

Media Control

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News as an Institution of Power
and Social Control

ROBERT E. GUTSCHE, JR.

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For Dad

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Preface

This book is just as much a “come to Jesus” for me in terms of my relationship to journalism, education, scholarship, and the daily fight for equal treatment in our media, as it is commentary on media. To set a tone for my purpose, then, I share the following statements that motivate and shape me more than I could ever say in a preface made of my own words. I have cited the origins of the statements to the best of my knowledge.

About Journalism

I may be rancid butter, but I’m on your side of the bread.

– E. K. HORNBECK, A NEWSPAPER COLUMNIST SAID TO BE BASED
ON H. L. MENCKEN IN THE PLAY AND FILM INHERIT THE WIND

*Newspapers aren’t always on the side of liberty.
Not everyone agrees on what liberty means. Some struggles
never end. And it’s not the newspaper that’s forever at risk of
dying and needing to be raised from the grave.*

It’s the freedom of the press.

– JILL LEPORE, “THE DAY THE NEWSPAPER DIED,” THE NEW YORKER,
JANUARY 26, 2009

*Prior review by administrators undermines critical thinking,
encourages students to dismiss the role of a free press
in society and provides no greater likelihood of increased
quality of student media.*

– JOURNALISM EDUCATION ASSOCIATION’S ADVISERS CODE OF ETHICS

About Life & Learning

*You are what you think.
The better the writer is, the more the writer appreciates
the editing. The worse the writer is, the more the writer
complains.*

– MATTHEW ROTHSCHILD, EDITOR OF PROGRESSIVE MAGAZINE,
IN ISTHMUS, MAY 1, 2009

*Life is not a race.
I'm sorry for talking while you were interrupting me.
Brick walls are there for a reason.
They let us prove how badly we want things.*

– AUTHOR RANDY PAUSCH IN THE LAST LECTURE, 2007

About Books

*Books are notes from the field, bound and domesticated, life
brought into narrow focus. Get rid of a book? No way. Everyone
is a brick keeping the building standing. Books are my life. I leave
and come back, and the books I find there tell me I'm home.*

– NOVELIST JOSHUA FERRIS, IN THE NEW YORK TIMES
ROOM FOR DEBATE BLOG, DECEMBER 27, 2009

These scattered thoughts coalesce, for me anyway, in a way of thinking that questions everything, that demands interrogation, and that, with a tone of urgency, stands for social justice, yet it is with these thoughts in mind that I wish for the reader to begin this project.

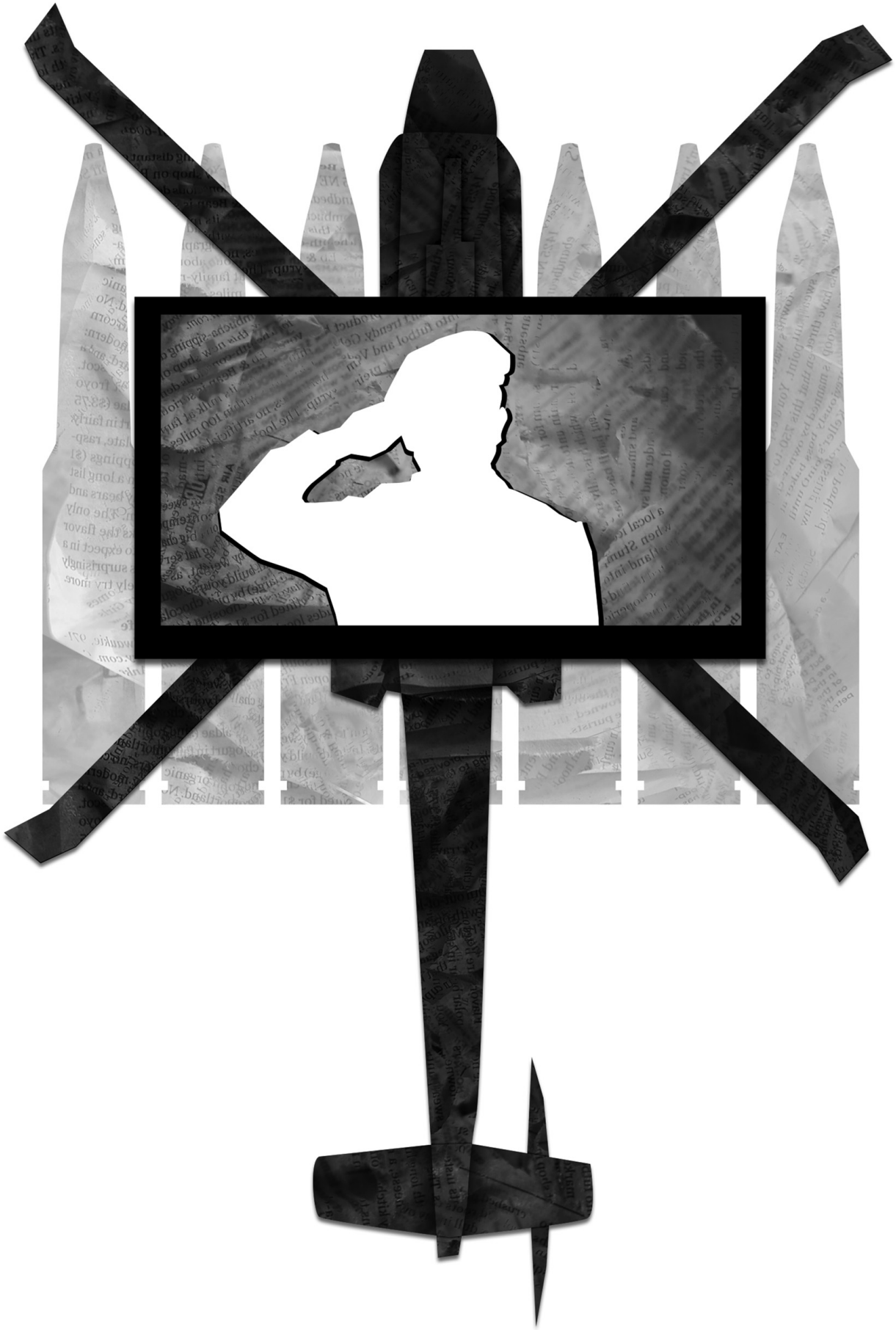
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Without Frank Durham giving me the knowledge and the sense of power to embark on a life of scholarship, this project and most of my scholarship would never have emerged. I have also benefited from the support and conversations with Mary Fisher, Dan Berkowitz, Erica Salkin, and the staff and faculty at Florida International University's School of Journalism and Mass Communications, including Juliet Pinto, who continues to provide much support for my work. Teresa Ponte and Maria Elena Villar have also been guiding lights, as has Dave Park, who was always available with a boost of deep thoughts. Special thanks go also to Moses Shumow for his collaborations and his comments on early versions of this project.

Without doubt, I am also indebted to my many semesters of students who have all challenged and shaped the messages I present here. At the risk of excluding names, I wish to thank students who contributed directly to this project: Alicia Sandino, Stephanie Mason, Charnele Michel, and students in my Fall 2014 Digital Theories course and my Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 Theories of Mass Communications courses for their inspiration and comments.



Introduction

Chapter Purpose

This introduction presents the book's overarching purposes and approach. It introduces the reader to my own experiences with media—and in media—in an effort to ground the project not only in a theoretical framework, but also to validate the ideas presented throughout the book as being a personal and scholarly examination of the role of media in everyday life. The second part of the introduction places this project in today's landscape of increasingly overt forms of surveillance and social control on the part of world governments and news outlets. The chapter ends with an outline of the book.

Guiding Questions

1. What's the definition of "news"?
2. How might one measure the potential influence of news in terms of how we interpret everyday ideas and activities?

Key Terms

Ideology: Explanations of and meanings assigned to everyday life that serve the powerful and are evidenced by socially acceptable and unquestioned data

Media Control: The common practices of news construction, institutions, and representations that occur across media outlets and mediums as a means to justify and enforce elements of social control

Power: A fluid and inherent ability to influence individuals and social situations through force, ideology, and/or information

THE EXPERIENCE OF EXPERIENCING POWER: A BEGINNING

We each wield power. Most of the time we do so without applying physical force. Efforts to employ power in everyday life are a bit hard to identify. It takes power for me to convince you to do something or for me to do something you suggest. It takes power to wake up in the morning, to decide to purchase one thing over another, or whether to purchase anything at all. Our power is at the center of what we create and what we destroy. Power operates through the choices we make about where to go, who to talk to, and how to respond to our surroundings. Power is in our language and in our interactions with each other, with things, and with ideas. And that power is exerted to control.

We use our power to control—or to attempt to control—an outcome of a conversation between friends or enemies. Sometimes, we wish to control the actions of others. Yet, in many ways, each of these types of power-control scenarios relies on power that most of the time is absent of fists and weapons. In fact, physical force is rarely the best indicator of power's presence. Force is, in and of itself, a moment of power being exerted, yet within and behind the physicality of force steeps the power of veiled or unspoken relationships related to pressures and complexities of contested meanings of language, rhetoric, and rationales for our actions. It is that type of power, particularly related to the press, that this book explores. For this project, I define *power* as a fluid and inherent ability to influence individuals and social situations through force, ideology, and/or information—and control.

My hope for this project, first, is to successfully argue for an approach that recognizes power as force in which it is seen as a verb as much as a noun, revealing the *act of power* in how it appears and is applied in and through our social activity. Power lives in ideology and in the ability we each have to interpret, to accept, or to diminish dominant interpretations of life, and my focus on *this power*, for the purpose of this project, operates around actions, interpretations, and indoctrinations of and through the press. Therefore, my arguments throughout these pages revolve around the claim that the press, too, is an *ideological act of power*. I make these arguments as a means to assist in the radicalization of the field of Journalism Studies.

My second hope for this project is to challenge normative—and maybe also other cultural—interpretations of the press as being merely representatives of or observers of power systems. Rather, I contend that the press should be viewed *as its own* power system and one that is *of* dominant power systems that are focused on control. This is not the way the press is normally discussed

in journalism scholarship. I do not ignore, then, the many other scholars in this field who acknowledge elements of power within journalistic decision-making, within journalistic organizations, within relationships of sourcing, ownership, and in terms of how power may be identified within dominant press explanations. However, many of these scholars release the institution and individuals of the press—and those who argue that the press serve the public—from any sense of responsibility for social policies and conditions within which the media orchestrate on behalf of the power elite. Certainly, debate related to the media in the United States surrounds several popular themes:

- The degree to which the press is politically liberal or conservative
- The ways in which the press may influence public discourse and individual thought on social and cultural issues
- The financial and political benefits to corporate owners of media monopolies
- How effective individuals can be both inside and outside of media outlets to create “change” and challenge the status quo
- The possible function of social media to diminish the voice of dominant, mainstream press

These, however, are not the debates I wish to have in this project. Instead, I am interested in making direct connections between the control function of the power elite (see Chapter 1), which is rooted in physical force and threats of physical force, and that appears in indoctrination tactics, including the farce of a publically invested news media. I am not fully alone in this critique, though many of the voices, including for instance, Robert McChesney, who contributes to a similar discussion through a framework of political economy, skirt the issues of culture that inform control systems inherent within the mediated elements of daily life. Even Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky¹—those who might first come to mind as arguing for media as a tool for propaganda (see Chapter 1)—do not, to my satisfaction, apply control as a mainstay function of the press.

Rather, media scholars tend to showcase the interactions between the press and other institutions in ways that shape society in sociological terms. Missing is the critical analysis that connects media to the power elite in ideological terms that results in moments of force upon the subjugated, of oppression in the silencing of the alternative, and in the purposeful distraction of the public from intentional collaborations between the press and the power elite. Feminist scholars are likely the most aligned with the approach I am

describing, though little critical, feminist work appears in Journalism Studies itself in ways that implicate the press as benefiting dominant cultures of control and as obfuscating the histories of today and yesterday for future dissemination that maintains the status quo (see Chapter 4).

As political economists and radical scholars, Herman and Chomsky—and those influenced by their work—address the function of the press to indoctrinate the public to the wishes and aims of the power elite, including corporations, governments, and demagogues. Still, much of this work is based on a national and international level of media creation and dissemination in ways that discuss the function of the high levels of government and business in ideological collaboration with elite and establishment press. Ignoring the local level of the press as they do—the hometown paper and regional news outlets that broadcast to localized audiences and function as a level of our media system that reaches the widest audiences—limits the public's ability to deeply interrogate the ideological control that the press push upon our ranks of society closer to home. As I discuss in Chapter 2, scholars attempt to explain this local effect of the press through agenda-setting—the idea that dominant media outlets influence the newsworthiness and meanings of particular issues that then seep through the media ecosystem. But, this still is not what I am attempting to discuss in *Media Control*.

Our society's dedication to Western, hegemonic control in every facet of our lives—reinforced, if necessary, by force—contributes to local manifestations of such force and control in our neighborhood schools, in the back yards of our friends and neighbors, on our main streets, in the suburbs, and in inner-cities, in a city's outer rings, and in local city council chambers and voting booths that is rationalized, normalized, and even celebrated by the press.

The degree to which local control is critical to the success of a larger power elite is why much of this book discusses national or international issues through the lens of local coverage from second- and third-tier cities in the United States. So, while *The New York Times* and CNN are mentioned and analyzed in this book, there is a shared commitment to places and news outlets that rarely appear in journalism research, though their contribution to local community identity and the application of power elite ideologies are forefront in the outlets' operations. Explicating the operation of "media control" at the local level—which in this case I am considering of a geographic region and space within a larger sphere of nationhood—is vital for understanding the degree to which news media focus on ideological indoctrination to dominant cultural norms and on the assimilation of the public to desires of the power elite.

Processes of control that exist within the work of media do not rely solely on individual extensions of power, on the role of a viewer to influence another,

nor on the hope that groups will influence other groups. Members of media and representations of dominant culture within media must function in tandem with each other, to be pushed from one level to another, reified, and challenged in ways that result in the maintenance of dominant ideology. In this, I am describing a process of culture constructed by interactions of normative and ideological functions of the press, and I am calling for an examination of what I refer to as *media control*—the common practices of news construction, institutions, and representations that occur across media outlets and mediums as a means to justify and enforce elements of social control. Through this exercise and a rearticulation of the functions and processes of the press discussed elsewhere in several scholarly and professional disciplines, my final hope for this project is for it to help us better understand the close connections the press make between news of the day and the dominant meanings of our daily lives.

There is no need to rebuild the wheel of understanding related to the workings of media in order to build a concept of “media control.” The parts are already there. For instance, interpreting communication as culture, as James Carey does,² with its cultural rituals, myths, narratives, and meanings—elements beyond the purview of scholars identified earlier in this introduction—complicates even the most banal of news. We need not to rehash the value or virtue of this approach. We need only to further complicate what has been complicated. In other words, “media control” is something that has existed since communication/media was formed.

This project, however, presents approaches and analysis that raise the application of radical interpretations of media to make it more likely for members of society to see elements of control within things such as local coverage of high school proms, car crashes, house fires, graduations and retirements—even obituaries. Each of these types of stories holds cultural meaning and is designed and replicated across society to align local communities with interests of a larger power elite. Take a simple example: News coverage of local parades, for example, embeds into narratives of the event “traditional American values” that are reinforced by stories of “the hometown” in which photojournalism features flags of the United States and scenes of children interacting with members of the Armed Forces and local police during a welcome “invasion” of military and police activity; overarching narratives of explanation and personification within these stories themselves tend to promote a single community identity that elevates uniformity.

In these ways, a simple parade story creates an “us/them” dynamic within a single geographic area that present dominant stories of desirable community activities, behaviors, and people and exclude counter-narratives that confuse clean articulations of what the community “is.” My own early—and some of

my late—days of reporting focused on creating and re-creating these senses of the “hometown,” particularly during US holidays. It is hard for a news outlet to ignore big community events, but it is even more unheard of for local news outlets to diminish the local patriotism of our communities in our coverage. Parade coverage, then, provides an opportunity not only to “cover” events of the day but also to “cover” the dominant ideological position of American Exceptionalism that connects our local communities to larger notions of nation.

On July 4, 2001, for instance, I wrote about the holiday’s “meanings” for the local community of La Crosse, Wisconsin, for its newspaper, the *Tribune*. In that piece, I positioned the article around the people at a large river-front celebration:

If Bill Budd and Sharon De Blieck dress up as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson next Fourth of July, they can count De Blieck’s daughter out.

Heidi Wiebke, 17, stood along the Mississippi River in Riverside Park on Wednesday, while the older couple talked about patriotism. She was embarrassed by their idea of perhaps coming back next July 4, dressed as two of America’s Founding Fathers. All three live in La Crescent, Minn.

Thousands came to the first day of the Riverfest celebration, in the park where the river overflowed only a few months ago. Crowds cheered as water-skiers flipped and jumped on the river. Others sunbathed on the grass.

Some people came to the park with lawn chairs, some bearing U.S. flag designs. But that symbol of patriotism didn’t satisfy Budd and De Blieck.

“I would hope,” Budd said, “that today would be more about the Fourth of July” than the start of Riverfest, which continues through Sunday.

After introducing the story’s characters (also known as sources), the story focused on the “meanings” of the day, their activities, and of the news article itself:

On the far south end of the park, Budd, De Blieck and Wiebke set up their lawn chairs. They talked about the sacrifices of people like Washington, Jefferson and John Adams in the fight for American independence. “Those people lost their homes and a lot of their lives,” Budd said of some early American patriots. “But the people here celebrate the fireworks instead of the meanings of today.”

De Blicek said the Founding Fathers sacrificed family life because of the fight for independence. “They must have spent so much time away from their families,” she said. “And their families probably didn’t want to go to Pennsylvania with them and probably did not understand what they were doing. That must have been hard.”

The couple wish there was an authentic re-creation of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in La Crosse. They said they may try to organize one for next year, so people can have a better understanding of the holiday.³

By the end of the tale, the dominant, “normal” behavior and ideologies have become quite clear, so much so that there is little room to interpret the story’s—and the newspaper’s—position on US history, the importance of celebrating the nation’s “birth,” and the rewards that are assigned to those who exude proper Americanism.

One might expect such patriotic coverage about such a patriotic event, yet the type of media control that this book discusses is of a more embedded nature in which events and issues of the day are not presented in specific and overt frames of meaning—such as in the example above—that benefits dominant structures of patriotism, exceptionalism, and racial superiority. The overt stories of American Exceptionalism, like what I have shared, formulate the dominant meanings of acceptable identities approved by the power elite that guide what is later pronounced through language, embedded more subtly within larger familiar storylines of explanation and consistent messages over time that appear in everyday news across mediums, news outlets, political lines, and generations of journalists and audiences. In other words, there are hints as to the meanings that the audience is to understand in everyday news that are reinforced by the occasional overt lesson on “American values,” many of which are connected to recognizing and maintaining the authority and virtue of institutions of dominance and authority, particularly the authority of institutions of discipline and punishment with which news media are direct collaborators.

Below, I provide a brief example of how the press formulate constructs of power messaging that may help the reader understand how I am approaching the news as acts of control.

The article that appears at left is one I wrote in the *Wisconsin State Journal* in Madison, Wisconsin, in 2002. Headlined, “Man is shot in parking lot” and carrying a subhead of “Victim was behind a Town of Madison apartment building when he was hit in right arm, abdomen,” the article provides a subtle, but clear, reinforcement of the status quo in terms of providing “acceptable” forms of evidence for understanding daily news events. At the right column,

Original text

A man was shot in the right arm and abdomen behind an apartment building Sunday night.

The man, who was in surgery at an unidentified Madison hospital Sunday night, was shot about 8:45 p.m. when he was in the back parking lot of the apartment building at 2717 Pheasant Ridge Trail, off East Badger Road.

Police said the injuries were nonlife-threatening.

No arrests had been made by late Sunday. Two men have been interviewed as witnesses to the shooting, said Scott Gregory, acting town of Madison police chief. He said police are looking for an older, white four-door car seen leaving after the shooting.

Gregory said the shooting victim wasn't from the Madison area.

Victor Dixon, 23, of Madison said he knew the man who had been shot and was visiting with him at the apartment building before the shooting.

Explanation of text

The story begins by focusing on the most significant information—someone was shot—while the headline contributed the location and other details. Already, we “know” what the story is.

In the second paragraph, the reader is told details of when and where the event occurred, the geographic element of which provides meaning by tapping into any dominant ideologies of particular neighborhoods or addresses. Further, meaning is assigned to the event if audiences see the geography as a “bad side of town.” If so, the crime is awarded even more drama and surprise.

In the third through fifth graphs, “the police” appear as a source, that stand alone from other sources. Thus, the reader is left to insinuate that the “facts” presented above were provided by police and are of absolute authority.

By the sixth graph, the story has established its “truth” to the degree that any witnesses—even if counter to the dominant “truth” of the story—can appear to further drama through personification, in which the story becomes about human lives rather than sterile information.

Dixon said he left for about thirty minutes. When he returned, he saw people surrounding the man, bloodied by the gunshot wounds and lying in a hallway inside the building.

"I don't know why someone would do this," Dixon said. "He don't know nobody here."

The last two graphs characterize the case at hand, the location of where the event occurred, and the people involved in the story. The police source is presented as an institution with a minor acknowledgment of the human element besides the police chief's name. Further, that the article stated the victim "wasn't from the Madison area" and presented the witness's comments in "improper grammar," the reader is left to interpret meanings associated with just what type of person was involved in the shooting—and possibly why.

I present a short structural analysis of the elements of power and control that build throughout the article.⁴

The above analysis is meant to be generalizable only to the degree that it helps to present the particular patterns of storytelling that journalists are trained to follow that meet the needs of both journalistic production and of explaining social conditions that appear in the news. More specifically, I used the above example because it represents everyday news storytelling in that it:

- Is focused, at the time, on a recent event of supposed interest to the perceived audience
- Includes local geographies as being settings within which the meanings of the story are played out
- Presents local institutions, such as the police, as a single source of explanation and authority with which an individual's interpretations of the news event are to be aligned

I do not remember the night I wrote that brief story, but after years of examining the journalistic form and processes—including my own experiences within social and cultural environments of journalism—I can determine, with some certainty, the degree to which I was "aware" in the crafting of this story and hundreds of others like it of the embedded cultural meanings—a process Stuart Hall refers to as a stage of "encoding"—that would then be "decoded" by the reader.

Turning to the shooting story above, for example, I obviously interviewed someone related to the event other than police sources, but in terms of presenting the “facts” of the story, the article was still single-sourced in that it relied only on the police as an institution from which to gain information and “facts.” Dixon, the victim’s friend I had talked to and quoted, for instance, did not serve as providing “facts” of the case for the story; he was instead at the end of the story to provide what we call “color,” a term used to refer to action, environment, and detail. It was only the police official who was considered worthy enough for me to break a journalistic cardinal rule that mandates journalists verify and triangulate information that they present in the news through multiple sources.

In each hard news story ever written, the structure of the story, unless given adequate space and relevance that would alter normal circumstances—all of which would be determined by a host of factors within the newsroom that day—begins with “just the facts,” specifically facts coming from police sources, the theory being that the police are a universal, trustworthy, and authoritative source. Furthermore, the argument goes that police information goes through a process of filtering and verification of its own within the police organization so that when it is funneled to the reporter, she can take it as verified “fact.” So while some of the structuring of the news story depends on the resources available to report the news and on the access to space to publish the news, the journalist also relies on the validity of sources necessary to maintain a sense of journalistic “objectivity.” In this case, the assumption is that the police themselves, are “objective” sources of information that could not possibly bias press articulations of the “truth.” Such an assumption allows us to begin to argue for more radical understandings of media control by identifying the control mechanism that exists between police and press in terms of shaping the information released to the public.⁵

But to argue as journalists and scholars interested in normative and social scientific explanations of the news often do that I as the reporter and my editors did not operate with knowledge of how to craft news as a consumer product by using stories of shootings, poor grammar, and police information, would be misleading. Just as journalists are socialized to journalistic norms and values (see Chapter 2), they are trained in storytelling and ways of explaining the world that empower them to:

- Select “newsworthy” stories that will be viewed as favorable and meaningful items for audiences so as not to disrupt the flow of capital to news creation by publishing something that would be counter to audience tastes

- Provide, when applicable, dramatic storytelling in which sources are characters and environments are settings within which the characters play out the events of the day and reveal common and shared social conflicts and power relations that reflect a “reality” recognized by audiences
- Present the news with moral meanings for interpretation within a collective (i.e., the news audience) in ways that reify dominant cultural and social norms and that punish members of society who operate outside of these norms
- Maintain the social and cultural authority of the press itself and of fellow social institutions for even further legitimization in future times of social and ideological crises
- Require the power messages to be interpreted by the audiences in ways that distance journalists from fellow institutions and claims of explanation that run counter to their proposed purpose of serving the public with objective information

Indeed, in the police story above—which, admittedly in some communities would be considered banal, while in others it would serve as an example of “big news”—the text relies on the reader to make meaning and to ascribe relevance on her own. In 2002, the City of Madison (not the Town of Madison, which was landlocked by the city) saw three murders, for instance, compared to eight the year prior and six in 2003. In other words, for a region of some 500,000 people, the murder rate was quite low, as were other forms of violence, including shootings at the time. Without an everyday narrative of what violence existed and what it meant, journalists and their audiences were left to imagine the details of the crime and to construct meanings to what was considered in the press as counter to the “norm.”⁶

The role of news myth (see Chapter 2), then, becomes vital to explaining the world through stories and narratives grounded in the power of dominant ideology that is told and retold through authoritative means. The “imaginative power” of news storytelling via myth and its tool of verisimilitude allows journalists and audiences to interpret and tell meaningful tales about the everyday in ways that equate “facts” to “truth” and the omnipresence of journalism and its sources as an authoritative and objective narration that can be cast as only “reporting the news” in service to the public. The authority and power ascribed to journalism veils the process of manipulation of information that is conducted through journalistic processes and production.

Beyond subscribing to the sense of authority that is assigned to media messages, audiences (which include sources, officials, the traditional media consumer, and journalists themselves) validate explanations of and solutions for issues of the day, which often relate to the use of (or threat of) authorized force and discipline. Naturalized manifestations of force or discipline and the threats of such action are as imagined as the tales within news stories. As Christopher Hedges writes in his book focused on violence, "When we allow mythical reality to rule, as it almost always does in war, then there is only one solution—force."⁷ Elsewhere, he states:

Every society, ethnic group or religion nurtures certain myths, often centered around the creation of the nation or the movement itself. These myths lie unseen beneath the surface, waiting for the moment to rise ascendant, to define and glorify followers or members in times of crisis.⁸

It is these notions of war and of myth as applied in the press that I wish to address throughout this work. I will be complicating the notion of "war" and violence later but insist on expressing here first that I approach our society as one in which we live a perpetual war of ideology and power (see Chapter 4) through which we not only apply violence in terms of fighting physical battles with physical weapons, but with immaterial ones, as well. Our emotional and cognitive battles are the ones in which dominant articulations of gender, masculinity, nationalism, virtue, ethnicity, and race play a formative role in the emergence or maintenance of control and power, elements which play out through the following pages.⁹

In the end, analysis of local news through a lens of power and control, which has often been more acceptable in examining the embedding of dominant ideologies of the nation's power elite on national and international stages,¹⁰ reveals power as inherent in all aspects of knowledge and understanding and in the processes of interpretations of the everyday that, in order to maintain one's legitimacy in society, meet the standards and norms of the safe and popular, that are then used to justify harm through police and military action, harm through ideological social control of what is "good" and "acceptable" in social interactions of youth, and harm in the support of police brutality that penetrates our schools and communities with the support of citizens who sit idly or by the press that propagandize the benefits of violence. "The news media and law," write the authors of *Representing Order*, "also (share) an affinity in claiming that their policing is in the public interest." Indeed, they write that:

[t]he basis of this claim is the appearance of neutrality. The consequence of this claim is that the news media and law are able to accomplish a degree of legitimacy and authority for their own institutions, while also

selectively underpinning or undercutting legitimacy and authority of other social institutions.¹¹

The authors might be correct in their assessment of selective, institutional conflict as a core feature of media power and control, but as I argue in this work, the “underpinning or undercutting” of institutions is a *performance* to suggest a distance between the institutions and an independence of thought and is an *act* to counter any potential claims from the public of institutional collaboration that would threaten the sanctity of journalistic objectivity (see discussion of “flak” in Chapter 1). Throughout the rest of this chapter, I place myself further into the creation of this project by explicating not only my ideological positions related to media and control but also to examine the role my own experiences with media that have contributed to the construction of these beliefs.

Clarifying constructs and characterizations

The reader should note that by this point I use the terms “the press,” “news,” “journalism,” and even “the media” interchangeably. While I acknowledge the potential complications in applying these terms so widely, I do so because I reject that each term in today’s press/news/journalism/media landscape holds fast its own clear and common definition. At a time when “infotainment” has become “news,” political and news satire serves as “journalism,” and corporate conglomeration has blurred the lines between concepts of “the media” as being news, as being “news-as-entertainment,” and as being “media-as-entertainment,” a single term in this conversation about news and power provides little clarity.

I will, however, throughout this project define the specifics related to the “news” of which I will be examining, yet even those specifics should not determine for the reader the degree to which news *is or is not* entertainment, for instance. Still, by leaving these definitions fluid, the reader is able to add her own interpretation to the arguments being made and to focus on the ideological acts of media rather than to focus on a specific field or sector that might mire critical analysis of communication as action.

As I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 4 and again in the Conclusion, debate about terminology and conceptualizations often serves not to provide nuance and to empower but to distract us (1) from maintaining a sense of clarity about how power systems operate and (2) from examining the potential surrounding the roles we may hold in our social systems as consumers, journalists, scholars, students, and citizens.¹²

It is my hope, then, that by blending and blurring terminology, we can confuse the conceptualizations of exactly what media and medium is at play—and in what ways—in the cases this book discusses. Throughout the confusion of examining what we believe is “so,” but with parameters that I hope to form for the purposes of these discussions, we may be able to come to new and advanced interpretations of modern messaging that some of us have never imagined. I also recognize that this project joins a large library of work on journalism, Journalism Studies, and perspectives on power, control, and social order. Yet, what appears in the following pages, much of it built upon the work I have been doing in Journalism Studies over the past several years, is meant to identify the press as an act of power at multiple levels of social performance and cultural meaning. Specifically, and as I have discussed earlier, I am interested in how such power is enacted in everyday, daily journalism—particularly journalism that occurs locally. And, it is more on this point I wish to discuss before moving forward.¹³

As I briefly touched upon above and discuss in more detail in Chapter 3, news media are as much a product of geographic markets as they are of economic markets of capitalism, which is an important perspective to understand when dealing with the ideological meanings assigned to local news media messaging. Whereas in capitalism the market provides the financial systems for survival, the news medias’ connection to geographies and related ideologies of the geographic collectives provides the authority and legitimacy upon which the press act to enforce dominant power dynamics. In other words, the press function as a force of power and control by telling stories and providing explanations of specific regions and areas of their audiences *to their audiences*. News organizations define the meanings of world events and events from other geographies through the lens of the local news audience in an attempt to always connect news of the day to local lives and local ideologies that, in turn, reinforce the legitimacy of the local journalists who are telling the stories.

The connection of geographies to the lives and times of local audiences explains the rationale for journalistic localization and specific pages within local publications that discuss “World News,” “Regional News,” and the very use of the dateline—the words that appear at the beginning of news articles that place the story within a specific space. These words, OFTEN WRITTEN IN ALL-CAPS, either indicate where the journalist was when reporting the story, or as has become the norm throughout the news industry, merely serve as a marketing tool for showing audiences the wide reach of the news organization, even if the reporter wrote the piece from behind her desk in the newsroom. Datelines, therefore, represent how locality functions as both ideological and financial constructs through which the press operate to reify the power positions of fellow institutions and cultural positions.

In building an argument for expanding the contribution of local media messaging to the studies of media power and control, I have tried, when appropriate, to analyze local news coverage in places where I have either lived or worked as a journalist—places where I might be able to interpret local social and cultural spheres as presented by the press because of my interactions with those environments and, in some cases, involvement through those media outlets. All of this is to explain why readers will be introduced to some places within the United States of which they may never have heard—from small-town Tomah, Wisconsin, where I spent much of my childhood, to Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Omaha, Nebraska; Iowa City, Iowa; and Miami Gardens, Florida.

While scholars can certainly write about places they have never been, for this project I wanted to focus, largely, on places I may know a little more about to help place the analysis of media control in each situation to some of the specific cultural and social environments occurring at the time of news events. In the spirit of qualitative cultural examinations of communication and culture, I subscribe to the validity of one's ability to blend personal experiences expressed within a reflexive framework of language and *ideology*—explanations of and meanings assigned to everyday life that serve the powerful, what Thompson defines as “meaning in the service of power.”¹⁴

This is not to say that I am an expert on the complexities within each of these locations, but such context helps when making deeper, ideological connections as a way to express my meanings of “media control.” Another reason for examining the local effect of media control in the local media of these places is to challenge whatever public imagination might exist about these locations. Iowa, for instance—often confused with Idaho and other Midwestern and Plains states that look and sound similar—is a space of great migration of inner-city blacks over the past thirty years that has created challenges in terms of how long-time Iowans welcome and interpret newcomers.

The Midwest, in general, continues to be a growing hotbed of racial tension that has occurred in discriminatory educational treatment and an over-criminalization of blacks. The murder of a young black man by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014, for instance, attracted national attention in discussions about racialized policing and militarization of local police forces (see Chapter 4). Another murder of a young black man by a white police officer occurred in early 2015 in Madison, Wisconsin, a city steeped in local public imaginations as a liberal bastion, but that has an unspoken history of racialized educational and policing institutions.¹⁵

The Midwest does not escape its own horrors of police conduct that is representative of the acts of police murder that occur across the United States. Just as *The New York Times* reported in February 2015 about years of

brutal treatment of inmates in an Attica prison, *The Guardian* released a report that Chicago police used a Homan Square warehouse codenamed “black site” to abuse minority suspects and others who protested against police activity since at least 2011. In March 2015, National Public Radio reported (1) that in Milwaukee, public schools were found to be suspending “black high school students at a rate nearly double the national average,” (2) that the state “incarcerates the most black men in the country,” and (3) that such efforts may be aligned with “sentencing and policing policies that disproportionately affect African-Americans.”¹⁶

Examining local media messaging of spaces throughout the Midwest not only challenges any imaginations of these as being “fly-over states” that grow corn and churn cheese but that hold meaningful moments of power and control that shape the lives of people living there. Furthermore, I wish to use examples from these places to articulate the problems associated with today’s post-race ideologies and ignorance related to racial and ethnic identities that have been frequently shared with me in the past few years, particularly the racist comments that also come from black social activists, such as, “I didn’t know there were black people in Iowa.”

South Florida, another location where much of this book is focused, is equally as mired in public imaginations of itself—particularly of Miami of the 1980s, the *Miami Vice* days of drug-running and bank robbery shootouts. Even locally, South Florida’s communities are cast in a bright light of imagination of Miami and its highlife, including the spaces of South Beach, the luxury of Lincoln Road, and the fashion and entertainment industries that cast the region in a limelight of flash and flair. Miami-Dade County alone, however, has more than thirty incorporated cities, and more people living in unincorporated Miami-Dade County than in incorporated areas. The complexities of these dozens of governments, of identities formed so much around recent immigrants and the Cuban influx of the twentieth century, and of fractured geographies based on economic inequality create a complex cultural sphere.

But even South Florida is not aware of its own competing “geographic imaginaries.” Hispanics and Latinos make up a supermajority of Miami-Dade County with those categories being further split based upon what Latin, South American, and even Caribbean influences have emerged each decade of the region’s development. US blacks, then, living in South Florida become merged in the public image with Haitians, dark-skinned Latin and South Americans, Cubans and Dominicans.

In early 2015, for example, local public radio in Miami reported that, according to recent studies on segregation in the United States, “four of the ten metro areas with the lowest levels of poverty segregation are in Florida—Orlando, Tampa, Miami and Jacksonville.” Overall, the study from the

University of Toronto's Martin Prosperity Institute, ranked South Florida "in the top 10 percent most segregated metro areas in the United States."¹⁷

That white folk (i.e., Anglos who do not identify as Hispanic or Latino) only make up some 15 percent of Miami-Dade's 2.6 million people provides a sense to the population here that this is a "diverse" region. But, as the news messages from South Florida that I focus upon in this project reveal, traditional White Supremacy upon which dominant US ideology is based is not absent. And, it is for this reason that I have selected two vastly different regions of the United States to focus most of my analysis of news coverage, save for the moments of analysis elsewhere. Again, my hope is to challenge dominant place-meanings of US geographies through which one can examine the ideological acts of media messaging without being mired in the safety of "knowing" what one thinks she knows about a particular place or people.

Explicating media experiences

This project has its roots in my own early interactions with power—and with the control associated with it—which were often connected with the press, not to mention, of course, the many moments of punishment and influence of childhood that just come from other avenues of control. My early connection between power and control and this thing called "the news" began on weekend mornings when I would sit with my parents in a coffee shop in small-town Tomah, Wisconsin.

Together, we would spend at least an hour each of these mornings flipping through the pages of the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Milwaukee Sentinel*—and then what became the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. On those mornings, my parents would order a second (or third) pot of coffee, and we would not leave until every drop was finished.

They read the *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Tribune*, the local *Tomah Journal* and *Tomah Monitor-Herald*, and the *Wisconsin State Journal*, published in Madison. My parents would grab sections of the *Chicago Tribune*, if available in the free pile of papers at the cash register, and we would pass them around the table, the pile of print at its center in constant movement. I would go on to write for each of these newspapers as a young adult, the experiences of which taught me the tools and rules of the trade and led to me teaching for an industry that I now both love and hate.

I know now that I was lucky then. My family did not have much money, but we had enough for these weekly breakfasts, and my parents had the time to spend in such leisure to read editorials about current events and to discuss news

stories about local issues and people. I would listen as they would debate the issues that appeared on the pages. And, while I do not pretend that I understood exactly what they were talking about, I was able to pick up on the trends of what was important to them—crime, taxes, governance, and economics.

What I found was that my family and their friends focused much of their daily conversations about concerns and worries, joys and interests, on what they had seen or heard in the news. It is not that these folks were not able to create or tell their own stories outside of the news, but there was something about having the “most information” about a topic to carry on conversation, to become civically “invested” through voting on these issues and people, by attending town hall and union meetings as my father did, and ultimately by recognizing a power system in which decisions that we may make as individuals may not be our own and that our efforts at employing agency can come with consequences.

At home, my parents would religiously watch the *CBS Evening News*, and it was there where the discussions I was exposed to by my parents at the coffee shop, in my school classrooms and textbooks, and in entertainment were reified and justified by talking heads on the nightly news. I found that the news was where consequences for individual actions and collective decisions played out in war and social unrest and where the world was explained. I remember my interactions with TV news as occurring as early as the Challenger space shuttle explosion in 1986 (I was five) and in news coverage of the Ross Perot presidential campaign in 1992. I was twelve at the time of Perot’s run, and I remember forcing my parents to stop the car at a crowded intersection in Milwaukee just so I could get a Perot yard sign. I remember that I was a fan of his ears and his pitchy voice; I did not know his politics, I just thought he was funny to watch. By the age of seven, I knew all of the names of the reporters on *60 Minutes* and would recite them at the start of each broadcast—or even just on a whim.

The news has always been there and has always been of a great importance to me. But, just as much as the news was part of my life from the earliest I can remember, so were memories of being afraid and alone when faced with even the most distant media representations of life and death. I remember always worrying a tornado would come and rip apart our house like what I had seen on the news. I remember not being able to sleep because of fears that I would not remember to breathe; I think I had seen a story about that on TV once.

While some of my childhood fears were just part of childhood worry, I suppose, I found myself intrigued by media representations of these fears, and I struggled with the ability of drama to capture representations of reality. The first time I saw a dead body, for instance, was in the movie *Stand By Me*. Alongside railroad tracks in a wooded stretch of land that resembled the deep brush surrounding my home, the boy’s body quite simply freaked me out one

Saturday afternoon on TV when my parents were away for the day. Making matters worse, the movie aired amid live news alerts and coverage of air raids and the launching of anti-aircraft weapons during what would later be referred to as the *First Gulf War*.

War footage glowed green on the screen as TV cameras captured the night air raids. Street and building lights reflected white and yellow fog in the lens. Sirens filled the airwaves. Just as when I was watching *Stand By Me*, scared of the scene as the characters who appeared to be my age discussed death, I watched what appeared to be the end of the world in TV montages of war on the ground and from the sky via video feeds as US missiles plowed into concrete barracks “somewhere else.” That, too, must have been death, I thought, watching the destruction on the TV news alerts but not seeing the bodies blown apart on the ground.

Even when my parents were around, the scenes and sounds of war via media scared me. Specifically, I recall one cold winter’s night drive to my Cub Scouts meeting when our headlights lit only a few feet of the darkness around us and the radio station transmitted news coverage of the war. Long pauses between the reporter’s voice let air-raid sirens sing. My father and I rode in silence. I imagined what the scenes of war might be like and wondered if anyone else listening to this broadcast was also afraid about how what was happening “there” in this place called “The Persian Gulf” might affect us “here” at home.

Our house sat a mile or so East of Fort McCoy in Western Wisconsin, an Army base that served as a staging ground for the First Gulf War, and a place from which a good number of my elementary school classmates and family friends worried that someone they loved would be deployed. The real fear, of course, is that those loved ones would not return. Our proximity to the US Army base brought a reality of war home in other ways, too: our house would shake daily as military personnel tested munitions—sometimes in a fury of four or five booms in a row that would knock pictures from the wall and wake us from our sleep; overhead, Army choppers buzzed our tree-tops, flying so low over a field in front of our house that I could see through the open side doors and make out the facial features of its passengers; higher-up, fighter jets would rocket across the sky, roaring as they rolled, pitched, and darted in their daily exercises; even the occasional trip that would take us on the Interstate through Wisconsin would be clogged with miles-long lines of military convoys heading to the Army base.¹⁸

Thankfully, I have never personally experienced what may be considered our dominant understandings of physical warfare, but the degree to which the *First Gulf War*—not to mention the *Second*—became a normal part of my life via TV and radio when I was a child reflects the layered interaction of and

with war, particularly in terms of the indoctrination to dominant ideologies associated with it.

In my hometown, American Patriotism was a common demand in our classrooms, in our churches, and in our idle conversation at the local Pamida. Signs of war were all around us: tanks and fighter jets announced the entrance to the local Veteran's Administration hospital where my father worked; at Fort McCoy, acres and acres of camouflaged trucks and tanks were repainted from greens and browns and blacks to tan to make them easier to hide in the desert, and they were parked behind a chain-linked fence on Highway 21, in plain view by the public passing by. Our daily lives continued almost undisturbed by the war; we merely incorporated it into our normalcy.

Throughout high school, I followed a sense of nationalism that ignored the critical functions of our military—and of our media—that I had normalized throughout my childhood. I wrote patriotic essays for local American Legions to help pay for college, knowing the end product that the judges wanted to see in which the United States was presented as The First Free World. Now, I can see that in the back of my head at the time, I was storing stories of the soldiers from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam whom I had met—their tales of harrowing feats and bravery balancing between celebratory nostalgia and sadness.

With me in their living rooms, these veterans shared stories of loss with gain. There was a complexity in their experiences and stories that I failed to capture at the time, forcing their thoughts into a common narrative of sacrifice and prosperity. And, even though each war has its own narrative of context and conflict—the World Wars presented through a lens of altruism, the other two I mentioned mired in confusion and controversy—it was not until I left for college that I was able to reflect upon both the blatant and latent role that the US government and its press had played in my early years and through which I ultimately have come to question the stories I had been told and retold.

Back then, I was never critical of the stories from the veterans themselves and I dare not, even now, attempt to reposition their comments then into my frame of mind today. I did, however, as I began to move throughout the journalism field, start to critically evaluate the “same old stories” of war I had written about in which American heroes sacrificed so much for so many. The narratives of US Exceptionalism that appeared in each of these tales lost its thrust the more I was able to reflect on my growing-up around veterans at the VA where my father had worked and on the experiences shared with me by homeless veterans I would meet as a reporter.

Again, it was these interactions in which my commitments to rhetoric of the Free World were carved away, beginning slowly and becoming elevated

as I entered the media world myself, crafting stories that attempted to explain social deviance from the position of a select few institutions, stories that maintained the legitimacy of police and military violence, stories that separated the media and its power and control from “unpopular” moments of disorder by fellow institutions, and stories that would again align ourselves with institutional triumphs.

My father had spent twenty-one years in the US Navy before he left to earn a master’s degree in Social Work from the University of Connecticut. This led to us moving from Maine to Wisconsin a year before I watched the Challenger explode. My father took a job at the Tomah Veterans Administration Medical Center where he conducted group therapy and completed another twenty-some years of service. His work focused on helping vets address the many issues that they tend to carry with them following their time in the military—regardless of whether or not they “saw action.” My early, patriotic indoctrination had trained me to interpret these men’s problems—including daily confusion about their surroundings, physical struggles due to a worn-out body, emotional loss that shown in their eyes, and in even the simplest of behaviors that cast them as operating outside of “the norm”—as having been “sacrifices” for their “service” to their country.¹⁹

My skepticism about this explanation for such pain, however, grew as I began to really listen to my father’s experiences working in the VA system. Exhausted at the end of each day, he would discuss the bureaucratic explanations for why his patients were not getting what they needed. Coupled with my own fears and concerns about war, my albeit limited exposure to sites and sounds of warfare, and the cynicism of TV sitcoms that I grew up on such as *Murphy Brown* and *The Golden Girls*—shows that questioned the status quo through humor and current events—I came to recognize the power of dominant explanations of the world that often go unquestioned by the citizenry and that, in fact, are maintained by the very people who suffer from such explanations.

One of the moments that really changed how I view the work of our military, in particular, and what ultimately has led to the perspectives and the interests of media messaging that I address in this book, happened around Christmas 2003.

I was flying from Washington, DC, to Wisconsin, sitting on a flight next to a man, who like me was in his early 20s. He had a crew cut. He sat erect in his seat. On his lap, he held a stack of papers stuffed in at least three separate manila folders.²⁰

“You’re in the military,” I said to him. It was not a question.

“Yeah,” he replied. “How’d you know?”

“Because you guys are the only people in the world who have to travel with a stack of documents on your lap that prove your existence.”

He chuckled.

“I’m heading back from Iraq,” he said, and he began to tell me about his time fighting Saddam Hussein’s forces.

The man told me that his Hummer had been flipped by an exploding IED and that he had just been released from a US military hospital in Germany. Once he landed in Wisconsin, he would be taken to the same Fort McCoy that I had been familiar with, where I had spent Saturdays shopping at the Exchange, where I had watched my military train during public events to celebrate the nation’s holidays. I cannot quite remember what the soldier said would happen to him after he checked-in there and after he delivered his papers—our conversation only lasted a few minutes and we finished the flight in silence—but at the airport after I gathered my bags and headed to the parking lot, I saw him sitting on the floor, leaning against the wall, waiting for a ride.

Wishing him the best, I asked how long he had for his ride to arrive.

“Tomorrow,” he told me. “They said they couldn’t send anyone today, so I could wait or take a taxi.”

I was appalled. The Army base was about forty minutes away, a straight shot up the Interstate, and the US military could not find someone to get this guy? A soldier who had just “sacrificed” for our “freedom?” It did not matter that it was also Christmas time? Where was the “Christmas spirit”?

Without pause, he accepted a ride to the base—specifically to the Army barracks where he was to report; I was going that way anyway. Once we arrived, I walked him in to find his commanding officer, shared my disdain for the treatment of this soldier and bid them farewell. It was hard for me at that time to accept that this treatment of our soldiers was so commonplace—and so true—that a civilian would be responsible for transporting troops during a time of war. More troubling was the thought that if our Armed Forces treat our own soldiers this way—and the ways I had seen throughout my childhood that had led so many to experience homelessness and chemical dependency—we really must treat humans from other nations, our enemies, and people who operate within our own society outside of the norm like pure shit. It was then when I began to question my role as a citizen in our Great And Only Democracy. What was it I was upholding as a citizen—and as a journalist?

By this point, I had been a journalist for going on ten years and had reported for local and national newspapers, relying on the sources of our police and military officials, our business leaders, our elected politicians, and our like-

mindful celebrities—all who seemed to provide the same explanations for daily life, all who seemed to support the same kind of capitalism, and all who seemed to just sound scripted in their explanations of the world. At the time, their consistency seemed to support the “truth” of what they spoke, but something just did not seem right. My reality was not lining-up with theirs.

I had started reporting when I was fifteen, having first written editorials for the local *Tomah Journal* and *Tomah Monitor-Herald* about the need for compassion for understanding the changing faces of those dealing with AIDS and, in other pieces, for the need to maintain our community’s patriotism on specific holidays.

My first opinion piece had really appeared in the mid-1980s when I dictated to my mother my praise for a local fireworks display. I had seen my father craft his own letters to the editor about local and national issues (and I still have a scrapbook where some of his work appears).

Not absent of mistakes and challenges of learning the trade, I worked for those same local papers throughout high school, moving to regional, state, and national newspapers as either a freelance writer or staff member throughout college. My journalism focused on business, local and state news, and contemporary US culture. I moved from journalism to journalism education in the mid-2000s, graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s journalism school and entering graduate school to understand the cognitive process of learning and socialization. Along the way, I also helped launch the online nonprofit Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2009 and later that year cofounded another online nonprofit news outlet, The Iowa Center for Public Affairs Journalism with Pulitzer Prize winner, Stephen Berry, at the University of Iowa. Since then, my journalism has been blended into my teaching and research, with activism as its main focus.

During my nearly twenty years working in and around the journalism field, it has only been in the last few, though, that I have come to understand the social experiences and cultural meanings of working in a newsroom—the ideological function of accuracy and sourcing to maintain “legitimacy,” the dance of love and hate with police to represent “objectivity,” the dedication to politicians and businesses who provide access to what becomes news content, the false expectation that elected officials should uphold some oath to serve the public that maintains the presentation of the press as a watchful “Estate.”

Though critiques of journalism abound, I have come to believe that there is no such thing as “good journalism,” and that journalism is a cultural construct upon which values can be ascribed only when discussing the news as a social process. At the cultural level, news is an ideological function that acts toward maintaining popular rhetoric.

The act of news, in and of itself, holds particular meanings related to the construction of ideology, which may in effect be hegemonic in that it places the good of the few over the good of the many, but as an act is neither “good” nor “bad.” The value of outcomes of the news, which this book articulates are manifested in violence, are open to interpretation in that what may be “good” for some is not for others. Those values, then, apply not to the act of a cultural function but to the relationship of dominant ideology to social action. Put simply, there are normative means by which to judge the “quality” of news, but journalism holds its particular cultural functions that can be neither “good” nor “bad”; it operates with particular goals in mind—the least of which is to provide objective meanings for what appears on the news or occurs in life.

Meanwhile, I find myself as a journalism professor, training future communications professionals with the same-old techniques of covering public meetings, highlighting the views of official sources and the value of official data that advances the needs and interests of the power elite while we refuse to consider forms of advocacy journalism that is focused on dismantling power structures. Hence, this project comes at a time of increased public awareness—and normalization—of government and corporate tracking and surveillance that is celebrated by mainstream press, which ultimately provides a moment in which we can radicalize the field of Journalism Studies in ways that can best examine the Orwellian nature of government-led control that is no longer alive only in fiction. Indeed, we are living in Huxley’s *Brave New World*, and it is time to explore it with the radical tools required to push past the mire of US hegemony.

In the end, I like to tease my father that I became a reporter and then a professor who attempts to undermine most of what I learned in my youth because of his influence. We may not share the same politics, but I would like to think that I try to apply the same zealousness I saw in him those times he spoke with passion against government-induced homelessness that came about due to inadequate funding and intentional, politicized bureaucracy. It is the same zeal that carried him into work each day that carries me through these pages.

PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

This book maintains two themes. The first builds upon recent debates about surveillance conducted by world governments and corporations and a recognition of the hyper-militarization of local law enforcement agencies in the United States as an opportunity to articulate the role of the press in furthering

and instituting this watching and punishment through the daily activities of maintaining the ideologies of the power elite. The second theme deals with the ways in which the press indoctrinate members of their own ideological communities and the public to veil the violence inherent in news storytelling and to distance the press from the everyday collaborations with some of the same institutions the press mandates it is to hold accountable.

Both elements of this book require critical/cultural approaches that continue to be under attack by a growing, neoliberal and anti-intellectual system of higher education in the United States that is focused on professionalization and conformity (see Conclusion), and it is against this hostility that the book attacks with a specific tone and argument. Below, however, let me first discuss these themes in greater detail.

Theme 1: Press surveillance and protecting the power elite

My interest in the control function of media doubled in 2010 when twenty-five-year-old Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning, an intelligence analyst for the US Army, leaked more than 700,000 “sensitive” government documents and videos related to the illegal war in Iraq and Afghanistan to WikiLeaks—a whistle-blower website organized by Julian Assange, among others. One of the videos was of a 2007 air attack of a Baghdad neighborhood that killed seven innocents, including a Reuters news photographer. The video footage, which WikiLeaks edited and released under the title “Collateral Murder,” shows grainy shots of military personnel flying in a helicopter above the neighborhood as they determined among themselves and over radio with military leaders off-site if and how to engage with persons on the ground who appeared to be terrorists.²¹

The video includes an audio track of Army personnel issuing the orders to “fire” and discussing the “good shots.” On the ground, men scurry to safety as bullets burrow into the ground and into concrete walls of nearby buildings. Dust clouds the street as the assault rifle pounds away and the viewer sees the men, riddled with bullets, falling to the ground. Some crawl to help another. Some do not move at all. The firing continues as a van comes to rescue the men, and as the helicopter gunfire roars, it pushes metal into a van that was carrying children.

An investigation by the US government, while incomplete in the minds of many touched by the violence and the deaths related to our nation’s invasion into Afghanistan and Iraq, indicates that military personnel had mistaken one of the man’s camera bags for a surface-to-air weapon that could take down the helicopter. The soldiers were found to have acted properly given what they knew about Iraqi insurgent threats in the area of New Baghdad.

And, while the footage shows a rarely seen and gruesome side to war in which all enemies of the state look the same, little public discussion was had about how our nation's military engages with the "enemy." With a slight hint of caution in momentary skepticism of "official" reports about progress in the war in Iraq, the press returned to its cheerleading on behalf of US interests: The deaths were cast as merely unfortunate as WikiLeaks and Assange and Manning became the story, which focused (1) on the role an "open" internet plays in "leaks" of "secrets," (2) the ability of the US government to control its own information, and (3) the professionalism of mainstream media that covered "Collateral Murder."

Furthermore, news reports of Manning's July 2013 conviction of several charges, including espionage, were overshadowed by his statement that he identified more as a woman than as a man, and that Bradley was now openly known as Chelsea. Debate about the degree to which the Army would supply hormone therapy for Manning's transition overtook other news angles, including (1) the types of information released in the files she leaked, (2) her motivations for leaking such information, and (3) the many questionable international actions of the US government that appeared in the files, including confidential information on US military efforts and embarrassing State Department documents, many of which included US officials' disparaging comments about heads of state around the globe.

After Manning's sentencing in which she was to be placed in military custody for thirty-five years, her personal life was used in the press to mark her as "crazy" and to remove any power she might have held as a member of the military to discuss with any authority the dealings of US forces. Indeed, photographs of Manning in her uniform soon became replaced in the press with a selfie that she had taken—her long, blonde hair and lipstick the focus of public discussion surrounding the pic. At the same time, Assange was portrayed as a recluse who, as of early 2015, was holed up in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London to avoid prosecution in several countries for an alleged sexual assault and for his role in releasing classified documents to the world. Assange claims the sex charges were made as a way to shame and delegitimize him and the website with the single aim of distracting the public from information about worldwide, US-led collaboration and collusion against the interests of private citizens.²²

Releasing the secrets

Manning's stories took a serious backseat in 2013 when lawyer and journalist Glenn Greenwald, who at the time was a reporter at the United Kingdom's *The Guardian*, released reports about the US government's spy network that

was leaked to him and a team of confidants by Edward Snowden, a twenty-something who worked both for the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and National Security Agency (NSA). Overnight, words such as PRISM—a data-mining system operated by the NSA—appeared in mainstream press as journalists hurried to report on the reporting, relying on Greenwald as Snowden’s front-man and on canned responses from the US government about the tens of thousands of “top secret” documents Snowden initially released.

Among his many other findings, Greenwald reported that during one month in 2013, the NSA’s Boundless Informant program, through the agency’s Global Access Operations, had gathered data related to phone calls and emails that numbered in the billions and that had been funneled through US telecomm infrastructure. Worldwide, the agency during that time had collected 124 billion phone calls and 97 billion emails. In short, the reporting found that the US government was spying on US citizens through their own telecommunications infrastructure while also prying into the private worlds of global leaders, suspected terrorists, and business executives.²³

Over the next year, Greenwald’s reporting revealed that the NSA had been growing its surveillance on US citizens’ emails, phone calls, metadata, and social media since the early 2000s. Even since revelations came to light in 2005 that the Bush Administration had concocted a legal argument that the president could order mass surveillance on citizens via government and military resources in order to fight “terrorism,” little could have prepared even the most cynical for the amount of energy being used to capture the movements of those living in The Free World. (In May 2015, a US federal appeals court ruled that the NSA programs were illegal and not covered by any mandates of the Patriot Act.)²⁴

The NSA’s acts, Snowden’s materials confirmed, were not just limited to the efforts of the public spy agency, but relied on governmental collaboration with the private sector. For example, both Verizon and AT&T were found to be complying with (and providing little fight against) orders from the US government to release private communication information. These findings provided further evidence that the public-private surveillance net that has been cast over the United States—and much of the world—depends just as much on private industry as it does on public efforts supported by the nation’s citizenry.

That the efforts stretched so far and were so deeply embedded in the everyday practices of public and private entities revealed the power behind the belief that the more eyes we have watching, the safer we all are. Furthermore, tricked through “thought control” designed to convince us that the altruism of securitization appears in the normalization of security, even the most local of entities had come to adopt hyper-securitization as a natural fit for our American Way of Life (Figure I.1).



FIGURE I.1 A sign on the back of a Starbucks in Fort Lauderdale, Florida in November 2013. It reads, “THIS PROPERTY IS PROTECTED BY VIDEO SURVEILLANCE,” anthropomorphizing ideas such as “surveillance” and reflecting a normalized belief that technology has an inherent ability to take action, in this case to “protect.” Photograph by author.

Snowden's files also revealed that much of the private-public intelligence collaboration is based on independent contract work. Greenwald's reporting—and the re-reporting from other news organizations that came late to the game—showed a direct connection between corporate elites, educational institutions, media conglomerates, and the US military and spying agencies. "The NSA itself," Greenwald writes, "employs roughly thirty thousand people, but the agency also has contracts for some sixty thousand employees of private corporations, who often provide essential services." Indeed, Greenwald continues, Snowden himself "was actually employed not by the NSA but by the Dell Corporation and the large defense contractor Booz Allen Hamilton."²⁵

International mainstream/elite press published Snowden's leaked information, initially in Germany's *Der Spiegel*, the United Kingdom's *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times*. Other news outlets picked up the publishing pace, including *The Washington Post*, *Le Monde*, and wire services. But that these media outlets began to regularly report about the shocking information within Snowden's data—including US spying through video games, the capturing of individuals' keyboard strokes, and mobile phone metadata of US citizens and a handful of world leaders—was of no consequence. Even the most direct lead in a December 2013 *New York Times* article, "N.S.A. Dragnet Included Allies, Aid Groups and Business Elite,"²⁶ which stated quite clearly that US spying was extended over some sixty countries and equally focused on citizens and government and business leaders, led to little change in everyday press collaborations with other power groups, as this book will discuss in Chapter 5.

Journalistic narratives applied to interpret the level of governmental surveillance at this time merely allowed the press to present itself as a "watchdog" institution as journalists appeared shocked and awed by the revelations of government spying. Hacking and surveillance for the purposes of control and order—often through the threat and use of violence by the US government and its corporate and global government allies—was presented in US news media as "facts," with very little independent journalistic verification or even reporting that would balance such arguments against the nation's normative dedication to "independence," "privacy," and "freedom."

In fact, the press did very little to complicate the news of the day by investigating power systems with their own efforts and maintaining the status quo by marginalizing "radical" positions of criticism against such surveillance. Yet, this initial analysis of how media covered the release of these secrets begs the question of what role the media *really* holds in global collaborations of militaries and corporations that represent the purest form of US imperialism.

Subjugation through fear

Throughout this book, I present arguments for particular understandings of “media control” that answer the question of just how news media operate within the construction of our daily lives—and in the interpretations of those lives. I first build upon the assumption that subjugation is not a media outcome; it is media’s core purpose. In other words, the purpose of media is to maintain social divides that support the supposition that in our capitalism-democracy “there must be losers for there to be winners.” Part of this subjugation occurs through the application of dominant ideologies in media rhetoric.

Take, for instance, the notion of “martial law,” the ability of the government and its military to maintain local police control and to demand the order of people and spaces normally under civilian rule. As William Arkin writes in *American Coup: How a Terrified Government is Destroying the Constitution*, hints of possible “martial law” in the US post-Vietnam “lingered as a consequence of nuclear war or foreign attack, civic cheerleading promising that civil authority would be rapidly restored.” Similar arguments have been made even recently in the local police takeover of the streets in and around Boston following the Boston Marathon Bombings in 2013 (see Chapter 2), and in the police-press control over people and information following the 2014 shooting of a black young man by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, and after the grand jury’s decision there not to indict the officer who had been accused of shooting without justification (see Chapter 4).²⁷

While martial law was not claimed by law enforcement and military officials in these instances—despite the degree to which it was occurring—press attention to the swarms of police in riot gear and their explanations for and of disorder that ensued (racialized in both instances) mirrored responses to police violence in New Orleans following the 2005 Hurricane Katrina, which displaced a majority of the city’s blacks and sent police barreling into the streets with weapons rather than with food and blankets.

That martial law can occur without someone saying it is occurring (indeed, the claim of instituting martial law would be far too devastating to the legitimacy of police forces than merely executing it) speaks to the power of rhetoric in times of crisis. As Arkin argues, martial law is an “oxymoron” in that “it is as much about what does not exist as what does.” In other words, martial law and its myths of a calm, orderly, and fair/just civilization that is to be returned to the citizens from moments of chaos through the intervention of government/military intervention suggests that the civilization was truly those things of fairness, equality, and safety before the “disorder.”

But, that myth is based on a fallacy that this previous/natural “order” was of a civilian mandate, with a focus on the interests of the public and absent of

an always-looming military threat. Furthermore, rhetoric of protectionism via a government/military and even a local/civilian police force maintains that the aims of these institutions include peace—a peace demanded by and for the public for a negotiation of shared outcomes absent of threats of force and all to stave off pending doom of which we all fear (Figure I.2).

Control through violence

Notions of social distress—of which martial law should really be considered—are frequently calmed and solved through the solution of force. How these solutions flow to the public through press explanations is what this book attempts to decipher. News media operate as more than messengers in particular moments of ideological crisis, when the public needs to be aligned with solutions to problems from the power elite—especially when those solutions include force against the public itself.



FIGURE I.2 *In this age of normalized securitization, even universities have armed themselves with military grade weaponry, as represented by this military issued response truck that was part of Florida International University's arsenal in August 2014. Photograph by Donny Boulanger. Used with permission.*

Journalism provides a ritualistic function that extends beyond providing information; the press provide explanation, and these explanations for everyday events, social issues, and individual actions that appear as “news” revolve around larger, dominant cultural norms within a given society that lead to control. In recent US history, ideologies of increased surveillance, control, order, and protection shared among the government’s military, local police forces, schools, private enterprise, and the press have surrounded fear appeals that bank on confusion and distress similar to that experienced by a child watching war on TV, listening to it in the dead of night, and trying to understand its human toll.

Fear demands a story in which someone needs protection and a hero to do the protecting. Perhaps the most common of myths, the hero almost always comes to the rescue or identifies within the victim a sense of power and control so that, even indirectly, the hero saves the day even if it is through the actions of the victim. Just as centuries before, today the hero still wields a weapon to fight the demons; the hero leads a people to victory; and, the hero knows best what ails and what heals (see Chapter 2).

The cultural norms and historic tales we tell within our own communities are not necessarily our own, however. Yet, each of us holds the power to interrogate these norms and stories, not with the expressed intent to undermine what we believe to be “true” but to examine the degree to which these truths can handle the pressure of being “false.”

Understanding that dominant explanations of the world spread through storytelling (i.e., literature, music, dance, official histories, law, journalism), which emerges from positions of power and holds types of power of themselves to shape individual interpretations and actions in the world, though, also means that what we find in our investigations of our truths must be addressed. Therefore, I am particularly interested in the role of the news media in such cultural storytelling and view news media as collaborators within systems of power and culpable for social and cultural environments.

For example, in his book, *The Watchdog That Didn't Bark*, which examines press coverage—or lack thereof—of the financial crisis of 2007/2008, Dean Starkman writes that the “failure” of journalism to address the pending doom of the collapse as early as the 1990s “was not of the industry, but of the imagination.”²⁸ Put another way, the norms that led to the subprime bubble and the loss of financial solvency of some of the nation’s largest financial institutions were not enough to provide a sense that a problem was brewing and that this problem was economic genocide. The cheating and overlending, the completion of ill-advised mergers and investments was merely commonplace to business reporters, so much so that such behavior and processes were not enough to call attention. It was only when reporters were faced with the notion that there was “scandal” at the center of the

collapse, Starkman argues, that journalists responded as “watchdogs” over the financial sector.

Clearly caught in the public limelight as “missing the story” in the decades of profiteering that led to the bust, journalists attempted to maintain the public’s trust, apologizing for their mistake but never admitting, of course, that press-business partnerships (what could be considered an element of Starkman’s concept of CNBC-ization) were intentional collaborations that fit within a media system that relies on waiting for a story to break, watching those who are breaking—or could break—a story, and punishing those participants through media shaming (see Chapter 5). As Chapter 2 discusses in greater detail, these processes of the press—processes of normalizing fear and supporting securitization *vis-à-vis* media propaganda—require machines that work through various forms of indoctrination to spread conservative political and social thought about everyday life.

Media control also revolves around justifications of and for violence or justifications of threats of and for violence (including economic violence), whether that violence emerges within language, through a bank account and bad mortgage, or at the end of a gun that is embossed with explanations of normative notions of normalcy and virtue of natural social roles of the press. As journalist James Fallows writes:

Reporters and pundits hold no elected office, but they are obviously public figures. The most prominent TV talk show personalities are better known than all but a handful of congressmen. When politicians and pundits sit alongside each other and trade opinions on Washington talk shows, they underscore the essential similarity of their political roles.²⁹

White supremacy in news storytelling

The shared political roles that Fallows mentions surround the function of White Supremacy, which is the cause for violence that emerges from the power elite’s military and police force. In the next chapter, for instance, I make such an argument by identifying elements of today’s power elite within a racialized lens. While there’s more than enough research about how media messages contribute to social conditions through racialized stereotyping and marginalization, which leads to the subjugation of particular sets of citizens, this project focuses on the ways in which racial subjugation serves as a primary effort of the media in terms of the intentionality of messaging through dominant cultural lenses that do not allow for legitimate and authoritative explanations that may be counter to those of “The Fourth Estate.”

In this sense, the press operate as an institution of white domination that recalls histories and explanations of the world that come from Western/Anglo/white perspectives with the intention of maintaining a status quo that benefits future generations of white folk, which involves the function and act of violence to enforce submission. As I further clarify in Chapter 3, another way to consider what I mean by “white” is to consider the term as corresponding with “non-black,” those of skin color and tone, heritage and self-identification that may not be distinctly “black,” “American-black,” or “African American,” but who do not benefit from dominant society in ways similar to those of lighter skin colors.

This distinction becomes important as more and more citizens in the United States consider us to be living in a post-race society, but where in reality those with darker skins and those considered “black” are oppressed at greater rates and in greater ways (see Chapter 3).³⁰ Even more will be discussed in Chapter 5 and in the book’s Conclusion about how mainstream news media continue to maintain relevance of racialized force for order and control by adopting social media as a tool for public participation. For instance, new media technologies turn the public to viewing media on-demand, on tablets, on mobile phones, and away from a passive interaction with TV screens, cable boxes, wires, and confined spaces of living rooms in ways that tighten ideological relationships between race, the citizen and journalism, which enhances the public’s involvement with the interactivity of media and its meanings. In this way, the public becomes an active member of the media’s policing force, which is examined in this book’s second theme, discussed below.

Theme 2: Media, indoctrination and control

Another main theme of this book is to identify the ways in which news media maintain a list of approved behaviors for society and present those lists through coverage that is designed to maintain order. News that dictates compliance to dominant ideology polices society and its members as a means to record patterns of misbehavior and ideological mismanagement for the sole purpose of instituting discipline that will bring society back in-line with the status quo. US citizens—and viewers of US media—are indoctrinated to follow the flag into wars, into big box stores (think, George W. Bush’s infamous statement to spend, spend, spend following the 9/11 attacks), and to adopt governmental use of technology as a primary tool for protection.

Consider, for a moment, the hyper-militarization of local law enforcement and the confusion surrounding the US government’s use of drones and surveillance on its own citizens, which has done nothing more than increase during the Obama Administration.³¹

Because individuals are under constant threat of personal attack by political and media institutions if they present radical claims counter to governmental and media expectations of behavior and beliefs, news media become anything but complicit in the application of thought control. In the end, our public hears only the comments and critiques of government and media via mainstream news because, simply, safe and approved opinions are the only ones that news outlets are willing to air. And, because the powerful—those with money, weapons, and the ear of the media—so benefit from cultural calm and social order, which is only in the interest of the protection and prosperity of the Free World, I argue throughout this book that such media-sponsored democracy is too often a veil for ideological oppression.

Up until immediately following the 9/11 attacks at the World Trade Center in New York, the idea that US officials would surveil their own citizens may have seemed strange—maybe even anti-American. Our government, we said then, would only monitor those suspected of terrorism, those who deserved to be watched, and those who had previously been shown to try to harm American interests. Few realized—or wanted to realize—that their government was already watching us and had always been in partnerships with private business, public ideologues, and members of the “free press” to surveil and influence its citizens, as have governments and merchants from even the earliest of societies.³²

Now, surveillance is synonymous with democracy. Order is patriotism. Hidden within cynical language that stretches the country (and polls that support it) that Congress is “untrustworthy”—as is the press—are generations of critical histories that when applied to today’s news reveal that neither has the US government nor has its press been interested in resolving issues of and for the people. Governments are designed with the press in mind, as the media hold stakes in private financing that allows government-press partnerships to produce messages that serve and protect elites, traditional histories of society, and shared traditions that maintain dominant social roles and cultural values. Through such means, the media institute order.

This book, therefore, challenges initial assumptions that the press merely are left to cover only what they are told by officials, only what reporters have seen and have been able to verify themselves, or only what eyewitnesses report. The arguments I make throughout this project build upon notions that have been presented before—that the press operate within a system of social and cultural pressures but that members of the press also have choices about what becomes news and how it is interpreted. It is within these choices, driven by ideologies shared with fellow power institutions, that journalists operate within a larger system of control and power. They are not observers looking in on a system, because they are within that system.

The press, in fact, serve as a lynchpin of power and the application of force applied by governments, their militaries and local police in order to maintain that power. Throughout the following chapters, I make what may be read as causal claims about power, about the role of media in society, and about the use of force against citizens. I understand that these ideas may be met with rigorous skepticism, if not outright disbelief. In fact, my arguments may even be categorized as “conspiracy theory” (see Chapter 3). Yet, there is something here to be examined, something in terms of power and news, journalists and police, citizens and democracy, and the role of force and threats of force within and of the news at the local level.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

Because of the aims I wish to meet, this book has several audiences. For scholars, I wish to contribute to a radicalization of Journalism Studies that provides value to increased critical analyses of the news, particularly local news, in ways that question the violent power of media and control. From this project, journalists would benefit from related discussions about the *cultural* influence of their work. I emphasize the word “cultural,” because the journalistic trade boasts dozens of websites, magazines, and news columns that examine the degree to which the press function as a democratic tool, but very few—if any—assess the ways in which the press embed moral lessons and question the degree to which news practices and products support power systems.

Students—a term I use to include more than those organized in a classroom—are an obvious audience for such an academic approach to a professional field, and I discuss below ways in which this project is designed to help integrate the ideological analyses of these pages into daily life and work. I also have a desire for the average reader who may be interested in journalism, culture, power, and control to apply this book in their challenges of traditional modes of interacting with the news—and even popular critiques of the news (see discussion of news literacy in Conclusion).

The audience should note that *Media Control* is, in many ways, a continuation of work I have conducted in journal articles and in my first book, *A Transplanted Chicago: Race, Place & Press in Iowa City*, published in 2014. In these works, I have attempted to explicate issues of media power and control at the local level, and I return to those pieces throughout this project to reveal the press’ role in a culture of White Supremacy that, despite any discourse of living in a “post-race” society, divides US society with a black-

white dynamic. Indeed, it is this dynamic that fuels the root of increased militarization of police forces and the basis for control and surveillance.

To guide readers through these arguments and cases, this book presents several features in each chapter, including:

- A Chapter Purpose, which serves as an overview to introduce the reader to those pages' main arguments and approaches, as well to map the chapter itself
- Key Terms, which are also listed in a glossary at the end of the book, at the top of each chapter focus the reader's interpretation of the subsequent discussions through a particular conceptual framework; the terms cross between chapters but are highlighted in those where the terms are best examined
- Guiding Questions that appear at the beginning of each chapter help frame the subsequent analyses with approaches that may help the reader come to interpolations that connect the concepts to practice and to further questions about news and ideology
- Discussion Questions appear at the end of each chapter to create a fluid discussion from the beginning of an argument and analysis to its end; the questions are designed more to guide discussion than to lead to specific answers
- Chapter References appear throughout each chapter that suggest the reader can go to previous pages or to future sections within the book for more on specific examples or for further examination of a particular concept; the intention is for the reader to use this book not necessarily in a chronological manner, but in their own way
- Notes at the end of each chapter continue the main narrative of this text, providing depth in some cases, evidence in others, and context that helps the reader continue to examine the terms applied throughout this project and the cases examined
- Original Artwork by Jared Rodriguez, who has supplied images for websites such as truth-out.org, appear at the beginning of each chapter; such visual communication and expression is meant to influence and to inspire a broader audience and to complicate the modes of language that can be used to discuss issues of communication and control

With these additives, *Media Control* may appear to be a textbook—and it may be used as such—but it is not one. This project revolves around original

arguments and evidence and is rooted very much in my own experiences as a journalist and as a media scholar. *Media Control* is, therefore, a manifesto of sorts that is meant for journalists, scholars, students, and citizens to provide a foundation upon which radical assessments of the power acts of media messaging can be applied.

Lastly, even though this book focuses on the role of the press in US society, some of this work is also dependent on conceptualizations related to the press, police, and social control in the United Kingdom, largely because of the nature of the two geographies' ideological foundations and relationships. Indeed, much communication scholarship in the United Kingdom provides a more critical perspective than in the United States and provides a much needed and valued approach to media operations in this country.

The book unfolds as follows:

Chapter 1, "Power, Propaganda and the Purpose of News," places the reader in a setting of increasing worldwide militarization and social control through the lens of media control. The chapter begins by arguing that news coverage of mass-closings of US embassies in 2013 under the fear of international terrorism is representative of work journalists perform as a collective and moral force in collaboration with powerful political and corporate leaders. This chapter focuses on explicating power and propaganda that will be extended throughout the book in ways that suggest journalistic "objectivity" and "watchdogging" veil the inherent—and intentional—power functions of the Fourth Estate. The idea of "information" in this project, therefore, is provided within a framework of power, the assessment of which depends on relationships between the messenger(s), the audience(s), and the cultural context(s) surrounding communication. Throughout this discussion of how the press, in this case, worked to maintain popular, public agendas of the power elite, I build connections between Journalism Studies, cultural theory, and critical perspectives of race—including whiteness—to reveal how news media operate in relationship with private business, law enforcement, and governments (the power elite) to exclude news explanations that threaten the likelihood of the public to accept dominant interpretations of justice.

Chapter 2, "Making News: Purposes, Practices and Pandering," explains how, as an institution, news socializes its own and indoctrinates the public to the power of the press through fear appeals that are intended to shape social behaviors. The chapter begins with an analysis of how US press covered the 2013 Boston Bombings through narratives of terrorism and protectionism with which the press institute ideological control. At the core of my argument and analysis of news in this case is that journalistic interpretive communities in the United States do not operate independent of naturalized democratic values absent of human interaction, desires, and power. In other words, it is

here where I place the press as a human construction, a constant struggle between individual agency and the ability of dominant culture to incorporate alternative perspectives to maintain dominant power systems, explicating the role of the press as a paternalistic and propagandistic power force to support US plutocracy. By introducing the reader to methods by which journalists boost local, dominant ideologies and banish alternatives through the application of myth, this chapter sets a foundation of sociological and cultural understandings of how the press deepen cultural meanings of everyday events for the benefit of the power elite. In turn, this chapter begins the larger argument of the book—that acts of mainstream journalism-as-ideology, press practices, and methods of press socialization weaken the purpose of the press as serving the public good.

Chapter 3, “Displacement and Punishment: The Press as Place-makers”—a play off of Michel Foucault’s *Discipline & Punish*—argues for a concept of “news place-making” as a power function of news media that is applied through press demarcations and characterizations of space and place. Building upon previous work in human geography, journalism sociology, and critical spatial studies, this chapter connects the physicality of journalism—a field focused as much on the “where” as on the journalistic traits of explaining “who, what, why, and how,” particularly in an age of mobile media and geotechnologies—to a rich history of rhetoric within news coverage of urban and rural displacement and disorder. More specifically, with the intent of placing these perspectives more purposefully within the field of Journalism Studies, particularly in terms of news coverage at the local level, I discuss the seemingly more covert ideological applications of place in journalistic storytelling, what I call “news place-making.” I also further operationalize a concept that I began to examine in some of my previous work—the idea that “journalistic boosterism,” that which maintains and empowers dominant cultural positions of collective identities that then deploy messages of approved behaviors, including consumption and patriotism, serves as a form of “social banishment,” a forced marginalization and removal of undesirables from society.

To do so, I first turn to an analysis of juxtaposed local coverage of rural poverty and urban disorder through a lens of patriotic martyrdom and a rise of “nuisance” properties as a reflection of urban and black “disorder” in Des Moines, Iowa in 2014. This analysis examines an element of how (1) the press cover what has become a decades-long forced black migration in the Midwestern United States and (2) how news representations normalize protectionism of white space, an analysis which identifies place and White Supremacy as critical elements of US journalistic ideology. The chapter further examines news place-making through the participatory methodology of mental mapping in Iowa City, Iowa, to present a new way of viewing the power of the journalistic interpretive community and the racialized role of

place-making in the press—particularly through storytelling of neighborhood schools as representative of neighborhoods and their residents.

Chapter 4, “News as Cultural Distraction: Controversy, Conspiracy and Collective Forgetting,” argues that “the news” is meant to pit the press and its messages against the public by marginalizing those who provide alternative explanations for news events in moments of cultural trauma when the press provide an “offensive line” for the power elite in order to justify the messages and meanings of dominant groups. This chapter focuses on the ideological role of press conflict, controversy, and conspiracy at the center of media messages surrounding two cases in which the media focused on explanations of “conspiracy theory” and of “collective forgetting.” Specifically, the chapter examines the role of “conspiracy coverage” to marginalize the role of gun violence in US society and to ignore inadequate gun policies that allow for rampant civilian onslaughts of each other and that fuel the militarization of US public schools that contribute to the “school-to-prison pipeline.”³³

In this chapter, therefore, I examine news related to the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, in which twenty children were killed and in which news media focused on “conspiracy theories” of a Florida communications professor that the event was a hoax rather than discussed the issues of gun culture maintained by local police agencies and the nation’s entertainment complex. I also examine how the use of “conspiracy theory,” “confusion,” and “controversy” in news contributes to the justification of violence by the power elite and serves to support acts of press violence against individuals and communities considered a “threat” to the power elite.

This argument is tied to an analysis of news coverage out of Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014 surrounding the killing of a young black man in the St. Louis suburb by a white police officer. The shooting—and the later decision by a grand jury not to indict the police officer—led to rioting and to a national discussion on race and militarized local police forces. In the end, I am not interested in presenting a single explanation for either of these news events. Rather, I turn to the first to explicate the ideological purposes of casting “conspiracy theory”; the second provides an opportunity to argue for a notion of “collective forgetting” that, in the case of Ferguson, was informed by the country’s racist history and the normalization of neoliberal principles and “urban memory,” which contribute to the maintenance of a race-based future.

Chapter 5, “Normalizing Media Surveillance: Media Waiting, Watching and Shaming,” dissects direct collaborations between the press and other power structures by discussing how news contributes to a surveillance and control state. The chapter includes an analysis of how journalists, public officials, and

business leaders in 2013 discussed the expected onslaught of black tourists to Miami Beach, Florida, as part of the city's Urban Beach Week in ways that cast the partiers as threats to local "community" and non-black "identities" of South Beach. Building upon work related to surveillance and sousveillance, I explicate three elements of press surveillance—waiting, watching, and shaming—to showcase how such coverage normalizes a war mentality and industry reinforced through racialized national press rhetoric and the "localization" of economic and security benefits. Furthermore, I present press surveillance as an act of power and force rather than an idle process of sitting back and recording society by identifying press "waiting" and "watching" as ideological acts that build a foundation for more overt forms of press power, including "media shaming" as punishment in a moment of a rising police state in the United States and the militarization of the country's local police forces.

In Chapter 6, "The Violence of Media Sousveillance: Identifying the Press as Police," I examine how explanations of police activity and authority operate within a realm of press legitimacy that shapes dominant interpretations of how police should deal with perceived public disorder. My analysis of news coverage of press and public calls for an increased police presence police disorder in Miami Gardens, Florida, during a time of increased "black-on-black" violence—even when the police were secretly recorded snooping through a private business and harassing its patrons—explicates the ideological function of "police myth" that maintains police have natural authority to institute and maintain order. By examining how the press explained the legitimate authority of police in the community prior to and following the camera footage, this chapter implicates the press as a member of a larger police force, extending the traditionally reductive notion of the journalistic community as being only among those considered journalists to include "outsiders" through the press adoption of "police myth."

In the book's Conclusion, "The Myth of Being 'Post-Media' and Why Americans Will Always be Media Illiterate," I summarize the main elements of media control articulated in this book and move into a discussion that implicates journalism education, journalistic socialization, and public efforts at creating a sense of "media literacy" as means to distract both the public and the press from discussing the issues of today that would challenge—and possibly cripple a portion of—the power elite's media control. I examine previous media literacy movements to explain that by incorporating business, military, and governmental interests, mainstream news outlets and educators, together, indoctrinate current and future generations to understand that news media must make profit and limit public involvement to maintain the status quo. At the core of this effort, I argue, is a socialization

and pacification of journalism students through constant collaboration with corporate and private interests, including an infatuation with “digital media” and the promise of “digital democracy” in which students are driven by educational institutions to jobs in private industries that serve the power elite—not the public. This conclusion also implicates areas of journalism research, such as news myth and the structure of the journalistic interpretive community, as being rooted in White Supremacy that is often used to justify physical violence and threats against citizens by military and local police forces.

Discussion Questions

1. What complexities exist in defining “the news,” and how do they complicate conversations about the role of media in everyday life?
 2. What might we suspect are initial reactions by the public at large (and of journalists, for that matter) to statements that news media hold a power of social control, and what must one do in order to approach and/or counter those initial reactions?
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Notes

- 1 Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002).
- 2 James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009).
- 3 Bob Gutsche, Jr., “For some, holiday is about independence,” *La Crosse Tribune*, July 5, 2001.
- 4 Robert E. Gutsche, Jr., “Man is shot in parking lot,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, November 25, 2002.
- 5 For more on how meanings are embedded into text, see Stuart Hall, “Encoding/decoding,” in: Hall, et al., ed. *Culture, Media, Language* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 128–138.
- 6 City of Madison Police Department Annual Reports (2000–2001; 2002–2003; 2003–2004).
- 7 Christopher Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), 22.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 46.

- 9** See, Eric Duggans, *Race-baiter: How the Media Wields Dangerous Words to Divide a Nation* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).
- 10** George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Richard V. Ericson, Patricia M. Baranek, and Janet B.L. Chan, *Representing Order: Crime, Law, and Justice in the News Media* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1991).
- 11** Ericson, Baranek, and Janet B.L. Chan, *Representing Order*, 7. Other works of note by these authors related to media power and control include *Negotiating Control* and *Visualizing Deviance*.
- 12** For example, see Robert E. Gutsche, Jr., Consuelo Naranjo, and Lilliam Martínez-Bustos, "'Now we can talk': The role of culture in journalistic boundary work during the boycott of Puerto Rico's *La Comay*," *Journalism Practice* 9, no. 3 (2015): 298–313, doi: 10.1080/17512786.2014.963358; Dan Berkowitz and David Asa Schwartz, "Miley, CNN and *The Onion*: When fake news becomes realer than real," *Journalism Practice* (2015), doi: 10.1080/17512786.2015.1006933.
- 13** Robert McChesney makes a similar case in terms of addressing issues of democracy in the uses of new technologies in *Blowing the Roof off the Twenty-First Century: Media, Politics, and the Struggle for Post-Capitalist Democracy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014).
- 14** John B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 20.
- 15** For more, see "Shooting of Tony Robinson," wikipedia.org, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting_of_Tony_Robinson. Since the initial drafting of this book, several more black men died at the hands of police that then became national news. These men included Walter Scott, 50, who was shot in the back by a police officer in North Charleston, South Carolina, in April 2015. Video of this shooting spread across the internet and led to the indictment of the officer. Also in April 2015, Freddie Gray, 25, died while in police custody in Baltimore, Maryland. His death led to protests and "riots" in that city for several days. In early May 2015, six police officers were charged with his death.
- 16** Tim Robbins, "A brutal beating wakes Attica's ghosts," *The New York Times*, February 28, 2015; Spencer Ackerman, "'I sat in that place for three days, man': Chicagoans detail abusive confinement inside police 'black site,'" *The Guardian*, February 27, 2015; Kenya Downs, "Why is Milwaukee so bad for black people?," *National Public Radio*, March 5, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2015/03/05/390723644/why-is-milwaukee-so-bad-for-black-people>.
- 17** For more, see WRLN, "Income is only one of the ways South Florida is segregated," wrln.com, March 3, 2015, <http://wrln.org/post/incomeonly-one-ways-south-florida-segregated>; Moses Shumow and Robert E. Gutsche, Jr., *News, Neoliberalism and Miami's Fragmented Urban Space* (Lanham, MA: Lexington, forthcoming); Robert E. Gutsche, Jr. and Moses Shumow, "'NO OUTLET': A critical visual analysis of neoliberal

narratives in mediated geographies," *Visual Communication*, forthcoming; Moses Shumow and Robert E. Gutsche, Jr., "Urban policy, press & place: City-making in Florida's Miami-Dade County," *Journal of Urban Affairs*, forthcoming.

- 18** I should note that my home was also some twenty miles West of Volk Field, an Air Force base. Though I never had much personal experiences on that installation, the base was also actively used during both Gulf Wars.
- 19** To be clear, I do not intend to represent all veterans—even those I met in my life—as mentally deranged, always-depressed, or in-need of medical or financial assistance. The range of outcomes that come from war is as diverse as the individuals themselves who deal with those outcomes. In these stories of "sadness," I saw an equal number of interactions of joy. I heard laughter more than I heard cries of pain. I saw men—and women—who had made lasting friendships, who were married, who were happy to be single. It was, however, the degree of need that I saw and the stories of abandonment by their government and the public at times of need told by "America's heroes" that influenced me the most.
- 20** The story that follows is presented to the best of my memory.
- 21** View "Collateral Murder" here: <http://www.collateralmurder.com>.
- 22** Manning released her statement to the TODAY show on NBC. The statement can be read here: <http://www.today.com/news/i-am-chelsea-read-mannings-full-statement-6C10974052>; See also, Julie Tate and Ernesto Londoño, "Manning found not guilty of aiding the enemy, guilty of espionage," *The Washington Post*, July 30, 2013. About the media shaming of Manning and the process of criminalization by news, see Josh Stearns, "Criminalizing journalism: Manning, media and you," August 6, 2013, <http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/18009-criminalizing-journalism-manning-media-and-you>; Julian Barnes, "What Bradley Manning leaked," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 21, 2013, <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2013/08/21/what-bradley-manning-leaked>; Charlie Beckett and James Ball, *WikiLeaks: News in the Networked Era* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2012).
- 23** Glenn Greenwald, *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the US Surveillance State* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014).
- 24** To be clear, the US government and corporations have had the abilities—and have employed these abilities—since the nation was formed.
- 25** Greenwald, 101. Also, in 2010, *The Washington Post* published "Top Secret America," a project that focused on the public-private intelligence network, which can be read here: <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/top-secret-america>. See also Chapters 4 through 6 of this book for discussion on power collaborations.
- 26** James Glanz and Andrew W. Lehren, "N.S.A. Dragnet Included Allies, Aid Groups and Business Elite," *The New York Times*, December 20, 2013.
- 27** William Arkin, *American Coup: How a Terrified Government is Destroying the Constitution* (New York, Boston and London: Little, Brown and Company, 2013), 34.

- 28** Dean Starkman, *The Watchdog That Didn't Bark: The Financial Crisis and the Disappearance of Investigative Journalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 287.
- 29** James Fallows, *Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy* (New York: Vintage, 1997), 36.
- 30** Robert E. Gutsche, Jr., *A Transplanted Chicago: Race, Place and the Press in Iowa City* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014); See also, Christopher P. Campbell, *Race, Myth and the News* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995); Teun A. van Dijk, *Racism and the Press* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991); Michael Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (New York: Nation Books, 2013); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).
- 31** Associated Press, "Report: Secret drone memo to be disclosed by Obama administration," *The Guardian*, May 20, 2014.
- 32** For history, see Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2014).
- 33** Catherine Y. Kim, Daniel J. Losen, and Damon T. Hewitt, *The School-to-Prison Pipeline: Structuring Legal Reform* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2010).