2.2 The Controversy Surrounding Concentration of Ownership

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**Initial Post (due by Wednesday, January 27):** Critics of concentration of ownership and conglomeration, like Robert McChesney and Ben Bagdikian, argue that these trends threaten democracy for several reasons, not the least of which is that they reduce the likelihood of consumers becoming well-informed citizens. In a thoughtfully prepared response, agree or disagree with their stance. Then, explain your perspective as specifically as possible. For instance, discuss what you think are advantages and disadvantages of concentration and conglomeration. Which weighs more heavily--the benefits or the consequences? Why?

In thinking about your response, consider the following:

1.  A quotation from Ben Bagdikian:

"So that what we have is maybe anywhere from 20 to a half a dozen huge corporations who have the dominant media voice in the media absorbing world, especially in the developed world - and now, getting a foothold in the less developed world. And that means that inevitably people who have such power see the world in a particular way. And when they have dominance... the less competition there is, the more control they have on what economists would call price and quality. In cases of the media and when we're talking about the news, price is one thing, quality means how much and what kind of news will you give. And what we're seeing in the media now is a decrease in hard reporting as a proportion of the whole, and an increase of soft entertainment features - which are the least expensive to produce and the most revenue producing."

2.  Media industries see these trends, for the most part, as solutions to changing economic conditions and consumer preferences. Media industries are businesses and, therefore, are entitled to make a profit. On the other hand, as the fourth estate, they also have important responsibilities to the public. What is gained/lost as a result of these trends in the media industry? In what ways do the industries benefit? In what ways does the public benefit? What disadvantages do these trends have for the public?