

American journalism past and present essay examples

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



Introduction

Journalism has long been regarded as a symbol of democratic freedom; a country with no apparent democratic will to convey the truth in what's happening in its society does not have the freedom of free speech. However, journalism does not always constitute absolute freedom because journalism itself follows predefined standards, principles and ethics that all journalists need to adhere upon. Some may argue that today's journalism still lacks the fundamental ethical values that establish its credibility. Others may say that today's journalism principles are well established and constitute meaningful purpose. Having said that, this paper will discuss the universal principles and code of ethics in today's modern journalism. Historical evidence will reveal which principles are appropriate in today's modern society. Furthermore, journalism methods will be evaluated to determine which needs to be amended. Recommendations will be stipulated at the end of this discussion that is believed to be helpful in amending the broken methods.

Part 1:

The long history of journalism in America helped in codifying its standards and principles into formal statements. The principles embraced during the early years of American journalism no more than sets of rules and regulations set by individual publishers. These rules are composed of ethical guidelines and good practices listed to be the guiding principles in the news room and even on field reporting and investigation. The primitive rules have evolved throughout the centuries and the modern American journalism has adopted more defined set of principles that suits the modern society.

However, not all of them can be considered as strong as a set because there are principles that no longer aligned with the fast changing societal perspectives.

One of the sound principles in American journalism is transparency because it requires the journalist to be upfront about everything. This also allows journalists to develop their own sense of accountability. It is to avoid broadcasting matters out there anonymously due to the fact that whatever consequences of the journalist's actions entail should point straight back to him and as a responsible journalist he is obliged to own the situation. This principle is codified in the ASNE's 1926 decision of compliance (Keeler, Brown and Tarpley 50). According to this set of principles, journalists are subject to the commitment of objectivity, this entails objective news reporting that is based on factual truth and free of biases. Furthermore, the ASNE's guide stipulates, " sound practice makes clear between reports and expressions of opinion" (Keeler, Bown and Tarpley 50-53).

SPJ and ASNE reinforced the above-mentioned principle by adding commitment to tell the truth and news reporting should be free from social, economic and political influences. The connection between the principle of objectivity and commitment to truth is the journalist's capacity for accountability. This means, if the journalist failed to adhere to the commitments set by the aforementioned principles, he neglects his responsibilities and lacks the sense of accountability. It is important for journalists to be aware of their commitments to the code of principles of their profession. The people rely on journalists for telling the truth about what's happening. Biases and lack of commitment to truth means conceiving

the real facts from the people and journalists are supposed to deviate from such to sustain credibility.

Part 2:

Despite the positive outcomes delivered by the existing principles in journalism, there are still methods that need to be changed such as political coverage. Journalism has been a major ideological contributor for the public. The people's decision in choosing an ideal leader is at some level influenced by the media. Political events are being covered in the news and the general public depends on the news delivered by journalists in deciding who among the political figures appeared to be credible. However, modern journalism is often bombarded with speculations of political biases. For example, a news reporter covers the developments in a political campaign, and calls himself an insider. However, it can be noticed that the same news reporter is covering the party campaign and focuses only about the developments of a particular candidate. Such scenario suggests that the news reporter's interest is leaned towards a single candidate, when as a journalist that helps the public to choose wisely it is his obligation to deliver the positive and the negative side of the political candidates.

In addition, political views of mainstream journalists are somewhat stained by personal interest because of the connections that the politician has to the media network where the journalists work. A political tie with news companies often affects the way the politician in question is being portrayed in the news. In some instances, when a politician was involved in a dubious act, the news company might not report about it and leave the issue to die

down eventually. A journalist responsibility is to bring the truth to the people, but political views and partisans potentially affects the manner of delivering the news to the public. Political involvement with journalism is apparent in the early years of journalism. It can be recalled that news companies in the 20th century continued to endorse political candidates particularly those that are sunning for president. For example, the two giant news companies own by Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearts had great interest to politics (Keeler, Bown and Tarpley 20). These publishing owners label themselves as president makers. The chain of newspapers they own openly expresses support to a particular presidential candidate despite claims their claims of independence. Such trend followed in the succeeding years of journalism and some publishing companies continued to do it despite denying partisanship.

In order to change the trend, journalism should adopt a standardized rule that will be implemented across the entire journalism profession. Rules of engagement regarding political support should be coded clearly in the principles and code of ethics. However, stipulating the rule in the ethics code is not enough to persuade journalists to adhere to its purpose because political interests renders enticing rewards. The best solution for this is a legislation that will define boundaries and limitation to journalists when it comes to political reporting. Although some journalists would react to legislative constraints citing independence of journalism, it would still be best to have legislative standards that will prevent biases and partisan. Furthermore, publishing and media companies should also develop their own

initiative to practice non-partisan reporting in order for them to sustain integrity and credibility.

Conclusion

Journalism is the beacon of truth, at least for the majority of the society. Having said so, the general public relies on journalism to deliver news that best depicts honesty, credibility and integrity. If the modern American journalism resist in practicing the right principles and follow ethics of honest reporting, the general public is then deprived of its right to know the real facts about their surroundings. Therefore, the principles of truth and having sense of accountability are the sound principle that journalism has to thrive upon.

Works Cited

Keeler, John D., William Brown, and Douglas Tarpley. " Chapter 5: Ethics." American Journalism: History, Principles, Practices. Ed. William D. Sloan, and Lisa M. Parcell. New York, USA: McFarland, 2002. 44-54. Print.