

# Merrill's arguments in "the professionalization of journalism" against profession...

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Merrill's arguments in "The Professionalization of Journalism" against professionalizing journalism. What is a profession? The Oxford English Dictionary defines professions as that way of life/manner of making a living that involves the application of a specialized knowledge of particular subjects, field, or science to fee-paying clientele. Examples of professions include nursing, architecture, medicine and engineering.

Although journalism has some characteristics of a profession, for Merrill it cannot be considered a profession due to the fact that journalists do not have a direct relationship with their clients, there are no entry requirements and they do not follow a prescribed code of ethics or a standard way by which their behavior is judged against/regulated. Also, Merrill asserts that journalists do not possess one specialized body of knowledge but rather command many disciplines.

If journalists came from only one shared common knowledge, this would restrict the perspectives, conduct and values of their work. Merrill believes that while the professionalization of journalism does deter unprofessional practices, university journalism programs aimed at creating set standard journalistic practices "squash creativity and inquisitiveness" in the budding journalist. For Merrill, if journalists were organized into a self-regulating professional body, they would turn increasingly inward and be more concerned about protecting their self-interests than the interests of citizens.

American journalists believe that one day journalism will become a profession according to the definition proposed by Merrill and supporters of the profession, that professionalization will come about by journalists

accepting an individual sense of responsibility. Rivers and Schramm (1969) state that " you cannot have both individual concepts of responsibility and a professional concept of responsibility" because a professional concept of responsibility would squash substandard concepts and the professionals would judge behavior against them, setting them as standard ideal.

Daniel agrees that journalism is not a profession and that education for journalism would make it a true profession. A professional journalism program is one which prepares a student to be a professional journalist. How a journalist is educated is very important. Barrett (insert year of publication here) blamed the poor educational system in the United States for not aiding and uplifting the profession. In recent times however, journalistic accreditation in universities is becoming standardized, although there are individuals who are not interested in a journalistic education at all.

With formal journalism education, more candidates will and can be hired in the publishing, broadcasting and advertising media. Merrill agrees with Louis Lyons, a journalist of 20 years, that journalism schools are wasting time, effort and money on professional courses because for them, a journalistic education does not add to a student's basic general education. Merrill concluded that journalistic education can cause a student not to be creative and think for himself (causing a robot-like automatic reaction) and further it discourages unprofessionalism.

Despite that statement however, he believes that not all students become robots out of the education system as there are some professors who encourage students to think outside of the box, though they themselves

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believe, and are involve in journalistic education. There are however, students and professors who bypass journalistic education as their background prior to engaging in journalism as a profession, nevertheless they were able to succeed as journalists. Wasserstrom's argument in "Lawyers as Professionals: Some Moral Issues" In the article, " Lawyers as Professionals", Richard A.

Wasserstrom examined two moral criticisms of lawyers: 1) the relationship between the lawyer and the world in general where he proposes the relationship is sometimes unethical and more often immoral and 2) the special kind of relationship between the lawyer and the client. For Wasserstrom, the lawyer-client relationship is morally objectionable because it is a relationship which the lawyer dominates allowing inevitably for a situation where the lawyer treats the client in both an impersonal and a paternalistic fashion. He sees the lawyer as a professional, one that is different from other professionals.

He sees this profession to be more vulnerable to moral criticism than any other. In the Watergate affair, it was noted that most of the persons involved in the cover-up were lawyers. Wasserstrom proposes that it is not an accident, the fact that most of the characters involved belonged to the legal profession; the fact is, lawyers see society through the eyes of one who understands the labyrinth of legalities which made it rather easy for them to manipulate the affair and do what they have done. For him, this was a good example of noting the intricacies of the lawyering profession, particularly professionalism.

Wasserstrom holds that the core of the problem is professionalism and its role-differentiated behavior. 'Role-differentiation' refers to situations in which one's moral response will vary depending upon whether one is acting in a personal capacity or in a professional, representative one. In one of his examples, he illustrates that the way a parent would distribute assets among children who are 'strangers' would be morally different if it was being distributed among children whom they have reared and 'knew' ??? those they hold dear.

He summed it up in the following phrase: "the role differentiated character of the situation alters the relevant moral point of view enormously". The role differentiated behavior displayed in this example is similar to the stance that would be taken by a lawyer to his client as against someone who is not his client. The lawyer as a professional possesses certain skills and knowledge and has a duty to legally represent and defend his client with limits; someone who is not a lawyer cannot and is not obligated to do so.

Wassestrom admires (and said most people do as well) how lawyers are able to put on a "vigorous and persuasive" defense for the client even if they know their own client is guilty against the lawyer/defendant the opposing party who the lawyers know is innocent. One example of a role-differentiated obligation of a lawyer which Wasserstrom states is wrong is that of the case law in California which allows the defendant in a rape case to secure an order from the court requiring the laintiff to submit to a psychiatric examination before trial. This is done in the hope that the results may help to prove that the defendant did not perform the act. A pretrial of this kind is

not available for any other crime and Wasserstrom argues that no special provision should be made for any particular case. Consider this issues that set a moral dilemma to lawyers: Should lawyers refuse to draft a will leaving bequests to children who opposed the war in Vietnam because he thinks it is wrong?

Or should a lawyer refuse to advise a wealthy client of a tax loophole provided for only a few wealthy taxpayers because it seems unfair?

Wasserstrom does not think a lawyer should turn aside these seemingly difficult moral dilemmas, he said the job of the lawyer is not to "approve or disapprove" the character of his client or to judge the client's cause, but to represent his or her interest. He further states that the "attorney's compliant" in such sample cases of moral dilemmas are not with the client but with the laws of inheritance and the Internal Revenue Code.

Wasserstrom says that the role-differentiated behavior of the lawyer often makes it both inappropriate and excessive for the person in a particular role to put to one side, considerations of various moral and social implications and issues must be taken on despite the fact that from the lawyer's side, in terms of defending the case, they might seem irrelevant. He said if he is wrong about these, there are four things which seem to be true and important: ??? If accepted, supportive arguments to the role-differentiated amorality of the lawyer can succeed; For the system to work professionals must have certain character traits; ??? the verbal role-differentiated behavior of the lawyer raise questions about the lawyer's integrity, this makes the role-differentiated behavior of lawyers different from that of other

professionals; and ??? how the lawyer thinks and acts forms his person and this may be acceptable to the system. Wasserstrom states that the problem of interpersonal relationship between the client and the lawyer is not a good one, as the client is not treated with the respect he deserves in some cases.

The lawyer might be too preoccupied with the interests of the client and therefore the client does not get the service he morally deserves. There is also inequality, though this is inevitable, however, the relationship should be one in which the professional is in control. The professional is a possessor of excessive knowledge and skills which the client does not possess, therefore the client is unable to effectively evaluate or criticize the performance of the professional. Assessment and criticism via peer review is carried out by members of the profession itself.

Even if the client has those qualities the professional would likely believe that the client is incompetent to look after his/her own interests. One profession Wasserstrom singles out is a psychiatrist who sees the patient as sick and needs a professional who is well to treat him/her. That conception is claimed as wrong as most times those cases are "merely cases of different but rationale behavior". The mental illness is a barrier to functionality and relevance and seeking help is an act taken on by professionals "to ensure and enhance their ability to function as professionals".

He believes that this profession practice needs a review and is due for change. To conclude, Wasserstrom says that legal language should be simplified to make it more understandable in order for lay persons to be able to solve more problems on their own. He said there may have to be a change

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in the way in which lawyers are educated and trained in terms of client-lawyer relationship. Other issues that he also proposes are due for change/review include role-differentiation behavior lawyers and de-professionalization of the lawyering profession.