

Media and censorship

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The media is everywhere you turn. The media can be found in various forms such as newspapers, magazines, television, and radio. In the process of capturing ratings, whom is the media hurting more? Is it people who are accused of a crime, such as O. J. Simpson, or is it the American public's stupidity for believing everything they hear. The job of the media should be to find the truth and tell it to the people. The reporters' work ought to be like a pane of glass, flawlessly clear and unspotted, through which the reader might view the important events of the day.

The media has the power to inform the public, but often the information it receives is distorted. The media has the power, although indirect, to influence people's opinions; it has shaped our view of society and the process by which we choose our leaders, make our rules, and construct our values. The media promotes what it believes is easiest for the public to accept, but in the process it fails to cover the issues appropriately.

The media can make us wiser, fuller, and more aware. Unfortunately, the media's tendencies veer more towards clouding the public's judgments, and causing confusion and disillusionment. Therefore, limitations greatly need to be placed upon the United States Constitution in regard to freedom speech and of the press because presently the media is doing more harm than good.

In general, censorship is the regulation and control of information and ideas that are circulated among people within a society. It refers to the examination of electronic and print media for the purposes of altering and/or suppressing parts of the media thought to be inappropriate and/or offensive

(Microsoft Encarta) The implication of censorship is that it is necessary for the protection of the viewing public.

Pornography, praise of crime, gangs, terrorism, subversive, violations of national security, morality, opposition to the political or religious establishment are materials that can be exchanged through the above mentioned media, and are subjected to censorship.

Throughout history there have been attempts to censor what people can read, write, speak, create, listen to and view. The verb "to censor" is defined in Webster's Dictionary as "to alter, delete, or ban completely after examination." One attempt to regulate the media came when the Fairness Doctrine was established in 1934. This doctrine was instituted to ensure that publicly owned television and radio stations would not be biased and would not promote their own views.

The Federal Communications Council (FCC) was created to enforce this doctrine. In 1987, under the Reagan Administration, the Fairness Doctrine was revoked. (Hull) The role of the FCC changed, therefore evolving to monitor the decency of materials presented on the radio and television. With the abolishment of the Fairness Doctrine, the window for controversial journalists was opened. Thus, America saw the emergence of two strong willed personalities – Rush Limbaugh and Howard Stern (Green).

The Communication Decency Act (CDA) adopted in 1996, is the most important recent development in the United States, regarding censorship and the Internet. The CDA made it an illegal crime to send "indecent material by the Internet into others computers" (Wilkins, 5). "Everyone has <https://assignbuster.com/media-and-censorship/>

the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19) The Freedom of expression is a right that " shall not be subject to prior censorship." (The American Convention on Human Rights states, Article 13).

International laws allow governments to restrict the free flow of information as a way of protecting confidential data such as national security or public ethics. Materials should be subjected to a certain level of examination inline with international standards before it is published, and prior to censorship, which normally includes inquiry whether there are various ways to protect those interests that are less restrictive of the right to free expression.

Society has been affected and will continue to be affected not only by television but the media in general. Television is a constant form of entertainment and occasionally an average source of news. However, television has been blamed for much of societies flaws because it is easy to attribute it to violence in the media and a social of lack of initiative. Television is a small part of a much larger societal picture and should be weighed as such.

Television is a multi billion-dollar industry. The primary concern of the television industry is to net a profit and then entertain the consumers. The network with the highest rating means more profit the network. Censorship is not only controversial but also quite difficult to implement. Who decides

what is inappropriate or too violent, such vague terminology would be difficult to define.

For many years the film industry has practiced a form of self-censorship. Increasing demands from the public forced the industry to develop a system classification in 1968. (Microsoft Encarta) The major networks voluntarily adhere to a self-regulating system this is in conjunction with regulations established by the Federal Communications Commission. The V-chip is the most current weapon in the TV censorship battle. Parents are able to block certain channels so that children are not exposed to violent programming. (Aversa)

Generally, knowledge is disseminated in the form of films, publications, computer games, and Internet content, and the Internet is considered the main media via which information can be shared and accessed easily. The Internet is the embodiment of the Information era, and the explosive growth of the Internet brought all corners of the world to reach anyone with a computer, by surfing through a seemingly endless library of information.

The rules governing the Internet are to some extent less strict than those controlling the media that are widely accessible to the masses like publications and broadcast. Computer Bulletin Boards Systems (BBS) are operated by individuals, or organizations. The published material is usually topic oriented presenting information on interests and hobbies, while BBS systems may also contain adult oriented material, and attempts are exerted to limit minors from accessing the information enclosed in those systems. (Electronic Frontier Foundation)

As digital technology is growing, liberties in cyberspace and in publications are threatened by government and corporate practices. According to some committees, foundations and movements, censorship is a dangerous weapon in the hands of governments. Some of these foundations are: The Free Software Foundation, The Citizens Internet Empowerment Coalition (CIEC), Electronic frontier foundation (EFF), The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). (Microsoft Encarta)

In conclusion, how should the media be regulated? Many people feel that the solution to the problem is to create a new media doctrine of self-restraint. Opponents of this feel that this would alter the information and this country would evolve into a dictatorship. But, if something is not done soon, who know what will happen? If the media does not establish an internal system of self-regulation, the government will surely intrude; this is a step that will begin with regulation and ultimately lead to total censorship. Freedom of the press is the cornerstone of America's image of itself. The question of free speech is arguably one of the most complex of all constitutional issues.

To solve the problem, there must be a partnership between the media and the American public. If the public commits to not wanting the lies and gossip, the media is not going to try to feed it to them; but as America continues to be fascinated by lies and gossip, then the press will continue to print it. The likelihood of this occurring is very slim.

The government, therefore, needs to step in. Special amendments to the Constitution regarding the right to freedom of press and speech need to be put in place in order to avoid such conflicts in the future. While it should not

be the government's position to decide what kind of information the media may release, unfortunately no other medium currently exists through which this information can be sifted.

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