

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 tried to expand competition but because the Federal Communications Commission eliminated some regulation on ownership, it has reduced competition. This has led to an oligopoly media structure that is dangerous to democracy. This oligopoly media structure should be disbanded, just as the American Bell Company was many years ago. Consumers are not getting efficient use of their public spectrum. A modern, updated telecommunications act should be created that disbands these media giants and works to serve the public first. Here is an example of a media structure and its corruption.

Rupert Murdoch is the thirteenth most powerful man in the world according to Forbes. This is an accurate assessment considering that he is one of the major media conglomerates that control an overwhelming share of American media. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 tried to create more competition by allowing companies to integrate vertically and horizontally in almost unlimited numbers. This created an oligopoly media structure, where a few players control all of media. One of these players is Rupert Murdoch and the News Corporation. The danger of this oligopoly media structure can be examined through Murdoch's history, heavy media acquisition and the operation of the Fox News Channel.

Rupert Murdoch was the son of a war correspondent and newspaper publisher. Murdoch's father left him his newspapers The News and the Sunday Mail. Murdoch recalls, "I was brought up in a publishing home, a newspaper man's home, and was excited by that, I suppose. I saw that life at close range, and after the age of ten or twelve never really considered any other." Young Murdoch changed The News to report on crime, sex and scandal, which was controversial, but established a pattern for acquisition and change of entities he received. Murdoch grew and as did his empire, stemming from Australia to London, and then to the United States. In 1979 after acquiring the New York Post, Murdoch founded News Corporation a company to hold all of his media properties. The 1980s and 1990s were a time of blossoming for Murdoch, as he ventured successfully into television, entertainment, sports ownership, publishing companies, radio, internet, and cable news. He is criticized for monopolizing media outlets, and has attested to the strength of acquisition and power "I sensed the excitement and the power. Not raw power, but the ability to influence at least the agenda of what was going on."

News Corporation is a vertically integrated media company. It owns several different parts of the production chain. News Corp owns film production as well as distribution companies like Twentieth Century Fox, Fox Filmed Entertainment, Fox 2000, Fox Searchlight, Fox Family Films, Fox Animation Studios, Twentieth Century Fox Home, Twentieth Century Fox TV, Fox Studios Australia. It also has ownership in sports teams like New York Knicks (20% stake through partnership with Cablevision), New York Rangers (20% stake through partnership with Cablevision), Los Angeles Kings (NHL, 40% option), Los Angeles Lakers (NBA, 9.8% option), Staples Center (40% owned by Fox/Liberty), National Rugby League Championship (50%) - Australian football but also sports television like Fox Sports in eighteen different regions, Fox Sports World, Outdoor Life, Golf Channel and Speedvision. News Corp has ownership in electronics through 34% of Hughes Electronics (satellite broadcaster DIRECTV with over 11 million subscribers in the US, 81% equity in satellite operator PanAmSat, and

Hughes Network Systems) but also produces the content that is shown on those television and electronics like local stations in twenty-four regions, FX, FiT TV, The Health Network, National Geographic's cable channel, TV Guide, The Family Channel and Fox News Channel. One of the largest ways that the company's power has influence on American people is through the Fox News Channel. Rupert Murdoch is a proclaimed Republican conservative, and these vies reflect in Fox News Channel. In the documentary Out-Foxed, Murdoch is exposed as man who has contempt for journalism because opinion cannot be proven false. Several people who worked at Fox News Channel say that their experience involved less of news gathering and more proponents of Murdoch's point of view. Larry Johnson, who was a contributor for Fox News Channel says that the twenty four hour cable news channel operates like a "Stalinist system" in an environment of fear. When he question Sean Hannity (a talking head for Fox News Channel) on his own show, Mr. Johnson was not asked to contribute again. Fox News Channel is criticized for inviting poor representations of the opposing viewpoint, including weak or faux liberals like Susan Estrich who often agrees with conservatives. Memos, or daily briefings coming from Fox News Channel headquarters in New York work to set the agenda for the news that day, mentioning that abortion should be a trademark issue and instructing to only cover parts of politician's speeches. There is no separation between the news and commentary and that is what is dangerous to the American public. The public only sees the "Fair and Balanced" tag line and the American flag in the graphics, and they cannot decipher what is fact and what is opinion. News Corporation is a part of the oligopoly structure that threatens democracy. True democracy requires that all points of view are heard and understood, but because News Corp has a hand in the creation and distribution of all parts of media, their point of view is heard more than others. An example is the Fox News Channel, which is a part of News Corporation and reflects the views of it's owner, Rupert Murdoch and does not exercise true journalism.

As a student who is preparing to enter the workforce in the meda industry, it is essential that I can rely on a governemtn who recognizes these problems and works to fix them.

The oligopoly media structure should be disabled through regulation set by the Federal Communications Commission so that Americans can experience true journalism and thus true democracy.

#### Bibliography

"Rupert Murdoch Biography." Bio.com. A&E Networks Television, 1 Jan. 2012. Web. 20 Nov. 2012. <<http://www.biography.com/people/ruPERT-murdoch-9418489?page=1-3>>.

"Murdoch & News Group: Holdings." Murdoch & News Group: Holdings. Ketupa.net: A Media Industry Resource, 1 Jan. 2010. Web. 20 Nov. 2012. <<http://ketupa.net/murdoch1.htm>>.

