

Introduction Extract

Title: News Media: The Guardian of Democracy the Elite: A cross-cultural investigation into the power and influence corporate media owners and consumers have over the news media content produced throughout Australia.

Born into an era where a major source of our knowledge and information derives from mass media and in particular news media, this Personal Interest Project (PIP) aims to deepen my understanding of the traditional role and function of news media in a democratic society, and from this, understand the extent to which corporate media owners and news media consumers influence the content produced and distributed, specifically within the Australian media landscape. Furthermore, in investigating this function, I intend to discern whether or not consumer influence, given they have any at all, challenges the power of institutions, or conversely, whether corporate media owners can embed their ideologies and manipulate the news information they produce to ultimately serve their vested interests.

Based upon my personal observations, I believe the relationship between corporate media owners and news media consumers has reached a disequilibrium. It is my belief that corporate media owners exert excessive control over news media content, and that thus, news content no longer fulfils its traditional role as the 'Fourth Estate', and instead, this content now serves the vested interests of corporate owners, rather than communicating messages which serve public interest. As such, I hypothesise that the institutional power of news media is predicated on duping consumer culture into passive consumption, which it does so for the purposes of sustaining and benefiting the vested interests of its corporate media owners.

In order to deepen my understanding of the complexity of this issue and analyse the relationship between my cross-cultural perspective of corporate media owners versus the consumer, I will conduct several interviews with university professors, journalists and a news media producer and through this examine and apply a range of media theories as ways of explaining and gaining both an academic understanding on this topic and to challenge my cynical and nihilistic views of institutional powers. I intend on conducting a content analysis on climate-change-related articles published by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp and The Australian, then a second content analysis on climate-change-related articles published by various Independent news firms, in the hope to gain insight and interpret any ideological biases that are embedded within these articles, that may essentially reflect the vested interests inherent to these news firms. Furthermore, to inform my cross-cultural investigation, I will employ the primary research method of a questionnaire which will allow me to gain a large sample of consumer perspectives and provide me with both quantitative

and qualitative data regarding micro news media consumer experiences. Moreover, the combination of these research methods is intended to offer differing and perhaps opposing perspectives of this issue and in doing so, are intended to challenge my personal belief that my cross-cultural perspective of corporate media owners and consumers are inherently separate.

By critically discerning and synthesising both the primary and secondary research I aim to further my ability to discern who really holds the power in this complex relationship between corporate media owners and consumers, and at the completion of my PIP I hope to have developed appropriate skills as a researcher as well as have an enriched sense of social and cultural literacy and active citizenship.