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Mountaintop Removal: An Assessment of the Propaganda Model of the News Media

Tonya Lynn Adkins

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**Mountaintop Removal: An Assessment of the Propaganda Model
of the News Media**

**Thesis submitted to
The Graduate College of
Marshall University**

**In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Sociology**

By

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Marshall University

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Abstract

Mountaintop Removal: An Assessment of the Propaganda Model of the News Media

by Tonya Lynn Adkins

This research used the method of content analysis to examine how the issue of mountaintop removal mining was presented in four print media sources: the *Logan Banner*, the *Charleston Gazette*, the *Herald Dispatch*, and *Graffiti*. The propaganda model put forth in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, was used as the model upon which the research was based.

The purpose of the research was to determine whether or not the coal industry exerts a form of censorship over print media sources in West Virginia. It also sought to determine if there was a difference in the way information was presented in the mainstream media as opposed to the alternative media. The tentative finding of the exploratory research was that industry bias was reflected in varying degrees in the three mainstream media sources, but not in *Graffiti*, the alternative media source.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In West Virginia, the mining industry has long held sway over the political and economic climate of the state. One vehicle for influencing public opinion has been the use of the news media. A look at the history of the state sets the stage for a closer analysis of the impact the news media has had in promoting the interests of the coal industry.

Before the Civil War, the Western section of Virginia was agrarian in nature. Its vast natural resources remained untapped, largely due to the lack of a means of transporting these resources to market. By 1880, however, the influx of outside investors dramatically and permanently changed the political and economic environment of the state. From its very conception into statehood, the interests of extractive industries have guided West Virginia's political climate. Governor Arthur I. Boremon, the state's first, was a stockholder in at least two coal companies. Senator Peter G. VanWinkle was linked to the oil industry. These and other leaders ensured that the politics of the day would suit the needs of their industries (Rasmussen, 1994).

As Robert McChesney points out in *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communications Politics in Dubious Times*, control of the economy is a significant, often dominant, source of power generally outside of parliamentary or direct popular control (1999). In his book, *West Virginia and the Captains of Industry*, John Alexander Williams discusses the role two major businessmen and politicians played in garnering the power that the coal industry still retains in West Virginia. Henry Gassaway Davis and Stephen B. Elkins were both industrialists who owned interest in the states major

industries. They were also instrumental in developing the ideological platforms that have guided both political parties with regard to extractive industries in the state.

Throughout the late 1800's and 1900's, Davis developed a coal and railroad enterprise. His son-in-law, Nathan Bays Scott, dominated the northern glass industry, but also invested in banking and mining (Williams, 1976). Elkins entered the state as an absentee landowner, joining with "Davis and Camden to purchase the 'Caperton lands' in central West Virginia, a 90,000 acre tract," upon which Elkins relocated to the region (Williams, 1976). With their business interests in mind, both Davis and Elkins realized the importance of a favorable political atmosphere.

Davis and his son-in-law, Nathan Bay Scott, each represented the state in the United States Senate. Henry Davis also served as a West Virginia state legislator in 1866 and as state senator in 1869 (Rasmussen, 1994). Davis's control of the Democratic political machine in West Virginia ensured that his businesses would not be burdened by costly taxes (Rasmussen, 1994). Stephen B. Elkins, who became the leader of the state's Republican party in 1888, also served as a state senator. Like Davis, he worked to ensure that the political climate favored the coal industry. In fact, he was instrumental in transforming the Republican Party from its former agrarian position into the industrial, modern party that exists today (Williams, 1976). Davis and the Democratic Party enjoyed varied success through the 1870's and 1880's, but during the election of 1894, the Republican Party regained control of West Virginia, where "fraternal competition among big business" has existed ever since, regardless of the controlling party (Williams, 1976).

In her book *Absentee Landowning and Exploitation in West Virginia 1760-1920*, Barbara Rasmussen states that Henry Davis, Stephen Elkins, and their industrial

associates were the source of campaign dollars and political power that “paved the way for later successful political careers of many of their lieutenants and that ensured the continued concern of the state government for the needs of extractive industries” (1994). In fact, Rasmussen says, the behavior of Davis, Elkins, and others like them contributed to the failure of the state to develop a mature industrial economy (1994). During their political careers, Davis and Elkins were instrumental in setting up a system of taxation that limited taxes on the large tracts of land owned by extractive industries. These low taxes did not allow for the construction and maintenance of infrastructure that would have attracted additional businesses to the area, thus broadening the economic base. In other words, the resources were exploited, not developed (Rasmussen, 1994).

Furthermore, because the larger economy was tied to a few extractive industries, the small, non-agricultural middle class became tied to these industries as well. Service providers such as teachers, doctors, builders and mechanics relied on miners, lumbermen and their families as their only source of patients, students, customers, etc. This dependent and subordinate middle class survived by meeting the needs generated by industrialization (Rasmussen, 1994). The situation was further complicated by the loss of the land by the indigenous people of Western Virginia. Records indicate that large numbers of western Virginians were defeated in deed challenges by absentee landowners during the 1840’s and 1850’s. This loss of land, coupled with a loss of political power, represents a loss of the means of production (Rasmussen, 1994).

While controlling the political machine of the state, Henry Davis and Stephen Elkins recognized the advantage of a loyal press. William McCorkle, speaking of Davis and his political cohort, Johnson N. Camden, noted that neither man could “make a

decent speech, but investments in Democratic newspapers and gifts and loans to their editors added weight to their viewpoints” (Williams, 1976, p. 13). In addition to the monetary contributions Davis made to various newspapers, there was also the matter of his association with the *Charleston Gazette*. Davis, along with two other individuals, “moved secretly to acquire control of the *Charleston Gazette* by relocating the editor, O’Brien, to a military position for duty in Cuba. Then, Davis re-imported Lewis Baker from Minnesota to take over the *Gazette* in July” (Williams, 1976, p. 85). Baker didn’t retain his position long, however. Davis, who often gave loans to prominent Democrats, had loaned money to Baker. When Lewis Baker angered Davis during the 1884 campaign, he was forced to sell his newspaper and make over his life insurance to Davis (Williams, 1976).

Stephen B. Elkins also sought to exert influence over several newspapers in the state. In a politically motivated move, Elkins financed the acquisition of John B. Floyd’s paper and merged it with another journal to form the *Charleston Mail Tribune* (Williams, 1976). He also held alliances with Hart of the *Wheeling Intelligencer* and White of the *Parkersburg State Journal* (Williams, 1976).

According to William Evjue, editor of the progressive daily newspaper, the *Capital Times*, “The future of America is safe as long as the American people have the ballot and can obtain information and facts on which to base intelligent opinion. When, however, the steel trust, the railroads, the packers, the coal barons, and the industrial plutocrats can pervert public opinion to exert their purposes, then we are treading on dangerous ground” (McChesney, 1999, p. 273) In West Virginia, the coal barons and

their supporters have historically tried very hard to exert their power over the press in order to influence public opinion.

In his book, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922*, David Corbin asserts that a miner's lack of political voice was due in part to the difficulty in obtaining information about the candidates.

Newspapers that were critical of the coal industry were banned from company towns (1981). A more direct attempt to control information occurred during the Paint Creek – Cabin Creek strike. When two socialist newspapers in Charleston and Huntington pointed out that his actions were despotic, Governor Hatfield sent soldiers to smash the presses and incarcerate the editors (Corbin, 1981).

While it is evident that the coal industry has historically played a major role in the political and economic development of the state, the question that remains is whether or not that influence continues today. As several historians have noted, individuals associated to the coal industry have attempted to control the flow of information in local newspapers in order to promote their self-interests. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the relationship between the mass media and the coal industry, as it exists today. Specifically, it will focus on the question of whether or not the coal industry exerts a form of censorship on local newspapers.

In *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky examine the power structure of the mass media, and dissect how this structure has essentially limited the freedom of the press. A propaganda model focuses on the inequality of wealth and power and its effects on choices made by the mass media. According to the propaganda model, a number of “filters” exist within

media structures that allow those with money and power to limit the amount of news that is unfavorable to them, to marginalize dissent, and to allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public. The essential ingredients of the propaganda model are (1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and “experts” funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) “flak” as a means of controlling the media; and (5) “anticommunism” as a national religion and control mechanism (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

One issue that has focused public attention on the coal industry in West Virginia is mountaintop removal mining. Using this method, coal companies dynamite the tops of mountains and push the resulting “overburden” into adjoining valleys in order to get to the seams of coal. This process has buried an estimated 469 miles of streambeds in five southwestern watersheds. The coal industry argues that this is the only economically feasible way of competing with mining companies operating in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming and Montana. The widespread devastation of this mining practice has understandably given rise to great concern by environmentalists and residents of the coalfields (Fox, 1999).

In July 1998, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and a group of West Virginia residents who live near coal mines filed a lawsuit against the Department of Environmental Protection and the Army Corp of Engineers for issuing permits for mountaintop removal mining that violated federal law (Stockman, 1999). In 1977,

Congress passed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, SMCRA. This law states that strip mines, including mountaintop removal mines, cannot be allowed within 100 feet of active streams, unless it can be shown that the streams won't be damaged (Vollers, 1999). Additionally, mine operators are required to return the land to its approximate original contour, or AOC. The land must be reclaimed so that it "closely resembles the general surface configuration of the land prior to mining" (Ward, 1998). The only limited exception to this was to be mountaintop removal, which blasts off the tops of mountains and shoves the resulting rock and earth into nearby streams. And this was only permissible if mine operators submitted detailed development plans for one of five post-mining uses: industrial, commercial, agricultural, residential, or public facilities (Ward, 1998). The lawsuit filed by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and the group of coalfield residents contended that the DEP was issuing permits that violated this legislation.

Governor Cecil Underwood was blamed in part by some industry supporters for pushing a controversial bill through legislature that allowed companies to destroy up to 480 acres of drainage above any stream before paying mitigation costs to the state. This was almost twice the size of what was originally allowed (Vollers, 1999). In the meantime, Arch Coal was pursuing a 3,100-acre mountaintop removal permit to expand its Dal-Tex Mine in Logan County. This would have made it the largest mountaintop removal site in the state (Vollers, 1999). Federal defendants argued that this permit should be exempted from portions of the lawsuit that called for closer scrutiny; however, the plaintiffs balked at exempting the Dal-Tex mine and, instead, asked for a preliminary injunction that would delay the permit until the rest of the lawsuit was settled. In March,

conservative, Republican, Judge Charles H. Haden, granted the temporary injunction (Vollers, 1999). On October 20, he ruled that valley fills in streams that flow more than six months of the year are illegal under state and federal mining rules and portions of the Clean Water Act. (Stockman, 1999).

Based on the widespread media coverage of the preceding events, I chose as my target sample the year 1999, in which much of these events occurred. While the subject of mountaintop removal doesn't always receive media coverage in the local press, I realized that this time frame would produce ample articles for research purposes.

Statement of Problem

Does the coal industry in West Virginia exert a form of censorship on the local news media with regard to the issue of mountaintop removal mining? In order to answer this question, this paper will analyze four local papers: the *Charleston Gazette*, the *Herald Dispatch*, the *Logan Banner*, and *Graffiti Magazine*. These papers were chosen for a number of reasons. First, The *Charleston Gazette* represents an independently owned paper that has an investigative reporter specifically assigned to covering environmental issues. The *Charleston Gazette* was established in 1873 and the Chilton family acquired formal interest in the paper in 1912. W.E. Chilton, a U.S. senator, was publisher of the paper, as were his son and grandson. Currently, Elizabeth Chilton is president of the Daily Gazette Company, and Craig Selby is the publisher of the *Gazette*. As was noted previously, the *Gazette* was actually once used by industrialist Henry Davis as a platform for his pro-coal agenda.

In contrast, Gannett, a large news conglomerate, owns the *Herald Dispatch*. According to the Gannett profile, it is an international company with headquarters in

McLean, Va., and operations in 44 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Hong Kong. Gannett is the USA's largest newspaper group in terms of circulation. The company's 100 daily newspapers in the USA have a combined daily paid circulation of 7.7 million (*About Gannett* n.d.).

Like the *Herald Dispatch*, the *Logan Banner* is not independently owned. Currently, it is owned by Smith Newspapers, a newspaper group located in Alabama. According to the *Logan Banner* website, it was first published and edited by Henry Ragland, and was a Democrat newspaper under his ownership until his death. At that time, Charles and William Brazie purchased it and changed its political affiliation to represent the Republican Party. (*Logan Banner* n.d.). The *Logan Banner* offices are located in the heart of the mining industry in Logan County, West Virginia; therefore, the economic underpinning of the newspaper may be more closely tied to the mining industry than the other target media sources in this analysis.

Finally, *Graffiti* represents the only source of alternative media in the local vicinity. It was started in July of 1990. The current owners of the magazine are Larry Groce, host of West Virginia's *Mountain stage*, and lawyer Frank Venezic. Michael Lipton, who once worked as a freelance writer for the *Charleston Gazette*, is the managing editor (Leroy, 2001, September).

The intent of this research is to use the propaganda model put forth by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, which is reflected in Herman's free-market model, as a tool by which to assess the amount of influence the coal industry exerts over each journal. This research will attempt to gain an understanding of the extent to which these "filters" play a role in

influencing the publication of information regarding mountaintop removal mining in each of the four print media sources that will be analyzed.

Research Questions

Is there a significant difference in the presentation of information regarding mountaintop removal mining in local mainstream papers and alternative papers?

Is there a significant difference in the number of times mountaintop removal is presented in a negative way in local mainstream and alternative papers?

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

In a country founded on the idea of freedom of speech, and whose media industry is explicitly protected by that first amendment right, it is sometimes difficult to imagine that a form of censorship limits the free flow of information to the public at large. However, research suggests that censorship does exist. As Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman illustrate in their book, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, the elite and powerful exert this censorship through a number of structural mechanisms. An examination of the historical development of the mass media reveals how these systems have emerged.

Early newspapers relied heavily on revenue generated from subscriptions. While the public press system was partisan, and was sometimes subsidized by government printing contracts or politically motivated contributions, it was nevertheless relatively easy to publish. Therefore, the press represented a broad spectrum of public and political interests (McChesney, 1999). With the expansion of the free market, the press became more “industrialized” (Herman, 1999). Due to rising start-up costs, most media industries became concentrated in the hands of a small number of firms (McChesney, 1999). Currently, only six major media conglomerates control most newspapers in this country (McChesney, 1999). Consequently, those that serve as “media gatekeepers” are members of the economic elite, and represent the associated class biases (Herman, 1999, p. 14). “In a capitalist ‘democracy’ like the United States, the corporate news media faithfully reflect the dominant class ideology both in their reportage and commentary. At the same

time, these media leave the impression that they are free and independent” (Parenti, 2003).

Another factor that results in the predisposition for media bias is the fact that media have become increasingly dependent on advertising revenue for support (McChesney, 1999) Advertising-based media tends to marginalize or run out of business those media companies that rely on revenue from sales alone (Herman, 1999). These companies are geared toward a “buyers market” and tend to promote the status quo. Furthermore, the market-based structure of these companies appeal to an ever-increasing number of stockholders who exert pressure for achievement of the bottom line, increased profitability (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). These profit-oriented media are very sensitive to the needs and pressures of their advertisers and tend to avoid controversy and oppositional views (Herman, 1999, p. 15).

Each year, Carl Jensen, a professor at Sonoma University, along with his students, research and report on the top twenty-five censored news stories of the year. In 1997, *Project Censored* examined the connections members of the boards of directors at top media corporations have with the corporate world at large. What they found was a veritable web of connections. These webs create a mechanism of structural control.

One story covered by *Project Censored* illustrates this point very well. It is the story of Steve Wilson and Jane Akre, producers at WTVT, Fox TV in Tampa Bay, Florida. Wilson and Akre produced a story called “Milking the Public,” by Hillary Varner, which broke the story of rBGH (Bovine Growth Hormone). This hormone causes cows to produce up to thirty percent more milk; however, cows injected with rBGH have an increased level of medical problems, such as udder infections and hoof disease.

Consequently, farmers are forced to treat the sick cows with higher levels of antibiotics. The story produced by Wilson and Akre questioned the possibility that these increased levels of antibiotics pose a potential health risk for the public at large. The growth hormone, rBGH, has been banned in several European countries as well as Canada and New Zealand. Nevertheless, when Monsanto, the producer of rBGH, learned the story was to be aired, they had their lawyer send a threatening letter to Fox Network. Ultimately, the story was pulled and Wilson and Akre were fired. An interesting sideline to this story is the fact that Rupert Murdoch, owner of Fox, also owns a public relations firm that represents Monsanto (Keller, 1999).

So the question that arises is whether or not the connections that exist between the corporate world and the mass media serve to censor the media. This is especially important as it relates to the research contained in this paper. One aspect of the research focuses on the difference between the coverage of mountaintop removal mining in two independent media sources, compared to the coverage in two papers that are owned by media chains. One of the corporate owned newspapers in the study is the *Herald Dispatch*, which is owned by Gannett. According to Gannett's "Game Plan," it is an "international, multi-billion dollar news, information, and communications company that delivers quality products and results for its readers, viewers, advertisers and other customers." One of the philosophies of this "game plan" is that well managed newspapers will "lead to higher profits for [their] shareholders" (*About Gannett*, n.d.).

A look at the members of the board of directors at Gannett reveals just how connected this media company is to a wide range of other corporations. These connections are further strengthened by the fact that several members share directorships

at other companies. First, Douglas H. McCorkindale, Chairman, president and CEO of Gannett, also holds a directorship at Continental Airlines Inc. Gannett board member Karen Hastie Williams holds a directorship at Continental Airlines as well. Next, McCorkindale and board member Stephen P. Munn both hold directorships over funds that are part of the Prudential group of mutual funds. Finally, both James A. Johnson and Solomon D. Trujillo hold directorships at Target Corporations. Board members at Gannett hold directorships at a wide variety of other companies as well, including Lockheed Martin, Textron Corporations, Eastman Chemical Co., Armstrong World Industries, UnitedHealth Group, and others (Interlocking Directorates, n.d.). While these members have no direct ties to the coal industry, their corporate backgrounds and associated biases could potentially affect the newsroom climate of subordinate papers.

Does this mean that members of this board reach down from their lofty positions and either pull a story or fire a reporter? According to Ben Bagdikian, former dean of the school of journalism at U.C. Berkley, this is unlikely to happen (Keller, 1999). The control factor is much more structural. Board members hire and fire top newspaper executives and editors who understand that some stories will result in “static from above” (Keller, 1999). Although editors at some newspapers have more leeway than at others, mainstream media tend not to run stories that offend their major advertisers or people on their corporate boards (Keller, 1999). According to Bagdikian, reporters quickly learn that certain subjects will either not get in the paper or will be buried inside. Since the “payoff” for a reporter is to be published, they simply don’t bother doing stories that they know are not going to appear (Keller, 1999).

As media has consolidated, the number of employees has been downsized, resulting in another form of censorship. With fewer reporters to cover the news, media have come to rely heavily on news from public relations sources such as those who work for corporations or the government (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Therefore, the mechanism of censorship is structural. Given the structural logic of the concentration and centralization of the market, the news reports are filter through this ownership mechanism. In addition to providing a steady source of news, these agencies are considered to be credible. Dissident sources are sometimes expensive to find and must be carefully checked out (Herman, 1999). Using official sources as the basis for news allows reporters to avoid the controversy associated with determining what is legitimate news (McChesney, 1999). However, it also means that stories are often shaped to meet the needs of corporations and the government (Keller, 1999).

When journalists rely heavily on official sources, this allows the officials to frame the issues and to use words in ways that serve their agenda (Herman, 1999) “The integration of word usage, framing, and source selection point up to the fact that language is an arena of conflict and struggle” (Herman, 1999, p. 283). Since words carry with them their associated connotations, propagandists seek to “label” their opponents in negative ways, while trying to create positive overtones for their supporters (Parenti, 2003). Herman calls these “snarl” words and “purr” words and suggests that industry affiliates often use words such as “extremists” and “junk science” to delegitimize oppositionists (1999, p.287).

Another “filter” through which the news must travel is what Chomsky and Herman call “flak.” “Flak” consists of negative feedback to a media story or program

(1988). While flak can come in many forms, such as letters, phone calls, speeches, and lawsuits, the most serious forms of flak are related to power (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Therefore, the most serious media challenges are usually associated with those having the most money and power.

The aforementioned outline of the historical development of media structures clearly reveals the events that have led to the development of the “filters” that make up the propaganda model. Chomsky and Herman mention a fifth filter, anticommunism as a control mechanism; however, due to the limited nature of this research, this filter will be discussed in the last section as a suggested topic of later research.

As has been shown, all of these “filters” are tied to the free market system. McChesney suggests that the media system exists as it does because powerful interests have shaped it to their benefit. These markets are not value free. They work to the benefit of those with money (McChesney, 1999). In a capitalist society, where a small number of people hold a disproportionate amount of the wealth, McChesney points out that democracy works best when “there exists a democratic spirit, a notion that an individual’s welfare is directly and closely attached to the welfare of the community, however broadly community may be defined (1999, p. 285). Therefore, what appear to be positions that reflect a neutral community interest is in essence, a class bias of the news. In fact, based on class analysis, ideological social control is an important instrument of how the capitalist class achieves power in a capitalist society. In West Virginia, the coal industry is probably the most influential industry that exists. Therefore, if we apply class analysis to the specific West Virginia case, then we can understand how coal monopolies are the most powerful economic actors in the economy.

The coal industry's influence is so far-reaching that the decision by Judge Haden to limit the process of mountaintop removal mining brought instant reaction from government officials, including then-Governor Cecil Underwood. The coal industry in essence was able to use flak to convince state administrators that any regulation on coal industry would economically cripple the state. Governor Underwood immediately called for a governmental spending freeze. Four months later, Oshel Graigo, Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, requested that the Center for Business and Economic Research of the Lewis College of Business at Marshall University conduct a study to determine the impact the decision to limit mountaintop removal mining would have on the coal industry. It is glaringly apparent in the introductory section of the report that the researchers were trying to make the connections between the well being of the coal industry and well being of the "community," which is defined in the study in terms of West Virginia's southwestern counties. According to the report, "If there is any single element that defines the bounds of a regional economy, it is the intensity of the interrelationships that inexorably bind the economic fate of one group to the well-being of all others" (Burton, Hicks, & Kent, 2000) In fact, if the report is to be believed, coal is such an important part of the region's economy that a decline in coal-related economic activity would "affect the nature and magnitude of *all other* commercial activity in the region" (Burton, Hicks, & Kent, 2000, p. 1 – emphasis is mine). The report also mentions the "vast sums" of money that mining companies have spent to protect the practice of mountaintop removal mining and states that "even the mining industry's most ardent detractors must realize that mining management would have preferred to distribute these monies as profits" (Burton, Hicks, & Kent, 2000, p. 1). What is significant about this

report is that Marshall University's business school legitimated mountaintop removal by pretending to use neutral public relations words to support the powerful interests of the coal industry. This pattern of collusion between the university and the industry has been articulated by many theorists including Christopher Simpson in *Universities and Empires* (1998) and Lawrence Soley in *Leasing the Ivory Tower* (1995). Furthermore, an industry that would spend "vast sums" of money to protect its interests would logically use every weapon at its disposal to influence popular opinion. The purpose of this research is to explore to some degree the extent to which the coal industry is able to exert its power over the local media in its quest to shape public opinion.

CHAPTER III

Theoretical Framework

The broad framework of this paper is derived from Marxian theory, based on the idea of historical class conflict that reveals a record of oppression and exploitation of the lower classes by members of the upper classes. According to Marx, the economic base, or substructure, of a society influences the superstructure, consisting of its ideas, values, laws, and social and political institutions (Farganis, 2000). This control of a society's ideology then becomes a structural mechanism by which to control the servant class. "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of a society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it" (Farganis, 2000, p. 53). Marx's suggestion that the class that serves as the ruling material force of society also becomes the dominant political and ideological force in society serves as the underlying assumption of this research (Farganis, 2000).

From the broad framework of class conflict and exploitation, the theoretical framework of this paper is narrowed to focus specifically on the idea of ideological social control as it is used in the mass media. The model that has been used is Herman's theory of media constraints by the free-market system. According to this theory, market forces create structures within the media system that limit free expression and tend to advance the ideologies and class biases of the economic elite (Herman, 1995). Herman suggests

that there are five filters built into the media system that tend to promote the ideologies of the economic elite and filter out stories that challenge the status quo.

The first filter stems from the fact that ownership of the media is limited to those who possess enough capital to enter the media industries. These members of the economic elite serve as “gatekeepers” through which other interest groups must go in order to gain access to the media (Herman, 1995). This control mechanism is strengthened by the fact that media have been further integrated into the market by increased competition and mergers, resulting in greater pressure to focus on profitability. This focus on the bottom line provides the basis of the second system of constraint. Herman suggests that the media have become very sensitive to the needs of advertisers. Stories that represent controversial or oppositional views are often not printed for fear of alienating those who provide this source of income. Furthermore, since the owners of news sources are members of the economic elite themselves, and embrace the same ideological assumptions, they tend to promote the status quo and marginalize dissent (Herman, 1995).

The media’s quest for cheap sources that are credible and provide a reliable supply of information contributes to the third factor that causes market forces to limit free expression. Using governmental or corporate sources is easier and cheaper because these sources are seen as being more credible. They also provide a constant supply of newsworthy information. It is more difficult and costly to locate and check out dissident sources; therefore, they are used less often (Herman, 1995).

A fourth factor that serves as a means of constraint in the market system is the use of “flak.” Flak is negative feedback that threatens or imposes costs upon the media

system. Flak takes many different forms, from letters to the editor, to the threat of financial harm from libel suits and boycotts. In whatever form, it represents a challenge to the media system, and often serves to limit dissident voices or coverage of controversial topics (Herman, 1995).

The final factor in media control by market forces are the ideological premises of the system, which reflect a culture centered on private property. However, due to time constraints, this factor will not be addressed in this paper. It could, however, provide a topic of later research. One argument used by industry supporters in the mountaintop removal issue is the fact that coal companies should have the right to do anything they want to their own property. It would be very informative to research the extent to which the industry and its supporters use this argument, and how dissidents attempt to counter it.

According to Herman, one of the great merits of the free-market constraint system is that it works naturally, without explicit censorship (1995). In fact, many editors argue that it is not censorship, but news selection that tends to limit the kinds of stories that are reported by the media (Keller, 1999). However, as Michael Parenti points out in *Methods of Media Manipulation*, the press has to be selective, but there appears to be a question about the principal of selectivity that is involved. “Media bias does not occur in a random fashion; rather it moves in the same overall direction again and again, favoring management over labor, corporations over corporate critics, affluent Whites over low-income minorities, corporations over corporate critics, and officialdom over protesters” (Parenti, 2003).

This thesis incorporates the theoretical assumptions of Marx's theory of capitalist political economy. Based on this work, I have derived a number of assumptions that may be applied to the media. In the first volume of *Capital*, Marx describes the concentration and centralization of markets. Thus, in the later phases of capitalism, the large corporation emerges as the most important economic actor in a capitalist society (Fox, 1993). Therefore, based on this trend, we can understand the significance of the concentration and centralization of the media. The empirical trend indicates that the international mainstream media is controlled by six major media outlets. This trend in the concentration and centralization is fundamentally linked to the ownership filter of the news. It is important to understand this theory is based on a structural analysis of power. As a structural basis of power, the concentration and centralization constrains the news (Fox, 1993).

In addition, Marx's theory of class analysis is applied to the media for this research. In this regard, in the third volume of *Capital*, Marx argues that class may be analyzed as an economic basis and a social basis. The economic basis of the capitalist class is derived from the ownership interests in the large transnational corporation. Since the mainstream media is characterized by large transnational corporations, we can understand the theoretical context of the class basis of the mainstream media. In Marxist terminology, we can say that the large mainstream media represents a class-in-itself. However, as Marx explains, social systems are not just produced, they must also be reproduced. Therefore, Marx develops a sophisticated understanding of how an economic base (e.g. capitalism) is maintained by a social superstructure (e.g. media, laws, education, the state, religion, and ideological systems). In this regard, we can understand,

at a concrete level, how the mainstream media is part of a social superstructure. Therefore, the mainstream media represents the class interests of the capitalist class. If we apply this theoretical assumption to the specific class nature of West Virginia, then we can understand how the large coal conglomerates represent the economic basis of the capitalist class in this state. Therefore, on any issue of strategic importance to this powerful industry, the mainstream media must legitimate and support. The mainstream media in this regard will reproduce the class relations of a class stratified society. At the surface, the issues will appear to be neutral, but the essence of the ideological justification is that the mainstream media supports class bias. As Chomsky and Herman point out, this is more effective than overt censorship. Overt censorship would be easy to detect, therefore, members of the capitalist class must enlist high paid prizefighters for the capitalist class (e.g. journalists and economists) to manufacture the consent of the masses with an objective, neutral and professionalized media that conceals the class interests.

CHAPTER IV

Methodology

The purpose of this section is to explain the method of procedure by describing the purpose, sample, and general design of the research. The research problem, an examination of censorship in media sources, suggests the method of content analysis. Content analysis is defined as “ the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those values using statistical methods, in order to describe the communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from the communication to its context, both of production and consumption” (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998).

Content analysis has several advantages. First, content analysis includes the advantage of economy in time and money. This allows for quality research to be conducted without the expense of a large research staff (Babbi, 2001). Another advantage of content analysis is that it allows for portions of the research to be repeated if the researcher deems it necessary (Babbi, 2001). A third advantage of content analysis is that it permits the study of processes over a long period of time (Babbi, 2001). This is particularly advantageous for this research project, since the legal process relating to mountaintop removal that served as a basis for the study transpired over a matter of months. A final advantage of content analysis is that, like other unobtrusive measures, it seldom has an effect on the subject being studied (Babbi, 2001).

While content analysis has several advantages, it has disadvantages as well, especially with regard to reliability and validity. Reliability is defined as agreement

among coders about categorizing content (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998). If the research is simply measuring manifest content, reliability is easily achieved as long as the conceptual and operational definitions specify how the concepts of interest can be recognized in the content (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998). However, the reliability of the research is only as important as the validity of the research; that is, the extent to which a measure reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration (Babbi, 2001). Therefore, in order to maximize the validity of the research, I employed an examination of both manifest and latent content. That is, I first used quantitative methods to define the number of times certain words appeared in the coded articles. However, this did not always give the underlying meaning. Thus, it was necessary to examine the latent content. I reported these findings through a descriptive analysis of the articles. For example, I found that simply counting the number of times the word *jobs* was repeated in an article did not accurately reflect the underlying meaning. Sometimes those opposed to mountaintop removal stated that it *reduced* the number of jobs. Therefore, simply counting the number of times the word *jobs* was used in the article would give a false impression that the article reflected a positive attitude toward mountaintop removal mining

Another way in which I attempted to address the problems of validity and reliability was by refining the instrumentation in order to ensure that I was accurately measuring the positive and negative aspects of mountaintop removal mining. In fact, I had to read through several articles to get an understanding of how the issue was being defined in both positive and negative language in order to craft a final coding schema. To address the problem of reliability, I attempted to conceptualize and operationalize the coding process in very definite language that would allow for replication with similar

results. The problem of validity, as I mentioned earlier, was addressed through qualitative analysis.

The design of the research involved a content analysis of four media sources, each having certain distinctions. The first source was the *Charleston Gazette*, an independently owned newspaper that has been controlled by the Chilton family since 1912. Unlike the other media sources in the research project, the *Gazette* employs an investigative reporter assigned to cover environmental issues. The second newspaper included in the research was the *Logan Banner*, a subsidiary of Smith news. I chose this paper because its offices are located in the heart of coal country and I wanted to examine the difference between media coverage by a newspaper embedded in a coal community and that of media coverage outside coal communities. A third source for this research project was *Graffiti*, a monthly entertainment magazine that also contains social commentaries. It is located in Charleston, West Virginia. I chose this source because it represents the only alternative news source in the area. The final media source for the project was the *Herald Dispatch*, a Huntington based newspaper that is a subsidiary of *Gannett*, one of the top six global media conglomerates that exist today.

The selection of these media sources actually resulted in the first step of the analysis, which was the examination of ideological control through the first “filter” of ownership. As mentioned in the Review of the Literature, newspapers that are owned by large conglomerates tend to represent the associated class biases of the economic elite (Herman, 1999). This is in part due to the fact that members of the controlling boards of directors for these media giants also serve as board members of other corporations (Keller, 1999). Research suggests that reporters working for media conglomerates often

avoid writing stories that might be offensive to either major advertisers or corporations with ties to the parent media company (Keller, 1999). The underlying reason for this type of analysis was to determine if there was a difference in the way the issue of mountaintop removal was reported in the independent and alternative sources, the *Charleston Gazette* and *Graffiti*, as opposed to how the issue of mountaintop removal was reported in the *Logan Banner* and the *Herald Dispatch*, each of which are owned by media conglomerates.

The next step of the research process was deciding on the target time period I would use in the study. I wanted to choose a time frame that would produce the greatest amount of information on the subject. With this in mind, I chose to use the year 1999 as the basis of the study, due to the large amount of attention that was focused on mountaintop removal resulting from a lawsuit filed by a group of coalfield residents and the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, an environmental group in Charleston, West Virginia. The lawsuit, filed on July 19, 1998, involved several charges against the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection for a “pattern and practice” of violations in issuing mountaintop removal permits (Bragg et. al. v. Roberson et. al.). At this time, Hobet Coal Company, a subsidiary of Arch Coal, had applied for a permit to expand operations at Dal-Tex Spruce Number Nine mine, located near Blair in Logan County, West Virginia. This would have made the Dal-Tex operation the largest mountaintop removal site in the state of West Virginia. In the ensuing months, Judge Haden issued a temporary injunction to stop Arch Coal from obtaining a permit, pending the upcoming court case. This injunction was later made permanent. These events were

followed closely in local media sources, providing an opportunity for close analysis of the issue.

Using Chomsky and Herman's propaganda model as the framework, I began the analysis by creating a coding scheme that would reflect the amount of influence each of four filters had on the delivery of the stories. The first step in the process was simply counting the number of stories that each source had published during the target time frame to determine the amount of coverage the story received. Then, since framing plays a role in ideological control, I coded each story based on the location of the story within the source. According to Michael Parenti, framing allows communicators to create an impression without departing from the "appearance of objectivity" (*Monopoly Media Manipulation, 2003*). It is achieved in the way news is packaged, the amount of exposure, the tone of the presentation, and the placement. The placement involves such details as whether it is located on the front page, or buried within, and whether it is the lead story or the last (*Monopoly Media Manipulation, 2003*). The assumption is that stories on the front page receive the most attention, as do lead stories. The complete coding schema is given in the appendix.

Another consideration for the analysis was the author of the story. Three of the four sources used in this study use both staff writers and stories from the Associated Press. *Graffiti* was coded somewhat differently, since the magazine does not have staff writers. Guest columnists or editors submit all articles. I did differentiate between "regular" contributors and "guest" contributors, based on an interview with the managing editor, Michael Lipton. The rationale for this distinction is the fact that, with downsizing, fewer and fewer staff writers are assigned to cover local stories; therefore, local readers

often receive information through the lens of outside journalists who are working for conglomerates. This is another layer of the “ownership” filter.

The source of the story is another filter through which information must travel, and thus became part of the structural analysis of the research (Herman, 1999). I first coded each story in terms of who was cited first in the story as a source of information. The categories used for this section of the coding scheme were as follows: industry source, government source, environmental source, coalfield resident, Judge Haden, other. I further defined this as being the first person either directly or indirectly quoted. I operationalized the categories as follows:

Industry source: Any individual with an affiliation to the coal industry including miners, lawyers representing the coal industry, industry owners, operators, managers and public relations officials.

Government source: Any individual holding public office or representing someone in public office. These included DEP officials, lawyers representing the DEP, and spokesmen for various public officials.

Environmental source: Any individual belonging to or representing an environmental organization, or any individual who identified themselves as an environmentalist.

Coalfield Resident: Any individual self-defined as living in the coalfields, or individuals identified by the news source as being a resident of the coalfields.

Judge Charles Haden: Judge presiding over the lawsuit.

Other: Any individual who did not fit into the above categories. These included a freelance writer, a Unitarian minister and a representative for the Commission on Religion in Appalachia.

After coding the story based on the first source cited, I continued to code each article according to the number and types of sources included in each story. I used the above categories, and simply recorded each type of source that was used in the story. For example, if two DEP officials were quoted in the story, as well as a lawyer for the DEP, that story would be coded as having three government sources. Not only did this allow me to look at the use of sources as a “filter,” it also allowed for an examination of how balanced each story was. According to his analysis of media manipulation, Michael Parenti suggests that both sides of an issue are seldom given equal prominence (*Monopoly Media Manipulation, 2003*).

The next step in the analysis was to try and determine whether or not the articles presented the issue of mountaintop removal in a positive or negative manner. I used jobs and economic benefits as variables representing the positive aspects of mountaintop removal. The variables *jobs* and *economy* were operationalized in the following manner: Jobs – the word *jobs* was used as an indicator, whether the article stated that mountaintop removal provides jobs, or that stopping mountaintop removal would cause loss of jobs. Economy – again, the word *economy* was the primary indicator, whether the article stated that mountaintop removal was beneficial to the state’s economy or whether it stated that the loss of mountaintop removal would be harmful to the economy.

I used the variables *environmental harm* and *destruction of property* to indicate the negative aspects of mountaintop removal. I operationalized these variables in the following manner:

Environmental harm – in order for an article to be coded as reflecting environmental harm, it actually had to mention harm or devastation of the environment. This could

include such things as loss of streams, loss of animal life, loss of vegetation or violations of the clean water act. I did not include neutral statements such as “filling streams” because it does not show the environmental harm. Without an explanation of why filling streams is detrimental to the environment, I did not think it was adequately reflective of environmental harm.

Destruction of property – this included any mention of destruction of personal property including homes, vehicles, water wells, and graveyards resulting from the process of mountaintop mining.

I first coded all the articles on a binomial scale for each variable. I coded the article as zero if the variable was not mentioned, and one if it was. I later realized that this was not giving an accurate representation of the importance of each factor. For example, if jobs were mentioned three times in an article, and environmental harm was mentioned only once, the article was coded to reflect that the variable was mentioned, but not how many times. In order to solve this problem, I chose a target sample within the overall sample population and coded those articles to reflect the number of times each variable was mentioned. The month of October was chosen as the target time frame because that was the month Judge Haden issued his decision and there was extensive coverage of the issue within that time frame. In retrospect, I realize that I should have included the variable *destruction of property* in that target sample; however, I did not. I simply counted the number of times the variables *jobs* and *economy* were mentioned to illustrate the positive aspects of mountaintop removal. Then, to show that perhaps there was a false sense of balanced coverage, I counted the number of times the environment was mentioned in a neutral fashion; that is, without defining *how* the environment was being harmed. I then

counted how many times each article mentioned specific harm to the environment as I operationalized the term above.

As I mentioned earlier, I described both the manifest and latent content of the articles. The preceding coding system only explains the steps taken in examining the manifest content of the articles. The rationale for and explanation of the descriptive analysis is given in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The purpose of my research was to examine four media sources for bias, using Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model and Herman's free market theory as a theoretical framework around which the analysis was built. Due to time constraints, the research focused primarily on the variables of ownership, sourcing, advertising, and to a small degree, flak. I gave the justification for the selection of the target media sources in the methodology chapter, but for the sake of clarity, I will give a short justification in this section as well. According to the propaganda model, ownership of media plays a significant role in the determination of what will be published in individual newspapers. Therefore, I wanted to examine media sources that would represent ownership by a media conglomerate, independent ownership, and alternative media. The four sources I chose were the *Charleston Gazette*, an independent newspaper located in Charleston West Virginia; the *Herald Dispatch*, which is owned by media conglomerate Gannett and located in Huntington, West Virginia; the *Logan Banner*, located in the heart of the coalfields in Logan County, is also owned by media conglomerate Smith news; and *Graffiti*, an alternative media magazine located in Charleston, West Virginia.

In order to get an idea of each paper's newsroom climate on the mountaintop removal issue, I began by looking at the editorials written by either the editorial board or the editorial page editor. These articles were not coded, as were the regular articles. Instead, for the purpose of this paper, I gave a qualitative description of each paper's stance on the issue and drew some conclusions about each. To begin, *Charleston Gazette* editorials were obviously slanted in favor of the environment, placing the blame for

layoffs and economic demise on the coal industry itself. In one editorial, Dan Radmacher, the editorial page editor, posed the question, “If coal is so good the state and its people, why is West Virginia, with perhaps the richest coal deposits in the nation, so terribly poor? (1999a). He pointed out the inevitability of the fact that West Virginia’s coal supply would eventually be gone and called on state leaders to quit “giving away the store to the coal owners” (Radmacher, 1999b).

In another editorial, Dan Radmacher called for the enforcement of provisions in federal law that call for development of reclaimed land that receives an “approximate original contour variance.” He said the Surface Mine and Reclamation Act was supposed to develop a social compact between coal companies and the public that would allow the use of a socially and environmentally disruptive form of mining on a limited basis, providing the companies left something behind for communities. He was referring to a mine ruling that requires post-mining land closely resemble the general surface configuration of pre-mining land. The only way mountaintop removal can be permitted is under a variance that allows mine operators to leave land flat, or with gently rolling hills, instead of steep slopes. Under federal law, this variance can only be granted if mine operators have specific plans to develop flat land for public use such as schools, businesses, public parks or other improvements (Ward, 1998).

In conducting a qualitative analysis of each paper, I attempted to examine each article in terms of the following: a) language used to label environmentalists b) language used to present pro-environmental views c) language used to define the issue in terms of jobs d) language used to define the issue in terms of economic impact e) language used to label miners f) language used to describe coal industry g) language used to describe the

process of mountaintop removal. The justification for this is that language itself is a means of propaganda and ideological control. Mainstream media people “seek to prefigure our perception of a subject with positive or negative labels” (Parenti,2003).

Analysis of articles in the *Charleston Gazette* revealed a great deal of negative labeling of environmentalists. It should be noted that these labels were applied by government and industry officials, not news reporters; however, the implications of propaganda still remain due to the fact that the newspaper relies so heavily on these types of sources. I will discuss this in further detail later in the paper. For now, I will focus simply on the descriptive language used in some of the articles, beginning with language used to describe environmentalists. These labels included: extremists, radicals, and lizard lovers. Further, there was an effort to portray them as outsiders by labeling them as “out-of-state” environmentalists.

Along with the negative labels, environmentalists were portrayed as having an agenda: shutting down the entire coal industry. Cecil Roberts, president of the state United Mine Workers, said that the goal of environmentalists was to shut down the nation’s coal industry “without regard to the people, families, or communities affected (Ward, 1999c) He later depicted the coal miners as having been “kicked in the teeth” by environmentalists. West Virginia Governor Cecil Underwood alluded to the same agenda. “Let’s not make any mistake about it,” said Underwood. “The driving force behind the lawsuit are extreme environmentalists who want to see the entire industry gone” (Peculiar: Underwood on the Warpath). Richard Lawson, president of the National Mining Association, made even broader accusations. “The people in West Virginia’s coal

industry happen to be the number one target,” he said. “But right behind them are all of the other coals industries and all of the other industries” (Ward, 1999u).

A connection between local politicians and the industry was also reflected in these articles. Politicians called for compromise, but their comments revealed a distinct industry bias and labeled environmentalists as uninformed and uncaring. Following Judge Haden’s decision limiting the use of mountaintop removal mining, the congressional delegation from West Virginia released a statement saying it was “time to put aside whatever animosity exists between coal mining industry and the environmental movement. It is time to realize that we are all West Virginians and that we share common values and a common vision for the future. Divisiveness is not now, nor has it ever been, the road to prosperity.” (Ward, 1999m) However, there were indications that voices from both sides were not heard equally. In a November article, Ken Ward, Jr. reported that, while United Mine Workers members and coal industry supporters got a “warm” welcome from West Virginia’s congressional delegation in Washington, D.C., coalfield residents and residents who favored more strict regulation were “not greeted as well” (Ward, 1999o).

While the congressional delegation was calling for a truce between environmentalists and coal miners, Robert C. Byrd, United States Senator, made his feelings about environmentalists known. “These head-in-the cloud individuals peddle dreams of an idyllic life among old-growth trees, but they seem ignorant of the fact that, without the mines, jobs will disappear, tables will go bare, schools will not have the revenue to teach our children, towns will not have the income to provide even basic needs” (Ward, 1999r). And, in case there was any question about which side he

supported, Byrd made his position even clearer. “These dreamers...they have been carrying their banners around some of the meetings that I have addressed. They might as well talk to the trees. I am speaking for the coal miners” (Ward, 1999r).

Governor Cecil Underwood, a former coal industry executive, also spoke of his support for the coal industry. “I will never apologize for fighting every step of the way to protect your jobs from people who don’t really care about your future” (Martell, 1999). And while state political leaders were expressing their support of the coal industry, UMWA President Cecil Roberts claimed he was trying to promote “common sense” willingness to compromise. He said that coal miners were not only “under assault” from environmental challenges to mountaintop removal, but also from stiffer air pollution standards and a global warming treaty. He stated that while he lived in the “real world,” environmentalists lived in a “fantasy world” (Hodel, 1999b).

Industry officials put their own spin on the environmental impact of mountaintop removal mining. “We do our job so well and so safely and environmentally well that no one – except for editorialists and some others – know we’re there,” said Richard Lawson, president of the National Mining Association (Ward, 1999u). Lawson went on to say, “American businesses should not have to spend money on domestic environmental improvements, when they could be spending it to help developing nations expand their economies (Ward, 1999u). According to Lawson, “the most precious thing in the world is capital” (Ward, 1999u). Finally, a writer to a vent line run by Logan’s internet service provider summed up the situation in this way, “The sooner these extremists learn that economic might does make right the better” (Hodel, 1999e).

Environmentalists presented a different view of the industry. Joe Lovett, a lawyer representing environmentalists and coalfield residents in the lawsuit against Hobet, accused the coal company of using political and economic pressure to exempt its Spruce mine from Federal environmental laws. He said their actions “demonstrate corporate arrogance and a stubborn refusal to play by the same rules that apply to everybody else” (Ward, 1999d). But perhaps some of the strongest language used against the industry came from an article that was reprinted from *Mother Jones Magazine*. The writer of the article accused Big Coal of leveling the mountains and tearing communities apart. According to the article, machines do most of the work in mountaintop removal mining, and coal miners and communities are an “inconvenience” (Mother Jones Magazine hits mountaintop removal, 1999). Also, the article reported that David Todd, Vice President of Arch Coal Inc., called Judge Haden’s temporary injunction against Hobet unconscionable. The writer of the *Mother Jones* article questioned Todd’s concern for the workers. “ In the past year, 900 union miners have been laid off in West Virginia due to reduced domestic demand...and a general consolidation in the coal industry. Nobody marched on Charleston when those cuts were made, and no corporate vice president expressed their anger and frustration” (Mother Jones Magazine hits mountaintop removal, 1999).

While environmentalists were labeled in very negative ways, miners fared much better. They were consistently referred to as “fine” individuals, who were “hard working” and who earned their bread “by the sweat of their brow.” There was also an attempt to define the conflict in terms of environmentalists having a higher regard for non-human

life than for miners. Pictures at protests showed miners carrying signs such as “We’re people – not spotted salamanders” and “Protect the species at the top of the food chain.”

Another difference between the environmental perspective and the industry perspective was in the language used to define the issue. Environmentalists defined the issue in terms of the need for making the industry follow regulations. They called for peaceful solutions to the crisis and spoke of a need for justice for the people, mountains and streams of West Virginia. Speaking about an environmental impact study being designed by federal regulators, Charleston businessman and environmentalist Ted Armbrrecht said, “Mitigation proposals assume that you can destroy a habitat and go back in and restore it. Is not the destruction of the habitat a violation of the law?” (Ward, 1999v). In a November article, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., compared the fight for the environment to a fight for community and justice. He said that tearing down the landscapes of West Virginia for a few dollars would be like “tearing the last pages out of the last Bible” (Kabler, 1999). In most cases, however, environmentalists seemed to avoid emotional language and defined the situation in concrete terms, calling for the coal industry to stop violating regulations such as the Clean Water Act and to abide by the regulations of the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act.

Coal industry affiliates were more likely to define the situation in terms of conflict and a personal assault against them. The language was emotional in nature and implied far-reaching consequences. Those who sided with the coal industry used language such as: “fight,” “battle,” “war,” “economic genocide,” “scary,” “tragic news,” “irreparable harm,” and “anti-mining movement.” In describing the consequences of mountaintop removal legislation, the following statements were used: “miners will suffer

greatly,” “mining will be brought to a grinding halt,” “end of all mining in southern West Virginia,” “unprecedented economic and social dislocation,” “massive revenue losses,” “statewide economic consequences,” and “end of life as we know it.”

In at least one instance, the language of violence escalated into real violence. In a march to commemorate the Battle of Blair Mountain, Secretary of State Ken Heckler and James Weekly, a litigant in the lawsuit against Arch Coal, were verbally assaulted and pelted with eggs by members of the United Mine Workers (Hodel, 1999d). In an editorial, Dan Radmacher compared those who attacked Heckler to coal industry thugs. Radmacher said that United Mine Worker members had allowed themselves to be manipulated by the industry. He pointed out that many of them had been featured in commercials that showed the economic benefits of coal, but did not show the environmental and social devastation that results from mountaintop removal mining (Radmacher, 1999c).

In terms of job loss, industry affiliates spoke of “massive” job loss and implied that Haden’s decision did not recognize the human impact that limiting mountaintop removal would bring. State politicians asserted they were attempting to present a balanced view, but their primary focus tended to promote coal industry interests. Following Judge Haden’s decision, the West Virginia Congressional delegation, led by Senator Robert C. Byrd, attempted to attach an environmental rider to unrelated legislation. This rider would have exempted the mining industry from regulations found in the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act. He called his actions a test to determine whether our nation possesses “the creativity, innovation, the drive and determination to protect both our environment and our jobs” (Ward, 1999r). However, as mentioned

earlier, this rider contained little in the way of environmental protection. Byrd himself stated, “This mountaintop mining proposal is an effort to stand up for America’s coal miners and the hundreds of thousands of jobs in scores of other industries that they support (Ward, 1999q). Environmentalists, on the other hand, argued that limiting mountaintop removal would create more jobs because underground mining is more labor intensive.

Prior to the issuance of Judge Haden’s decision limiting mountaintop removal, Governor Cecil Underwood said West Virginia was not “totally tied to coal mining jobs. I think we can do both: balance the use of regulation to protect the environment, but protect the economic base as well” (Regan, 1999). However, at a press conference held the day after Haden issued his decision, Underwood said that he did not believe “the Founding Fathers of this nation intended to allow our court system and government in general to sentence a legal industry authorized by Congress, the people who work in it and the economy of an entire state to legal purgatory” (Ward, 1999h). He later said, “October 20, 1999, will go down as the bleakest day in the recent history of our state of West Virginia” (Ward, 1999i). United Mine Workers President Cecil Roberts echoed these sentiments. “When Judge Charles Haden ruled last week to outlaw most valley fills, he single-handedly sentenced thousands of West Virginia coal miners and other industry workers to almost certain economic death. The only question is how to stop the execution from happening” (Ward, 1999k).

In response, Underwood called for an immediate statewide spending freeze. He also instructed Michael Castle, head of the Department of Environmental Protection, to stop issuing all permits for mountaintop removal, even though Judge Haden clearly stated

in his decision that it only affected future mining operations, not those already in existence (Ward, 1999s). Underwood also asked various state officials for projected revenue losses resulting from Haden's decision. The reported results were economically devastating (Balow, 1999). Further, due to the order to stop the issuance of mining permits, coal companies threatened layoffs, closings, and issued pink slips.

Environmental representatives and many others saw these moves as scare tactics to try and get Judge Haden to reverse his decision or to force lawmakers to rewrite the rules. A *Charleston Gazette* editorial board editorial accused Underwood of using "politics of panic" to further his own political interests. They said Underwood, a former coal executive, wanted to use job losses as a way of garnering support in his effort to overturn Haden's decision (Hyperbole: Playing with jobs, 1999). Environmental lawyers accused Mark Muchow, director of research and development for the tax department, of pulling an assumed reduction of fifty per cent "out of thin air" and leveled similar claims against those responsible for assessing the Logan County school budget (Ward, 1999s). Cindy Rank, a member of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, also said these dire predictions were overblown. "People need to understand that this is not as draconian as the governor would have us believe. This doesn't end coal mining. It would change, but it wouldn't end" (Ward, 1999j). Even Judge Haden expressed his irritation at the actions of the administration. He accused the Underwood administration of "hyperbole" and "dire predictions" that were "at best, misunderstandings and at worst, egregious misrepresentations of significant portions of the ruling" (Ward, 1999p). Nevertheless, to stem public opinion leaning toward panic, Haden eventually relented and stayed his

decision pending an appeal to the United States Supreme Court in Richmond, Virginia (Ward, 1999p).

In concluding this portion of the analysis of the *Charleston Gazette*, I would like to focus on an article that has important implications in relationship to ideological control. In “Mining legislation may have to wait for 2000 election,” Ken Ward, Jr. reported on a forum conducted by the Energy and Mineral Law Foundation to discuss Judge Haden’s decision (1999t). According to Ward, the forum was billed as an open forum; however, it cost \$100 to attend and was attended almost entirely by coal industry officials. Several industry officials in attendance complained about media coverage of the Byrd rider, especially in the national press. “The way the Byrd amendment was being characterized by the environmental community, which was bought lock, stock and barrel by the press and other media, was to allow mining waste to be dumped into streams,” said Ed Green, a lawyer with the firm Crowell & Moring in Washington, D.C., and president of the foundation. In a blatant attempt at media manipulation, Green told those attending the forum to “try to figure out a way to plug the Haden decision” into an ongoing environmental impact statement federal agencies were conducting on mountaintop removal. He said that the ruling was “sort of off in another solar system and must be overturned ” (Ward, 1999t). His advice to those attending was to tell their story “and try to occupy the moral high ground so the story is told by you and not by the environmental community’ (Ward, 1999t). This is a clear indication that the industry not only realized the impact of the media on the issue, but had a strategy for manipulation of the media as well.

The next media source I analyzed was the *Logan Banner*. As before, I started by looking at the editorials written by the paper's editorial board and editors. Keeping in mind that the *Logan Banner* is located in the heart of coal country, it was not surprising to find a completely different view of mountaintop removal reflected in these editorials. Some of the earlier editorials were very critical of Governor Cecil Underwood. In one, the editorial board discussed a bill Underwood signed into law that allowed mountaintop removal sites to be much larger before companies had to pay damage to the state. They said, because of this law, the Environmental Protection Agency had objected to several major mining permits, bringing mining operations in valley fills to a virtual halt. They called for a repeal of this law. They also quoted Senator Jeff Kessler, D-Marshall, who chaired a legislative interim committee on industry blasting and who urged the state to deal with the concerns of southern West Virginia residents who live near strip mines and are subject to their effects (Repeal mine law, 1999). In another editorial they criticized Underwood for disbanding a group formed to write a bill addressing mountaintop removal mining rather than submitting to public scrutiny. "We firmly believe that any talks concerning the mining method must be held in the open" (The coward's way out, 1999).

By late January, the editorial board of the paper was urging Judge Haden to throw out the lawsuit filed by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, saying that it would cost 1,000 jobs. "Stop holding Logan County miners and their families jobs hostage to the concerns of a very small minority" (Enough is enough, 1999). Later editorials encouraged a solution that would protect the environment as well as the economy; however, labeling of environmentalists became increasingly harsh, and two themes

emerged. First, many of these editorials called for some type of action, aimed at either state politicians or Judge Haden. Second, they launched a barrage of accusations against the *Charleston Gazette*.

A March editorial reported that the Logan County Commission was organizing a grass roots effort to either speed up the surface mining trial, or circumvent Judge Haden's order of a temporary injunction against Hobet's application for a mining permit at its Spruce Number Nine mine. The board suggested that the Commission organize the "hundreds of local miners who will lose their jobs" and protest in Judge Haden's neighborhood (It is no surprise, 1999). Their efforts to encourage their readers to participate in political activism was further revealed in an August editorial in which they encouraged readers to clip out a sample letter located inside the paper and send it to Judge Haden. The sample letter contained the paper's pro-industry view of the issue. However, they did attempt to appear somewhat balanced in their views, stating that they believed "industries like the coal industry can work hand in hand with environmentalists for a common good of all West Virginians. Supporting one side does not necessarily mean hatred for the other". (Make your comment, 1999).

With regard to state politicians, the editorial board appeared to try various tactics to sway their opinion. In an August editorial, the board asked Congressman Nick Joe Rahall to clarify the intent of federal legislation governing surface mining, which he helped to write back in the 1977. "We are not asking Rahall to take sides in the issue. Doing so would be tacky. But we are asking him to answer that simple question – and make Haden's job a little easier" (Where are you Nick Joe?, 1999). Two days after Judge Haden's October decision, however, the editorial board was definitely asking Rahall and

other members of the Congressional delegation to take sides. In this editorial, they listed the consequences of Haden's "despicable" ruling, including less money for services, higher taxes, and mass exodus. This was followed by an allusion to the *Charleston Gazette*, as well as an ultimatum for local politicians. They suggested that, "rather than taking out our hostilities on the environmentalists who filed the suit, the liberal Charleston media which has all but endorsed the radical environmental movement, or Judge Haden, we believe that our efforts would be better spent in targeting our Congressional delegation which has apparently taken a 'hands-off' approach on the topic of mountaintop removal and the mining industry in southern West Virginia." The board then recommended that people vote for these politicians' opponents in the next election (A hands-on approach, 1999).

Apparently, their efforts had some impact because a few days later the editorial board was full of praise for Rahall. "Throughout his tenure, Rahall has demonstrated one important trait; that he does whatever he can to ensure the will of the people who placed him in office is carried out" (Nick Rahall, It's up to you, 1999). They said this trait "irks the *Charleston Gazette*, whose editorial board told members of the Logan County Commission recently that it didn't really care about the economy of Logan County" (Nick Rahall, It's up to you, 1999).

Two editorials written by Michael Sisco, managing editor of the *Logan Banner* provided a glimpse of his ideology with regard to the environment and mountaintop removal mining. In a July editorial, Sisco argued that Mother Nature would overcome the actions of men bent on destruction. He cited examples of fish and wildlife found on a site that used to be a nuclear weapons facility, where deer grew to astonishing proportions on

land contaminated by nuclear waste. “There was also the information (which we reported but other state newspapers did not) about reclaimed surface mine land scoring better (as far as wildlife habitat) than land untouched by surface mining activities” (Sisco, 1999c). In another editorial, he specifically stated that he was not environmentally inclined, and said he had “a difficult time siding with salamanders and other such ‘wildlife’ in relationship with industry” (Sisco, 1999f Oct. 31). In this article, Sisco conceded that Judge Haden had “probably” made the right decision in his interpretation of the law. He then implied that blame for the situation should be placed on a number of individuals. First, he said some measure of blame should be placed on Governor Underwood for creating the controversy by signing a law that doubled the size of permitted valley fills. “He did so at the expressed objection of many of his advisors and state leaders, who saw the conflict with environmentalists looming over the horizon” (Sisco, 1999f). He also said blame should be placed on the coal industry for its history of greed, and on environmentalists who have an agenda to stop coal mining. He then called for Congress to revisit the 1977 law regarding surface mining and suggested that the law be rewritten to reflect today’s coal industry. He also said that it should be done in a manner that would provide jobs while protecting the environment (Sisco, 1999f).

As for the regular articles, much of the language was consistent with that found in the *Gazette*. Environmentalists were labeled as “tree huggers,” “the enemy,” and “out-of-state environmentalists.” Miners, on the other hand, were labeled in much more positive terms, such as “fine” and “hard working.” The economic impact was described in very emotional terms such as “devastating,” and “catastrophic,” and spoke of such things as “human costs,” “tragic news,” and the need for “coalfield justice.” Again, industry

affiliates tended to define the issue in terms of conflict, using such words as “under siege,” “assault,” and “threat.” One headline even declared *This is War* and stated that the “Logan County Commission fired the first volley Monday night in what they promise will be the second battle of Blair mountain” (Sisco, 1999a).

There was also evidence of the same type of declarations from elected officials who claimed they were neutral regarding the issue. In July, all five members of the West Virginia congressional delegation told a group of political and business leaders in Logan County to expect no intervention on their behalf in the mining controversy. The delegation said such attempts, would be “unethical and illegal” (Filings go on in mine case, 1999). Governor Cecil Underwood also declared that he sympathized with both sides (Rulon, 1999). However, after Judge Haden’s order for a temporary injunction, these expressions tended to become more industry biased. By April, Underwood stated that he didn’t “see it as a controversial issue. I see it as a life and death issue for West Virginia (Sisco, 1999b). He also declared that the day of Judge Haden’s final decision would go down as “one of the darkest day in the history of our state” (Sisco, 1999e). He made another statement that seemed to echo the interpretation of other industry supporters. Namely, he suggested that Judge Haden’s ruling had no more authority than those rendered by state regulators. “We’ve enforced the law as we have interpreted it, and this (ruling) is just a different interpretation. This is all a matter of interpretation” (Sisco, 1999e). This was a theme found among many industry supporters: if the law doesn’t suit you, either change it or find someone to interpret it in your favor. Logan County Commissioners and the *Logan Banner* editorial board called for the 1977 strip mining laws to be changed to suit the needs of mountaintop removal. When Art Kirkendall,

president of the county commission, learned of Judge Haden's decision, he said, "I read the judge's ruling and if I had a puking trough I would have puked. This ruling set us back twenty-five years" (Sisco, 1999d). He then called for a revision of the 1977 strip-mining legislation.

Even Federal regulators entertained the idea of changing laws to protect the coal industry. In a *Gazette* article, Kathy Karpan, director of the Office of Surface Mining, said that the agency was considering revoking the stream buffer zone rule to allow coal companies to continue dumping waste into streams. "We have a situation where the industry's going to come to a virtual halt, disrupting the lives of hundreds and hundreds of West Virginians (Ward, 1999h).

While the connection between state politicians and the coal industry was reflected in the *Charleston Gazette*, this connection seemed even more obvious in the *Logan Banner*. First, as I have already mentioned, the editorial board of the paper appealed directly to politicians on several occasions, and threatened political repercussions if they failed to respond in an industry-friendly manner. Next, several articles that listed information for pro-industry rallies named top state politicians as key speakers. The only politician reported to have attended a pro-environment rally was Secretary of State, Ken Heckler. Furthermore, one article revealed the fact that the State of West Virginia actually provided funds for a pro-coal rally in Racine, West Virginia. According to this article, the rally has been in existence for sixty-one years and no "serious politician would dare to miss it." In fact, according to the article, it has become "such a fixture that the state Legislature helps fund it with \$4,000 from the state fairs and festivals budget" (Hodel, 1999e). Cecil Underwood, who attended the rally, said, "I do this because I'm the

Governor of the state of West Virginia, a state which has enjoyed the fruits of mountaintop mining for years.” (Hodel, 1999e).

Before continuing with a qualitative analysis of *Graffiti* magazine, I would like to address two issues that pertain exclusively to the *Charleston Gazette* and the *Logan Banner*. First, as I mentioned earlier, the greater part of my analysis dealt with the variables of ownership, sources, language, and advertising. I initially had no intentions of dealing with the variable of flak. However, in analyzing the editorials and articles of the *Logan Banner*, and even some of the articles in the *Gazette*, I realized that this variable needed to at least be mentioned. In this case, it seems that most of the flak was being targeted toward the *Charleston Gazette*. I have already made mention of the Logan Banner editorials that berated the *Charleston Gazette*'s support of environmentalists. Additionally, a group of Logan County businessmen and miners picketed the *Gazette* offices in protest of their coverage of the lawsuit. Much of the criticism was leveled against Ken Ward, Jr. who covers environmental issues for the *Gazette*. I included this analysis because it reflects one method of censorship; that is, attacking the legitimacy of the reporting of the offending journalist and labeling their stories as “bad journalism” (Michael Parenti, 2003). Ken Ward, Jr. was labeled in one case as a “pimp for environmental extremists.” And, while the analysis of flak would be the topic for another research paper, I chose to include an analysis of one letter to the editor, simply because it contained a note from the editor explaining that it had been hand delivered to both the *Logan Banner* and the *Charleston Gazette*, and illustrated a prime example of the type of censorship of which Parenti wrote. Jim Winkler, Vice President of the Logan County Coal Vendors Association, wrote the editorial. In it, he said that mountaintop mining

“should not be about the ego of staff writer Ken Ward, Jr. We have witnessed Mr. Ward walking out of many of the public hearings held on this subject after he hears only what he wants to hear. He has never shown any interest in nor printed what educated people think about this subject. He is guilty of trying to raise those telling false stories to a state of martyrdom” (Winkler *A letter to the Gazette*. March 9). It is interesting that editorial board editorials in the *Logan Banner* accused the *Charleston Gazette* of one-sided journalism. However, their own editorials were clearly one-sided as well.

Another variable that needs to be addressed with regard to the *Logan Banner* and the *Charleston Gazette* is advertising. The propaganda model suggests that advertising plays a role in media censorship because media sources are hesitant to publish stories that might offend their advertisers. In my analysis of these papers, there were two considerations that had to be made. First, I realized that simply identifying ads placed by the coal industry in the *Logan Banner* would not adequately explain the impact of advertising dollars on the paper. The reason for this is because almost every business in the area is in some way linked to the coal industry. Businesses rely on the patronage of miners and their families; therefore, nearly all are supportive of the industry. Thus, offending the coal industry would be tantamount to offending the patrons of nearly all the businesses in the town of Logan and the surrounding area. Next, the propaganda model did not seem to explain the fact that, even though *Charleston Gazette* editorials tended to favor the environmental view, the coal industry continued to place advertisements in their paper. The answer to this paradox lies in the fact that the advertisements themselves were forms of propaganda. With this in mind, I recorded the numbers of advertisements in

each paper that specifically related to mountaintop removal, and gave a brief description of each.

Beginning with the *Logan Banner*, a description of these ads revealed that there was a concerted effort by the labor unions and the coal industry to inundate readers with positive messages about the coal industry, while at the same time playing on the sentiments of state residents by using symbols of religion and family values. One of the ads used by the West Virginia Coal Association was a half page ad picturing a sad-eyed family of five. The ad identified the group as the family of a Dal-Tex coal miner who was losing his job because of Judge Haden's temporary injunction. The caption read, "We're not the enemy. We're your neighbors." Another one fourth page ad showed the front of an ambulance with one of the following captions: "Coal is the heart of a healthy community," "Because coal taxes support local ambulance service, Bill Jeffries got to the hospital on time – and survived a heart attack," "Last year, over \$181 million in coal severance taxes alone were generated by West Virginia coal." Another ad had the caption "It took thousands of years to create – take a few minutes to learn more about it." Featured in this ad were statements such as "We are committed to reclaiming the land. In fact, if you walk some of our older sites, you'd never know mining had ever taken place." It also compared mountaintop removal mining to building a home, saying it was a work in progress, and that, like a home, was not pretty when it was under construction. Another ad with the caption, "The issue isn't just black and white" also gave a list of the benefits of mountaintop removal mining.

One of the most blatant attempts at manipulation was a full-page ad sponsored by the United Mine Workers of America, and the AFL-CIO that showed a family of six,

including a baby and three small children, praying at a dinner table. The caption read, “An American Way of Life.” This ad contained information about Judge Haden’s decision limiting the use of mountaintop removal mining. It stated that their way of life was at stake. “Their work has fueled America’s prosperity. And enabled their families, their communities, to share the good fortune we all share.” According to the ad, Judge Haden ruled that mountaintop removal mining broke certain environmental rules, but said that his broad decision was uncompromising. The ad urged readers to contact President Clinton and ask him to support the environmental rider proposed by Robert C. Byrd and supported by the West Virginia congressional delegation. A final example of propagandistic advertising in the *Logan Banner* was a half page ad featuring a picture of Robert Byrd asking readers to send Byrd a letter in support of mountaintop removal mining. This ad provided a form letter that could be clipped out and included Byrd’s address.

All of the attention directed toward the congressional delegation obviously paid off in the industry’s favor. The United Mine Workers of America and the AFL-CIO paid for a full-page ad thanking the congressional delegation for all their support. The ad featured pictures of Senator Jay Rockefeller, Senator Robert Byrd, Representative Robert Wise, Jr., Representative Alan Mollohan, and Representative Nick Rahall. In the ad, the UMWA and the AFL-CIO thanked the congressional delegates for “fighting for working families,” “strengthening communities,” and “looking out for all West Virginians.”

The Charleston Gazette contained most of the above advertisements as well, with the exception of the one featuring Robert Byrd and the form letter. However, some of the ads were slightly different. The full-page ad sponsored by the West Virginia Coal

Association made the same claims about the commitment to reclaiming the land, but it also stated that surface mining affects only 1% of West Virginia's surface. "Certainly housing developments and new shopping malls have had more total impact on West Virginia's landscape." The ad also gave information about jobs, severance taxes, business taxes, and the amount of coal produced by West Virginia mines. Additionally, while there were a total of twelve ads featuring the caption, "We're not the enemy," two of those ads also contained a caption stating that this family and "those we love – have become casualties in a battle we didn't even start." Finally, the Gazette contained a twelve page insert in the Sunday Gazette Daily Mail that was titled, "The importance of coal to West Virginia." This ad touted the importance of coal in terms of its providing high paying jobs, a tax base for the state, and service to communities. It also attempted to explain the necessity of the mountaintop removal mining method in terms of competition with lower prices coal from the Wyoming Powder Basin. The table on the following page shows the number of times each ad appeared in the *Charleston Gazette* and the *Logan Banner*.

Table 1
 Coal industry advertisements that appeared in the *Charleston Gazette* and the *Logan Banner*.

Advertisements	<u>Logan Banner</u>	<u>Charleston Gazette</u>
1/2 page "We are Not the Enemy"	10	12
1/4 page Picture of Ambulance "Coal is at the heart of a healthy community"	6	5
Full page Thank you to the congressional delegation	1	1
Full-page "An American Way of Life"	1	1
Full-page from West Virginia Coal Association	0	5
1/4 page "It took thousands of years to create"	2	0
1/4 page "The issue is not just black and white"	2	0
1/2 page Form letter for Robert Byrd	2	0
12 page insert on the importance of coal	0	1

Comparatively speaking, the coal industry and its affiliates appear to have spent slightly more advertising dollars in the *Charleston Gazette* than the *Logan Banner*. With the Gazette's apparent support of the environmental position, it might seem unusual that they would spend money on advertisements in this paper; however, the obvious explanation is that they were attempting to counter any negative publicity perceived from the Gazette. An interesting note to this is that *not one* advertisement in support of the environmental perspective appeared in either paper. It must be assumed that these groups did not possess the funds necessary to counter the advertisements placed by the coal industry and their supporters. Therefore, due to the fact that there was no environmental perspective to counter the perspective of the coal industry, these advertisements become another source of ideological control. Furthermore, the fact that environmentalists logically would have attempted to counter coal industry propaganda with their own ads if they had the funding suggests another layer of structural control within the media system that tends to advance the interests of elites and censor the voice of those opposed to corporate agendas. I did not include the *Herald Dispatch* or *Graffiti* in this analysis of advertisements, simply because the target sample from these sources did not contain any ads relating to the issue.

Moving now to the qualitative analysis of *Graffiti*, I began as before to get some idea of the journal's stance on mountaintop removal by looking at the editorial page. As mentioned before, *Graffiti* is only published once a month, so the number of stories is dramatically less than those found in the other sources. In fact, during the target time frame, I found only one editorial piece reflecting the journal's perspective. It said that the industry "spin" on the issue would be the loss of jobs at the hands of "out-of-control"

environmentalists and that the industry would never admit its complicity. “Fact is, if the coal industry, the UMW or state government had the least bit of concern or compassion for our state or its employees, tens of thousands of West Virginians who have depended on the coal industry for their livelihood would be much better off than they are today” (Thank God for Cecil; or, praise the gov’ and pass the ammunition, 1999, November).

Not surprisingly, the issue of mountaintop removal mining and the environment were presented in a completely different manner in this alternative news source than in any of the other sources analyzed in this research. To begin, the devastation of the mining practice was the main focus of most articles. They described the destruction of communities, mountains and streams. Furthermore, while most sources in the other journals referred to jobs in terms of potential losses if mountaintop removal were to be stopped, a totally different perspective was presented in the *Graffiti* articles. In fact, the implication was that mountaintop removal mining itself causes loss of jobs. “Deep mining is where the jobs are, and the more mountaintop removal sites there are, the less deep mine jobs there will be” (Lipton, 1999, April). Denise Giardina, who was a gubernatorial candidate at the time, also defined the issue in terms losses, stating that thousands of deep miners had lost their jobs and had seen their homes destroyed as well (1999, November).

One theme that emerged from the articles was that of manipulation. One of the arguments used by the industry in support of mountaintop removal mining was the need to mine coal more cheaply in order to compete with companies mining coal in the Powder River Basin. Michael Lipton, who is the managing editor of *Graffiti*, said that when Arch “talks about competing with cheaper coal out west, it’s talking about

competing with its own mines, in which it continues to invest heavily in developing” (1999, April). In another article, Denise Giardina accused Cecil Underwood and the congressional delegation of manipulating the fears of West Virginians about the state’s economy (1999, November).

Another difference between the information found in the alternative source, *Graffiti*, and that found in other sources was the language used to describe miners. As I mentioned before, miners were labeled in very positive terms in both the *Charleston Gazette* and the *Logan Banner*. In *Graffiti*, they were described as being “on the warpath,” and having “blind patriotism (to the industry).” There were also implications of violence. Speaking of Larry Gibson and a group of environmentalists who engaged in a walk for the mountains, one columnist said, “There was reason for them to be concerned for their safety. A handful of miners from the nearby Samples Mine had promised to rough Larry up” (Stockman, 1999, September). She also said that environmentalists had been harassed and intimidated (Stockman, 1999, September). Finally, in reference to the UMWA’s affiliation with the coal industry over the issue of mountaintop removal, Denise Giardina summed up the plight of environmentalists, many of whom had family members who once belonged to the UMWA. “It is now necessary to agree to stand idly by while the mountain vistas many of us cherish are destroyed. It is also deemed necessary to give in time and again to any demand the coal industry makes, and to be named an extremist and enemy of the state’s economy for loving mountains more than coal” (1999, November).

The coal industry was also labeled in very negative terms. Among the labels used to describe the coal industry were: “corporate polluters,” “monster,” and “evil empire”

who practiced “corporate greed,” and “manipulation of workers,” and was responsible for a “massacre” of the people and communities of Buffalo Creek. Furthermore, in regard to the legislation signed by Cecil Underwood that sparked environmentalists to file a lawsuit, one writer said, “The coal industry brought this on itself because it was arrogant and believed raw political power fueled by generous campaign contributions would roll over any opposition” (Steenstra, 1999, November).

As I turn my attention now to the qualitative portion of the paper, it is important to note two details. First, due to time constraints, I was unable to conduct an in-depth qualitative analysis of the *Herald Dispatch*. However, I did not want to omit the paper completely from the research project; therefore, I chose to use a representative sample from the paper as a basis for a quantitative analysis. Since I had already chosen the month of October from which to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the variables *jobs*, *economy*, and *environment* in the *Charleston Gazette*, the *Logan Banner*, and *Graffiti*, I decided to use October as the target sample for the *Herald Dispatch*. Thus, the number of articles for the *Herald Dispatch* only represents the number printed during the month of October.

As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, framing of the story, or its placement within the newspaper, represents a form of media manipulation. The assumption is that stories on the front page receive more attention than those buried inside the newspaper. The following table and charts represent the distribution of stories within each newspaper. I have omitted *Graffiti* from the charts because of the format of the journal. No stories appear on the front page of the magazine, and the stories I coded all appeared

inside the front section. In fact, in all but one instance, there was only one section of the magazine.

The table on the following page shows the frequency of articles that were located in each section of the targeted news source. This is followed by graphs that illustrate the percentages. The reason for this type of analysis was to give an understanding of the amount of coverage the issue received, and to look at it's "packaging" in terms of the location of the article within the source. Please keep in mind, the figures for the *Herald Dispatch* represent only the articles for the month of October.

Table 2
 Frequency and location of articles within each news source.

	<u>Banner</u>	<u>Gazette</u>	<u>Graffiti</u>	<u>(October only) Herald Dispatch</u>
Front page	141	75	0	10
Inside front section	7	110	6	3
Inside other section	0	19	0	1
front page business	0	4	0	0
Front page sports	0	1	0	0
Front page local	0	2	0	1
Front page classifieds	0	4	0	0
Total	148	215	6	15

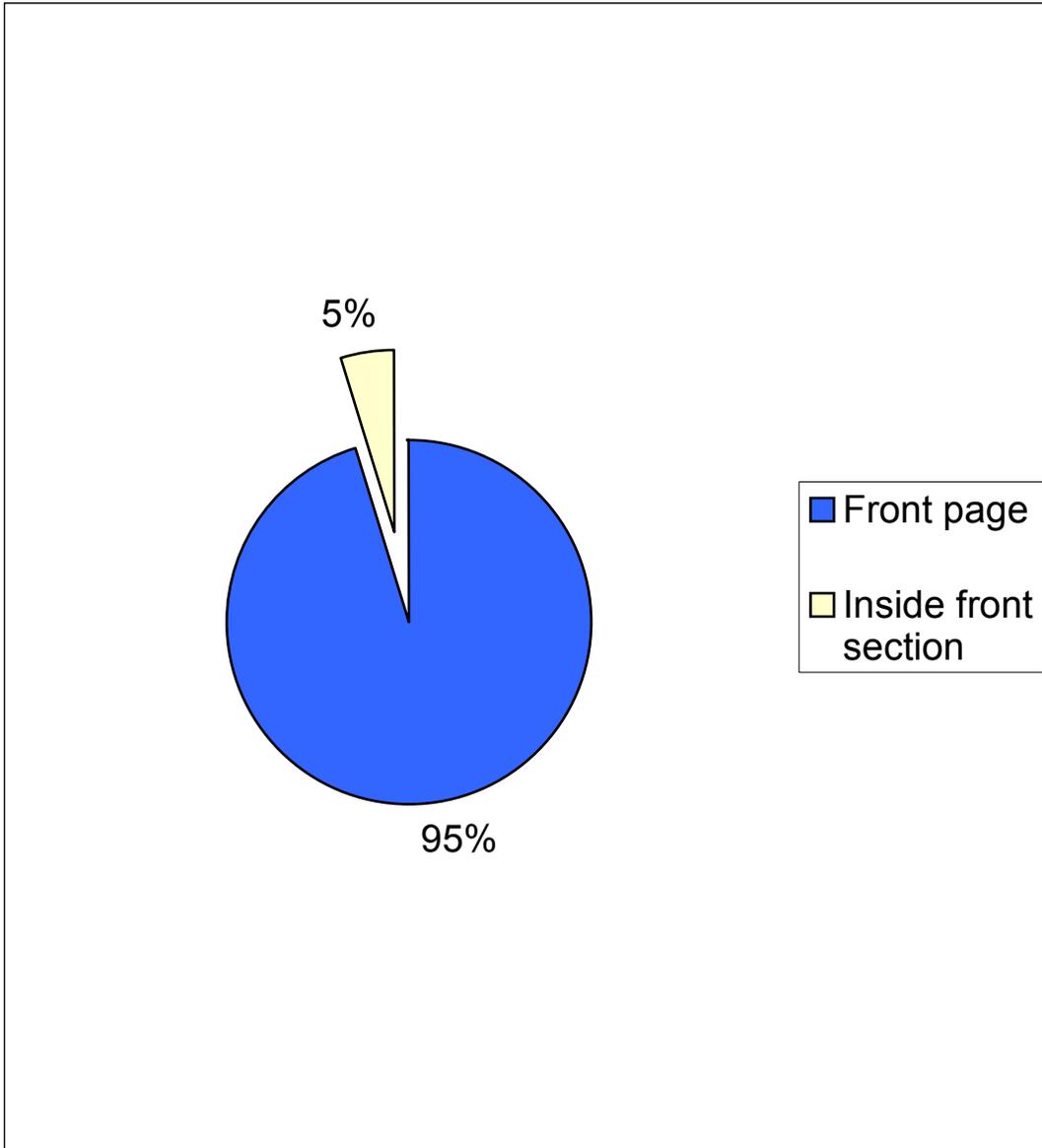


Figure 5.1 Percentage of articles located in each section of the *Logan Banner*.

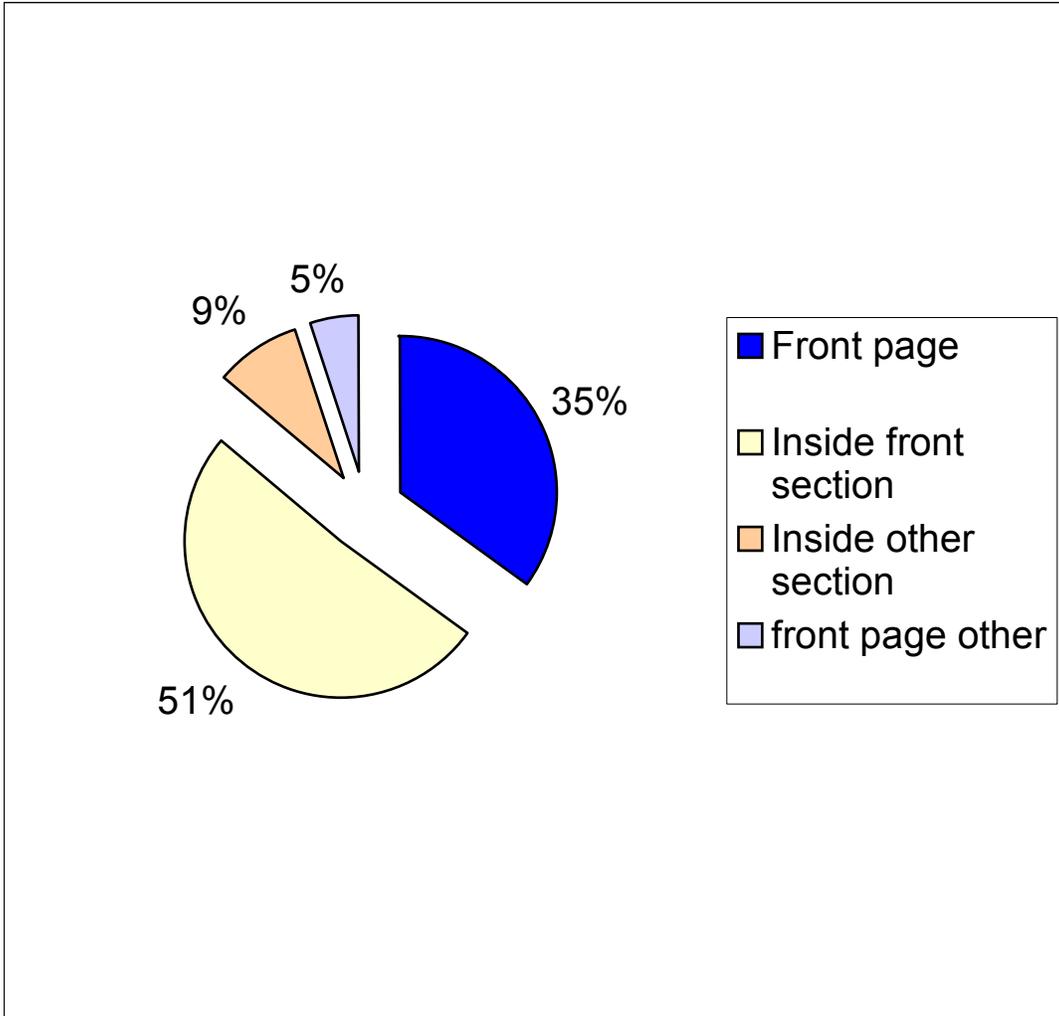


Figure 5.2 Percentage of articles located in each section of the *Charleston Gazette*

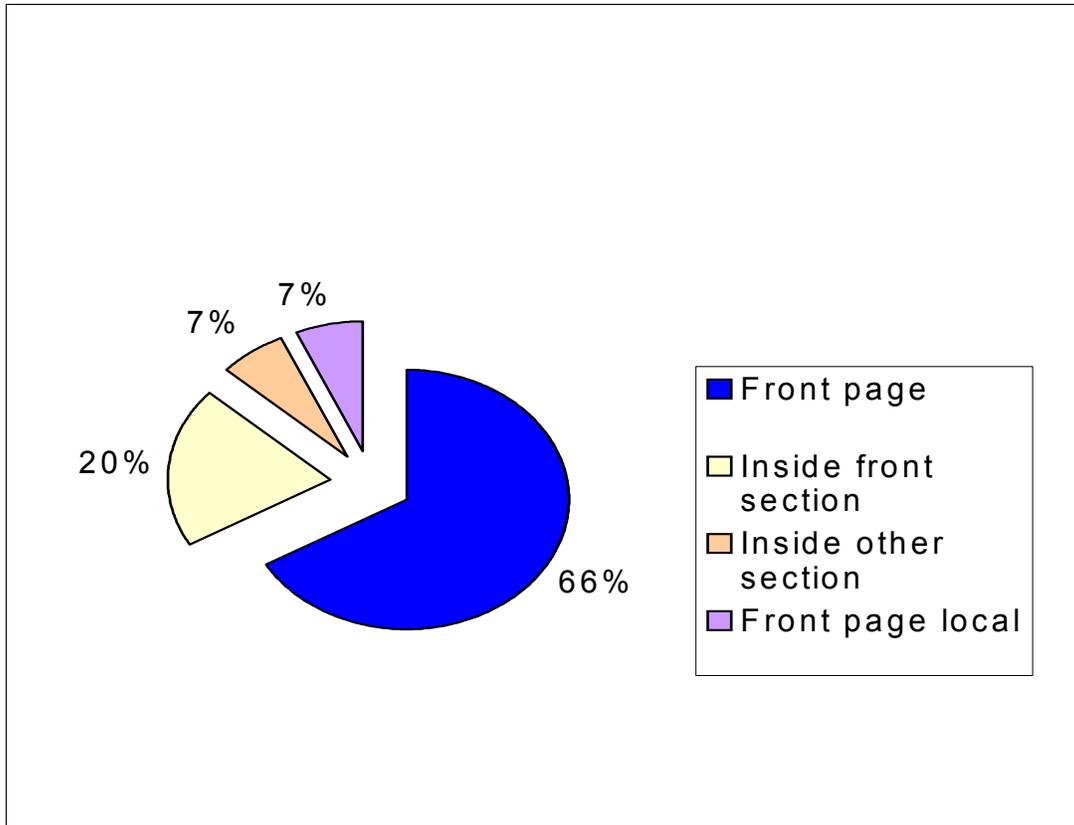


Figure 5.3 Percentage of articles located in each section of the *Herald Dispatch*.

With regard to the preceding statistical information, certain inferences can be made about the framing of stories on mountaintop removal mining in each news source. First, with ninety-five percent of the stories in the *Logan Journal* appearing on the front page, it seems obvious that the issue was regarded with great importance. It would appear at first glance that perhaps the *Logan Banner* placed greater emphasis on the story than did the *Charleston Gazette*; however, although only thirty-five percent of the articles appeared on the front page of the *Gazette*, the frequency of stories was much higher. As I mentioned earlier, the *Gazette* is the only one of the four journals that has an investigative reporter assigned to cover environmental stories. This probably accounts for the greater amount of coverage in the *Gazette*. With sixty-six percent of mountaintop removal articles appearing on the front page of the *Herald Dispatch*, it appears that the issue was also deemed to be of importance in this news source as well.

The next step in the analysis was determining the author of each article. The assumption for this was that writers working for the journal might reflect more closely the newsroom climate of the paper, while associated press writers might be more susceptible to the influences of media conglomerates for which they work. As noted earlier, due to the fact that *Graffiti* has no staff writers, it was coded somewhat differently.

Table 3
 Authors of articles in the *Logan Banner*, *Charleston Gazette* and *Herald Dispatch*.

	Logan Banner	Charleston Gazette	Herald Dispatch
staff writer	52	194	3
associated press writer	96	18	12
other	0	3	0

Table 4
 Authors of articles in *Graffiti*.

	Graffiti
editor	1
regular contributor	3
guest columnist	2

The next step in the analysis was examining the sources of information. I tried to examine each article in two ways. First, by looking at the framing of the issue by examining what kind of source was cited at the beginning of each article. Then, by looking at the number of and kinds of sources used in each article. The first table on the following page represents the total frequency of kinds of sources cited first in each paper, followed by a chart showing the percentage for each paper. The second table represents the frequency of the total number of kinds of sources used in each paper, followed by a graph showing the total percentages for each paper.

Table 5

Frequencies of the type of source first cited in the *Logan Banner*, the *Charleston Gazette*, and the *Herald Dispatch*.

	<u>Logan Banner</u>	<u>Charleston Gazette</u>	<u>Herald Dispatch</u>
industry source	29	57	3
government source	72	90	5
environmental source	20	33	1
coalfield resident	5	7	1
Judge Charles Haden	15	22	5
<u>other</u>	6	6	0
total	148	215	15

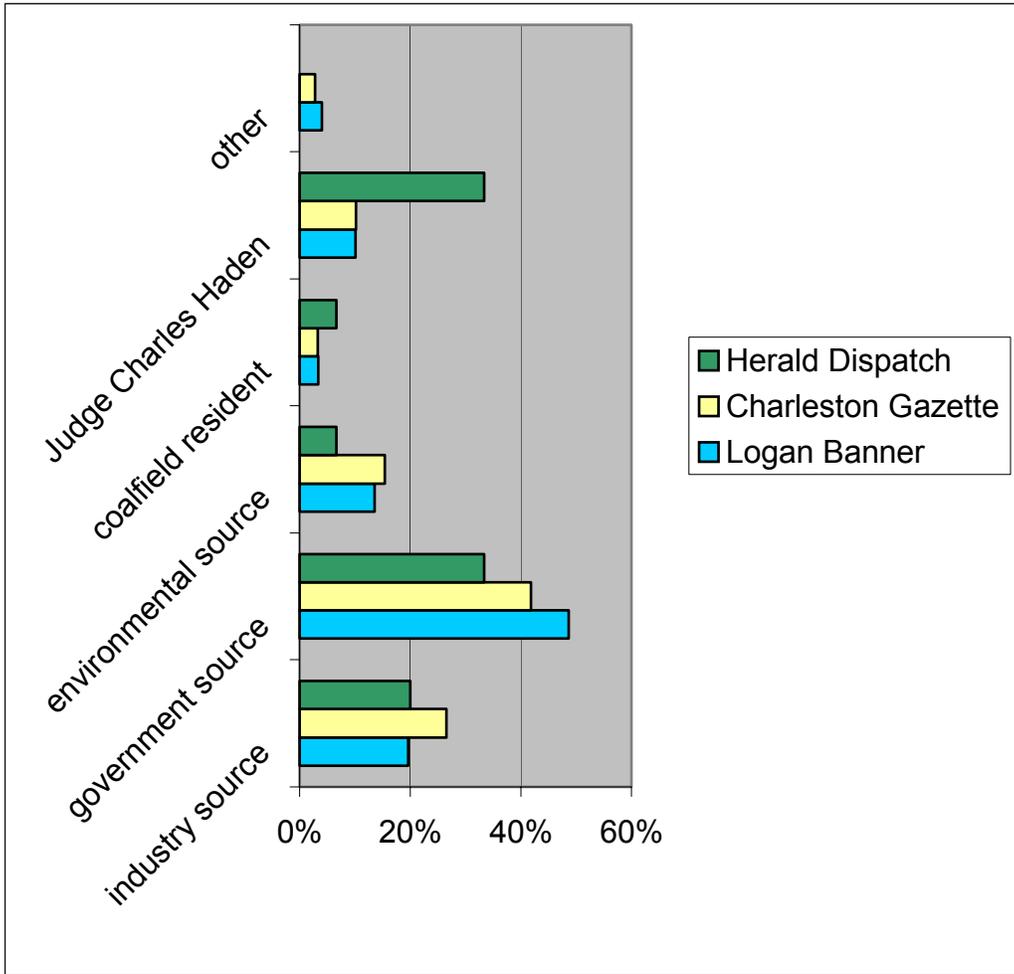


Figure 5.4. Comparative percentages of kinds of sources cited first in articles in the *Logan Banner*, the *Charleston Gazette*, and the *Herald Dispatch*.

Table 6

Frequency of total kinds of sources cited in articles in the *Logan Banner*, *Charleston Gazette*, and *Herald Dispatch*.

	<u>Logan Banner</u>	<u>Charleston Gazette</u>	<u>Herald Dispatch</u>	<u>Graffiti</u>
industry source	67	147	10	
government source	136	214	26	
environmental source	49	102	9	
coalfield resident	12	34	3	
Judge Haden	17	32	6	
Other	6	8	0	6
total	287	537	54	6

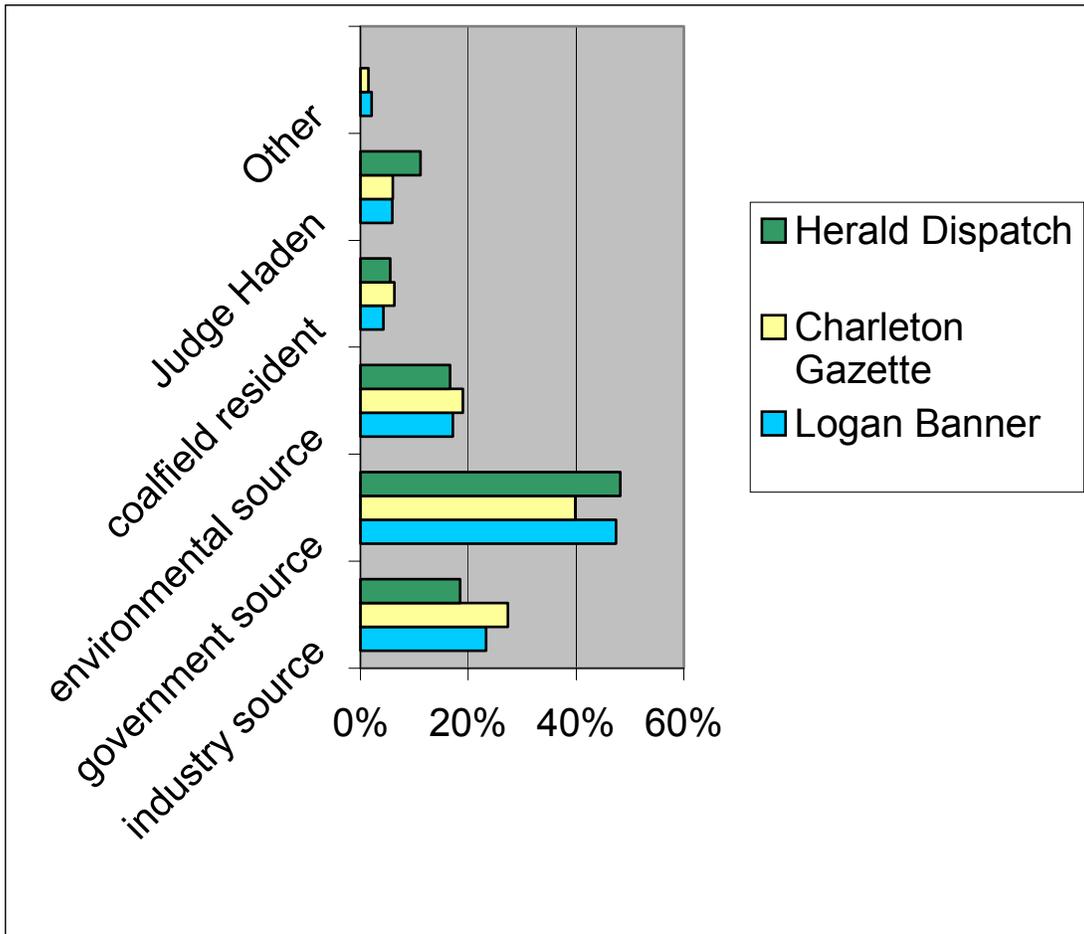


Figure 5.5. Comparative percentages of total kinds of sources cited in articles in the *Logan Banner*, the *Charleston Gazette*, and the *Herald Dispatch*.

I will now attempt to draw some inferences from the preceding statistical information. First, there is a clear indication that writers for the *Logan Banner*, the *Charleston Gazette*, and the *Herald Dispatch* all used government sources far more frequently than any other type of source, both in the frequency of times they are cited first in the story and the total number of times they are cited in the story. This follows the logic of the propaganda model that suggests these types of sources are more readily available and are deemed more credible. Next, when comparing the number of times industry sources and environmental sources are used, industry sources are only slightly more prominent. At first glance, it might seem that the stories are balanced in terms of industry coverage and environmental coverage. However, this would be an inaccurate assumption. As I have shown in the qualitative analysis, government officials showed a clear bias in favor of industry objectives. Therefore, the prominent use of government sources resulted in coverage that was slanted in favor the coal industry. Furthermore, it should be noted that in the majority of cases, the environmental perspective was reported at the end of the article where the story had been continued to another page. It is also important to note the relatively small number of times coalfield residents were used as sources. Again, these observances follow Edward and Chomsky's propaganda model in that the view of the dissidents was marginalized, not by the personal leanings of individual writers, but by structures that exist within the media system.

The next step in the analysis was to look at how the effects of mountaintop removal were presented in each media source. I was trying to determine whether or not the issue was presented in a way that gave a balanced perspective of both the positive and negative aspects of mountaintop removal mining. I used *jobs* and *economy* to represent

the positive aspects of mountaintop removal, and *environmental damage* and *property damage* to represent the negative impact. As I explained in the methodology section, I realized that the manner in which I coded the articles did not accurately reflect the coverage given to each issue. Namely, I only coded the articles in terms of whether or not each of the variables was mentioned, not the number of times they were mentioned, which would have more accurately reflected the coverage. To correct this problem, I chose a target sample and recoded the articles to show not only if the articles included the variables *jobs*, *economy*, and *environmental harm*, but also the frequency of each variable. I will begin by assessing the first table and chart that represents the articles that mention each variable. It should be noted that the *Herald Dispatch* is not included in this analysis because I was only able to code the representative sample from this news source. However, it will be included in the final analysis.

Table 7
 Effects of mountaintop removal as reported in the *Logan Banner*, the *Charleston Gazette*, and *Graffiti*.

	<u>Logan Banner</u>	<u>Charleston Gazette</u>	<u>Graffiti</u>
jobs	62	105	2
economy	62	84	1
environment	51	114	5
<u>property damage</u>	13	15	3
total	188	318	11

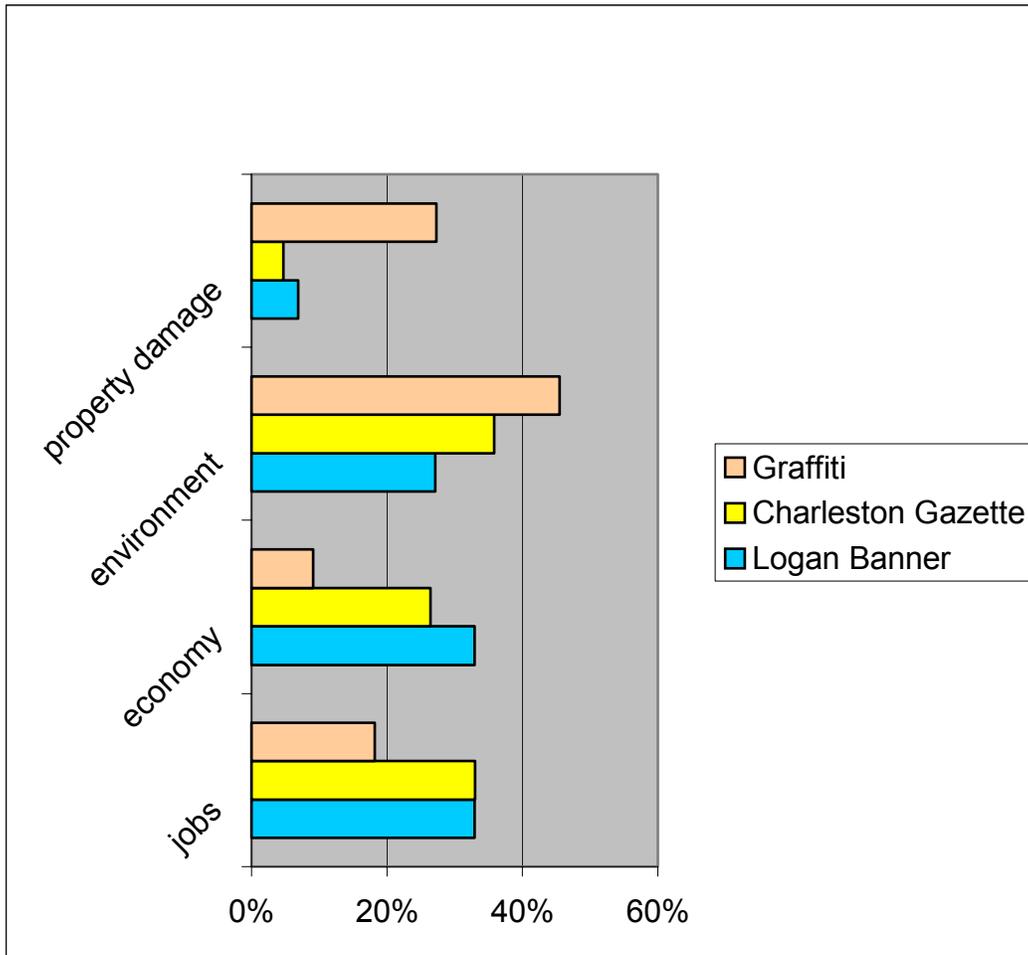


Figure 5.6. Comparative analysis of the effects of mountaintop removal mining reported in articles in the Logan Banner, the Charleston Gazette, and Graffiti

These statistics show that in both the *Charleston Gazette* and the *Logan Banner*, a similar percentage of articles mentioned the variables *jobs*, *economy*, and *environmental harm*. Only in the *Graffiti* did the environment receive a significantly greater amount of coverage. However, if we combine the variables that favor mountaintop removal, *jobs* and *economy*, then combine the variables that show the negative impacts, *environmental harm* and *property damage*, we see that coverage was slanted in favor of the industry view that presents mountaintop removal in a positive manner.

One observation that I made was that, while most articles gave the impression of reflecting both the environmental view and the industry view, descriptions of environmental impact were presented in a very neutral manner. For example, many articles stated that streams were being filled, but they did not elaborate on the impact that this actually had on the environment. Many of the Associated Press stories described the process in terms of removing the tops of the hills and leaving a flat or gently rolling landscape. One writer for the *Charleston Gazette* said, “In mountaintop removal, rock and soil are blasted away to get at the coal underneath. The dirt *falls* (emphasis is mine) into valleys, covering some streams” (Stone, 1999). Michael Miano, who was the Director of the Department of Environmental Protection at the time of the lawsuit, claimed that he could look at reclamation sites and see that there were no environmental problems. He used this argument to try and persuade Judge Haden to grandfather pending permits from an environmental impact study. “If in the last twenty-five years there hasn’t been any environmental damage done, then additional environmental damage that is done in the next two years it would take to do the study would be insignificant” (Ward, 1999a).

The Logan County Commission claimed that the process of mountaintop removal mining “enhances” the environment and “produces an end result of usable post mine land for many and diverse economic development opportunities” (Hicks, 1999b).

Finally, the Logan County Commission also tried to minimize the impact of mountaintop removal by stating that it only affected three per cent of the mountains in West Virginia (Hicks, 1999a). This information was misleading because it referred to 3 per cent of all mountains in the state and did not take into account the percentage of mountaintops destroyed in individual counties.

To try and ascertain a more accurate understanding of how the issue of mountaintop removal was presented in either an industry friendly, environmentally friendly, or balanced manner, I chose a target sample of the month of October and recoded the articles. This coding schema reflected not only the fact that the article mentioned the variables *jobs*, *economy*, or *environmental harm*, but also the actual number of times these variables were mentioned. I further broke down the variable *environment* into two categories. One category shows the number of neutral statements such as filling streams; the other one reflects statements that show the explicit harm that I operationalized in the methodology section. This data again shows the tendency of the mainstream press to promote industry bias.

Table 8

Total frequency of times the variables jobs, economy, environmentally neutral, and environmental harm are used in the *Logan Banner*, the *Charleston Gazette*, the *Herald Dispatch* (October only) and *Graffiti*.

	<u>Logan Banner</u>	<u>Charleston Gazette</u>	<u>(October)</u> <u>Herald Dispatch</u>	<u>Graffiti</u>
jobs	29	29	21	1
economy	42	31	15	1
neutral environment	14	50	19	0
<u>environmental harm</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>4</u>
Total	101	140	65	6

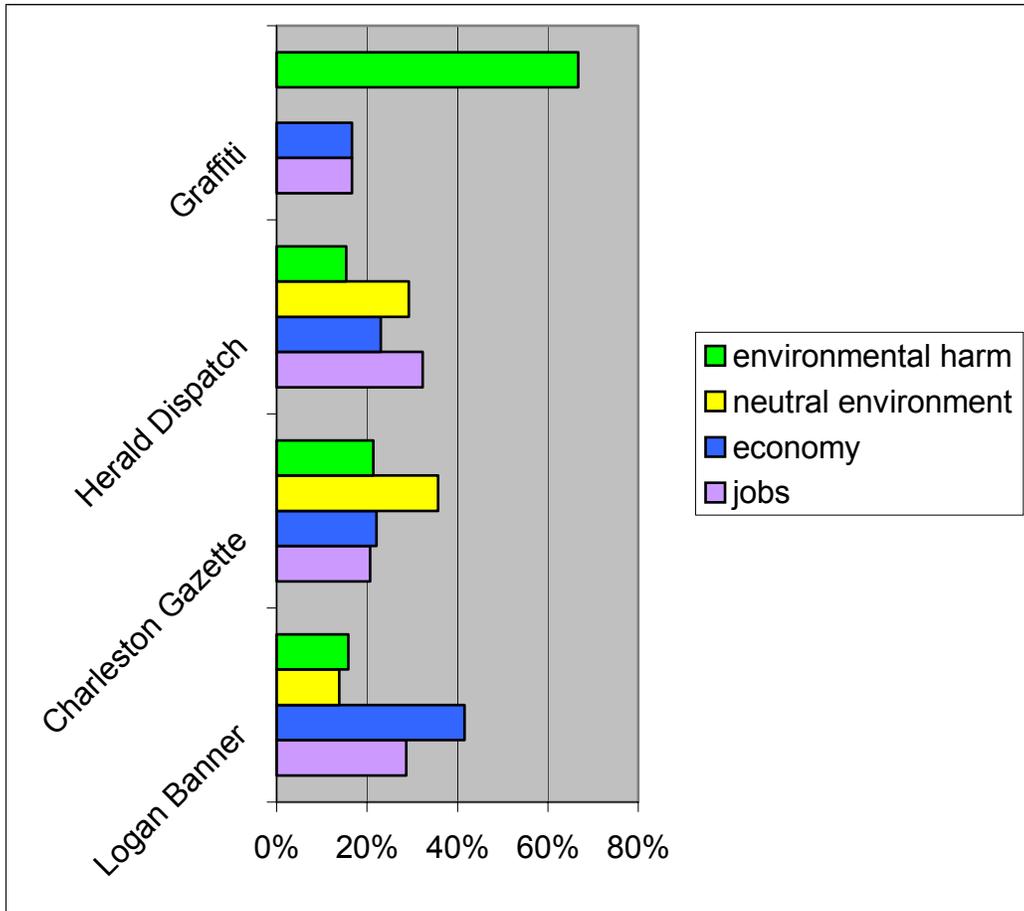


Figure 5.7 Total percentage of times the variables jobs, economy, neutral environment and environmental harm are included in articles in the *Logan Banner*, the *Charleston Gazette*, the *Herald Dispatch* and *Graffiti*

The preceding statistics again clearly show the tendency of the mainstream media to promote industry bias. Again, this bias is structural in nature. On the surface, it appears that the stories are balanced due to the similar frequencies of references to variables that show the positive aspects of mountaintop removal, which are jobs and the economy, as opposed to the negative aspect, which is environmental harm. However, upon closer inspection, we find that many of the statements regarding the environment are neutral in nature and do not have the same impact as the more tangible factors of jobs and economy. As Parenti points out, “many things are reported in the news but few are explained” (2003). This is what happened with the issue of mountaintop removal in the mainstream media. Although it may have been reported that streams were being filled, the explanation of the impact was rarely included.

In Judge Haden’s decision for a preliminary injunction halting the permit for Hobet’s Dal-Tex mine, he specifically talked about the impacts the mining operation would have both on the environment of Pigeon Roost Hollow, and the lives of the Weekley family who lived there. He talked about the loss of the quality of life the Weekley’s were experiencing due to the constant layering of dust from the mines. He also mentioned Biologist Benjamin Stout, who testified that the stream running through Pigeon Roost was a “keystone” community; a headwater stream that, if disturbed, would adversely affect the rest of the stream in a very serious manner (Bragg v. Robertson, 1999). These types of explanations were largely omitted in the coverage of the issue. Both the *Charleston Gazette* and the Logan Banner printed stories that reported Haden’s explanation of the temporary nature of the economic costs of halting the mining process, versus the “imminent and wholly irreparable” environmental costs of allowing mining to

expand (Bragg v. Robertson, 1999). Furthermore, the *Charleston Gazette's* coverage of Haden's final limiting mountaintop removal decision gave a very descriptive explanation of the environmental impact. Quoting Judge Haden, Ken Ward reported, "When valley fills are permitted in intermittent and perennial streams, they destroy those stream segments" (1999g). Furthermore, "The normal flow and gradient of the stream is now buried under millions of cubic yards of excess spoil waste material, an extremely adverse effect" (Ward, 1999g). Again, according to Haden, "If there are fish, they cannot migrate. If there is any life form that cannot acclimate to life deep in a rubble pile, it is eliminated. No effect on related environmental values is more adverse than obliteration" (Ward, 1999g). The problem was that these stories were very limited in number, while the negative impact on jobs and the economy were reported in the majority of stories pertaining to the issue.

In conclusion, while the structural nature of the use of sourcing tended influence the presentation of the issue of mountaintop removal in an industry biased manner in the mainstream media that was analyzed, the independently owned *Charleston Gazette* differed in its coverage of the issue in one significant manner; namely in some of the kinds of stories that were covered. These stories were truly investigative in nature. For example, Ken Ward reported on the connections between the coal industry and the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, pointing out that Michael Castle, Director of the DEP, had appointed six former industry officials to prominent positions in the department (Ward, 1999w). He also reported on Castle's own coal industry background and the fact that Castle had, himself, been cited and fined for failing to follow mountaintop removal regulations (Ward, 1999f). Ward also showed the

connection between the coal industry and some elected officials. In a November article, Ward reported that a fifth of Senator Robert Byrd's campaign contributions come from mining executives, industry political action committees and the United Mine Workers (Ward, 1999n). Byrd led the fight to insert a legislative rider that would have overturned Judge Haden's decision limiting the use of mountaintop removal mining.

In addition to showing connections between the industry and government officials, Ward also wrote about the financial cost of the lawsuit to the people of the state. He reported in a July article that, since being hired in April, the law firm of Bailey & Glasser had charged the state a total of \$168, 117. During one month, they worked 93 hours and charged the state \$195 per hour (Ward, 1999e). This lawsuit stemmed from charges that the DEP was improperly issuing permits for mountaintop removal mining. Finally, it was Ken Ward who conducted an investigation into the increasing use of the practice of mountaintop removal mining. He reported that the number of West Virginia streams permitted for valley fills had tripled since the federal surface mining law was passed in 1977 (Ward, 1999l).

I used these last examples to show that differences did exist in the way the issue of mountaintop removal was covered in the independently owned mainstream source, the *Charleston Gazette*, and the two sources owned by conglomerates, the *Logan Banner* and the *Herald Dispatch*. However, this does not change the fact that, due to the structural mechanism of sourcing, all three mainstream media sources presented an industry-biased perspective.

CHAPTER VI

Summary of Conclusions

The original research questions I asked were (1) Does the coal industry exert a form of censorship on print media in West Virginia? (2) Is there a difference in the way the issue of mountaintop removal mining is presented in the three types of media being examined: an independent source, and alternative source, and two sources owned by media conglomerates. The model for exploring the possibility of censorship was Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model.

Keeping in mind that this research was exploratory in nature and the findings are tentative, we can nevertheless draw some conclusions from the data. The research indicates that the *Charleston Gazette*, the *Logan Banner*, and the *Herald Dispatch* fit in varying degrees into the propaganda model put forth by Chomsky and Herman. *Graffiti*, the only alternative source, did not fit into the model. This is logical, though, since news in this source did not travel through the same "filters" through which news in the mainstream media must travel. For example, *Graffiti* didn't receive any advertising dollars from the coal industry; and, the articles in the target time frame were not based on information from industry or government sources.

The three media sources in which media bias was present seemed to be affected by three factors, or "filters" as Chomsky and Herman call them. First as I pointed out earlier, the focus on advertising was very limited in this research project. The only two sources that used coal industry advertising during the target time frame were the *Charleston Gazette* and the *Logan Banner*. However, it is not clear how much of an impact this advertising had on the coverage of the mountaintop removal issue. My

assumption was that advertising dollars from the coal industry have a much greater impact on the policies of the Logan Banner since it is embedded in a coal community; even though the industry paid to have similar ads placed in the *Charleston Gazette* and the *Logan Banner*, the fact remains that the coal industry plays such an economic role in Logan that nearly all businesses rely on the patronage of miners and their families. Thus, even advertising dollars from these dependent business could potentially have an impact on the decision to print certain information in the Logan Banner. Furthermore, as I pointed out, the advertising in both the *Logan Banner* and the *Charleston Gazette* was directly related to Judge Haden's decision. Therefore, the advertising dollars spent in the *Charleston Gazette* may simply have been an attempt by the industry to counter any perceived negative coverage of the coal industry. And, as I mentioned before, the fact that these ads were not countered by any environmental advertisements contributes to the structural mechanisms that tend to favor the ruling class and marginalize dissent.

The bias in these news sources was not overt. In fact, it often appeared that coverage of the issue was balanced. However, a closer inspection of the structural elements revealed a decided industry bias. One of the mechanisms of censorship was sourcing. As I have shown in the research, government sources were used more often than any other source. Furthermore, it has been shown that these government sources were biased in favor of the coal industry. Thus, even though industry sources and environmental sources were cited comparatively equal amounts of times, when we take into account the industry biased statements of government sources, we see that the issue was slanted in favor of the industry. This finding is substantiated by the overall amount of

pro-industry variables (i.e. jobs, economy) found in the target time frame as opposed to the overall mention of environmental harm.

In conclusion, then, this research found that (1) the coal industry appears exert a form of censorship over three of the print media sources that were analyzed, (2) this censorship was structural and not overt in nature, and (3) there appears to be a difference in the way the issue of mountaintop removal mining is presented in the mainstream media sources as opposed to the alternative media source that was analyzed in this research.

CHAPTER VII

Recommendations

The research reflected in this paper was exploratory in nature and broad in scope. Therefore, for future research, I would suggest that the scope be narrowed to reflect individual aspects of the propaganda model, rather than trying to examine the entire model at once, allowing for closer examination and a refinement of the coding schema. The coding schema could also be further refined to more accurately define language that reflects environmental harm as opposed to language that is environmentally neutral.

I mentioned earlier in the paper the fact that I totally omitted the fifth “filter,” anti-communism and private property, from this research project. This would make an excellent focus for future research, because one of the arguments used by supporters of the coal industry in their fight to use mountaintop removal mining is the fact that the coal companies own the land, therefore, they should be able use it in any manner they deem appropriate.

Another topic for further consideration is the use of flak. In this research project, I examined editorials reflecting the opinions of either the editorial boards of the newspapers, or editorial page editors. It would be interesting to examine both editorials from the readers, and conduct interviews with the reporters who were covering the story of mountaintop removal at the time Judge Haden issued his decision to examine the presence and effect flak had in framing the presentation of the issue.

A final topic of consideration would be a closer examination of the impact advertising has on the news media's coverage of mountaintop removal. While I examined the issue in terms of the number of advertisements in each media source, I did not investigate the exact amount of advertising dollars generated by these ads.

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Appendix

Coding Schema

Location of story in media source

- 1 – front page of first section
- 2 – inside front section
- 3 – front page business section
- 4 – inside business section
- 5 – front page local section
- 6 – inside local section

Author of story

- 1 – staff writer
- 2 – associated press writer
- 3 – other

Source first cited

- 1 – industry source
- 2 – government source
- 3 – environmental source
- 4 – coalfield resident
- 5 – Judge Haden
- 6 – other

All sources cited in the article

- 1 - industry source
- 2 – government source

- 3 – environmental source
- 4 – coalfield resident
- 5 – Judge Haden
- 6 – other

Positive aspects of mountaintop removal

- 1 – jobs
- 2 – economy

Negative aspects of mountaintop removal

- 1 – property damage
- 2 – environmental harm