

Media and American Democracy

Module 5, Lecture 3

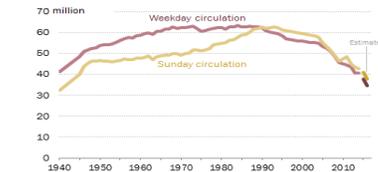
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Media Have Changed Over Time

- 19th and 20th Centuries: print media
- 20th Century: broadcast media
 - Radio
 - Television
- Early 21st Century: Internet/social media
- Throughout U.S. history, the media have served as a critical mediating institution
 - Translating politics to the citizenry
 - Bringing the grassroots to leaders
- Question for today's democracy: Can social media continue to serve this role?
 - If not, American democracy faces a

Newspaper circulation continues to fall

Total circulation for U.S. daily newspapers



Note: Break in line indicates switch to estimated circulation. No data for 1941-1944 and 2010. To determine totals for 2015 onward, researchers analyzed the year-over-year change in total weekday and Sunday circulation using AAM data and applied those percent changes to the previous year's total. Only those daily U.S. newspapers that report to AAM are included. Affiliated publications are not included in the analysis. Weekday circulation only includes those publications reporting a Monday-Friday average. For each year, the comparison is for all newspapers meeting these criteria for the three-month period ending Dec. 31 of the given year. Comparisons are between the three-month averages for the period ending Dec. 31 of the given year and the same period of the previous year. Source: Editor & Publisher (through 2014); estimation based on Pew Research Center analysis of Alliance for Audited Media data (2015-2016).

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Nationalization and Diminishment of Media as Mediating Institution

- Similar stories broadcast nationally
 - Minority/fringe opinions hard to come by
- Internet creates wide access at cost of editorial control and accountability
- Return to an earlier era of American politics
 - News that supports our beliefs
- Reduced media role as independent political actor
 - Listen to "Final Words: Cronkite's Vietnam Commentary"

Coverage and Influence

- Factors that influence what gets covered and how
 - Journalists and their employers
 - Topics
 - Audience
- How does the media influence public opinion and political discourse?
 - Agenda setting: what's news?
 - Framing: making the complex understandable
 - Priming: how do we evaluate leaders, events, issues?

Media Bias / "Fake News"

- 20th Century notion that media should be "Fair and Balanced"
- Forms of bias
 - Ideological
 - Institutional
 - Government
 - Advertisers/owners
 - Partisan
 - International
- Ultimately, media depend on ratings to satisfy advertisers/supporters



In Sum

- Mass democracy requires an independent mass media
- Throughout the nation's history, there has been a tension between breadth of news content and editorial control
- Traditional media seeing less breadth
 - Concentration of ownership of traditional media
 - Internet has expanded content, but has limited editorial control
- Internet/social media have unclear editorial control
