

Last time: Today's news environment

- Previous generations – news came mostly from established local & national news outlets
- Now – an ocean of information
- Instant coverage (or expectation of it)
- Professional and non-professional
- Participate, not just consume
- Less established news hierarchy
- More difficult to stand out
- More opinion-driven material
- More difficult to know what to believe

Human nature vs. basic needs

- Theory of Technological Determinism
- Scholarly research: Technology constantly changes, but human nature does not
- Need to communicate with others
- Desire to learn, apply knowledge
- Form communities/societies – work together
- Share stories through generations
- Basic impulse – spread the word

Newspapers

- The only major news medium for many decades
- Competition – most major cities had many papers
- Early 20th Century – build circulation – as much about entertainment as news
- ‘Yellow Journalism,’ ‘Stunt Journalism’
- Began to have competition from magazines (investigations, ‘muckraking’)
- 1920s – turned toward professionalism – established ethical standards – Pulitzer Prizes
- For decades – self-policing profession – ‘objectivity’
- Eventually other media got into news business

Breaking news: Extra editions

- Before electronic media, only way to follow fast-developing news
- Small four-page editions devoted to main story
- Assassinations, wars, deaths, accomplishments
- Big stories – people would gather outside newspaper offices, waiting for updates
- ‘Extra! Extra! Read all about it’
- Became less necessary with newer media

Breaking news: Extra editions

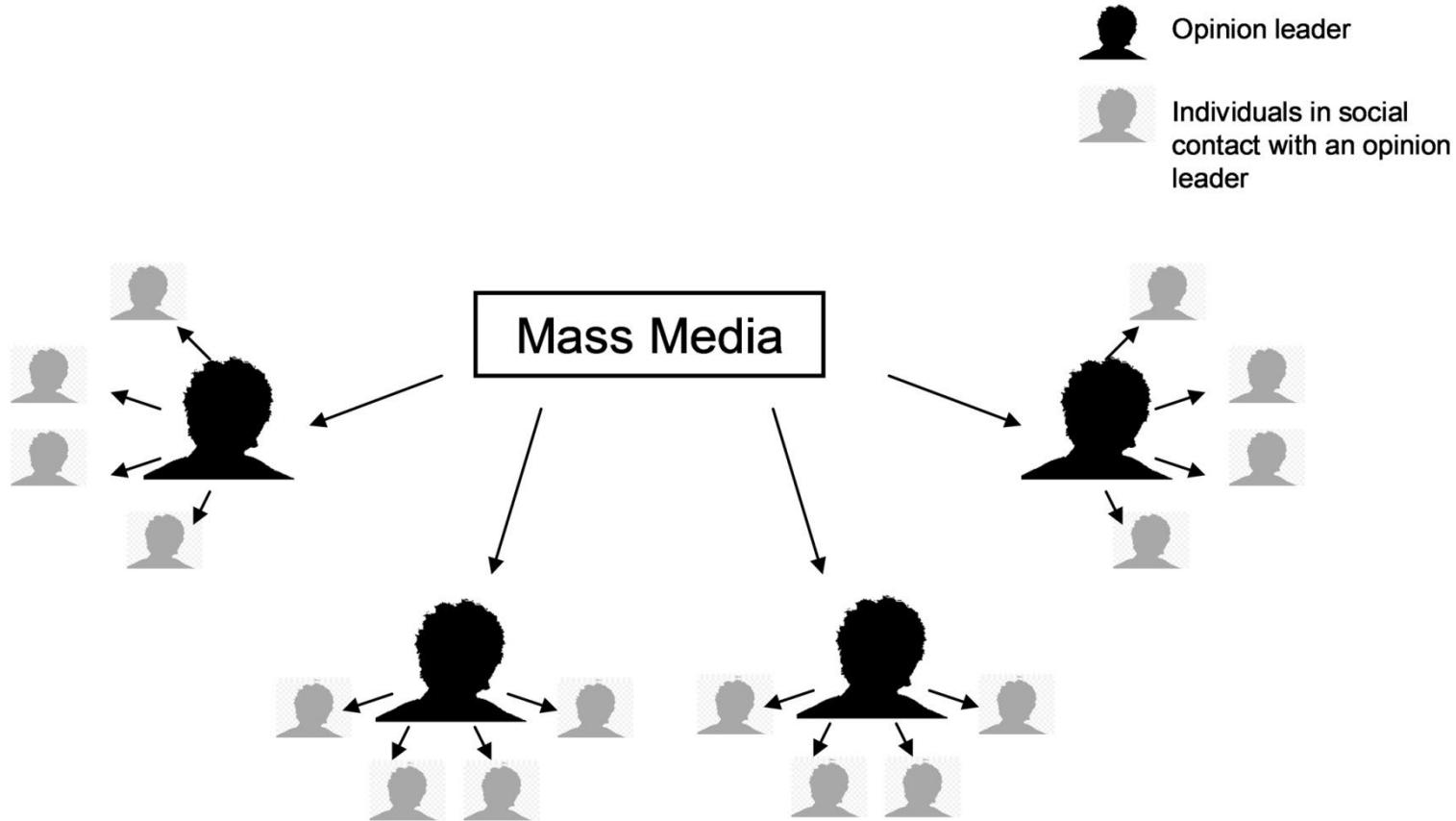
Newspapers – Professionalism

- Competition from magazines, other new media
- Audiences tired of sensationalism, absurdity
- Pulitzer Prizes begin 1917, 6 years after death
- Moved (mostly) away from partisanship
- Sheer size, daily schedule allowed depth, variety of coverage
- Established credibility in spite of limitations

Different media take up news

- Movies – gained popularity in 1910s and forward
- Originally just for entertainment
- 1920s-30s – newsreels – moving images
- Radio – first emerges in 1920s
- 1926 – first radio network – NBC – primarily an entertainment medium
- Could cover breaking stories live w/audio
- Competition with newspapers, but also alliances
- Still, newspapers reigned as main source of news through first half of 20th Century

Two-step flow model



Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955

Technological earthquake: Television

- First networks - 1948
- Exploded in popularity in 1950s
- Not much of a factor in news until 1960s
- Key event: JFK assassination
- Evolution – videotape, satellites
- Anchors emerged as trusted news sources
- Newspaper circulation & ad revenue fell

How television changed news

- Primarily an entertainment medium
- Television news had to adopt elements of other TV programming – get ratings, ad revenue
- Emphasis on video, visuals, emotion
- Emphasis on immediacy over depth
- Easier to process quickly and peripherally
- Audiences shifted preferences
- Newspapers scrambled to adapt
- Politicians shifted media strategies

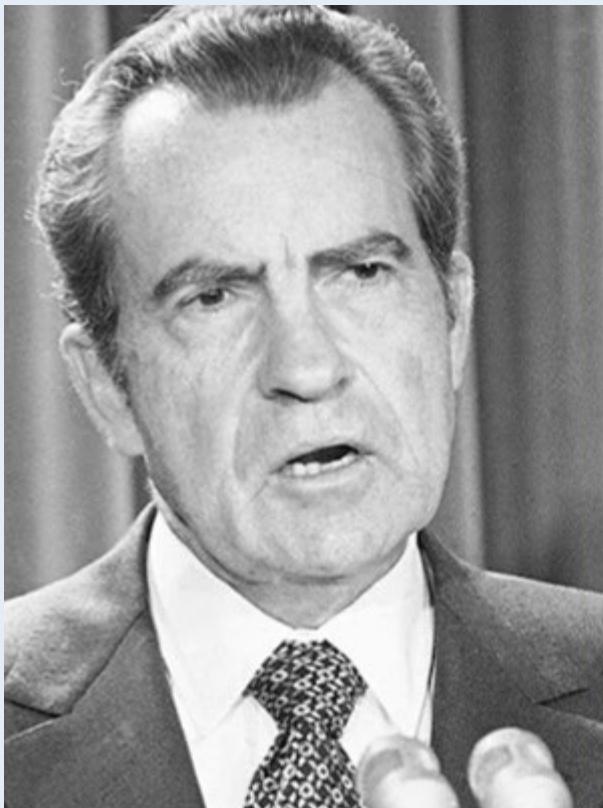
**Important moment in
history of American political
communication:
January 1968**

Mike Douglas Show: January 16, 1968



Mike Douglas Show: January 16, 1968

Guest:



Richard Nixon

Producer:



Roger Ailes

Nixon and Ailes, 1968



Ailes' media strategies for Nixon

- Humanize him through TV ads and appearances
- Limit press exposure to controlled events
- Carefully craft simple campaign messages
- Place Nixon in telegenic settings
- Use surrogates to criticize opponents
- Portray his followers as 'real Americans'
- Paint news media as elite, liberal, out of touch
- Continued strategies later with Reagan, Bush

Roger Ailes



Political consultant, 1968-92
Co-founder, Fox News

Concept of 'Fake News'

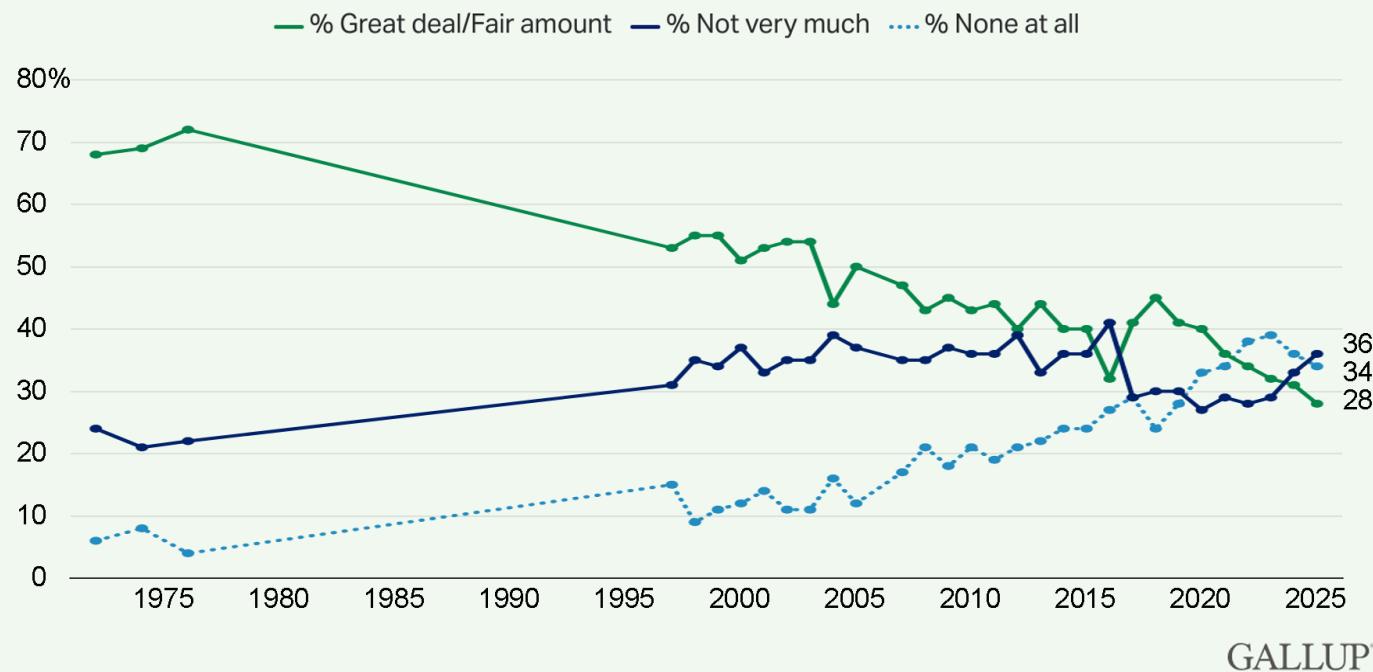
- False/misleading info reported as legitimate news
- Nothing new – Yellow Journalism of late 1800s full of sensationalism & fabrications designed to sell papers
- Digital Age – anyone can publish anything with no fact checking – can spread untrue info, mislead audiences
- Saturation – people don't know who/what to believe
- Echo Chamber effect – audiences only follow outlets that publish stories that reinforce their beliefs
- People gradually believe more & more bizarre things about perceived enemies – sites push conspiracy theories
- Most well-known example – Pizzagate
- Politicians use term to their advantage – call anything that makes them look bad 'fake news' even if it's true

Why does this matter outside of politics?

- Timing – newspapers already losing readers to TV
- Took advantage of existing social divides
- Challenged journalism's credibility
- Institutionalized distrust of news media
- Created 'us vs. them' narrative
- Turned huge swath of populace against media
- Anti-media narrative continues to this day

Americans' Trust in Mass Media, 1972-2025

In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media — such as newspapers, TV and radio — when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly — a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?



Gallup Poll: Trust in Media at New Low of 28% in U.S.

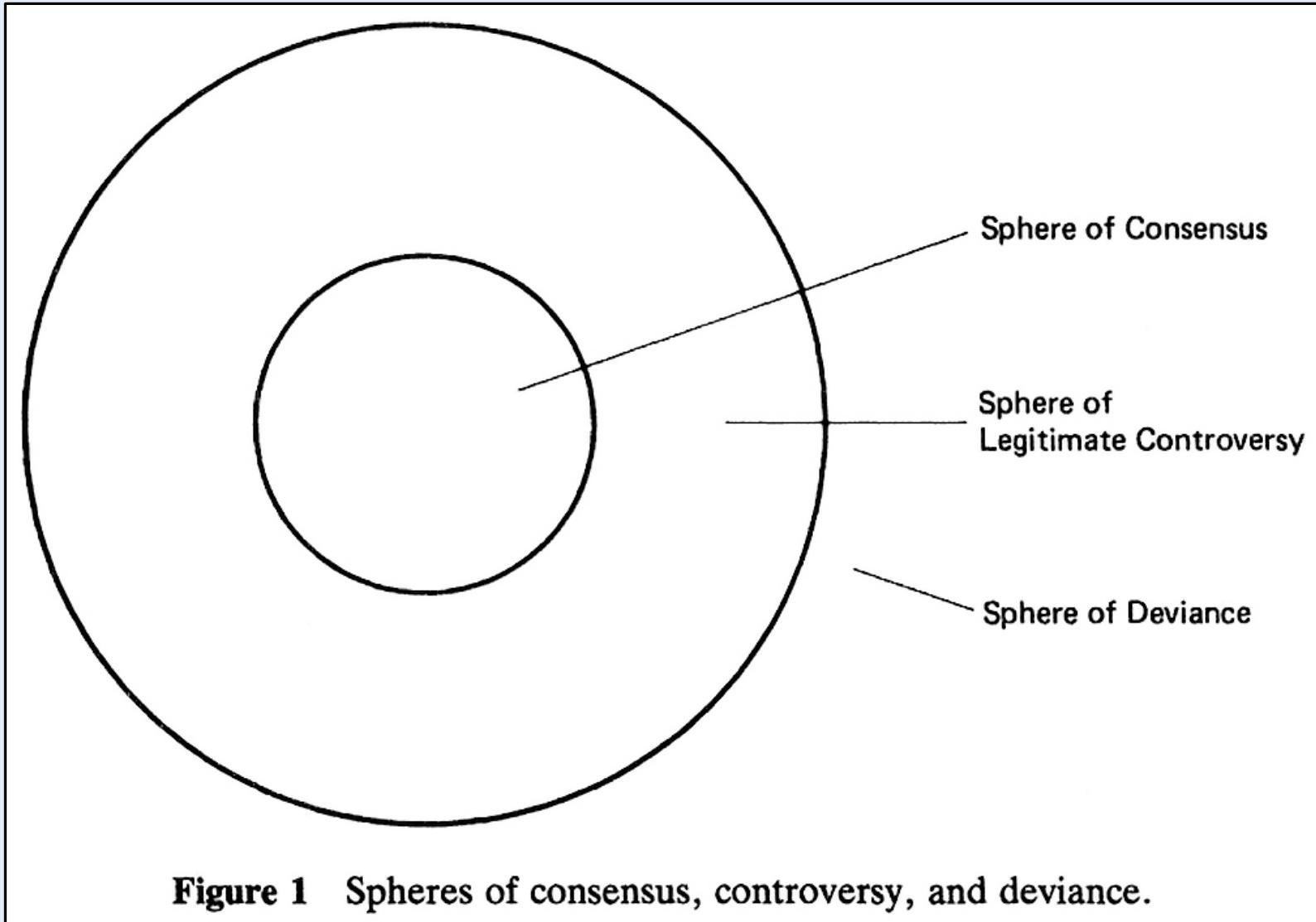


Figure 1 Spheres of consensus, controversy, and deviance.

[Dan Hallin, UC San Diego: Spheres](#)