

## **Appropriate Propaganda**

Jina Kim, 2/25/2003

Last Wednesday, Reshma and I ended up meeting for dinner. Although the class event was canceled, Reshma had not read the e-mail, and I found her waiting at the end of the Infinite Corridor. We headed over to Alpine Bagels for food and discussion.

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Our knowledge of current events is derived mainly from the newspapers we read, the radio station we listen to, or the news channel we watch—collectively called the media. Reshma and I talked about media coverage in two different scenarios: in the absence and presence of war. We grappled with one main question: is it acceptable to use media as propaganda to manipulate how the American public feels about an issue?

In general, Reshma was uncomfortable with how the media “glosses over” the hard, factual details and emphasizes the emotional side. For example, in the Columbia incident, the word “disaster” became associated with the shuttle. Instead of “disaster”, which carries a negative, almost ominous connotation, the media should have expressed it as the Columbia “accident.” The latter word is less subjective because it does not have as much emotional punch. “Disaster” implies that we should be upset, or guilty if we do not feel that way. Even changing a single word can transform the public's view of an event.

In war, however, I believe that the media should cover news keeping in mind to muster support for the war. Propaganda in media is acceptable to a reasonable extent. Even if masses of people were initially against the war, the government needs support in order to pull through once it has engaged in combat. The war will only gain public approval if the people maintain high morale. If the media's choice words for the

war carry optimism and hope, then there is a higher chance of winning the war because the general public is more likely to support it.

Ideally, this “propaganda” in media would include substantive journalism that is favorably disposed toward the war. My agreement with well-dosed propaganda in media does not mean, however, that I disagree with media coverage of the more dreary, disheartening aspects of war. When the media covers a war in which its own country is involved, there should be a good balance between positive and negative coverage.

In any state, war is always a special situation that needs careful handling. In events unrelated to war, each individual should be given a chance to decide upon his or her opinion and feelings by means of thorough, objective media coverage. Although the media is always somewhat subjective, it will be more so during war due to the obligations of patriotism. During war, I find propaganda in media acceptable, or at least inevitable.