

Many authors associated with British cultural studies assert the systematic tendency of commercial journalism toward reportage that supports dominant class and cultural interests. This dissertation will pursue this assertion in application to a case study of local commercial news coverage of a 1985 confrontation between a group of people known as MOVE and the City of Philadelphia.

The theoretical framework for the research is the tradition of critical cultural studies, particularly the theories of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. In *Encoding/Decoding*, Hall suggests that there are at least three discernable reading positions possible for audiences of commercial media: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional. With respect to MOVE, encoding will be studied via interviews with commercial journalists who reported the 1985 confrontation and through a qualitative analysis of the commercial coverage in Philadelphia newspapers; decoding will be studied via a Q study of Philadelphia residents' reading positions. Factor analysis of statements about MOVE, the City's and MOVE's actions, and the news media will contribute factor types which can be compared with Hall's hypothesized reading positions.

Comparison of interview material, qualitative analysis of coverage, and factor analysis of readings can produce some sense of the viability of Hall's assertions in the context of American cultures.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS: CENTRAL AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT

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On December 14, 1987, the International Commission on Central American Recovery and Development was convened in San Jose, Costa Rica. Stimulated by initiatives by Nobel laureate Oscar Arias, President of Costa Rica, the Commission was proposed by North

Carolina Senator Terry Sanford and was created to carry out a comprehensive analysis of development prospects in Central America. The Commission is co-chaired by Arthur Levitt, Jr., Chairman of the American Stock Exchange, and Sonia Picado, Executive Director of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, and includes almost 40 members from 14 countries in North America, Latin America, and Europe.

At its initial meeting, commissioners spent most of the first day discussing the Commission's role and objectives, and from this concourse the appended 33-item Q sample was selected and subsequently administered to Commissioners and other quasi-official representatives and observers. Analysis indicated the existence of three separate views about the Commission's objectives, as illustrated in the following factor scores:

- +4 +1 +1 (33) The Commission must include consideration of the social and political environment: otherwise, it will produce studies which are economically ideal and sociologically sterile.
- 1 +4 0 (24) The Commission's focus should be on general principles of strategy--to make clear what options are available.
- 2 0 +3 (11) The Commission needs to place a realistic price tag on development in the region, because it is necessary to know what magnitude of economic assistance will be required to achieve meaningful progress.

Factor A was comprised almost exclusively of Central American (including Nicaraguan) and some European Commissioners, and placed emphasis on the contextual nature of the problems. U.S. Commissioners were divided on factors B and C, the former concerned with establishing processes for effective economic choice, the latter with attaching price tags in anticipation of approaching developmental financiers.

The results were presented to the Commission at its second meeting in Stockholm (June 25-26), during which the Commission's various working groups re-

ported their recommendations--e.g., "Construct the necessary capacity for resettled and repatriated groups to deliver basic health services," "Provide explicit bilateral debt relief by reducing service obligations," "Encourage developed countries to grant special incentives, such as tax incentives, to stimulate investment in the region," and so forth. This concourse of recommendations will provide the basis for the second Q study of the Commission's work.

Selected Bibliography

- Ascher, W. (1984) *Scheming for the poor: The politics of redistribution in Latin America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gorostiaga, X. (1984) *The role of the international financial centres in underdeveloped countries*. (Trans. A. Honeywell.) New York: St. Martin's.
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Central American Commission Q Sample (N=33)

(1) The Commission's optimism cannot be directed toward the peace process specifically: it must be directed in other directions; otherwise expectations may not be met. (2) The Commission already has enough consensus and legitimacy in order to press ahead, to make its views known, and to sharpen its diagnosis. (3) The Commission should focus on specific problems, such as the plight of the millions of Central American refugees and displaced persons. (4) The Commission should treat democratic institutions not as an adjunct to, but as the key to political democracy, social reform, and economic development. (5) The Commission should address itself to different audiences--to various policymakers in Central America and in those countries, such as the U.S., with a stake in the region. (6) The Commission should set out the broad outlines of a very general strategy, followed by sets of recommendations to achieve more specific targets. (7) The Commission must switch to a "logic of peace," which is different from a "logic of war." (8) Unless recovery and development are focused on social and political issues as well as economic ones, the effort

may miss its target. (9) Inevitably, there will be moments of progress and moments of setback; therefore, the Commission cannot link itself to the assumption that peace is a prerequisite. (10) The Commission doesn't have to worry about what audience to address: it simply needs to convince itself of the importance of what it suggests, in which case it will attract audiences automatically.

(11) The Commission needs to place a realistic price tag on development in the region, because it is necessary to know what magnitude of economic assistance will be required to achieve meaningful progress. (12) The economic plight of the millions of Central American refugees and displaced persons will have to be a top priority on the Commission's agenda. (13) There must be some representation of working people, for if the Commission is to have an impact on the daily lives of this group then there must be some input from them. (14) The Commission must attend not only to economic growth, but to social and cultural growth. (15) It is of course necessary to be mindful of the political context, but politics must be in the background: the Commission's task is not to solve anyone's political problems. (16) The Commission must examine prior efforts--e.g., the Kissinger Commission, Caribbean Basin Commission, etc. These should be viewed without defensiveness, but with a toughminded view of both strengths and weaknesses. (17) It is incumbent upon the Commission to recognize the central role of agriculture in the development of the region. (18) It must be adopted as an operating principle that the problems to be considered are autonomous to the region, and not reflections of East-West security issues. (19) The Commission's initiatives must be related to other initiatives in the region so as not to add to the confusion. (20) The critical task is less to spell out specific program needs than to develop an outline of a suggested process by which those specific needs can be reviewed and acted upon.

(21) The process which the Commission works out must, through its structure, recommend that aid be conditioned on measurable and swift progress toward genuine democracy. (22) The Commission's process must involve not only government representatives, but also representatives of all those who have a

significant stake in the process. (23) The Commission should be visionary: it should imagine an idyllic Central America in which peace, democratic institutions, economic growth, and the satisfaction of basic needs have been achieved or appear as plausible goals. (24) The Commission's focus should be on general principles of strategy--to make clear what options are available. (25) It is not as important that the Commission address the magnitude of resources to be committed as much as how resources can best be utilized. (26) Before it can really begin, the Commission must emphasize the fundamental nature of the problems being faced--e.g., the truth about the debt crisis and of the real constraints associated with it. (27) The most useful thing the Commission could do would be to indicate the magnitude of what must be done, and to suggest measures that could be undertaken. (28) Although the Commission must take other initiatives into account (e.g., by the U.N., OAS, etc.), it should not try to conciliate what it is trying to do with what the others are trying to do. (29) The Commission's objective should be to institutionalize the participation of working people, businessmen, farmers, and professionals in national economic decision-making in the region. (30) Granted the Commission's recommendations must be visionary: they must also be practical and capable of being achieved.

(31) The Commission needs to know whom it is addressing--governments, institutions, or public opinion generally? (32) The Commission must state that peace is feasible and a precondition for realizing economic development. (33) The Commission must include consideration of the social and political environment: otherwise, it will produce studies which are economically ideal and sociologically sterile.

The journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. (Chinese proverb)