

news sources. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) held in 2002 that war correspondents cannot be compelled to testify about their sources, except under extraordinary circumstances.

Still, going to jail seems to be an occupational hazard for journalists worldwide. Sometimes the offense is criticizing government or its policies. Sometimes the offense is refusing to reveal confidential sources. Sometimes, some journalists might say, the offense is merely speaking the truth. Truth sometimes has the power to set one free, as the adage goes, but sometimes it is government that has the power and it is the truth teller who loses freedom.

SEE ALSO: ► Blogger ► Censorship ► Communication and Law ► European Court of Human Rights ► Free Flow of Information ► Freedom of the Press, Concept of ► Gag Orders ► Internet ► Libel and Slander ► Privacy ► Source Protection ► Violence against Journalists

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Journalism: Normative Theories

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Normative theories of journalism concern ideal functions of the press, what the press *should* do. These purposes are best understood in relation to larger claims about the *good*

society. In principle, there are as many normative theories of journalism as there are political systems, from Marxism–Leninism to diverse conceptions of democracy. Nonacademics as well as academics may express these theories, which are relatively coherent conceptions that cluster together specific ideals (such as representation, deliberation, accountability, and the like) in different combinations with varying emphasis (→ News Values; Standards of News; Journalists' Role Perception). Such broad theories are, to a certain extent, artificial constructs, because no one, from politicians to ordinary citizens, is entirely consistent in adhering to only one of them. Journalistic practice likewise does not always accord with normative theories of journalism, but these theories remain an important component of professional training (→ Journalism Education). Institutions and the state draw upon theories of journalism, implicitly or explicitly, when shaping media policies that carry real incentives or penalties for deviant behavior.

Scholars attempting to classify normative theories (Siebert et al. 1956; McQuail 1983, 2005; Baker 2002; Ferree et al. 2002), as well as less systematic reflections about media and democracy, have identified nondemocratic theories, including authoritarian, totalitarian, Marxist–Leninist, and developmental, as well as democratic theories, including libertarian, social responsibility, democratic elite, democratic participatory, public sphere, and postmodern.

NONDEMOCRATIC THEORIES

Authoritarian theory holds that journalism should always be subordinate to the interests of the state in maintaining social order or achieving political goals (Siebert et al. 1956). At a minimum, the press is expected to avoid any criticisms of government officials and to do nothing to challenge the established order. The press may remain free to publish without prior censorship, but the state retains the right to punish journalists or close media outlets that overstep explicit or implicit limits on reporting and commentary.

Under more extreme authoritarianism, or *totalitarianism*, a closely censored press proactively promotes and extends a totalizing state control over society. In the context of the Cold War, the Soviet communist theory stood out (Siebert et al. 1956), an approach perhaps best understood today as a variant of totalitarianism that includes Islamic and other forms of religious fundamentalism. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, versions of Marxist–Leninist, or *Soviet*, theory have survived in North Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam, and to a certain extent in China, as the most coherent, self-consciously elaborated examples. The Soviet normative theory of journalism posits that media should not be privately owned, should serve the interests of the working classes, and, most importantly, should provide a complete, objective view of the world following Marxist–Leninist principles, as defined by the communist-party-controlled state.

Another nondemocratic normative theory is partly a product of western communication scholarship and foreign development projects. *Development theory* is authoritarianism for a good cause (→ Development Journalism), supporting the economic development and nation-building efforts of impoverished societies (Schramm 1964; McQuail 1983). In the context of western dominance in international news gathering (→ News Agencies) and in cable news, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (→ UNESCO) has also framed development theory in cultural pluralist terms as the right

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to communicate (MacBride Commission 1980) and, most recently, as the defense of global cultural diversity (→ Right to Communicate; New World Information and Communication Order [NWICO]; Rogers, Everett; Schramm, Wilbur).

The western press and communication research generally portray these nondemocratic theories negatively, as anti-democratic, whatever their potential merits. Outside of the west, however, purely anti-democratic justifications of journalism have grown more rare. The Chinese government, for instance, defends a *market socialist* approach to the media, which combines limited market freedoms with continuing state control (→ China: Media System). Certain ideals in nonwestern societies are not necessarily anti-democratic, such as the poetic or literary ideal of the Arabic press (Mellor 2005; → Iran: Media System; Egypt: Media System; Gulf States: Media Systems). Democratic normative theories have been motivating forces behind emerging nonwestern media outlets such as the Qatar-based Arabic-language cable news channel Al Jazeera (modeled after the BBC and CNN) (→ Arab Satellite TV News). Even in the most repressive authoritarian states, the language of democracy has become commonplace.

DEMOCRATIC THEORIES

Where authoritarianism stresses the importance of maintaining social order, libertarianism aims to maximize individual human freedom. John Locke and other liberal philosophers of the eighteenth century conceived of the libertarian theory (Siebert et al. 1956), which relates closely with *laissez-faire* capitalism. In the oft-used metaphor, the press should offer a *marketplace of ideas*, pursuing profits in a natural process believed to support democracy. *Libertarian theory* sees the government as the primary if not the only threat to press freedom. Perhaps the best-known embodiment of the ideal is the First Amendment to the US Constitution, which specifies: "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." This formulation expresses the ideal only in negative terms, as a freedom *from* state intervention. Presumably the press, left to its own devices, will represent diverse voices and hold government accountable, but the only requirement for the press is to pursue its own economic interests. Far from a caricature, this pure form of libertarianism is alive and well in the public pronouncements of many news media owners and managers, as well as of some journalists (→ Freedom of the Press, Concept of).

Observers and activists who perceive that a pure market orientation does not necessarily support democracy have argued that the press must instead assume *social responsibility*. In the 1947 Hutchins report, the US Commission on a Free and Responsible Press conceived the chief responsibilities as factual accuracy, promotion of open debate, representation of diverse views, and protection of individual rights by serving as a watchdog that guards against government abuses of power.

Any theory that the press has a voluntary duty to perform positive functions could belong in this category, but social responsibility theory, as originally described (Siebert et al. 1956), clearly upheld the US journalistic ideal of *objectivity*, which stresses factual (especially investigative) reporting over commentary, the *balancing* of opposing viewpoints, and maintaining a neutral observer role for the journalist (Schudson 2001; → Objectivity in Reporting; Investigative Reporting). This ideal has become dominant globally, even among journalists in countries where highly polarized political cultures

make it difficult to put into practice (Hallin & Mancini 2004; → Party-Press Parallelism; Convergence of Media Systems).

Social responsibility theory lacks any systematic critique of capitalist media ownership and funding (Baker 2002; cf. McQuail 2005). Most journalistic professional exhortations about *ethics* are social responsibility theories in this sense (→ Ethics in Journalism), including not only traditional defenses of investigative journalism but also the recent US movement for civic journalism (→ Public Journalism). Armed with enough courage, individual journalists are assumed capable of performing their democratic responsibilities.

Other democratic normative theories also concern social responsibilities, but emphasize some more than others. Legal scholars, philosophers, and social scientists, rather than journalists, largely produced these theories, which may not share the assumption against state intervention as a legitimate means to orient journalism democratically.

Representative liberal theory (Ferree et al. 2002) or *democratic elite theory* (Baker 2002) proposes that democracy works best with highly educated elites and specialized technicians in charge. The primary duties of the press are to chronicle accurately the range of competing elite perspectives, to examine the character and behavior of elected officials, and to monitor closely their activities for corruption or incompetence (the *watchdog* function). In other words, the press should adopt a critical, serious tone in covering public affairs, defined as the activities primarily of government but also, in principle, of business or other powerful social institutions. Democratic elite theories tend to be skeptical, however, of whether the press can adequately report and analyze complex issues (e.g., Lippmann 1922; → Lippmann, Walter).

Pierre Bourdieu's (1998) critique of journalism argues for a democratic elite theory from a sociology of knowledge perspective. He values most highly those forms of intellectual and artistic production sheltered from external economic or political pressures. By analogy, his critique esteems the specialized forms of journalism that maintain the greatest *autonomy* from external pressures (→ Science Journalism). He would generally prefer that journalism loosen its *monopoly* over public communication so that non-journalist experts could directly transmit their knowledge as they see fit. However, Bourdieu's ideal of complete autonomy could lead journalists (as well as non-journalist experts) to pursue only their own narrow interests and ignore legitimate concerns of wider publics (Schudson 2005).

In *democratic participatory theory*, journalism is called upon to promote actively the political involvement of citizens. The theory emphasizes principles such as popular inclusion, empowerment, and full expression through a range of communicative styles (McQuail 1983; Ferree et al. 2002). Its theorists emphasize diverse viewpoints and active citizen involvement more than the quality of the discourse (whether reasoned, critical, serious, or the like). They disagree on the best means to achieve these goals. Tabloid forms of journalism (→ Tabloid Press; Tabloidization), for example, might provide a bridge leading formerly apathetic citizens to an interest in politics (McNair 2000), or the mainstream press might provide news from more perspectives (Gans 2003). In participatory theory, however, small-scale, *segmented* media, commercial as well as nonprofit, are best for promoting grassroots citizen involvement (e.g., Keane 1991; → Grassroots Media; Citizens' Media; Citizen Journalism).

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With his ideal of the → public sphere, the German sociologist and philosopher → Jürgen Habermas (1989) combines concerns for the quality (reasoned, critical debate) with the quantity (broad representation and participation) of discourse that journalists mediate (Calhoun 1992). However, *public sphere theory*, also referred to as the *discursive* (Ferree et al. 2002) or *republican* (Baker 2002) ideal, places the greatest emphasis on quality, narrowly conceived: the press should create a domination-free environment where the better argument can prevail in a quest for social consensus (→ Deliberativeness in Political Communication). The public sphere should be free from the state as well as the market (→ Coffee Houses as Public Sphere). Societies seem most likely to achieve the ideal during periods of democratic revolutionary effervescence, as in France and the United States at the end of the eighteenth century or in the Soviet Union and east-central Europe during the late 1980s.

By adaptation (and perhaps taming), public sphere theory can fit the conditions in western democracies. Public television, for example, armed with legal guarantees of autonomy from political intervention (→ BBC; Public Service Broadcasting: Law and Policy), may be the best embodiment of the ideal (Garnham 1986). French and other continental European traditions of a journalism of ideas (→ France: Media System; Comparative Research), rather than of raw information, are also consistent (Albert 1998). The ideal inspired the US movement among journalists to redefine their role, from simply providing information to promoting reasoned and civil public debate among ordinary citizens (Glasser 1999).

Emerging in part as a critique of Habermas, postmodern or *constructionist theory* (Ferree et al. 2002), like democratic participatory theories, is more tolerant of diverse styles and forms of discourse that journalists mediate. Feminist scholars such as Nancy Fraser say that the ideal of reasoned critical debate may embody masculine domination and that the ideal of social consensus may suppress ineradicable identity differences (Calhoun 1992). Building on the motto, "the personal is political," postmodern theory privileges personal narratives and emotion over abstract reason, celebrating grassroots media that facilitate the playful search for identity or the articulation of counter-hegemonic interests (→ Advocacy Journalism; Radical Media). A postmodernist ideal is also evident in Kevin Barnhurst and John Nerone's (2001) critique of rationalized, modernist newspaper design form and the hegemonic aspiration of professionalized journalism to map the social world (→ Newspaper, Visual Design of). Postmodern theory insists on a journalism open to the widest range of narrative styles and perspectives, especially those emerging from the margins of society.

THE NEED FOR NORMATIVE THEORIES

Are normative theories of journalism necessary, as Hallin and Mancini (2004) ask? The best-known texts in normative theory, such as *Four theories of the press* (Siebert et al. 1956), may promote ethnocentrism and justify the US model of market-oriented, ostensibly objective, journalism (→ News Ideologies). The assumption that other approaches are inferior has dampened intellectual curiosity about the practice of journalism in other parts of the world. The market model has also influenced international organizations such as the World Association of Newspapers and the Inter American Press Association.

Freedom House, for instance, rates national press systems as free, partly free, or not free, based primarily on political rather than economic criteria. US-centrism, however, is not inherent to normative reflection on and critiques of journalism.

One promising alternative approach, *complex democracy* (Baker 2002), acknowledges the shortcomings of any type of news media in the face of diverse democratic purposes and seeks to encourage the greatest variety of journalistic practices. A working model includes multiple sectors (Curran 2000): a core sector of public service television, a supplementary private enterprise sector, a professional sector under the control of journalists, a civic sector supported by social organizations, including political parties, and a closely related sector of ideologically or culturally marginal media that operate in the market with partial subsidies from the state.

Through broad reflection on the many strains of political theory, or through comparative research on media systems, normative theorizing can continue to play a key role in communication education and research (→ Professionalization of Journalism). Value judgments guide all research, and it is important to make implicit normative theories explicit. Plural normative theories rather than any singular theory can help clarify the range of policy and ethical choices available to guide the practice of journalism (→ Media Policy).

SEE ALSO: ▶ Advocacy Journalism ▶ Arab Satellite TV News ▶ BBC ▶ China: Media System ▶ Citizen Journalism ▶ Citizens' Media ▶ Coffee Houses as Public Sphere ▶ Comparative Research ▶ Convergence of Media Systems ▶ Deliberativeness in Political Communication ▶ Development Journalism ▶ Egypt: Media System ▶ Ethics in Journalism ▶ France: Media System ▶ Freedom of the Press, Concept of ▶ Grassroots Media ▶ Gulf States: Media Systems ▶ Habermas, Jürgen ▶ Investigative Reporting ▶ Iran: Media System ▶ Journalism Education ▶ Journalists' Role Perception ▶ Lippmann, Walter ▶ Media Policy ▶ News Agencies ▶ News Ideologies ▶ News Values ▶ Newspaper, Visual Design of ▶ New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) ▶ Objectivity in Reporting ▶ Party-Press Parallelism ▶ Professionalization of Journalism ▶ Public Journalism ▶ Public Service Broadcasting: Law and Policy ▶ Public Sphere ▶ Radical Media ▶ Right to Communicate ▶ Rogers, Everett ▶ Schramm, Wilbur ▶ Science Journalism ▶ Standards of News ▶ Tabloid Press ▶ Tabloidization ▶ UNESCO

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Journalists, Credibility of

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Credibility is a central professional value for journalists. For audiences, perceived credibility of the media affects choices of and responses to the news. Scholars and journalists disagree about what constitutes credibility, but agree that it relates primarily to the truthfulness and accuracy of the facts journalists report. Credible journalism is reliable and believable. However, scholars, mostly in the United States, argue that credibility goes beyond believability (Metzger et al. 2003), and demonstrate that it encompasses fairness, lack of bias, → accuracy, completeness, and trustworthiness (Meyer 1988; → Bias in the News; Credibility of Content; Fairness Doctrine; Quality of the News).

The broader definitions of credibility describe a relationship between → audiences and journalists, under uncertain conditions, where audiences cannot fully verify the character and intentions of the journalists and the veracity of their reports. Audiences expect that credible journalists will act according to shared norms of honesty and fairness, and expect reading and watching the news to be worthwhile activities. These expectations depend on secular norms such as professionalism, which vary from one place to another. In the United States, for example, *credible* journalists who live up to the standards of their profession are expected to tell the whole story in a sincere, precise, fair, and truthful manner, reporting to serve the public good, not personal or partisan interests (→ Ethics in Journalism;

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