

Compare and contrast the social responsibility theory

[Experience](#), [Responsibility](#)



The press also known as the fourth estate plays a very critical role in educating, informing, entertaining and bridging the gap between the mass community and the executive, judicial and legislative. Hence what is more essential is its stance on policy and choice of theory, which is a system of law like propositions and set of ideas that guide action or predict a consequence.

The purpose of this research is to compare, that is to put side by side and to contrast, and that is state the difference between the Authoritarian theory with the socialresponsibilitytheory of the press. There is not much of a hint of comparison between the Authoritarian theory and the social responsibility theory, in that the heart beat of the authoritarian theory is designed to protect the status quo and existing social order mainly biased towards the ruling elite and those that are in authority.

The authoritarian press is under state control and heaps more thrust with the public media while the social responsibility of the press thrives on democracy and principles of public service media which seek to cater for minorities, the so called mass community and ordinary people. Unlike the authoritarian theory of the press, the social responsibility avenue directly gets its funding from the public through licensing and this is true mainly for the electronic media.

The authoritarian on one hand regards the role of the press to be that of nation building and propaganda and as a mouth piece for the ones in authority, hence the main source of funding is the ruling elite and the government. Both the authoritarian and social responsibility theory seek to

communicate to an audience, communication is absolutely essential to effective leadership and press. The leader must be able to share knowledge and ideas to transmit a sense of urgency and enthusiasm to others. If a leader can't get a message across clearly and motivate others to act on it, then having a message doesn't even matter.

This is the true hammer and nail of the authoritarian set by political leaders due to the reality that repetition is the rule of long and deep lasting impressions. This is a propagandist mode of communication to drive home a particular message. The state sets up censorship boards and agents to regulate and monitor the operations of the media in the authoritarian theory, issues of censorship and punishment for diversion from rules that are set by political leaders and authorities are central in this theory.

It thrives on censorship and repression of freedom of expression as exemplified by the enactment of the draconian laws such as Public Order and Security Act chapter 11: 7 (POSA), the Access To Information and Protection of Privacy Act Chapter 10: 27 (AIPPA), The Broadcasting Services Act Chapter 12: 06 and the Criminal Law (Codification and reform) Act in the nation of Zimbabwe. Basically there is no diversity on coverage, which is catering for all tastes and interests. The social responsibility theory of the press however is not rigid and allows for freedom of expression and thus catering for all tastes and interests.

The socially responsible press takes something complicated and makes it simple to understand to layman, compared to the authoritarian which propagandises all information and feeds the masses with what the ruling

elite desires to propagate that is government policy. I would like to believe that the authoritarian believes audiences are passive partakers of information whereas the social responsibility adheres to the reality that people are active consumers and do have a choice of what media to consume.

This is seen with the geographical universality of provision and reception, thus encouraging competition in programs and freedom to broadcasters, more over there is room for feedback and diversity; while the authoritarian to a lesser degree diversifies to push government policy and agenda. The major criticism against the authoritarian theory is that it does not create a viable atmosphere and environment for free expression and diversity which are essential elements for any democratic and free society; hence the principles for the social responsibility theory may differ from country to country.

What is important to understand is that the public service concept is opposed to the authoritarian, propagandist mode. Radio dialogue and other community radio initiatives are using legitimate means of giving people a real taste of media diversity and thus getting them involved; They bring members of the community together, record their discussions and distribute this material on CD's. When people hear themselves they get excited about media issues. Authoritarian control tended to be exercised in arbitrary, erratic ways.

Sometimes, considerable freedom might exist to publicize minority viewpoints and culture as long as authorities don't perceive a direct threat to

their power. Unlike social responsibility theory, authoritarian theory doesn't prioritize cultivation of a homogeneous, national culture. It only requires acquiescence (compliance) to governing elite. This perspective also held that ruthless elites could use media as a means of gaining personal political power. These demagogues could manipulate media to transmit propaganda to fuel hatred and fear among a majority, unite them against minorities, e. g. s Hitler used the media to arouse hatred against the Jews. The Social Responsibility Theory of the Press, emphasize the need for an independent press that scrutinizes other social institutions and provides objective, accurate news reports. The most innovative feature of Social Responsibility theory was its call for media to be responsible for fostering productive and creative " Great Communities". It said that media should do this by prioritizing cultural pluralism- by becoming the voice of all the people- not just elite groups or groups that had dominated national, regional or local culture in the past.

Dennis McQuail in 1987 summarized the basic principles of social responsibility theory as the following: 1. Media should accept and fulfil certain obligations to society. 2. These obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity and balance. 3. in accepting and applying these obligations, media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions. 4. the media should avoid whatever might lead to crime, violence or civil disorder or give offense to minority groups. . the media as a whole should be pluralist and reflect the diversity of their society, giving access to various points of view and to rights of reply. 6. Society and the

public have a right to expect high standards of performance and intervention can be justified to secure the public good. 7. Journalists and media professionals should be accountable to society as well as to employers and the market. Social Responsibility theory has proved quite durable. Most journalists take seriously the central values of social Responsibility theory such as pluralism and cultural diversity; However the state of affairs is not so with the authoritarian theory of the press. Unlike the Authoritarian theory, the social responsibility theory of the press takes heed and pays cognisance to people's right to true information- the right of people to express themselves freely through the media of communication and the journalistic dedication to objective reality; - this aims to provide public with adequate material to facilitate the formation of an accurate and comprehensive picture of the world.

The journalist's social responsibility is also of the essence, this emphasizes the fact that journalistic information is social good not just a commodity. When it comes to the Journalist's professional integrity; dealing especially with rights not to work against personal conviction and other matters of personal ethics. The social responsibility theory of the press has respect for such, while the Authoritarian theory has no regard for such values and ethics. Ethics is a practise of moral behaviour by individuals, governments and social institutions.

Ethics is more to do with principles concerning the rights and wrong of conduct, principles which have some reason theoretical basis which therefore apply objectively and impartially. Besley & Chadwich 1992 The

Social responsibility theory of the press in contrast to the Authoritarian theory has respect for, Public access and participation, this includes the right of rectification and reply, respect for privacy and Human Dignity, respect for the Public interest.

This relates to respect for the national community, in democratic institutions and public morals, respect of Universal Values and diversity of cultures. This calls for respect for human rights, social progress, national liberation, peace, democracy, elimination of War and other great evils confronting humanity. This calls for abstention from justifying aggression, arms proliferation, violence, hatred, discrimination, promotion of a New World information and communication order. This is directed especially at the need for decolonization and democratization of information and communication.

After all said and done my conviction is that the Authoritarian theory in contrast with Social Responsibility theory does not encourage media practitioners to see themselves as front-line participants in the battle to preserve democracy in a world drifting relentlessly toward tyranny. This gives rise and room to fear amongst media operators and infringes on the right of freedom of expression, the list of people who have been arrested for exercising their right to freedom of expression is long.

In December 2008, for example, Jestina Mukoko, Director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project, was abducted and tortured. Members of Woman of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) are harassed, intimidated, assaulted and arrested on a regular basis. Okay Machisa, the Executive Director of Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZIMRIGHTS) was arrested in March 2010 for organising

reflections - an exhibition of pictures of victims of the 2008 political violence. Geoff Nyarota was arrested for exposing some foul play at the Mazda industry formerly Ford motors.