

MANUFACTURING

CONSENT

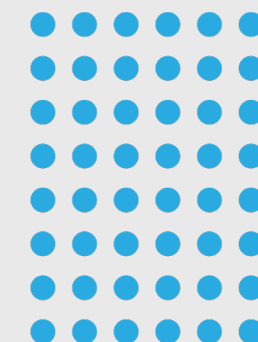
EDWARD S. HERMAN

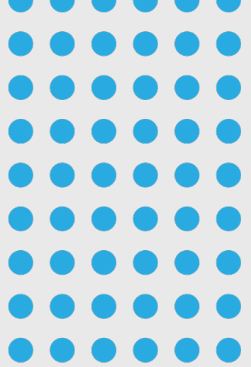
and

NOAM CHOMSKY

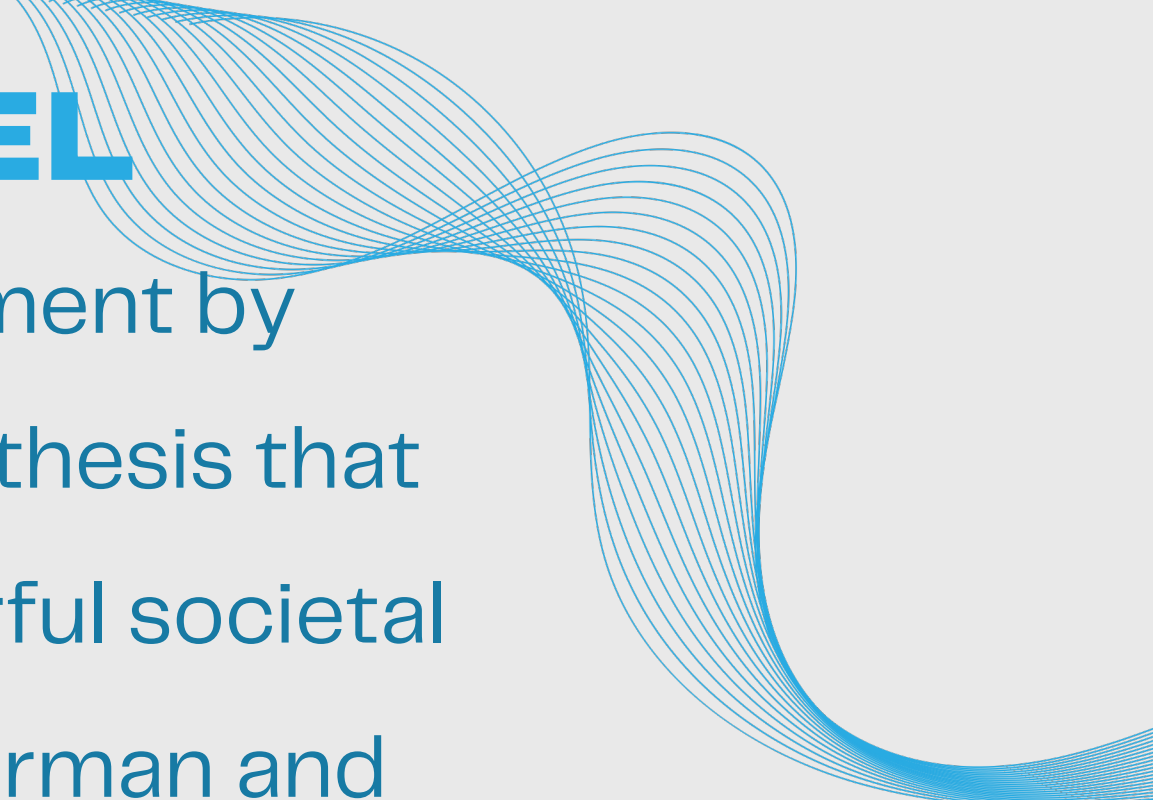
Introduction, preface, and
chapter 1

Daisy Cutter SOC-285
Contemporary Sociological
Theory

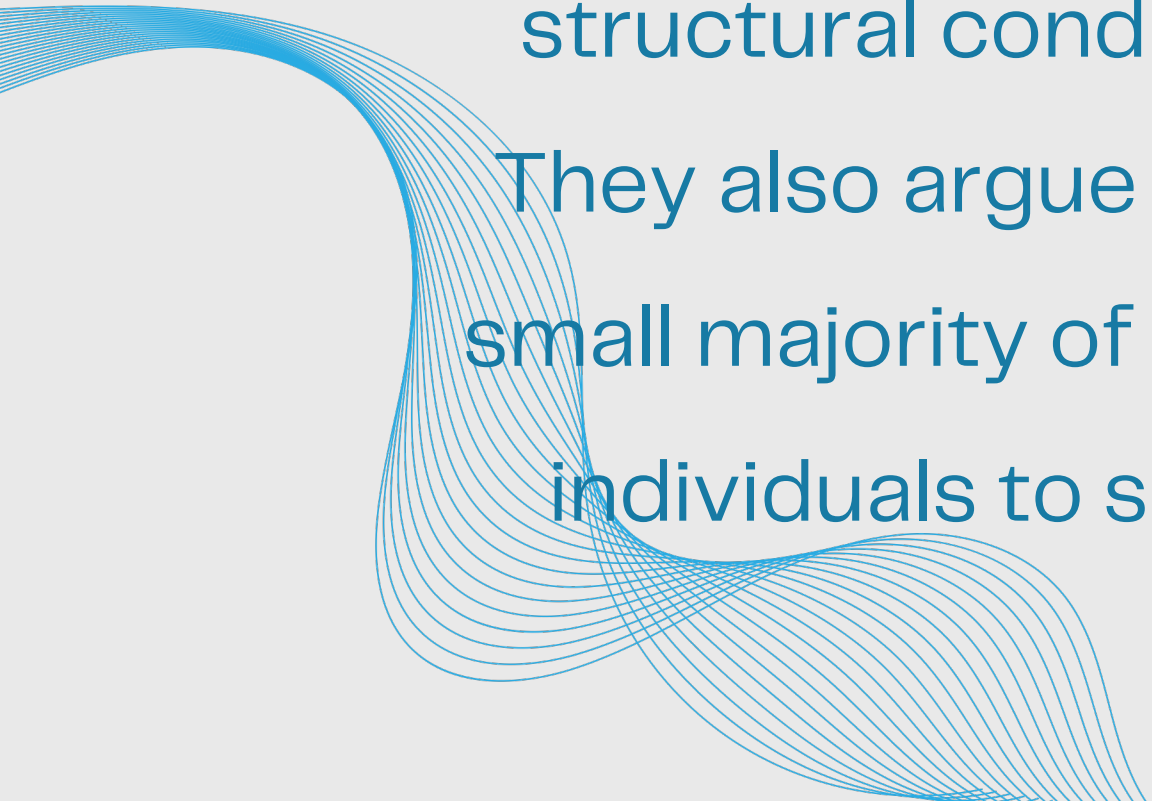


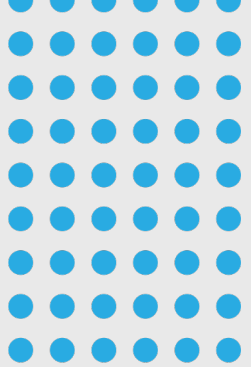


PROPAGANDA MODEL

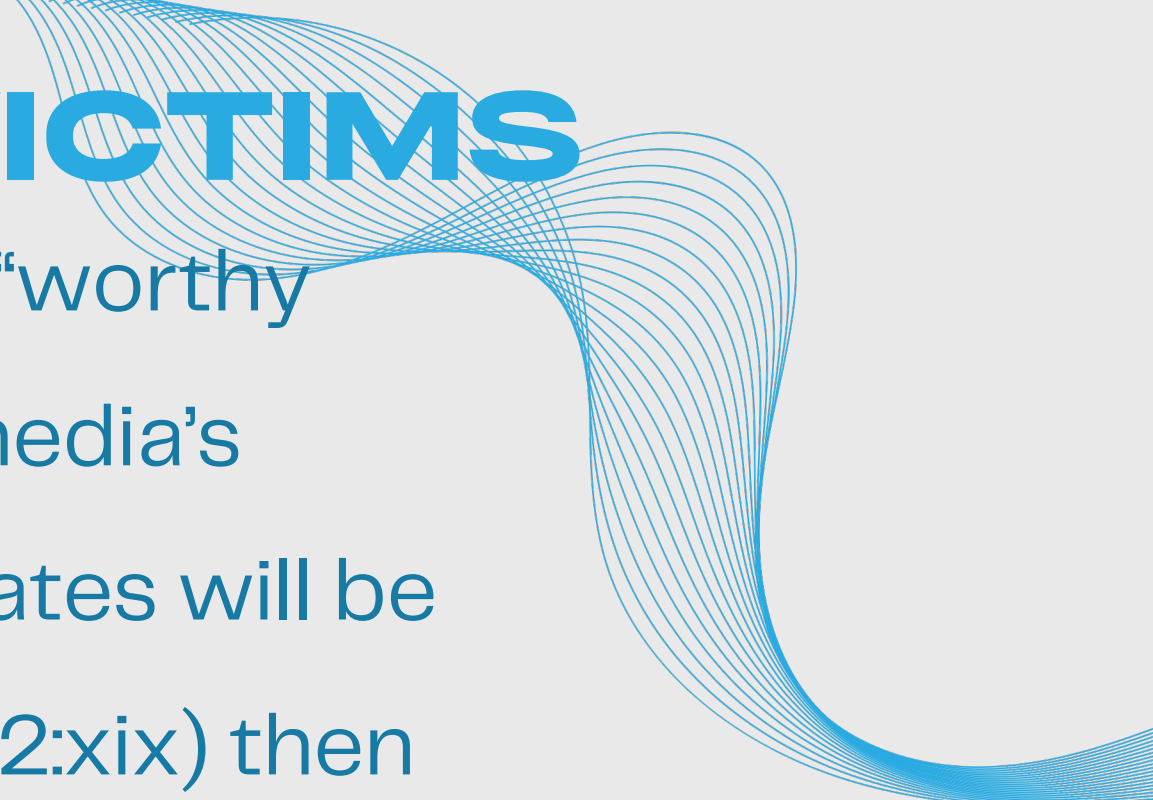


Herman and Chomsky set the stage for their argument by introducing the propaganda model, arguing the basic thesis that the media propagandizes for the benefit of the “powerful societal interests that control and finance them” (2002:xi). Herman and Chomsky argue that from this key concept of the propaganda model, the media creates “worthy and unworthy victims” via controlling information through “filters” (2002: xix, 2), and via the structural conditions for the creation of media as well (2002:xi). They also argue that much of the media landscape is owned by a small majority of companies, who select a group of “right-thinking” individuals to select a self-supporting, self-reinforcing agenda (2002:ix, xiii).



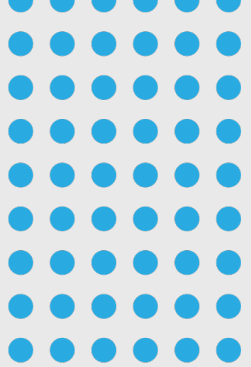


WORTHY & UNWORTHY VICTIMS

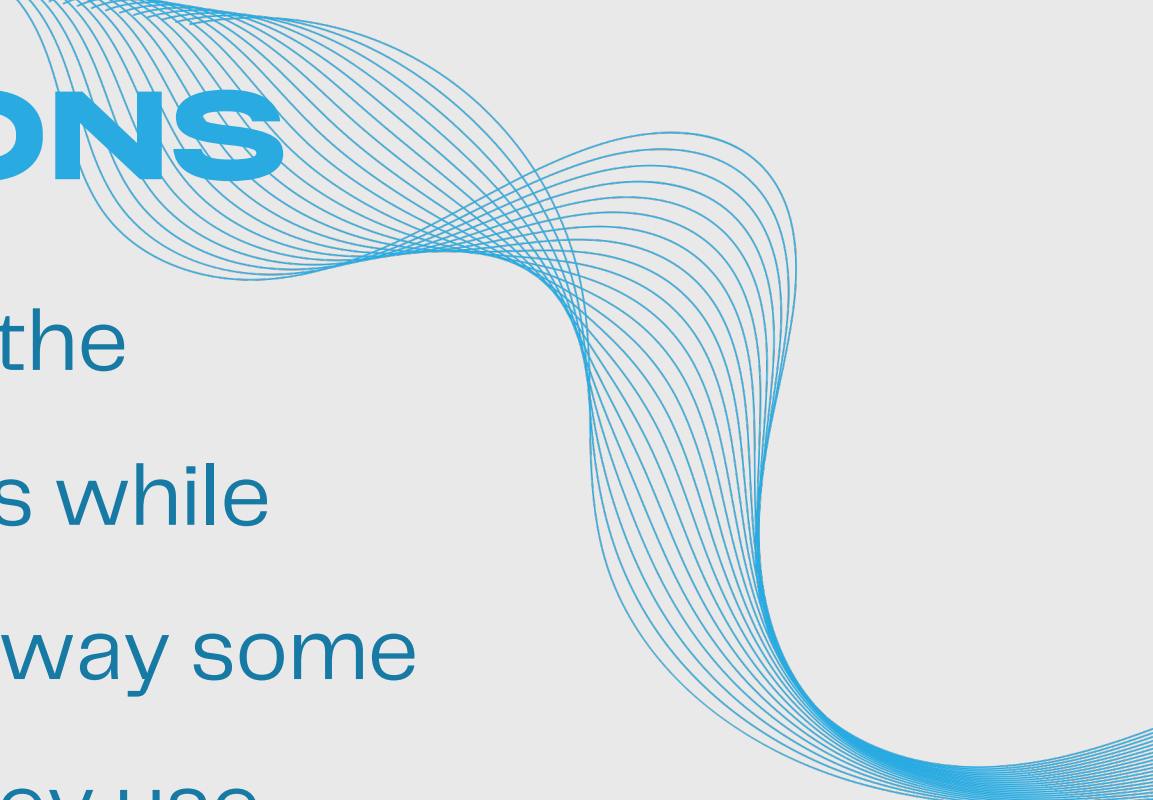


Herman and Chomsky introduce the concept of “worthy and unworthy victims”, claiming that under the media’s propaganda model, “worthy” victims in enemy states will be seen as deserving of oppressive treatment (2002:xix) then backing up their claim with the difference between the coverage of one priest murdered in Poland, versus a hundred “religious victims” in Latin America (2002:xx) and in chapter 2. This is a key function of the propaganda model; to produce “worthy and unworthy” victims.



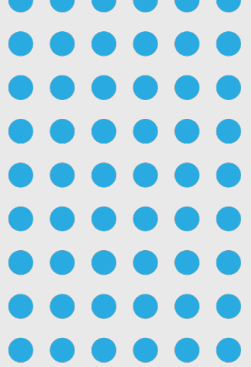


LEGITIMATING ELECTIONS

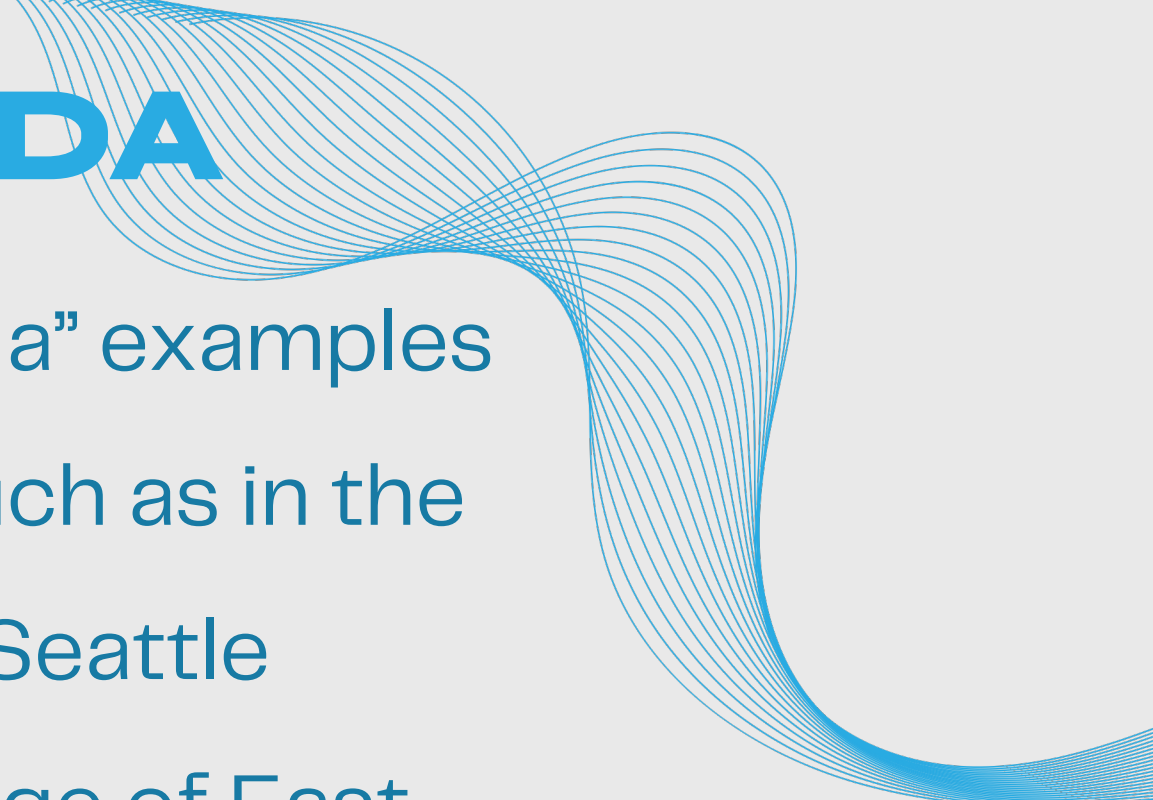


Herman and Chomsky argue another function of the propaganda model is to legitimate some elections while discrediting others (2002:xxiv–xxvi), in the same way some victims are unworthy while others are worthy. They use examples like El Salvador in the 1980s, supported by the US to be seen as a “legitimate” election, but contrasted with Nicaragua in 1984, to be seen as a “sham” election because it did not have US support. The same situation can be seen in other countries like Yugoslavia and Cambodia, even asserting “flawed elections are worse than none” (2002:xxv)



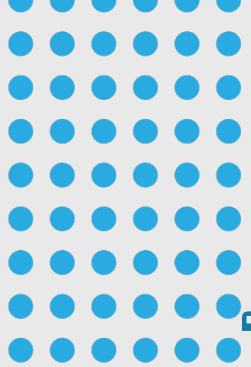


MEDIA AS PROPAGANDA



They introduce other, various “media as propaganda” examples as well, showing the propaganda model at work, such as in the framing of various stories like the coverage of the Seattle World Trade Organization protests, and the coverage of East Timor (“separatist” and the lack of the word “genocidal”) (Herman and Chomsky 2002:xi, xliv) Additionally, they bring into consideration the media coverage of the attempted assassination of the pope, in which after 17 months in prison the Turkish fascist assailant ‘confessed’ to being hired by the KGB, and the plot was pinned on the Bulgarians and KGB despite a lack of hard evidence, which the media did not account for, essentially propagandizing. (2002:xxvii–xxviii)





1ST FILTER: SIZE AND PROFIT



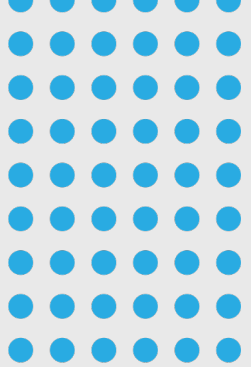
“Thus the first filter—the limitation on ownership of media, with any substantial outreach by the requisite large size of investment—was applicable a century or more ago, and it has become increasingly effective over time.” (Herman and Chomsky 2002:4)

Herman and Chomsky state that the first filter to who can control the media is capital and size: you need a certain amount of capital to start a media corporation, like a newspaper: something only accessible, especially now, to the rich and powerful. They attribute this fact to the consolidation of American media, as capital has consolidated and the media has too (Herman and Chomsky 2002:5).

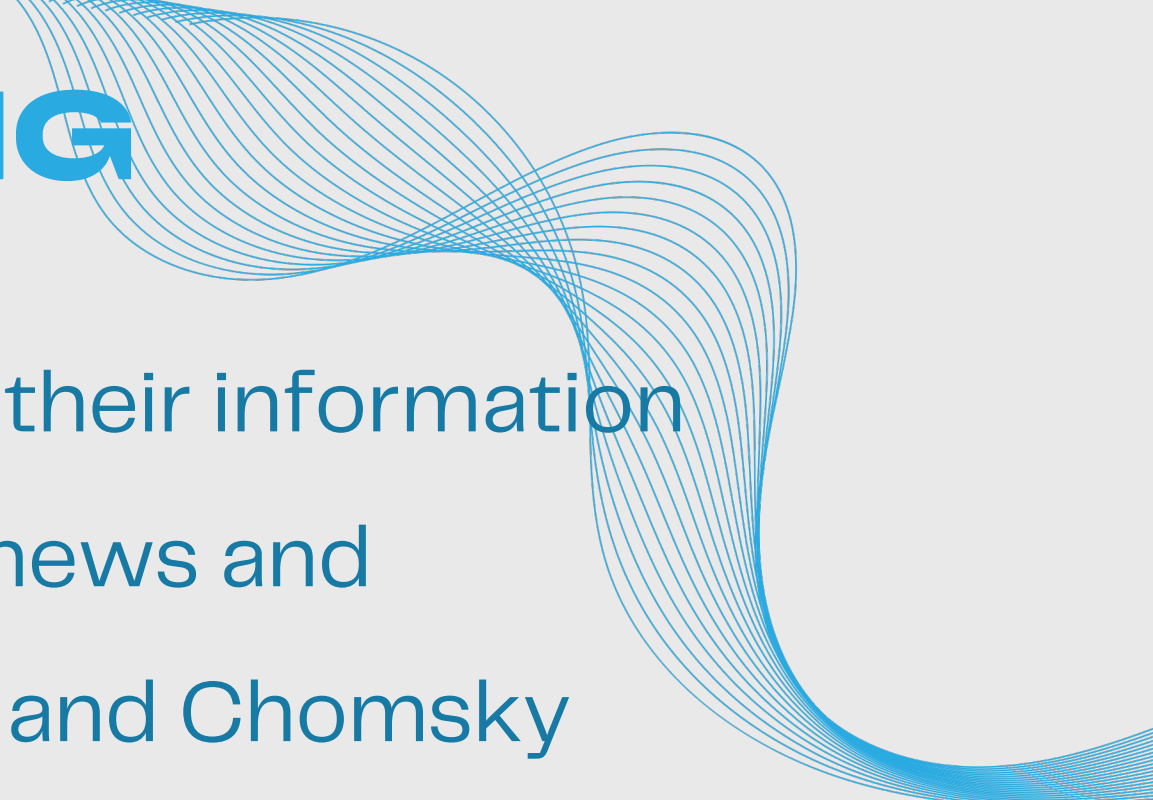


2ND FILTER: ADVERTISING

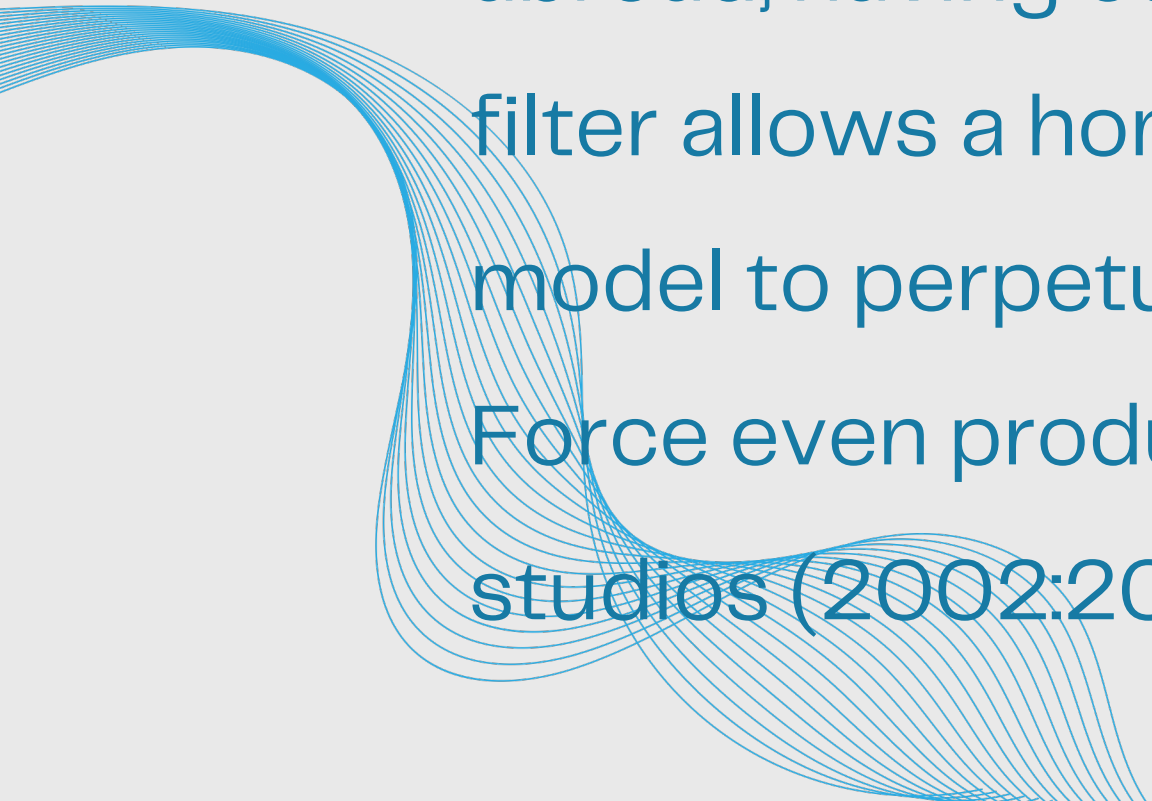
• The second filter is advertising. “With advertising, the free market does not yield a neutral system in which final buyer choice decides. The advertisers' choices influence media prosperity and survival.” (Herman and Chomsky 2002:14) They argue that advertising subsidizes the media market, meaning that independent media suffers and ad-supported media flourishes, like in the death of The Daily Herald by lack of advertiser support because of the reader’s “modest means” and a lack of money to be found (2002:15). They also discuss the money to be found in television advertising in the contemporary setting, which is even higher stakes and in the tens of millions of dollars, causing working class media to suffer (2002:16) and a lack of criticism on serious issues that need to be addressed (2002:17).

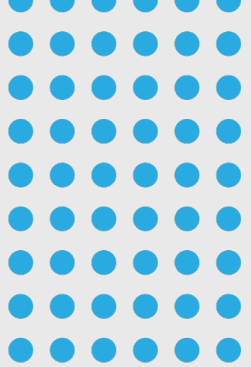


3RD FILTER: SOURCING

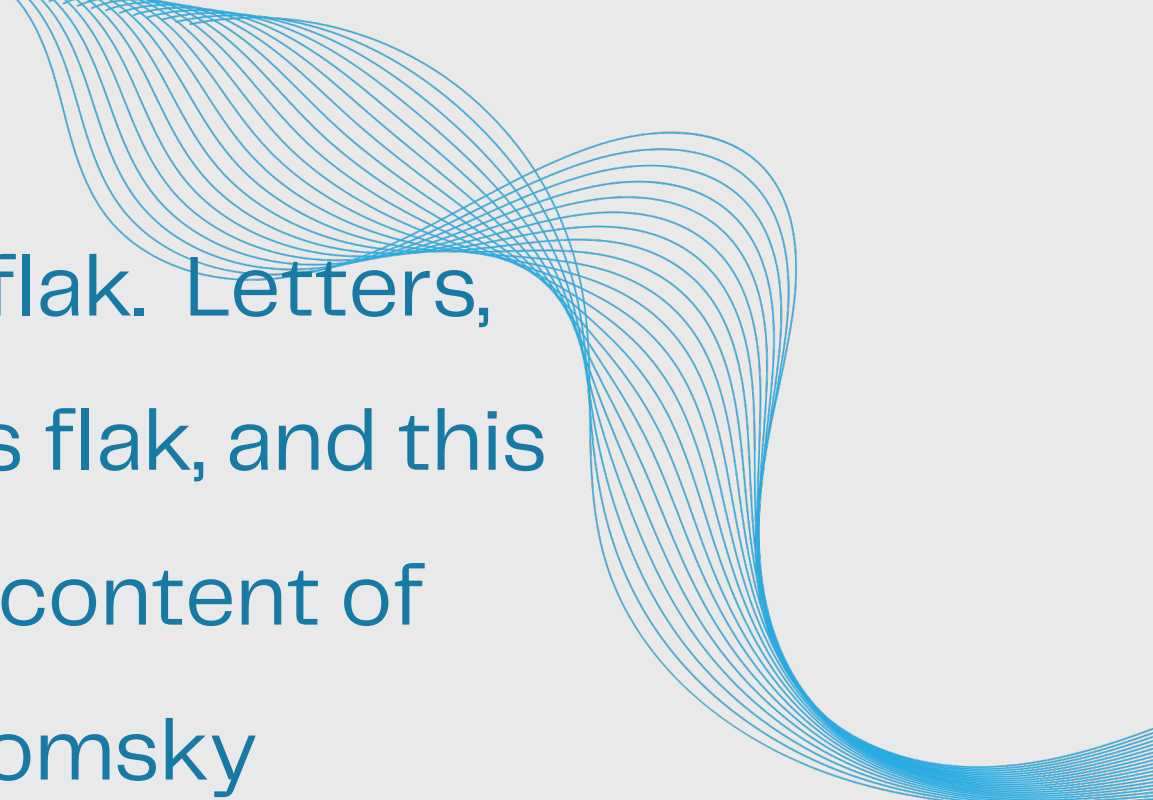


The third filter: sources of news. Many newsrooms get their information from the same sources, often dedicated to producing news and relaying it to media outlets around the world. (Herman and Chomsky 2002:18–19). Often there are entire departments dedicated to tailoring relaying information to the media, like the US Air Force's media department, with over 140 newspapers, 34 radio and 17 TV stations abroad, having conducted over 45,000 news releases (2002:20). This filter allows a homogeneity of information, allowing the propaganda model to perpetuate and control of information to be seized. The Air Force even produced motion pictures and film clips to be used by film studios (2002:20).



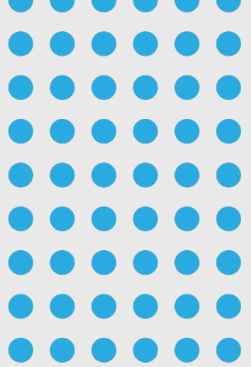


4TH FILTER: FLAK



A major concept in their model and the fourth filter is flak. Letters, calls, petitions, speeches before Congress, all count as flak, and this in effect acts as a means of censorship regarding the content of television and news media coverage (Herman and Chomsky 2002:26). It can lead to boycotts, advertisement withdrawal, and can act as a form of lobbying in and of itself (2002:26–27). By controlling the content of media, the narrative can be controlled and “consent” to act can be produced. Herman and Chomsky use the example of Freedom House, an organization specifically designed to produce flak and interlocked with the US government, whose viewpoints were designed to serve and produce that of the US government and anti-communist views (2002:28).



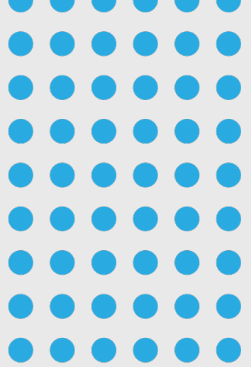


5TH FILTER: ANTICOMMUNISM AS CONTROL



The fifth and final filter: anti-communist ideology. As a capitalist society, Herman and Chomsky consider the anti-communist ideology (arising from McCarthyism?) to be a core filter for the media's propaganda model, with "communism as the ultimate evil [that] has always been the spectre haunting property owners" (Herman and Chomsky 2002:29). They put it quite succinctly: "If the triumph of communism is the worst imaginable result, the support of fascism abroad is iustified as a lesser evil," and argue that anti-communism is the "dominant religion" in the US media under the propaganda model, and this is carried abroad when the media is working to manufacture consent and interfere in foreign affairs (2002:29–30).

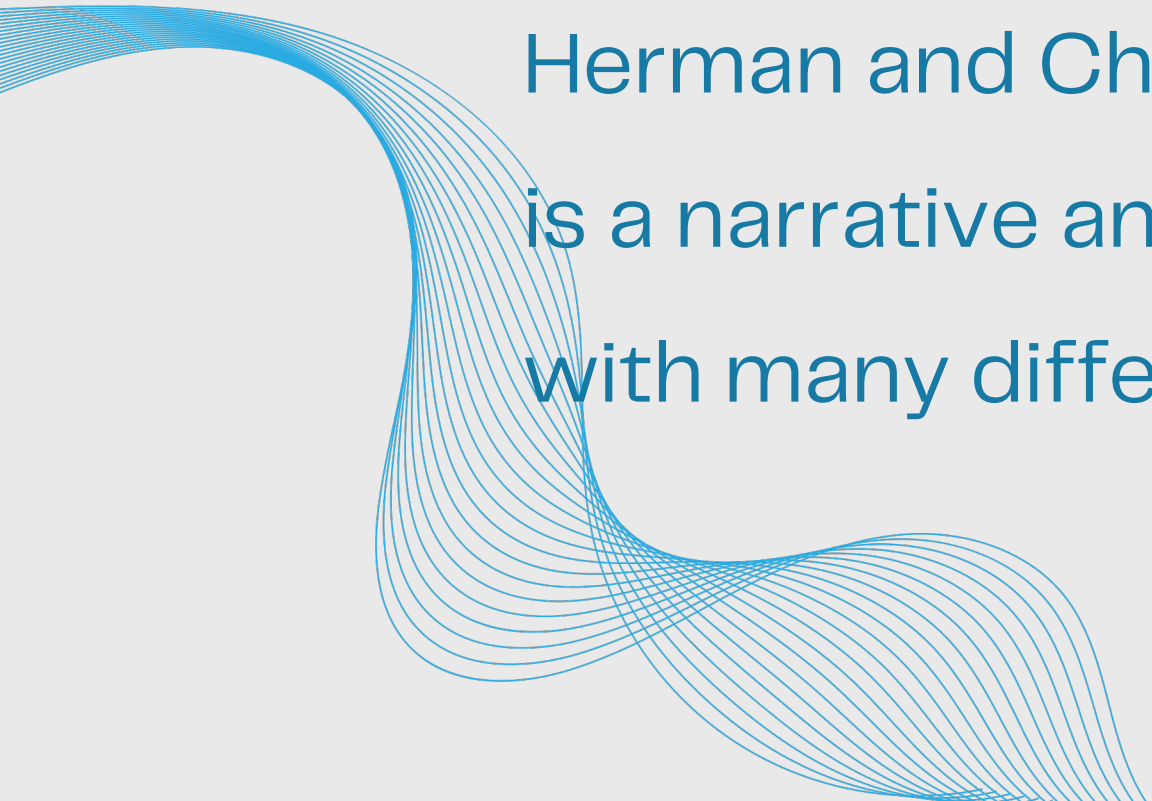


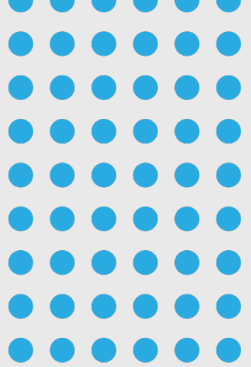


PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS



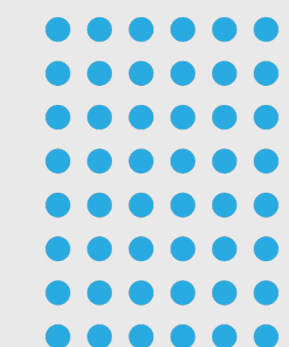
These filters all coalesce to form the propaganda model's propaganda campaigns: news must necessarily pass at least one of these filters to be sourced much of the time, and often passes through many of the other filters to be “news-worthy” (Herman and Chomsky 2002:31). This leads to propaganda campaigns: Once they pass through the filters, they can be used to tell a story, a narrative, to “enlighten the public” by being “focused on dramatically” (2002:31). Herman and Chomsky propose that when the news is covered, there is a narrative and an ideology behind its framing. This comes into play with many different situations of selective focus in the media.

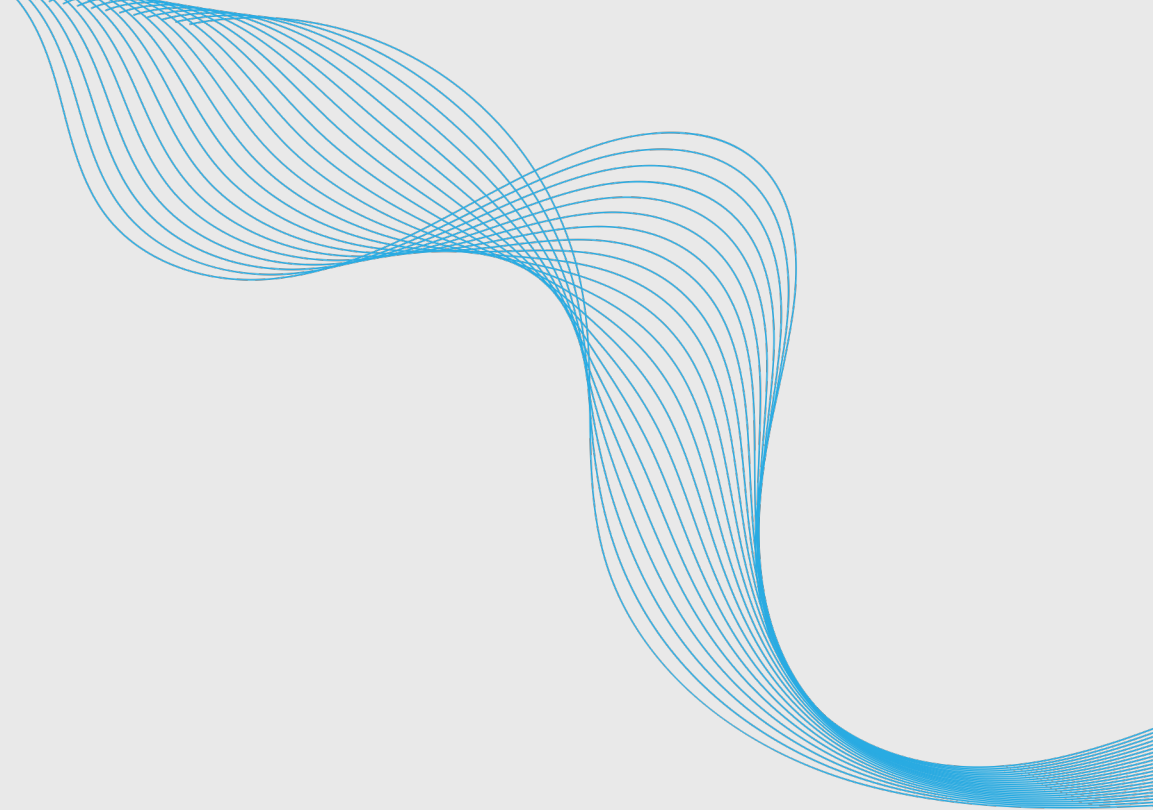
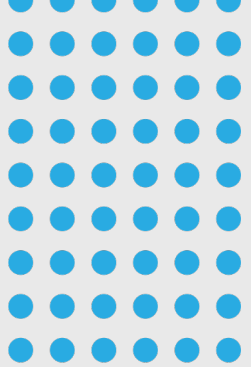




DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. How do filters create the conditions for “manufacturing consent” in the media landscape? How do they lead to the creation and propagation of the propaganda model?
 2. How does this relate to the other readings that you have seen throughout the class? Can you think of connections?
 3. What kinds of sources and stories have you seen that you believe have been affected by the propaganda model? What kinds of filters do you believe have applied to them? Why do you believe those filters have applied to them?
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REFERENCES

Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. 2002.
Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the
Mass Media. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

