

Government Funded Public Broadcasting: A United
States ethical necessity

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ABSTRACT

While journalistic ethics exists in the United States today, it works primarily to address dilemmas in the profession, as opposed to working to comprehensively understand journalism in relation to its public duties. This role in United States journalism is not only misunderstood by the majority of journalists working in the media industry, it is also misunderstood by the public. This misinterpretation is directly linked to the concepts of cultural separation between the 'natural' laws that run the market place and those things in society that influence everything else. In this sense, journalism has become an industry working in the market place. Essentially, the product of completely corporatising the media industry has created a gap between the role of journalism in a democratic society and the current state of journalism in the United States.

That said, the relationship between the media and democracy can be traced back through the history of United States democracy and the subsequent history of journalism as a profession that was an essential part to keeping the public sphere of democratic debate healthy. A section of journalists, public journalists, currently attempt to heed the public responsibility needed to create this space for democratic debate. However, these journalists, though earnest in their pursuit to rebuild the type of journalism needed to create this democratic sphere, cannot reach the masses effectively without more funding and more autonomy. Likewise, the public broadcast station (PBS) in the United States could be enhanced in many ways with more funding and more autonomy. Such funding and autonomy for media in the United States could come from a tax-payer funded public broadcast station. And though not all media need to bear the responsibility of journalism focused on public life and politics, a section of the mass media should commit itself to creating a sphere to enhance democratic debate.

This thesis explores the necessity of a government funded mass media source in the United States. Given that United States media and democracy are inherently linked, as I will aim to show through the development of democratic history and the development of liberal democracy in the United States today, the ethical need for a media source that can fulfil its democratic duties.

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

The works contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

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Chapter One

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Introduction

This thesis seeks to provide both an analysis of the changing nature of democracy and then seeks to suggest specific ways in which the United States media today can reform in order to possibly support public life in more positive ways. That is to say, the media, seen as the Fourth Estate¹ in United States democracy should work to respond positively to the changing nature of democracy. However, the ability of journalism and the media to fully meet its democratic responsibilities may be limited by (a) its institutional corporate setting and (b) its professional ideals, especially when considering the concepts of objectivity, and detachment. When considering the corporate business of media, it should be understood that this type media and journalism is not a negativism. However, so too should the media be publicly oriented, rather than primarily business oriented. Furthermore, when tracing the history of United States media, an inherent link between the media and the public emerges. However, throughout the course of U.S. democratic and media history, this link has been clouded at some times and very apparent at other times. The media's dedication to its public can be likened to that of a polarized pendulum swinging. At one extreme, U.S. media prevails as the 'watchdog' over government, or as the operating 'Fourth Estate' structure revealing hypocrisies in U.S. government and society. At the other extreme, U.S. media is censored and complacent to either the government or corporate business.

However a constant in the pendulum swing has been that of the Public Broadcasting Station (PBS). The emergence of PBS goes a significant way in addressing the concerns of censorship either by the government or by big corporate business. However, PBS may itself be limited in the long term through lack of granted funding and a limitation on resources. One way that we could move forward with the role of the media in this changing nature of democracy would be that of strengthening or augmenting the PBS system through a legislated structuring of funding, and independence

¹ The concept of the Fourth Estate will be flushed out thoroughly later in this chapter.

(freedom/autonomy) as displayed in the national systems like those of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), or the Australia Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) (Australia has an additional public broadcasting station funded by tax-payers called Special Broadcasting Services or SBS).

With that said, the media is a multifaceted, much debated topic. It is a necessary aspect in any type of society, although its role in society is often debated. In fact, the importance of the media in relation to the governmental/social/political spheres of society encompasses one of the only aspects for which various media theorists and the public agree. The media in the United States is often criticized by the public and by media theorists for its disregard for the truth, elaborate fabrications, its sloppy referencing or complete lack thereof, and constant misprints or misquotes (see Dotinga, 2005 and Healy, 2005). These elements have led to a public mistrust of the media. A 2005 Gallup Poll, conducted September 12-15 of that year, found

that half of Americans say they have a great deal (13%) or fair amount (37%) of trust and confidence in the mass media, while the other half say they do not have very much trust (37%) or none at all (12%). The current results show an increase in the public's trust and confidence in the media since last year, but the results are still slightly lower than what Gallup has recorded in recent years.

(Romenesko, 2005, 1)

While half of Americans may have a more positive view of the media than a negative one, half of the public is not exactly a number to boast as a significant amount of citizens that trust and believe in the U.S. media. Furthermore, the media provides society with access to information about specific communities, the nation and the world. This relationship between the media and its important role for society creates an inherent link between the two (specifically the role of broadcast media is important to consider here)². As such, the public's complaints or praise of the media is just as, if not more, important

² I should note here that many of my examples regarding the media in a positive or negative way are pulled from the print media. While my focus is on broadcast, print media supplies an abundance of resources and is more accessible for analysis. Additionally, broadcast media, as I will show in Chapter Four, is born from the tradition of print media in the United States, and while they are not the same, they share many similarities. Therefore, I do not consider this difference a hindrance to my overall argument concerning a truly public broadcast station. Further, I will refer to this point at various times in my thesis.

than the perceptions of the media according to media analysts (see, Merrill, 1999, Merritt, 1998, and Rosen 1994, 1999b).

However, aspects of today's media in the United States are also praised within the industry and by media critics (see Getler, 2003, Morgan, 2001, and Schudson, 1997). In the United States many types of media exist. From scholarly journals, weekly magazines to broadcast and Podcast (the Internet broadcasting of stations found through Apple's iPod). And furthermore, citizens have a vast amount of means by which they can access information. Both cable television and the internet offer infinite resources. Accordingly, some of this media is of great quality, while other parts of the media suffer for the very reasons detailed above. In this thesis, I do not mean to suggest that all aspects of the media in the United States are poor. Rather, I want to pinpoint a cultural and governmental change in United States society, and show that a section of the media can be more adequately adapted to suit the needs, wants and capabilities of the public. After all, the public and the opinions of the public are essential elements not only in terms of the media but also in terms of democratic governing (see Macquire, 2001, Lock, 1952, and Wortman, 1970). At least a portion of the media, in a democratic society, should, therefore, answer to, and be aware, of its public. This point is the essentially element to my entire argument throughout this thesis.

Further, the media's role in democratic procedure should be understood. That is to say, in democratic societies, in the Lockean sense of individual liberty and 'natural rights' that later translated (specifically in the United States) into speech freedom as an individual right, the media's role has fundamentally been that of a voice (or many voices) for the people. One very important in-progress media debate in democratic societies focuses on whether or not current media fulfils this ideology related to the media's public-democratic duty (see Merritt 1998, 1999, 2002 and Rosen, 1994, 1999a, 1999b). This debate extends to whether or not the new media truly has a public responsibility to fulfil. Specifically, in the United States, media discussion linked to the democratic role of the media for United States citizens questions the harmful effects of a purely privatised media for the sake of maintaining a healthy democracy. Generally, mainstream media

and journalists assert that the role of the media in the United States, while possibly full of faults, should not look to pull away from their fundamental journalistic style that requires journalists to be detached from their stories and present an objective, unbiased report (France and Lowry, 2004). However, other journalists feel that this detachment from the issues they report upon is not only unnecessary, but responsible for hindering truth in journalism and reporting (Rosen, 1994, Durham, 1998). These journalists often participate in the very events which they cover. One such example is depicted by the Boston Independent Media Center, IMC. These journalists often report stories on a variety of issues while participating in the protest marches that debate these issues.

To participate in the events one covers is anathema to traditional reporters. IMC reporters and organizers, however, call objectivity a myth. "The mainstream media has a bias toward the status quo, and that's a bias, too," said John Tarleton, 33, of Harrington, Maine, who participated in IMCs in Seattle, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia before coming to Boston to help out. "We have a point of view, and we don't conceal that, so I think in some ways that makes us more honest."

(Bombardieri, 2000, B1)

Furthermore, a section of journalists in the United States, public journalists, contend to have created a working solution for journalists toiling to connect the media back to its public. This movement is called public or civic journalism, and it is the most comprehensive movement for a more publicly oriented media in the United States today. Public journalism incorporates both the practical and theoretical aspects needed to create a new type of professional thinking in journalism. Additionally, this movement works to anchor journalism in the historical context of the United States. Therefore, to expand upon the differences between mainstream journalists and those following in the public journalism tradition, an understanding of the development of journalism in the United States should be considered.

The Historical Context

The history of mainstream journalism³ in the United States revolves primarily around the history of the media's capability to distribute the product: the news (Merritt and McCombs, 2004). Small town newspaper organisations ruled the media scene since the development of the media in the United States to the end of the Nineteenth Century (Nelson and Dwight, 1973, 22-35 and Starr, 2004, 47-113). These newspapers concentrated on local issues, and encouraged citizen interaction in local governmental decisions. After all, when papers could only be delivered within a small area, it is sensible to create papers concerned with the issues of that specific area. However, by the early Twentieth Century when radio broadcasting boomed onto the media scene, the media changed in style and content because of its mass distribution capabilities. Furthermore, because of television broadcasting in the mid-Twentieth Century, media distribution achieved a height it had never before experienced (Starr, 2004, 376-377). Distribution at this level allowed broadcasting companies to reach most of the entire United States population, thus giving more power to individual privatised companies that owned the stations than ever before experienced.

At this time, newspapers, while they had high readership, were not widely distributed across the nation as they are today. For example, between the years of 1720-1735, the newspaper organizations in the city of Boston (which were highly regarded printing companies of their time) grew from two to five. However, these printings circulated only within the city (Starr, 2004, 57). Whereas today, a highly regarded newspaper industry, like the *New York Times*, not only distributes to all fifty states, but has international readership, and an Internet site, that can be accessed from any computer in the world. Furthermore, as the newspapers business began to pick up speed, and began to distribute nationally, they still had concentrated distribution in large cities throughout the nation.

³ Mainstream journalism or mass media can be defined as “a term used to denote, as a class, that section of the media specifically conceived and designed to reach a very large audience (typically at least as large as the whole population of a nation state). It was coined in the 1920s with the advent of nationwide radio networks and of mass-circulation newspapers and magazines. The mass-media audience has been viewed by some commentators as forming a mass society with special characteristics, notably atomization or lack of social connections, which render it especially susceptible to the influence of modern mass-media techniques such as advertising and propaganda. It is also gaining popularity in the blogosphere when referring to the mainstream media” (Wikipedia, 2006).

For example, the first newspaper companies belonging to William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer had national readership, even though these papers were concentrated in the major cities of the United States. Additionally, many small-town citizens felt loyalties to local papers over newspapers from distant, large cities. When radio hit the media scene, it was eased with greater success into the national audience. Thus, mass distribution in the form of broadcast media was maximized and both radio and television broadcasting were eventually incorporated into privately-owned businesses (Merritt and McCombs, 2004).

The decision to incorporate radio and television broadcasting inexorably changed the course of United States history. The United States government passed the Radio Act of 1927, “Which provided the statutory framework for broadcast regulation...” (McChesney, 1990, 16). It also set the foundation for the Communications Act of 1934, which allowed for a progressive complete privatisation of broadcast (Merritt and McCombs, 2004). These two acts put a price tag on the broadcasting slots in radio and television. Thus, the non-profit organisations could not make the payments to keep their slots on the radio. And those that could initially make the payments were no competition for the private companies that dominated the other stations, leaving the non-profit organisations empty handed. Eventually, the non-profit organisations diminished. The basic understanding between the broadcasters and the mass public quickly contended that the commercial broadcasters were working to create money for the public to use in efforts to better the United States economy; while the other non-profit broadcasters (i.e. university broadcasting stations dedicated to educational purposes) were viewed as propaganda, working solely to push their biased views (Merritt and McCombs, 2004, McChesney, 1990). It should be noted that the incorporation of broadcast media, while certainly not inclusive of all media types, ultimately had a profound and social-altering effect on every type of media.

When the distribution of easily accessible media for the public was incorporated and thus owned by businessmen, the views of those supporting such a move came into the spotlight, while most other voices faded out (Merritt and McCombs, 2004). In a way, the

media established a journalist without the public as a client, yet with the approval of the mass public. By incorporating the industry, the public automatically accepted the views and opinions of those running the mass distribution of news, thus the public gave consent to their spectator roles in the media. However, consent without true choice of options is certainly something to consider. I do not mean to suggest that corporate media must gain the acceptance of the entire public (or even a majority as seen in U.S. democratic legislation) in order to operate within a democratic society. However, because of the immense influence the media has over any society, democratic or not, *completely* incorporating the industry takes away the chance for extensive public discussion on the topic. And in this aspect, choice has been removed from the U.S. public in terms of the mass media.

Furthermore, the complete corporatization of media organisations certainly did not stop in the Mid-Twentieth Century. The other major occurrence contributing to today's media debate concerns the global corporate media mergers of 2000. After nearly half a century of private companies gaining more and more influence in the United States, the most dominant of these corporations joined with global corporations creating the most powerful conglomerates to date. Such ownership equates a solidified voice in the media. Those companies comprising the solidified voice, in descending order of dominance are; AOL/Time Warner, The Walt Disney Company, Bertelsmann AG, Viacom, News Corp., and Vivendi Universal (Williams, 2003). Certainly each of these conglomerates has different reporting staffs and different editors, yet the same corporate dollar anchors many of the reporters' and editors' loyalties. For example, the Disney Corporation owns nine local television stations within the United States, and one in Canada, in addition to owning the entire American Broadcasting Station (ABC). Likewise, Disney owns over forty local radio stations, in addition to Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) national radio (Columbia Journalism Review, 2005). Because of the wide-scale corporatization in the United States today it is common that large companies own many smaller companies throughout the country. However, the media, as an important social institution, should not merely be valued according to its business or monetary value.

As such, the corporatization of broadcasters that occurred half a century ago, and the conglomerating of broadcasting companies of six years ago, speaks to a certain set of values in the United States today. And when we consider the importance of broadcast media, it is understandable why such action has contributed to social values within American society,

Not only did broadcasting cross continents and bridge oceans, but it was also envisioned as penetrating the minds of people more than other, older media and, therefore, expanding its influence as a tool of mass persuasion in the science of commercial or political interest.

(Hardt, 1979, 25)

For this reason, I will focus my argument mainly on the development of broadcast media⁴ and its role in U.S. society today. However, understanding broadcast entails an understanding of the media that preceded it. Moreover, the concern of broadcast media as primarily a business for money-making entrepreneurs, and not necessarily as a public service, is of particular concern when we consider the mass persuasive possibilities broadcast media obtains.

Media and the Public

In the United States, society and legislature is embedded in its dedication to democracy and the public. American democracy runs in three separate departments: the legislative branch, the executive branch and the judicial, branch. The legislative branch, that which encompasses the House of Representatives and the Congress, is the area of the government where laws are proposed and passed or denied in order to help the nation and its people. The executive branch is that in which the President and his/her cabinet make governmental decisions. And finally the judicial branch, that which encompasses the Supreme Court (and all courts for that matter), is the section of the government that interprets the laws made in the legislative branch. These separate branches, each as powerful as the other, were designed to keep American democracy in a sort of checks and balances to prevent any one area (or any one person) from gaining too much power or control over the nation (Wikipedia Contributors, 2006, 'Separation of power under the

⁴ Recall my point early about the accessibility of newspapers as resources.

United States Constitution’). The term ‘Fourth Estate’ relates to the press’s role in democracy. The concept is that in a democratic system, such as the United States, with such checks and balances, the media can and should work as yet another system of checks and balances. That is, the media is responsible for reporting issues about the government in order to keep the government virtuous in relation to the public. Though the Fourth Estate is a concept used in United States media and government, its origins, though always referring to the media, come from a Scottish essayist, Thomas Carlyle, who, when writing about the French Revolution wrote,

...does not...the parliamentary debate go on...in a far more comprehensive way, out of Parliament altogether? Edmund Burke said that there were three Estates in Parliament, but in the Reporters’ Gallery yonder, there say a fourth Estate more important than all. It is not a figure of speech, or a witty saying; it is a literal fact,

.... Printing, which comes necessarily out of Writing, I say often, is equivalent to Democracy: invent Writing, Democracy is inevitable. Whoever can speak, speaking now to the whole nation, becomes a power, a branch of government, with inalienable weight in law-making, in all acts of authority. It matters not what rank he has, what revenues or garnitures: the requisite thing is that he have a tongue which others will listen to; this and nothing more is requisite.

(Carlyle, 1904, 349-350)

In the United States, media is thought of as the Fourth Estate of the government because of this concept first introduced by Carlyle.

Moreover, as implied in my brief discussion of United States media history, the public acceptance of the spectator role in corporate news distribution may not have completely been a voluntary decision. Whether or not the mass public is aware of this spectator position they currently fulfil, an ongoing concern for media commentators is the perception that at least a section of the public, in some ways, has lost trust and respect for the sections of the media and certain types of journalists. To highlight this attitude, consider:

It would be hard for the media to pitch itself as a innocent victim of its own shortcomings. And though journalists like to think of themselves as guardians of the public trust, opinion polls for at least two decades have shown declining faith in print and television news. Reassuring the public that these products are

dependable, in turn, has proved frustratingly elusive. Is it even possible for such an unwieldy industry to regain a healthy measure of public trust?

(Healy, 2005, 4)

The results in a recent Gallup Poll of 2005 indicated that broadcast media was more commonly used as they way citizens' gather their news on daily basis. The poll showed that 39% of those polled indicated they gather news from the cable networks (Cable News Network or CNN, Fox News Corporation or Fox, and MicroSoft National Broadcasting Company or MSNBC) and 51% said they watched local television broadcast. Whereas only, 7% of those polled gather their news on a daily basis from national newspapers (*New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today*), and 44% gathered from a local newspaper on a daily basis. These figures show that, in general, local media is preferred to national and that broadcast is preferred to print. And yet, when asked about the trustworthiness of the stories present by specific anchors on national broadcasting stations, Peter Jennings of ABC got the highest percentage of full public confidence, and it was at a mere 31%. Furthermore, the same poll indicates that the overall confidence in the mass media in the United States is merely 50% (only 13% had a 'great deal' of confidence and 37% had a 'fair amount'). These statistics signify a low level in both media-gathering activity and, further, a low level of trust for those that are gathering media information. Furthermore, the poll indicates that 62% of the U.S. public believe that news organisations' stories are often inaccurate accounts. These statistics show a moderate to poor outlook on the media in terms of the public (The Gallup Poll, 2005).

The public's moderate to poor, possibly mistrusting image of the media and the journalist is a multifaceted and serious issue. To understand this somewhat negative public sentiment, an understanding of the relationship between the media and the public should be established. A paradox in this relationship occurs resulting from an unregulated 'free media.' The democratic concept of free press and freedom of speech were established to empower the public. However, this empowerment can be questioned when considering the conditions of today's media in relation to its public (Picard, 1985). Consider that although a medium such as the Internet provides the public with limitless avenues for

information and the access thereof, media organisations are aware of their mass influence. Therefore, media companies may come to use their power to report news that best suits their business needs (McNair, 1998). For example, arguably, the Fox News Corporation in the United States has a political agenda that favours supporting the current Bush presidency. A documentary in 2004, *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism*, argues this very claim (Greenwald, 2004). In the Fox News Corporation newsroom, various memos are sent out to the staff instructing them on appropriate issues and the ways in which certain issues should be handled on-air. An Internal Fox Memo, as seen in the documentary, reads: "The pictures from Abu Graib prison are disturbing. Today we have a picture – aired on Al Arabiyn – of an American hostage being held with a scarf over his eyes, clearly against his will. Who's outraged on his behalf?" (Greenwald, 2004). This memo was distributed to the journalists working on that night's broadcast. It is not merely a suggestion to the journalists, rather it serves as the outline for what story should air, and the mood the story should assume. It is worrisome that the journalists at this broadcast station have little to no autonomy. But it is also of great concern to consider that the agenda of the Fox News Corporation feels it must defend the atrocious actions of the U.S. soldiers at Abu Graib by pointing the blame back onto the Iraqis and, even more disturbing, to pass it off as news.

As such, the public in the United States may come to feel more as "passive witnesses of a media spectacle beyond the control [of the public]" (McNair, 1998, 49). In the case of Fox News Corporation, the company creates the special and the citizens sit back and watch. (I must also note here, that other broadcast stations have agendas that they push onto the public, but I have chosen to pinpoint the actions of Fox because of its influence and the abundant amount of information assessable on Fox because of its dominance over other stations (Greenwald, 2004)).

Beyond understanding the 'passive-witness' relationship the public currently maintains with the media, many media theorists list reasons for the drop of public trust in the media. Media analysts agree that media corruption occurs at the hand of the corporate advertiser. "Journalists pursue confrontation for confrontation's sake and expose the private failings of public figures for no more noble cause than the commercial advantage of their

proprietor” (McNair, 1998, 63). Similarly, the Society of Professional Journalists in the United States agrees with this type of reasoning. They have made many public statements to journalists instructing them to, “Deny favoured treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage” (Society of Professional Journalists, 2003, 2). The committee continues to explain that, “These practices are a disservice to the public; eroding the trust the public must have to find the work of the press credible” (Society of Professional Journalists, 2003, 2).

Still other theories exist that work to explain the possible decrease in public trust of the media. One media analyst, Jonathon Alter (2003), admits that the public comes to resent large corporations for their power and control as these corporations become larger. He also asserts that entertainment and the media have blurred together. Alter (2003) adds that cable television has given way to the 24-hour news coverage, which reports on-the-spot news before its accuracy has been checked. Ultimately, as Alter concludes, the effect of public mistrust of the media has resulted in “Readers [or viewers] now often look[ing] for news that simply reinforces their own world view and politics. They often assume that the truer version is what has not appeared in... mainstream outlets” (Alter, 2003, 27). This type of mistrust has an obvious effect on the public. If they cannot trust the very entity from which the news emerges, then they find it necessary to search elsewhere for news.

Likewise, the media’s professionals, (the journalists) may come to be less trusted for various reasons. Indeed, journalists take the position of the devil’s advocate when reporting on many issues. The ‘hard-nosed’ journalist looking to uncover scandal and lies has replaced the ‘looking-for-proper-information’ journalist who actually reports the events fairly, and asks important questions of what should happen (Rosen, 2004a). Similarly, journalists, despite their various ethics codes for every type of journalism, continue to behave at times in an unethical professional manner. Certainly, the ethical standards for the journalistic profession become hazy when journalists continue to find rewards (both monetary and professional) for invasion of privacy, exploitation of celebrities and politicians, refusing to give the benefit of the doubt, breaking confidentiality promises, and so forth. Current journalistic codes fail to work holistically

on such ethical breaches. Instead, the codes provide in-the-moment decision-making techniques. Many media theorists argue that codes for journalists must set an educative standard; it should link breaches of requirement and prohibitions with sanctions. In other words, the codes should impose more regulation upon journalists (Belsey, 1999).

The anchoring concept depicted in each of the aforementioned reasons for public decline in the media and in the professional journalist is a professional disregard for the democratic role of the media in society. While the complaints about journalistic inaccuracies and dishonesty ostensibly appear as a problem with professionalism, fundamentally it is a problem with the social understanding of the journalistic profession. On a wide-range scale, neither journalists nor the media are acting as responsible as they possibly should in terms of public duty and on some level, those critical of the media today are be aware of the connection between the media, democracy and the public.

A common theme in the public's criticism of the media is that the concept of freedom has gotten out of hand and that the media push all sorts of irresponsible information in the name of freedom of the press. Responsible journalism, not free journalism, is increasingly proposed by would-be media reformers.

(Merrill, 1999, 22)

Generally speaking, the United States public is aware of the irresponsibility of sections of the media and of some journalists. Likewise, understanding the public's view about journalism and the media is critical to media reform. Therefore, is critical that one understands what type of public creates these views. In order to understand the public in terms of its media practices news-gathering customs must be considered.

It is just as important to understand the public behaviour of news-gathering as it is to understand the public mistrust of the media. After all, the way in which the public uses the media directly affects their opinion and trust for the media and journalism. As such, there are three basic types of news-gatherers currently in the United States. They are information seekers, monitors, and onlookers:

- Information seekers, who most closely resemble the idealized citizens of democratic theory, are persons to whom elections and a wide variety of public affairs are highly relevant. Typically, they make an effort to acquire a considerable quantity of information about public affairs.

- Monitors [are] those individuals who monitor or scan the ongoing stream of news for information specifically relevant to them and their lives. These individuals generally are satisfied with knowledge *of* the issues of the day rather than detailed knowledge *about* the issues of the day.
- Onlookers [are] those persons for whom civic life has little personal relevance. These are the individuals with a low need for orientation, persons for whom the daily news paper and television news may be more of a pleasant distraction and source of entertainment than a source of orientation to civic life.

(Merritt and McCombs, 2004, 50-52)

Since most of the public fit into the ‘onlookers’ category, it becomes quite obvious why money-making news conglomerates concentrate more on entertainment and ‘news’ capable of ‘pleasantly distracting’ the public. Understandably, it is easier to entertain the public than inform and build trust with the public. However, as many democratic-socialist media theorists (such as Davis Merritt and Jay Rosen) contend, this business loyalty over a public loyalty can harm the public’s right to information and capabilities to express public concern and incite change. “The public, in whose name all journalists ply their trade, is best understood as an achievement of good journalism—its intended outcome rather than its assumed audience” (Rosen and Merritt, 1994, 7). This quote suggests that journalists should view the public as their client, not as their audience or means by which to sell that audience and make money through advertising.

The Journalist and the Public

As my next two chapters on the changing nature of democracy and its effects on journalism will indicate, the journalist, in some aspects, should serve the public. Davis Merritt comments on this problem within the profession of journalism by referring to the words of George Bernard Shaw,

[He] once remarked that every profession is a conspiracy against the public. By a conspiracy he meant that every profession, such as the law, accounting, and journalism, creates ground rules and traditions to govern its behaviour with little explicit regard to the needs or convenience of the public whom the profession ostensibly serve.

(Merritt and McCombs, 2004, 41)

While this quote comments on general link between professionalism and the public, in the context of my thesis, we should specifically consider the relationship between journalism and the public. Moreover, journalism is a unique public profession. Consider other public professionals, such as a doctor or a lawyer. In terms of the professional commitment to their clients, the doctor and the lawyer must professionally serve aspects of the good that can be substantiated individually and/or socially. These professions require the doctor or lawyer to commit an honest service to the public. Yet, in addition to the public duties of these professions, both the doctor and the lawyer also have individual clients. It is simple to understand the individual commitment of a doctor or a lawyer when we consider the individual citizen that seeks medical attention or legal counsel. Both the doctor and the lawyer, and many professions have a specific duty to serve the good to individual clients. Therefore, the public duty of these professions requires only a portion of the overall responsibility within the entire profession. That is to say, the good, for many professionals, can be served at the public level and/or at the individual level. After all, in the case of the doctor, for example, he/she could be a doctor immersed in clinical research dedicated to curing diseases. This doctor does not attend to individual clients, however he/she does professionally serve the good publicly. Likewise, the lawyer that works for the District Attorney's office that never counsels an individual client is still professionally serving the good by providing information to possibly convict criminals. And yet, this good is certainly not an individual one as it exclusively serves the public. However, the professional journalist that works to serve the good does not (and should not) have this individual client. After all, media can facilitate democracy more completely with the attention and trust of the mass public, thus aiding by fuelling public deliberation. Therefore, the only true client for the professional journalist is the public. However when journalism in the United States today is considered, it becomes apparent that the journalist is not working holistically in the public interest. The overwhelming presence of advertisement agencies is testimony to the ulterior clients within the media industry. And since journalists only work in the public arena, then journalists that work solely for these individual corporate clients should not necessarily be considered as true professionals in the media industry (though they currently are). However, it is hard to draw the line between a journalist that works in the interest of the public, yet maintains a

job for a corporation and a journalist that panders completely to the wants and needs of the corporation for which he/she works. This issue becomes a matter of autonomy for individual journalists and specifically for those journalists working for big corporations, and it is a cloudy subject.

It should be noted that an alternative client with alternative loyalties exists for the journalist: the advertiser. However, a client such as the advertiser should not serve as the journalist's or media sole client. Rather the advertiser is the client of a business or of the journalistic industry. Nevertheless, the journalist's obligation to the advertiser creates on possible tension within the professional autonomy of the journalist in that if the journalists loyalties lie with a company that has interests other than those needed to publicly inform and educate, the journalist may be faced with a lose of autonomy in order to get paid. As a result of this possible jeopardized autonomy, many editors of magazines, newspapers, radio, television, etc. are more concerned with 'jazzing the client' as opposed to informing the client; and with 'increasing paid advertising' (Gonser, 2003, 46) as opposed to increasing public readership. On the other hand, within the industry, pandering to the wants and needs of the public is seen as a negativism as well.

Many journalists in the United States today misunderstand the necessity of publicly orientating this profession. Those professionally involved in the media today argue that journalists cannot pander to the wants and needs of the public (Bell, 1998). These journalists claim such a move would make them less objective; thus sacrificing those journalistic values that have been rooted in American journalism since the days of the penny press⁵ (Steffen, 2003). This attitude speaks to the individualistic trend that many mainstream journalists currently adhere to; they view their profession as a way to advance in a business and personal gain, rather than as a way to inform and educate the public.

⁵ The penny press era refers to the early 1800's in United States history when printing became so accessible, that nearly six hundred newspapers circulated through the nation. It truly was a time of 'free' press.

This trend of poor mainstream journalism that is currently spreading across the United States has certainly been noticed, discussed, and analysed. A movement founded by Jay Rosen and Davis ‘Buzz’ Merritt seeks a workable solution (though, as I will discuss later this solution is not yet workable in the current condition of United States journalism) to counter the destruction of the democratic media in the United States today. This movement, as mentioned previously, is called public (or civic) journalism (Rosen, 1999b).

Public Journalism

In accordance with the concepts of Rosen, Merritt and public journalism, the betterment of the client-to-professional relationship in journalism must occur both at the hand of the professional, and within the public. For example, the fact that most of the public fits into the ‘Onlooker’ category previous described is a dangerous category for the majority of a democratic public to fit. However, mass inspiration to push the public into the ‘Information Seeker’ category can only happen by means of one profession; journalism. It is this professional responsibility to the public that Rosen and Merritt hold so dearly as being central to their theories on a new type of United States journalism. They hope to create journalism that is capable of working with the public, instead of working separately, or detachedly.

This civic ‘movement’ is best described by its theoretical founder, Jay Rosen.

Like holistic medicine, public journalism wants to begin in a different place. Rather than starting with the ruptures and breakdowns that make for news, it asks about the conditions that allow for a healthy public life. And it rejects as too limiting a disease model of community life, in which things become interesting only when they begin to break down.

(Rosen, 1994, 3)

Rosen describes that he, the vocabulary builder of public journalism, works to keep the conversation growing on the subject. He admits that any attempt to outline ‘what Public Journalism is’ is exactly that, merely an attempt. He additionally admits to flaws in his own thinking since the beginning of the public journalism conversation. Nevertheless, Rosen offers what his view of public journalism entails in five detailed categories;

defining dominion, the art of framing, the capacity to publicly include, the positioning effect, and shaping a master narrative (Rosen, 1994).

Clearly Rosen and other supporters of public journalism speak of journalism in terms of rebuilding the social responsibility of the journalist. This essential piece of the public journalism philosophy founds the debate. Mainstream journalists (or journalist not of the same socially-oriented mindset as public journalists) believe a stress on press responsibility would have negative effects on the profession of journalism.

Many press people feel that talk of responsibility leads to obligations and duties and that these in turn then restrict press freedom. The journalists always get back to stressing press freedom and deemphasizing press responsibilities.

(Merrill, 1999, 34)

Many journalists cling onto concepts guaranteed by the First Amendment that is, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. But democratic socialists and supporters of public journalism question this press freedom in face of corporate control. Furthermore, if the press is truly free, then who is it free for? Certainly, press freedoms do not extend to the general public as they do to corporate media owners. For example, Rupert Murdoch's opinion on the current War in Iraq can easily spread through millions of homes throughout the United States (and globally for that matter), because he owns Fox News Corporation. And where American journalism strives to be unbiased, it is apparent (as shown previously) that Murdoch has a political agenda in his reporting. However, if Joe Citizen wants to get his opinion about the War in Iraq into the homes of millions of Americans, he would find the task challenging, if not impossible. I am not suggesting that my thesis will venture into solving the problem of 'fair' media access to each and every individual, however, this example highlights that the media is very 'free' for Mr. Murdoch, and not so 'free' for Joe Citizen.

Certainly we should consider the Internet's role in somewhat altering the possibilities for Joe Citizen to get his voice heard. However, the various types space created by the Internet (i.e. MySpace, Personal Blogs, Specific Web Blogs, etc.) do not have as much power behind their voice as a network station does. The Internet offers an infinite amount of space to any person that knows how and has the means to access it. In a way

this is very liberating. However, the flip side to this liberation is that since so many people use the Internet to have their voices heard, it becomes difficult for an Internet user to concentrate on one specific voice. And in this way, Rupert Murdoch does have more power to spread his opinions than Joe Citizen. However, implementing a truly public broadcast system could open more doors for Joe Citizen, doors that cannot be obtained by the sole use of the Internet. Thus, this broadcast system could aid in making the media more freely accessible for all citizens to become informed and educated. Furthermore, in drawing from the examples provided by other national public broadcast stations (i.e. the BBC, CBC, and ABC) we can see that these stations have Internet sites as well as their broadcasting. This space on the Internet opens doors for a reputable space for citizenry discussion, as not all sections of the Internet can be trusted because of its complete vastness.

In returning to the concepts of public journalism, we should consider that it is not an easy endeavour. It is, by nature, is not merely an easy ‘task’, as it does not demand quick results for rushed deadlines. Rather, public journalism takes time, and retrospection on the part of the journalist, the editor, and the public. This very aspect of public journalism, once again asks the journalist to break from the tradition of the profession. Therefore, it is understandable why current journalists feel sceptical, or are outraged by the concepts of public journalism. However, understanding scepticism is one thing, accepting that a break with tradition is too hard of a task to endeavour is quite another.

Additionally, many members of the press feel that public journalism aims to ‘fix’ the public’s attitudes and ideologies. However, as public journalism’s practical philosopher, Buzz Merritt (Merritt, 1999, 185) states; “We [do not] claim the ability or the aspiration to ‘fix’ things—except insofar as citizens can be empowered to fix things themselves.” Public journalism is not in the business of shaping the public thought, except to shape it with an emphasis on the importance of active citizenry for democratic deliberation.

This purported ‘tie’ to the public for which mainstream journalists currently link only to a concept of public journalism, is the basis of another argument against this new

movement. Mainstream journalists accuse public journalists of losing their objective voice, and becoming attached to the public. As Merritt explains;

Most journalists hear the critique of detachment and take not a step but a mental leap: if we're not talking about detachment, they say, then we must be talking about attachment, and if we're talking about attachment, then we must be talking about abandoning such indisputably important and useful roles as watchdog, outsider from government, independent observer, uninvolved-and-thus-credible-source of information.

(Merritt, 1999, 184)

However in refuting this argument, public journalists make the distinction between *attached to* the public and *not detached from* the public. Where attached to the public is a dangerous place for any credible journalist to stand, not detached from the public means caring for the state of the public and actively working to reengage the public in democratic life.

Basically, public journalism is a new type of journalism. And those journalists that are currently satisfied with their role in the profession cannot possibly see what good could come from changing the status quo. A break with tradition is always a difficult task. But if it were not difficult, it would not be so incredibly necessary. Furthermore, breaking with tradition requires one to first establish the tradition from which it is breaking. Charles Taylor explains the connection linking social progression and the culture history from which aspects of society have developed.

History and Taylor

Any thoroughly researched theory in the Taylorian tradition for the improvement of a well-established, respected social institution, an institution as will be described in Chapter Three, should include the history and unfolding of such institution. Although this approach is not like that of modern reasoning, this historical method proves very effective in establishing the current state of society as resulting in and contributing to the very social elements that have shaped the society. Charles Taylor explains this type of philosophical reasoning, as follows:

The temptations to deny [an ontological approach to understanding morality], which arise from modern epistemology, are strengthened by the widespread

acceptance of a deeply wrong model of practical reasoning, one based on an illegitimate extrapolation from reasoning in natural science.

The various ontological accounts attribute predicates to human beings—like being creatures of God, or emanations of divine fire, or agents of rational choice, which seem rather analogous to theoretical predicates in natural science, in that they (a) are rather remote from our everyday descriptions by which we deal with people around us and ourselves, and (b) make reference to our conception of the universe and the place we occupy in it. In fact, if we go back before the modern period and take the thought of Plato, for example, it is clear that the ontological account underlying the morality of just treatment was identical with his scientific theory of the universe. The theory of Ideas underlay one and other.

(Taylor, 1989, 7-8)

Essentially, the Taylorian tradition is an ontological approach to morality. Ontological, in this context, requires that morality be considered holistically, that is to include historical aspects, cultural understandings, and social institutions as embedded within our understanding of morals and ethics within society. Taylor claims that the modern philosophical way to interpret or guide behaviour is a deficient way to consider ethics. Modern philosophy indicates that basic ethical values and principles can be rationally determined and then general guidelines can be created to provide for humans an ethical basis for action and the resolution of ethical dilemmas. Taylor rejects this type of ethical approach. He suggests, rather, that ethical reasoning and understanding must be obtained by considering all aspects of society, and retracing social problems throughout their history in search of a more holistic approach to solve social issues.

As such, my thesis follows in this Taylorian tradition. This quote highlights two ways in which my thesis unfolds in the Taylorian tradition. First of all, my thesis accepts that the world and society are embedded in each other, just as social customs are embedded in the history that created the customs. Furthermore, my thesis, as described in my account of a social institution, accepts that the media is an embedded institution that cannot be removed from the very culture that has created the media and accepts the social frameworks which the media creates and contributes to. Additionally, the above quote reveals Taylor's emphasis on retracing the past to relocate the original intentions of current practical reasoning. In relating this concept to my thesis, I plan to outline the

history of United States journalism to show that the current state of journalism has grown out of its political and history relating both to democracy and the U.S. government. Furthermore, in using this historical context, I strive to demonstrate that the very phrasing and ethical basis for journalism today stems from this a democratic foundation. Specifically, the current state of mainstream journalism (i.e. predominantly broadcast journalism) has developed in conjunction with the political state of the nation.

Conclusion

While some journalists refuse to admit that a change must occur, the changing nature of democracy, which I will delve into in my next chapter would suggest that, it would be socially and professional helpful for the journalist to rejoin with its public. Public journalism offers some of the best solutions for this problem. Of course, public journalism has some limitations, but any good theory can be contested, and then reworked for better solutions. Quite certainly, the overwhelming mainstream journalist's rejection of public journalism stems from a loyalty to tradition. However, the foundation of this very loyalty is often misunderstood by most journalists. Public journalism needs to reach more journalists at a rational, pragmatic level for acceptance across the profession. Additionally, journalists refuting this movement reject the very essence of the movement in that they concentrate on their own well-being; the success of the journalist rather than the success of the profession in relation to its client. After all, public journalism is not just a healing of the journalist; it is also a mending of the public in relation to the changing nature of democracy.

Therefore, it is my intention to explore a solution allowing for the full blossoming of public journalism. Since public journalism is not solely about the betterment of the journalists and the media, it must also work to rebuild the relationship between the public and the journalist. Therefore, public journalist requires a safe sphere where development does not depend on commercial gain. Fundamentally, United States media necessitates a tax-payer funded broadcast station in order to allow a new type of socially responsible journalism to reconnect with the public. Furthermore, the media must serve as the information provider for the mass public, which is essential to the public voice in a

democratic society. Therefore, the movement of public journalism must succeed in order to reconnect the public with its democratic responsibilities to debate upon the development of their society.

The media in the United States today must work to swing the social pendulum back to a state that is more progressive for the public in terms of its media capacities. As I will discuss in the history of the development of the media in the United States, the journalistic tradition was created from the development of the nation, the writing of *The Constitution*, and the development of the public sphere. In this era, journalism developed with concepts of free speech and public deliberation. However, it was also heavily censored a short time later. A pendulum swings in the name of media and U.S. history. And journalism in today's society has become to be a different profession than it once was. In order to swing the pendulum back in the name of free speech, press freedom, and democratic deliberation, the return of journalism must also be considered in conjunction with the changing nature of democracy. In doing so, the necessity of a truly publicly funded broadcast network emerges.

To argue these claims, my thesis will follow a basic philosophical breakdown in an effort to show that United States media needs a truly public broadcast system, and without such an implementation, United States media will develop without consideration of its democratic modification. In fact, the aspiration for genuine reform in any aspect for the sake of the journalistic profession, the media industry, or the democratic involvement of the United States public should encompass reform in the form of a truly funded broadcast system. Such a change could work to not only swing the pendulum back to a freer media for the public, but also make solid steps in preventing the pendulum to ever swing so far in the other direction again. In order to support such a claim I must first establish that the nature of democracy is changing. And then assess that a serious problem in United States media does, in fact, exist today, and demonstrate the relationship between the media and the changing nature of democracy. Consequently, I must then show that historically analysing the aforementioned embedding of the media, democracy and the public in The United States will reveal that this 'serious problem with the United States media' is

indeed the result of a deficit-functioning institutional role of the media in United States society. Upon this analysis, I must also work to provide a clear understanding of the term 'institutional' and what this term indicates for the way in which the media is interpreted by society. Furthermore, in my discussion of the history of United States journalism, I aim to show that current journalistic standards have swung far away from the type of journalism that was created in order to found the United States democracy. I must then relate the position of the current professional journalist relative to this account of the history of journalism, and relate the necessity of a professional despite the implications of the role of a professional in modernity (particularly because my theoretical basis for this thesis is a rejection of much of modern philosophy that underpins current understandings of the professional). Furthermore, I will explain that the journalist, because of this inherence between the media and democracy, carries a public responsibility like those outlined in Jay Rosen's (Rosen, 1999a) concepts of public journalism, as the much needed and socially-accepted professionals in this field, but will conclude that no journalist even with a solid ethical basis and public sense of duty can operate ethically in this fundamentally deficit-functioning profession. Finally, I will show that a helpful way in which to allow journalists in every field the opportunity to behave as publicly responsible professionals is with the implementation of a tax-payer funded broadcast system capable of providing a public sphere freed from privatised-corporate control. Additionally, while I am not suggesting that all type of media should become tax-payer funded, I am suggesting that implementing such a broadcast station will set a new standard in United States media, thus capable of raising the status quo of all mainstream media. In this last piece of my argument, I will appeal to examples of already accepted and successful tax-payer funded broadcast systems like the United Kingdom's BBC, Canada's Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and both Australia's Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting System (SBS). Furthermore, I will seek to show that Public Broadcast System (PBS) in the United States is not a solely funded by tax-payer money, therefore is not a truly public broadcast system, and thus does not have the same autonomous capabilities nor does it create the same space to publicly orient the media as seen in each of the aforementioned stations. That is to say, implementing a tax-payer funded broadcast station in the United States, as seen in the United Kingdom,

Canada and Australia, could seek to further enhance the PBS initiative by providing more autonomy and space in which journalism can inform and educate the public.

Chapter One Summary

This chapter seeks to provide the context needed to begin the ethical discussion of the media in the United States. It notes that media ethics conversations do, in fact, exist in the United States today. And it acknowledges the overwhelming presence of the media in society.

Furthermore, the chapter has introduced the need for a new type of understanding within media ethics as it appeals to the necessity of historical consideration when engaged in the media ethics conversation. And with this historical consideration, as this chapter explains, the link between journalism, the public and the development of democracy in the United States emerges.

A possible new type of journalism, public journalism, works to connect the public to the journalist. The chapter outlines the basic philosophies of this new type of journalism. However, it also has pointed out that public journalism is not a widely accepted practice.

Through setting the context of media ethics in the United States today, I aim to have established that changes have occurred in the United States: both socially and democratically. In considering the changing nature of democracy and the responses of society, I aim to show steps that journalism and the media could take in order to most benefit the public in terms of informing and educating.

Finally the chapter has provided the outline for the development of the thesis.

Chapter Two

DEMOCRACY IS CHANGING

Introduction

In order to provide significance to my proposal of implementing a publicly funded broadcast station in the United States media today, I must first show that the media, in its current state, can be amended to work more effectively for the public and for a liberal democracy. And in order to establish such a broad claim, an understanding of liberal democracy and its current application in the United States should be established. As such, democracy is the dominant political system in the world today. “Today 119 [countries have what we would consider a democracy], comprising of 62 percent of all countries in the world. What was once a peculiar practice of a handful of states around the North Atlantic has become the standard form of government for humankind” (Zalaroa. 2003, 13). It can be said, then, that democracy is a viable and popular governing system in the world today. Furthermore, governing systems are susceptible and often exposed to change. I aim to demonstrate that liberal democracy is changing worldwide, and specifically, in the United States. Moreover, the type of democracy found in the United States is not just a democracy; rather it is a liberal democracy. In my thesis I aim to show the changing nature of liberal democracies as this type of governing is more pertinent to my focus. While the term “democracy is often assumed to be liberal democracy” (Wikipedia Contributors, ‘Liberal democracy’, 2006), to be clear, I should explain the specifics of a liberal democracy. In this respect consider that,

Liberal democracy is a form of representative democracy (either a constitutional republic or a constitutional monarchy) where the ability of elected representatives to exercise decision-making power is subject to the rule of law, and usually moderated by a constitution which emphasizes the protection of the rights and freedoms of individuals and minorities, and which places constraints on the leaders and on the extent to which the will of the majority can be exercised.

These rights and freedoms include the rights to due process, private ownership of property, privacy, and equality before the law, and freedoms of speech, assembly and religion. In liberal democracies these rights (also known as "liberal rights") may sometimes be constitutionally guaranteed, or are otherwise created by statutory law or case law, which may in turn empower various civil institutions to administer or enforce these rights.

Liberal democracies also tend to be characterized by tolerance and pluralism; widely differing social and political views, even those viewed as extreme or fringe, are permitted to co-exist and compete for political power on a democratic basis, although this rarely occurs in practice due to public rejection of radical agendas that seek to overthrow liberal democracy. Liberal democracies periodically hold elections where groups with differing political views have the opportunity to achieve political power.

(Wikipedia Contributors, 'Liberal democracy', 2006, 1)

With that understood, the changes that are occurring in liberal democracy worldwide encompass both positives and negatives. And the very nature of liberal democracy requires malleability. Therefore, it is helpful to understand the specific ways in which the nature of democracy is undergoing change in order to understand what role the media play in their relation to liberal democracy, and thus to society. Furthermore, in a time of such transformation, efforts can be enhanced with public awareness and support. As such, the media can work to accommodate and incorporate these changes to build this public awareness and support.

This chapter will unfold in four basic components. Initially, I will provide the background for the development of democracy, and furthermore will portray the emergence of liberal democracy and its current characteristics. Then, I aim to show that liberal democracy, throughout its emergence and continuing today, is changing. That is to say, the very nature of liberal democracy is change. Furthermore, liberal democracy in the United States is attached to U.S. consumerism and capitalism, thus the dominant scheme in determining the 'good life' in a liberal democratic society, specifically that of the United States society, is one of an economic nature. And this present alliance between democratic policy and consumer capitalism is in some ways dulling political awareness in the mainstream public. However, an increase in communication can work to create a fuller flow of information and eventually education of and for the public in political and social terms. These final concepts coincide with many of the theories on media, democracy and the public that Noam Chomsky clarifies. As such, I will reference him often when discussing these phenomena and their importance on both the media and U.S. society. Finally, this introduction chapter will delve into specific examples found in

the media that can, through specific examples, portray the rhetoric developed in the first three components of my developing argument in this chapter.

Liberal Democracy Defined

To begin with, then I must clearly define democracy, albeit a liberal democracy, and its intertwining counterparts. Liberal democracy should be understood as a form of government. Therefore, I must also define the elements of governing a society, elements such as politics and power. Each of these concepts is still debated over as their exact meanings are hard to decipher. However, a general understanding of these terms will assist in my breakdown of the current changing nature of liberal democracy today. Therefore, it should be understood that,

Democracy is unattainable unless it is brokered by institutions, mandated by the people and made accountable to them, whose primary purpose is to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak and to prevent people of all stations resolving their differences by means of violence. The collective noun for such institutions is government.

(Monbiot, 2003, 41)

With that said, government “in a modern state, can be defined on a simple level as the individuals, institutions, and processes that make the rules for society and possess the power to enforce them,” (Cummings, and Wise, 1985, 14). Likewise, politics and government are very closely-intertwined concepts. We can understand politics as the “pursuit and exercise of power,” (Cummings, and Wise, 1985, 14). Consequently, politics are the means by which the government can carry out the laws and rules for society and maintain the power to enforce these rules. What then, is this power I keep referring to, in terms of government and politics: “Power is the possession of control over others,” (Cummings, and Wise, 1985, 15). Therefore, government, politics, and power are all entwined fundamental elements needed to understand, implement and practice democracy and thus to practice liberal democracy. Liberal democracy is a type of government that uses its distribution of power according to the desires of the society. Distribution of power is a key element in democracy. In U.S. liberal democratic policy, those social elements held valuable like equality and basic rights are the very elements of

distribution for which the U.S. government maintains the power to enforce (Cummings, and Wise, 1985, 16). That is to say,

Values are important in the context of any political system because they help to shape the institutions and the policy outputs of that system. In the United States the ideas of equality, democracy, self-government, individual liberty localism, the protection of property and constitutionalism, as well as arguments over the definition of what is 'truly American', have together provided a core set of values.

(Peele, 1992, 14)

U.S. liberal democracy uses a constitution to provide a backbone to enforcing the social values such as individual liberties, free speech, and so forth. These concepts, while righteous in content, are not so perfectly righteous when actualized. Democracy today in the United States encompasses many aspects that the forefathers of the nation did not nor could not foresee. Furthermore, some aspects that were intentionally designed by the forefathers of U.S. democracy do not correctly apply to the concepts of liberal democracy. That is to say, the culture of U.S. liberal democracy is different today than it was in 1775, and the government should continue to adapt to social transformations. As such, many amendments to the U.S. Constitution have been made to create a clearer backbone to guide a changing society. However, these definitions of government, politics, power and democracy, in a way, is contentious. After all, attaching a definition to such concepts compels one to understand these concepts as either abstractions or as procedure and institutions (Inoguchi, Newman, and Keane, 1998, 2). And liberal democracy is nether fully an abstract concept nor is it merely a set of procedures designed to run a government and society. Therefore, in order to understand the need for governmental adaptation, we must first understand the history of democracy, liberal democracy, and its changing nature.

A Brief History of Democracy

The history of modern day democracy begins with the rediscovery of the concepts developed by Greek philosophers. The theoretical and political application of democracy stems from a long line of philosophical theory. Its original name (its Greek name), *demokratia*, directly translates into 'government by the people'. However, democracy

cannot be defined so simply. It must also be considered in its context of the people. Therefore, democracy “must be subject to realization among people who are alive today, and should apply to the organizational and infrastructural procedures for collective decision-making of which we have knowledge” (Hadenius, 1992, 7). That is to suggest, that democracy is a government dedicated to its people and the people that compose the democratic society create the ways in which their democratic procedures and rights are applied. In the late 14th Century European Renaissance humanists, that were rejecting medieval ideologies, looked to art and education. Additionally, the humanists sought to install power into secular communities, as opposed to centralized ruling from the Church. After explaining the history of liberal democracy I will move into the general explanation of the changing nature of this liberal democracy. And from these ideologies, centuries later, the forefathers of the U.S. governing system created the democracy now seen in the United States (Wikipedia contributes, ‘History of democracy’, 2006).

In the early stages of the return of democracy in the late 1700’s democracy gained momentum as a split in society occurred in Europe. That is to say, there were the aristocrats who owned the land and basically controlled all the money within society. In contrast to the aristocrats, were the democrats, the workers, those without land and without much money. Essentially, the workers wanted to even the social and monetary playing field and the aristocrats strove to conserve those aspects to which they already maintained power. Where the workers (or the democrats) wanted to create new fairness and equality of social and physical attributes, the conservatives (or the aristocrats) wanted to conserve their rights to the land they already had. The new democratic thinking in society at this time gave birth to a new economic order. As such, the working people demanded a better life of equality. Eventually, the ‘good life’ (or the ideology thereof) became not the entitlements one had or the land one had, but the economic wealth a person could ascertain. The social argument appears as such; because of the new social capability to ascertain wealth, class division lessened (Wikipedia contributes, 2006).

With this concept of the good life, capitalism in democracy was born. Capitalism was introduced into democracy in the 18th Century and it “created a new world, utterly

different from the one that had existed for millennia” (Zakaria, 2003, 46). Where land and family inheritance once dictated one's social position, capitalism allowed for an ideology that gave more social opportunity to all members of society. And it did so by replacing old forms of feudal government rule with economic precedence. At this point, democratic ideology became that of pursuing the good life through creating a better economic place in society. And while this emergence into capitalistic democracy blossomed in Europe, it flourished in the colonizing Americas (what later became the United States of America). The development of democracy in the United States was exceptional. After all, “Most countries don't begin their national experience as a new society without a feudal past. Free of hundreds of years of monarchy and aristocracy, Americans needed neither a powerful central government nor a violent social revolution to overthrow the old order” (Zakaria, 2003, 50). Furthermore, the development of the United States birthed a truly middle class. In fact, the aristocracy (though it existed) did not hold great power over the mass public. Actually, “In the 1780s we can actually sense the shift from a premodern society to a modern one where business interest and consumer tastes of ordinary people were coming to dominate” (Wood, 1993, 348). The United States, at its development, was creating a new world order, combining capitalism and democracy, creating what we call today liberal democracy.

However, the emergence of this middle class society found in the early days of United States history is not a completely positive tale. The middle class ‘views and tastes’ were and continue to be basically those things attached to consumerism. As such, society continues to run according to economic strategies because the concept of the good life and social stature are gauged by how much wealth one can accrue. But in order to keep creating this wealth, wealthy nations reap a great deal of natural resources from the earth and exploit other countries. Therefore the global understanding (and we must think globally because everything is Globalized these days) of the good life and democracy is changing. U.S. society has grown to provide the wants and needs of mass public with those products it commands at the cost of exhausting global resources. Essentially then, the liberal democracy that occurs in the United States today is not only *tied* to capitalism, it is *intertwined* with and a part of capitalism. This type of consumerism meshed with

liberal democracy in the United States has overlooked the fact that we, as a human race, cannot keep stripping the earth of its natural resources in order to create more material wealth (i.e. we have finite resources both domestically and globally) (Mitchell and Schoeffel, 2002, 60-64). Liberal democracy and capitalism today face growth, however much of this growth takes the form of an economic one.

Economic Growth in Liberal Democracy

As I have explained, the nature of the liberal democracy in the United States is that of a growing and changing government. The ways in which economic growth in a country vary. However, the attitude towards consumption in societies of wealthy nations is an essential aspect;

Most economic growth is derived from increased personal consumption, despite the evidence of its personal, social and environmental costs. We need, individually and collectively, to be more discerning about what economic activities we encourage or discourage. While such suggestions are often dismissed as ‘social engineering’, this criticism ignores the extent to which our lifestyle is already being ‘engineered’ through marketing, advertising and the mass media.

(Eckersley, 2005, 3)

However, personal monetary gain consumption is not as cut and dry as it may seem. That is to say, “As a rule, no matter how much money people have they feel they need more. Why else would people in rich countries...keep striving to become richer, often at the expense of their own happiness and that of their families?” (Hamilton and Denniss, 2005, 5). It is important to note its link to personal growth, overall economic growth and liberal democracy. This type of growth in liberal democracies is one that is occurring in wealthy democracies worldwide. The gauge for a successful liberal democracy today has become a monetary gauge, rather than a democratic one. Consider that:

[T]he political perspective continues to equate progress with the pursuit of economic growth. Wealth creation comes first, the argument goes, because it not only increases personal freedom and choice, it also allows us to spend more on meeting broader social objectives such as improved social welfare and environmental care and conservation.

It is striking just how much the political framework of growth is regarded as a 'policy constant' that is beyond scrutiny or debate. Political leaders explicitly state high growth as their prime objective, believing it to be the foundations upon which social progress, including better health and greater wellbeing, is built...

This view is understandable: strong economy, higher growth, more revenue, bigger budget surpluses, more to spend on new or bigger programs.

(Eckersley, 2005, 1-2)

As Eckersley explains in this remark, economic growth for liberal democracies has become the norm demonstrating national success within government and society. Not to suggest that economic gain is a negativism, however it should not be the only consideration for social and governmental success. The social condition of the public should not solely (or even primarily) focus on how much money the individuals within society are making. After all, other problems exist for governments and society besides those of an economic nature. A government and its people in the world today should also consider the (worsening) condition of the environment (i.e. global warming, droughts, floods). Furthermore, the state of health throughout the world should be considered. The global AIDS epidemic, specifically in Africa, illness, and famine are all current global concerns, and while each of these issues has been addressed by governments around the world, the question really becomes what can we do differently to help these problems, because it is beginning to become clearer, though the lack of great-success evidence in treating these global issues, that solely working to create more powerful and economically sound countries may not be the whole answer to such global problems.

Furthermore, there are things in life that can possibly matter more to society than having more money in the wallets of citizens. That is to say, possibly it is more important to citizens to spend tax money on say for example, creating better public schools or raising the level of healthcare for the community. Consider,

We need to think less in terms of a 'wealth producing economy' and more about a 'health producing society', where health is defined as total wellbeing – physical, mental, social and spiritual. We need to pay attention to the content of growth - and the values and priorities it reflects and serves – not just its rate. At present, government policies give priority to the rate, but leave the content largely to the market and consumer choice.

(Eckersley, 2005, 3)

As such, when considering that the emphasis on economic growth could possibly corrupt a liberal democracy, then there are consequences to this corruption. Consider,

Corruption [could] increase public investment because it creates opportunities for manipulation by dishonest high-level officials. It also skews the composition of public expenditure away from needed operations and maintenance spending and directs it toward new equipment purchases, thereby reducing the productivity of public investment, especially in infrastructure. Under a corrupt regime, public officials shun health programs because they offer less scope for rent-seeking. Corruption may also reduce tax revenue, because it compromises the government's ability to collect taxes and tariffs.

(Dailami, Dhareshwar, Kaufmann, Kishor, Lopez, Thomas, and Wang, Y., 2000,145)

Working long hours to make more money breaks the relationships that are needed for a community to stand tall-there are other things in life that can benefit if we stop trying so hard to make more money, work, consume, save, consume, spend, retire and die. (Hamilton and Denniss, 2005, 95). The people in liberal democracies working within the institutional stigma that drives people to work hard so as to accrue personal wealth are, in general, becoming more tied and sick because of overwork (Hamilton and Denniss, 2005, 95).

Furthermore, as a result of focusing so heavily on individual personal gain, community life is becoming something to avoid, instead of something to be a part of; “overwork seems to shape people’s mindsets in such a way that they feel their community is something they must protect themselves from rather than a resource from which they can draw and to which they can contribute” (Hamilton and Denniss, 2005, 95). As such, community, people and family are concepts that are losing their value in everyday life.

Perhaps the most disquieting consequence of affluenza⁶ is the way it corrupts values. In short, market values have increasingly colonized al other values, so that ethical decisions have become economic decisions, despite a nagging feeling

⁶ “Affluenza describes a condition in which we are confused about what it takes to live a worthwhile life” (Hamilton and Denniss, 2005, 7). Affluenza is further described in this respect: “We have grown fat but we persist in the belief that we are thin and must consume more. Perhaps we blind ourselves to the facts; perhaps the cure seems more frightening than the disease; or perhaps we just don’t know there is an alternative. For these reasons the epidemic of over-consumption that pervades rich societies has been dubbed ‘affluenza’” (Hamilton and Denniss, 2005, 6-7).

that putting a price on some things actually devalues them. Even the most intimate and precious aspects of being human have been subtly transformed into their antithesis. Becoming a parent used to be something we did because it was part of the human condition; now it is a 'lifestyle choice'...

(Hamilton and Denniss, 2005, 142)

The fact that people have an *attachment* to consumption is a worry. The issue is not that people consume. However, being attached to consumption and gauging life values primarily on personal gain creates the social problem with consumerism.

The Changing Nature of Liberal Democracy

Liberal democracy is a worldwide political phenomenon. In fact, liberal democracy is spreading globally. And because of this growth,

Something of a paradox exists. Democracy is recognized as the prerequisite for legitimate authority and governance, and democracy covers an unprecedented geographic area of the world. The number of countries worldwide that might reasonably be described as meeting basic democratic criteria has jumped from 10 in 1896 to 100 in 1996.

(Inoguchi, Newman, and Keane, 1998, 2).

Liberal democracy is essentially then, the status quo aspiration for developing countries. However, this democratic development is occurring according to the interest of the most powerful of liberal democratic governments: the United States. And just as democratic policy continues to evade the citizens in the United States, so does it evade those on an international level. Consider,

A further issue relating to the increasing prominence of international organizations is the question of accountability and democracy within these organizations. Traditionally, the concept of democracy did not extend beyond the domestic arena, and a different set of norms governed international relations. According to some observers, this tradition has evolved into a democratic deficiency in many organizations. Even in the case of those that can wield enormous leverage upon the domestic policies of some states and exert a significant impact upon the lives of many millions of people, there is little transparency or public input into the policy of such organizations.

(Inoguchi, Newman, and Keane, 1998, 13)

The point being made here is that liberal democratic policy, though founded in rhetoric that extends from workers pursuing a fairer middle class, is not yet capable of actually including the public in political decision-making. Therefore, the global and national success of liberal democracy when viewed in this manner must not be attributed to its democratic ideals (i.e. policy making through public deliberation), rather its success stems from the consumer success of capitalism. The public, for example, the United States public, are fairly even and are given various opportunities to accrue personal success. And these opportunities are presented with options and information about the society. However, this information has more to do with consumerism and economic policy, rather than political policy making. And yet, the public remains essentially loyal to the interests the government has provided. Citizens are loyal beyond reason. This is not a new phenomenon but it means something different to society today. Consider,

Throughout history, human beings have been the loyalists of an exclusive community. They have always known, as if by instinct, who lies within and who lies without. Those who exist beyond the border are less human than those who exist within. Remorselessly, the unit of identity has grown, from family to the pack, to the clan, the tribe, the nation. In every case the struggle between the smaller groups has been resolved only to begin a common struggle against another new federation.

Our loyalties have made us easy to manipulate. In the First World War, a few dozen aristocrats sent eight million men to die in the name of nationhood. The interests of the opposing armies were identical. Their soldiers would have been better served by overthrowing their generals and destroying the class which had started the war than by fighting each other, but their national identity overrode their nationhood, just as, in earlier epochs, we abandoned the irrationality of the loyalties which set us apart.”

(Monbiot, 2003, 8)

While the loyalty of the United States citizens today does not necessary actualize in the form of a commitment to nationhood (though the current Iraqi war suggests this attitude to be true as well), United States citizens are loyal to capitalism beyond reason. For example, citizens remained loyal to McDonalds even though various amounts of literature and film expose the poor food quality and health conditions within the company. Furthermore, when McDonalds combated this bad image with redesigning their

menu to include 'healthier' choices, the general public did not boycott nor did it reject McDonalds for years of poor service, instead most of the public continued (and continues) going to McDonalds. This is a corporate marketing example of capitalistic loyalty beyond reason (product loyalty beyond reason).

However, we can also see this attitude on a larger scale, and in terms of the media. Specifically, in terms of broadcast media in the United States. Media are in the business of selling their media package, and therefore not exactly, or at least not specifically, in the business of informing the public. Consider,

[I]f you look at these larger media outlets, they have some crucial features in common...They, like other corporations, have a product to sell and a market they want to sell it to: the product is audiences, and the market is its advertisers. So the economic structure of newspapers [or broadcast media] is that it sells readers to other businesses. See, there're not really trying to sell newspapers to people – in fact, very often a journal that's in financial trouble will try to cut down its circulation, and what they'll try to do is up-scale their readership, because that increases advertising rates.

(Inoguchi, Newman, and Keane, 1998, 14)

Considering that the media corporations work in such a manner, and then consider that the public tune into these broadcast stations or read the newspapers that are run by corporations that do not consider the public as their clients (and rather as their product) and yet the mass public does not demand a different kind of news that focuses rather on the wants and needs of the public. This suggests that the public are loyal to the media corporations beyond reason. However, the amount of information that any one person in the U.S. public could acquire is increasing tremendously. Many technological advances have contributed to the increase of information. And yet, satisfying the public or the individual citizen has not become the main concern for the media corporations. This has occurred because the media works in the United States as a capitalist endeavour more so than a democratic or political one. These political philosophies are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but the combination is not completely capable of creating a really healthy liberal democracy. Noam Chomsky explains this contradicting nature of capitalism in democracy.

The idea is that policies flowing from any kind of decision-making apparatus are going to tend to reflect the interests of the people involved in making the decisions—which certainly seems plausible. So if a decision is made by some centralized authority, it is going to represent the interest of the particular group which is in power. But if power is actually rooted in large parts of the population—if people can actually participate in social planning—then they will presumably do so in terms of their own interest, and you can expect the decision to reflect those interests. Well, the interest of the general population is to preserve human life; the interest of corporations is to make profits—those are fundamentally different interests.

(Mitchell and Schoeffel, 2002, 60-61)

We should consider the role of technology in light of the contradicting nature of capitalism and liberal democracy. New technological developments have led to an increase in access to information and such access has in many ways assisted in the globalizing of democracy, and yet this globalizing is also occurring as a capitalistic endeavour in democracy. Technology has long since increased the public's capabilities to access information. From the printing press to the Internet, throughout history, each new technological invention has, in a way, empowered the public to access information and to provide some space for citizens to get their voices heard. However, as Chomsky explained, the very nature of capitalism and liberal democracy are fundamentally rooted in different interests. That is to say, even if it is in the interest of the public to increase their knowledge politically and participate in democratic discourse, it is still in the interest of the corporations to make a profit. Therefore, until it becomes profitable for the public to participate in democratic discourse via collecting information through the vast resources at the fingertips of the U.S. public, it will not occur. Or at least it will not occur easily, as the corporations (and they have the most power) will take serious measures to prevent this from occurring, in order to maximize profit. Thus, we can consider the liberating role of the Internet for free speech in U.S. democracy. Various Internet sites offer space for people to post ideas, comment on the ideas and thus conversations about countless issues (albeit political or not) can occur with a great deal of ease. However, this type conversation tends to lead to very individualized and specific topics, which, in some ways is positive, but it remains in the interest of the corporate media to keep the

masses interested in similar issues. Thus, a polar split in terms of information flow and gathering on the part of the public is occurring.

As such, one should consider this impact of developing technology in this ever increasing Globalized world. As Katz points out,

Indeed, the new media technology is tending in two directions. Individualization or segmentation is one, whereby programming will be so individually tailored that no two people will see the same film at the same time; the other is globalization, whereby the whole world will see the same international blockbusters and the occasional global event.

(Katz, 1998, 94)

Liberal democracy, as a viable political system, must adapt to this change. In the United States, specifically, and in relation to my thesis, the nature of liberal democracy is changing the nature of the media in terms of its place in society and its place in relation to the government. Therefore, understanding the media as a distributable good in a political system, like the U.S. liberal democracy, is the first step in looking to change the means by which the media can be offered to U.S. citizens. Another way in which liberal democracy is changing involves its vast spread throughout the world.

Democracy has the potential to be politically engaging. The more politically active citizens become, the more they are able to affect the way the state is run. The more success they encounter in changing the state, the more likely they are to remain politically active. Unhappily, this process appears to be in reverse in many democratic countries. As the competing parties offer less political choice (partly as a result of constraints introduced by the migration of power to the global sphere), citizens are alienated from government, which leads, in turn, to a further withdrawal of the government from the people. A system which should be politically centripetal has instead become centrifugal.

(Monbiot, 2003, 46).

And herein lies the problem with democracy in a capitalistic society, and furthermore the role of the media within this type of democracy. But a change is occurring, and the media should look to adapt to this change in a way that primarily benefits the people, the citizens, rather than primarily benefiting the needs and wants of corporations. In other words, the media should look to work with the public on a social planning endeavour, in

an effort to offer the public the information they need, rather than the information the corporations want to offer to create better consumers for corporate financial gain.

Government Power versus Increased Public Participation

Corruption within a liberal democracy can occur when civil liberties are jeopardized. And thus corruption can jeopardize various aspects of society and public life. Specifically, and in relation to my thesis, corruption can lead to a limited press. After all, “Political rights, which include democratic elections, a legislature, and opposition parties, and civil liberties, which include rights to freed and independent media and freedom of assembly and speech, are negatively correlated with corruption” (Dailami, Dhareshwar, Kaufmann, Kishor, Lopez, Thomas, and Wang, Y., 2000, 150-151). That said, the media, as a liberty in a democratic society, should not only be free of government control, but should also work to offer a space for the public that is free from the very entities that run the basis for a growing government. And as I have aimed to portray, economic means to becoming a wealthy nation currently dominate the gauge for determining the success of a liberal democracy. As such, the media, as an institution, that is primarily run by businesses working to increase profit, thus increasing economic growth for the nation is not necessarily working to its potential for the whole of the liberal democratic public. Consider;

It is becoming ever clearer that we are being force-fed, like pate de foie gras geese, by a vast media-marketing complex to meet the demands of the economy. We could choose to redirect economic activity into creating a fairer, cleaning, healthier, safer world. We don't have to keep consuming more in order to generate the wealth to try and fix the problems that consumption gives rise to. We in the rich world don't have to eat another four-liter tub of ice-cream so that a child in a poor country can afford a single cone.

Economics does not forbid such a choice; most economists simply assume it won't be made because it goes against human nature – or so they think. But it is in our nature to cooperate as well as compete, to show compassion and generosity as well as ruthlessness and selfishness. And human nature isn't fixed, hard-wired; it is influenced by culture...

(Eckersley, 2005, 4)

Human nature is influenced by culture, thus society is shaped by the very things that the public understands about their society. As such, the media play a vital role in the image, understanding and education of the public in a liberal democracy.

Information Flow and an Educated Public Community

Liberal democracies can seriously benefit from encouraging civil liberties amongst its citizens. Specifically, the free flow of communication can work to inform and educate the public so as to keep democracy fueled by its participants. Consider the findings of the World Bank,

Evidence from more than 1,500 World Bank-financed projects suggests that civil liberties and citizen participation are important factors for development outcomes. Researches focused on measuring the impact of participatory and civil liberties variables on project performance and found consistent, statistically significant, and empirically large effects of civil liberties on project rates of return.

(Dailami, Dhareshwar, Kaufmann, Kishor, Lopez, Thomas, and Wang, Y., 2000, 163)

Furthermore, note the specific need for citizenry voice and participation in a liberal democratic society;

Participation and voice are vital in increasing transparency, providing for the necessary checks and balances, and ameliorating state capture by the elite's vested interests. It is not enough to get basic economic policies right on paper; the political economy forces at play must also be recognized. These forces will vary from country to country.

(Dailami, Dhareshwar, Kaufmann, Kishor, Lopez, Thomas, and Wang, Y., 2000, 167)

What I aim to show, here, is that in the United States a powerful force that could work to relieve corruption and promote the good life outside of monetary gain and capitalism is the implementation of a tax-payer funded media. That is to suggest that the liberal democracy and the public within this democracy that is the U.S. government and its citizens can benefit from a more autonomous Public Broadcast Station.

In showing that economic growth and consumption as the paradigm of social value and relation, I also aim to show that opportunities exist that can allow for a move away from

these types of attitudes in liberal democracies today. If we consider the ineptitude of widespread attached consumerism in society, as Hamilton and Denniss argue, then we can also consider that a way in which to democratically work to heal this attachment to consumption.

Conscious consumption, as opposed to no consumption, is the antidote to affluenza. Conscious consumption involves cultivating an awareness of why we buy things and understanding what needs we are trying to meet by buying this item or that one. We are more likely to recognize that a purchase will not really answer a need if we understand that our motivation is a response to marketers persuading us that a product can fill an emotional gap in our lives or project to the world an image of how we wish to be seen because we are not happy with who we are.

(Hamilton and Denniss, 2005, 95)

And the media is a way in which this kind of awareness can take place in society. However, in order to give the media an autonomous space in which to report and educate on such issues, it should develop a space separate from the forces that run consumerism. Essentially, I am referring to a tax-payer funded, public broadcasting system.

Example of Significance

The significance of this change in the nature of democracy can also be determined when considering specific examples that relate directly to the media. In particular, because of this type of democratic governing that is intertwined with capitalism, a split between real media and the aspired type of media exists in U.S. media and public today. The media in the United States has always considered itself something of a Fourth Estate, like a fourth section of the government, not run by the government, rather managed democratically by the people to keep a watchful eye on the goings-on of the government. This is the traditional understanding of media in the United States. However, there is a stark difference between this type of media and the type of media that occur in the United States. Chomsky explains the diverse models of media,

The former model is the more or less conventional one: it's what the New York Times recently referred to as the 'traditional Jeffersonian role of the media as a counter-weight to government'—in other words, a cantankerous, obstinate,

ubiquitous press, which must be suffered by those in authority in order to preserve the right of the people to know, and to help the population assert meaningful control over the political process. That's the standard conception of the media in the United States, and it's what most of the people in the media themselves take for granted. The alternative conception is that the media will present a picture of the world which defends and inculcates the economic, social, and political agendas of the privileged groups that dominate the domestic economy, and who therefore also largely control the government. According to this "Propaganda Model," the media serve their societal purpose by things like the way they select topics, distribute their concerns, frame issues, filter information, focus their analyses, through emphasis, tone and a whole range of other techniques like that.

(Mitchell and Schoeffel, 2002, 15)

When we consider that the very entities that control the media also have a strong influence on controlling the government, it becomes apparent that an innate conflict of interest exists between the media and the government. Furthermore, the concept of the Fourth Estate and the media as the watchdogs of the government seems a bit unlikely.

To depict this difference consider that the United States has, in the past, had various laws in place that seemingly worked to keep the media as a '*cantankerous, obstinate, ubiquitous press, which must be suffered by those in authority in order to preserve the right of the people to know, and to help the population assert meaningful control over the political process,*' (Mitchell and Schoeffel, 2002, 15). One such law is the Fairness Doctrine. Its purpose was to force broadcasters to provide an equal amount of time for either side of any political issue (i.e. if the station or channel had an interview with a Democratic candidate for any election, then the same station must offer a similar situation for a Republican candidate to defend his/her point of view). Its constitutionality was defended by the Supreme Court case in 1969, *Red Lion Broadcasting v. FCC* (395 U.S. 367). This case determined that the First Amendment's rights to freedom of speech did not extend to broadcasting presenting only one view in a political issue. This type of law seeks to uphold the type of media that is seeking to be objective and unbiased. This is the very type of media for which United States journalists purport to strive. However, in 1987 the push to place the Fairness Doctrine into federal law was vetoed by Ronald Reagan. Thus, the Fairness Doctrine has not been active since 1987. This example highlights the stance that the U.S. occasionally takes in which legislation rejects (and in a

way prohibits) the type of media that the United States alleges. Specifically, we can understand this type of media as being a 'fair and balanced' one. And furthermore, one that acts as the Fourth Estate, which has the capability to check up on the government, in order to keep fairness and balance. Furthermore, it shows that even if the media is 'fair and balanced' it is not always capable of being the so-called Fourth-Estate, as Regan's veto should not have happened if the media truly stood as a watchdog of the government.

It might be argued that removing the ruling of the Fairness Doctrine gives more freedom to the broadcasting companies in the name of freedom of speech. However, the broadcasting companies are owned by private corporations, not by the public. Therefore, the freedom of the private entity, in a democratic state, should not take prevalence over the public interest of receiving fair news. Keep in mind, however, that this is an example of how the U.S. media cannot actualize as the balanced media it purports to be. This example does not suggest that if the Fairness Doctrine remained intact that the media would be more politically reasonable.

Conclusion

Democracy is changing and the United States is a growing nation that waves the democratic flag where need be in order to maintain further growth. However, not all the outcomes of these globally changing factors are positive.

America's impasse was caused, not by growth, but by the political price that was paid to achieve it. Growth did not come free. In the face of extraordinary growth at home, passion and controversy were held to be ungrateful. In the face of imperial growth abroad, they were held to be unconstitutional. In order to bring about economic and imperial expansion, America sacrificed political vitality. The capacity of either major party or dominant set of ideas to establish goals and an agenda for reaching them was undermined by the fixation on economic and imperial conquest.

(Wolfe, 1981, 230)

The condition of broadcast media in the United States today is a product of this very phenomenon. The strength of broadcast media as a democratic enhancer is one of the many prices paid for capitalistic, economic growth and success in the United States.

And when we consider that the United States has only one public broadcast station (PBS), which is merely financially subsidized by the government just as any non-profit organization could be, it is worrying to consider that the United States government expects PBS to

facilitate the full development of public telecommunications in which programs of high quality, diversity, creativity, excellence, and innovation, which are obtained from diverse sources, will be made available to public telecommunications entities, with strict adherence to objectivity and balance in all programs or series of programs of a controversial nature.

(The Fairness in Broadcasting Act of 1993).

My argument lies here, democracy is changing, and the media can be a tool to work positively with these new developments in democracy. However, the media in the United States, in its current state suffers because of the negativisms of democracy and capitalism. It is my belief that the implementation of a fully tax-payer funded broadcast station can work to aid the change of democracy in the United States. As such, my thesis will work to defend this stance. My next chapter will further consider the roles of democracy and the media, and the significance of the links between the two.

Chapter Two Summary

This chapter seeks initially to define and distinguish the characteristics indicative of democracy and the developments of liberal democracy worldwide and specifically in the United States. That is to say, I aim to show the history of democracy so as to link its heritage with its current and developing state.

In liberal democracies today economic goals set the precedence for success, which has created some questions concerning the quality of life for democratic citizens versus economic wealth, both on an individual level and a nation one. This questioning has shown that the nature of liberal democracy is changing in accordance with an economic, capitalistic emphasis, which creates fundamental contradiction for capitalism and democracy, as this chapter aims to show, are essentially contradictory political philosophies in nature.

This contradiction, in terms of the media and its public role, leads to questions of the power of government versus that of increased participation in government for the public. As such, liberal democracy in its current changing state can vastly improve with a better

educated, more informed public. And, as this chapter strives to show, such education can occur if the media is provided with a more autonomous press. Specifically, in the United States, the current state of PBS should be enhanced to create greater freedom and autonomy for the journalists.

Finally, this chapter provides a specific example to illustrate the changing nature of liberal democracy.

Chapter Three

THE MEDIA PROBLEM AND ITS RELATION TO DEMOCRACY

Introduction

One of the basic functions of U.S. media stems from its place in relation to liberal democracy. And as the previous chapter concluded, the nature of liberal democracy in the United States is changing. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the media should work to re-establish itself as the purported ‘Forth Estate’, a name it boasts. As such, in this chapter I will first reveal my motivation for this thesis, then reveal the relationship between democracy and the public and then relate democracy to the importance and role of the media in society. This discussion will explore the relation between democracy and journalism. Furthermore, this chapter is an extension of the previous chapter’s analysis of the changing nature of democracy. Finally, this chapter will show that the media have the means to raise public awareness and should do so on a wide-range scale in order to entice the public into democratic discourse.⁷

With that said, the media serve various purposes in society. Specifically, the media provides society with greater social capital. Essentially, social capital is a method for gauging those things in society that cannot be evaluated by their price tag or contribution to the economical state of the nation.

Social capital represents the degree of social cohesion which exists in communities. It refers to the processes between people which establish networks, norms and social trust, and facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit

(Productivity Commission, 2003, 8)

Accruing social capital requires a society to improve upon things other than the economy. For example, implementing a public health system that offers free medical care to all of

⁷ It should be noted here, that this chapter serves as the rebuttal to many criticisms against public journalism. Public journalism is a new movement in United States journalism that I will extensively cover in my final chapters of this thesis. Since the crux of the public journalism argument hinges upon accepting that democracy and the media, as the Fourth Estate, inherently coexist, this chapter serves as a reference point for such proof.

the citizens in its nation is not necessarily an economically beneficial move. However, such an implementation would greatly increase the amount of social capital found in that nation. Social capital works to identify the “importance of social networks for human well-being” (Raicheva, 2004, 1). Social capital is an important aspect of human and social life.

...it serves as a force that bonds people together; it acts like social glue that links people to each other and lets them pursue common goals more effectively by transforming individuals from egocentric, self-absorbed calculators to community players with shared interests and obligations

(Raicheva, 2004, 4)

Furthermore, and because it is like ‘social glue’, social capital is directly related to well-being of the democratic state, “social capital influences not only what goes into politics, but also what comes out of it,” (Putman, 2000, 344). This quote reveals that, according to Putnam, when citizens are active in social networking and have close personal reciprocity with others in their contemporary, they become more likely to organise and can therefore participate more so in democracy. Essentially, social capital, as Putnam explains, helps to make democracy work (Putnam, 1993).

As such, the media contributes to (and also has great potential to harm) social capital in various ways, e.g. through education, business, culture institutional opportunities, community affairs, and community fundraising. Each of these attributes listed create social capital as they work to build the very things listed in the above quote. Yet, a central element of social capital in liberal democratic society is that of public participation in government policy. Furthermore, the current role of the media in the United States could possibly contribute more so to informing and educating the public in order to inspire such public participation.

Motivation

This thesis is about the fundamental change in democracy, and the role that at least a section of the media should take because of this change (i.e. implementing a truly public broadcast system that can provide a framework capable of offering a workable solution to this democratic change for United States culture). My research is focused on the United

States media for many reasons. First of all, as a United States citizen and as journalism graduate, I find the current condition of United States journalism worrisome to say the least. However, my personal concern over the condition of media and journalism in the United States is certainly not the only reason for my focus on the United States media. As such, the media in the United States has set a media precedent globally since the boom of United States journalism just after the American War for Independence (or the American Revolution from 1775-1783). The press and distribution thereof boomed in the new United States more than any other country at the time (Starr, 2004, 47-82). Moreover, regardless of whether or not its journalistic styles were mimicked perfectly, the United States media established its pervasive presence in such a way that many countries looked to the United States for a mould to which their own country's media could adhere. However, a very distinctive divide in media style occurred just after the turn of the 20th Century when media included broadcasting in radio and then in television, which leads me to my next reason for focusing upon the United States media. Britain and other countries (such as Canada and Australia following in the British tradition) created a media with a distinctive publicly-funded, publicly-oriented sphere. The United Kingdom created the British Broadcasting Corporation (the BBC), which according to their Freedom of Information statement explains,

The BBC is not permitted to carry advertising or sponsorship on its public services. This keeps them independent of commercial interests and ensures they can be run instead to serve the general public interest. If the BBC sold airtime either wholly or partially, advertisers and other commercial pressures would dictate its programme and schedule priorities. There would also be far less revenue for other broadcasters. The BBC is financed instead by a TV licence paid by households. This guarantees that a wide range of high quality programmes can be made available unrestricted to everyone.

(British Broadcasting Corporation, 2005, 1).

Upon considering the purely privately-owned United States media in contrast with this statement the divergence between United States media and British media becomes apparent. The United States media does not have a truly public broadcast system, that is, a system funded with a portion of the populations' taxes (or tax-payer funded), dedicated solely to serving the general public interest. Rather, it is a purely privately-owned, corporate enterprise. Certainly, the United States media is not alone in its deviation from

the British tradition of broadcast media. However, *my* focus here examines the role of American media and democracy.

In summary, it is for the following four reasons then that I focus my thesis on the United States media:

1. My personal interest, as an United States citizen and as an amateur journalist, in the declining condition of United States journalism
2. The global influence and precedence of United States media
3. The lack of a truly publicly-funded, publicly orientated media
4. The contradiction in a democratic society void of a mass, publicly oriented section of the media

Each of these motives builds upon its predecessors, and must not be thought of individually. Rather my focus in this thesis is that of developing and explaining the embedded culture between the media, democracy, United States public and the changing nature thereof.

Additionally, I must explain my emphasis not only upon United States media, but upon a solution involving radical change only in the area of the United States broadcast system (those media seen and heard on television and radio). This is not to suggest, however, that implementing a truly public broadcast station in the United States would only affect the media and its relationship to the public in terms of broadcasting. Rather, broadcast media is unique because of its limited space on television and radio airwaves. Where print media can be utilised by anyone with printing and distribution capabilities, broadcast can only be used by those in control of the airwaves. As previously explained, countries with media in the British style maintain a section of this limited broadcast space for publicly-financed and publicly-orientated programs. Thus, a section of broadcast in the British tradition remains free of advertisement, that provided by the British Broadcasting Corporation. However, the United States media is void of this sacred public broadcast space. Additionally, broadcast media has the largest capacity to reach audiences. It not only attracts viewers and listeners because of the facility of their gathering news in a relatively passive manner, but broadcast media also provides a more personal communication in that the viewer or listener can see and/or hear the reporter

relating the news. This type of ‘one-to-one’ intimacy is quite powerful when considering that all other media-types come in print form, whether in a magazine, newspaper, or on the Internet. In addition, broadcast media is more accessible to intake. It should be noted here that the necessary technology for broadcast access is very cheap and simple to facilitate, and thus more available across the breadth of the community. Most United States citizens have televisions and radios tuning-in to the local news broadcast from free local stations which involves a mere push of a button, whereas print media minimally involve subscriptions and/or monthly fees. Even the Internet, which does not necessarily require a subscription to the online newspaper, though some do, does require citizens to own a computer and/or to pay for Internet use either at their home or through public Internet service (i.e. library or Internet café). In any case, broadcast media certainly has many advantages over print or Internet media in gaining and maintaining the mass public’s attention.

However, it is the possible misuse of this advantage that makes broadcast media so potentially dangerous.

When powerful members of the [broadcast] media do not accept their responsibility to educate people about complex issues – and to make the information accessible to the average viewer—they cannot avoid responsibility for creating a society of uninformed citizens.

(McLeod, 1994, B2)

It is the broadcast media sources that most effectively inform and influence the public. After all, United States print media has a wide range of scholarly journals and analytical news journals and magazines that heed the journalistic public responsibility to inform and debate over societal and political events. However, as understood in the explanation of the three different public news gathering types, the masses are generally ‘onlookers of media’ and therefore they do not reference such journals on a daily or even weekly base to gain a deep understanding about the current local, regional, or global events. Moreover, newspapers and magazines albeit local or national, have more variety of news compared to broadcast media coverage purely because the papers have more space than the broadcasters have time to report on the issues at hand. Still, because of the

aforementioned conveniences of broadcast media it prevails over print media and the Internet as the way in which the United States mass public gathers news.

Given the focus of my thesis, I must also explain that much like the style of Charles Taylor (1989), my thesis unfolds as a philosophical approach based upon ideas in conjunction with the historical shaping of the United States society, its democracy, and the United States media. Therefore, my method is Taylorian in that I first look at the factors creating the problem with the media in the United States today, and then I look to ways through a historical analysis that can be recovered in society so as to truly reconnect the democratic United States society to its original purposes and goals. As such, Taylor's concepts on the historical context to retrace current ethical behaviours in society are the very foundation of my thesis. Likewise, my thesis is anchored in the concept that history and current social happenings cannot be extracted from one another. Specifically, the development of the United States media occurred simultaneously to the development of democracy. The United States media then and now is not a side effect to democracy nor is democracy a product of media regulations and allowances. Rather both work and have worked to shape each other and both have a definite effect upon United States society, which in turn effects the public's perceptions about the media and democracy. Essentially, my thesis implies each of these concepts cannot exist independently as they are embedded in one another and embedded in the history and development of one another.

United States Democracy and the Public

In my previous chapter, I described the changing nature of liberal democracy. It is important that I explain the specific nature of United States democracy, its relation to the public and finally how the media relates with both of these topics. Therefore, keeping in mind those aspects of U.S. democracy previously discussed, consider that an active public voice is vital to the role of democracy in the United States. As Charles Taylor describes, a "flourishing public sphere is central to democracy" (Taylor, 1995, 279). The necessity for a public sphere emerges from the key issues that Taylor describes in explaining the essential relationship between the public and political life. As he describes,

the public must receive information that will not be manipulative of their political opinion and the public's voice and opinions should be informed (Taylor, 1995, 279). What Taylor is describing is a democratic system in which the public can learn about the politics of their government and culture. Furthermore, this system must be earnest in its effort to inform the public. A manipulative system with alternative agendas is much like subtle propaganda in that such a system would work to create opinions within the public in order to satisfy the wants and needs of those in power, as opposed to the wants and needs of the public (Chomsky and Herman, 1988). In Taylor's final point concerning the relationship between the public and political life, he asserts that the public opinion must be informed. In order for this informed opinion to occur, the system that supplies the information must be accessible to every member of society. Fundamentally, Taylor is referring to the necessity of a public media that will report political news free of the ulterior motives that privatised companies encompass (i.e. profit margins and advertising appeal). And likewise, this public media must be committed to a propaganda-free delivery of information.

Therefore, regardless of cultural change, democracy is still in constant need of the public voice as heard through a free public sphere. With this understanding of the role of democracy in the United States, we must now consider the current condition of the media in relation to democracy.⁸ Keep in mind the role of the media as the Fourth Estate in United States democracy.

Democracy, as a structural government, hinges upon the incorporation of citizen deliberation. "In the most simple and conventional sense, a democracy is deemed to be a political system in which the majority of a given population exercises power" (Raboy and Dagenais, 1992, 4). This governmental value constantly faces necessary modifications to ensure that the government remains malleable in the hands of its citizens. "As a normative concept, democracy implies equality, social justice and political mechanisms for people to participate meaningfully in making the decisions that affect their lives"

⁸ The need for an active public sphere in a democratic society can be linked to the concepts of justifying government implementation of social goods in a liberal democracy, as described by Taylor. The concept will be readdressed in my final chapter where I justify the implementation of a truly public broadcast system.

(Raboy and Dagenais, 1992, 5). In today's Western societies, democracy often faces changes focused on the individual's rights. This type of democracy is labelled a 'liberal democracy'. As such, the United States is considered a Liberal Democracy. Even the very phrasing of the words, 'liberal' and 'democracy' creates a fundamental contradiction. While the concepts of liberal have generally come to describe behaviours that encourage members of society to attend to their individual needs, the concept of democracy demands that society interacts so as to deliberate upon the issues that affect the society. Nevertheless, society understands that democracy is the method by which citizens can maintain liberal freedoms. Therefore, United States society understands that;

A free people, according to the modern understanding, is a people of equals. It is made up of individual citizens who enjoy the same moral standing irrespective of creed, occupation, ethnicity or whatever local allegiances they have. No matter what your religion, job, ethnic or cultural background, in a free society you enjoy the same basic rights as your fellow citizens.

(Smith, 2002, 141)

This understanding of freedom is merely that of understanding one half of the concept involved in the freedom for a liberal state. This type of freedom is only a freedom *of* the citizens in a society. If members of society understand freedom as merely being concerned with protecting the individual rights, then the pursuit of this protection does not allow society to truly embrace freedom. After all, the individual rights cannot be embedded in society as a whole, because the mere pursuit of individual rights and freedoms forces citizens to deny the importance of society and social freedoms.

On the one hand, such freedom would be unstable: the citizens would be divided amongst themselves and alienated from their collective life. On the other hand, it would be contradictory: a people that did not give the law to themselves would not really be free at all.

(Smith, 2002, 141)

Therefore, the ideal of freedom necessitates an additional understanding. In the sense that the type of freedom concerned solely with individual rights is a freedom *of*, we must consider an additional kind of freedom referred to as freedom *to*. As such, the viability of the liberal state is threatened if we consider only freedom *of*, and not also freedom *to*. Freedom *to* requires society to consider that some freedoms necessitate citizens to agree fully and participate fully in obtaining these freedoms. And furthermore, such participation cannot occur if left to the individual actions of citizens. Yet, concentrating

solely on the concepts of freedom *to* limits freedom as well. As Taylor notes, creating an alternative incentive to those freedoms that cannot be obtained without full citizen participation causes the state to step in and create laws that make sweeping claims about all of society, thus homogenizing society, lessening diversity and deteriorating democracy (Taylor, 1979).

The way to provide a balance between the complete focus of individual freedoms and those granted by the state, is a type of liberal state that Taylor refers to as Liberal Holism. Taylor describes combining both freedom *of* and freedom *to* to create a more holistic liberal state. Taylor considers that there is a difference between the types of freedoms that are granted to every citizen, and freedoms that are ‘socially conditioned capacities’ (Smith, 2002, 145). Freedoms that do not need to be considered according to one’s capacity, like the freedom to live, are freedoms of the people. However many freedoms depend upon the individual’s maturation and capacity within society (Taylor, 1985). This type of freedom pinpoints the embeddedness of freedom in society. If a certain kind of freedom depends upon the individual’s capability to obtain that freedom within society, then we cannot consider the freedom in a context void of the very society that created the necessity for the freedom.

The democratic necessity and freedom that is the public access to the media, (that professional duty to which journalists aspire), for example, is a socially conditioned capacity freedom, and thus it is a *freedom* that must be provided *to* the public. The media and the access thereof can only be used by those citizens that have the capacity to access it. Or the media only influences those citizens mature enough to comprehend it. Therefore, the distribution of the media must be a freedom that is not left to individual disbursement. Rather, a system must exist that can provide political information to every section of society. Privatised media companies cannot be expected to heed this responsibility, as their individual interests in profit and personal gain will continue to outweigh a public duty. Essentially, the public must agree to fund, through standard taxing, an organization dedicated to providing the whole public information. This organization must also reach (over land and communication) all citizens. Since broadcast

is the most widespread, and easy to use type of communication, it is sensible that the type tax-payer funded news outlet be a broadcast station.

Defining the Media Problem

As such, the media is a multifaceted institution used to narrate the world's events on a global, regional and local level, communicate information, and inform the public through its various modes of communication. However, the media's role in society is not just determined by its purposes. The media provides and contributes to a range of social frameworks. Essentially then, the media cannot be understood as an entity of and within itself. It is an institution in the same way that a handshake as a custom of greeting is an institution (Bellah *et al.*, 1991). In other words, an institution does not exist independently; it exists because members of a society agree upon its meaning. In this way, an institution can be defined as, "... a pattern of expected action of individuals or groups enforced by social sanctions, both positive and negative" (Bellah *et al.*, 1991, 425). Thus, the power of an institution can only be granted by those involved within the society that provide its meaning and social agreements. Specifically, when analysing the role of United States media in society today numerous problems surface. However each of these issues is rooted in the institutional deficiency of the United States media. Therefore, the media must be understood as a social institution before any type of serious reform, or discussion thereof, can begin.

Understandably, it is difficult to view the media in such a broad and complex manner. Most United States citizens consider the media as a news-reporting entity or organization that reports the events happening around them. As Bellah explains, "One of the greatest challenges, especially for individualistic United States citizens, is to understand what institutions are—how we form them and how they in turn form us—and to imagine that we can actually alter them for the better" (Bellah *et al.*, 1991, 425). Bellah continues to explain that many times organizations are seen and understood as the only type of institution in society. This concept applies directly to the United States media in that the media is seen as a corporation or many corporations working to inform the public. This wide-range institutional misunderstanding or lack of complete understanding about the

role of United States media in society gives the media power over the public as opposed to power *for* the public. After all, if the media, as an institution as Bellah *et al* (1991) describes, can only exist under terms agreed upon in society, then the media should empower the public to employ the media as the public sees fit. However, if United States society fails to view the media as a malleable institution, then those corporations that own media outlets have free reign over the media and its influence over society to behave as they please. Thus, the media has power over the public and not for the public.

This assessment of United States media does not alone explain its fundamental problem. That is to say, if the public became aware of and active in its role in determining the function of media in society, and then decided to allow for a media system that was free of public responsibility, then the current state of the United States media would be acceptable. However, when United States democracy is considered in conjunction with the development of the United States media, then this core problem becomes clearer. Since, as I have noted, institutions exist because of social agreement concerning their roles in society, then it is logical to understand that the media's role in a democratic society stems from its role *for* the democratic public. Democracy hinges upon the public's capabilities to engage in discourse and collective debate. True democratic solutions cannot be obtained, then, without informed members of the public willing to participate in such decision-making. Furthermore,

The democrat also insists that democracy itself, along with its discourse and rules and modi vivendi, all remain subject to on-going correction--that they be seen as provisional not permanent. Democratic principles originate in historically important, psychologically pertinent and morally admirable grounds and may be helped along via some form of rational discourse. But their legitimacy--how we know them politically--depends on the democratic process itself

(Barber, 1994, 46).

Given that democracy necessitates 'on-going correction' then democracy must also necessitate a means by which society can receive information making it possible to debate and correct decisions in society. This democratic means of communicating information, as the very term suggests, is the media. Therefore, the media cannot fundamentally exist in a democratic society without maintaining proper attention to its public obligations, and those obligations extend beyond merely maximizing the audience

in effort to maximize corporate profit. Since journalism and the media primarily exist in a democracy to inform and communicate information throughout society, then the purpose of this communication must coincide with the democratic purpose of being informed in order to contribute to debate in effort to come to a collective solution. Furthermore, as Barber explains, democracy originates in a moral grounding, but beyond this historical reference point, the power of democracy is fuelled only by society's capability to keep public discourse alive and purpose-driven (Barber, 1994, 46). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the historical development of United States democracy and the implications this development creates for United States media since the media, as I have established, is the tool by which the democratic public can gather pertinent information.

Misunderstanding the Problem: Media and Democracy

The current changing nature of democracy, discussed in the previous chapter is not much debated in the public sphere because modern ideology and philosophy teaches United States society that the current condition of society is that of a 'naturally' occurring condition. Since the public obtains a portion of their language from social and political theorists, then the fact that society, specifically United States society, behaves according to the ways the modern social theorists explain proves that society is in fact embedded in every aspect of development and its current happenings (society is *always already* happening). United States democracy has made the separation between those laws that govern the economy and those that govern society, and United States political scientists, businessmen, and theorists alike have agreed to this type of rationale. Therefore, the United States public ostensibly understands these two aspects separately. This type of thinking contradicts the 'embedded' philosophy of Charles Taylor discussed previously in Chapter Two and in Chapter Four (Taylor, 1989). Essentially, a cultural rationale that excludes an embedded sense of identity is one that fails to identify its formative frameworks. Taylor's concept here is that all things in society, the society's history as well as its current happenings, relate to and involve one another. Fundamentally, life occurs with and in relation to undeniable frameworks that work to shape culture and ideologies. Taylor explains,

Frameworks provide the background, explicit or implicit, for our moral judgments, intuitions, or reactions...To articulate a framework is to explicate what makes sense of our moral responses. That is, when we try to spell out what it is that we presuppose when we judge that a certain form of life is truly worthwhile, or place our dignity in a certain achievement or status, or define our moral obligations in a certain manner, we find ourselves articulating inter alia what I have been calling here frameworks.

(Taylor, 1989, 26)

Since United States society fails to identify its frameworks, it accepts the beliefs that society is ‘naturally’ occurring. A specific example of this misinterpretation can be seen in examining society’s view on economic laws versus societal laws.

The crucial step [in the decline of democracy] was the assertion that the laws governing the economy are different from those of the political or social sphere of life. The economy is governed by natural laws, while the rest of society operates according to social laws and customs. Natural laws are universal and invariant; social laws are not.

(Champlin and Knoedler, 2004, 896)

Therefore, while the development of the United States economy was seen as something ‘natural’ and universal, social laws were seen as something not only separate, but as something totally different, thus ‘non-natural’⁹ when compared to the universal laws that could govern a free market. This outlook on the disjunctive relationship between the laws of the economy and social laws, as Champlin and Knoedler label it, is referred to as a *disembedded* society (Champlin and Knoedler, 2004). Fundamentally, Champlin and Knoedler are working to define the framework in United States society that has created the cultural assumption concerning the universality of economic laws versus the non-natural concern over social decree. In defining this framework, Champlin and Knoedler note that the development of this framework is an incorrect assumption, and has had damming effects on the state of United States society.

⁹ This term, ‘non-natural’ should not suggest that events are unnatural. The difference being that unnatural events would be artificial, whereas non-natural events refer to those events that do not maintain the universality of those events considered to ‘naturally’ occur. In my example, the natural laws are those that dictate the economy, while non-natural laws would be those that shape society.

Furthermore, the very rationale employed to explain how a society develops with a disembedded understanding of itself proves the very nature of modernity incorrect. The opinion of the mass public has not been considered in conjunction with the development of social normalities for United States democracy. Since the ‘natural’ laws of the economy have been separated from other social laws in United States ideology, the market place has been allowed to dominate in both economic and social spheres. Cornel West has characterized this problem as follows:

The greatest threats [to American democracy] come in the form of the rise of three dominating, antidemocratic dogmas. These three dogmas, promoted by the most powerful forces in our world, are rendering American democracy vacuous. The first dogma of free-market fundamentalism posits the unregulated and unfettered market as idol and fetish. This glorification of the market has led to a callous corporate-dominated political economy in which business leaders (their wealth and power) are to be worshiped—even despite the recent scandals—and the most powerful corporations are delegated magical powers of salvation rather than relegated to democratic scrutiny concerning both the ethics of their business practices and their treatment of workers.

In short, the dangerous dogma of free-market fundamentalism turns our attention away from schools to prisons, from workers’ conditions to profit margins, from health clinics to high-tech facial surgeries, from civic associations to pornographic Internet sites.

(West, 2004, 3-4)

Relating this very concept back to the role of the media, this antidemocratic dogma turns our public attention away from solid, quality news reporting concerned with political issues capable of inspiring public discourse and turns our attention to scandal-driven, ‘objective’ and polarized news reporting. Furthermore, the dominating aspect of the natural market laws that govern United States society is further testimony to the concepts of an embedded society. Since market laws have been permitted to reign free of intervention, they dominate both social and economic life. If market forces were truly limited to their influences in the economic sense, then the United States lifestyle would not so heavily emphasize the business aspect of life. Specifically, if the line between economy and society truly existed, then a media created to inform the public would do just that: inform the public. The business aspects of a social medium would not interfere with the purpose of a media meant for the masses. However, in the United States today the media is more of a business endeavour than that of a public one. Therefore, it is clear

that Taylor's concepts on the embeddedness of society are correct. Moreover, if the public is led to believe that economic and social life are truly separated, then even a media with a public consciousness will not be successful in providing the public with political information. That is to say, if economic laws are viewed as natural, then public deliberation is superfluous for 'natural' occurrences. Just as publicly debating the weather would render no democratic solution, neither would economic deliberation. At least this is the societal understanding of economic law. Therefore, it is sensible that democratic reform necessitates radical, fundamental change. And the media plays a vital role both in the changing nature of democracy and its chance for radical, positive reform.

To highlight the media's role in this decline, consider this next point made by West. He explains,

There is a deeply troubling deterioration of democratic powers in American today. The rise of an ugly imperialism has been aided by an unholy alliance of the plutocratic elites and the Christian Right, and also by a massive disaffection of so many voters who see to little difference between two corrupted parties, with being taken for granted by the Democrats, and with the deep disaffection of youth.

(West, 2004, 2)

Certainly, each of these issues listed by the aforementioned theorist contributes to the decline of United States democracy, but an underlining influence exists that is even more damning than each of these aspects. The United States media supports the very things that affect each of West's assertions. In other words, the 'plutonic elites and the Christian Right,' as well as women that are marginalized in the workplace, or 'liberal' political beliefs as the prevalent point of view in most mainstream media (Leo, 2004, 12) are fuelled by the media coverage of these very issues. Without the media coverage and reinforcement of these issues with this type of angle on the issues, they could not contribute to the decline of the public sphere. After all, it is the media that feeds the public information. If mass media outlets worked to turn a critical eye on the marginalization of women in the workplace, for example, and specifically the lack of woman in the media industry, then this could become a deliberated issue in the public sphere (Anonymous, 2005b). I must admit, however, that the mere coverage and feeding of information to the public of such policies is not enough to make the public deliberate

upon the issues. Nevertheless, currently the mass media fails to even turn a critical eye on such issues; therefore the public has no chance of gaining this information on a wide range scale. After all, before United States democracy can truly flourish, it must actually be saved from its declining state.

The spotlight effect is another democratically damning effect the media perpetuates. The media, rather than contributing to a wide range of issues that occur throughout the United States and internationally, are consistently guilty of employing the spotlight effect. Essentially, the concept behind this type of reporting explains why many stations cover the exact same stories with very similar styles. Therefore, even if a member of the public were to reference various news broadcasters, the same information would appear on each station. For example, when O.J. Simpson hit the news as the suspect in the murders of both his wife and his wife's lover, every news broadcaster in the United States ran the same story with essentially the same coverage of the issue. Regardless of the other issues occurring at the time of the Simpson murders and trial, broadcast news focused heavily upon this one issue. Like a spot light, that focuses a great deal of light on one specific spot, but keeps everything else occurring simultaneously around that spotlight in complete darkness, news coverage in such fashion fails to provide the public with proper information on a wide range of issues. Thus, the public stays in the dark on many issues, but gains an excessive, even blinding amount of information on one particular aspect of current events (Anonymous, 1995).

A Change in Ethics

Consequently, the concern over the explosion of infotainment in United States broadcast, and the other various discussed reasons media analysts provide for the current mistrust in United States journalism effectively illustrates the very nature of United States media ethics as dilemma-oriented. Many media analysts view the negativisms of media as problems or dilemmas that can be remedied by dealing specifically with the dilemma. As such, current media ethics can be understood as emphasising ethics *in* the practice of media. Before I explain the futility of solely employing this type of ethical reasoning in an effort to reform the media, allow me to first explain the distinction between the ethics

within, or *in* the practice of journalism (or any profession) as opposed to ethics *of*, or *about* journalism (or any profession). Dilemma-oriented ethics, or the ethics within the practice, prevail in ethical conversations concerning various professions. This type of ethical reasoning is known as

The Socratic account, which has strongly influenced the Western moral philosophical tradition, [it] emphasises that the kind of vicissitudes of life, often appear problematic although these problematic elements can be addressed through the guidance offered by reason. Thus the Socratic picture portrays the ethical form of life as one which focuses primarily on the individual person, is dilemma oriented and is significantly guided by reason.

(Isaacs, 1994, 15)

Therefore, it is understood that this type of ethical reasoning, the Socratic account, is known as the ethics *in* the practice. This type of ethical analysing contrasts to the ethics *of* or *about* a practice.

When considering the ethics of a practice, a serious mental refocusing must occur. Essentially, understanding the ethics of a practice mirrors that of understanding the ‘self’ as embedded in society and social frameworks. Consequently, “...our interpretations of ourselves and our experience is constitutive of what we are, and therefore cannot be considered as merely a view on reality, separable from reality, nor as an epiphenomenon, which can be by passed in our understanding of reality” (Taylor, 1985b, 47). That is to say, when this concept is applied to professional ethics or media ethics, ethical behaviour cannot merely be considered as a dilemma that can be extracted from the profession, remedied and then made into an example or a guideline of how ‘not’ to behave. For example, the problem of fabrications as a normalcy in the media is understood by media analysts as a dilemma, therefore one that can be reprimanded and later avoided by making codes of ethics that instruct journalists to “Seek Truth and Report It” (2004c) as the Society for Professional Journalists instruct. After all, as the dilemma-oriented ethical thought process goes, *if a reporter who fabricates story were truly seeking truth and reporting it, then the fabrications would never occur*. However, in understanding media ethics the way Taylor (1985) describes understanding oneself, the problem of fabrications as a normalcy in the media demands an analysis beyond the dilemma. It

demands an institutional analysis, where we cannot view fabrications as merely repairable aberrations within the reality of journalism. Rather, this type of refocusing forces ethical analysis to take a step back from the dilemmas, and understand the embedding of journalism, the media, and the culture in which this institution operates. This type of ethical reasoning creates a more holistic understanding of the profession, as Isaacs asserts,

Such reflection might lead us to explore how that practice is woven into the social fabric of a broader community life. Or it might lead us to examine the ethical propriety of relationships within the practice. Or it might cause us to consider the social responsibilities which each ... practice ought to recognise within its local community, the international community and the global environmental order.

(Isaacs, 1994, 16)

This type of ethical refocusing for journalism equates a journalism that becomes aware of its social responsibilities and in doing so cannot elude its democratic heritage.

Using these philosophical concepts, we can return to the examples of the problems in journalism, and specifically in broadcast journalism. These concepts though broad and philosophical are capable of describing ethics as a whole within society and should be directly applied to media ethics. Specifically, using the example outlined above, the problem of infotainment as the status quo of broadcast media coverage ostensibly appears as a dilemma. However, in viewing infotainment as a mere problem that plagues United States media, an institutional understanding of the media can be occluded. In other words, if the media is seen as the aggregation of individuals confronting solvable dilemmas, then it is no longer seen as a malleable social institution that can be formed and reformed to fit the needs and agreements of the public for which and by which the institution has been created. Understanding the ethics *of* or *about* media is essential to understanding possible reform for the media. Therefore, if the problematic role of infotainment in broadcast media today is seen not as one specific problem, but rather as an outcome of a deeply rooted institutional malfunctioning of the media, then understanding the ethics *of* the media becomes apparent. Refocusing in such a manner, though not openly discussed amongst most media ethicists and journalists for that matter, is nevertheless understood in media ethics today,

These problems are systematic of a larger trend in broadcast journalism: the abandonment of a reportorial model intended to provide the public with factual information in favour of a tabloid model aimed at maximizing the audience. In the tabloids, action-packed stories about crime and celebrities are paramount. Television shows such as 'A Current Affair,' 'Hard Copy,' and 'Entertainment Tonight' have become the models to emulate. Prime-time news magazines have proliferated on the strength of sensational 'celebrity' stories"

(McLeod, 1994, B2)

As McLeod points out the problem with infotainment in broadcast media is not that the news reports the celebrity scandals. Rather, the real issue involves the United States media's sole fundamental concern with increasing profit by maximizing the audience through news that will keep viewers tuned-in and advertisers sponsoring.

Liberal Democracy and Defining Freedom

We should consider that a liberal democracy is type of government with a great philosophical basis. That being the case, there are various requirements and understandings used to denote freedom and liberty in democracy. These philosophical conversations attempt to explain ways in which it can be made possible for liberal democracy to flourish within the society. Consider,

[T]here clearly are theories, widely canvassed in liberal society, which want to define freedom exclusively in terms of the independence of the individual from interference by others, be these governments, corporations or private persons; and equally clearly these theories are challenged by those who believe that freedom resides at least in part in collective control over the common life.

(Taylor, 1985b, 175)

Essentially, then, as Taylor explains, the divide in philosophical thinking between what is free and what is not free in liberal society focuses upon freedoms of the individual, and whether or not individual freedoms can be actualised without a collective consciousness that controls aspects of the common life. My thesis aims to show that some liberties, such as the media, are services needed in democratic society, and thus liberties to its entire people, that an individual citizen cannot utilise its full potential without the some efforts from a section of the government interested in maintaining these liberties for the good of common life. To establish the basis for this type of reasoning, we must first take a step

back and work to understand the reasoning behind freedom or a lack of certain freedoms for an individual in society. “If we are free in the exercise of certain capacities, then we are not free, or less free, when these capacities are in some way unfulfilled or blocked” (Taylor, 1985b, 179). That is to say, there are aspects of freedom that, in being a liberty, when restricted, limit freedom for the individual. And furthermore, as Taylor explains, these aspects occur both internally and externally. After all,

...the capacities relevant to freedom must involve some self-awareness, self understanding, moral discrimination and self-control, otherwise their exercise couldn't amount to freedom in the sense of self-direction; and this being so, we can fail to be free because these internal conditions are not realised. But where this happens, where, for example, we are quite self-deceived, or utterly fail to discriminate properly the ends we seek, or have lost self-control, we can quite easily be doing what we want in the sense of what we can identify as our wants, without being free; indeed, we can be further entrenching our unfreedom.

(Taylor, 1985b, 179)

As Taylor explains, individuals in society can be less free or working toward ‘unfreedom’ if the understanding of self and freedom are deceived. This concept can be likened to that of democratic choice in the United States. Where choice and the freedom of choice has been a cornerstone in the U.S. democratic emblem, political choice, on a wide scale has been replaced with consumer choice. Essentially, individuals feel free to choose whatever they please, however this choice is deceiving because the institutions in U.S. society have created a sense that consumer choice is liberating. Thus, U.S. citizens make a variety of choices a day, and possibly feel liberation to do so; however these choices are contained by the very institutions that create this limitation. Thus, individuals are ‘entrenching unfreedom’ rather than making truly free choices about the role, power and dynamic of the institutions in society. These concepts can be applied directly to the role of a liberal democratic state on its citizens.

While, in this quote Chomsky is referring to the failed state of democracy in Haiti, even after the United States under the leadership of President Clinton had declared Haiti a successful democratic state. The case of the failed Haitian democracy is an extreme example of democracy gone wrong. However, the very aspects that soured this society

are fundamentally the same aspects that chip away at the changing nature of liberal democracy in the United States today. Regardless of the country, a

Functioning democracy has preconditions. One is that the population should have some way to learn what is happening in the world. The real world, not the self-serving portrait offered by the 'establishment press', which is disfigured by its 'subservience to state power' and 'the usual hostility to popular movements'...

(Chomsky, 2004, 18)

In the case of the Haitian democracy, as Chomsky continues in this article to explain, nearly complete censorship of the media has thwarted the chance of a successful democracy for this struggling country. In the case of the United States, the effects of a 'self serving portrait offered by the 'establishment press'' is understated by comparison. That is to say, the United States has various outlets for citizens to gather information on this 'real world' to which Chomsky refers. However, if the social norms created by the institutions within society are not supportive of this type of information gathering that could lead to the education of the people, then these vast resources, while still very valuable to many, are not effecting the general public on a grand scale. Or at least, the media, as an institution, is not living to its fullest potential in a liberal democratic state. As I have demonstrated, broadcast media is most commonly used by the general public in the United States, and because of limited ownership could be considered and 'establishment press'. It is for this very reason that I have introduced the concept of a truly public, tax-payer funded broadcast media to help the media, in relation to its socio-political duties, and democracy in the United States reach a new potential.

Media and the Changing Nature of Democracy

With that understood consider that a positive initial step for the media to help accordingly with the changing nature of United States democracy is to unite the media with the public and help to give a space to the public in which public awareness and identification can begin. Currently, the mass media, in many cases, when informing the public on political issues, often does so in a misleading manner. As Mooney points out when considering journalistic coverage on scientific issues, there may be a number of reasons for the possibility if misleading information being provided:

Journalists face a number of pressures that can prevent them from accurately depicting competing scientific claims in terms of their credibility within the scientific community as a whole. First, reporters must often deal with editors who reflexively cry out for "balance." Meanwhile, determining how much weight to give different sides in a scientific debate requires considerable expertise on the issue at hand. Few journalists have real scientific knowledge, and even beat reporters who know a great deal about certain scientific issues may know little about other ones they're suddenly asked to cover.

(Mooney, 2004, 28)

Thus, the misleading nature of some media coverage may stem from a desire to provide 'balance' or a mere lack of specific knowledge on the part of the journalist. However, there are other reasons for misleading reporting. Media coverage of distress events (i.e. The September 11th Attacks or the War in Iraq) has been heavily criticized for being misleading (Crain, 2005, Martinson, 2006 and Smith, 2004). And this criticism is not explained by a lack of knowledge, but rather by intent to mislead.

Apologists for the Bush administration, and for media coverage of that administration's communication offensive before and subsequent to the Iraq invasion, frequently insist that no outright, formal lies were communicated. Some, however, will now acknowledge that the communication the public received had a distinctive spin and was colored by the credo of those orchestrating the communications campaign. When, for example, a particular piece of intelligence could be read from different perspectives, that fact was ignored by administration spokespersons and neglected by the media.

Efforts to spin information to achieve particular objectives did not, of course, begin with the Bush administration and the neoconservatives who dominate it. Critics of the public relations industry, for example, argue that the entire public relations process is directed toward distorting reality to the advantage of particular special interests. (Public relations practitioners, it must be noted, vigorously deny this charge. Even they, however, will acknowledge that too frequently public relations techniques have been used to misdirect rather than inform those to whom particular communications are directed.)

(Martinson, 2006, 11)

To illustrate this point, consider the case of the Iraqi war and the extensive coverage of the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), much of the public not only misunderstood the role of Weapons of Mass Destruction, but were also unclear on whether or not the purported Weapons of Mass Destruction's were found and removed from Iraq (Smith,

2004). These misunderstandings correlate directly with the misinformation and confusing aspects of the media coverage on the topic. Furthermore, as I have established, the public needs access to political information.

Citizens' need for political knowledge for democracy has been recognized since the founding days of our nation. James Madison, one of the principal framers of the Constitution, wrote:

Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives. A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or, perhaps both.

(Smith, 2004, 16)

And while the United States offers various outlets for citizens to pursue knowledge, broadcast media prevails as the medium of choice. Therefore, even though the United States public is not always completely interested in political issues, the correct coverage of such issues needs to be available on broadcast. Therefore, since The United States does not have a truly public broadcast system it weakens the chances for the majority of members of society to obtain informed, accurate information.

When accusing the media of being void of a public broadcast system, many United States citizens consider the station entitled Public Broadcast System (PBS). However,

To talk about the future of public media, we need to begin by realizing that we have no public media, no public broadcasting...I do not believe that public broadcasting as currently practiced has much connection with the public as it currently exists. The public in today's public broadcasting appears as an adjective, a simulated site where a particular kind of broadcasting takes place. Public certainly does not refer to the subject, to those doing the broadcasting, nor even to the audience they seek. Broadcasting to the public? Only if you mean the donors. In no way can it mean broadcasting by the public.

(Artz, 2003, 78)

A lack of a truly public broadcast system can lead to a media void of a high standard for which other media outlets can aspire. Many examples in United States media exist displaying the confusion and misunderstandings of political life on the part of the public.

Consider this example of the misleading claims that sections of the U.S. media has made concerning the issue of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the current Iraqi war.

So why do most Americans believe these statements to be true? The answer, I think, is that the Bush administration has consciously decided to wrest control of large slices of the American media - not just in its editorialising, but in its reporting as well. It comes naturally to the present White House to lie, bully and intimidate, and the result is that the media are now exactly where the administration wants them to be: cowed, more right-wing, and on the defensive.

The process started in the administration's first term. "Reporters" without proper press credentials were planted in White House press conferences; they duly asked what Americans call softball questions. Fake TV news reports, written and produced by government departments or even PR companies paid to work on their behalf, were frequently broadcast by stations that passed them off as their own legitimate news.

(Stephen, 2005, 29)

It should be understood, however, that this type of misleading journalism is not indicative of a media system in society, which is void of a tax-payer funded media system, like that of the U.S. media system. After all, various misleading news exist in countries that have implemented a truly public broadcast system. However, the real nature of the problem surfaces when we consider that U.S. media has neither an alternative, nor a space for a truly public, autonomous broadcast station to raise the bar for quality media.

This type of manipulated journalism is indicative of an industry that has no means by which a checks and balances system can be realized. With the implementation of truly public broadcast system, a journalism that does not need to pander to large companies or to the government would develop, and thus offer a new source of media capable of reaching the masses on a wide range scale. However, this type of journalism cannot be fully understood until the current practices in U.S. journalism and the business for which this journalism operates is considered.

Conclusion

A plausible solution to the ethical problem in journalism, at hand, should first address the historical and societal implications that stem from the development of the United States democratic government and the positioning of the media in relation to that development. The media, like all institutions, is malleable. By accepting the media's capability to change, society should look to change it in ways that can allow at least a section of the media to function more appropriately in relation to democracy. That is not to say that all other types of media information (i.e. infotainment, travel guides, cooking instructions, arts coverage, etc.) should be removed from media coverage. Actually, these types of media information provide certain value for a liberal democratic society.

The media has an effect on the public, and thus has an effect on the ways in which democracy can function in the United States. As such, the media's success as a business is undeniable; however its success in sustaining and enhancing the democratic form of life is more debatable. The media is needed to transform the culture of democracy. In this sense I mean that a cultural understanding of what democracy is and how it works in society needs to be understood by the public. This understanding, as shown through the accounts of the 'disembeddedness' of United States society, has gone astray. However, in order for the media to commit to a level of responsibility that is capable of making a cultural change the media must involve the public and raise its understanding of democracy. After all, United States media today has no truly public broadcast station. Therefore, in my next chapter I will explore the history of journalism and the media in the United States in order to show the heritage from which this American media culture has been created.

I conclude this introduction with Robert McChesney and John Nicholas' words on what the United States media *should* ethically do for the United States public.

Imagine the kind of media that a democratic society deserves: Media that bring us a wealth of diverse opinion and entertainment options; media that are held responsible for providing us with the information we need to function as informed citizens; media where ideas flow in both directions and where ordinary people routinely have a chance to voice their concerns

(Nicholas and McChesney, 2000, 9)

And this type of imaginative yet hopeful media can be made a reality for United States citizens. The first step in doing so requires implementing a truly public broadcast station.

Therefore, I intend to begin my proposal for the necessity of a truly United States public broadcast system with an account of the history of United States democracy in conjunction with the history of United States media and journalism.

Chapter Three Summary

This chapter aims to show the media as a vital aspect of social capital for public life in a liberal democracy. Furthermore, it outlines my personal and educational motivation for creating a thesis about media and democracy. These motivations are attached to the concepts of media as social capital.

This chapter continues to explain the role of democracy and its public. It references the works of Charles Taylor and Noam Chomsky in order to explain the importance and necessity of an active and participatory public for a healthy democracy.

It then works to display the current media problem in the United States today. In doing so I work through the role of institutions in society, the public understand thereof, and impact institutions have on society. Then, in this chapter I aim to explain that a misunderstanding within society exists that causes difficulty in understanding the media as an institution, and therefore stressing the institutional impact on society.

As such, the role of the institution in society coincides with various ethical discussions that are critical of current professional ethics. This type of ethical conversation can be described as understanding the ethics *in* a practice or profession as opposed to the ethics *of* or *about* a practice. The latter, like understanding the role of institutions in society, forces one to consider a practice in a more holistic manner. As this chapter aims to explain, such reasoning is vital to understanding the need for a more autonomous public broadcast station in the United States today.

In respect to such logic, as this chapter explains, a liberal democracy should encapsulate certain public values that coincide with analysing society, government and profession in a holistic manner. And as I aim to show, one such liberty intrinsic to a liberal democratic state is that of a truly public media, or at least a section of the media that can provide great freedom and autonomy.

This chapter concludes with an illustration of the problems that face journalists in the media today, bearing in mind that much of journalism frames ethical decisions in a dilemmic, rather than holistic, manner. Finally, I aim to show that reframing ethical

consideration of the media can work to create a basis for rationalizing the need for an enhanced PBS.

Chapter Four

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UNITED STATES JOURNALISM

Introduction

Recall from my first chapter that I am to employ Taylor's concepts on retracing history to rediscover the initial purposes for institutional aspects of society. Specifically, I hope to retrace the history of United States media in order to pinpoint aspects of journalism that have deviated from their initial purposes. Further, through my assessment of the U.S. history, I aim to show that both the media and the public could greatly benefit from an ethical analysis on the part of mainstream media in terms of the changing nature of democracy. That is to say, in the tradition of Taylor, the current practices of mainstream media should not only look to their historical developments, but use this insight to reevaluate the current context of change. And from this reevaluation, the U.S. media should consider the implementation of a truly public, tax-payer funded broadcast system.

Therefore, my thesis seeks an account of current journalism as evolving from its historical, democratic establishment. Essentially, the media is embedded in society and society is embedded with the media, and both society and the media are embedded within their historical contexts. In order to ground my thesis in historical theory and logic, I must first begin by anchoring this topic in its history: the United States history of journalism. It begins at the very creation of the country though certain developments before the colonization of the new world set the wheels turning for United States journalism (Starr, 2004, 127). It should also be noted that the history of journalism (just as the history of any topic) is a widely discussed and a widely contested topic. It, like its very institute, shares commonalities in dates and passing of time, but diverges in the areas of attached social implications. Like any historical account, certain events in the history of United States media create different debates about their meaning and influence within society. Specifically, the complete corporatisation of broadcast media that occurred in the 1930's and 1940's marks a very important (and somewhat negative) turning stone for socially-oriented journalism historians (McChesney, 1990). However, many mainstream

journalists believe that the privatisation of the media as a negativism is oversimplifying the social issue (Schudson, 1997).

Additionally, the development of journalism in the United States intertwines almost completely with the political and democratic history of the country. This history includes political and sociological ideals such as freedom of speech and liberty for individuals. As such, I am quite aware that any directions to which I attach my discussion of the history of United States journalism will undoubtedly set the path for later explanations of social theory and the ethical implications involved in such theory. Likewise, my ultimate theory, intended to suggest reform for the United States journalism institution, will undoubtedly refer to and grow from these very initial understandings of its history. Therefore, this chapter is not only vital to the understanding of current United States journalism, it is imperative to the development of my thesis.

Historical clumping and working through political and social developments are certainly guilty of oversimplifying the history of United States journalism, however I am forced to pinpoint instances throughout U.S. history in order to keep this account concise. Additionally, it should be noted, that I mean to discuss the history of mainstream United States media. The United States has produced and continues to create countless scholarly journals, independent magazines, political journals, etc.; however, it is not through the publication and acceptance of this type of media that most of the United States public chooses to gather/decipher/and judge news. Therefore, the summary of the history of mainstream media, mainstream as defined by those newsgathering mediums utilised by the mass public, will set the basis for my thesis, which aims to offer reform tactics for *mainstream* United States media.

If we consider, once again, the concepts of Charles Taylor on the importance of retracing history in order to ontologically look at society, the media, institutions and the context from which these things developed, my intention in this chapter becomes clearer (Taylor, 1989). I aim to show that the history of the media and democracy in the United States directly correlates to the current condition of the media. And furthermore, tracing the

history of the media emphasises the need for the Fourth Estate in a liberal democracy. As I have demonstrated in my previous chapters, the changing nature of democracy has led to a stronger public need for the U.S. media. However, this role of the Fourth Estate has been somewhat limited throughout the history of U.S. media, as I aim to show in the detailing of U.S. media history. However, before I delve into these aspects, I must first establish the role of the media and its origins.

The Printing Press

Mass communication and media are often said to begin with the invention of the printing press. It is an undeniable fact that without Gutenberg's invention in 1450 (in Europe before the Western development of the new world) (Burke, 1997), the press and journalism would not exist as it does today. In fact the term, 'press,' would certainly not have developed as the vernacular term used to describe the institute made up by newspaper-media outlets. It can be established, then, that modern day journalism developed from Gutenberg's printing press. This new invention allowed for faster reproduction of texts and literature. Likewise, it raised literacy rates during the Renaissance (Pankow, 2003). In fact,

[B]y the end of the 15th century, every major European city, as well as most minor cities, had at least one printing establishment. During the so-called incunabular (early) period (1450-1501), almost 30,000 separate editions of books were produced. This represented an enormous contribution to the spread of learning during the Renaissance.

(Pankow, 2003, 34)

Understandably the printing press provided the means by which media could reach the masses in the late 1400's and into modernity.

However, despite this (limited) social success of the printing press during the Renaissance, its success in Europe (during both the Renaissance and into Modernity) was slow-moving compared to the explosion of book publishing and newspaper printing that occurred in the colonizing Americas around the time of the American Revolution.¹⁰

¹⁰ It should be noted here, that the essential features of Gutenberg's printing press in its original, mechanical form remained virtually unaltered by other inventors. In other words, the boom of the printing

Comparing the success of the printing in the colonies to that of its success in Europe aids in highlighting the social differences that created a new nation and a new culture that later became the United States. Appreciating this new culture is essential to understanding the development of the government and the role of the 'Fourth Estate' that became the media in the New World. As such, the various reasons for Europe's slow development of the printed word compared to that of colonizing Americas portray cultural differences between the colonizing Americas and Europe. For example, in early modern Europe, printing faced problems especially linked to high costs, "The market for print comprised only a small fraction of the population because of the limits of both literacy and income, as well as high distribution costs due to the primitive condition of transport and communication" (Starr, 2004, 26). Understandably then, only wealthy European institutes could afford the high costs involved in purchasing and maintaining the printing press. For example, the wealthy churches used a printing press to mass produce copies of the bible (hence the Gutenberg Bible). Likewise, the church was capable of paying the expensive printing costs because of the church's great economic and social power. However, in this capability led to an exaggerated sense of power within the churches, which eventually allowed religious authorities the right to control censorship in printing. As such, the spread of printing in Europe in the 16th and early 17th centuries suffered from great political limitations. The printing press, while vital to its era and location, failed to ignite the boom in journalism that the late 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, specifically in the New World, witnessed. The elitist control of the printing press in Europe led to a certain sentiment concerning rights to information and the publication thereof. Therefore, political and religious happenings were not socially understood as information that belonged to the masses. This is an essential cultural difference between the development of the media in Europe and the development of the media in the colonising Americas. It is important to consider this development in order to emphasize the specific social differences concerning respective attitudes toward communication and information (Starr, 2004, 50-65). Current United States policies and governmental legislature grew from its colonizer's history, that system found in Europe,

press in the New World in the 18th and 19th Centuries occurred for reasons other than a more facilitated printing press (Pankow, 2003).

and as a result the media in the colonizing Americas (specifically in the Americas region that became the United States) developed in conjunction with events occurring in England. However, just because the colonies were influenced by events occurring overseas, the colonies had a unique media history as well,

Although the development of communications in seventeenth-and eighteenth-century colonial American paralleled the changes taking place in Britain, the conditions were substantially different. The colonies were not just peripheral to metropolitan Britain; they were also subordinate and inferior to it in a self-conscious cultural as well as political sense.

(Starr, 2004, 55)

Starr's account on the condition of the communications development in the colonising Americas shows that what has become the United States media today had a shaky beginning. However, the media, in conjunction with the nation's political sense grew stronger, eventually leading to a break from British control. And the colonising era leading up to the revolution reveals many fundamental roles, like that of creating a media as the Fourth Estate autonomous from government control, found in the media today. It was an era of great change, and great development for the country and for the development of U.S. mass media.

The Ideology and the Birth of a Revolution

The Americas during the Colonial Period, (1610-1776) began in poor conditions. The European settlers, who were mainly British in the area that later became the United States, left their homes to come to a new world in search of a new way of life. Many found land, but work on that land was difficult and demanding. The initial stages in settling the New World required British governmental aid. Products, materials, manpower, and equipment were all supplied in some aspect by the British government. This dependency forced the new settlers to rely not only on Britain for materials, but also for social structure and governance. As such, the initial settlers in the New World received their political information through an English filter (Starr, 2004, 47). Furthermore, the initial infrastructure of the colonising Americas was not solid enough to create a communications circuit capable of relating news throughout the colonies.

However, this dependent state of the colonising Americas, with its poor communication links, was soon to change as the colonies became more and more independent of Britain, eventually leading to the American Revolution from the British. However, the veracity of the American Revolution as a true 'revolution' has been argued for various reasons: as a social revolution the movement failed because it failed to overthrow a ruling class, as a claim to the initiation of democracy the revolution is seen as more of a defence of an already existing democracy (defending itself against the British desire to evade the colonies laws in order to make more money from the colonial trade), and as a political revolution the movement failed because it did not establish new rights, it merely emphasised those already established (Starr, 2004, 62-63).

Communication in the colonizing Americas was significantly transformed in the seventeenth-century, but not because of any great technological discovery. It was, rather, a social phenomenon. For various economic and social reasons that were linked to the concepts of the *individual, rational-self* born out of modernity, the colonizing Americas (specifically in the colonised area under British rule, that later became the United States) looked to free themselves from European control. As such, a revolt required the colonial peoples to band together and they were facilitated in doing so because of accelerated communications within the New World (Starr, 2004, 64). As the colonies moved past the initial stages of settling, they organised their efforts and began creating solidified communities. Thus, the need for communicating the concerns of the colonies, as opposed to those things discussed by British communications, became important and more widespread. The spread of communications led to the spread of a written (rather than printed) word, and thus arose an opportunity for the spread of printed news. In other words, the American Revolutionary War and the events leading up to the revolt, in a certain way, provided the need for newspapers and information that could reach and speak to the common people in the colonies, giving them voice and power to rule their country and local community independently of a strong centralized government (Starr, 2004, 63-64). Consider,

Western Europe is the home of the modern idea of freedom of the press and it is no surprise that the United States of America, despite its short history, took the lead over Europe in this regard. Arguably, tolerance for the free dissemination of

ideas and texts was promulgated most forcefully in the more ideologically homogeneous United States because it had a less rigidly defined social order than did Europe. The absence of sharp class prejudices and divisions in America made it easier to envisage a mass press. Further, in the nineteenth century, the rapid and ongoing democratization of American life, under the aegis of the liberal ideology which defined the nation, was partly responsible for the fact that journalism for the masses first developed in this country, followed closely by England and other Western European countries.

(Rothman, 1997, 56-57)

A government ruled by the common man¹¹ is unmistakably a concept coined by the colonial people in the Americas that were revolting against British rule. The need for a common word among the people, so as to overthrow, or at least gain power over, the dominant political scheme, is a concept very similar to that of the Fourth Estate in a democratic society. In a way, the development, or at least the basis, for the Fourth Estate has roots during the Revolutionary War. As such, the widespread newspapers worked to legitimize this idea ‘that common man can rule himself’ (Starr, 2004, 64). For example, the infamous American slogan ‘*No Taxation Without Representation*’ was created from the same type of mindset. This slogan was used in relation to the Boston Tea Party, when the settlers in the developing colonies demanded that they should not have British taxes on their tea since the colonies did not have representation in the British legislature. After all, the common man in the colonies felt strongly about their individual rights, and felt that British rule of the American ‘self’ unjust. It is through this type of reasoning that the American emphasis on ‘self’ and individual rights was born (Rothman, 1997, 57).

The rise of the empowered common man capable of ruling himself was one factor in opening the doors to a new ideology in the developing world. And this ideology, in terms of the role of the media in a democratic society, lead to the concepts that emphasise the importance of the media as a Fourth Estate democracy. During this period of history many social changes occurred. It generated the spread of logic and reason for the individual self. This philosophical movement is known more commonly as modernity.

¹¹ I use only the terms ‘man’ and ‘himself’ here because the early thinkers in United States history did not include in ‘equality of all men’ the equality of women. Of course, in today’s language the absence of ‘woman’ and ‘herself’ is inaccurate, yet since I am discussing the era in which equality did not extend to women, omitting these terms is acceptable.

Insofar as the basis for the American revolt against the British, the common understanding of 'self' became that of understanding oneself as an individual within a definite society. Modernity provided an understanding for the people of the new world, within society and gave these people aspired goals as members of this society. The American success of the American Revolutionary War launched a new society, separate from its European heritage. The devotion to the common man, and the separation from centralised power in the new country led to the founding concepts of the Constitution and new republic. Consider,

That part of the "new world" which became the United States of America can be examined as a paradigmatic case of the relationship between Calvinism, capitalism, and democracy for it has epitomized the Western version of modernity Perceived as an "empty land" by the English Protestants who initially shaped its culture, it came to represent the ideal type of liberal capitalism for observers as diverse as Tocqueville, Hegel and Marx. To be sure, there were myriad other influences, including the frontier and mass immigration. Nevertheless, American liberalism, with its highly individualistic and relatively egalitarian and "pragmatic" social ideology and reality, lacked the earlier communal European traditions with which European liberals had to struggle.

(Rothman, 1997, 53-54)

And thus, the American identity was developed from a history of European influences, but in a fashion of its own. The influence of the media in era must be considered. However, we should keep in mind, that both the media and society, and social identity are factors imbedded in one another. Therefore, the media influenced society and social identity in America, and so did society influence the media.

The New Republic

The history of media and communications in the United States often begins here with the development of the Republic that followed the American Revolution. Furthermore, this is the section of U.S. media history which fully develops the Fourth Estate. After all, the country was emerging both politically and socially. One of the most important hallmarks of press freedom in the United States was the establishment of the First Amendment. Additionally, the establishment of the First Amendment creates the foundation for the media as a Fourth Estate in U.S. democracy. Historically, the Constitution was written just after the Revolutionary War. Though introduced in 1787, the Constitution was

ratified in 1788. And the Bill of Rights (Amendments 1-10) revised the original Constitution a mere three years later.

As such, the Bill of Rights set the basis for the current media tradition, that tradition anchored in the concepts of the media's role as the Fourth Estate. The First Amendment states that, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances" (1789). At the time of the Bill of Rights, there were many controversies over its wording. The Bill of Rights was erected to pacify those who were against a strong central government, but it failed to de-centralise federal government power. Essentially, the Bill of Rights failed in its only main pursuit. For example, the original First Amendment, drafted by James Madison read, "The people shall not be deprived of..." This section was changed to "Congress shall make no law against..." (Starr, 2004, 75). The difference in the very wording changes the grounds for understanding the First Amendment. It seems, therefore, that it is not a citizen's *right* to have governmental or political information. Rather, it is Congress's duty to passively never make a law against free speech and the like. Ironically, it is this same logic that anchors the argument that many United States journalists use today to absolve journalists of all social responsibility in terms of source confidentiality, fabrications, and invasion of privacy, etc. and in the name of 'free speech'. This same attitude keeps United States journalism 'free' from governmental control of the media. While this word change is certainly of great consequence for general social ideology and specifically for United States journalism, incongruously it is not a widely discussed topic in media ethics. As Starr explains,

With no record of the discussion, it is impossible to know whether the new phrasing in the active voice ('Congress shall make no law...') was merely a clarification or a substantive change and, if the latter, whether it was intended to make the injunction more imperative or more narrow than Madison's construction ('The people shall not be deprived of'), which could be construed as applying to power in any form.

(Starr, 2004, 75)

It is apparent, that even with the First Amendment in 1791 the American government wasn't sure exactly what 'free speech' was or 'how free' speech should be for the American citizens. Despite the implementation of 'free speech' with the First Amendment, the American government still legalised seditious libel. Seditious libel is the publication of sedition. Sedition can be defined as "...crime against the state. Though sedition may have the same ultimate effect as treason, it is generally limited to the offence of organizing or encouraging opposition to government in a manner (such as in speech or writing) that falls short of the more dangerous offences constituting treason" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2006 entry: 'sedition'). Furthermore, seditious libel was something commonly used in England, but, with the First Amendment in the United States, it seems the American government was attempting to move away from government control of citizenry speech and/or printed word. However, the American government still struggled with *how free* it wanted the citizens to be.

The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1778-1800 worked to specifically define this freedom. To understand the history of these acts, we must first consider the context of their development. Just before the Acts came into effect, England and France were in such conflict in the colonizing Americas, that the newly developing settlements were forced into a war. During the time of this war, American politics were split between supporting England or France. Essentially, those in the Republican Party favoured France, while the Federalist Party favoured England. As such, the demand that the colonies give the French government a war loan angered the English-supporting Federalists Party (Nelson and Dwight, 1973, 25-26). Despite the war loan, the republicans, led by Thomas Jefferson, continued their support for France.

Yet, because of this loan, the Federalists Party made a case against France, and they passed the Sedition Act that forbade citizens from speaking against government decision. This Act actualized a way to keep Republicans and those in agreement with Republicans from voicing their points of view. Essentially, because of the Sedition Act, the republicans could not defend their viewpoint without breaking the law. During this time in American media development, fourteen Republican publicists and printers were indicted and convicted (Smith, 1956, 22-34). Eventually, however, the Alien and

Sedition Acts were overturned when Jefferson became president. He and other Republicans argued against these acts, empowering the people by preaching about democratic philosophies, such as; “A people cannot call itself free unless it is superior to its government; unless it can have unrestricted right of discussion. No natural right of the individual, they contended in the Lockean framework, can be more important than free expression” (Nelson and Dwight, 1973, 27).

Furthermore, the physical infrastructure of the country took shape in the new republic. With government funding roads were built, schools were established, post offices were created, as was a facilitated postal service to provide communications throughout each of the budding areas. As such, through the Post Office, newspapers were distributed throughout all of the developing states (government subsidies allowed for cheap distribution). The distribution and, therefore, range of newspapers in the United States extended far beyond newspaper distribution in Europe. The acceptance of such a postal subsidy was of great debate just after the creation of the Constitution, and the implementation of the Postal Act. Eventually, it was agreed that newspapers should be delivered, with a small fee for the postmaster, in order to give a great majority of the public (even those outside of a city) a chance to read newspapers. The small fee was enlisted in order to support reliability of delivery. As Starr explains,

This postal subsidy would have been less important if most papers were distributed solely within the cities and villages where they were published, but even small-town papers had many subscribers who lived at a distance. A study of the subscription books of two small-town Ohio papers in the 1820s, the Ashtabula Sentinel and the Mansfield Gazette, finds that a majority of subscribers to both papers lived out of town...Not all of these copies necessarily went by U.S. mail. But by expanding the area from which a newspaper could draw subscribers, the Post Office made possible a larger subscription base and thus enabled more newspapers to develop. In the late 1830, the Post Office was delivering about one-fourth of all newspapers.

(Starr, 2004, 89-90)

Hence, because the Postal Service facilitated cheap distribution, the success of printed news gained greater speed in the United States than in Europe. In each of the states, newspapers extended into not only urban cities, but also into small towns and farming

communities. Likewise, the creation of the public school and the spread of literacy and commonplace knowledge, helped to empower and provide validity to the concepts of the common man capable of governing himself. In turn, all of these factors involved in infrastructure and technological growth worked together to share the social development of the new country (Starr, 2004).

The spread of literacy and the concepts of modernity that created the ‘individual self’, also created a sense of reciprocity within these budding communities. It should be understood that,

American liberal individualism emphasized freedom, but within a framework that set stringent limits upon its expression. Individuals were free to act but were held responsible for their actions. However their behaviour was mediated by an emphasis upon the restraint of impulse, including sexual impulse, and their energies were concentrated on hard work and accumulation of material wealth.

(Rothman, 1997, 54)

This attitude of hard work influenced many aspects of the American lifestyle. In terms of journalism, it helped to create a business sense for the publication and distribution of papers. That is to say America journalism, though stemming from a community identity, also had its roots in the business of journalism.

The History of U.S. Journalism Actualised as a Business

Various factors play into the creation of the media industry in the United States. Technology is a key factor in creating a new mindset for the distribution of information within the new country. For example, the newspapers in this era saw great advancement with wired news via the telegraph. The wire led to a shortened, solidified style of news which, as many journalism historians argue, provided the foundation for the capitalistic-business style of news reporting that developed predominately in the United States (Starr, 2004, 174-186). Since the telegraph created more facility in transferring information it was commonly used to report issues throughout the nation. However, the telegraph required stories to become more condensed, since they were not detailed written accounts. Furthermore, the condensed versions of the stories emphasised reporting just

‘the facts’. The telegraph made reporting faster, which created competition within the industry. This competition actualised as a drive for each media outlet to be the first to report the condensed version of the story. Various social differences were undoubtedly moulded by the contrasting spread of technological acceptance between the United States and Europe. However, the boom that was the objective style of journalism (the status quo in American journalism today), and the polarized type of journalism that is committed to ‘just reporting the facts’ and telling both sides of the story (Mindich, 1998, 1-14) in the United States encompasses many different telling factors other than those linked to the development of new technologies. That is to say, it was not merely technology that shaped the norms for the institution of journalism during the development of country, and its media. For example, new ways in which to fund the media, particularly in the United States where media was purely privatised, impacted profoundly on the practise of journalism.

The Penny Press Era (1830-1860) set the stage for advertisement-funded media. The concept was simple. The newsletter-type sheets cost a penny each, and the printing businesses made their profit through advertisement sales rather than through subscription sales. Penny press newsletters provided the opportunity for many people to purchase a newsletter for a very cheap price. Since the advertisers paid the production and distribution fees, the newsletters were affordable for many people in society that otherwise would not have a chance to buy a newsletter or any form of information source.

The Penny Press Era gave birth to the predominance of this type of funding in the media. Advertisement-funded media is the current way in which all United States media (and most global media) operate today (with the exception of the Public Broadcast Station and the National Public Radio, which are both non-profit organisations). However, the penny press’s new type of funding was only one factor in the many social changes that led to the type of profession journalism has become today (Nerone, 1987). After all, if media organisations continued in the tradition of the Penny Press Era to use advertisement funding purely to compensate production and distribution costs, thus providing the public with an inexpensive means to information, then a truly public media, funded by taxes

(tax-payer funded media) would be unnecessary. However, the United States media, and specifically broadcast media, today use advertisement funding far beyond that of the penny press concepts and purpose. Certainly, media, during the printing press era, was a business endeavour, but those printing also held other types of outcomes valuable (i.e. informing people, gaining readership, etc.) as well as sustaining business profitability.

Additionally, within the United States the practice of printing was viewed as a labourer's job rather than that for an apprentice. As a result, printing was performed by many lower-income citizens, thus more printing was performed. The boom of printing facilitated newspapers to become business that looked to turn a profit like so many other businesses at the time. As such, the United States was developing its infrastructure even more rapidly than in the early days of development, which allowed for easier transferring of newspapers from the printing houses to the homes of citizens. Additionally, newspapers were used for political purposes, which made it possible for the media and advertisement companies to raise money and spend it on various political party members. Party members quickly realized that they could use the newspapers to communicate with citizens in remote rural areas. As such, the newspapers were often employed by politicians to report stories involving that specific politician (Starr, 2004, 127-131). For all of these reasons, the business of the newspaper and communications expanded. The United States was becoming a nation in which the common man was governing himself and that equated to a man running his own businesses and the media was not only reporting on such developments, it too was becoming a business run by the common man. Again, the irony surfaces when we consider that this new media business demanded its freedom in the name of democratic rights. Ostensibly, it seems as though the business of media in a budding nation with a social emphasis on business in a democratic society is sensible. After all, it seems that if the society is democratic, and the common man, through deliberation with other members, has decided that business endeavours and an ample economy are the overall concerns of the public, then this business emphasis in a democratic society can occur rightfully. Therefore, even those public goods, like the distribution of information (i.e. the media) in society, can be game for such endeavour. These goods, social goods, are elements of society, decided by the society to have value.

However the importance of such goods, stem not from the goods' monetary value, rather from the agreed importance that society places on them (Shapiro, 1996). However, this understanding of social goods and the distribution thereof is somewhat misleading (at least a bit vague)¹². At this point of my thesis, it will suffice to state that a societal misunderstanding of social goods occurred in this era for the United States. I will expand upon this issue later, as it is vital to my discussion concerning the capitalistic state of the media in the United States today.

The Civil War, Advertising and Censorship

In returning to the history of United States media, we can now consider the effects the Civil War had on the development of mainstream media as it was undoubtedly an important factor in shaping U.S. journalism. Before the war, “Constitutional structure and political forces in the United States held back the centralizing tendencies of capitalism in communications...” (Starr, 2004, 144). However, for various reasons, it is argued that because of the Civil War, communications law began centralizing. Starr explains,

The war and its aftermath produced a stronger central government...The war effort itself led to an increase in the fiscal and administrative capacities of the federal government and precipitated a suspension of rights, including, in some instances, freedom of the press. The South had been the principal source of support for states' rights, and its defeat weakened devolutionary pressures. And after the war, the enactment of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments created rights under the federal Constitution that were enforceable against the states and would later be interpreted to mean that the original Bill of Rights applied to the states as well. This was a revolutionary change in America's constitutional system, and it set in motion a long-term process toward a more powerful national government.

(Starr, 2004, 144)

As Starr explains, the Civil War changed the type of government that was originally developing in America. Where the government once sought to give greater state control, and thus more control to localised communities, after the war, the government sought a more powerful centralised control. In terms of the media, this move is one away from localised printing with postal subsidy to reach outer regions in order to gain readership,

¹² I will return to the concept and importance of social goods later in my thesis. Furthermore, I will explain the role of the media as a social good more thoroughly.

and toward the public acceptance of a bigger, centralised mainstream media. This is not to suggest that the outcome of the Civil War is the primary cause of big corporate media business. Rather, I am pinpointing a change in national sentiment, a fork in the road of media history. The Civil War gave a reason to the public for supporting and accepting a stronger centralised government, and this acceptance had a serious outcome on the development of the media from that time.

Media censorship is one aspect of this very serious outcome. In the era after the Civil War, the public acceptance of a stronger centralised government initially leads to a sentiment (that continues to develop today) in U.S. society that allows, even encourages big media business (that today has actualised as global media business). The issue here is not limited to the business and advertiser aspect of media. Consider that,

[The motivation] by [the] governmental conversation to the cause of press freedom...stemmed from the growing realisation among politicians and other members of the establishment that if entrepreneurs and industrialists could be tempted to enter the newspaper market then this could kill off the hated radical press far more effectively than taxes had ever done – by tempting away its readers, by raising the cost of newspaper production – which mass-market papers could offset via advertising revenues – or by a combination of the two.

That the powers that be intended the press to be used as an agent of social control and regulation rather than as a means of popular enlightenment and empowerment...

(Petley, 69-70)

As Petley points out, censorship and control of the media can occur when public sentiment of the media transforms from a concept by which the media is used to empower the common man into a concept by which the media is used to control common man (while common man believes he is still being empowered). In essence, the validity of media as the Fourth Estate begins fading with this public sentiment.

As such, examples of sedition, censorship and the extreme polarized opinions that dominate the political realm in the United States do not stop at the time of the Civil War, as they continue to effect the politics of U.S. media today. Moving into more recent

media history, consider that sedition libel was no longer a term used during the 19th Century. Instead it was replaced with criminal libel. Nevertheless it was the same thing. However, during this period few charges against the media occurred. Possibly, the heightened state of polarized views on the freedom of speech in the United States can be paired with the occurrences of wars and the national fear of attack and enemies. Certainly, technology and war has moved media history faster than times of national safety. This is not to suggest that media is the central issue when considering these aspects of historical development. The wars and technology shaped everything in the nation, not just the media.

As we move into the 20th Century, libel and speech restriction is once again a factor in the United States government. Consider that, “The urging of radical economic and political change, opposition to World War I, and the advocacy of violent overthrow of government were proscribed as criminal under sedition legislation of the Twentieth Century” (Nelson and Dwight, 1973, 35). World War One and the initial spread of communism abroad gave cause for the U.S. government to worry. As a result, legislation was enacted that made it illegal in the States to speak about or print issues that advocated a political overthrow of the government. “It was the federal government’s Espionage Act of 1917, and its amendment in 1918 to include sedition that put most muscle into prosecution for criminal words” (Nelson and Dwight, 1973, 36). This act the shutting down of socialist newspapers and the prosecuting of pamphleteers (Nelson and Dwight, 1973, 36-37). These are acts of censorship, and restriction upon speech. This type of government control of speech during the First World War was only the precursor to even more serious censorship during World War Two. “In the context of the cold war between the United States and the U.S.S.R. following World War II, almost 10 years of prosecution took place” (Nelson and Dwight, 1973, 39). However, the pendulum does not halt on the side of censorship in this era. There was a very important Supreme Court decision that aided in bringing balance back to the freedom of speech in the United States during this era of World Wars.

In 1931, a landmark case for the media took place: *Near vs. Minnesota*. The case essentially outlawed censorship in the media. The Supreme Court decision voted in favour of Jim Near and Howard Guiford, the publishing partners of the *Saturday Press*, “A Minneapolis ‘smeer sheet’ which vilified authorities” (Nelson and Dwight, 1973, 43). The paper was being charged with making inappropriate claims about the occurrences of the time. And the state charged the paper in the hope of preventing it from printing more such issues of the paper. However, such restriction is a type of censorship or prior restraint. This case is one of the most important cases in American media history because the US Supreme Court ruled in favour of Mr. Near, as it claimed that there could be no prior restraint on publications. However this concept as an absolute law was not adopted by the US government. Rather, the Supreme Court ruled that prior restraint was illegal except “when publications involved a threat to the nation in time of war or were obscene, or were incitements to violence or overthrow of the government by force” (U.S. Constitution, 1931, 631). The *Near* case is a hallmark case in US media history as it marks the first time that censorship is outlawed. This decision was made by the Supreme Court by considering both the First and the Fourteenth Amendments. The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution is a declaration of citizenry liberal rights. The outcome of this case shows that the U.S. government acknowledges free speech and free press as a citizenry right (Nelson and Dwight, 1973, 45-47). However, in conjunction with the development of mainstream media as a capitalistic business, this liberal right has tended to become more of a consumer’s right.

Journalism as a *Capitalistic* Business

The 19th and 20th Centuries were not only times of war and reconstruction, they were also a time of great invention. An era of just over a century (1820s-1950), bore witness to the inventions of the telegraph, the telephone, the radio (am and fm) and the television. These inventions gave media the chance of reaching the public on a wider scale and at a faster rate. With each invention, communication sped up and reached more people with greater facility. However, the effects of the Civil War and the invention of these

communications tools were not the only factors in shaping media history during the 19th Century, and into the 20th Century.

Between the end of the Civil War and the onset of the Great Depression (1865-1920), capitalism boomed in the United States. And the newspaper companies went along for the money-making ride. This era saw a great increase in urbanization with migration (both internationally and domestically) toward the cities. Likewise, the newspapers began to urbanize. Where small-town newspapers once ruled, the new corporate paper began to take-over (with the help of previously discussed technologies) and spread throughout the nation. Two of the most influential journalists and astute businessmen of the era were Joseph Pulitzer and his partner, later turned rival, John Hearst (Starr, 2004, 255-260).

This partnership/rivalry gave birth to the term ‘yellow journalism’ a term coined to mock the sort of “high-voltage paper published by the two masters of the urban press” (Starr, 2004, 258). Pulitzer and Hearst and their yellow journalism spread the type of journalism known today as sensationalism, “they mixed story telling with news and uncovering the ‘awful truths’ in society” (Starr, 2004, 528). Both Hearst and Pulitzer experienced great financial reward from their new type of journalism. Yellow journalism focused on entertainment as selling a story, rather than solid political issues. Hearst and Pulitzer created the common magazine style using this type of journalistic focus. While the subject of scandal in the media had been around since the penny press, the extended use of scandal news in a polished-book format was created by Hearst and Pulitzer. They shaped reporting into the familiar glossy-packaged story that the public could easily enjoy and purchase. Despite the boom of yellow journalism, there were many United States citizens against this new type of journalism (and certainly against the successes of Hearst and Pulitzer), and while their voices were heard, those voices were rarely loud

...late-nineteenth century Americans saw a multitude of anarchist, socialist, and populist publications; no movement, however small was complete without a journal to establish its identity, propound its ideals, and communicate with its members. Such publications typically had a high mortality rate because they typically carried little, if any, commercial advertising and radical organizations themselves often had only a transitory existence.

(Starr, 2004, 264)

This boom of an intellectual debate within the mass media basis existed only until the onset of the Great Depression. As with the rest of the nation, newspapers companies and media outlets felt the financial devastation from the Great Depression. And mirroring the earlier devastation of the Civil War, the mass public looked once again to a stronger federal government to provide stability. This stability came in the form of President Theodore Roosevelt's New Deal.

Roosevelt's New Deal entailed many things for the United States people in the 1930's. For example, it offered stock market regulation, Social Security, and unemployment compensation, etc. Likewise, the New Deal worked to build up the United States economy with incentives to spend and sell within the United States market, a market that had just crashed in 1929. Essentially, the New Deal strived to inspire United States citizens to bring life back to the United States society by providing security to United States citizens (Sunstien, 2004). This security worked in various ways, but truly emphasised the security of a strong economy. In terms of journalism and the newspaper industry (and the budding broadcast industry of radio), these developments encouraged a profit-driven business obligated to the public only through an endeavour to strengthen the economy, rather than a public duty as the professional suppliers of information needed to sustain United States democracy (McChesney, 1990).

With the unprecedented advancement of yellow journalism as the mass media norm, a significant turning point in the evolution of United States journalism occurred. Although scandal-driven journalism has been a constant in United States journalistic culture, its presence as the main form of journalism for the masses appeared only after Hearst and Pulitzer carved a permanent niche for yellow journalism in the mass media.

Specifically, when tracing through U.S. history various examples surface proving the success of yellow journalism that can be linked with the economic basis for printing scandal or exaggerated news so as to capture the attention of the public, selling a news product that is neither politically informative nor educative. For example, the National

Police Gazette of late 1870's and 1880's is one such newspaper. "The emphasis [of the paper] was placed on rumour and gossip. The aim was entertainment, not enlightenment" (Anonymous, 1993, 124). This type of journalism was widely successful as well.

Fox's [the owner of the National Police Gazette] formula proved to have broad appeal. Circulation of the New York-oriented weekly soared to 150,000. The Gazette was to be found wherever men congregated--at saloons, hotels, liveries, and barber shops. The lesson of the Gazette's success, Gorn says, was not lost on the publishers and editors of daily newspapers. By the 1890s, many of them were packaging the news 'as a series of melodramas and atrocities, of titillating events covered as spectacles, complete with illustrations.'

Fox had sensed the enormous potential audience among the wage earners of the Gilded Age. To workers seeking escape from dull jobs--or just relief from the Victorian ethos--his Gazette offered vicarious excitement.

(Anonymous, 1993, 124-125)

Through this example, it becomes clearer how the attitude of the public as a product, rather than a client developed. While Fox made its money through this newspaper by performing research and reporting on the data found in this research, it is not just the newspaper Fox was selling to the public. He was selling the thrill, the excitement of gossip as news. This sentiment, since, has been developed and marketed to the public. Sensationalism is itself, a product and sensationalism needs an audience to which it can invoke. That audience is the U.S. public. This example highlights the way in which yellow journalism played a part in the new economy that was developing during this time.

Furthermore, while many factors led to the development of objectivity in journalism, yellow journalism made objectivity a strong presence in mainstream media. Objectivity in United States journalism relates to the concept that all reporters report from an observational view point and report on the issues not as a member of society or of the specific event being reporting upon, but rather as a bystander. However, when we consider that, "...perception and understanding is always a matter of interpretation reflecting, not only reality, but where we stand to that reality and the cognitive frameworks which we choose, or assume, in making sense of that reality" (Isaacs, 1998,

2), then we can understand the ‘objective’ journalistic viewpoint is a complex construct. However, the concept that Isaacs discusses here should not be understood as an excuse for biased reporting. Rather, it is theoretical reasoning against the common journalistic idea of ‘ultimate truth seeking’. Just as an individual person cannot ascertain one ultimate truth in his/her own life, a journalist should not be so delusive in his/her reporting. That is to say, the journalist should seek truth and attempt to relate articles in a truthful manner, but should also understand that many aspects effect the nature of all stories. Furthermore, realising that multiple issues effect context can lead to a more full recollection of events, thus providing the public with a fuller, more educative outlook on events, rather than a black and white report that reveals one basic ‘truth’.

Honest reporting entails a profound understanding of one’s surroundings, which demands that the journalist perceives their own presence and deciphers the truth or truthful perspectives of the situation with the realization that many truths exist in all situations. However, this perception has not been the accepted form in traditional thinking in journalism; traditional journalism in the United States can be defined as that type of journalism that uses objectivity as its ultimate ‘idol’. Objectivity, though the principal concept in U.S. journalism today, is a very difficult term to define. Mindich explains,

[Objectivity] for some is a vague point to strive for, like the North Star. For others it involves specific practices. Still others define it in the breach, citing journalists who break its rules. And lately ‘objectivity’ has come under fire, a causality of a bitter battle over the future of journalism. But even as some journalists celebrate it and others call for its end, no one seems to be able to define it.

(Mindich, 1998, 1)

We can assess, however that objectivity encompasses ideas like the detachment of journalists from the stories they report, non-partisan reporting, balance and fairness, and a search for the truth. The concept of objectivity in journalism, though developing from about the 1830s, was in full swing by the 1920s (Ward, 2004). At that time, just after the First World War, the leading journalistic ethics organisations described “objectivity as a canon of journalism,” (Ward, 2004, 214). During the next few decades objectivity, though disputed at times, became the staple form of reporting and writing in United States journalism. Objectivity in journalism offered a more strict type of reporting, a

clearer method of writing and reporting, and as such created a stronger sense of professionalism (Ward, 2004, 216). However, change due to the use of objectivity in journalism was not limited to those things occurring only within the profession.

Objectivity espousal within the profession of journalism led to major social change in the United States. Ward explains,

Two trends were of primary importance. One was confidence in public institutions run by impartial professionals who subscribed to the ideal of procedural objectivity. The other was loss of confidence in the public as capable of forming rational opinion in a democratic fashion. Such scepticism resulted from two factors. New public relations techniques cast doubt on human rationality, and leading intellectuals worried that democracy was succumbing to the subjective, emotional opinion of the masses. Both trends—confidence in objective procedure and scepticism about public opinion—drove journalism into the arms of objectivity.

(Ward, 2004, 224)

As Ward suggests, the standardising of objectivity in mass media required serious scepticism of public opinion. Public opinion was considered subjective and emotional (terms that a professional journalist would not want to portray). Thus, objectivity became the methodological or professional need for journalism in the United States.

The journalistic code was born from the concept that journalists can objectively report on issues, and that the media's presence in society solely works to communicate information (Mindich, 1998, 1-10). And furthermore, objectivity stresses an understanding of society that coincides with capitalistic endeavours. Objectivity requires that the journalist view their profession from a detached observational position. Whereas if the journalist were to see the profession as one attached to its community, as a public service, then the journalist could view the job as both a service for society and as a business for personal and social gain.

New Technologies and the Media

The history of journalism now moves to the great technological developments in United States just after the Great Depression. However, as I aim to demonstrate, many of these

technological advances while capable of advancing the U.S. media in terms of its role as the Fourth estate, failed or were at least limited in doing so. For the United States, the 1920's and 1930's saw great business advances in terms of the radio. When the National Broadcast Channel (NBC) and the Corporate Broadcast Station (CBS) radio station were created in the late 1920's, they came into the field of radio at a time when various other radio frequency slots were utilized by non-profit organizations such as universities (McChesney, 1990). As the government decided to corporatise the radio stations, many socialist-leaning intellectuals spoke against the decision. At the very onset of radio frequency distribution many intellectuals recognised that the outcome of distribution would shape the media, and thus, the nation forever. The privatised broadcasting businesses, through broadcasting advertisements, used the advertising payments to accrue profit and with this money the privatised broadcasting companies gained more power and public attention over the non-profit broadcasters. Since the private broadcasters freed themselves of the financial burdens of running a radio station by airing advertisements the non-profit broadcasters soon faced competition that was completely beyond their competitive reach. However, in airing advertisements, the private broadcasting companies consented to certain conditions with these advertising companies. These conditions determined whether or not particular views were expressed on the radio. Furthermore, the concept of public radio stations that did not need funding from advertising was not a topic many advertising companies wanted the United States public listening to and/or thinking about (McChesney, 1990). This is not to suggest, however, that just because advertisement companies paid broadcast stations to air their commercials, corporatised broadcast stations instantly became biased towards the views of their advertisers' wishes.

Roosevelt's New Deal enticed the United States public to enjoy more expenditure, thus creating a greater flow of money through the country. The New Deal came at a time between the World Wars, but the after effects of the Second World War certainly sealed the acceptance by the United States citizens of the New Deal. At the end of World War Two labour and consumer movements lost the battle to retain price control (Cohen, 2003). Price control fell into the hands of the federal government. This defeat anchored

the influence of the New Deal over the United States public. Essentially, the New Deal in the context of post World War Two inspired United States citizens to concentrate on rebuilding the economy, thus creating a sense in public life that sections of society were only valid if contributing to the economy. The effect of this public sentiment on non-profit broadcasting was devastating. Since the non-profit broadcasters were not working to make money and circulate that money back into the economy, this type of broadcasting was viewed socially as superfluous.

It is understandable, then that the later technology of television developed in a completely corporatised atmosphere. Television airwaves were thus owned by businesses, instead of given to the public.

The History of Media Ethics: The Codes

Journalistic codes, in accordance with the concepts of the fourth estate, have been established by the journalism and media institution so as to keep the business honest. However, these codes are limited in accomplishing the autonomy needed to create a fourth estate that truly can perform the duties (i.e. the watchdogs over society) it purports. As such, journalism, like all professions today, faces a barrier between the expected, structured behaviour outlined in ethical codes, and that of the realities involved in professional practice. The development of coded journalism ethics is founded in its history and that history depicts a professional ethical philosophy common in United States society. Essentially then, journalism codes developed at a time when philosophers believed (and many still believe today) that ethical behaviour can be shaped around a basic code of moral behaviour. In this way codes present a general guide for moral behaviour for professionals. However, the way in which these codes are actualised is a separate point entirely. After all, these codes deal with specific dilemmas within the field based upon the generalities made from the philosophies of journalism ethicists. Therefore, when actualised, these codes do not provide a guideline for everyday behaviour, as they can only be applied when the professional faces a difficult problem, issue or dilemma. Journalism is a much different profession than many other professions, in the fundamental sense that its client is the general public (or at least a section of the

general public), rather than a specific person. However, I will expand more thoroughly on these professional differences in my next chapter. Nevertheless, journalism in the late 1960's and early 1970's looked to structure its ethical practice like that of many other professions through the development and use of codes (while the development of codes date back to the 1920's, journalism began to widely employ these concepts in the 1960's). The roots of coded journalism not only coincide with the concepts and social ideologies found in the history of philosophical ethics, they progress and entangle with the developments of applied ethics (Chadwick, 1998)¹³.

The development of the journalistic code in the name of objectivity, while valid in its endeavour to create a more ethical profession, proves inaccurate and incapable of guiding a profession for which the codes do not apply. Basically, the codes as actualised do not guide the professional morally, as they cannot deal with journalism holistically. These codes merely address the problems of journalism and then offer a way to morally deal with such problems. Newspapers began, at this time, to value objectivity and the search for THE one single truth in every news story above all other types of news reporting. This attitude links directly with the culturally accepted philosophies of the time. During this period in journalism, the concepts of Descartes and his search for one essential truth in life to which all should aspire surfaced not only in the philosophical world, but also in the everyday lives and ideologies of the Western public. While Descartes lived in the 17th Century, his concepts are important to the development and understanding of society today. In addition to his importance as a highly regarded philosopher, as this thesis indicates, it is important to consider the social events and institution of today in the context of history. Descartes provides a philosophical basis for truth searching that has been employed by many philosophers of the day, and furthermore has been adapted into our own current society. Thus, this concept is known as practical reason or good thinking. Charles Taylor explains,

Good thinking is defined procedurally. Descartes offers a paradigm example of this with his model of clear and distinct thought. We end up with the assurance

¹³ I use this term, applied ethics, to describe a “general field of [ethical] study that includes all systematic efforts to understand and to resolve morale problems that arise in some domain of practical life” (Chadwick, 1998, 191).

that this will give us substantive truth, but only after we have gone through the argument of proving the existence of a veracious God. Correct thinking is not defined by substantial truth, because defining it is the prelude to raising the questions whether its results are trustworthy...

To make practical reason substantive implies that practical wisdom is a matter of seeing an order which in some sense is in nature. This order determines what ought to be done. To reverse this and give primacy to the agent's own desires or his will, while still wanting to give value to practical reason, you have to redefine this in procedural terms. If the right thing to do still has to be understood as what is rationally justifiable, then the justification has to be procedural. It can't be defined by the particular outcome, but by the way in which the outcome is arrived at.

This modern idea of freedom is the strongest motive for the massive shift from substantive to procedural justifications in the modern world.

(Taylor, 1989, 86)

This modern idea of freedom in journalism created a journalism that searched to procedurally present TRUTH in reporting, rather than substantively understanding the events of the story, the role of public to the story, the role of the media in reporting the story, and so on. Likewise, the push for objectivity after the fall of the partisan newspaper (rather the development of the objective voice as a result of the fall of the partisan newspaper) gained momentum in the practical field of journalism because the ideologies of the time coincide with the socially accepted philosophy of Descartes that truth is attained through the pursuit of rational, objective procedures. Reporting with an objective voice set the ground work for developing procedural codes in journalism, by which journalists could model their behaviour. However, as Taylor notes, a dedication to procedures means that regardless of the outcome the procedure must be maintained. In United States journalism, this dedication to codes or procedures has created an industry that no longer understands the substantive reasoning behind the implementation and description of the codes intended to guide journalistic moral behaviour.

Journalists as 'truth seekers' is a term that has derived directly from these very concepts. 'Truth,' in this sense, has become obtainable through procedural reporting and a commitment to coded behaviour, rather than an enduring understanding of journalism and

the search for truthful accounts of everyday occurrences. Consider the codes of journalism that advanced from practical reasoning. Truth, and the search thereof, are included in every ethical code in United States journalism: “Seek Truth and Report” says the Society of Professional Journalists (1996); the Radio-Television News Directors Association and Foundation reads, “Professional electronic journalists should: (a) Continuously seek the truth (b) Resist distortions that obscure the importance of events and (c) Clearly disclose the origin of information and label all material provided by outsiders” (2005c). This search for a basic, undeniable truth is enforced and dependant upon the journalist’s commitment to objectivity in reporting.

The emphasis on objectivity applied in the early 1930’s came at the cost of a socially responsible profession. The first attempt to integrate social responsibility into the (public) profession of journalism came to United States in 1942 with the Hutchins Commission (Merrill, 1999). The Hutchins Commission is the first account of United States journalism as providing social criticism with a social consciousness. The Hutchins Commission has five basic points for media responsibility; it reads:

1. *The media should provide a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day’s events in a context which gives them meaning*
2. *The media should serve as a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism.*
3. *The media should project a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society.*
4. *The media should present and clarify the goals and values of the society.*
5. *The media should provide full access to the day’s intelligence.*

(1947, 20-29)

With these five points it is clear that the Hutchins Commission provided the initial set of broad guidelines to challenge journalists into understanding and acting upon the social responsibility that is linked to this public profession. The basic principles provide an outline for publicly orientated responsibility on the part of the journalist. Furthermore, the Hutchins Commission set these guidelines with a clear awareness of the media’s public duty. However, these guidelines and ideals advanced by the Hutchins Commission were ignored and were buried in the history of United States journalism for many reasons. The most prominent reason for this being the emphasis that modern thinking

provided for United States society as previously discussed. In other words, modern thought set the precedent for practical reasoning and procedural morality. Furthermore, society in the United States emphasised the importance of individualism. This emphasis comes as the result of a politically fragmented society, as defined by Smith:

Political fragmentation may be driven by an atomistic outlook, that is, by a conception of society as an aggregate of individuals with no common purposes and only their own particular interest and life plans. This denies the very existence of a shared political community.

(Smith, 2002, 170)

The politically fragmented society that was the United States society in this era stressed logical thought and procedural morality and devalued the efforts of Hutchins Commission to pull journalism toward a sense of social obligation. In other words, since objectivity and the search for the ultimate truth became the professional duty of the journalist, creating guidelines for social responsibility was deemed unnecessary. After all, as modern rationality contends, if journalists act as truth seekers and they only report those things that are objectively observable, then they automatically serve the public. Thus, the necessity to orient the profession publicly is void, since truth seekers necessarily work to promote the good of the public. It is because of this type of reasoning that codes today restrict their focus to that of the dilemma as opposed to the larger scope problems that face United States journalists. Clearly, these codes also address problems ostensibly wrong with the practices of journalism, yet fail to recognize the root issues with some of the shared ideologies within the profession. The codes found in journalism today are a direct result of modern ethical philosophy. Consider ethical understanding as explained by Taylor. Just as Taylor suggests, such ethical guidance does not truly work to heal the social undercurrents that create the professional dilemmas that these codes address. However, understanding the profession ontologically requires that the profession be considered in the context of its society, history, institutional standing, and ideology. In this sense, the codes are deficient in holistically understanding the profession and therefore cannot work to mend the profession. Rather, codes can merely work to guide ethical behaviour with a limited understanding of why such problems occur. However, there are good aspects of the code in journalism. For example, because of coding

behaviour, journalism has become more 'professional'. The codes warrant professionalism, and therefore have given a name to the profession of journalism. Furthermore, in a sense, these codes give a sense of duty to the profession of journalism. Regardless of whether or not this duty is actualised, the sentiment is there. The concept of the code, in these respects, will be further considered in following chapters.

The Current Media

The media is always in a constant pendulum swing between censored and free, as such the current role of the media as the Fourth Estate is primarily in remission. While great journalism has occurred in recent years, the overall state of journalism as the Fourth Estate is in somewhat of a decline. In fact just thirty years ago, a major censoring event occurred in mainstream media. The *New York Times* published information they received from a forty-seven paged report that were a part of papers collected from the Pentagon. These papers showed the US involvement in Vietnam. The US government shut down the publications of both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* (after the *Washington Post* published articles from the same information) for two weeks. Eventually the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the *New York Times*, and the paper began publishing again. However, only after the government censored the papers for two weeks. Furthermore, the Supreme Court decision was merely a 6-3 vote in favour. This hardly points to a conclusive defence of the First Amendment (Nelson and Dwight, 1973, 49-57).

In U.S. media today, we are faced with loads of information and endless information on the Internet, and an overload of 24 hour news. Furthermore, broadcast news in terms of mainstream media is ever so important. However, it is impossible to understand how broadcast is today without understanding the history of U.S. print media.

With that said, today the media extends far beyond the boundaries of United States. In the current media situation six very large conglomerates control the global media (Williams, 2003). Additionally, the Internet has created a communication means far beyond any other type of technology used for communication. As such, media today are

faster, more accessible, and more abundant than ever before. Even if a person tried to consciously escape all media outlets it would prove a difficult task. In a time when such abundance of media exists, it seems that the media and the journalists within the media should be working for the public's approval and thus working to create better news, with solid coverage of events. However, the media today, in competition, are not working for the betterment of the media in such terms. The media corporations today compete for advertisers and increased audience ratings. Competition in the media industry has created a profusion of media, but has failed to create an abundance of quality news in the mainstream media sphere. Thus, the United States media, owned by global forces, faces a time when quantity far exceeds quality. The history of United States media shows that at one stage in United States history the role of journalism and the media were respected and regarded as a necessity for political and democratic deliberation within the public sphere. However, today that is not the case. The challenge today is that the media must regain the trust of the public and restore the severed tie between the media and its political public. To regain this trust and to restore this tie, the current journalistic status quo must be rejected and replaced with quality media. To do such a task involves radical change: the type of change that I will discuss in my following chapters.

Accepting this Historical Account

It is understandable that one's view of the history of journalism will certainly shape one's view of possible suggestions for reform. Journalist Michael Schudson makes this very point in an article concerned with the misunderstanding of United States journalistic history. In this article, he points to five basic mistakes that many historians make about journalism:

1. *the assumption that the media always are central to a historical event or process*
2. *the assumption that commercial forces always have a corrupting influence on the journalism practice*
3. *the tendency to reduce complex events to technological or economical explanations*
4. *the acceptance of the view that journalism is in a constant state of decline*
5. *the assumption that the news media came into existence because they served a popular need*

(Schudson, 1997)

Regarding the first of Schudson's issues in conjunction with my account of the history of United States journalism, it is clear that the media are not the central issue in many of the historical milestones discussed in this chapter. However, because the media are the immediate means by which the public can interpret issues throughout history, they do play a central role. Throughout history the media, as I have shown, did provide the basis for public information gathering. It is therefore understandable that the media maintains a central role in history whether or not it is vital to the specific 'event or process'. Moving on to Schudson's second point I must admit that my account of journalism history does not paint a completely supportive picture of the role of commercial forces in the media. However, commercial or private media, if still concerned with the wants and needs of the public, can provide solid news. Furthermore, the type of news that each corporatised media outlet portrays is not of great concern. What *is* of concern, involves an entire country with multiple mainstream media outlets, and no truly public broadcast station. In the case of the United States media, and specifically so in the case of broadcast media, commercial forces have worked to solidify and globalize the media, which is satisfactory for a corporation in the business of selling an audience. However, because of the constantly changing nature of democracy, media as purely a business could be improved if competition of the non-profit sort were implemented. Moving on to Schudson's third issue, he attacks the oversimplification of historical events. While this point is valid, it should be understood that the turning point for many historical events occur around key issues, and specifically around economic and technological events. In the case of journalistic advancement, United States journalism would be very different if radio and television were never created. The invention of broadcast media was not just a technological advancement for journalism; it was a complete transformation for the societal institution. Undeniably, other factors contributed to the change in United States journalism at the time; however the technological advancement was the basis for such change. Schudson's fourth point, 'accepting the view that journalism is in a constant state of decline,' is a valid point. And I do not wish to suggest that the media is in a constant state of decline. But democracy is about improvement, and since the nature of American democracy is changing, it could be improved with the aid of a media outlet designed to involve the mass public in democratic deliberation. My outline of the history

of U.S. journalism here is not to illustrate a declining media, but rather a changing media and a changing democracy. Perhaps scholarly journals and some higher levels of journalism are peaking. However, since the mass public do not utilize such media on a regular basis its success cannot represent the overall condition of journalism. And furthermore, the media in the United States is not considered all that 'free'. According to the 2004 Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) index, a Paris based press freedom watchdog (the English translation is Reporters Without Borders), United States journalism is ranked 23rd in the world for its free media. Ostensibly, this is a decent rating. However when United States journalism in Iraq is considered, that ranking falls to a very low 108 (Siemienowicz and Schoales, 2005). Even the ranking of 23 is low for a country that prides itself on free speech. The changing nature of democracy and media is of concern when we consider that the U.S. mainstream media is not deemed entirely 'free'. Finally, Schudson's last point is applicable. Journalism did not come 'to be' because of a popular need. However, United States journalism has a place in United States society because of its historical democratic roots. Thus, while United States journalism may not exist because of a popular need, it does exist because of a democratic one. Schudson's five points about recounting the history of United States journalism conflict with some of the views as I have expressed them in this chapter. However, the compelling point that emerges by discussing Schudson's concepts is that the history of journalism in the United States is a very complex one and it should not be over-simplified for the sake of making claims about current society. However, I believe that my historical account of United States journalism is not guilty of over-simplifying and, therefore, can provide a solid basis for the argument of my thesis.

Conclusion

The changing nature of liberal democracy creates a stronger public need for the present U.S. media. Such a role is anchored within its historical origins to the Fourth Estate. However, that role has been limited, has been in remission, with other significant influences on the media's later historical evolution – influences such as advertising, corporatization, government censorship and a distinctive notion of truth and objectivity.

The ultimate aim in this chapter was to inform the reader of the history of the media in relation to the development of the Fourth Estate in liberal democracy.

With that said, understanding the history of journalism in the United States is a key element to understanding current journalism. For example, the “embedded journalist,” a term coined during the current Iraqi War, to cover war correspondents mimics that of packaged news that any company working to sell its product would produce. Infotainment has journalism historians and critics concerned (despite the fact that sensualized journalism has existed since the days of the penny press). The public turn from politics to a softer sort of news is additionally worrisome. Equally worrisome are many of the ineffective efforts to mend the declining state of mainstream media. Essentially, journalism, like many current professions, has been ethically coded. The journalist is provided with various rules on the do’s and don’ts of journalism behaviour. However, in today’s media, employing codes that can only deal with micro-journalism is not helpful to the overall macro-journalism that must be considered if reformation is to occur. The current development of the media and United States journalists will be analysed thoroughly in my next chapter.

When considering the current condition of the media today in the United States, it is apparent that the media may well benefit from further reform. This reform is born out of the understanding that the United States media and democracy have an inherent tie to one another. In this chapter, I have discussed the heritage of this entanglement; in my next chapter I will discuss the current state of United States journalism and consider how it has deviated from its democratic roots.

Chapter Four Summary

As the title indicates, this chapter aims to provide a basis for understanding the context of U.S. journalism by tracing through its history. Essentially, the concept of understanding the current state of an institution and using its developments to suggest ways in which to positively look to change is a Taylorian one.

As such the chapter outlines the development of media beginning with the invention of the printing press and highlighting the differences in development between those things

that occurred in Europe compared to what was named the New World at the time, and eventually became the United States. The differences of importance reveal that the United States (or what came to be the United States) created a perfect pallet for new ideas allowing for a more complete break from tradition than what was seen in Europe.

Moving into the Colonial Ages, this freedom gave birth to ideologies within the American society of the common man governing, or a government run by its people as opposed to a more powerful centralized governing system. It was in this era and in many ways because of this ideology that the U.S. media created the role of the media as the Fourth Estate in a democratic nation.

The chapter continues to trace through history by discussing the development and importance (to this thesis) of the First Amendment of the Constitution. It then traces through various examples of the polarized relationship that has been indicative of the media in America throughout its history. This relationship swings from a great deal of press freedom to government (and eventually big business) censorship.

The chapter then works through the business of journalism, its development during the civil war, and the censorship that occurred and prolonged through this era and into the next era; Journalism as a Capitalistic Business.

This next section details the creation of a media capable of reaching national audiences. Thus, a solidification of voices in the media occurs. Furthermore, the invention of broadcast media has added to this solidification. However, the Internet in recent years has worked to combat some of this solidification. This section then leads into the developments of the code in journalism to prevent some of the negatives aspects of the profession. However, in linking the concepts from the previous chapter to this one, I aim to show that such developments as codes to dictate ethical behavior in a profession are inept.

Thus, as the chapter concludes, the media today is a big business with various outlets for the public to access. Its heritage is founded in its role as the Fourth Estate and its role as an institution in society. Furthermore, the role of the journalist has developed in dilemmic manner (just, as the previous chapter highlights, as the media). Finally, the chapter looks to find ways in which the media can reconnect some of its fundamental concepts, as the media alongside democracy has been changing. But the media can look to support the changing nature of democracy for its citizens.

Chapter Five

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNALIST

Introduction

At the conclusion of the previous chapter I briefly alluded to the current state of United States journalism. This chapter deals directly with the type of journalism that the United States employs today. In discussing current United States journalism, the very profession of journalism must be considered. Therefore, this section delves into an in-depth analysis of the ethical coding of journalism to shape the profession. The journalistic ethical code not only shaped and set the boundaries for the development of ethical thought and behaviour within journalism in the United States; it also contributed to the very concept of the professional role of the journalist in United States society. As such, the journalist, as briefly mentioned in my previous chapter, is unlike most other professions. Its role in public life differs from other professions as does its professional duties. Journalism can (and must in some aspects) be compared to other professions, but it must also be considered within a different sphere for its ethical responsibilities in society. Therefore, when using the criteria for professionalism established by various respected professional ethicists and philosophers, journalism can be considered a special-type of profession, at best. Nevertheless, the mass media aids democratic public involvement. And democracy is currently changing in the United States. Therefore, those professionals that facilitate the mass media, journalists, should be ethically considered in order to work toward a media that better suits the changing nature of democracy.

The responsibility of journalism in a democratic state that is changing calls for a responsible professional. That is to say reform within the industry needs facilitators. Specifically, if this profession is to change at all it must be led by those who understand journalism, the media, democracy and the role that journalist's can play in informing the public. Additionally, the journalist capable of creating institutional change must understand how each of these aspects is embedded in society, culture and history. Such a responsibility demands a professional. Journalists bring the information to the public

because the public do not gather their information on their own (refer to my previous discussion in Chapter One on the concepts of the 'onlooker' public).

Understandably, the concept of the professional is one that stems from modernity. And while my thesis rejects much of modern thought, modernity is nevertheless an important and socially determining aspect of United States culture. The role of a professional in society is deeply embedded in cultural understanding. The idea of a profession incorporates many aspects requiring that the professional act responsibly to his/her duties publicly and with individual clients. While media reform requires radical change in society, it does not require a change so radical that the concepts of a professional, moreover the concepts of a professional journalist, are lost in implementing a truly public broadcast system. Therefore, because of the cultural understanding of professionals, journalism must work to act professionally and provide its clients with the necessary information to inspire democratic deliberation. However, defining journalism as a profession is difficult, after all journalism differs greatly from other professions.

The Professionalism of Journalism Today

Given that the professional journalist is needed in society, journalism must also be shown as a profession before pragmatic suggestions to the moral reformation of journalism and the media can be considered seriously. Today, many ethicists have developed theories concerning the nature of professionalism (see May, 1989, Koehn, 1994, Langford, 1978). In the style of such ethicists, I will evaluate the professionalism of journalism. Specifically, the journalist as a professional can be more thoroughly analysed when the professional breakdown provided by Glenn Langford (1978) is considered. While Langford discusses the professionalism of teaching, the framework he uses can be directly applied to the professionalism of journalism. Furthermore, Langford, as a social philosopher, in the initial section (the only section from which I reference) of his book seeks to give a philosophical account of a profession (i.e. it forms on the characteristics of any practice as a professional). Therefore, I will use Langford's analysis as a general guideline for professionalism, and specifically for my purposes, I will relate his philosophies to that of journalism. Langford breaks professionalism into six categories.

They are “(1) payment, (2) knowledge, (3) responsibility and purpose, (4) the professional idea of service, (5) unity and (6) recognition” (Langford, 1978, 5). Applying Langford’s initial heading of payment corresponds with the professionalism of journalism as journalists are paid for their reporting, editing, and so forth. Amateur journalists or members of the public that submit opinion articles or correction pieces are not usually paid for their services. Yet, if a member of the public or an amateur journalist obtains a newsworthy video/photograph or writes a relevant article, then he/she could possibly be paid for these services. In other words, any person, because of freedom of speech can publish articles, or provide video coverage of an event, but the journalist has a public duty to inform and communicate necessary information to help citizens run and work within a democratic society. Unfortunately, most journalists feel that increased press ‘responsibility leads to obligations and duties and that these in turn tend to restrict press freedom,” (Merrill, 1999, 34). However, the journalist should have a sense of duty and obligation for the profession. As Langford notes, receiving payment for a job is not merely about obtaining money since,

The receipt of payment is one side of a contract or bargain, the other side of which is the performance of the services contracted for. A professional teacher [or journalist] is not simply one who does as a matter of fact teach [or report] but also one who has a duty to teach [or report]

(Langford, 1978, 6)

The duty or payment incurred, in the case of journalism, is that of deliberation, a public service as required by the purpose of the profession in a knowledgeable and responsible manner. The contract between the journalist and his/her client, the public, requires that the journalist provide information to the public. That is to say, where any citizen can submit a report of publication at various times in various media outlets, the journalist is (metaphorically) professionally contracted to do so by the public. If journalists are professionally obliged to provide information to the public, then we must consider what information meets this requirement.

To answer this question the discussion must move on to Langford’s second category, knowledge and skills. Journalists must have esoteric knowledge and skills to inform the public. Esoteric knowledge in this sense can be described as the type of knowledge one

can acquire through study or practical work in the area. This knowledge comes in the form of superior research skills and a dedication to the purpose of the profession. The professional journalist must not only know how to report the story, layout the newspaper, air the broadcast, and so forth, the professional journalist must also know why it is necessary to publicly inform. As Langford notes,

In general, the tradesman or technician knows how to do what needs to be done and, very often, what needs to be done; but may not know why it should be done...The knowledge and skill required for a profession, therefore include whatever theoretical knowledge is available. Such knowledge can be acquired only through study and training over a period of years.

(Langford, 1978, 8-9)

The modern journalist usually attends university and obtains a journalism degree to achieve this higher level of professional knowledge needed to understand the purpose of this profession. However, not all journalists need degrees to begin a career in journalism, and furthermore, many United States journalists today do not understand the public duty that journalism must perform in order to maintain a healthy democracy. In this sense, journalism today has become more of a trade and less of a profession. However the need for professional journalists in democratic journalism is undeniable. As such, journalists should endeavour to obtain theoretical knowledge concerning their profession and their role in democracy. This step would not only make journalism more professional, it would help to make create a media that could aid the changing nature of democracy.

The necessity of theoretical understanding for professionalism leads into Langford's next topic on professionalism, responsibility and purpose. Langford breaks responsibility into four separate topics. I will show how each of these topics applies to United States journalism. Responsibility as an agent, in terms of professional importance, flushes out the importance of people as agents acting or making things happen (Langford, 1978). People have beliefs about situations and are aware of their roles as agents in situations. Therefore, people must be responsible in this sense in "acting on, rather than in simply reacting to, the situation in which they find themselves" (Langford, 1978, 12). This concept relates directly to journalists in that journalists should take responsibility for the stories they write, in the style they write them. However, in United States journalism

today, because of objectivity, journalists often understand stories as events that they observationally take note of and then report strictly upon the facts of those observations. In other words, journalists today do not take responsibility as agents, they deny that they take action in these events, and merely see reporting as a reaction to the public happenings. However, if journalists were to heed responsibility in this sense, it would create a better public and professional awareness of the journalist's (and the media's) role in society.

Furthermore, journalists should maintain social responsibility. All persons, professional or not, have social requirements and participate in society in a responsible manner (Langford, 1978). The professional journalist must respect his/her social responsibility as any other professional or member the public must do so. However, the social responsibility of a journalist is somewhat greater than most professional requirements. The journalist is democratically linked to the public, as I demonstrated in my chapters on the changing nature of democracy and the nature of the media problem (Chapter Two and Three respectively), and therefore must commit and perform the necessary requirements of this prevalent social responsibility. Simply put, the journalist has the professional duty to provide information to the public. Aspects of this information are pertinent to public deliberation, therefore the journalist must provide information that pertains to political governance so as to keep democratic public deliberation thriving. To deny this social responsibility is to compromise the requirements of the profession. Furthermore, the journalist cannot merely be a responsible professional in a context separate from his/her social responsibilities, considering that the journalist's primary client is the public. Certainly in the journalism *industry* today the media has another client, the advertiser, but the public and democratically aligned journalism is primarily concerned with a public client. And although the advertiser is primarily the client for the industry of journalism and the media, it is not the defining client of the journalist. Nevertheless, the relation between the journalist and the media industry is an intertwining one, therefore causing conflict for the professional journalist within the industry. As such, the professional journalist should serve and inspire trust with his/her client: the public. Likewise, the professional journalist must "...publicly pledge themselves to render assistance to those

in need [of information] and as a consequence have special responsibilities or duties not incumbent upon others who have not made this pledge” (Koehn, 1994, 56). The ideal of journalism as a profession expresses a commitment to an ideal of service for the public, an ideal that from its historical origins has seen that service as centrally linked to notions of the public good, and as a consequence, a role for the media in being a critical advocate in protecting and enhancing that good. This concept of the good can be extended to communal professionalism. To understand communal professionalism consider, as one example, the profession of medicine. Doctors have a responsibility to other doctors in the name of enhancing research, discoveries and various practices within the profession. A doctor’s commitment to this responsibility is seen through the various journals, seminars and so forth that are organized so as to bring doctors together, as communal professionals. Furthermore and contributing to communal professionalism, professional doctors have a responsibility to developing, aspiring doctors. It is for this reason that medical students must complete a year of residency in an actual hospital with patients under the scope of a doctor. In this way, professional doctors are doing their share to enrich the future condition of their profession.

When considering communal professionalism through the example I have provided, consider that journalism does not have this same type of communal responsibility and could possibly benefit from creating space that could allow for a communal responsibility on the part of journalists and aspiring journalists.

Additionally, journalists need not only to be responsible to their duty, and to their public, but they must remain responsible people. That is to do “what he should simply because he sees that he should. There is no need, therefore, either for someone else to see that he does what he should or for any other form of external pressure such as a system of sanctions” (Langford, 1978, 13). Langford is asserting that the professional should be a responsible person from an internal commitment to being a responsible person. And if the professional were trained to do so, then implementing a system of sanctions (or coded moral behaviour) is largely superfluous. Though I have already established the history of

the journalistic code, I will discuss coded journalistic ethics and their inadequacies in the next section of this chapter.

The final correlation between responsibility and professionalism that Langford discusses is that of responsibility for a purpose. Essentially, this entails that the profession provides a sense of purpose to the job through the good or the telos of the practice. All people committed to the profession (albeit reporters, editors, anchor-people, etc) must agree to this purpose and work toward this good that is laid down by the traditions of the practice, for society's well-being. If this purpose is not agreed upon and understood by all members of the profession, then there is no motivation for those people within the profession to perform in ways that supersede the minimal amount of work needed to receive pay (Langford, 1978, 14-15). In the case of the journalist, he/she must understand the narrative of the newspaper, magazine, station, and so forth and also must understand the purpose of journalism in United States society. When the journalist does not agree with the view points and overall goals or purposes of the industry or social institution for which he/she works, then his/her reporting would merely be a service or a trade to the company provided for payment. This type of responsibility, for the journalist, links back to responsibility as agents. In the same way that the journalist has view points and is not purely an objective unattached observer, so do media industries. If these viewpoints do not correspond, or if the media industry is vague in its claim to purpose, then the journalist cannot report in a way that motivates the journalist to regard the responsibility to the purpose of his/her professional job. However, since journalism today has difficulty admitting to any purpose (other than to objectively report issues) this responsibility to purpose is often overlooked. Journalism today certainly has a long road to improvement in terms of its professional dedication to responsibility as it fails in each of the four aspects outlined here. However, its failure to be responsible is no reason to exempt journalism from professionalism. Its failure is a reason to re-evaluate the current condition of journalism.

Moreover, the journalistic ideal of service must also be professionally re-evaluated. The ideal of service demands that the professional has a commitment to duty that extends

beyond the contractual duty of the employer. The professional must be committed to provide his/her service for the sake of advancing those people that benefit from the professional service (Langford, 1978). In journalistic terms, the ideal of service demands that the journalist commits to informing the public for the sake of raising awareness and feeding public deliberation, and not because in doing so the journalist will receive advancement in any other fashion, such as a promotion, better pay, more exposure as a popular journalist, and so forth. This concept is also deficient in journalism today. While journalists may have the public in mind when reporting to a certain degree, the heightened level of journalistic falsehoods, resource fabrication or short-cutting to make deadlines is testimony to journalists that fail to realize the importance of commitment to the ideal of service, and instead look to advance their personal position.

Furthermore, journalists must also commit not only to their sense of service to the public, but also to other journalists and to the media industry as a whole. As Langford explains, “The members of a profession not only, individually, adopt professional purposes; they also adopt the same purposes and, moreover, realise that they share the same purposes and co-operate with one another in order to achieve them,” (Langford, 1978, 17). In this respect, professional journalists should work together to achieve maximum service: informing the public to fuel deliberation. Journalists should therefore report on a wide range of issues so as to provide the public with various stories with a wide range. However, in journalism today many news industries cover the same issues. Separate newspaper companies often have the same headlining stories, as do the news broadcast stations. In this sense, journalists and media industries are much more competitive rather than co-operative. By co-operative I am referring to the need of reciprocity within the profession as a whole. If journalists in the mainstream media worked with each other to make sure that various kinds of news and reporting were readily and conveniently available for the common citizen, then broadcast stations that air nightly news would not look exactly the same, with the same information (except the commercial line-up).

Finally, the professional must be recognised as a profession not only by other professionals, but also by the community (Langford, 1978). In the case of journalism,

journalists must be understood as professionals in their field by other journalists and by the public. Today, while journalists within the industry may regard one another professionally, the public generally mistrust journalists. This mistrust leads to a feeling of pointlessness for journalism in the minds of the public. Since the public does not trust journalists that perform their jobs, then their role in society is considered unnecessary. After all, if a journalist that reports to provide information to the public, but the information he/she reports is disregarded, then the social necessity of such a profession is unneeded. Therefore, the professional journalist in a democratic society must work to rebuild this trust so as to give recognition to the profession.

While the United States journalist of today may not always reach the professional expectations that Langford has outlined here, the journalist nevertheless has the potential to become a professional. The contents of journalism practiced today and the pressures that are placed upon it by corporatisation, advertising, government censorship, etc... (as suggested in the previous chapter) mean that meeting the standards of good professional journalism is often difficult.

A Sanction-less System: the Journalistic Code

Journalism today, as lacking in its professional attributes, does not denote a socially responsible journalist. Rather, it indicates a journalist that is morally bound by procedural codes. The notion of professional ethics presupposes the notion of a profession (which, as the Langford discussion indicates, is a social phenomenon). However, codes tend to operate at the level of guiding or sanctioning *individual* behaviour. Thus, in themselves, these codes weld individuals together as professionals in a profession. Indeed, they may actually function to mislead – to suggest that individuals constitute a profession when they actually do not. As Langford points out, to be a professional is to become a member of a social group in which things are shared. One can, as an individual, subscribe to a code, but not share with others these collegial aspects. The atomism emerging from modernity is a key influence in such a dedication to the codes of professional ethics.

In the case of journalism, these codes are, therefore, not totally successful in maintaining the professional ethically. By the 1960's journalism was coded in every possible way. Journalists made different codes for newspapers, magazines, newsletters, radio, television (and eventually online news). Similarly, codes were developed by a society of editors: The American Society of Newspaper Editors. The Society of Professional Journalism established its authority and created a code to which all journalists should adhere. Furthermore, each individual newspaper/magazine began writing their own mission statements followed by their individual set of ethical codes to which each of their journalists/reporters/editors should abide. These efforts could be seen as efforts by the industry to establish a purpose of journalists. Furthermore, the codes seek to shape individual practice according to generalized norms, but fail to link such guidelines (a) to an account of journalism as a specific kind of practice and (b) to an account of the purpose of the profession as contributing to the good. The result is a code of ethics and a sense of professional identity that is constructed around procedure requirements for the good life rather than a substantive account of the good and, thus, how the profession as a social practice serves to articulate, protect and enhance that good.

As such, in spite of the flourishing of journalistic codes, many of the codes failed to have an impact on many journalists. In an article about the *Tampa Tribune's* (a newspaper in Tampa, Florida) ethics code, the Executive Editor and Vice President of the paper, Gil Thelen, was quoted, "Crudely put, the risk we run on the downside of readership credibility is a bigger risk to me than the risk of having an ethics policy used against us in court" (Fitzgerald, 1999, 10). Furthermore, when these codes were originally developed, many companies did not want the codes published, as publishing them would cause a sense of commitment to maintain them. Moreover, newspapers did not want to be held accountable for the mistakes that were made, especially if those mistakes were specifically outlined in a set of codes established by the news organisation (Fitzgerald, 1999, 10). Certainly today the codes continue to be published and more and more companies feel the need to "adopt and publicise ethics codes to underscore their commitment to fairness and integrity" (Fitzgerald, 1999, 10). However, publicising an ethics code is quite different from abiding by it or being sanctioned for violating it.

Furthermore, publishing an ethics code is also quite different from being ethical. To better understand the mentality of journalists created by the coded ethics, a breakdown of the staple journalistic code is necessary.

While there are many codes, broadly speaking they all address the following values on commitments:

1. A search for truth
2. Completeness in writing, reporting, and editing
3. Conflict of interest: do not write stories about issues to which the journalist is emotionally (or in any way) attached.
4. Freedom, independence and self esteem (of the journalist and the company)
5. Honesty
6. Be respectful of privacy and honour those involved in the reporting (albeit the subject of the story or the sources)

In some instances, journalism ethics codes have become a thing for news agencies to 'post' and publicize in an effort to make their news industries appear ethical. That is to say, it is difficult, in some cases for the industry to truly inspire journalists to comply with the standards of these codes. However, in a positive light, these ethical standards are each created with a sense of public duty. And the widespread commitment of journalists and companies to codes, and their inherent ideas of services, logically allows for, even leads to, the kind of professional space for a truly public broadcasting station. In effect, the commitment to professionalism supports the argument for an independent publicly funded broadcast station. Furthermore, regardless of the current success or failure of these codes, the fact that they exist pinpoint an ethical sentiment within the industry. And implementing a publicly funded broadcast station could further facilitate and actualize this sentiment within the journalism business.

Consider the Society of Professional Journalists Ethical code. It states,

1. *Seek Truth and Report It*
2. *Minimize Harm*
3. *Act Independently*
4. *Be Accountable*

(2004c, 1)

A journalism code, such as this one negotiates with ethical behaviour in a dilemma-orientated fashion. This type of ethical boundary setting is distinguished by the conception that behaviour norms can first be established and then guidelines can be created to direct the behaviours in a morally or ethically fashion (Mount, 1990). Coded journalistic ethics assumes first and foremost that a problem exists, and ethical behaviour (or the parameters set to guide ethical behaviour) comes from helping a person (or a professional) to choose the 'correct' action in response to this dilemma. Using the Society of Professional Journalists code from above, "Seek Truth and Report It" deals with the dilemma of being an honest journalist versus lying in stories or fabricating sources. The concept of "Minimize Harm" hinges upon the assumption that reporting stories can, in some way, harm an individual or the public. Likewise, "Act Independently" deals with the journalists' problem with autonomy. Finally, "Be Accountable" assumes the problem of reporting and publishing stories without an awareness of the results that could occur from publishing the article. Each of these four journalistic 'truisms' needs a problem to remedy in order to guide ethical behaviour. This conception of ethics as being concerned with making right judgements when faced with difficult or dilemmic choices is constant with the dominant philosophical account of both professional ethics and applied ethics.

Ethics codes in journalism and other businesses encompass an entire moral philosophy. They form ideals to which all professionals should adhere, and then look to the dilemma as case situations that happen within the profession. This type of ethical approach is strongly evident in applied ethics. Applied ethics, according to its encyclopaedic definition, is;

a general field of study that includes all systematic efforts to understand and to resolve moral problems that arise in some domain of practical life, as with medicine, journalism, or business, or in connection with some general issue of social concern, such as employment equity or capital punishment. There are today three major subdivisions of applied ethics: biomedical ethics, concerned with ethical issues in medicine and biomedical research; business and professional ethics, concerned with issues arising in the context of business, including that of multinational corporations; and environmental ethics, concerned with our relations and obligations to future generations, to nonhuman animals and species, and to ecosystems and the biosphere as a whole.

(Winkler, 1998, 192)

It is applied ethics concerned with *business and professional ethics* in which the discussion of journalism ethics codes lays. This approach to applied ethics constitutes the dominant paradigm in current ethical discussions (Isaacs, 2004). Again, I am referring to the concepts of ethics *in* a profession as opposed to the ethics *of* a profession. Applied ethics, like the coded ethics found in journalism today, are dilemma-oriented and thus analyze only the ethics within the coded framework of the profession. However, ethics *of* the profession creates a more holistic outlook on the profession and forces ethical analyses to consider the profession more broadly.¹⁴ Essentially, applied ethics allows for an ethical conversation only when a problem occurs. Additionally, it assumes aspects of the very nature of (human or) professional behavior. As Peter Isaacs and David Massey, suggest, “In the philosophical view, applied ethics as a human interest and practice is born at the appraisive stage¹⁵ and is generated by the ethical problematic inherent in the situation being confronted” (Massey and Isaacs, 1994, 3).

Each code, for each facet of journalism makes assumptions concerning both dilemma-orientated issues and the nature of the journalistic institution. Examples of these assumptions are endless. The applied ethics of journalism is essentially weak as a result of these unfounded assumptions. In using the term ‘weak’ I am stressing that a coded journalism, or the use of applied ethics in journalism, is not totally void of ethical rationale and function. Rather, journalism that follows codes is much weaker than a journalism that understands its position, influence and capabilities in society. Yet, a difficulty arises in bringing awareness to the weakness of these codes. Practically speaking, journalists throughout the United States admit to the shortcomings of the codes

¹⁴ These concepts concerning the ethics in versus ethics of were thoroughly discussed in Chapter Two.

¹⁵ According to Isaacs and Massey (1994) this stage is the starting point for the type of applied ethics that encompasses the approach of; ‘guiding an individual in seeking to answer the question **what** ought I to do?’ when faced with a problem, issue or dilemma of practical urgency. This approach emphasises the deliberative or appraisive nature of applied ethics and incorporates as well other critical assumptions regarding the applied ethics agenda, notably its *individualistic* orientation and its reduction of ethical situations to problems of an intellectual kind, i.e. human situations are reinterpreted as intellectual problems, albeit philosophical problems.

when faced with a dilemma that cannot be solved by merely applying these codes. Yet, theoretically, journalistic codes have been established within the industry and within society from an understanding of logic and rationality. They, like the modern philosophers that introduced this type of reasoning, appear unquestionable because of the innate emphases on logic used to create these codes (Isaacs, 2004).

It is reasonable to suggest, then, that the concepts of logic and reason that grew out of modernity not only affected, but shaped, the very foundations of ethical sensitivity within current news media. With this understood, it is also reasonable that journalism continues to progress with the concepts that have now developed from the ideas of reason and logic as ultimate providers for ethical behaviour. However, this type of ethical reasoning creates serious ethical questions concerning the problems *within* (as opposed to *about*) the profession of journalism. Essentially, practical logic creates an acceptance of coded moral behaviour, thus creating an infallible system by which the codes can operate. Regardless of the outcome, the perfect procedure should maintain ethical professionalism within the journalistic industry. In the case of United States journalism, the outcome or the 'good' is considered as the information offered to the public and the procedure is ethically bound to the type of code outlined above (Taylor, 1995). Therefore, by practical rationale, if all journalists behave according to these codes, then whatever 'good' occurs from their behaviour is beneficial to society. Yet, as Taylor explains, this type of moral reasoning is inadequate;

Where the 'good' means the primary goal of a consequentialist theory, where the right is decided simply by its instrumental significance for this end, then we ought indeed to insist that the right can be primary to the good. But where we use 'good'...where it means whatever is marked out as higher by a qualitative distinction, then we could say that the reverse is the case, that in a sense, the good is always primary to the right. Not in that it offers a more basic reason...but in that the good is what, in articulation, gives the point of the rules which define the right.

(Taylor, 1995, 89)

Taylor's point here can be illustrated when considering United States journalism. The 'good' that journalism offers to society is understood as the information offered to the public. This concept still exists in United States journalism today. The journalistic codes

set to maintain this good failed to keep this inherency apparent within the profession as the purpose for journalists in a democratic society. Therefore, the procedure by which journalism was created failed, and thus the good is no longer considered in its proper context. Taylor's point in the previous quote is that in order for the right to maintain the good, the good must be considered as a substantive value that stands apart from considerations of 'the right' as procedural value. This concept further demonstrates a point I made earlier in this chapter, that point being the intention of creating codes within an industry. Specifically, while journalism codes try to shape the behaviour of individual journalists, through generalizing normal patterns of ethical behaviour, such generalizations fail to link the specific practices of the journalists to the guidelines and fail to consider the overall contribution of the profession of journalism to the notion of the good life within society. As such, journalism, as a profession with coded ethical behaviour that is shaped around procedure that encompasses concepts of the good, but when actualised fails to enrich the good within society.

For example, freedom of speech and the freedom of press are vital to any journalist's identity. These are the first elements of professional formula explored by any budding journalists. They are the backbone to journalism justification whenever any behaviour, moral decision, or problem is at hand. However, the original understanding of press freedom, when this freedom was granted by the United States Constitution, referred to the freedom that the *people* were granted to use the press in any manner they pleased to express public views, or private views for that matter. However, in the United States today, press freedom has come to mean the freedom of the companies that own the press to use the incredible power of communicating with the mass public in whatever way they see fit. Although the procedure was established and the good was in sight, United States journalism has deviated from original purpose in society. Thus, the coded professional journalist today does not perform his/her professional duties properly, because the right is not considered in the context of the good. The context of the good, for the journalist, requires the public, because the profession of journalism cannot exist without the role of the public.

A Public Professional

In an ideal democracy the public is well-informed on governmental issues and processes and participates in public debate. Likewise, a model democracy is one in which public information stands free from governmental control. Where other government systems may openly use the media to manipulate public opinion, democracy was established to empower the people in society to create their own press that was free of government manipulation. Recall from my Third Chapter that the media and journalism in the United States have grown from the concept that American democracy, in addition to its three divisions, has a Fourth Estate: the media.

Yet, in the United States mass media is still misused by the government in many ways. It is imperative that the media scrutinize the government, because the public has no other means by which to gain comprehensive information on the subject. However, mass media today are owned and operated by very large conglomerates, with valued interests in running the mass media as a business rather than a public endeavour. As such the journalists' public duty is essentially in tension with the business goal of maximising profit. Fundamentally then:

The mass media as organisations say they represent the public good and the private citizen, but through innumerable actions and omissions, they are seen to represent the views and interests of the establishment. Many newspapers, radio, and TV news programs do work of the common citizen as well, but not only and not always.

(Herrscher, 2002, 277)

The 'innumerable actions and omissions' Herrscher speaks of in this quote refer to the obvious 'unethical' behaviour that brands journalists today. Specifically, these actions include, making up sources, lying about aspects in a story, fabricating entire stories, editing a photograph, and the list can easily continue. Consider, once again, some of the information provided by the Gallup Poll on the media and its perceived trustworthiness. Only thirteen percent of the U.S. government have 'a great deal' of confidence in the media, and another thirty-seven percent have 'a fair amount'. Likewise, the other half of the public have 'not very much' confidence or 'none at all' (The Gallup Poll, 2005). And

furthermore, this poll shows that specific journalists are mistrusted. The most popular of television broadcasters, Peter Jennings, Dan Rather and Brian Williams receive trust ratings of only thirty-one percent, twenty-three and twenty-one, respectively (The Gallup Poll, 2005). Certainly this poll is not indicative of the trustworthiness for all journalists throughout the country, but it shows that even the most watched anchormen are not trusted by most of the public in the United States. And while there are no comprehensive, accredited studies done on the trustworthiness of journalists across the nation, there is an educated sentiment that the public is losing its trust in the media and in journalism (Roach, 2004, Cranberg, 2004).

Seemingly today, it is of great concern that journalists in the mass media appear not to be fully trusted by the public. Furthermore, it is not surprising that journalists maintain little public trust as illustrated in cases like the fabricated reporting of Jayson Blair of the New York Times. Additionally, United States journalists are seen as uncaring for individual privacy. In the manner of 'spotlight' United States mainstream journalism often concentrates on one particular story, and thus ignoring everything else happening in society. Often, these stories entail a personal aspect, and thus the person and those people close to the person for whom the reporting concentrates feels a great deal of privacy invasion. Privacy invasion also occurs because United States journalism reports so often about celebrities. Privacy invasion by use of spotlight reporting or merely by celebrity reporting has become a major problem in United States journalism today. Since the media is so ubiquitous, United States journalism and these unethical acts are widely discussed topics within the public and within media theorists.

Many media and professional ethics philosophers theorise about the faltering trust of United States journalism (see Alter, 2003, Barber, 1994, Belsey, 1998, Carey, 1999, McNair, 1998, Merrill, 1999 and Picard, 1985). Each of these journalistic misbehaviours can be directly linked back to the fundamental problem with journalism today. Moreover, public trust in United States journalism declines while the media business booms

(2000)¹⁶. Conclusively, journalism in today's market is ambivalent regarding its concern for the public.

However, if public trust with the media was established as a result of following journalistic coded behaviour, many problems would still occur. Failing public trust is a serious issue within the media because it is at the core of how the public regards the media. Various issues exist that contribute to the public understanding of the media, one such issue being the role of propaganda in society.

Propaganda

Media organisations have the money to have their voices heard while the public idly listens. Furthermore, as Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman note, the media in a democratic society is often used for propaganda (Chomsky and Herman, 1988). As such, the propaganda that is fed to the United States public through the mass media is widely accepted because of the passivity of the public. Chomsky defends the idea that democracies use media propaganda like a totalitarian state would use physical abuse. Therefore, the corporate media works to control the minds of those in a democracy by making the public feel as though they are not being controlled.

Examples of Chomsky and Herman's (1988) claims about United States media propaganda include the misinformation, or lack of reporting upon such issues in the mass media that include the United States 'democratisation' of Guatemala in 1954, or the military actions taken by the United States government in Brazil, Chile, and Philippines. And furthermore, just because the media may cover some of these issues briefly the issues are not being covered thoroughly. Chomsky and Herman assert,

That the media provide some information about an issue, however, proves absolutely nothing about the adequacy of media coverage. The media do, in fact, suppress a great deal of information, but even more important is the way the

¹⁶ The top three media corporations, AOL Time Warner, Walt Disney and Company, and News Corporation, alone accrue around \$66.7USD (\$31.8 billion, \$21.4 billion, and \$13.5 billion respectively). This was a report done in 2000, but the current results bear similar, yet increasing amounts. I chose to cite, although a bit outdated, in my thesis because it is the most extensive account of the media conglomeration to date.

present a particular fact – its placement, tone, frequency of repetition – and the framework of analysis in which it is placed. That a careful reader looking for a fact can sometimes find it, with diligence and a sceptical eye, tells us nothing about whether that fact received the attention and context it deserved, whether it was effectively distorted or suppressed.

(Chomsky and Herman, 1988, 15)

Chomsky and Hermann's point here relates back to the concept of 'objectivity' in reporting. Just because an issue was discussed in a paper or on a broadcast news station in an 'objective' manner, does not mean that issue was discussed in proper way that it could be considered good journalism. For this reason the public in the United States is being fed propaganda. Not only are the corporate media misinforming the public on foreign affairs, but the lack of coverage and lack of frequency of coverage contribute to the propaganda. If the United States public cannot understand the world because the information they are fed through the media is incorrect, then the corporations (and the government) have a great deal of power over society when deciding what the public thinks and does not think because the public does not understand global issues in the first place. Corporate media are failing the public, and the public are merely watching the media show, as the public no longer plays an active role in the media relationship. Thus, the public is suffering at the hand of the corporate media in the sense that they are being kept uninformed and are being excluded from political engagement or, at times, simply manipulated.

The Corporate Threat to Journalism

Despite the global awareness of this corporate phenomenon, many professional journalists, while aware of the growing corporatization of the media, fail to see corporate control as a possible threat to press freedom. And because the journalist (like many others in society) finds it so difficult to break from this original concept of free press, "they are largely suspicious of social ethics or any group-imposed rules that might cause them to lose their sense of identity and freedom" (Merrill, 1999, 36). Yet, obviously succumbing

to the control of corporate ownership is just another form of identity/freedom loss. Nevertheless, many United States journalists fail to see this parallel.

Any attempt to truly solve this issue must understand the complexity of such a task. With this in mind, I am not suggesting that a total de-privatisation of media corporations and an implementation of purely government subsidised media stations/newspapers/channels is the answer to the loss of a press foundation in the liberal democratic society that the media professional currently faces. However, quite obviously, some drastic change must take place to alter the current condition of the media and the professional journalist. Specifically, in the United States this change must occur in the form of radical constitutional change that will implement a tax-payer funded broadcast station.

Therefore, some combination of government subsidized and privatised media must be introduced into United States media in order to create balance. There are obvious powerful forces in the media, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation, Australia's Broadcasting Corporation, Australia's Special Broadcasting Service, and many other government funded organisations in Europe. Europe is the best example of this type of 'state-regulated', 'socially-responsible', or 'public service' media model. Many countries, including the aforementioned large, powerful countries like that of Canada (the CBC), Great Britain (the BBC), and Australia (both SBS and ABC) maintain government funded and subsidized broadcast systems in addition to the privatised media systems that the United States boasts in plenty. However, the United States refuses to provide tax-payer funding to endorse a truly public broadcast system. Like many of the public institutions in the United States, media remains completely a private endeavour. The United States must provide a tax-payer funded, socially responsible media. Specifically, a broadcast station capable of utilising both television and the radio to reach all of the United States citizens must be implemented into the United States mainstream media¹⁷.

¹⁷ Once again, I concentrate on a government funded broadcast system because the industry of print, albeit newspaper, magazine or electronic print has repeatedly shown a greater scope of reporting. As such, broadcast maintains only so many frequencies and can therefore only maintain so many stations on both television, and radio. Furthermore, broadcast media continues to be the main source of news gathering for most United States citizens. Consequently, broadcast endures the paradox of media information; it reaches nearly every variety of lifestyle, yet speaks with basically one solidified voice.

As one of the leading powerhouse nations in the world, the United States is responsible for maintaining a standard within the institute that forms opinions and ideologies domestically and globally. Therefore, it must create a government-funded public broadcast station, free of the restraints that privatised media endure at the will of advertisers and other large companies responsible for financing the station.

Nevertheless, even if more regulation to keep corporate media ownership smaller succeeds, the journalist still needs to take responsibility for the profession. Likewise, a government-funded broadcast station in the United States can only set the framework for greater journalism autonomy. The journalist must inevitably maintain his/her public professional duty. As such, a responsibly-aware press entails the implementation of what people currently call the 'public journalist.' The basic concept of the public journalist is that of a journalist concerned with the current condition of public life in liberal democracies (Glasser, 1999). The public journalist sees his/her job as one needed to restore the public interest in government and civic life. Arguably, the role that most mainstream journalists take today is that of the 'objective bystander' simply reporting the facts. Public journalists admit the falsity of this position and aim to encourage public debate (and not to sway public opinion one way or the other). While many arguments against this type of journalist arise in discussion of the journalist's profession, one aspect remains true. Journalism is founded in and necessary to a democratic society for one very essential role and that role is to maintain the freedom of the marketplace of ideas. Public journalism works to maintain this very concept.

The media play an essential role in all societies and specifically in democracy. The control of the media in any form debilitates its role and public professionalism. This problem, at the ethically essential core of the media, is one that needs repairing. And certainly the type of repair necessary must include all of those currently practicing the profession. But it must also include the public, the corporate owners, and governments across the world. If we begin with the regulation of global media, corporate owners will no doubt use their power to manipulate new regulations. Likewise, we cannot turn to the global public to rise up against the power of the media owners. After all, where will the

mass public get their information about the hypocrisies of the hypocrisy-detectors? Essentially, the reformation must exist within the profession, within journalism. Since the ethical conversation in professional journalism has only just begun, we must look to journalists to begin to have dignity in their profession. Action that moves toward the roots of this profession and a redefinition of the journalist in today's liberal democracy must begin with the pen in the hand of the world's information providers. United States journalists have public journalism to reference, but they also need a sphere in which the journalist can develop as a truly publicly oriented professional.

However, we should also consider the good aspects that the corporatization of media has had over the industry. After all, if the media had not been viewed as an opportunity for big business by Hearst and Pulitzer at the turn of the century, who knows how long it would have taken for media to reach a national audience. Furthermore, big media industries have provided some quality coverage of big issues over the years. While the coverage of the current war in Iraq has been critically scrutinised (Roach, 2004), the coverage of the September 11th attacks on the Twin Towers in 2002 have been more positively praised (Roach, 2004). Additionally, the media reform that I suggest is not one that eradicates corporate media industry. Rather, I believe that there should be a truly public-funded broadcast system available to the public in addition to the corporate stations already provided. The corporate media have value, and I do not mean to belittle this value. I am suggesting, however, that this type of media is not secure or autonomous enough in a democratic society that refers to its media as the Fourth Estate.

Reform

The difficulty of moral reform in terms of the journalist in a global society and a national liberal democracy occurs because of conflicting ideologies. Globally speaking, journalism is primarily a business endeavour, whereas on the national level journalism in a democratic society should have some public awareness. Furthermore, since the United States considers itself as a liberal democracy, then the role of journalism in the United States becomes more like the business of global journalism. Since journalists, as professionals, should work to be successful in a liberal society, then the business of

journalism is quite appreciated by journalists that strive for great financial success. Herein lies the complexity of creating a system that could manage such a compound clash of interests. An ethics code cannot change or influence the journalist. These codes and the conferences needed to discuss such codes appear to the journalist as “thinly disguised excuses for warding off attacks on [journalists], for asserting the rhetoric of ethics into a void where little ethical conduct or concern in that fact exists” (Carey, 1999, 39). Consequently, such efforts to implement codes are never followed seriously by the journalist. Because of this occupational lack of ethical interest, reformation must occur in the very institution of the media and its journalists.

The media (and the journalist) play a crucial part in society. In daily life, it is regarded as ‘normal’ to listen/read/watch the news and agree to the information provided. The media is, as Bellah *et al* state, “...an essential bearer of ideals and meanings” (Bellah *et al*, 428). Therefore, the truly dangerous aspect of the institution is not its existence and ethical misuse, but the misunderstanding of its place in society. For example, the media claims to objectively present news allowing individuals to view the media simply as large organisations, easily escapable by individual choice. Thus, the ultimate power of the media goes undetected (Chomsky and Herman, 1988). As Bellah *et al* explain, “The idea that institutions are objective mechanisms that are essentially separate from the lives of the individuals who inhabit them is an ideology which exacts a high moral and political price” (Bellah *et al*, 427). Individuals cannot escape the scandal-driven news by simply refuting the tabloid or changing the news station. Likewise, journalists, regardless of determination to objectivity cannot escape the corporation for which he/she works. Obviously freelance writers have more freedom and consequently less of a voice because they do not have the means of distribution that corporate journalism possesses. It is impossible to be a good journalist and to report good journalism to well-responsive good citizens, when the very institution from which the journalist and the citizens operate is fundamentally flawed (Bellah, 1991, 427). The very institution of the media lacks moral professionalism; this essential issue endangers the journalist, democracy, and its citizens.

Public Journalism

Therefore, journalism must alter its foundational context to report news for the public and with the public. Establishing trust is the starting point for such modification. By accurately reporting events, working with citizens to create responsible news, and treating the public as citizens, rather than statistics or consumers (Costello, 2002), journalists can establish trust with their client. In doing so, social capital increases. Understanding social capital is crucial to the success of public professionals. Thus, more social capital that could be created by journalists equates a raised level of citizen awareness and provides appropriate conditions for democratic deliberation (Cox, 1995, 4). Journalists, in particular, hold a very crucial position in professional life. They hold the key to informing and mass inspiring the public by merely introducing these concepts of social capital in their reporting. In other words, if journalists reported issues that fed democratic debate then the public could easily become more aware of their role in democracy. This is the fundamental understanding of the movement Jay Rosen (2002) has coined *public journalism* or *civic journalism*. To understand these concepts, takes more than just a simple definition. Public journalism is a working process and a work-in-process. Allow me to explain the process and eventually define these terms.

Unlike most professionals, the journalist does not work with one client at a time; he/she has the power to report and encourage social capital by emphasizing democratic involvement to all members of society simultaneously. Unfortunately, many journalists today mistakenly reject Jay Rosen's (2002) public journalism in the name of free press as the backbone of democracy. Since the concepts of public journalism require the journalist to become actively involved with the public, many traditional United States journalists label this as pandering to the public. Their rationale is that journalism, because of democracy has the obligation to stay objectively involved in the stories for which they report. Therefore, involving the public would certainly make the journalist biased and unable to report fairly on the issues at hand. Therefore, traditional journalists argue against Rosen's public journalism because it does not maintain the objective voice which has been incorrectly attached to the concepts of free press and free speech. This

misunderstanding of the journalism profession, however, disconnects journalists from their public duties, and therefore disconnects journalists from their professional duties.

The journalist, as a public professional can alter many things in relation to their use of journalistic power or in relation to the power of the press, in order to raise social capital. In a more specific pursuit to alter the professionals' use of power, Tim Costello (2002) outlines six specific guidelines for the professional use of authority. Accordingly, the journalist should initially treat his/her client as a citizen and not as a consumer. The theoretical founder of public journalism, Jay Rosen (2002) argues this client-to-professional relationship marks the difference between good journalism concerned with the inspiration of democratic debate, and bad journalism concerned solely with profit and individual gain. Similarly, journalists should always place the common good before user-pays and when faced with the decision of which story to run on the front page of the news paper, should always choose the story that works to inspire public debate (as oppose to the story with the best photograph or most scandal). Costello (2002) adds (and Rosen agrees) that the professional should place value before growth and profit. Accordingly, journalists should aim for quality news reporting, rather than just provide the public with sure-fire, profit-making scandal. Also, a professional journalist must have more concern with his/her client, as a whole, and not upon individuals (such as individual politicians or individual celebrities). Additionally, as Costello (2002) explains, the professional must work together with other professionals in that field. Journalists should work in the mindset of serving their client and doing so with the cooperation of other journalists. Currently, journalists compete for the fastest news story, and fail to check sources properly. Journalists' working together equates a better range of quality news. Finally, Costello stresses the importance of the professional's role in terms of the community before the individual, which for the journalist is essentially the same as placing the client before the individual, since the journalists client is the public. Journalists should maintain an overall concern with the state of the public in terms of liberal democracy. Void of many or all of the issues from Costello's priority list, journalists today consequently fail as professionals. Furthermore, the current journalist stresses values (or vices) at the very opposite end of Costello's suggested priorities.

The overall importance of the role of the journalist in society today is that of an irreplaceable force. Journalists offer the public the means to obtain and learn from information needed to operate a democracy properly. Rosen, and his concepts of public journalism, provide answers for a more professional journalist. His writings and experiments of the like start with the same fundamental shift that creating a more professional journalist would require. Public journalism and professional journalism requires that journalism work to inspire public trust. In this sense, Rosen could remove the word, public from his coined phrase and replace it with professional. After all, journalism as a profession is nothing other than a public-serving journalist.

Conclusion

The journalist's role as a public professional must be analysed in accordance to the role of the media as an essential institution in United States society. Upon accepting that the journalist should exist in the sphere of public life, as the role for professional journalism stems fundamentally from its political tie to democracy, then the media, as a social institution must also be accepted as a public entity. In other words, the media must answer and respond to the public. Therefore, understanding journalism not only as a profession, but also as a public profession, the necessity of an independently funded broadcast system is apparent. Additionally, and just as apparent, is the need for a professional willing to undertake the responsibilities in being a public professional accountable for the health of democracy by supplying the public with accurate, quality information. This type of journalism on a small scale already exists. Public journalism is a good stepping stone for the healing of the United States media. It works to heal the very issues that currently do not work in United States public life. Furthermore, public journalism is a theory and a practice. In the theory, like a great deal of philosophy that critiques society and institutions, public journalism appears very reasonable and attainable when actualised. However, when put into practice, it becomes clear that, as my next chapter will detail, public journalism still does not confront the issue of greater autonomy for more journalists in the corporate media industry. As I have suggested many times throughout this thesis, autonomy for journalism can be emphasised with a truly

public journalism. Furthermore, doing so could create a freer sphere in which concepts like those developed in Rosen's public journalism could possibly flourish to a greater extent.

Chapter Five Summary

This chapter aims to develop the current state of journalism in the United States today, in the context of the way in which the media has developed with society and liberal democracy (those things developed in the previous chapters).

The chapter begins with a detailed account of what qualifies a professional and relates these concepts to the professionalism of journalism. It then aims to work through the role of the code on the journalist's ethical consideration.

The chapter continues to show the role of the professional in public life, and then applies these same concepts to the role of the journalist, as a public professional. In this discussion, the uniqueness of the journalist, as a profession, surfaces. After all, the journalist, unlike a lawyer or a teacher, does not have duties to individual clients and a separate public duty. Rather, the journalists' only true client is the public. This section aims to show the various conversations in media ethics that are discussing the role of the journalist in such a manner.

Furthermore, one very specific aspect that defines journalism is that of maintaining autonomy. And a breach of this autonomy, in the media, can lead to propaganda. As this chapter aims to show, journalists can frame issues, leave out information or avoid issues completely in order to create a public sense of the news that is incorrect. This propaganda can occur because of a lack of autonomy when we consider the role of corporations and the media.

The next sections aims to show that this autonomy is threatened by the mass corporatisation of the media business. In an effort to reform the media and gain some journalistic autonomy back, as the chapter suggests, the U.S. media could consider a section of broadcasting that is funded by tax-payers and protected by legislation, similar to the stations found in Britain, Canada, and Australia.

The next section details the concepts and practices of public journalism, a movement that is currently gaining momentum in the United States media today. However, it too suffers from shortcomings that could be lessened if a truly public broadcast system was implemented into U.S. media.

Chapter Six

PUBLIC JOURNALISM ADEQUACIES

Introduction

Like all ethical philosophy, public journalism begins by establishing that a problem exists; it is accepted in this field that public trust in journalism is dropping while public interest in democratic debate simultaneously plummets. Public journalistic theory links these two aspects, and then asserts that journalists must heed the responsibility of inspiring public debate once again. Fundamentally, the goal of public journalism is to reconnect journalism with the community for which it reports, focusing specifically on the interests of the public (Eksterowicz, 2000, 177). In this final step of my thesis I plan to use these ideas of public journalism to show that the ethical awareness of the media's inherent tie with democracy does exist within the ethical conversation of journalism in the United States. However, despite the public journalism movement and its gaining momentum in the United States, its success is limited. To further understand this limitation we must first consider the theoretical basis of public journalism, and then its practical application.

The Theory behind Public Journalism

Understanding public journalism begins with establishing its theory. Public journalism's theoretical basis originates with admitting and defining the ethical problems in current United States journalism. Public journalism does not merely list ethical dilemmas within the journalistic profession. For example, a dilemma in journalism emerges when journalists must consider whether to print an aftermath picture of drunk-driving car crash involving two 20-year-old drivers, when the picture clearly depicts the bloody face of the young driver. The dilemma forms because the photograph is quite obviously news worthy and valuable to the community—making an example of what could happen if driving drunk—however if the family sees the printed picture it would certainly be most devastating and harmful to the family members of the drunk driver. In this example, the ethical problem appears as a dilemma which forces the journalist or the media organization to decide between acting in the interest of the individual family versus

acting in the interest of a 'better cause' to show the public the dangers of drunk driving. In this sense, the journalist does not see the role of the media in making this decision directly affects the culture, and, therefore, the journalist cannot merely be the role of an observer. Regardless of the decision made, the journalist must commit to a belief, thus revealing that the journalist has a perspective and, therefore, an embedded role in the event. Thus, the journalist and the media are not completely objective. As previously explained in my discussion concerning the differences between the 'ethics of' versus the 'ethics in' a profession, it can be understood that public journalism strives to focus on the primary or fundamental ethical challenge of journalism as that of articulating a foundational 'ethics of' journalism. It locates journalism as having a central role, and responsibility within the democratic process. As such, public journalism strives, with its attitude and philosophy on the professionalism and role of journalism in society, to reflect a holistic, rather than dilemmic, emphasis.

Paralleling this assessment, moral theory illustrates ethical problem identification quite well. Certain branches of current ethical theory work to refocus the concepts of ethics. For example, Eric Mount draws from the fact that ethics is not a thing; it is an action. Mount explains:

For us to 'do ethics' – to reflect critically on the charter and action of ourselves and our communities – we must recognize that 'where in the world we are' and 'where we come from.' We abide in personal and cultural stories and in institutions ranging from the family to the nation and beyond. Our pasts precede us, our futures lie before us, our cultures surround us, our values infuse us, our absorbed images shape us, and our myths and worldviews locate us. We become more ethically perceptive and sensitive people when we understand ourselves in our layers of contexts and understand what creates and changes those contexts. With that understanding, we may further complicate the already complicated process of ethical reflection, but we may also better define some moral problems, clarify some moral conflicts, and even alleviate or head off some moral messes.

(Mount, 1990, 26-27)

Here, Mount is reflecting on the embedded perspectives of these moral philosophers (like Taylor) who challenge the detached view of the dominant ethical approaches. Essentially, this type of current moral theory works to re-establish our understanding of ethical

behaviour in light of the fact that we are all joined in this process together. Public journalism takes heed from this line of thought.

In applying this same type of refocusing, Jay Rosen and Davis 'Buzz' Merritt, the founders of public journalism, critically (probably for most of their professional lives, but officially since the early 1990's) began to look at the current ethics in United States journalism. As Mount explains, in order for journalism ethics to 'be done' journalists (like Merritt) needed to establish 'what world he was in.' The journalistic world Merritt found himself in as an active member and professional was that of a place where public life, in terms of democratic involvement, was declining and journalists were not feeling responsible for this decline.¹⁸ This link between the decline of public democratic involvement and journalistic responsibility is crucial not only to my thesis, but also to public journalism philosophy. It is on this connection that many opponents of public journalism concentrate. In recollecting my arguments from Chapter Five, I deal with the historical account of United States journalism and why this account equates an inherent tie between the development of United States journalism and United States media. In my fifth chapter, I explain how the two major historical effects on current United States journalism may have contributed to the decline of democracy. To reiterate, these two effects are the style of yellow journalism as the status quo for mass media and the emphasis on 'objective' reporting. Furthermore, implementing these two aspects into United States journalism as the 'norm' of journalistic style has pulled journalism away from its public responsibilities and toward its business responsibilities. Finally, journalism as a business has been [mis]understood in society as being separated from public life just as the 'natural laws' of the market place are separated from societal laws and thus separate from society. This separation is a misinterpretation of society, however. Journalism and the public have suffered from the consequences of this misinterpretation. Journalism has largely been absorbed into a business endeavour with journalists divided as regards to their public duty. Therefore, the assumption that public journalism makes (I use the word assumption because the historical account of this link cannot be found in

¹⁸ However, mere correlation does not necessarily represent causation. Refer to my previous chapter for the rationale behind the causative link underpinning democratic decline and journalistic decline

public journalism literature and discourse) concerning the link between a declining public sphere for democratic discourse and the responsibility of journalists to remedy this decline is valid. As such, the theoretical aspect of this inherency is proved by Merritt and Rosen's practical efforts to validate public journalism.

Essentially then, by refocusing the journalistic ethical attention away from the typical coded agenda, public journalism's founders, tapped into their environment and worked toward a more holistic (as oppose to dilemmatic) cure for this profession. Once the refocusing began three basic issues arose; the public and the media are interdependent, public life and the media are deteriorating; and journalism, can and, has a responsibility to work to fix these problems (Rosen, 1999b).

Both Rosen and Merritt explain that the media's interdependent tie with the public hinges upon the very fact that without the public interest in journalism, journalism would have no purpose as profession (Stepp, 1999, Merritt, 1999). The logic goes as follows: as a profession, journalism exists to inform the public. As outlined in my Chapter Four, the esoteric information journalists acquire that the common public does not have, is simply raw information and the capability to research this information and turn it into a coherent, truthful account of the events in society. A democratic public needs raw information and interpreted information in order to operate properly within society. If journalism is not concerned with providing this information to the public, the social purpose of journalism within democracy is lost. Thus, the public needs journalism to act as encouraging a democratic active public. Furthermore, journalism cannot function without public readers, viewers, listens, etc. Information access without anyone to access it proves futile. Thus, the practical interdependency of journalism and a democratic public becomes obvious. This is the logic used in public journalism. However, it misses some of the points discussed in my previous chapter concerning the interdependency of the media and democracy.

Moreover, journalists, political scientists, and political historians alike continue to comment (and have been criticizing as far back as the 1980's) upon the deterioration of

public life. For example, Robert Picard (1985), has been discussing the decline of democracy in the United States for decades. He asserts that the problems with democracy today is not a failure of democratic theory, it is rather the erosion of democracy in the name of freedom of the press that public life continues to decline.¹⁹ Simultaneous decline of the public and the press reinforces Rosen and Merritt's claim to the interdependency between the two. Furthermore, the decline in democracy supports these public journalists second point founding the basis for the necessity of public journalism.

The Breakdown: A Work-In-Progress

Both Merritt and Rosen have written various books as thought processes toiling through this new type of journalism. They admit on various occasions in many of their articles and books that public journalism is a working concept. As such, it cannot be purely defined because it is a work-in-progress. Therefore, sceptical traditional journalists and theorists often attempt to define public journalism by the practical examples that have utilized the concepts of public journalism. However, defining public journalism by the actions that accompany the philosophy of public journalism is not only inaccurate, it also lowers the impact of the philosophy to a simple set of actions (like that of code setting) (see: Rosen, 1999b, Merritt, 1997, Merritt, 1999, Merritt, 2002, Rosen, 2002a).

Rosen (1999a) defines five separate ways in which public journalism must be considered: Public journalism as an argument, an experiment, a movement, a debate, and an adventure. These various new ways to view public journalism give a better understanding for the entirety *of* public journalism. As an argument it works to counter the traditional journalism that both Rosen and Merritt and many other public journalist advocates have proven as deficient in both a media sense and for public life. As an experiment, public journalism cannot be seen as an entity with definite boundaries, it is not a system that can be uploaded and taught to all the staff in a newsroom without extensive teaching and understanding. As a movement, public journalism is a widely discussed and criticized interest that continues to progress throughout the United States journalistic world. Its

¹⁹ Picard delves into the issues concerning capitalist-inspired corporate control of the media as the fundamental causes of press declination, resulting ultimately in public life and democratic decay. I will return to this topic more thoroughly in the conclusion of this chapter.

advancement through discussions, papers, articles, books, etc. proves its role as a journalistic movement. As a debate, like a movement, public journalism has sparked journalistic ethical conversations (and in the name of professional journalism, its success is immeasurable here). While not all journalists will admit that a problem in journalism currently exists (and certainly many will not admit that public journalism is the correct way to fix any such problem), most journalists will admit that a conversation is happening; public journalism continues to leave its echo in journalism classrooms and newsrooms alike. Finally, as an adventure, public journalism has been attempted (in a few very famous cases), and succeeded. Public journalism has many sceptics, but the adventure of spreading its concepts and practical applications makes up the very extraordinary aspects of public journalism (Rosen, 1999a).

With that understood, the argument, experiment, movement, debate, and adventure of public journalism can be broken down into five major types of journalistic redefinition. Keeping in mind that any real definition is workable, public journalism endeavours to insight journalists to participate in:

1. defining their dominion
2. the art of framing
3. the capacity to publicly include
4. the position effect
5. shaping a master narrative (Rosen, 1999a)

Essentially each of the five topics breaks down into simple rethinking positions for journalists within their own community. Initially, public journalism is thought of a type of journalism working to aid the public and the media in a preventative manner.²⁰ Public journalism works to create a media capable of keeping public life healthy and active.

In doing so, journalists must learn to define their dominion. This step fundamentally entails that journalists accept their position in society and, not only maintain but, utilize their awareness of this position when reporting and writing articles. Rosen asserts that

²⁰ At the moment, public journalism is working from a 'healing the broken' side, since traditional journalism is fundamentally not operating properly in democracy. However, upon the success and implementation of regular public journalism into society, its purpose will bare a journalism capable of keeping public life healthy, instead of reporting upon the misfortunes and the deteriorations of public life.

the professional journalist must define his/her dominion to practice true autonomy. The press has the power to define its dominion; it has the power to remain autonomous. Though, because of current industry standards, this autonomy does not fully extend to individual journalists. Where the media industry has autonomy, the journalist often does not. However, that dominion has been defined for other purposes, namely for infotainment and product sales. The public journalist argues that professions in this field should “include in their dominion the problem of making public life go well” (Rosen, 2002, 6). Furthermore, Rosen argues that journalists fail to admit to this power of dominion definition with claims of loyalty to objectivity. Thus, the current state of the media appears ‘natural’. However, it is quite unnatural, as it is really just a result of journalists defining their dominions in categories other than that of healing public life.

Furthermore, journalists need to learn the art of framing. Every story in every broadcast, newspaper, magazine, on-line, etc article is framed by a journalist or a team of reporters and editors. Essentially, journalists *decide* how to frame stories. Every article written has been a collaboration of facts organized by the journalist and fashioned by the journalist’s wishes. “Facts can’t tell you how they want to be framed. Journalists decide how facts will be framed and that means making decision about which values will structure a story” (Rosen, 2002b, 8). Despite the reality that most journalists have been taught to tell ‘both sides of the story’, all stories have more than two sides. It is ridiculous to believe that every story contains only two sides and that the journalist can provide an equal account of both sides. Just as the professional must take responsibility as an agent (Langford, 1978, 11), so must the journalist take responsibility as a person within a perspective. Much of the inaccuracies in the press today come from a difference of opinion on *how a story is framed*. However, the press does not include ‘the art of framing’ vocabulary in its job description. Thus, framing problems are never truly solved as they are never even discussed. Once journalists admit to their power through framing, they should begin to ask what values within the story or event are important to frame. Rosen and other public journalists emphasize the importance of framing stories to the benefit of public well-being, in the name of democratic citizenry debate.

The next of Rosen's concepts, 'the capacity to publicly include', correlates directly with my discussion of the negativisms that have developed as the 'norms' in journalism: those being a polarized objective view on the part of a journalist, and the concentration and standardization of yellow journalism or infotainment. Rosen and Merritt suggest that through publicly orienting journalists to acknowledge this angle effect, journalists can then choose the angle that best suits feeding the public life. Journalists have the capability to include in their stories, whomever or whatever they choose, whenever they choose. While some people (or issues) receive huge spotlight attention other people (or issues) remain invisible. Journalists frame their own stories in such a way to make it seem as if the only news in the world comes packaged as their news presentation. Broadcasting companies, in particular, are guilty of this;

By choosing whom to include, the press tells us who's world public life is, who knows about it, who acts within it, whose voices count, whose lives are relevant, whose concerns are central...journalists make casting decisions. They decide whom to cast in what roles in the drama of public life

(Rosen, 2002b, 10-11).

Public journalists try to use this power honestly (at the very least they are honest about *obtaining* and *using* this power). They admit to this power, which is a leap far beyond that of traditional 'objective minded' journalist. Likewise, the public journalist's request that their fellow professionals to turn the spotlight away from the politician (or celebrity) and refocus it toward the citizens. Furthermore, if stories have a public angle; an issue that directly engages public attention, then the journalist should not only write about this issue, but should invite the public to get involved.

Additionally, journalists need to be aware of their power to position stories. However, this step does not allow journalists to simply admit to uncontrollable biases and then report upon things in whichever fashion they wish. Quite the contrary, public journalism asks the journalist to admit to the positioning of his or her article and then re-question himself/herself to the fairness of this positioning. This concept is a lot like that of the art of framing. Essentially, the position effect is an unavoidable effect caused by journalists, because journalists must choose words to use in stories the meaning of articles can

change easily. The public journalist, as the philosophies of Rosen and Merritt explain, admits to this power, and attempts to use it honestly and responsibly. After the completion of every article the public journalist should ask, ‘How am I positioning here?’ And then endeavour to position the public as citizens, since as Rosen states, “Public journalism is the *art of positioning* people as citizens” (Rosen, 1994, 13).

Finally, public journalism hinges upon the concept of shaping the master narrative. The four other concepts lead up to this essential aspect of public journalism. A society must have a direction to which it aspires (all societies have this direction regardless to whether or not the members of society are aware of their direction). Journalists need to be aware of the ways in which the articles they publish contribute to the desires and aspirations of society. As discussed in the professionalism of journalism, this profession must adhere to a clear purpose. Public journalism requires this purpose to be a publicly-oriented, publicly-responsible one. Certainly, public journalism does not suggest that journalism should pander to the public, simple it should be aware of the culture and society for which the media outlet reports, and work toward a master narrative (or purpose) for the media outlet or for the individual journalist. This concept deals with journalistic work in its entirety. Basically, one article is never just one article. It is inevitably one article in the midst of many articles, which create an entire narrative in a press agency. Or similarly speaking, the journalist could be writing one article in the midst of a career of journalism, and should commit to a career goal. Public journalists should always create story issues in the mindset of honouring all of the aforementioned categories. They need to keep in mind that their stories can and will shape the master narrative in society. Journalists must be civil workers, and realize that citizens are the players in the democratic society for which they civilly work. Furthermore, the journalist needs to remember that “the art of enabling people is what gives meaning to the task of informing people (Rosen, 1994, 16)”

Certainly, public journalism is working to re-establish the journalistic vocabulary. However, it serves another purpose within the journalistic profession. Public journalism is working to create a new standard in the profession that can work to inspire journalists

and the public. It also works to re-establish the relationship between the public and the journalist. In referring back to the importance of a professional journalist, we can recall that recognition of the professional is an essential aspect of professionalism (Langford, 1978). Since “The members of a profession not only see themselves as members of a profession but are also seen as a profession by the rest of the community” (Langford, 1978, 19), then it is desirable for the journalist to work on the relationship between the profession and the public. Essentially, citizens must recognize the profession as necessary in society. And public journalism works to bridge this gap with these five topics. However, theoretical transformation of a profession is quite different to the practical conversion.

In this section on the philosophies behind the concept of public journalism, I have relied mainly upon the writings of Jay Rosen and Davis ‘Buzz’ Merritt. Ostensibly in doing so, I have created a skewed version of the understanding of this new type of journalism. However, these men are the creators of public journalism. Other media theorists and journalists have discussed these concepts (see Belsey, 1998, Belsey and Chadwick, 1999, Carey 1999, Merrill, 1999, Nicholas and McChesney, 2000) however the language and framework for public journalism has been developed by Rosen and Merritt. Therefore, thought it reasonable to utilise primarily their works in order to explain the philosophy behind this movement. However, one need only refer to previous chapters within this thesis to reference the comments, both praise and criticism, of other media theorists on public journalism.

Criticisms of Public Journalism

As developed through my thesis, public journalism offers the best solutions to many of the fundamental ethical problems at the core of United States journalistic theory. However, like all solid theories, public journalism has various shortcomings. These problems range in variety from misunderstandings of the movement, to fundamental criticisms of the assumptions made within public journalism.

While public journalism criticism is vast, only a few can be accepted as serious criticism and not merely as misunderstandings of the movement. Carl Sessions Stepp (1999), in his article, 'Public Journalism; Balancing the Scales about the inadequacies of public journalism.' argues against public journalism. He forms some of the best disputes about this new type of journalism. Essentially, this article breaks down the several basic assumptions or 'articles of faith' that public journalism makes without justification. Initially, he outlines that public journalism assumes that public life and journalism are interdependent; and that both are declining in society (a point I have already noted). Stepp rejects this assumption, when he argues that public journalism cannot make the assumption that journalism and public life are co-dependent, in the name of pure "human appetite for news...beyond the dependency on a particular kind of public life" (Stepp, 1999, 177). Additionally, he refutes the public journalism assumption that since no other institution (or organization exists) capable of repairing both public life and journalism, it must be the responsibility of journalism to restore both (Stepp, 1999). To expand upon each of these criticisms, Stepp (1999) then criticizes the statistics that Rosen and Merritt have gathered to prove that public life and journalism are declining. Finally, Stepp criticizes the public journalism endeavour to remove 'detachment' from the journalistic status quo. He explains,

[Merritt's] logic leaps too quickly to equate 'distance' (whose heritage suggests a professional effort at fairness) with the sinister 'indifference.' They aren't the same. There's nothing inherently untrustworthy in caring passionately as people but trying to act dispassionately as professionals (like say judges or teachers).

(Stepp, 1999, 178)

In this final point, Stepp (1999) makes a most undeniable argument. His initial criticisms, while ostensibly convincing, fail for the very reasons detailed in the fifth chapter of this thesis that show the inherent tie between democracy and the media, and that both journalism and democracy are declining in United States media. However, the concept that public journalism requests and requires journalists to proactively care about the issues they report upon can be paralleled to that of a judge who cares for the due process of justice for citizens in the midst of a trial or a teacher who cares for his/her students. However, journalism has not typically been in the business of writing articles capable of

inspiring the public to engage in discourse. Rather, the United States journalistic tradition it is in the *business* of writing articles to ‘objectively’ tell the truthful story. Essentially then, to use Stepp’s comparison, a public journalist is more like that of a teacher than a traditional journalist, but not in the ‘detached’ sense that Stepp wishes to portray. Rather, they are similar in that teachers have their agenda set to inspire their students to learn. Therefore, the concept of public journalism and Stepp’s argument are actually in agreement. Rosen and Merritt argue that the journalist should not be totally ‘detached’ from their subject of writing. However, they accept that caring for a subject’s well-being, yet remaining removed from the situation, as a teacher or judge would be, is an admirable way for a journalist to behave. Certainly, a teacher must remain unbiased when marking papers, but a teacher that merely observes a classroom full of students is failing as a teacher. Likewise, a journalist that fails to realize his/her presence in society (or in that room) is failing at the job. Public journalism does not mean to ‘get involved’ and sway opinion; rather it means to get involved and inspire others to get involved. Therefore, the traditional sense of journalism should not be seen as the ‘correct’ sense of journalism just because it has been the accepted type of journalism in the United States for nearly 100 years. Traditional objective journalism is a product of modernity, as shown in my account of United States journalistic history. Since journalism traditionally often may not respond to its public duties, a new type of journalism where journalists understand their role more from a teaching perception than from a bystander-objective view is not only sensible but it is necessary to both the sake of United States journalism and democracy. Therefore, while Stepp’s argument is reasonable, it too reveals as a misunderstanding of public journalism. Stepp addresses this concept directly when he questions, “What are the implications of relinquishing the outsider status the press has had for two centuries?” (Stepp, 1999, 179). First of all, the typical type of journalism as seen in society in the United States today is not two-hundred years old. Additionally, this current type of journalism as the ‘outsider stance’ is failing its public duties. Therefore, Stepp’s arguments do not provide solid dispute against the theory of public journalism.

While the misunderstandings of a theory are usually discredited for their lack of critical basis, in the case of public journalism, the fact that many journalists refute this type of

theoretical creates a valid disapproval of the movement. Likewise, many of the misunderstandings critical of public journalism revolve around the journalistic refusal to allow such theory and practice into the profession.

Public journalism is a complicated way of ‘doing journalism.’ And in Merritt’s own words, “journalists [are] by nature and necessity pragmatic, results-driven people. For the most part we [journalists] say, ‘Don’t bother me with philosophy. Tell me how to do it; I’ve got a paper to get out’” (Merritt, 1999, 182). Certainly however, the excuse that journalists merely fail to have the patience or competence to truly learn a new and improved method of reporting is hardly a compelling enough argument against implementing public journalism into mainstream media. However, it undoubtedly raises a point about the ability of public journalism to gain acceptance within the field. If journalists look only at a “two-graph [or polarized] definition, then decide if [they] like it or not” (Merritt, 1999, 182), then public journalism has very little sway within the profession. After all, public journalism does not offer better ratings to the business of journalism, nor does it offer high profit margins. Public journalism is a complete ethical transformation that journalists must be willing to accept, appreciate and practice. After all, in referring back to Langford’s description of a professional, it is necessary for the profession to have unity; professionals within the field must accept and cooperate with the other professionals (Langford, 1978, 17-18). Therefore, public journalism must be accepted by other journalist as a valid type of doing journalism.

In general, public journalism has not been received well within the industry, particularly within the broadcasting industry (see Arant and Meyer, 1998, Haas, 2001, Maier, 2001, and Ryan, 2001). That is not to suggest that public journalism is disapproved of, rather it suggests that many journalists prefer the traditional style of journalism to public journalism. And furthermore, this type of journalism has been slow-moving in its development in the United States. Rosen and Merritt’s concepts and practices of public journalism have been circling through media newsrooms and journalism classrooms for over a decade now, and the movement has gained notable acceptance, but has yet to truly change the style of journalism in the United States (Brewin, 1999). Essentially, public

journalism has many critics comprising mainly of other journalists and those in the media industry. There continues to be a vast difficulty in receiving public journalism within the field. Merritt explains;

Journalism must [take its first step] toward revitalizing itself and public life, but that requires fundamental change, and journalism's deeply embedded culture is resistant to such change.

Much of that resistance to change is rooted in traditional journalism's determined detachment from the people and events we cover. That detachment, in turn stems from a peculiar sort of elitism that questions the ability of people to govern themselves; in other words, an elitism that denies the essence of democracy. That such an idea dominates the culture of the only profession to which the Constitution grants total freedom is a particularly cruel and dangerous irony.

(Merritt, 1998, 14)

Traditional journalists make up the majority of the professional industry today. The traditional journalists' commitment to this irony delves into the elitism of the profession. In other words, journalists do not want to give up this professional status that raises them above the public. However, as Merritt notes, failure to accept a new type of publicly oriented journalism is a violation of United States democracy. Likewise, journalists currently reign free from all any kind of professional sanction as the codes that are meant to guide the profession create a basis for ethical behaviour that, in no way can be reinforced or sanctioned if breached.²¹ Therefore, their willingness to commit to the public and accept more responsibly seems unlikely.

It is understandable, then, that Rosen and Merritt continue to battle the journalism ethics field from inside the profession, where they constitute a minority of non-trationals. However, public journalism relies upon public input (likewise public criticism), and therefore can only succeed if journalists become willing to accept outsider input. After all, the very critical irony that Merritt discusses in the previous quote implies that journalists consider outside criticism as serious; furthermore, the public journalism stance

²¹ It should be noted here that individual journalists have suffered the punishment of corporate dismissal for breaching ethics codes as discussed in Chapter Two. However when I speak of journalists in this sense, I speak of the entirety of the profession. While individual journalists may feel retribution, it is not a powerful enough punishment to alter the behaviours of the profession as a whole.

concerning detachment and ‘objective’ reporting works to erase this very solid line. Therefore, the struggle to widely spread acceptance of public journalism must work not only from the inside with journalists such as Merritt, and his philosophical counterpart, Rosen, but also with the criticisms and the aid that such criticisms can provide for the public.

However, an innate problem arises in encouraging both journalistic and public constructive criticism; in order to inspire the public to voice their wants and needs (in terms of democratic deliberation) it is desirable that some entity should exist to guide and publicize the views of the public. This entity, in every society is clearly the media. Therefore, in order for public journalism to truly work, it must first work. It is a self-winding cyclical problem, just as is the problem of healing democracy, as democracy needs both critical information and debate to work, and in order to create debate the public must be debating. However, the answer to this intrinsic irony lies in journalism without outlaying connections or, in other words, a section of journalism that is responsible *only* to its public. After all, if journalism did not have to pursue turning a high profit by maintaining the best ratings and enticing the best advertisers, and if journalists had the freedom to report about the events the public viewed most important, then it could create that public forum needed to reignite democratic deliberation, and likewise successful public journalism.

Furthermore, many media critics have accredited the slow acceptance of a truly ethical journalism (albeit public journalism or any socially-conscious journalism such as the type of journalism aspired for in the Hutchins Commission, or the socially orientated public radio stations funded and run by universities as discussed previously) to the United States journalists’ lack of response to a higher degree of responsibility in their field (see Corrigan, 1998 and Merrill, 1999). “Many press people feel that talk of responsibility leads to obligations and duties and that these in turn tend to restrict press freedom. The journalists always get back to stressing *press freedom* and deemphasizing *press responsibility*” (Merrill, 1999, 34-35). Journalists are well aware of their press freedoms. However, journalists feel that a turn toward press responsibility inevitable entails a turn

from press freedom. The mistake is quite obviously that one aspect does not negate the other. In fact, a more responsible press would make for a freer press. If a more responsible press, in terms of their public duties, means a more publicly oriented press, then the press freedom would be a freedom for the public as oppose to a freedom for the media.

If journalists continue to report and frame issues in whatever fashion they please, then the credibility of journalism, as a profession is at stake. Journalists that feel no responsibility for maintaining their freedom heeds careless journalism without reprimand. However, if journalism becomes responsible then the freedoms to which it is entitled become better appreciated, more respected and cherished. Responsible journalism means using the freedoms of press freedom as an honour to the profession; and not merely as an excuse to report and behave howsoever journalists please.

This line of thinking in journalism is a serious break from the media current tradition that I have detailed in this thesis. As such, it is a difficult task to implement a journalism breaking from the tradition. Moreover public journalism demands more than just a break from tradition. Public journalism requires the outright rejection of traditional media today in search of a new, publicly oriented media. Therefore, it is a fundamental change in reporting, analysing, and thinking as a journalist. As such, the task of spreading the acceptance of public journalism appears even more difficult. While public journalism has its various examples of success, it is slow moving in its wide range acceptance. The PBS system in the United States is an example of solid journalism with a greater amount of autonomy for the journalist. However, the reach of PBS has some great limitations. An independent and tax-payer funded media could provide the space for a powerful democratically committed journalism addition to emerge. This might then, with time, augment the developments within PBS to date and generate further procedures and ideas that might be emulated by other broadcasters and media agencies.

The theory of public journalism takes a holistic approach at curing the journalist, its practical application merely works with individual problems. This account of public journalism that you discuss seeks to transform present practice and institution by transforming individual professionals. The practice of public journalism utilizes its philosophies in a case-by-case manner. In the discussion of practical public journalism in my previous chapter, the individual success of these concepts was successful. In a holistic approach, public journalism should be striving to radically change the entire condition of United States journalism. As public journalism stands now, it is not lasting over time, and a holistic approach demands continuity if working to prevent media problems before they become problems is to occur. Furthermore, for public journalism to restore democracy and public life, it must last time. Therefore, the next task is to work through a solution that can provide public journalism the space to develop as truly holistic, in both theory and practice. While public journalism seeks to transform the individual profession, I think a more comprehensive solution exists. That is to say, the completely transformative step that is available is that of establishing a new institutional practice such as that characterized by public media institutions such as the BBC, the CBC, and the ABC. Hence, a more complete transformation should seek to engage with the challenge of change both at the individual and institutional levels.

Examples of Public Journalism

The practice of public journalism has been successful on many occasions. While the concepts of public journalism should be concepts that infiltrate journalism and the media as a whole, since public journalism is still a movement, its success is limited to its cases in point. For example, in 1994 Max Jennings, editor of the *Dayton Daily News*, in Dayton Ohio was confronted with a newsworthy problem in the area. He had to make a decision on how to cover the issue of a nuclear weapons plant closing that provided the area with 4,450 jobs (Rosen, 1999b, 87). Jennings could either cover the story merely from the viewpoint of an observer, or he could cover the story with the intent to help the community start the conversation about where to go from here. Jennings decided on the latter. Jennings and his crew at the *Dayton Daily News* created

...a twelve-page special section intended as both a briefing on the plant and an invitation to further talk. It included profiles of key employees and their phone numbers, should anyone want to contact them about next steps. The newspaper secured unprecedented access to the plant by persuading executives in its reporting. It laid out a path that key players could follow to save the business. Though photographs, graphics, opinion pieces, speculative reporting, and the detailed attention it gave to possible courses of action, the Dayton Daily News became a catalyst for discussion.

(Rosen, 1999b, 87-88)

This example highlights how public journalism can get involved with the community and work to create conversation and public deliberation on issues, without becoming biased and ‘attached’ to the subject of the news piece. Essentially, the *Dayton Daily News* got involved with the issue before a seriously damaging problem occurred.

Similarly, the staff at the *Colorado Springs Gazette* were disenchanted with the way traditional journalism covered political issues. The paper observed the way journalism polarized political issues: first stating the issue, then giving the opinion of one politician, and then providing the opposing politician’s opinion. Traditional journalism, in this way is designed to create a ‘balanced story’ where “antagonists in some public controversy are head in roughly equal measure: supporter and critics, Republicans and Democrats” (Rosen, 1999b, 120). In this way, the reporter and industry do not have to take a stance on either side, since providing both sides gives the reader/viewer the opportunity to weigh both sides of the argument and then create an opinion on his/her own. However, a member of the *Gazette* staff, Steve Smith, decided to reject this type of journalism, instead he adopted public journalism and worked with the staff to implement this new way of reporting. Smith was given the opportunity to perform public journalism when a “bond issue vote and a related tax initiative,” concerning the taxation of public schools were purposed “in the center-city area of Colorado Springs, where 76 percent of registered voters do not have children in the public schools” (Rosen, 1999b, 122). Smith covered the issue not by providing the two polarized views of those who wanted the taxing versus those who did not. Rather, he presented four separate perspectives and within each of these perspectives offered detailed information concerning a variety of sub-perspectives. Essentially, Smith fashioned the article so as to tell the public that the

issue of this bond and taxation was a very complicated one, and should not be ‘simply-put.’ Rather, it was complex issue and thus needed a complex analysis when reported on.

The list of examples for public journalism goes on and on. It is a progressive movement with a growing amount of success. However, while these examples work to more thoroughly solve a problem before the issue erupts, public journalism in general is still not holistic in its efforts. These examples do not create a broad enough basis for the policies and theories of public journalism to flourish throughout the mass United States public. These examples are problem specific and are therefore not capable of treating journalism in a holistic manner. Though Rosen aims for and draws from the holistic approach of ethics, public journalism will never achieve such a wide scale power without additional aid.

A Problem of Autonomy

In many ways, the concepts of public journalism for journalism both professionally and in U.S. society, are taking great leaps forward in linking the role of the journalist with the public and with the democratic process. However, much of the theory behind public journalism works to enhance the social political role of the journalist. And this thesis aims to show that such an enhancement requires an autonomous space in which such developments can occur. Therefore, while the concepts of public journalism are progressive and positive, I aim to show that such advancement cannot occur unless journalists, at least a section of journalists, are giving an autonomous space in which they can reshape the media industry and the public’s view of the media in a political manner. As such, in this respect, public journalism falls short of truly linking the profession to liberal democracy in a citizenry socio-political manner.

Conclusion

Public journalism is a good stepping stone for the restoration of journalism and public life in the United States today. However, it is simply a stepping stone. Public journalism works to heal the decline of public life and democracy from the journalists’ perspective.

And while public journalism makes great contributions to the re-evaluation of journalistic theory, theoretical contributions cannot alone generate practical solutions. The distinction between public journalism and democratic journalism is that democratic journalism is concerned with the overall healing of democracy. In this sense, democratic journalism is less concerned with arming the journalist to create democratic change. Rather, it is more involved with creating a space in society for democracy to flourish. Given that democracy needs a system to convey information to the public so as to create an informed public willing to deliberate on political issues. This necessary space must include a publicly oriented journalism. Democratic journalism, therefore, looks to reunite democracy with its public by means of creating a safe space for journalism to provide the necessary information.

Therefore, the next step in transforming public journalism into democratic journalism is creating a way for public journalism to reach the masses so as to provide easily accessible information to everyone in society. To understand the necessity of creating this public space for democratic media to flourish, we must first understand the criticisms of public journalism, and how these criticisms link to the necessity of a tax-payer funded public broadcast station for the United States.

Finally, much of the information and evidence provided in this thesis refers to print media, while my suggestion for reform calls for a truly public broadcast station. This has occurred primarily for two reasons. Those reasons being (a) print media is the basis for the development of broadcast, and while they certainly are different media, they share similarities when considering the role of the public and its relation to liberal democracy and the media and (b) access to print media supplies an abundance of examples. Broadcast, because it is not printed, is a much more difficult media to reference as it does not archive its transcripts to the extent that printed news archives its publications. Nevertheless, the condition of print media reflects too the condition of broadcast media.

Chapter Six Summary:

This chapter details the philosophy and practical application of public journalism. It aims to present the positive aspects found in public journalism, like that of reframing the minds of journalists to think in a more holistic manner (as opposed to dilemmic manner, concepts which I have discussed in previous chapters).

The chapter continues to show that there have been various accounts where public journalism has been practiced successfully in the United States. The criticisms of public journalism and established that while many critiques were merely misunderstandings of the movement, there are essential shortcomings to the success of public journalism in United States society today. Essentially, then public journalism, while solid in its theoretical approach cannot encompass complete journalistic reformation because practically it is limited. Public journalism needs a purely autonomous sphere capable of reaching the masses in which to flourish. In other words then, public journalism needs a tax-payer funded public broadcast station.

As such, these individual accounts, while they are steps in the right direction, cannot encompass the necessary reform for journalists and the media today. As such, public journalism needs a better place to allow these concepts to flourish.

The next chapter explains the possibility of reform in such a manner: a truly public broadcast system.

Chapter Seven

A TRULY PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Introduction

As the previous chapter explained, the success of public journalism on a wide range scale is limited. In this final chapter I will argue that its limitations correlate with the lack of a safe autonomous sphere for journalists in the United States media. After all, a movement based upon changing the condition of democracy proves somewhat futile if that movement cannot inspire the majority of the public. Thus, public journalism, despite its solid ethical foundation, cannot succeed on a vast level without a tax-payer funded broadcast system. Therefore, it is essential to U.S. journalism and furthermore essential to public journalism that a truly public sphere transpires. Consequently, I will appeal to broadcast media organizations of the United Kingdom tradition in order to show that mass media and its role as the Fourth Estate in United States democracy can help the public by implementing a truly public broadcast system. It is through the establishment of this type of broadcast system that ethical journalism, for example public journalism the United States America cannot succeed on a vast level without employing a public broadcast system. The conclusion made in this final chapter stems from the basis of my argument found throughout this thesis. That argument progresses as such; liberal democracy is changing and therefore a challenge exists today for the media as a democratic institution. After all, the media or a free autonomous flow of information for the public is a basic liberty in liberal democracy. As such, a tradition of media other than the type developed in the United States exists in the world today, that being the British tradition which created the BBC, but also those who followed in this tradition such as Canada's CBC and Australia's ABC. These stations follow in the tradition of an autonomous, publicly funded media that has social responsibilities not only to inform their public, but also to educate it. Furthermore, this type of media in a liberal democracy can be philosophically defended as portrayed by the concepts of Taylor and Chomsky. Finally, I can hope to conclude, in this chapter that a publicly funded media can benefit the changing nature of democracy in the United States today.

Creating a ‘Truly Public’ Public Broadcast Station

Installing public journalism into public life and mainstream journalism has been successfully attempted on many different occasions. For example, the Local TV News Project in 1997 that worked to gather various local TV journalists and work through issues that could publicly orientate TV journalism (1999). However, public journalism cannot merely exist at the ‘example’ level in order for it to endure. It must become part of the culture of mainstream media. Ultimately, public journalism must change the attitude of the journalists and the media for which they work. By changing the journalistic culture, then the profession can change, and the relationship between journalists and their public can also change. Clearly, public journalism is a practical endeavour with a theoretical basis that coincides with the current developing ethical theories about the professional and more broadly about the role of the citizen or individual in a society or culture. To allow the practical portion of the theoretical, public journalism must look to spread its wings; in other words it needs government funding in the form of tax-payer subsidies and it must be independent of the government. And such independence requires both a governing charter and governance structure that promotes independence and is protected as such by legislation. Legislation must be put into place in order to allow for this autonomous space in the media. Without it, this section of the media could become the poster section for propaganda by the government. However, if a section of broadcast media received tax-payer funding and solid legislation, then this section of the media would have the opportunity to be completely autonomous. Through creating a section of the media that allows for pure autonomy, journalists could have the opportunity to truly orient publicly. After all, if a portion of broadcasting did not depend upon ratings or advertisement funding, then this section of the media could report upon issues regardless of corporate opinion.

This type of public broadcasting is not a new concept. In the British tradition, the BBC, Australia’s ABC and SBS (although SBS is not completely a tax-payer funded broadcast station as it does run minimal commercials), and Canada’s CBC have developed tax-payer funded broadcast stations in their respective countries. Fundamentally, the concept

supporting a tax-payer funded broadcast station corresponds directly with the very issues I have been discussing. The motivation for a tax-payer funded public broadcast system in a nation is to protect and maintain a section of the broadcast airwaves that cannot be owned or controlled by any company. The broadcast station must therefore have funds from another source. Therefore, the station receives subsidies from the government through taxing the public a certain percentage needed to properly tend to the maintenance of a broadcast station. This very concept is outlined in the service commitment in each of these stations. Although Australia has two public broadcast stations, only one is purely tax-payer funded, the ABC. In the ABC's Code of Practice it states that,

The ABC Act guarantees the editorial independence of the Corporation's programs. The ABC holds the power to make programming decisions on behalf of the people of Australia. By law and convention neither the Government nor Parliament seeks to intervene in those decisions.

(2005b)

Furthermore, in the ABC mission statement they outline their values as follows (2004b):

- Distinctively Australian - reflecting the nation's identity and culture
- Open to all - reaching out to engage audiences, bringing Australians together
- No hidden agendas - aspiring to the highest editorial standards of accuracy and impartiality, reflecting a balanced and broad range of views and interests
- Creative - a commitment to innovation, ideas and support for talented people
- Courageous - encouraging the leadership and vision to adapt to change with integrity and decisiveness
- Supportive - providing opportunities for ABC staff to grow, personally and professionally, during their time with the Corporation
- Accountable - demonstrating high standards of governance and value for money to the Australian community

There is no sense in quoting the mission statements of each of the other publicly funded broadcast stations I have described earlier. Essentially, they are the same. The important distinction in these broadcast stations is that they do not rely on advertisement funding to operate their stations. Therefore, these stations offer an outlet for autonomous news information in their respective countries. That is to say, these institutions seek to serve the needs of the whole community (i.e. they are totally responsive to the democratic community). Additionally, they are free from any sectional interest whether that is

government, business, or any other form of sectional interest. And finally, the institutions seek to meet the highest standards of professional practice

The most powerful of these tax-payer funded broadcast stations is the BBC. The BBC has recently decided to sell portions of its broadcasting to other countries to make more money in an effort to create more funding for quality broadcasting. Furthermore, the BBC's interactive webpage is a highly developed webpage frequented by news gatherers globally. Essentially, the BBC has become an English language staple for global news gathering with its Internet usage and vast global broadcasting. The BBC works to set a different kind of journalism in the global media community. Furthermore, the BBC as a publicly funded broadcasting station competes with the major global media conglomerates. The BBC, like all well-known media outlets (or like anything with great public attention) is certainly open to criticism (Millard, 2005). However, that the BBC does not work for any major industry, and that it has global acceptance and wide-range usage proves that despite the various things the BBC does wrong, it is working in the interest of the public. After all, without the incentive of high profit margins, the BBC has no other motivation but public responsibility to report the issues in the manner they are reported.

Finally, when looking at the motives of this tax-payer funded broadcast stations around the world, it becomes apparent that no system is perfect, but at the very least a public broadcast system allows for information to flow, and the public to be a part of this information flow. However, true public broadcasting does not exist in the United States for many reasons. As I have shown in the discussion United States media history, it is clear that the culture in the United States has rejected the concepts that ground the necessity of a tax-payer funded public broadcast station. When the United States is considered in its liberal democratic state the reasoning behind requiring tax-payers to fund a broadcast station emerges. However, this reasoning of a liberal democratic state is a misunderstanding.

The United States Public Broadcast Station

Certainly, when suggesting a tax-payer funded broadcast system that is also anchored and supported by solid legislation in the United States the most obvious argument that surfaces involves the fact that the United States does, in fact, have a station entitled Public Broadcast Station (PBS). However, while PBS does receive a small amount of government tax money, it is not enough money to maintain a comprehensive public broadcast service. A comprehensive public broadcast service is that of the institutions like the BBC or ABC that provide more than news for their public. They also educate through current affairs and cultural programs, they generate constant debate through interview and talk-back programs. They inform on a wide range of issues. They entertain and educate. In this sense they heed the role of the media within a liberal society to a fullness envisaged by Taylor (and those envisions being issues that I have detailed in previous chapters) in his discussions of a liberal democracy and the philosophy of liberalism. With that understood, consider the role of PBS's in the United States and its funding breakdown:

Funding for PBS programs comes from a variety of sources. In addition to seeking foundation and corporate support, producers are able to seek production funding through PBS. While PBS's production funds are quite limited, the majority of funding is distributed through a PBS general fund and projects considered for funding are evaluated based on the criteria outlined in the Content Priorities section of this site. Though some submissions may not be priorities for funding, we encourage producers whose projects meet our content goals to seek alternative financing to cover the full cost of production and to submit their projects at rough cut or completion.

(2005b)

It is obvious that PBS receives some governmental funding, but the majority of PBS funds are received from endowments. These endowments come in the form of large company donations with a vested interest in a topic to which they request PBS run a story. This is not to suggest that PBS panders to company money and only reports on issues that big companies want reported, and furthermore only report in the style in which that endowment money comes. However, in a sense PBS is limited in its public concern as its stories are not chosen from endless amount of possible issues, their stories are chosen by the companies that are willing to fund the investigation. PBS is not guilty of

any serious wrong doing here. After all, as a non-profit organization, PBS must obtain its money from somewhere. However as a result, PBS is often criticized for being elitist.

What evolves relationally in the United States in public broadcasting in this context, if you can do only the stuff that is not profitable and you're going to depend on listeners and viewers to bankroll you for a large portion of your income, is a clear pressure to pitch your programming to the upper-middle class. That's the rational thing to do. Anything else would be suicidal if you're running a station. So you have a system pitched at show who have disposable income and who give you money during pledge drives. The system has played into that conservative critique.

(McChesney, 2003, 13)

Furthermore, the stories on PBS are not just borderline elitist; they are also accused of working to gain the audience approval. In essence, America's so called Public Broadcast Station is criticised for behaving similarly to the network, commercial stations.

...[P]ublic television has shifted from being content-driven to being audience-driven. As is the case in commercial television, audience members have been reduced to a viewing public. Moreover, audience members are viewed not as citizens, but as consumers. This leads to conflict of interest, if the goals of public television is to serve the public (not serve up the public).

(Cook, 2003, 85)

Therefore, it can be asserted that the United States Public Broadcast System, despite its name, is not public in the sense of being fully and freely responsive to the public 'body politic'. Merely, it is a poorly funded non-profit organization that looks to make money where it can without becoming completely commercial like those stations on network television. It will not do, in a democratic society to have an 'almost' public broadcast system. PBS may carry better quality news, and exceptional documentaries, however if only the upper middle classes find value in such news, then what service does this type of broadcast station provide for the public good?

Movements for a more public broadcast station in the United States do exist. Robert McChasney leads such a movement with his well developed website and updates page, entitled www.freepress.org. Additionally, there are other organisations working with and for journalists in order to create a stronger ethical stance within this profession. One such organisation is the Poynter Center. As it states in its mission statement,

The Poynter Institute is a school dedicated to teaching and inspiring journalists and media leaders. It promotes excellence and integrity in the practice of craft and in the practical leadership of successful businesses. It stands for a journalism that informs citizens and enlightens public discourse. It carries forward Nelson Poynter's belief in the value of independent journalism in the public interest.

However, like the development of public journalism on the side of journalists; the activism for a freer press in America is a slowly developing one. After all, it proves very difficult to get the public involved in a movement that gets absolutely no media attention. These topics are being discussed, in society however. Mass emails sent from McChesney's Free Press website to raise awareness of media legislature circulate within sections of the public. Steps such as these help the United States public to realize that while the United States media is a powerhouse and a major global influence in the business sense, it can do much more for United States democratic-public society. The awareness of media problems in the United States is an underground project, because it cannot gain the public following needed to be mainstream. Furthermore, a publicly-funded broadcast station could bring these issues to the forefront.

Finally, if we consider the role of publicly funded broadcast station like those of the BBC, the ABC, the CBC and so forth, we can understand that these stations provide their societies with an enrichment that could possibly not be attained if the stations did not operate with so much autonomy. That is to say, the ABC in Australia, for example, provides the people of Australia not only with solid news content, but also runs quality documentaries, runs radio stations for various audiences from the very young, adolescences, young adults, adults, and the elderly. It has shows reviewing movies, recapping sports events, and critiquing the media (and at times even critiques stories found on their own station), just to name a few of the culturally enriching programs. Additionally, the ABC provides an interactive Internet site with access to each of their shows and radio stations with forums and blogging to entice the public to use this provided space to interact with one another. Now, these do not suggest that the U.S.'s PBS does not have some of the same type of quality programming. However, the funding for PBS is so limited that this type of over all enrichment for U.S. society is also limited.

As such, a truly public broadcast station can enrich a society and the pursuit of the good life.

Conclusion

Implementing a fully tax-payer funded broadcast system in America is quite a task. It not only involves radical change on the part of journalistic culture, it involves Constitutional change on the part of the United States legislation. Certainly, this type of radical change will not occur quickly or with any kind of great ease. The United States public needs inspiration to take control of their free press, but with the press practices that currently exist generating this inspiration is very difficult. However, civic media movements are raising awareness throughout the country. It is with this type of activism that the issues discussed throughout this thesis are being raised. Furthermore, these types of comprehensive approaches to changing the media are necessary for fundamental change. United States journalism must look not only to the practical application of change that will come from implementing a tax-payer funded media. In this sense, efforts to change the culture of the media must be made. For example, the training of journalists in universities throughout the country should look to teaching the concepts of public journalism. Classrooms of budding journalists should understand the inherency between their chosen study and the democratic state of their nation. If journalism at the training level works to arm journalists with a sense of history and culture, eventually journalists will understand that their role in society is not merely that of an observational one.

As such, when the history of United States journalism is considered in relation to its democratic heritage, it is impossible to deny that United States journalism today does not enjoy the full conditions of a free and socially responsive press. The proper understanding of free press deals directly with making the press free for those for whom it was intended to be free: the public. The press has responsibility to the public, and it is time this responsibility was acknowledged. Implementing a publicly funded broadcast system will provide an outlet for the public to gather news. Furthermore, despite the mass success or lack thereof in the countries with public broadcast stations all ready running, such as the United Kingdom, United States journalism must take this step on

their own. Possibly the public broadcast stations found in England, Canada and Australia do not represent the highest ratings among the general public. However, at least the stations exist, and generate public discourse with an already established public broadcast system becomes an obtainable goal. And furthermore, ratings reflect the entertainment value of the media to the public, and are therefore a poor guide to judge meeting democratic responsibilities. What is important is that numerous attempts by government through inquire to change the ABC, the CBC or the BBC with bias and a failure in meeting its democratic responsibilities have failed to uphold that accusation.

Moreover, the current conditions of the BBC, ABC, and CBC are not perfect. These stations are criticized for various reasons, but usually for being too 'liberal.' Those stations that have developed out of the United Kingdom tradition have publicly funded broadcast stations, but they have not implemented the concepts of public journalism. Just as public journalism cannot operate without implementing a true public sphere to allow the ideologies of public journalism to blossom, implementing a broadcast system but failing to structure journalism in a way that public journalism describes would create a system without an understanding of United States journalism. Since United States journalism has a solid history, it is necessary to embrace this history and incorporate a change that maintains this commitment. United States journalism and mass media differ greatly from British journalism and should not be expected nor should strive to transform completely into the style of British journalism. However, United States journalism would significantly benefit from an autonomous and tax-payer funded broadcast station. And with the implementation of that broadcast system, United States journalism then needs to look to add its own understanding of the profession within this new type of mass media. Public journalism offers this piece of the puzzle. Therefore, United States journalism needs not only a tax-payer funded broadcast station it also needs the philosophies and practices of a journalism with a public consciousness and an understanding of the history of United States journalism.

The United States need only to look to other countries to see the importance and raised standard of journalism in a truly public broadcast system. This type of system is a

justifiable one for a liberal democracy, both in legislation and in tax-payer funding. And because autonomy is an essential element in a publicly funded media, it is reasonable that a publicly funded media exist in a country in which the media purports to be the Fourth Estate. Furthermore, the concepts of the media of the Fourth Estate are solid democratic concepts, but cannot, in its current state, be actualised to their fullest extent in the U.S. media. Likewise, the philosophies of public journalism fall short of great success for the same reasons. Therefore, in the tradition of the Fourth Estate, the media faces a challenge as we consider that liberal democracy is changing. However, the media can be used as a significant tool to educate the citizens of this changing democracy, and this step, this reform for the media, if encompassed into U.S. democracy and society, is itself a great change for the state of liberal democracy in the United States.

Chapter Seven Summary

This chapter begins by working through the concepts of the thesis thus far. It aims to reiterate the changing nature of democracy and the challenge today to the media as a democratic institution. It further explains that public journalism has made great contribution to the concepts of journalism in the United States today; however this practice has weaknesses particularly in the area of increased autonomy for journalists in a liberal democracy. However, the tradition of autonomy can be seen in publicly funded broadcast stations of various other countries. And likewise the implementation of such a system is defended by the philosophies of Taylor and Chomsky, as they describe the requirements for a liberal democratic state. One such requirement is the free flow of information at the mass level.

The chapter then continues with the problems of the current publicly funded media found in the United States. And since the U.S. Public Broadcast Station (PBS) is not essentially funded by the public, it will not suffice in the reformation of journalism and the public. Therefore, in analysing the publicly funded broadcast stations developed in the United Kingdom tradition, a broadcast system different to that found in the United States emerges. In the United Kingdom media tradition, a section of the broadcast airwaves were set aside specifically for public space and use. These stations (i.e. the BBC, and Australia's ABC) established their media purpose with a dedication to providing the public information. Essentially, these stations have no other ulterior motives, like profit and advertising support, to which their purpose is attached. And the United States media should look to these case examples and model a broadcast system, with a public consciousness, similarly.

This type of consideration suggests that the current state of the Public Broadcast System in the United States is not a truly public endeavour. And while powerful social movements are occurring to recreate and restore the public sphere, a public broadcast

station must be established to mediate these movements and spread the word throughout the masses.

Finally, the thesis concludes that many measures can be taken to restructure the public and the media. For example, implementing a new way of training journalists that incorporates a thorough understanding of the history of media and democracy and their inherency would create a new breed of mentally capable journalists founded in comprehensive ethics, rather than procedural. However, journalists are still working in an industry, and that industry must create a culture that encourages good journalism. Therefore a tax-payer funded public broadcast system is essential to the reform of the media and of the public sphere for democratic restructuring in the United States.

Resources

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