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THE POSITION OF THE PRESS IN THE U.S. POWER STRUCTURE*

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This paper examines the institutional links between the U.S. power elite and the press. Specifically, it looks at the institutional affiliations (corporate directorships, business and trade associations and policy groups, non-profit civic groups, and social clubs) of the directors of the nation's 24 largest newspaper-owning companies. The data reveal a web of affiliations that link all these corporations to the nation's power structure, but also reveal that some newspaper-owning companies are more linked than others. Those firms most closely linked to the power elite are those with the greatest journalistic and political influence. These, in turn, display and are distinguished from most other newspapers by a "corporate liberal" ideology that reflects the viewpoint of the "inner group" of the capitalist class.

A great deal has been written about the "power of the press," but little is known about the position of the press within the power structure of the United States. This paper examines the relationship between the U.S. business elite and the mass media elite. The mass media play two critical roles in society. First, they are profit-seeking firms; their owners, directors, suppliers, and advertisers are interested in the economic health of these firms. Second, they are ideological institutions. The media set the agenda of political, social, and economic debate. They shape public opinion on crucial issues; socialize individuals to social roles and behavior; and can legitimate or undermine powerful institutions, individuals, and ideas. Who controls these organizations is an important area for research.

Observers of and spokespersons for the mass media both view it as unique among U.S. industries. They view the media as a "fourth estate," standing apart from other institutions and segments of society, putting its public role and its social responsibility above the unfettered pursuit of profits. Publishers, editors, and journalists alike claim that their organizations are not beholden to any special interests except the pursuit of truth. The prime function of the press, according to the canons of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, is "to satisfy the public's need to know" (Udell, 1978:24). Because of their unique function in society, the mass media are, alone among U.S. industries, protected by the Constitution through First Amendment guarantees of "freedom of the press" (Bagdikian, 1971).

The media's special status is codified in an ideology extolling objectivity and impartiality. According to this ideology, the media should not reflect the views of any particular segment of society, but should try to provide a balance of all perspectives and points of view (Schudson, 1978; Tuchman, 1978). These norms are institutionalized in the daily practice of journalism. To guarantee that journalists' judgments are not colored by their own affiliations, newspapers encourage, and often require, that journalists avoid potentially conflicting commitments. The code of ethics of Sigma Delta Chi, the Society of Professional Journalists (whose officers are usually high-level editors of influential newspapers) states: "Journalists and their employers should conduct their personal lives in a manner which protects them from conflicts of interest, real or apparent. Their responsibilities to the public are paramount." Most journalists espouse these professional norms (Johnstone *et al.*, 1976).

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While the Sigma Delta Chi statement includes employers (media executives) as well as journalists in its proscription against conflicts of interest, interviews with and letters from newspaper board directors, as well as their statements in various articles, reveal contradictory norms and practices among newspaper firms regarding executives' institutional affiliations (Dreier and Weinberg, 1979; Ingrassia, 1979; Morgenthau, 1970; Rockmore, 1977). Some believe that all such affiliations compromise the credibility of the press and thus should be prohibited or discouraged. For example, the chairman of one of the nation's largest newspaper firms (who requested anonymity) said: "I have turned down directorships of major banks, saving-fund societies, life insurance companies, fire insurance companies, graduate business schools, hospitals, art museums, orchestra, and Port Authority, to avoid conflict of interest and the mere appearance of conflict of interest, direct or indirect (as in news coverage of strikes against such institutions)" (personal letter to author). Ben Bradlee, editor of the *Washington Post*, believes that newspaper company editors and executives should not join "any civic groups, clubs, or institutions" (personal interview). Otis Chandler, publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, has resigned from all his corporate directorships, citing the desire to avoid conflict of interest, although fellow board members at the parent Times-Mirror Company have not followed suit. Some firms prohibit affiliations only with profit-seeking corporations. Even among those who prohibit or discourage outside involvements, some apply such standards only to "inside" directors (employees of the firm) and not "outside" directors. Others view such involvements as part of a newspaper's role as an active "citizen" of the community, even suggesting that such involvements improve news coverage by allowing executives to feel the community's pulse. Still others suggest that affiliations related to the media's business operations, such as corporate directorships or business policy groups, are entirely separate from its journalistic activities and thus do not reflect potential conflicts of interest. Allen Neuharth, chairman of Gannett (the largest chain in terms of number of newspapers), explained that "I accepted the Marine Midland (bank) directorship because it has branches in all our communities in New York State . . . It's a good way for our company, through me, to be in touch with the business communities in the cities where we publish. You learn a lot of things about business developments that you might not otherwise know about" (personal interview).

During the past decade, sociologists have developed a growing interest in the upper echelons of business and political power, but they have not focused on the press as a special segment. At the same time, interest in the mass media and its inner workings has also grown. Research, however, has centered on the day-to-day activities of the newsroom itself and the processes of identifying, gathering, writing and editing the news. This has provided a wealth of insight into the social construction of news and the pressures on news media personnel (Dreier, 1978; Epstein, 1973; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1972, 1978). But this research has not penetrated the upper echelons of the newspaper hierarchy, the top decision-makers or the boards of directors of newspaper-owning corporations. Much of what we know about these individuals comes from official and unofficial biographies of publishers, histories of particular newspapers and journalistic accounts of the "lords of the press" (Gottlieb and Wolt, 1977; Halberstam, 1979; Lundberg, 1936; Roberts, 1977; Talese, 1969). While these studies suggest that publishers and board members can have an influence on the general tone of a paper as well as upon specific stories, there has been little systematic research on the characteristics of these individuals and how (or if) they are connected to other sectors of the U.S. power structure.

In the most recent and comprehensive survey of media management, Bogart (1974:170) notes that "the people who run such major media organizations are super-elites, notoriously difficult for social scientists to study first-hand." In this paper, I systematically examine the media elites' position in the web of institution affiliations that comprise the U.S. power structure. First, I examine the *extent* of the press' affiliations with other institutions. Despite their occupational code

and ideology, the press is deeply involved in the power structure network. Second, I describe the *distribution* of affiliations, particularly between inside and outside directors, a distinction mentioned by several executives as the critical difference in terms of outside involvements. Third, I look at the different *patterns* of affiliation between newspaper firms. Some companies are more closely linked to the power structure than others. There is a small subset of influential papers whose affiliations are significantly greater than the others. This distinctive pattern corresponds to the ideological outlook of the pinnacle of the corporate elite, an outlook termed "corporate liberalism."

THE U.S. POWER STRUCTURE

Following Domhoff (1970, 1979), Dye (1976), Useem (1978, 1979) and others, I defined the U.S. power structure as the top positions in the institutional structure of the society, especially the elite institutions in four major sectors—corporations, business policy groups, non-profit civic organizations, and social clubs. Research has found that, despite divisions among the members of the power structure, overlapping memberships in these elite institutions form a network, or web, of inter-relationships that allows a high degree of cohesiveness within the capitalist class. At the pinnacle of this network is what Useem (1978, 1979), Zeitlin *et al.* (1974), and others call the "inner group" within the capitalist class. This inner group includes those individuals connected to several major corporations who seek to protect the general welfare of large corporations as a class rather than the narrower interests of particular corporations, industries or regions. This inner group is the general voice of big business. Members of the inner group are disproportionately represented in institutions that promote class cohesiveness and integration, such as civic organizations, business policy groups, clubs, and high-level government posts (Useem, 1979, 1980). This paper examines the press' position within the U.S. power structure and its links with this inner group.

METHODS

I defined the newspaper elite as the directors of the 25 largest newspaper companies in the United States (in terms of daily circulation) during 1978 and 1979 (Morton, 1980). The top 25 companies accounted for over one-half (53.5 percent) of the total daily circulation in 1979. In that year there were 1,764 papers in the United States with a combined circulation of 62.2 million (Compaine, 1979:13). The top 25 companies owned 425 daily papers with a total circulation of 33.3 million. These included most of the major metropolitan papers (including 20 of the 25 largest dailies) and many small- and medium-sized papers as well. The top 25 newspaper companies dominate the industry. This reflects the long-term trend, accelerated in the postwar period, toward concentration, conglomeration, and centralization within the newspaper industry (Bagkidian, 1978; *Business Week*, 1977; Compaine, 1979). While many of these companies are diversifying, they are still primarily engaged in newspaper publishing (Compaine, 1979:32). Of the top 25 companies, all except Newhouse (the third-largest chain) provided me with a list of its board of directors for 1978 and 1979. I checked the lists of directors against information from annual reports (for those that publish them) and public references such as Standard and Poor's *Register of Corporations*. Because the list of Newhouse's board could not be obtained directly or indirectly (*Business Week*, 1976a, noted the company's exceptional secrecy), this research focuses on 24 of the top 25 chains.

This method netted a total of 290 individuals. Their names and affiliations (revised and updated here) appear in Dreier and Weinberg (1979). I examined affiliations with elite institutions, as defined by Bonacich and Domhoff (1977), Domhoff (1970), Dye (1976), and Useem (1978,

1979).¹ I obtained information on the affiliations of these 290 individuals from the following sources: Standard biographical data on 60 percent of the directors was obtained from *Who's Who in America*, the regional edition of *Who's Who*, *Who's Who in Business and Finance*, and several other similar reference books in ethnic and minority group members, educators, government officials, and lawyers. The reference books were consulted for 1975 to 1979. While the individuals listed in these public reference books provided their own, often incomplete, biographical information, what information that is there is generally considered reliable. G. William Domhoff provided recent membership lists of the major business policy groups and of eight nationally prominent social clubs. Many of the directors listed membership in these (and other) business policy groups and social clubs in their *Who's Who* biographies, but some affiliations missing from official biographies were added using the complete membership lists. I checked each individual in the *Business Periodical Index*, which indexes all major business periodicals from 1975 to 1979; articles about or mentioning them were consulted. Finally, I sent each newspaper company a questionnaire requesting biographical information (including institutional affiliations) on their board members. The questionnaire included all information already obtained on each individual and asked that errors be corrected. Mailed questionnaires were followed up by phone calls to public relations directors (or their closest counterparts) in each company. This elicited additional information from some chains and individuals. The data may overlook non-elite affiliations (which are least likely to be caught in this research net), but this is not a significant problem for this research. In addition, I interviewed more than 20 newspaper company directors and many journalists.

TOTAL ELITE AFFILIATIONS

Dreier and Weinberg (1979) found that newspaper firms are actively involved in their local communities. This confirms Molotch's (1976:315) view of the newspaper as one of the key actors

1. In terms of *corporations*, the elite institutions are defined as the 1,000 largest industrial corporations and 50 of each of the largest banks, insurance companies, financial companies, utilities, retail companies, and transportation companies in 1979, as listed by *Fortune* magazine. In a society in which economic power is highly concentrated, these 1,300 corporations control the overwhelming share of the nation's economic assets, and thus its economic power. In terms of *business policy groups*, the elite institutions are defined as the 15 major groups that prior research indicates play a critical role in establishing a common position among the major corporations on major issues. These 15 organizations were established to provide a forum for the discussion, articulation and promotion of policies that affect most major companies, regardless of industrial sector or geographic region. They draw their members from the top ranks of a broad range of corporations and include, in some cases, academics, attorneys and other professionals involved with and sympathetic to the business community (Eakins, 1969; Domhoff, 1970, 1979; Hirsch, 1975; Shoup and Minter, 1977). In terms of *non-profit civic organizations*, elite institutions are defined as the 12 private colleges and universities with the largest endowments. There are two reasons for isolating colleges and universities to represent this sector. First, among this sector, college and university board members are the largest sub-category (compared with cultural organizations, research and scientific institutions, philanthropic foundations, health-related organizations, charitable groups) and thus make it easier to see variations by newspaper companies. Second, identifying the "elite" institutions in the other sub-categories of the civic sector is more problematic. For example, it is difficult to determine which cultural institutions in the world of art, music, theater and related activities are the most powerful and prestigious. These 12 colleges and universities control over half (54 percent) of the resources available to private higher education and these institutions (although some of the more prestigious public universities such as Michigan and California and small private colleges such as Amherst and Reed are not included). The trustees of these 12 institutions "exercise a significant influence over higher education and thus over the quality of life in America" (Dye, 1976:133). A disproportionate number of the nation's top leaders attended one of these institutions, which attract a disproportionate number of the inner group members to their boards (Useem, 1979). In terms of *social clubs*, elite institutions are defined in terms of the 47 exclusive clubs identified by Domhoff (1970) and Bonacich and Domhoff (1977) as those that draw their membership from a nation-wide pool of elites, linking together individuals from across the country, disproportionately from the inner group. The author will supply lists of the specific institutions upon request.

TABLE 1

Elite Affiliations by Newspaper Company

	No. of Inside Directors (No. of Affiliations)	No. of Outside Directors (No. of Affiliations)	<i>Fortune</i> Interlocks	Business Policy Groups	Elite Uni- versity Trustee- ships	Elite Clubs	Total Affilia- tions
Dow Jones	11 (3)	9 (54)	24	19	2	12	57
N.Y. Times	6 (12)	5 (35)	23	14	3	7	47
Washington Post	8 (17)	4 (24)	12	17	3	9	41
Times Mirror	9 (18)	6 (22)	24	7	0	9	40
Field Enterprises	4 (16)	8 (20)	15	4	5	12	36
Gannett	14 (5)	7 (25)	17	4	1	8	30
Knight-Ridder	14 (14)	4 (15)	12	2	2	13	29
Minn. Star and Tribune	9 (23)	3 (3)	6	7	1	12	26
Media General	4 (3)	5 (19)	9	7	1	5	22
Hearst	19 (20)	0 (0)	3	2	0	15	20
Tribune	9 (2)	2 (17)	12	1	3	3	19
Thomson	6 (1)	4 (15)	9	4	1	2	16
Harte Hanks	7 (1)	3 (14)	13	2	0	0	15
Capital Cities	10 (10)	2 (3)	8	2	0	3	13
Affiliated	7 (5)	3 (3)	0	1	1	6	8
Scripps	10 (8)	0 (0)	1	1	0	6	8
Cox	8 (5)	0 (0)	2	1	0	2	5
Copley	11 (4)	0 (0)	1	2	0	1	4
Lee	8 (0)	3 (4)	3	0	0	1	4
Independent	11 (3)	0 (0)	1	0	0	2	3
Central	6 (2)	1 (1)	1	0	1	1	3
Evening News	9 (1)	0 (0)	0	0	0	1	1
News America	7 (0)	1 (0)	0	0	0	0	0
Freedom	12 (0)	0 (0)	0	0	0	0	0
Total	220 (173)	70 (274)	196	97	24	130	447

in local affairs, its interests "anchored in the aggregate growth of the locality." Social science and journalistic case studies have also revealed the involvement of local papers and their executives in community affairs (Banfield, 1961; Burd, 1977; Devereux, 1976; Hayes, 1972). But as the newspaper industry has shifted from local to chain ownership, and as parent corporations have become large diversified enterprises, those who control these corporations wield power and influence across local and regional boundaries. One would expect these media elites to become more integrated into the web of affiliations that form the national power structure, if they follow the pattern of other industries.

In fact, the data indicate that the nation's major newspaper firms *are* heavily linked with the nation's power structure. As Table 1 shows, the 24 newspaper companies have 447 ties with elite organizations, including 196 with *Fortune's* 1,300 largest corporations, 97 with the 15 major business policy groups, 24 with the 12 major private universities, and 130 with the 47 elite social clubs. Banks and other financial institutions account for the largest number of corporate interlocks compared with other industries, a pattern found in other interlock studies (Palmer, 1981:7). This is not surprising, given the newspaper industry's rapid growth and expansion in the postwar period and these firms' need for capital (Halberstam, 1979:811).

The power elite influences government policy not only through lobbying, campaign contributions, and policy groups and think tanks, but also by placing representatives (drawn disproportionately from the inner group) in high-level appointed positions in government (Domhoff, 1970, 1979, Dye, 1976; Mintz, 1975; Salzman and Domhoff, 1980; Shoup and Minter, 1977). Table 2 shows that the newspaper industry shares in this pattern of "revolving door" links between the

TABLE 2

*Individual Affiliations with High-Level Positions in
the Federal Government (Past and Present)**

Newspaper Company**	Number of Individuals Appointed		Total
	Inside Directors	Outside Directors	
N.Y. Times	2	4	6
Field Enterprises	1	3	4
Minneapolis Star & Tribune	3	1	4
Times-Mirror	2	2	4
Washington Post	0	3	3
Dow Jones	0	3	3
Media General	1	2	3
Gannett	0	2	2
Cox	2	0	2
Knight Ridder	0	1	1
Capital Cities	1	0	1
Tribune	0	1	1
Thomson	0	1	1
Evening News	1	0	1
Total	13	23	36

Notes:

* High-level federal government positions include: first- or second-level cabinet secretary, ambassador, presidential advisory commission, advisory committee to federal agency, and regional Federal Reserve Bank board.

** The other companies have no high-level federal government affiliations.

private sector and government. Thirty-six directors have been appointed to at least one (past or present) high-level federal government position. These posts include cabinet posts, presidential advisory commissions, advisory committees to federal agencies (U.S. Congress: Senate, 1977), and regional boards of the Federal Reserve Bank. Individuals with extensive and high-level experience in the federal government provide useful resources for newspaper companies, because these companies engage in activities (such as broadcasting and mergers) that are closely regulated by government. For example, Allen Neuharth, Gannett's chairman, explained:

(William) Bill Rogers is in a position to make major contributions to Gannett in its dealings with government, on anti-trust matters, with the FCC (Federal Communications Commission), whatever. He's been on the inside and can help top management understand what can be done and what can't be done (personal interview).

Distribution of Affiliations

Affiliations with power structure institutions are not equally distributed among the 290 directors. As Table 3 indicates, some directors are highly integrated into the network, others are marginally integrated, while others are not integrated at all. Indeed, 157 directors have absolutely no ties to any of the elite institutions of the national power structure; 108 have one to five affiliations; 20 have six to nine affiliations; and five have 10 or more (13 being the highest) affiliations. In other words, 25 of the 290 directors (8.6 percent) account for 204 of the 447 (45.6 percent) elite affiliations.

Moreover, as Table 3 shows, the newspaper companies' outside directors account for a disproportionate share of the linkages with the national power structure. Although outside directors account for only 70 of the 290 (24.1 percent) newspaper company directors, they account for 274 of the 447 (61.2 percent) total elite affiliations. Of the five directors with 10 or more elite affiliations, all are outside directors; of the 20 directors with six to nine affiliations, 15 are outside directors. In addition, as Table 2 shows, 23 of the 70 outside directors (32.8 percent), compared

TABLE 3

Distribution of Elite Affiliations

No. of Elite Affiliations	No. of Inside Directors	No. of Outside Directors	Total No. of Directors
0	146 (0)	11 (0)	157 (0)
1-5	69 (138)	39 (105)	108 (243)
6-9	5 (35)	15 (113)	20 (148)
10-13	0 (0)	5 (56)	5 (56)
Total	220 (173)	70 (274)	290 (447)

Note:

Numbers in parentheses give the total number of elite affiliations for each cell.

with only 13 of the 220 inside directors (5.9 percent) have been appointed to high-level positions in the federal government.

This data indicate that the newspaper companies' ties with the U.S. power structure come primarily from outside directors brought onto their boards for a variety of reasons, and that a relatively small group of these outside directors account for a disproportionate share of these elite affiliations. This pattern suggests that a division of labor may exist within the boards of these newspaper firms. The inside directors, with some exceptions, run the day-to-day operations of the newspaper-owning firms (or simply benefit through trusts as beneficiaries). Their affiliations, also with some exceptions, are with industry-related activities—boards of the Associated Press, or newspaper executives' organizations, press clubs, awards committees, and so on—and reflect an industry-oriented outlook. These are mainly professional managers who either climbed the newspaper corporate ladder or were brought in from outside to provide specific kinds of expertise. The exceptions to this rule are those inside directors who are part of the owning families—Katherine Graham of the *Washington Post*, Arthur Sulzberger of the New York Times, John Cowles and John Cowles, Jr., of the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, Marshall Field of Field Enterprises, Helen Copley of Copley Press, William Taylor of Affiliated Publications, and William R. Hearst, Jr., of Hearst Corporation, for example. Members of owning families tend to be part of both the social aristocracy of the nation (Baltzell, 1964; Domhoff, 1970; Roberts, 1977; Swanberg, 1961) and the network of the U.S. power structure. Thus, they share more in common with the outside directors than with the professional executives hired to run the newspaper companies on a day-to-day basis. With few exceptions, even the members of the owning families are not as heavily involved as the outside directors; they are less likely, for example, to have directorships on major corporations (Roberts, 1977:460). As members of "old wealth" families, however, many are likely to retain memberships in the exclusive social clubs and civic groups that form an important part of the power structure (Baltzell, 1964; *Business Week*, 1980; Domhoff, 1974; Lundberg, 1968). There are also professional executives—inside directors are part of the owning families—who are heavily involved with the elite institutions, but as a proportion of affiliations they take a back seat to the outside directors.

The outside directors provide a bridge between the newspaper companies and the capitalist class and its institutions. Some, as bank directors, may oversee their banks' investment in newspaper firms. Some, as former government officials, may provide expertise on government matters. But beyond these specific roles, these outside directors—many of them members of the

inner group at the pinnacle of the capitalist class—provide a link to the broader interests of the business community with which the newspaper companies' future is tied. They provide important links to the major corporate decision-makers and the larger corporate world. Thus, while they may represent stockholders' interests (*Business Week*, 1979), or banks, or other institutions in the narrow sense, they also provide a link to the central decision-making networks within the capitalist class.

DIFFERENCES AMONG NEWSPAPER COMPANIES

As Table 1 indicates, not all newspaper companies are equally linked with the power structure. Four companies—Dow Jones Company (57 affiliations), the New York Times Company (47), the Washington Post Company (41), and the Times-Mirror Corporation (40)—together account for 185 (41.6 percent) of all elite affiliations. The next four companies account for 27.1 percent, the next four 17.2 percent, the next four 9.8 percent, the next four 3.5 percent, and the final four less than one percent. How can this disproportionate share at the top be explained? What distinguishes the companies with the most elite affiliations, and therefore the strongest institutional integration within the national power structure, from the other companies?

The literature on interlocking directorates suggests that interlocks are relationships between corporations and that directors are agents of these relationships. Organizations seek such ties in pursuit of their interests. Indeed, there is evidence that different interlocks perform different functions, including access to general information about corporations' environments, specific information about corporate plans and procedures, and explicit coordination between interlocked firms (Allen, 1974 and 1978; Burt, 1980; Levine, 1972; Mariolis, 1975; Palmer, 1981; Ratcliff *et al.*, 1979). Interviews with and statements by the newspaper directors under study indicate that all of these factors help to explain specific interlocks for each firm. But these do not explain why the Dow Jones Company, New York Times Company, Washington Post Company, and the Times-Mirror Corporation have a significantly greater share of elite affiliations, of which corporate interlocks are only one type. Alternative hypotheses drawn from the literature do not explain this pattern. These four companies are not the largest in terms of sales or profitability, which are found to be correlated with interlocks (Bunting, 1977; Pennings, 1980), as found in the Dunn and Bradstreet *Million Market Directory* and as found in Morton's (1981) analysis of newspaper firms' average after-tax profit margins over a five-year period. (See also *Business Week*, 1976b and 1978.) Neither are these four companies the largest in terms of total daily circulation, number of newspapers, or number of market areas in which their newspapers circulate, as indicated by the 1980 *Editor and Publisher Yearbook*.

What is clear, however, is that these four companies own the four most prestigious and politically-influential newspapers in the United States, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal* (Dow Jones), the *Los Angeles Times* (Times-Mirror Corporation), and the *New York Times* (Bagdikian, 1971; Emery and Emery, 1978; Gans, 1979; Merrill, 1968; Merrill and Fisher, 1980; Tebbel, 1961).

Journalistic influence and prestige probably accounts for the pattern of elite affiliations. There is a perfect correlation between the four newspaper companies with the most elite affiliations and the four most influential newspapers. The data does not explain the causal relationship. Outside directors may be co-opted onto the boards of newspapers seeking access to capital or decision-making elites. Then too, the most powerful corporations and other elite institutions may be co-opting these four powerful papers to ensure their conformity with the power structure's long-term views (Rockmore, 1979). In fact, both of these processes are plausible. Moreover, some individuals may be motivated to join the boards largely for the prestige of affiliating with a highly visible and powerful institution.

Voices of the Inner Group

The four firms/papers with the closest ties to the U.S. power structure—the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Los Angeles Times*—are distinguished from most other daily newspapers by their ideological outlook. These four papers reflect a “corporate liberal” perspective. This is the outlook identified with the inner group of the capitalist class (Block, 1977, 1980; Domhoff, 1970; Weinstein, 1968). While leaders of small and medium size businesses have characteristically opposed unions, social welfare, foreign aid, and government regulation in all forms, leaders of the major corporations (the inner group) have sought to forestall challenges from below and stabilize the long-term foundations of capitalism by implementing strategic reforms to co-opt dissent. Concerned with the stability of the entire system rather than the narrow interests of any one industry, corporation, or region, the leaders of the major corporations have conceded the need for some government regulation of business, as well as trade unionism, civil rights and social welfare legislation, foreign aid to promote free trade and stability, and other related policies. Corporate-sponsored think tanks and business policy groups generally adhere to this “corporate liberal” outlook.²

Most U.S. newspapers are relatively narrow and parochial in outlook. Few have offices in Washington, D.C., or in foreign capitals. They emphasize local or regional news and economic development and growth (Molotch, (1976). Newspaper publishers traditionally have been politically conservative, reflecting a small-business outlook of government intervention in the marketplace, foreign aid and trade, defense policy, labor relations, and other policies. For the past 40 years, the overwhelming number of daily papers have supported the Republican party. In every presidential election since 1940, with the exception of 1964, most U.S. newspapers (between 57.7 percent in 1960 and 71.4 percent in 1972) endorsed the Republican candidate. This parochialism continues to this day (Emery and Emery, 1978).

There is evidence, however, that as newspapers and newspaper companies grow as corporate entities (and as competition between papers decline, leaving most dailies without any direct competition), they begin to broaden their political outlook. Today there are few independent, locally-owned dailies. Gradually, chains have purchased independent papers and large chains have purchased smaller chains (Bagdikian, 1978; *Business Week*, 1977; Compaine, 1979; Louis, 1978; Rosse *et al.*, 1975). As the chains grow, their high-level employees and executives make links outside the local community. They are no longer under the strong personal control of individuals such as William R. Hearst (Lundberg, 1936; Swanberg, 1961) or Col. Robert McCormick (Waldrop, 1966). Moreover, as newspaper competition declines, monopoly or near-monopoly newspapers must appeal to a broader audience. These reasons are clearly responsible for the increasingly corporate liberal outlook of both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Los Angeles Times*, once bastions of extreme conservatism (Dreier, 1976; Gottlieb and Wolt, 1977; Halberstam, 1979). Many papers, especially the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*, wish to appeal to the “upscale,” affluent readers, the target for both advertisers and opinion-leaders. One indication of newspapers’ increasingly “statesman-like” role is the steady increase in papers making no presidential endorsements at all—from only 13.4 percent in 1940 to 25.6 percent in 1976 (Emery and Emery, 1978:483).

2. Corporate liberal ideology and policy—which is most evident during periods of social unrest, such as the Progressive era, the Depression, and the 1960s—can also be seen as a product of the steady expansion of U.S. corporate and political power in the first three-quarters of this century. Although proponents of corporate liberalism were ascendant within the capitalist class during much of that period, they did meet resistance from other segments of the class. The success of corporate liberalism, moreover, rested on continued corporate and political expansion, a trend that was challenged in the 1970s, both domestically and abroad. The decline of U.S. power in the world economy (Kolko, 1974) and the domestic fiscal crisis of the state (O'Connor, 1973) created difficulties for proponents of corporate liberalism.

Although daily newspapers are moving away from narrow parochialism, the four papers with the closest links to the power structure best reflect the corporate liberal viewpoint. They have taken the lead, among major daily papers, in exposing corporate wrongdoing and government corruption. They regularly investigate corporations and government actions that violate what Gans (1979) calls "responsible capitalism." The *New York Times* published the Pentagon Papers, the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* took the lead in the Watergate exposé, and the *Wall Street Journal* was the first major paper to investigate the foreign policy views and business ethics of Reagan advisor Richard Allen, to question the State Department's view of the ties between El Salvador's insurgents and both Cuba and the Soviet Union, and to expose many corporate scandals that corporate officers would have preferred to remain secret. These papers were among the first to reflect the disenchantment with the Vietnam War among the inner group of the business community (Joseph, 1981). Other papers also do such investigations and reporting, but none as consistently and with such national influence as these four papers. What this suggests is that these papers' corporate liberal outlook transcends the narrow interests of any one industry, corporation, or region. The corporate liberal press may criticize or expose *particular* corporate or government practices as harmful to the legitimacy and thus long-term stability of the entire system, or *particular* corporations or elected officials for the same reason. They take the long view. Thus, while at first it may seem paradoxical that the papers and firms with the *most* elite connections are the most likely to expose corporate and government practices, from the standpoint of their role as corporate liberal spokesmen for the inner group, it makes perfect sense.

In examining how the mass media functions, sociologists have usually explained the tendency of newspapers to reflect the outlook of the powerful in terms of the routines of newsgathering and the ability of powerful institutions and individuals to gain regular access to journalists. Or, they point to the attitude of journalists that those in positions of power and influence are more "responsible" news sources (Dreier, 1978; Epstein, 1973; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Molotch and Lester, 1974; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1972, 1978). Certainly these factors help explain why newspapers in general reflect the world view of the powerful, but they cannot explain *variations* in ideology and world view, between newspapers, since the routines of news gathering are similar on most papers. That is why factors external to the newsroom, including the social, political, and corporate ties of newspaper directors, must be considered in explaining why some newspapers are different than others.

Our data confirm that the nation's leading newspaper companies are all linked to outside institutions. Of the 24 firms, 22 are linked to at least one elite institution of the *national* power structure. Moreover, these links are primarily through outside directors, who serve as the major link to the business community. The patterns of affiliations also suggest that four companies—those that publish the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*—represent the newspaper industry's part of the national power structure. These four papers speak not only for the directors and owners, but also for the inner group of the larger capitalist class. This is not to deny that they have a degree of autonomy and independence; they are not mere "tools" of this class (Dreier, 1982). But the structural links help to maintain and reinforce the ideology of corporate liberalism that these papers share with the inner group.

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