THE ROOTS OF A SOCIOLOGY OF NEWS: REMEMBERING MR. GATES AND SOCIAL CONTROL IN THE NEWSROOM

By Stephen D. Reese and Jane Ballinger

We examine two "classic" research studies from the 1950s: David Manning White's analysis of the "gatekeeper" news editor and Warren Breed's explanation of social control in the newsroom. Although posing a potentially radical question—"What makes news?"—these efforts were largely absorbed into and reinforced the limited media effects paradigm of the time. Drawing from interviews with the authors, we trace the origin, impact, and intellectual context of these forerunners of media sociology.

Introduction

A number of key works help shape and define research in every field of social study, whose scholars can usually agree on the "classics." In the relatively new field of communication, Rogers[1] has identified the "Founding Fathers" as political scientist Harold Lasswell, social-psychologist Kurt Lewin, psychologist Carl Hovland, and sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld. In recent years, histories have documented the thrust of the field toward the study of media audiences and effects and away from questions of institutional control and other forces shaping those media, concerns that have never been quite at home in the field laid out by the "Founding Fathers."[2]

Since the late 1960s, however, there has been a steady rise of interest in other questions: what forces shape the media message, what and who "sets the media's agenda"?[3] Now a sizeable body of research has developed addressing forces operating at a number of different levels, which may be thought of as a "hierarchy of influences." They include at the most basic level the personal views and roles of media workers, and, at successively higher levels, the influences of media routines, media organizations, external pressures, and ideology.[4] If, broadly speaking, European media studies have focused on ideological and institutional analysis, the U.S. approach from the beginning has favored the lower levels. This research, often termed "media sociology," has helped explain how news gets constructed—by individuals—within a social and occupational setting.[5]

In this article we select for closer scrutiny two exemplary early "classics," or "roots" of this news media sociology: David Manning

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White's, "The 'Gatekeeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News," and Warren Breed's "Social Control in the Newsroom." White's article appeared in *Journalism Quarterly* in 1950 and examined the personal reasons given by a newspaper editor for rejecting potential news items. Breed's work appeared in *Social Forces* in 1955, and considered the broader process of how news organizations socialize reporters to follow policy. "The Gate Keeper" is called "one of the first studies of its kind," in the journal's editorial lead-in introducing the work.[6] Breed's piece has been reprinted in nine books, including field definer Wilbur Schramm's *Mass Communication*.[7]

We present these studies within the context of the communication field's theoretical tradition, history and the personal background of the authors. Although time and subsequent research may have rendered them out of date, they are still important in establishing a tradition and model, whether later added to, adapted, or opposed.

Of these two models for doing media sociology, "Mr. Gates" arguably has had a greater impact.[8] Relying on one informant, its memorable and intuitive conceptual framework is not as theoretically demanding as the more involved functional analysis mounted by Breed. Both studies, while firmly rooted at the individual level, indirectly addressed the issue of individual liberty within a larger structure. The beginnings of both studies were personally linked to the "founding fathers" of communication research. In the case of Mr. Gates, it was social psychologist Kurt Lewin, with whom White studied at Iowa.[9] For Warren Breed, it was Paul Lazarsfeld and also Robert Merton at Columbia.

Classic studies such as these may not be the most advanced in either theory or method, but they capture the imagination. Unpredictable at the time, in hindsight we can ask what about them proved so influential. We show how these two newsroom studies were influenced by and continue to influence both views of news media and the larger communication field. We find particularly useful the "oral history" reflections on their work by the authors.[10]

We argue that although these two studies were exceptions to the field's preoccupation with audience and effects, they nevertheless accepted and implicitly reinforced the prevailing media framework, built around the commercial publishing and broadcasting industries. As such they resemble much of the field's research, grounded as it has been in the "limited effects" reinforcement perspective of Lazarsfeld and the broader functionalist tradition of Merton.[11] By calling the news construction process into question, both studies presented potential challenges to the "taken for granted" nature of the media. This subversive notion, that news is indeed a manufactured product, ought by all rights to have led to other attempts to explore this process. It would be much later, however, before more elaborated critiques of the construction of news would be mounted—and these largely from scholars outside journalism and communication. Thus, we will show how these two studies paradoxically challenged yet were often interpreted as reinforcing the field's predominant assumptions.

The work of White and Breed can be traced to the Chicago School. This remarkable collection of sociologists at the University of Chicago during the first half of the twentieth century included the "Four American Roots" of Communication Science: John Dewey, Charles Horton Cooley, Robert Park, and George Herbert Mead.[12] These men had a Progressive's faith in the mass media as a means for building social consensus and the newspaper as a tool for social betterment.

A former journalist, Park had been a student of Dewey at the University of Michigan, and together they even designed and published an issue of a small newspaper.[13] As the first scholar to pay serious attention to the press, using systematic first-hand observation, Park examined issues of audience, content, and ownership structure.[14] Thus, not only was he an original figure in communication, he should be regarded as the founder of American "media sociology."[15] Park saw the media as extending the networks of community beyond interpersonal communication, increasing personal interaction and thus allowing society to adapt and achieve stability. Thus, Park's view of the media yielded a functional, relatively benign approach to the press, as an institution that evolved to serve important societal needs.

In the latter half of the twentieth century the sociological center of gravity migrated east to Columbia University, and the broad vision of communication and mass media held by the Chicago School narrowed with the professionalization of the social sciences. In directing attention toward a preoccupation with linear, one-way effects, these influential "engineering" models of Claude Shannon and Norbert Weiner effectively defined the broader concerns of media content and control out of consideration. Their theory treated information as a general concept, which could be expressed mathematically and, thus, could unify questions in human communication, computers, biology, spanning across mass and interpersonal communication, regardless of "channel." But the inevitable tendency of this view is to take the media as the logical "source" and "transmitter," leaving only the efficiency of its signal sending to be evaluated.

Men like Shannon and Wiener differed from those like Park in method and theory, but not in broader worldview, especially concerning the societal role of social science. Park and Dewey, for example, had hoped that their newspaper, *Thought News*, could help solve social problems by disseminating the discoveries of social science.[16] This view would reach its full flower with the social engineering approach to communication greatly stimulated by World War II.[17] Schramm and many other social scientists helped further the war effort by mounting a number of studies involving propaganda and persuasion for the U.S. government.[18]

Communication "Theory" and Media Sociology. In his history of communication research, Delia argues that disciplines like sociology and psychology, although they may have pursued studies funded by corporate and government interests with specific applied objectives, still valued the development of theory as a byproduct, and thus sought to accommodate that more professionally prestigious activity in their prag-

matically necessary "administrative" research.[19] The search for objective and transcendent laws of behavior had moved the communication field away from the more situated, contextualized Chicago School approach, and toward a variable-analytic approach, based on the search for patterns in a large number of observations. This worked against a sociology of media approach, which is less given to the study of large representative samples and often relies on more "subjective" insider reports and naturalistic observation. Thus, defining away the area's theoretical potential restricted it from the start.

As Carey has reminded, the narrative of the history of mass communication research is a self-conscious creation, which serves a definite set of purposes.[20] Most important, he argues, casting such a history firmly within the existing institutional framework of the U.S. commercial mass media effectively neutralized the broader critique of modern society by the critical scholars of the Frankfurt School. As we can see, it also directed attention away from the kind of questions posed by White and Breed: How does news get made? If media themselves are not thought to constitute a social problem, then the forces controlling those media and shaping their symbolic fare, including the news construction process, are equally unproblematic.

Mass Communication Research at Columbia. To understand this emerging character of the communication field it is helpful to look more closely at Columbia University—a setting emblematic of the prevailing currents within the social science disciplines. At Chicago the primary unit of study had been the community, as represented by such studies as the Lynds' *Middletown.*[21] At Columbia it became the individual. A respected theorist, Columbia's Robert Merton was well regarded by the university administration and known for his overflow lectures. Merton's prestige and his "theories of the midrange" added respectability to the more opportunistic, applied mass communication studies of his colleague and friend Paul Lazarsfeld. Lazarsfeld was a problem solver and surrounded himself with other faculty and students, who could be set to work on his problems (projects many of them deemed unimportant).[22]

If in the "dominant paradigm," which Gitlin[23] argues was exemplified by Lazarsfeld, power is defined behaviorally as the ability to change attitudes in the short run in certain measurable ways, and if indeed those attitudes changes are not found to be strong, but mediated by, in Klapper's memorable phrase, the "nexus of mediating influences,"[24] then the control and nature of the media themselves are not problematic. If the media provide merely a central nervous system for society, or fodder for individual conversations, then it is of little interest who makes news, and what goes on behind the scenes. Had effects been defined differently—giving more emphasis to long-term, more pervasive media impact through their patterned, routinized presentation of particular symbolic frames—then those media would perhaps have become more important phenomena of study in their own right.

The Functionalist Perspective. Within the borders of Lazarsfeld's and Merton's structural functionalism can be located both Breed and White. In his review of the field, Kline argued that "the major *leitmotif* of communication research has been functionalist from the beginning,"[25] to

the extent that we are interested in standardized, repetitive patterns of behavior that have consequences, affecting a social system. Effects are characterized in terms of adaptation and adjustment—a desirable consequence helps encourage the behaviors that lead to it. Applied to studies of mass communicators, the strong tendency is to consider how patterns of practice help an organization carry out its objective and adapt itself harmoniously to the task at hand. The functional approach sees newswork as a problem to be solved: "The problem of news selection and news definition is a constant one for journalists."[26] The main focus is on the normal, "routine" functioning, not the crisis, the marginal, and the built-in tensions between institutions within society.

Although Breed was concerned with institutional functional analysis, with White's study we find a micro-functional problem: How does the editor solve the problem of too much news and not enough space? In either case, news selection remains a problem to be solved within the organization. It should be noted here that the functionalist paradigm emphasizes the relations among components of a social system, particularly in their normal operation. This perspective need not be naïve and uncritical in assuming a completely benign outcome of the system's operation, with Lazarsfeld and Merton themselves acknowledging "dysfunctions" of the media.[27] They go so far as to say that "social objectives are consistently surrendered by commercialized media when they clash with economic gains," that media work to support the status quo and cannot be used to change the existing structure.[28] They pay little attention to this social conformism function, however, or the nature and relative desirability of the status quo. Indeed, they dismiss as "grossly speculative" the possibility of serious empirical study of the social role of the mass media "by virtue of the fact that they exist."[29]

Having laid out this history, we now consider how it intersects with biography, the personal backgrounds of White and Breed, to produce these two key studies. Unless otherwise noted, the direct quotes are taken from personal written communications to the first author from White and Breed in response to questions about their respective works.

The Making of Mr. Gates

David Manning White was a general assignment reporter at the Davenport, Iowa, *Times* in 1938. During the war he worked for the domestic news bureau in the Office of War Information in Washington, D.C., (1942-1943) for Yale social-psychologist Leonard Doob in developing guidelines for American propaganda efforts, and later for the psychological warfare branch. After the war, he was a copy editor for the *Peoria Journal* (1947). He taught at Bradley University, and between 1949 and 1975 was on the faculty at Boston University. From 1975 until 1982 he was at Virginia Commonwealth University, from which he retired. He died in 1993.

White earned his doctorate in English at the University of Iowa (1942), where one of his favorite professors was Wilbur Schramm. "So, in the truest sense, if I accomplished anything of lasting worth subsequently (including my Gatekeeper study) it was because Wilbur Schramm

was my mentor, my ego ideal, my friend, and that in a small sense I was one of his protege's," White said.[30] Like Schramm, White had a strong humanities background before being drawn toward social science, and his gatekeeper rubric fit smoothly into the sender/receiver model Schramm had popularized. While at Iowa, White met and became friends with the great social-psychologist Kurt Lewin, who approached human behavior as a physicist and viewed decisions resulting from the interplay of psychological "forces" that could be studied mathematically, much as gravity could be.[31]

White admits that he did not have the academic background equipping him for the "exciting new discipline" of communication to which Kurt Lewin and Schramm introduced him:

> One day I happened to run across a paper by Kurt Lewin in which he coined the term "gatekeeper." I thought that the complex series of "gates" a newspaper report went through from the actual criterion event to the finished story in a newspaper would make an interesting study, and thus pursued it.

> During the summer of 1947 I worked on the copy desk of the *Peoria Journal*, with primary responsibility for the editorial page...The next semester I began to "study" the way the same AP or UPI story appeared in a number of newspapers throughout the country. The genesis of what became my Gatekeeper study had begun, for I soon discerned quantitative (and qualitative) differences in the very same story. This meant that "gatekeepers" were operative, or so it seemed to me.[32]

To examine this, White enlisted a wire editor for the *Peoria Star*, a morning newspaper, to keep a record of why he chose some stories and discarded others. ("I didn't have to twist his arm to do it, either," White said, as the editor worked for him as an adjunct instructor in journalism at Bradley University.[33]) During the week, the wire editor received some 12,000 inches from three news services, but selected only a tenth for publication.

In selecting from reports of the same event, 640 of the 910 reasons given dealt with lack of space, and 172 reasons involved waiting for more information. Of the 423 reasons given to reject reports of the same event, the majority were largely stylistic. Although few blatantly subjective reasons were given—"B.S." (18), "propaganda," (16)— these have been often cited by others as examples of extreme gatekeeper subjectivity. Later, Mr. Gates said his "tests of subject matter" involved "clarity, conciseness and angle."[34] The article minimized and included parenthetically the one bias traced specifically to preordained organizational stance: the news editor admitted he preferred stories "slanted to conform to our editorial policies."[35] White concluded that the editor's choices showed "how highly subjective, how reliant upon value-judgments based on the 'gatekeeper's' own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations the communication of 'news' really is."[36]

Reassessing Mr. Gates. White's gatekeeper model gave mass communication researchers a useful conceptual structure that permits comparing media content with some measure of reality.[37] The model was not "functionalist" as such, but placed within that same framework of assumptions, and thus compatible with the sender/receiver tradition of the engineering models. White's adaptation of Lewin is firmly individualistic. The decisions of individuals, some of whom by virtue of their strategic location at key "gates," have the power to affect the flow of information. Here the structure of the series of gates is of less concern than the individuals within it, their traits and judgments. The focus on gatekeeper news "selection" puts the emphasis on something either getting in or out, implying that proper operation of these gates will yield unbiased news. Having enough space would lessen the need to make choices and thus render news more objective (as some suggest for online journalism). Of course, this "in or out" focus overlooks message structure, or "framing." Similarly, it further implies that gatekeepers' choices do not constitute a systematic pattern across media.

Indeed, by selecting a wire editor, White over-emphasized the power held by news gatekeepers. Making this gatekeeper the focal point of the process assumes he has before him the entire range of the world's daily happenings. Yet this editor's job was mainly to choose between stories from services like the AP and UPI that were much the same. In fact, Gieber went on to show that sixteen wire editors' decisions were quite similar across several newspapers.[38] Even if the selection process is thought to be troublingly subjective it still takes place within a narrow range of given choices, with later studies showing that in the case of Mr. Gates he largely reproduced the content distributions provided him by his wire services.[39]

As we have seen, early U.S. communication research did not treat the creation and control of media content as a central issue. The available messages were assumed to flow from the environment, keeping the community in a relatively harmonious balance. By identifying gatekeepers, White brought into focus the intuitive notion that not all that happens in the world gets into the news. Not only that, these gatekeepers were thought to choose what got in based on their own subjectivity, adding a troubling challenge to the benign view of a well-tuned surveillance-providing media system. Acknowledging that news is what gatekeepers say it is brings the entire role of the news media themselves into question, and we can no longer assume that news is an unproblematic reflection of societal events, helping maintain the entire system in equilibrium.

How was this to be reconciled with the dominant paradigm? White provides an important insight in his personal recollections of his job on the copy-desk.

> I quickly became quite aware of my antipathy to the incoming columns of Westbrook Pegler, but I tried to edit his vitriolic prose with objectivity. One afternoon, though, the paper's managing editor called me into his office and said, "David, I've noticed lately that Pegler's columns are consid-

erably shorter these past few weeks."...Either subconsciously or with palpable awareness I had been cutting out sentences or whole paragraphs of vintage Pegler.[40]

Fittingly, White's response placed his decisions within the framework of responding to audience tastes.

> My hasty defense to my boss was that Pegler used language I felt would antagonize our Peoria readers. Fortunately, the column I had just edited that day contained a demeaning line or two about the Catholic Church, and Peoria had a substantial percentage of people who espoused that religious affiliation. "Look, Arnold," I said pointing to the potentially offensive sentences I had excised from that day's Pegler column. "I cut some of Pegler's stuff when I think it will piss off some of our readers." "Okay, David," my boss said, and didn't bring up the matter for the rest of the summer. So, though I knew I had tried to be "objective" it dawned on me that my "liberal" political orientation undoubtedly had affected my ability to edit arch-conservative Pegler objectively.[41]

White's functional defense of subjectivity is placed within the individual level selective reinforcement perspective and summed up in the article: ...all of the wire editor's standards of taste should refer back to an audience who must be served and pleased."[42] Thus, White argues, an editor "sees to it (even though he may never be consciously aware of it) that the community shall hear as a fact only those events which the newsman, as the representative of his culture, believes to be true."[43] It is precisely this "culture," however, and what it is he "believes to be true" that interest a more critical approach to media sociology. In retrospect, moreover, White observed, "It is a well known fact in individual psychology that people tend to perceive as true only those happenings which fit into their own beliefs concerning what is likely to happen."[44] In *Mass Culture Revisited*, White would later extend this defense more broadly: "Mass culture does not and cannot remain static in our society, primarily because it follows the needs of the people rather than fashioning them."[45] Appropriately, perhaps, Lazarsfeld wrote the book's introduction.

The Making of "Social Control"

Warren Breed was a newspaper reporter for the *Oakland Post Enquirer* and, after intervening war service, earned a Ph.D. in sociology from Columbia in 1952. Between 1950 and 1969 he taught at Tulane University. His other widely cited mass media study was "Mass communication and socio-cultural integration," which appeared in *Social Forces* (1958) and reprinted in Dexter and White's *People, Society and Mass Communication* (1964). His later work focused not on media but on alcohol abuse and suicide prevention. Breed's early experience as a journalist established the notion of social control as a research question.

In working for the *Oakland Post-Enquirer*, the reporters were
expected to follow policy. Now this was a Hearst paper, with
many (now faded) sacred cows: favorable to one of the two
Republican factions (Knowland, not Kelly), anti-labor, anti-
Japanese (the "yellow peril"), anti-minorities, and vividly
patriotic. For example, when a Knowland leader received an
honor, much attention was paid. Blacks and Mexicans were
considered as non-persons, not rating as newsworthy. In a
labor dispute or arbitration, favor business. Any patriotic
event received almost reverent coverage. For example, I was
assigned to cover "I am an American Day." An older reporter
tipped me to lead off with "Bands playing and flags flying."
The next year I advised a younger reporter and her story
began, "With band playing and flags flying..."[46]

Indeed, Breed's decision to enroll in graduate school at Columbia
was triggered by his reaction to press practice: "At the Los Angeles
airport I eagerly seized a copy of the *Los Angeles Herald Express*, a role
model for the (Oakland) *Post Enquirer*. The eight-column headline read,
"Grill Red Professor." Those three words angered me, and they trig-
gered my career change from journalism to sociology. I soon enrolled at
Columbia."[47]

The Social Control Study. In Breed's study, "Social Control in the
News Room," he shows the many ways that reporters come to under-
stand policy: "the more or less consistent orientation shown by a paper,
not only in its editorial but in its news columns and headlines as well,
concerning selected issues and events."[48] Enforcement of a policy about
what news should be obviously contradicts journalistic norms about
objectivity, that news is what's "out there" waiting to be reported. Thus,
enforcing policy must be done indirectly and not heavy handedly.
These techniques included editorial blue-penciling—teaching reporters
which objectionable phrases to omit in the future, occasional repri-
mands, internal house organ papers, and rare explicit policy decisions.
"Leo Rosten had shown that reporters realized they must deviate from
the facts to avoid being fired."[49] "He found reporters 'sensing policy.'
My contribution was to demonstrate in detail just how they sensed
policy—what techniques they employed."[50]

Breed drew upon his own experiences and intensive interviews
with 120 newsmen, mostly in the Northeast, chosen not randomly but to
represent the "middle-size" group, papers of 10,000 to 100,000 circula-
tion. The article was derived from his dissertation research, which was
later published in 1979 as part of a series featuring the best dissertations
of the previous fifty years (with Columbia's Robert Merton as one of the
editors). The unusual nature of the subject, however, may have ham-
pered Breed in getting it published. Although Lazarsfeld himself sug-
gested sending it to the *Free Press*, Breed says they kept it for nine months
before rejecting it. An article version was rejected by the *American
Sociological Review*, before being accepted by *Social Forces*.

The influence of Merton and functionalism is acknowledged
throughout the article and in Breed's personal recollections: "I feel that

Merton is one of the great minds of the twentieth century. His was the first sociology class I ever took. I couldn't figure out what he was saying for about six weeks, but I had to keep going. I knew there was something there!"[51] For giving him the beginning of the study, Breed credits a lecture by Lazarsfeld who pointed out that news executives set policy but must delegate newsgathering to those with often differing (more liberal) attitudes. "Lazarsfeld—puffing on his cigar, ideas coming every other minute, although he never learned to speak English too well—set me up to study media. He remarked that reporters often were liberal and their bosses were not, so what happens? That question really got to me: the Hearst experience came back to me. This was the opening for one to start."[52]

Breed argued that many actions by editors, such as marking up reporters' stories, serve the "manifest" function of getting it ready for publication and the "latent" function of guiding future action by the writer. Finding that newswork becomes a process of displacement of goals, Breed observes that the process (news routines) by which the original goal (truth, enlightening information) was sought becomes the goal itself: "news comes first and there is always news to get."[53] Staffers found their reward in following "good news practice."[54] In functional language, Breed notes that authorities in newsrooms need only prudently use reward and punishment to produce "equilibrium." Having acknowledged the source of control and the societal implications, Breed's task as he saw it was to determine "how it works," how it is that news executives can enforce this control: "I was telling Patty Kendall (also a Columbia professor) about my first interviews, and she said, 'And you're going to show how it all works?' That to me is one of the great questions of scholarship: How does it work? I tried to answer the question then, and still do."[55]

As one of the few in the Columbia School examining the news as an object of study in its own right, Breed had few precedents for guidance.

> When I began to read about media early in 1948 the theory of media was not well developed. In fact it is astonishing how little "theory" we had on media at that time. We had the things already mentioned (Lippmann, Rosten, Lazarsfeld, and Merton), it is true. Also ideas by Bryce, Steffens, Cooley, Mead, Park, Blumer, etc., but that was about it. On newspapers we had little empirical and theoretical work; the study by sociologist A.M. Lee[56] was the best. Rosten[57] did just about the first good empirical study of the reporter, and Lippmann saw the role of media and its enormous potential before anyone else I can think of. Books by journalism professors stayed with the "how to" theme. We also had many pieces by reporters, but these tended to recall some great "scoops," or to suggest that "reporters meet the most interesting people," and that most of these are [other] reporters.[58]

Reassessing Social Control. Although operating within the functionalist paradigm, Breed's work has critical moments that mirror later

academic concern with the operation of ideological hegemony. In gatekeeping language, he feared that "policy news may be slanted or buried so that some important information is denied the citizenry" (a dysfunction).[59] He identifies the publishers as the true source of the power to shape news, and he finds societal consequences for newsroom behaviors beyond simply allowing the paper to be published: "For the society as a whole, the existing system of power relationships is maintained. Policy usually protects property and class interests, and thus the strata and groups holding these interests are better able to retain them."[60]

His wider framework, however, shows that he considers this to be a potentially correctable flaw in an otherwise satisfactory system for newsgathering. By locating the source of bias squarely with the publisher he implies that, were it not for their policies, journalistic norms would be sufficient to produce objective reporting. In his own experience, Breed maintained that "apart from these matters of publisher policy, I believe that we reporters in Oakland sought to fulfill the rules of accuracy, objectivity and fair play."[61] From his research he found that, "As I listened to reporters' responses to my questions, I saw that they had developed means of fighting back against policy, to subvert policy and present a *more factual* and *more unbiased* picture [emphasis added]."[62]

Countervailing the publishers' influence, Breed maintained, were journalistic codes, and the professional leadership of journalism schools, the newspaper union, and "sincere criticism." On balance, however, he argued that "the cultural patterns of the newsroom produce results insufficient for wider democratic needs," because the newsman fails to conform to societal and professional ideals, but rather chooses a more pragmatic allegiance to the newsroom group.[63] Breed shows how the journalist is socialized and taught the policy but does not show the origin of that policy: "I made a contribution on the conflict between the publisher and his policy, as against the reporter's effort to follow the journalistic norms of accuracy, objectivity, responsibility and fair play. The topic was the struggle between the newsman and the boss."[64]

This view of Breed's is still reflected in journalism circles. James Boylan, for example, cites Breed in his historical review of reporter-publisher conflict, focusing on the reporters' counterattack on policy, including the formation of journalism reviews, the new independence of reporters in Vietnam, and the like.[65] Boylan called this the "unending conflict between Truth and Getting Along." Like Breed, he implies that, if left alone, reporters will produce truth.

Of course, the process of news control has become less personal and more rationalized with the decline of publishers like the *Chicago Tribune's* McCormack and *Time's* Luce, who were not above manipulating news to fit their personal ideology. As Hallin has argued, news workers have internalized such constraints under a "national security model" of reporting.[66] Although journalists may have become less conscious of chafing under "policies" imposed on them by publishers, this does not mean they have been released to follow Truth.

The functionalist approach, by definition, emphasizes harmony, with threats to equilibrium—tensions—originating from outside the system. Accounting for the journalist resistance recollected by Breed

suggests considering the professional relationships among journalists as the system of interest and the tension then originating from the owners. Counter-attacks may be seen as functional for the journalists, in allowing them to reconcile their desire for professional autonomy and respectability within the pressure of policy constraints.

> More generally, the reporters had fashioned a kind of underground and subversive pattern of ironic mocking of Hearst policy. Patriotic events would have speakers "proclaiming," and doing it "boldly"—not just "saying"—or "proudly clasping a flag to his heart." Nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs were selectively exaggerated or understated to follow, while mimicking, policy positions. Or we would omit something that would have glorified a policy favorite, or use empty generalities to weaken the image of a publisher's ally.

> The tactics were not formally planned, but were briefly and quietly discussed in the informality of the press room, or over lunch or drinks. Did the publisher know? We certainly were careful not to invite dismissal—this was still depression time. I suspect one pattern of response: the editor(s) would recognize (and perhaps enjoy) the mild sabotage, but refrain from informing the big bosses. These experiences naturally assisted me in seeking more material in interviews, on the mechanisms of sabotage in many newsrooms. So I may have been among the first to discover and describe this "underground newsroom," or the resistance to the social control by the publisher. This counterattack appealed to me, as a democratic struggle between bureaucratic aristocracy, and freedom and democracy.[67]

Not many studies have emphasized this intra-newsroom conflict that Breed observed—highlighting differences of interests between journalists and owners. And he himself made relatively little of it, as marginal to the basic question: "How does it work?" That is, how does the organization work to produce acceptable news?

Mr. Gates and Social Control: Uses within the Received History

We have outlined and placed within a theoretical, historical, and personal context two classic studies in the sociology of news, studies that established a way to think about the "communicator" within the emerging communication field. Examining how that field incorporated these works suggests how the potentially troublesome questions they raised were domesticated within the dominant assumptions of the time. In a widely read compilation, *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication,*[68] Schramm and Donald Roberts, as the book's title implies, spent little time on studies of newsmaking. In one chapter Roberts refers to both White's and Breed's studies, but in the context of effects. The Mr. Gates study he takes to indicate how much is not reported, and therefore unavailable for producing effects. Roberts uses both studies as evidence that media, in

the limited effects tradition, reinforce the prevailing order of things rather than create change: " ...the individual reporter or editor views and interprets the world in terms of his own image of reality—his own beliefs, values and norms. Thus, to the extent that his image reflects existing norms and values, he is likely to overlook or ignore new ways of perceiving the world or approaching problems."[69]

A similar summation is made of Breed's study. Given that reporters conform to publisher policy, Roberts argues, "to the extent that media policy reflects the norms of a given culture of subculture, so too will the information they transmit."[70]

The Schramm and Roberts book is considered exemplary given the role of Schramm in codifying and institutionalizing the communication field. It typifies how the research of White and Breed was incorporated within the prevailing audience and effects tradition of mass communication research—largely rooted within the existing media framework and its unproblematic "policies." This approach to gatekeeping mirrors the "uses and gratifications" tradition, which relocated the point of power from the producers of media to its consumers. Here the forces leading the gatekeeper to select one story over another are viewed as in concert with prevailing "norms and values." They are like the filters audiences erect against ungratifying content, rendering the end product of news selection just as unproblematic as the viewer's choices. Taken in this context, media are not a social problem, and so neither is the construction of news within these media. Any bias is still to be found within the individual, not in the larger system.

Only much later would the potential of these early studies be explored further—steps taken mainly by sociologists outside communication, who were able to treat newswork as an object of study in its own right. The breakdown in social consensus with the Vietnam era conflicts increasingly problematized newsmaking and challenged the taken-for-grantedness of the media and the presumption that they were staffed with gatekeepers who simply reflected their culture. Building on the roots of White and Breed, there have now accumulated many studies concerned with the newsmaking process. In organizing this body of research, Schudson traces three major perspectives that he terms political economy, culturological, and sociological.[71] The political economy approach traces the system-supporting character of the news to the financial control of media organizations; the culturological perspective emphasizes the links between news and the larger culture within which it is produced.

The sociological perspective has the closest resemblance to the classic investigations reviewed in this article, and contains a number of observational studies that examine how news is produced within organizations as a bureaucratic process. A particular wealth of such insights was provided within a short span of time in the 1970s by sociologists interested in media and newsmaking, often critical of what they observed, and who knew and were influenced by each other. These included, most prominently, Gans, Tuchman, Fishman, Gitlin, Epstein, Molotch and Lester, and Schudson himself.[72] These were scholars not much part of the communication field and who didn't tarry long at that

particular crossroads. Indeed, it was arguably their "outsider" status that allowed them to take a fresh look at newswork and expand on the provocative insights of White and Breed. Tuchman even says she couldn't have done *Making News* if she had been much read in media studies.[73]

Considering a field's history shows the power of prevailing paradigms and their boundary-defining assumptions. Taking the status quo for granted is always a strong tendency, not only for the communication field but for other social sciences as well. A more public manifestation of this benign and functionally organic view of newsmaking is presented in, for example, the Freedom Forum's museum of news in Washington, D.C., the "Newseum."[74] Given the power of journalism to shape public life, the expanded sociology of that journalism seen in the 1970s addressed important questions and was a valuable broadening of the communication field's boundaries. The questions asked in the early newsmaking research of the 1950s are just as important today as they were then: How does it work—and in whose interest?

NOTES

1. Everett Rogers, *Communication Technology: The New Media in Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1986).

2. Daniel Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to Mcluhan* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Jesse Delia, "Communication Research: A History," in *Handbook of Communication Science*, ed. Charles R. Berger and Steven H. Chaffee (Newbury Park: Sage, 1987); Everette E. Dennis. and Ellen A. Wartella, eds., *American Communication Research: The Remembered History* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1996); Everett Rogers, *A History of Communication Study: A Biographical Approach* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); David Sloan, *Makers of the Media Mind: Journalism Educators and Their Ideas* (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1990).

3. Reviewed in Stephen Reese, "Setting the Media's Agenda: A Power Balance Perspective," in *Communication Yearbook* 14, ed. James A. Anderson (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1991).

4. Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influence on Mass Media Content*, 2d ed. (New York: Longman, 1996).

5. An article is available in Spanish outlining this model: Stephen Reese, "Hacia Una Comprension Del Periodista Global: El Modelo De Investigacion De "Jerarquia De Influencias" (Understanding the Global Journalist: A Hierarchy of Influences)," *Comunicacion y sociedad* 12 (2, 1999).

6. David Manning White, "The Gatekeeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News," *Journalism Quarterly* 27 (1950): 383-96.

7. Wilbur Schramm, *Mass Communications*, 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1960). Both Breed's and White's articles are reprinted in Dan Berkowitz, ed., *Social Context of News: A Text-Reader* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1996).

8. The *Social Science Citation Index* shows that White's article has been cited 105 times between 1971 and 1999. Breed's article is ahead with 122 citations during the same period.

9. See Pamela Shoemaker, *Gatekeeping, Communication Concepts* 3 (Newbury Park: Sage, 1991).

10. The biographical approach is not without criticism, especially from those "objective" social scientists who prefer to keep the observer separate from the observing and find little relevance in personal details. We find, however, that biographical self-reflection by scholars can be a fascinating source of insight into how intellectual work is done. Sociology has provided a number of such reflections, including Bennett Berger, *Authors of Their Own Lives: Intellectual Autobiographies by Twenty American Sociologists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Philip Hammond (ed.), *Sociologists at Work: Essays on the Craft of Social Research* (New York: Basic Books, 1964); and the classic appendix, "On Intellectual Craftsmanship," to C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

11. For example, Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1949).

12. Rogers, *Communication Technology.*

13. James Carey, "The Chicago School and Mass Communication Research," in *American Communication Research: The Remembered History*, ed. Everette E. Dennis and Ellen A. Wartella (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1996).

14. Rogers, *Communication Technology: The New Media in Society.*

15. Jean P. Frazier and Cecilie Gaziano, *Robert E. Park's Theory of News, Public Opinion and Social Control,* Journalism Monographs, no. 64 (Columbia, SC: AEJMC, 1979).

16. Rogers, *Communication Technology: The New Media in Society.*

17. Both White and Breed served in the War. In 1942 Schramm had invited White to join an informal group meeting in Harold Lasswell's office at the Library of Congress to discuss mass communication research, but officer candidate school made it impossible (personal communication, White to E. Rogers, 17 September 1992). Breed was in the Army Air Corps stationed in Burma.

18. Everett Rogers and Steven Chaffee, "The Past and the Future of Communication Study: Convergence or Divergence?" *Journal of Communication* 43 (4, 1993).

19. Delia, " Communication Research: A History."

20. Carey, "The Chicago School and Mass Communication Research.'

21. Robert Lynd and Helen Lynd, *Middletown* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1929).

22. James Coleman, "Columbia in the 1950s," in *Authors of Their Own Lives: Intellectual Autobiographies by Twenty American Sociologists*, ed. Bennett Berger (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). As Coleman further explains, "To a student coming into Columbia, then, there were really only two persons at the apex, two persons whose attention one must try to get, two persons whose judgments mattered above all–Merton and Lazarsfeld. This concentration of attention was intensified by another fact as well: to the graduate student, there was no

discipline of sociology outside Columbia. Instead we saw a self-confidence, a looking inward with inattention to the outside" (79).

23. Todd Gitlin, "Media Sociology: The Dominant Paradigm," *Theory and Society* 6 (2, 1978).

24. Joseph T. Klapper, *Effects of Mass Communication* (New York: Free Press, 1960).

25. F. Gerald Kline, "Theory in Mass Communication Research," in *Current Perspectives in Mass Communication Research*, ed. F. Gerald Kline and Paul Tichenor (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1972), 26.

26. Alexis S. Tan, *Mass Communication Theories and Research*, 2d ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1985), 347.

27. Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action," in *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, ed. Wilbur Schramm and Donald Roberts (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

28. Lazarsfeld and Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action," 568.

29. Lazarsfeld and Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action," 558.

30. Stephen Reese, personal communication with David Manning White, 15 January 1993.

31. Kurt Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers* (New York: Harper, 1951).

32. Reese, personal communication with David Manning White.

33. Reese, personal communication with David Manning White.

34. White, "The Gatekeeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News," 390.

35. White, "The Gatekeeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News," 390.

36. White, "The Gatekeeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News," 386.

37. Shoemaker, *Gatekeeping, Communication Concepts 3*.

38. Walter Gieber, "News Is What Newspapermen Make It," in *People, Society and Mass Communications*, ed. Lewis A. Dexter and David Manning White (New York: Free Press, 1964).

39. For example, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, "Structuring the Unseen Environment," *Journal of Communication* 27 (2, 1977); D. Charles Whitney and Lee Becker, "Keeping the Gates for Gatekeepers: The Effects of Wire News," *Journalism Quarterly* 59 (1982): 60-65.

40. Reese, personal communication with David Manning White.

41. Reese, personal communication with David Manning White.

42. White, "The Gatekeeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News," 389.

43. White, "The Gatekeeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News," 390.

44. White, "The Gatekeeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News," 390.

45. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, *Mass Culture Revisited* (New York: Van Nostrand-Reinhold Co., 1971), 19.

46. Reese, personal communication with Warren Breed, 11 and 18

January 1993.

47. Reese, personal communication with Warren Breed.

48. Warren Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," *Social Forces* 33 (1955): 179.

49. Leo Rosten carried out perhaps the first empirical work on reporters (Leo Rosten, *The Washington Correspondents* [New York: Harcourt, Brace 1937]), before turning his attention to Hollywood (Leo Rosten, *Hollywood: The Movie Colony, The Movie Makers* [New York: Harcourt, Brace 1941]).

50. Reese, personal communication with Warren Breed.

51. Reese, personal communication with Warren Breed.

52. Reese, personal communication with Warren Breed.

53. Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," 187.

54. Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," 193.

55. Reese, personal communication with Warren Breed.

56. A.M. Lee, *The Daily Newspaper in America: The Evolution of a Social Instrument* (New York: Macmillan, 1937).

57. Leo Rosten, *The Washington Correspondents* (New York: Harcourt, Brace 1937)

58. Reese, personal communication with Warren Breed.

59. Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," 193.

60. Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," 193.

61. Reese, personal communication with Warren Breed.

62. Reese, personal communication with Warren Breed.

63. Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," 194.

64. Reese, personal communication with Warren Breed.

65. James Boylan, "Declarations of Independence," *Columbia Journalism Review* 25 (November/December, 1986).

66. Daniel Hallin, "The Passing of the 'High Modernism' of American Journalism," *Journal of Communication* 42 (3, 1992).

67. Reese, personal communication with Warren Breed.

68. Wilbur Schramm and Donald Roberts, *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

69. Schramm and Roberts, *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, 382.

70. Schramm and Roberts, *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*.

71. Michael Schudson, "The Sociology of News Production," *Media, Culture & Society* 11 (1989).

72. Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News* (New York: Pantheon, 1979); Gaye Tuchman, *Making News* (New York: Free Press, 1978); Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity," *American Journal of Sociology* 77 (1972); Edward J. Epstein, *News from Nowhere* (New York: Random House, 1973); Mark Fishman, *Manufacturing the News* (Austin: University of Texas Press,

1980); Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Harvey L. Molotch and Marilyn Lester, "News as Purposive Behavior: On the Strategic Use of Routine Events, Accidents, and Scandals," *American Sociological Review* 39 (1974); Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

73. Stephen Reese, personal communication with Gaye Tuchman, 1 October 1993.

74. Examined in Stephen Reese, "Framing Public Life," in *Framing Public Life*, ed. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar Gandy, and August E. Grant (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2001).