The Propaganda Model

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An Overview.

Usually limited to five filters:

1. Ownership,
2. Advertising,
3. Sources,
4. Flak, P.R.
5. Anticommunism, socialism, nationalism, or “the other.”

Below, I’ve elaborated aspects of the Propaganda Model, drawn from the work of Jeffrey Klaehn, and others. For an elaboration, see Jeffrey Klaehn (Ed), Filtering the News: Essays on Herman and Chomsky’s Propaganda Model, Black Rose Books, Montreal, 2005.

But, there is more.

1. The controls are tighter, the closer you get to the centres of economic and political power. (Klaehn, 7)

2. The media serve the political and economic interests of dominant elites, mobilizing support for special interests that dominate. (Klaehn, 8)

3. Instead of discovering and reporting the truth, the media fix the premises of discourse, decide what the populace can see, and manage public opinion through propaganda campaigns. (Klaehn, 9)

4. The media self-censor without any significant coercion. Employees are chosen to implement constraints, and have usually internalized these. (Klaehn, 9).

5. Media foster an intellectual and moral culture which protects wealth and privilege from “the threat of public understanding and participation.” (Klaehn, 10).

6. Since the media sell audiences to buyers, they reflect the interests of sellers, buyers, and consumerism. (Klaehn, 11).

7. There is a symbiotic nature to the relationship between journalists and their sources, as well as a reciprocity of interests. (Klaehn, 11).

8. Official sources such as governments, corporations and experts, dominate the news. (Klaehn, 12).
9. The media engender fear and hatred of otherness, which contrasts with the dominant ideology. (Klaehn, 13).

10. News values and criteria are closely linked to their serviceability to power interests. (Klaehn, 14).

11. Messages from and about the marginal are disadvantaged. (Klaehn, 14).

12. Elite media legitimize dominant ideological principles and social institutions. (Klaehn, 15).

13. The media engineer or manufacture consent for elite policies through ideological indoctrination. (Klaehn, 15-16).

14. Thought control in “western democracies” is more effective and efficient than in totalitarian states, because of the illusion of freedom and choice. (Klaehn, 18).

15. Media performance is “guided” by market forces and elite interests. (Klaehn, 18).

16. “Debate cannot be stilled, and indeed, in a properly functioning system of propaganda, it should not be, because it has a system-reinforcing character if constrained within proper bounds.” Chomsky, Necessary Illusions, 48.


18. Media typically treat victims of oppression and state terrorism differently, depending on the perpetrators, as either unworthy victims or worthy victims. (Klaehn, 21).

19. There is an absence of historical context in news reporting, as news is isolated from prior and subsequent events. (Klaehn, 23).

20. Chomsky employs two methodological techniques to test the model: 1. paired examples of historical events at the same time; 2. the “boundaries of the expressible” on crucial topics. (Klaehn, 23).

21. Research supporting the PM will be excluded from intellectual discourse on media behaviour. (Chomsky, Necessary Illusions, 11).

22. Intellectuals help to establish and legitimize cultural hegemony, as do universities generally. (Klaehn, 25).
23. There is a clear demarcation between the ‘state’ and the ‘government.’ The former sets the conditions for public policy and is stable. The state is the “actual nexus of decision-making power.” The government is “one component of the state system, at a particular moment.”

24. First-order predictions of the PM concern how the media function. Second-order predictions concern how media performance will be discussed and evaluated. Third-order predictions concern *reactions* to studies of media performance. (Filtering, pp 10-11).

25. Intellectuals and academics play an important role in establishing and legitimizing cultural hegemony, policing ideologized spectrums of opinion. (Filtering, p.14).

26. Dominant media firms share interlocks and common interests with other institutional sectors. (Filtering, p.15).

27. Elites can disagree, but this is *largely* confined to tactics on how to achieve similar goals. (Filtering, p.16).

28. Political affairs are simple, rather than complex, and do not require interpretation or obfuscation (“the tutelage of intermediaries”) by political scientists or others. (Filtering, p.17).

29. Media audiences are not passive victims of ideological control and domination, and public opinion can be surprisingly resistant to media representations. (Klaehn, EJC, p. 379).