAVID KRASLOW
Publisher
(305) 350-2207

Simply put, what a free press means to America is a free society. Neither can be without the other. A society not free cannot tolerate a free press. A free press makes impossible a society that is not free.

The First Amendment is the linchpin of our freedom--nothing less. And that is so because of the guarantee of a free press. The right of free speech, the right to assemble peaceably, the right to petition the government for redress of grievances are of little consequence unless what is said and complained of can be widely disseminated. When people can communicate openly across the nation, thoughts and protest represent power.

Government is accountable because of a free press. I have seen it work hundreds of times. A simple example of it I have experienced frequently that beautifully illustrates the point: A federal official who refuses to make available information that properly belongs in the public domain has a sudden change of heart when a reporter says: "In that case, I will have to take it up with the White House or maybe I will just ask the President about it at his next press conference."

Try that in a society where the press exists at the government's pleasure.



The Cox Newspapers: Atlanta Constitution • Atlanta Journal • Austin American-Statesman • Dayton Daily News • Dayton Journal Herald • Grand Junction Daily Sentinel • Longview Daily News • Longview Morning Journal • Lufkin News • Mesa Tribune • Miami News • Palm Beach Daily News • Palm Beach Post • Palm Beach Times • Port Arthur News • Springfield Daily News • Springfield Daily Sun • Waco Tribune-Herald

A7 (Letter No. 107)

The Boston Globe
Boston, Massachusetts 02107 Telephone 617-929-2000

The Vietnam veteran had a gripe. In hopes of learning a trade, he had spent $2000 for a career school's course in computer programming. But, he soon found that the school's promises of new equipment, fine instruction and a high-paying job were rank misrepresentations. The state and federal governments, which were supposed to regulate this business, shrugged off his complaint about wide-scale ripoffs, so the veteran decided to call a newspaper.

Another youth's lifetime goal was to become a firefighter, but he knew his chance of getting a high enough grade on the Civil Service exam was slim. The supposedly secret exam was for sale, and no matter how hard he studied, he knew he would never beat out the scores of those who had bought the exam beforehand for $1000 a shot. Believing his assertions were preposterous, the Attorney General's office and Civil Service department sloughed him off with nary an investigation. He too called a newspaper.

The VA doctor had nowhere to turn. He believed it was just too coincidental that two friends who had worked side by side repairing nuclear submarines would both contract leukemia. The Navy, feeling that the men's exposure to radiation was in the acceptable range, was unwilling to study the possibility that their illnesses may be work-related. The doctor chanced a call to the newspaper.

The distraught mother had tried in vain to convince the police department that her 11-year-old daughter had not run away but instead had been kidnapped. Kids her age are always running away, especially when they come from hardluck families like that, was the official response. There's no need for an investigation, she'll show up. The mother's broken English was difficult for the reporter to understand when she called soon after her daughter's body was found, but her story rang true.

These are just four of the thousands of calls that come into newspapers across the country on a daily basis, from people who have nowhere else to turn. That there is a place for these people to bring their complaints is a vital part of a democracy. That through independence, resources and intelligence these errors or misdeeds can be brought to light -- and thus allow a fair-minded public to insist upon change -- is testimony to the First Amendment.

Stephen A. Kurkjian
Globe Staff

A8 (Letter No. 118)

Sarah McClendon
McClendon News Service
Syndicated Columnist • Radio-TV Newscaster • Lecturer
2933 28th Street N.W. Washington D.C. 20008
(202) 483 3791
483 7918

Many citizens do not know what a Free Press means to them. It is in the Bible, John, 8, 32, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

In my 53 years of reporting the news, 40 of them spent on the Washington scene, covering nine presidents, I have experienced pressure, attempted intimidation, attempts at bribery, sarcasm, ridicule, laughter, discrimination because of being a woman, misunderstanding, accusations of publicity seeking, threats, insults, retraction of invitations, downgrading, incomparable pay, orders to leave, disadvantages through segregated membership of clubs, uniformed barricades, even strong arms, praise, large-scale public acclaim.

All of this has been tolerated as part of the job, because the goal was to get information out to the public. The public owns the information, not presidents.

A free press insures the continuation of democracy. It means freedom. Without it one can expect special interests will flourish at the expense of the majority. Injustice will prevail. Even dictatorships could take over.

As journalists collecting and passing on information in writing and broadcasting, we are the front line troops guarding the people in a democracy.

A free press enables the people to acquire the ability "to make a judgment," as former President John F. Kennedy often said. When the people have the facts, they will be able to make balanced judgments in the long run, for the good of our nation and society.

In writing the Constitution, our founding fathers expected that the people would watch their government carefully. Without a free press, they cannot oversee it. It is when the public does not know what is going on the politicians and officials of unscrupulous habits defraud the people.

At this time a free press is being attacked on many fronts in our land by a determined, calculated, vicious lobby led by some political and ideological leaders. They attempt to shut off government sources while claiming to conduct open government. They are becoming so effective that as I make my rounds today in the executive departments of government, particularly the White House and State Departments--not the more honest Defense Department--I wonder if we still have a free press. Billions of dollars are spent annually to keep the taxpayer from knowing what some agencies are doing. Censorship by editors and publishers and broadcast executives is increasing. They sometimes shut out whole areas of coverage and ignore disfavored persons who are news.

I believe that today there should be a united front among journalists to educate the public as to the benefits of a free press. It is like that woman who asked me a question after I had lectured on Freedom of the Press. "Why does the Press always have to give us bad news--why do they not only tell us good news?"

I replied: "My friend, had you rather not be told that a tornado was bearing down on you?"

Sarah McClendon

SARAH MCCLENDON

A9 (Letter No. 124)

The State
The Columbia Record

COLUMBIA, S. C. 29202

THOMAS N. McLEAN
EXECUTIVE NEWS EDITOR

P. O. BOX 1333
TELEPHONE (803) 771-8451

Freedom of the press (and other forms of expression) is the right to dissent -- even if such dissent is poorly formed. It is the right to differ publicly with others, without fear of governmental reprisal. It is freedom to disseminate ideas and opinion, conventional or nonconformist but not anarchic. It is an absolute right to inform others honestly and in a timely fashion, without prior restraint. And it is the responsibility to defend others' right to free speech, however disagreeable the message.

A10 (Letter No. 137)

Allen H. Neuharth

Chairman/CEO, GANNETT CO., INC.
Lincoln Tower, Rochester, N.Y. 14604

Chairman/Founder, USA TODAY
P.O. Box 500, Washington, D.C. 20044

GANNETT

USA TODAY

Most of us in this country get about what we demand or deserve in products and services--including the quality of our information services. Among the precious freedoms guaranteed in the First Amendment is the one which says anyone in the USA can create and distribute any news or information he or she wishes--and do so successfully IF the public will buy it.

It is important to all Americans that we preserve that press freedom-- and it is equally important that those who practice that freedom deserve it as well.

Our lives are much more wrapped up in the First Amendment than many realize. Clearly, this freedom of expression goes far beyond the printing presses of USA TODAY or any other newspaper.

We are talking about the freedom to create, circulate and sell ideas, the freedom to express our own individuality, in our businesses and in our private lives. That freedom has been the cornerstone to our success as a nation and as a people.

Because we have had this absolute freedom , we rarely think about it. We have come to view our freedom as automatic. That is a dangerous delusion.

Even as we move into the progressive and revolutionary Information Age, there are forces at work today that would take us backward rather than forward at home and abroad.

A shocking document, called the UNESCO McBride Commission Report, has proposed, among other things, licensing of journalists, a government code of conduct for the media and a form of censorship. Those UNESCO plans--if allowed to be implemented worldwide--could destroy freedom as the Free World knows it.

This latest worldwide effort to curtail freedom of expression is nothing new. When Lenin ruled the Soviet Union more than 50 years ago, he put that philosophy in his perspective when he wrote in the Communist Party mouthpiece, Pravda: "Why should freedom of speech and freedom of the press be allowed? Why should a government which is doing what it believes right, allow itself to be criticized? It would not allow opposition by lethal weapons and ideas are much more fatal than guns."

In sharp contrast, Thomas Jefferson put it in this perspective more than 200 years ago when he said: "Our liberty in America depends on freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost."

He certainly could have added that ultimately, the marketplace--the public--will determine which of the public-information peddlers really deserve the freedom that we must preserve for all.

As we work to preserve this freedom of many expressions, it surely seems proper for those of us in the media to pay more attention to deserving that freedom.

All (Letter No. 216)

The State Journal

321 West Main
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
1-502-227-4556

DIX NEWSPAPERS
Wooster, Ohio
Ravenna, Ohio
Kent, Ohio
Bellaire, Ohio
Martins Ferry, Ohio
Defiance, Ohio
Ashland, Ohio
Alliance, Ohio
Cambridge, Ohio
Frankfort, Kentucky

BROADCASTING
WWST Radio
Wooster, Ohio
WRAD Radio
Radford, Va.
WTBO Radio
Cumberland, Md.
WKAL Radio
Rome, New York
KFBB-TV
Great Falls, Montana

Gouverneur Cable
Gouverneur, N.Y.
Woodland Park Cable
Woodland Park, Colo.

Catastrophic to a newspaper adequately informing readers is censorship. Yet it exists in many parts of the world today. Example: Nicaragua's government routinely censors its leading independent newspaper, La Prensa. Typical censorship has included coverage of high meat prices, local sabotage, the arrest of a female travel agency operator, a cottonpickers' meeting, flood pictures, the search for terrorist bombers, and flaws in the delivery of medical supplies. Government censors called these topics "bad news" and prohibited their publication. Some days censorship is so heavy that La Prensa is not published.

Imagine that occurring in the United States!

I thought about it in personal terms. How would I feel if the government told me I could not report that a federal housing program for the poor was corrupt? Of that medical care providers were cheating Medicaid and Medicare out of billions? That congressmen squander taxpayers' money on meaningless foreign trips? That truckers greased key members of Congress with thousands of dollars in campaign contributions to assure passage of a bill allowing heavier rigs on the nation's highways?

Or how well would I have served readers if the government prohibited publication of these items?: An editorial portraying a governor as misguided, badly informed and poorly served by aides?; that the same official pledged full cooperation with a grand jury investigation of his administration and then instructed his children to take the Fifth Amendment before that same panel? I can't print that!? Or that the state's top law enforcement official used a state-owned truck for a personal, out-of-state shopping trip, sticking taxpayers with the gas bill?; that one of the state's biggest highway contractors provided a rent-free cottage to an official of the administration he was trying to do business with?; that an elected constitutional officer put his 79-year-old mother on the payroll as his highest salaried secretary when actually she was the babysitter of his children?

Who would dare say I could not publish the arrest, indictment, trial, conviction or acquittal of accused criminals? How could I tolerate no coverage of a deadly tornado? Elections? The total human impact of a recession? The many facets of serious and far-reaching legal, political, moral and religious issues?

Full public airing of these and a multitude of other topics - through a free press - is the underpinning of a democratic society. Without it that society cannot exist. Press censorship is utterly destructive and therefore totally unacceptable. Under censorship, American lives would never be the same again.

Carleton L. West
Editor

APPENDIX B

CONVENIENCE SAMPLE

B1 (Letter No. 136)

Los Angeles Times
WASHINGTON BUREAU

JACK NELSON
BUREAU CHIEF

As press disclosures about Watergate and hundreds of other scandals over the years have shown, a free press plays an essential part in the delicate balance that exists in this country between individual liberties and the power of government. For unchecked government power-- whether at the local, state or national level -- can compromise or even crush individual liberties.

By monitoring and reporting on the activities of government, the press provides the public with something other than the government's own version -- or the political opposition's version -- of what the government is doing. And that information enables citizens to arrive at their own informed decisions on how to deal with governmental power and abuses of power.

Since America does not have a parliamentary system to which the chief executive is answerable, the role of the press at the national level has been especially crucial in monitoring activities of the Executive Branch. The role has been no less important at the local and state level where in many cases officials have sought to enhance their own power by operating in secrecy. I vividly recall a sheriff in Wayne County, Ga., blocking a reporter from attending a meeting at the courthouse, saying, "There are some things the county commission does the public isn't suppose to know about."

A free press has meant that only in extremely rare circumstances has there been justification for government doing something the public isn't suppose to know about.

And it has meant that every citizen has the same First Amendment rights of a free press enjoyed by journalists. For journalists who monitor the operations of government and other institutions that affect our quality of life are only doing what other citizens would do if they had the time, resources and expertise to do it.

Finally, a free press has meant that Americans are among the world's most informed citizens concerning operations of their government.

SUITE 1100 / INTERNATIONAL SQUARE / 1875 EYE STREET, N. W. / WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006 / TELEPHONE (202) 293-4650

B2 (Letter No. 4)

CHATTANOOGA NEWS-FREE PRESS

400 EAST 11th STREET

CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE 37401

Freedom of the press is a unique ingredient without which personal liberty and a nation of freedom cannot long exist. It is necessary for the debate and exchange of ideas, and for the development of policy with the vital checks and balances of competing philosophies.

Many think of freedom of the press as being a possession or right given to those who make up "the press." But press freedom is actually a freedom for the people. It is not designed to protect only writers and printers and broadcasters but to assure the people's access to information.

Since press freedom is so important, there is a tremendous responsibility imposed upon the press to exercise its power honestly and wisely. While that should always be the goal, there is no assurance that the fallible humans involved in the press will always attain it. But freedom itself helps provide a self-correcting balance since other views may be presented to counter whatever errors of judgment or fairness may occur.

Because the press is so important, it should feel an obligation to be responsible, avoiding the injustice of failing to give a hearing to all viewpoints, avoiding persecution of individuals or causes by one-sided reporting, avoiding being an instrument of misinformation or disinformation, avoiding an ivory-tower complex while ignoring the rights and concerns of each individual whose freedom is as precious to him as that of the press is to those who exercise it.

The first action of those throughout the world who would deny personal liberty is to deny the freedom of the press. By their action they underline the importance of an unrestrained press in protecting the processes of liberty.

We help preserve freedom by preserving freedom of the press. Those who participate in this freedom should constantly dedicate themselves to being worthy of this great trust.

Lee Anderson
Editor

B3 (Letter No. 167)

DANIEL SCHORR
3113 WOODLEY ROAD, N.W. WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008 (202)483-7150

These are tough times for defenders of a free press. The First Amendmentment might not survive a constitutional convention today, let alone a popular referendum. Many Americans ask why the news media, alone among private enterprises, enjoy special constitutional protection. T hey perceive us as purveying sensation and pornography for profit, and they will not forgive us our press passes.

We defend "the public's right to know" at a time of indifference or even resentment at knowing anything that challenges what people think they already know.

But, with the wall of secrecy rising again and image-makers selling their own self-serving messages, never was a free press more important. It is the need to know more than the right to know that should be stressed.

We are on the defensive, and we need to exercise restraint. We should not over-dramatize what is already dramatic; we should not invade the privacy of the private. We might even pass up an occasional inessential story that needlessly hurts the defenseless. But we must resist the erosion of the amendment deemed so important to American liberty that it was numbered as the First.

Daniel Schorr

B4 (Letter No. 57)

Media General, Inc., P.O. Box C-32333 Richmond, Virginia 23293-0001 (804)649-6000

Media General

Alan S. Donnahoe
Vice Chairman and
Chief Executive Officer

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

I think it is fair to say that freedom of the press and individual liberty are highly correlated, so that any restriction on the former will reduce the latter accordingly.

If any proof of this proposition is needed, it can readily be found in a survey of both freedoms, nation by nation, throughout the world today.

And modern history makes it quite clear that the first priority of any authoritarian government is to control all channels of communication.

While all this is fairly self-evident, I am not certain that it is fully understood by all of our people. It is easy for Americans, having grown up in a free press society, and never knowing anything else, to take its benefits for granted.

I have visited a great many countries under authoritarian rule, and such an experience always reaffirms the great tragedy of these people who have never known the privilege of individual freedom. It would be most useful if more Americans could see this at first hand.

It is my belief that each citizen of the United States today is blessed with the greatest choice of media of all kinds to be found anywhere in the world today: a tremendous resource for each individual and for the nation as a whole.

But we should never forget that our free press is based on our system of private enterprise. For the press to be free, it must always generate enough public demand to be economically sound, and must not be crippled through taxation or government regulation.

Thus the most certain way to destroy freedom of the press is to destroy its economic foundation, and thus make it dependent on some form of subsidy from the government or otherwise. Those who believe in a free press must always be alert to these dangers.

Alan S. Donnahoe

B5 (Letter No. 117)

LONGVIEW PUBLISHING COMPANY

To be truly free the press must be independent. To be independent it must be self-sustaining. The press must earn its way and not seek or accept unearned support from anyone for any reason. This means that media must sell their product in the market place for enough to pay all the expenses of communicating in mass form.

When a newspaper's revenue becomes insufficient, its voice weakens and it may fall silent. This happens too often, not only in America, but in other countries that value freedom as much as we, such as France and Britain. In Sweden and Austria an alternative, unacceptable by our standards, has been resorted to--subsidies from the government. Swedish newspapers say they can criticize the government; therefore they are still free. But their existence depends on the continued willingness of government to make up their operating deficits.

In July of 1984 a count showed that in America television stations, operating under licenses from government, now outnumber daily newspapers. The shift of advertising from print to electronic media and into the mail continues.

Further change in this direction may be inevitable. If even more effective or cheaper ways to advertise become available, advertisers will have even less need to use newspapers and other print media engaged in public affairs journalism. If this happens, the free press will be faced with the loss, not of its freedom, but the means of exercising that freedom.

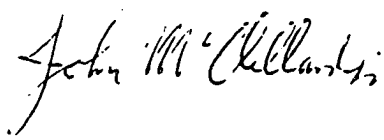
American newspapers must never accept subsidies, whether from large corporations whose officers want a forum for their views, or from a religious body, a political party or any organization existing because it has cause, and most emphatically not from any agency of government.

What then can be done to forestall further weakening of the economic base of free newspapers so that they can keep publishing without loss of independence?

Answers are not readily at hand, but it is not enough to argue righteously that freedom of the press must be retained at all cost. Nor to assume that whatever takes the place of newspapers, when and if they fall by the wayside, will suffice.

The economic threat to newspapers is not something to be ignored in any consideration of the status of free press in the 20th century.

John M. McClelland, Jr.



LONGVIEW
The Daily News
Cowlitz Cableview
Printing Arts Center
PORT ANGELES
The Daily News
KING COUNTY
The Daily Journal-American
Mercer Island Reporter
Overlake Press

P.O. BOX 189, LONGVIEW, WASHINGTON 98632 (206) 577-2500

B6 (Letter No. 66)

Akron Beacon Journal

44 East Exchange Street, Akron, Ohio 44328

Albert E. Fitzpatrick, Assistant Editor (216) 375-8257

A free press means that America will continue to function as a free society in a multi-cultural environment. Voices from this society will always be heard as long as the printed word is not censored or destroyed by those who fear a free flow of information. The free press is the eyes and the ears of blacks, whites, hispanics, jews and those of any other ethnic origin. Heroes, champions and even losers are portrayed by the press which has a responsibility to reflect its society.

Without the free press, the civil rights movement of the 1960s would never have gotten off of the ground. Without the watchdog responsibilities of the press, our government may have gone in a different direction.

Democracy exists primarily because of the free press. Without the free press, Frederick Douglass who fought endlessly to free the slaves, would not have been able to say, "I shall labor to use my voice, my pen and my vote to advocate the emancipation of my people."

I have been to many African countries where no free press exists and the uninformed masses are barely surviving. We are fortunate in this country because Democracy lives and it will continue to survive as long as we have a free press.

Albert E. Fitzpatrick

Albert E. Fitzpatrick

B7 (Letter No. 65)

St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch

John R. Finnegan
VICE PRESIDENT / EDITOR

55 East Fourth Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101-1160
(612) 222-5011

Without a free press, true freedom does not exist.

The First Amendment right of a free press provides the freedom to report new information, to explore challenging and provocative ideas, to examine how the society functions and to support or criticize those who govern us.

This guaranteed right belongs to the pamphleteer as much as to the head of a television network; it belongs to the book publisher, the film maker, the magazine editor and the writer for a weekly community newspaper.

With that freedom comes immense responsibility. To exercise its freedom, responsibly, the press must be wedded to the principles of accuracy, fairness and balance. It must be concerned about good taste, and community and public interest. It must insist on thorough reporting, good writing and sound commentary, properly labeled.

And when the press is inaccurate, unfair, arrogant and insensitive and uses its power indiscriminately, it endangers those cherished freedoms.

The press, today, is more and more the surrogate for the public. It is the free press, as a representative of the public, that informs readers about government activities. Consequently, it is the press that must fight to keep meetings and records of governmental bodies, including the courts, open and accessible. The principles of openness are vital to individual liberty. The ability of the public -- and the press -- to monitor government is essential if a democratic society is to survive.

B8 (Letter No. 11)

The Hawk Eye

P.O. Box 10 Burlington, Iowa 52601

During the Great War, E. B. White was asked for a statement on "the meaning of democracy." His rejoinder has become a classic. I can do no better than to borrow its tone in replying to the Society of Professional Journalists, while wishing I also could borrow his wisdom.

Thus:

SURELY the Society of Professional Journalists knows what a Free Press means to America. It is Joe Pulitzer exhorting his troops, "never be afraid to attack wrong." It is William Allen White writing an anxious friend that "this nation will survive...the orderly business of life will go forward if only men can speak in whatever way given them to utter what their hearts hold--by voice, by posted card, by letter, or by press." It is Walter Lippmann: "A free press is not a privilege but an organic necessity.

A FREE PRESS is a nation's safety valve, permitting us to let off steam without destroying society. It is the letter to the editor, the call of protest to the radio station, the clicking on of a TV program--and the clicking off too. It is the angry placard at the Whit House gates, the signed petition to the boss for a longer lunch, a newspaper ad protesting nuclear games.

A FREE PRESS is a shield, protection for Hustler magazine and for the high school student handing out leaflets criticizing the cafeteria food. It is the comfortable feeling of reading, without fear, anything our libraries can provide us. It is the politician's assurance that he may say and write outrageous things without going to jail.

A FREE PRESS is a torch, lighting the dim corners where winos drift and also the bright pedestals where we enshrine gold medalists. It illumines the mind by offering a different idea. It brightens the heart with a poem, a romantic film, a report on births at the local hospital. A free press is at ease at City Hall and the White House, in the laboratory and police station, in the Governor's office and the kindergarten. It visits all these places to try to shed light, and it often does.

A FREE PRESS has meaning for America because its guardians have put truth in first place. We know this is so because a free press can expose lies and liars. A free press survives only with freedom. In turn, the free press zealously guards freedom, not only for itself but for all. A free press is the Society of Professional Journalists, asking a country editor what a free press means.

Stuart Awbrey • Editor and Publisher • 319/754-8461

B9 (Letter No. 10)

HARRY S. ASHMORE
1373 East Valley Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93108
805/969.5262 805/969.2321

One who speaks from experience, Andrei D. Sakharov, wrote from exile:

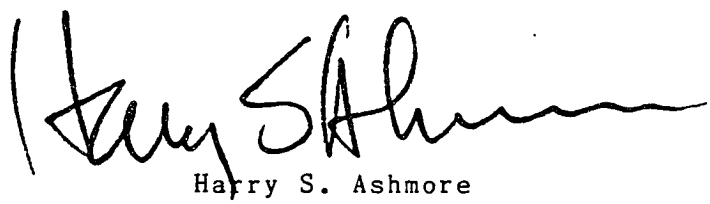
"As long as a country has no civil liberty and freedom of information and no independent press, then there exists no effective body of public opinion to control the conduct of government."

That, journalists need to be constantly reminded, is the reason the immunities they cherish were written into the first amendment to the American constitution.

Freedom of the press is the only one of the listed guarantees the individual citizen cannot exercise in his own right. And an effective body of public opinion has come to depend upon institutions that rival those of government in size and complexity.

The conduct of these is controlled only by the conscience of corporate employes who still believe, in the face of all the contrary evidence, that journalism is, or should be, a profession.

It is a sobering thought. And, I fear, we do not think it often enough.



Harry S. Ashmore

B10 (Letter No. 3)

United Press International

1400 EYE STREET NW
WASHINGTON DC 20005

Although journalists have given the First Amendment almost mystic powers and great sweeping authority, we sometimes forget that the language is quite simple and narrow. "Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press...." That is all: nothing giving reporters the right of total access to government files or shielding them from lawsuits and irate subscribers. There is not even any language that discourages the Executive branch from putting the President in a cocoon, as is now sadly the case, or keeping reporters out of invasions such as at Grenada.

I believe that Freedom of the Press in the United Stated boils down to one thing: protection against general interference by the government. It does not give us absolute protection against law suits. It gives us no protection against police or military restrictions if the authorities believe they can work better or more safely without reporters hanging around. The government has no constitutional restrictions on its ability to inhibit our news-gathering (and I despise such attempts). But the First Amendment totally prohibits interference by governmental decree with the distribution of what we choose to call news. To pretend that the First Amendment says something that we wish it said only weakens our narrow constitutional case.

Jim Anderson

Diplomatic Correspondent