PART TWO

Democracy

4

The Principles and Practice of Democracy

Democracy means popular sovereignty. In whatever particular form it might take, a democratic community represents the triumph of the rule of the many over rule by the few. Unlike monarchies, where individuals or an individual family rules, or oligarchies, where a small group of individuals rule, democracies promise rule by the people.[1]

While different theories of democracy define popular sovereignty in different ways, they almost always agree on its two basic constituents: equality and liberty. Equality implies identical or substantively similar opportunities to participate in the decision-making processes through which the people rule themselves—everyone gets to vote, for example, and one vote is worth no more than another. Liberty denotes the right of mutual influence—freedom of communication, for example, affords everyone, speakers and listeners alike, the benefits of uncoerced debate and discussion. Taken together, these basic ideals—popular control based on a commitment to political equality and individual liberty—amount to what Thomas Christiano terms a "minimal conception of democracy in modern societies" (1996, 4). They provide a foundation on which to build a more detailed account of what democracy means.

Detailed accounts of democracy vary considerably, of course, particularly with regard to, as David Held puts it, the "prerequisites of *successful* 'rule by the people'" (2006, 2). For some, democracy succeeds only when citizens rule themselves by participating directly in the community's day-to-day affairs. For others, democracy works best when citizens defer to elected officials whose experience and expertise qualify them to deal with the difficult and time-consuming demands of self-governance. But whatever the choice or compromise, there exists today a more or less united commitment to the general idea of democracy. As Held reminds us, this stands in stark contrast to the vast expanse

of human history, roughly between the time of the city-states of ancient Athens in the fifth century BC and the eighteenth-century revolutions in France and the United States, when the "great majority of political thinkers" were "highly critical of the theory and practice of democracy" (1987, 1).

If hardly anyone today disputes democracy as a worthy goal, not everyone expects it to apply to their own decisions and activities. Newspaper editors, to take an example close to home, often champion democratic values on their editorial pages but seldom apply those values in their own newsrooms. And editors usually see no irony in the gap between what they preach and what they practice, because for them democracy denotes a form of government and not a set of requirements aimed at private persons and their private enterprises. Others, however, view democracy more expansively. They regard it as a social, organizational, and institutional ideal that extends far beyond the realm of government in precisely the way George Seldes had in mind more than sixty years ago when he argued that freedom of the press means "letting the editorial staff run the newspaper" (1938, 382).[2]

What democracy means, then, depends on answers to questions about its proper domain: Where and when do we expect to find democratic arrangements? And answers to questions about democracy's domain rest ultimately on responses to two larger and related inquires about the prospects for democracy. The first concerns the principles of democracy: What, precisely, are democratic ideals and the grounds for them? The second concerns the practice of democracy: How should these ideals apply?

There are, obviously, important differences between the abstract and philosophical inquiries into the principles of democracy and the applied and concrete inquiries into the practice of democracy. But there are important connections as well. Just as an articulation of the principles of democracy needs to anticipate the forms of practice it implies, a description of the practice of democracy needs to reference the principles that inform it. It makes little sense to put forth a set of ideals so lofty and so unrealistic that no form of practice could ever approximate it. Paolo Mancini calls this "exacerbated normativism" (1996), and it happens whenever ideals or norms—about democracy, the press, or any human endeavor—bear little or no relation to cultural, sociological, historical, and other basically empirical accounts of the conditions and circumstances of everyday life. Whatever the purity of the principles that guide it, no form of democracy, to misappropriate one of Bertrand Russell's choice phrases, "can escape from the dreary exile of the actual world" (quoted in Barber 1996, 349).

But it also makes little sense to posit a set of ideals so closely aligned with current arrangements that it does little more than describe them. It defeats the purpose of any normative theory when no meaningful distinction exists between "what is" and "what ought to be." Properly conceived, a normative theory

of democracy, like a normative theory of the media, explains and inspires. It amounts to the kind of "embedded utopianism," as Held describes his brand of political theory, that includes an examination of "where we are" as well as an analysis of "what might be" (1995, 286). It takes the "actual world" into account, of course, but it also offers an assessment of what it would take to make that world a little better, a little less dreary.

Thus our approach to democracy straddles the line between normative and empirical questions. We offer an account of democracy that focuses on a handful of principles that at a certain level of abstraction highlight the distinctive charter of any democratic community, but an account that indicates how in practice the same principles can become the basis for distinguishing between one democratic community and another. We begin with a quick sketch of the two principal traditions in modern democratic thought, which in turn provides a general framework for reviewing four broadly distinguishable models or theories of democracy. We then look at a handful of topics that vivify the complexity of the relationship between media and democracy: (1) the balance between liberty and equality, (2) the connection between community and communication, and (3) the nature of public opinion and popular consent. We conclude with a discussion of where divergent principles of democracy have converged in recent years and what this convergence might mean for new forms of democratic practice and new opportunities for public communication.

Two Traditions of Modern Democratic Thought

Just as democracy enjoys many sources of inspiration, it manifests itself in a variety of ways, as Held (2006) illustrates with his several models of democracy. But today's variants, rooted in the political turmoil of the French and American revolutions, are best understood with reference to two broadly distinguishable traditions in modern democratic thought, what Habermas (1996b) describes as the "two received views of democratic politics": civic republicanism and procedural liberalism. Although both traditions deal comprehensively with basic questions of rights and liberties, popular consent, and political authority, they differ in their approach to these questions and in their final assessment of what rule by the people means. They differ, that is, not in identifying the fundamental requirements of self-governance but in their definitions of these requirements and in the priority they assign them.

Civic republicanism, a Continental brand of democracy rooted in the French Revolution and the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, James Harrington, and others, emphasizes the importance of common goals and shared values. It expects the state to play a key role in securing and sustaining what is shared and valued, namely, the "commonwealth." Procedural liberalism, of Anglo-American origins

and indebted to the ideas of John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and others, accentuates the interests of free and autonomous individuals. It looks to the state to protect the means, usually defined in marketplace terms, by which individuals can pursue their own ends. Liberalism offers a democracy of means, a deontological view of community that focuses on individual ends that are known prior to, and independent of, any associations between and among individuals. Republicanism presents a democracy of ends, a teleological view of community that regards a life in common as the best way to discover a good together that we could not know alone.

Republicanism and liberalism differ not simply with regard to the role of the state but more basically on the very nature of the political process. A republican conception of politics takes seriously each citizen's commitment to a *civic* culture that transcends individual preferences and private interests. Through what Habermas calls "civic self-determination," individuals become "politically autonomous authors of a community of free and equal persons" (1996b, 22). A liberal conception of politics, however, rests on an essentially procedural mechanism designed to facilitate the expression of individual preferences. Habermas describes the procedure that characterizes politics in the liberal tradition as a "market-structured network of interactions among private persons" (21). Political autonomy serves to separate citizens in order to protect "their opportunity to assert their private interests," which "are finally aggregated into a political will" (22).

Indeed, the importance of understanding the essence of democracy in the liberal tradition "as a process of aggregating the preferences of citizens in choosing public officials and policies" prompts Iris Young (2000, 19) to describe liberalism as the "aggregative model" of democracy, which she distinguishes from the "deliberative model" of democracy that characterizes politics and political participation in the republican tradition. The goal of "democratic decision making" in the aggregative model, Young explains, is "to decide what leaders, rules, and policies will best correspond to the most widely and strongly held preferences." Democracy amounts to a "competitive process" through which individuals, acting alone or in concert with others, build support for what they want. The deliberative model of democracy rests on an entirely different premise. Rather than assuming that "ends and values are subjective . . . and exogenous to the political process" (22), as Young describes the basic assumption of the aggregative model, the republican tradition treats ends and values as products of public discussions. The deliberative model thus posits a mechanism for identifying and achieving common goals and shared values, such that, to return to Habermas's (1996b) conception of civic republicanism, political participation "obeys not the structure of market processes but the obstinate structures of public communication oriented to mutual understanding" (23).

Because the aggregative and deliberative models of democracy embrace different forms of political participation, they rely on different conceptions of freedom. And these different conceptions of freedom, along with the correspondingly different demands they make on the state, underscore "contrasting images of the citizen," which Habermas summarizes this way:

> According to the liberal view, the citizen's status is determined primarily according to negative rights they have vis-a-vis the state and other citizens. As bearers of these rights they enjoy the protection of the government, as long as they pursue their private interests within the boundaries drawn by legal statutes—and this includes protection against government interventions. Political rights, such as voting rights and free speech, have not only the same structure but also a similar meaning as civil rights that provide a space within which legal subjects are released from external compulsion. . . .
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> According to the republican view, the status of citizens is not determined by the model of negative liberties to which these citizens can lay claim as private persons. Rather, political rights—preeminently rights of political participation and communication—are positive liberties. They guarantee not freedom from external compulsion but the possibility of participation in a common praxis, through the exercise of which citizens can first make themselves into what they want to be—politically autonomous authors of a community of free and equal persons (1996b, 22).

No "actually existing" democracy, however, falls neatly within one tradition or the other. Democracies exist as an amalgamation of principles, a creative and even contradictory mix of ideas that defies the orthodoxies of any particular school of thought or body of literature. Even in societies with rich democratic traditions, the practice of democracy can vary considerably from one place to another, from one generation to the next. Crises of almost any kind, such as terrorism, war, popular unrest, corruption, financial instability, and natural disaster, can quickly alter the state's role and thereby redefine what it means to live in a democratic society. Liberalism and republicanism, therefore, represent "ideal types." They do not describe democracy as much as they provide an intellectual resource with which to examine and understand the logic and application of democratic principles. As counterpoised perspectives, understood normatively and not empirically, the ideals of liberalism and republicanism set forth a certain tension that might usefully inform the development of additional democratic models.

Four Models of Democracy

To expand and refine the aggregative and deliberative traditions of democracy, and to bring them closer to current arrangements in democratic societies, we

revise and reconfigure them into four discrete models: pluralist democracy, administrative democracy, civic democracy, and direct democracy. Although these four models, outlined in figure 1 and summarized below, hardly exhaust the range of democratic societies in the modern world, they provide a broad and accessible framework for examining the relationship between media and democracy. Still, models have their limits. Democracy will always be more complex, and more fluid, than the models used to depict it. Here and elsewhere, models of democracy need to be understood as heuristic devices; they invite thinking about the relationship(s) between different aspects of democracy. The models we settle on work in much the same way as Young says hers do (though without the depth and detail Young provides): "Each picks out features of existing democratic practices and systematizes them into a general account of an ideal democratic process" (18).

THE PLURALIST MODEL OF DEMOCRACY

Pluralist democracy, sometimes called "liberal-pluralism" or "interest-group" democracy, derives its legitimacy from the proposition that individuals can most effectively assert their interests and preferences by coming together in the form of groups, small and large, that compete with other groups in an effort to find or forge mutually satisfying policies and programs. These private groups, protected by the state and at the same time insulated from its coercive powers, compete in the marketplace in the same way other private enterprises compete—they seek popular support for their interests and for the resources needed to promote and secure those interests. Without discounting the danger of factions and the divisiveness associated with them, pluralists believe that a dispersion of power of this kind represents the best and most appropriate response to the conflicts that inevitably surface in any but the most homogenous of societies.

Because power in the pluralist tradition is dispersed and thus decentralized, rule by the people takes the form of a system of checks and balances. In other words, although pluralism, like other forms of democracy, recognizes the legitimate sovereignty of the people, it logically insists on limits to that sovereignty. To be sure, limited or shared sovereignty stands out as the "fundamental axiom" of the pluralist perspective, what Robert Dahl (1967), one of pluralism's most prominent theoreticians, regards as the very check on power that protects minorities from majorities: "Instead of a single center of sovereign power there must be multiple centers of power, none of which is or can be wholly sovereign. Although the only legitimate sovereign is the people . . . even the people ought never to be an absolute sovereign" (24).

Understood as a process, pluralism celebrates the freedom of choice individuals enjoy as they decide how and when to come together to pursue their shared interests and goals. Just as the marketplace emphasizes open competi-

Table 1. Models of Democracy

	Liberalism		Republicanism	
	Pluralist	Administrative	Civic	Direct
Sovereignty	Shared among competing interest groups; "multiple centers of power, none of which is . . . wholly sovereign" (Dahl 1967, 24)	Limited to substituting one government for another; "government *for* the people" but not "*by* the people" (Schumpeter 1942, 412)	Exercised collectively through appeals to common interests; "free and public reasoning among equals" (Cohen 1997b, 256)	Requires unmediated participation in public affairs "all of the people govern . . . at least some of the time" (Barber 1984, xiv)
Civil Society	Privatized, entrepreneurial; modeled on the marketplace	Highly circumscribed; limited to electing, replacing, or removing officials	Open and robust; public debate on the overall aims of society	Invites direct involvement in government; modeled on the New England town meeting
Liberty	Defined negatively; ascribed rather than achieved	Defined negatively; ascribed rather than achieved	Defined positively; affirmed by the state through its policies	Defined positively; affirmed by the state through its policies
Equality	Of opportunity; basically a private matter	In voting, guaranteed by the state	Of conditions, a public question of resource distribution	Of conditions, a public question of resource distribution
Public Opinion	Aggregation of individual and group opinions; based on a composite of private interests	Aggregation of individual and group opinions; based on a composite of private interests	Of public deliberation; outcome based on appeals to common goals and shared interests	Of public deliberation; outcome based on appeals to common goals and shared interests
Community	Instrumental or sentimental	Instrumental or sentimental	Constitutive	Constitutive
Journalism	Is partisan and segmented; mobilizes members of groups, advocates their interests	Covers crises and campaigns; acts as a check on power by alerting citizens to problems	Facilitates deliberation; accommodates and amplifies debate and discussion	Promotes dialogue; serves as a forum for debate and discussion

tion, with the expectation that what is good will prevail "over a long period of time" (Nozick 1974, 332), pluralism emphasizes "constant negotiation," with the expectation that the "consent of all will be won in the long run" (Dahl 1967, 24). Through the coalitions they form and the compromises they reach, groups of any size should be able to participate meaningfully in the give-and-take of pluralist politics. However unappealing a particular outcome might be, all groups in a pluralist democracy "have extensive opportunities for presenting their case and for negotiations that may produce a more acceptable alternative" (23). Accordingly, the pattern of power that characterizes the pluralist tradition, Dahl explains, "makes for a politics that depends more upon bargaining than hierarchy; that resolves conflicts more by negotiation and compromise than by

unilateral decision; that brings about reform more through mutual adjustment and gradual accumulation of incremental changes than through sweeping programs of comprehensive and coordinated reconstruction" (190).

The process of pluralism depends in part on a system of segmented media, such that each group and its interests has, as Baker describes the role of journalism in a pluralist democracy, "its own media for internal mobilization, external advocacy, and recruitment" (2002, 177). Pluralism neither requires nor precludes deliberation (Young 2000, 19). It instead depends on the media to sustain the "constructive conflict" that fuels the process of competition, which in turn provides citizens with the palette of choices they need for deciding how to best satisfy their needs and interests. This calls for a decidedly partisan press, a range of committed and even strident voices commensurate with the range of values and beliefs in the larger community. Particularly under conditions of "polarized pluralism," the term Hallin and Mancini (2004) use to characterize the "sharply polarized and conflictual politics" of Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece, media content tends to be more politically charged than dispassionate. Through their coverage of policies and politicians, issues and ideas, news media serve as "instruments of struggle" in the conflicts that animate pluralist politics. The "notion of a politically neutral journalism," Hallin and Mancini observe, "is less plausible where a wide range of competing world views contend" (2004, 61).

More focused on mobilization than information, journalism in a pluralist democracy promotes negotiation and facilitates the process of bargaining by amplifying agendas and by providing platforms for specialized analyses and commentaries (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Even when moderate forms of pluralism prevail, political communication resonates with interested insiders whose knowledge and political disposition qualify them for special attention—or devolves into content that treats politics as a conflict or game that may appeal to, but seldom mobilizes, most members of the community. Insofar as pluralism neither expects nor encourages widespread citizen participation, news media either tailor their news content to meet the needs of politically active readers, listeners, and viewers or they depoliticize the day's news in ways that make it appealing to a politically inactive but considerably larger audience.

While pluralists may or may not call on the state to formally support a particular plurality of media through subsidies or other forms of subvention, they invariably look to the state to safeguard the conditions for media competition. The pluralist tradition stands opposed to local, regional, and national media monopolies on the grounds that competing interests need competing media. It is less clear, however, what the pluralist position would be on the escalating concentration of media ownership. If media firms find it in their self-interest to provide a diversity of media properties, does it matter who owns any particular property? Is there any necessary relationship between plurality of ownership

and plurality of content? Baker puts it succinctly when he acknowledges that a lack of media "segmentation and diversity . . . could suppress constructive conflict and undermine pluralist politics" but wonders why "national or global ownership concentration fails to provide pluralistic diversity" (2002, 178). Given the logic of market economics, a "single conglomerate often supports separate media entities or titles espousing radically different views and serving different groups. This diversity expands the corporation's overall market coverage without forcing it to compete against itself" (177–78).

THE ADMINISTRATIVE MODEL OF DEMOCRACY

This model of democracy rests on the premise that ordinary citizens lack the interest and expertise to effectively govern themselves.[3] In any but perhaps the smallest of communities, democracy demands more knowledge than most citizens possess and more of a commitment to politics than most citizens find reasonable. What most democratic communities need, then, is an elite corps of popularly elected leaders whose dedication to public service ensures that matters of legislation and administration receive the serious and sustained attention they deserve.

Usually associated with the writings of Max Weber (1978) and Joseph Schumpeter (1942), the idea of an administrative democracy represents the triumph of leadership over citizenship. Held (2006) describes the circumscribed conception of citizenship and political participation that characterizes an administrative approach to democratic politics as a "highly restricted model of democracy" (159). In this model, citizens involve themselves in little more than the election and occasionally the ejection of political leaders. Popular sovereignty means, basically, "the ability of citizens to replace one government by another" (142). In an account of democracy that exhibits a "low estimation of the political and intellectual capacity of the average citizen" (Held 2006, 143), Schumpeter (1942, 256) calls for "government for the people" but decidedly not "government by the people." Democracy, he writes, "does not mean and cannot mean that the people actually rule in any obvious sense of the terms 'people' and 'rule.' Democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them" (284–85).

Whereas politics in the pluralist tradition relies on competition among groups, politics in the administrative tradition relies on competition among elites. In both traditions, citizens play the role of the consumer whose choices amount to a form of political expression. But to a much greater extent than the pluralist model, the administrative model conceives "the behavior of politicians as analogous to the activities of entrepreneurs competing for customers" (Held 1995, 174). And, significantly, this competition for customers—this appeal to voters—typically occurs only on the occasion of formal elections, which means

that citizens in an administrative democracy depend as much on the state as on the marketplace for opportunities to express themselves.

Given the administrative model's emphasis on the quality of elected officials, along with its assumptions about a more or less disengaged citizenry, expectations for the media's political role tend to focus on the coverage of crises and campaigns. Rather than trying to inform citizens about issues over which they have no direct and immediate control, journalism serves an administrative democracy by alerting the community to crises, especially ones involving corrupt or incompetent leaders. Journalists also provide detailed accounts of campaign promises and platforms, especially during the months preceding a contested election.

Coverage of crises and campaigns casts news media in the role of a "guardian of institutions," a phrase Walter Lippmann (1922) used long ago to capture the limited but important contribution journalism in the United States might make if Americans agreed to the "abandonment of the theory of the omni competent citizen" (229). Vincent Blasi makes much the same claim when he argues that journalism serves society not by keeping individuals informed but by keeping officials honest. This "checking value" of a free and unfettered press neither assumes nor requires a vision of democracy in which citizens participate in any regular way in the processes of self-government: "The checking value is premised upon a different vision—one in which the government is structured in such a way that built-in counterforces make it possible for citizens in most, but not all, periods to have the luxury to concern themselves almost exclusively with private pursuits" (1977, 561). But the most elaborate justification for a more modest role for news media in democratic politics comes in the form of John Zaller's "burglar alarm" standard for mainstream news, which, like the surveillance responsibility Blasi assigns to journalism, proposes that citizens "should be alerted to problems requiring attention and otherwise left to private concerns" (2003, 121).

Building on Michael Schudson's (1998) pessimistic but arguably realistic account of how citizenship works in practice, Zaller rejects what he calls the "full news" standard, the widely endorsed but presumably untenable view of journalism that holds "that the news should provide citizens with the basic information necessary to form and update opinions on all of the major issues of the day, including the performance of top officials" (2003, 110). In its place Zaller wants a standard of news quality that honors the interests and capacity for politics of what he and Schudson call the "monitorial citizen," the individual who wants to leave ample time for the joys of private life—"appreciating a sunset, humming a tune, or listening to the quiet breathing of a sleeping child" (Schudson 1998, 312)—but who nonetheless "scans the environment for events that require responses" (Zaller 2003, 118).

This standard, which Zaller believes "is not as far from current practice as from current ideals," calls on journalists to "rouse ordinary people to action" by providing "intensely focused, dramatic, and entertaining" coverage of important issues "at irregular intervals . . . and not too often" (2003, 122). A similar logic applies to coverage of elections and campaigns, which deserve media attention only under special circumstances. Zaller expects news media to "ignore races in which the opposition party mounts no serious challenge while paying close attention to those in which it does" (125). Although Zaller claims that the "needs of democracy are met by scrutinizing the records of those incumbents whose achievements are in doubt and reelecting the rest with minimal fuss" (124), it is unclear what role journalists should play when an incumbent's record warrants scrutiny but no challenger poses a serious threat to the incumbent's reelection.

THE CIVIC MODEL OF DEMOCRACY

This model of democracy stands in stark contrast to both the pluralist and administrative models, insofar as it rejects one of the core claims of the liberal-procedural tradition: that an aggregation of personal preferences constitutes a legitimate form of popular consent. Citizens convey consent in a civic democracy through a distinctively public judgment that may or may not coincide with the sum of the private choices individuals make in a pluralist or administrative democracy. Indeed, this public judgment, understood as both a process and an outcome, assumes "that citizens are prepared to be moved by reasons that may conflict with their antecedent preferences and interests" (Cohen 1997b, 413).

Joshua Cohen, one of the leading proponents of participatory forms of democracy, prefers to describe this public judgment as a form of "public reasoning." This term better captures the deliberative nature of a civic democracy than "public discussion," which too often encompasses the negotiating and bargaining that characterizes a pluralist democracy and even the act of voting that accounts for most of the citizen participation in an administrative democracy. Public reasoning, as Cohen defines it, denotes a political process through which citizens "defend and criticize institutions and programs in terms of considerations that others have reason to accept" and a democratic outcome with which citizens will "cooperate" and treat as "authoritative" (1997b, 413). Thus citizens in a civic democracy engage each other for the purpose of discovering or establishing genuinely common interests. They work together to identify "generalizable interests" and the "general will" these interests express, which transcends and supersedes the "will of all" as that might be known through a computation of "nongeneralizable interests." In different ways but for many of the same reasons, democracies in the liberal tradition discount what democracies in the republican tradition regard as a key presupposition about the nature

of reason and rationality in democratic politics: that individuals "can know a good in common they cannot know alone" (Sandel 1982, 183).

A civic democracy, it follows, depends on a civic culture that honors the importance of a robust public life and cultivates the commitment to citizenship needed to sustain it. Even when, due to the problem of scale, citizens cannot involve themselves directly and formally in the affairs of the state, their political will and therefore their sovereignty rest on their ability to respond collectively, on the basis of "free public reasoning among equals" (Cohen 1997b, 412), to questions about the community's needs and interests. Whether this collective response comes in the form of a consensus or a compromise, a public judgment arrived at through deliberation distinguishes itself from the kind of judgment individuals make in a pluralist or administrative democracy. Even "the results of voting among those who are committed to finding reasons that are persuasive to all are likely to differ from the results of an aggregation that proceeds in the absence of this commitment" (Cohen 1997a, 75).

The public reasoning that characterizes a civic democracy places a particular burden on journalism, which plays a significant role in not only keeping citizens informed but in maintaining a certain quality of public discourse. Journalism in a civic democracy promotes political participation by creating and managing opportunities for public deliberation. It provides what Nancy Fraser usefully describes as "an institutional arena for discursive interaction" (1997, 451), which benefits not only the citizens who participate in it but also the uninvolved though attentive public whose participation in public affairs might amount to little more than an occasional vote. Whatever their level of involvement, citizens in a civic democracy expect news media to play some role in "making the community work"—a popular refrain of the "public journalism" movement in the United States.

A loosely organized but widely diffused response to the increasingly cynical tone of political journalism and the alienation and apathy associated with it, public journalism posits a set of deliberative ideals for the press. It calls on journalists to find better ways of engaging readers, listeners, and viewers as citizens with a stake in the issues of the day. Public journalism emphasizes substance over strategy, especially in coverage of political campaigns, and treats problems in a manner that highlights the prospects for their resolution. True to the republican commitment to participatory forms of democracy, public journalism understands the purpose of the press as promoting and indeed improving the quality of public life—and not merely reporting on and complaining about it (Glasser and Lee 2002, 204–5, 203).

Journalism exhibits its interest in promoting and improving the quality of public life by being "thoughtfully discursive, not merely informative," and "adequately inclusive and comprehensive" (Baker 2002, 148–49). But inclusion does

not mean pandering to uninformed and uninterested individuals who remain by choice at the periphery of participatory democracies. It means instead accommodating different voices, different points of view, and even different forms of expression.[4] And comprehensiveness does not imply attention to administrative and legislative details, for which elected representatives, engaged in their own forms of public deliberation, assume responsibility. Neither does it impose on the press a more general responsibility to reconcile its coverage of the community with the inevitable fact that, as Christiano observes, "many individuals know a lot more than others about the kinds of policies that are in place and their effects as well as how these policies came about." The importance of specialized knowledge notwithstanding, what matters most in a civic democracy are the application of "basic moral insights" to questions concerning the future of the community—and discussion, analyses, and critiques of these insights. "Citizens must choose the overall aims of their society in order to exercise their rights of sovereignty and political equality," Christiano explains. "It is not essential for them to know how these aims are being carried out" (1996, 193).

THE DIRECT MODEL OF DEMOCRACY

This model takes self-government literally by accentuating unmediated involvement in public affairs. In the version developed by Benjamin Barber, a widely cited advocate of "strong" democracies and the "wide popular participation in politics" they imply, direct democracy envisions a politics of cooperation and concord. In such a politics, "human beings with variable but malleable natures and competing but overlapping interests can contrive to live together communally not only to their mutual advantage but also to the advantage of their mutuality" (Barber 1984, 8, 118). This model offers a revision of the civic model of democracy, moving the republican tradition away from representative forms of government and toward forms of democratic participation in which "all of the people govern themselves in at least some public matters at least some of the time" (xiv). While this model is often linked to ancient Greece and the city-states of Italy during the Renaissance, it is important to acknowledge the narrow and exclusive conceptions of citizenship that made it easier then to involve "everyone" in politics. Beyond that history, the direct model is even more meaningfully tied to the work of Rousseau and Marx. Most modern accounts of direct democracies, like Barber's, make it a point to navigate between "nostalgia for ancient, small scale republics" and the "monolithic collectivism that can turn large-scale direct democracy into plebiscitary tyranny" (25).

Direct democracies can be best explained with reference to what impedes their success: scale, inequality, and privatism (Barber 1984, 245). By rejecting any form of representation as a violation of popular sovereignty—as Rousseau famously warned, "The instant a people allows itself to be represented it loses

its freedom"—direct democracies, particularly in societies with a large territory and a heterogeneous population, invariably face the challenge of overcoming physical and social distance. One prominent solution, usually attributed to Marx (e.g., Marx 1970), involves supplanting representation with delegation:

> The smallest communities would administer their own affairs, elect delegates to larger administrative units (districts, towns) and these would, in turn, elect candidates to still larger areas of administration (the national delegation). This arrangement is known as the pyramid structure of direct democracy: all delegates are revocable, bound by the instructions of their constituency and organized into a pyramid of directly elected committees. (Held 2006, 115)

Citizens retain their sovereignty in a system of revocable delegates—or in any form of direct democracy—only, however, when each individual enjoys a full and equal opportunity to influence others.

Unlike democracies in the liberal tradition, where equality refers to the absence of any role for the state in promoting or limiting the opportunities for political participation—opportunities that individuals create for themselves—direct democracies proscribe any accumulation or distribution of resources, public or private, that would have the effect of creating unequal opportunities for political participation. This very different conception of equality affirms a direct democracy's aversion to private centers of power and the unaccountable political influence they wield. If a direct democracy, as Barber contends, "neither requires nor corresponds specifically with particular economic systems" (1984, 252–53), it nonetheless "proclaims the priority of the political over the economic" (257). And this priority calls into question the familiar liberal claim, especially popular among pluralists, that "politics is an instrument of private economic purpose" (253).

The priority of the political over the economic also calls into question the viability of a privately controlled media. While private ownership in general might not be an issue in a direct democracy, private control runs counter to the demand for public accountability that direct democracies impose on any institution that plays a public role or claims a public purpose. In a direct democracy, freedom of the press exists to serve the interests of the community, not the interests of journalists and their managers. The community, rather than market forces or even the newsroom itself, needs to be the final arbiter of journalism's quality and value. Alexander Meiklejohn put it succinctly when he rejected the popular libertarian view of freedom of expression, which regards individual liberty as sacrosanct. He embraced instead a view of freedom of speech and freedom of the press that favors what the community needs to hear over what individuals want to say: "What is essential is not that everyone shall speak, but that everything worth saying shall be said" (1960, 19). In this decidedly illiberal

view of freedom of expression, collective self-determination trumps individual self-expression (see Fiss 1996; Glasser and Gunther 2005), which is to say that freedom of speech matters more than the freedom of speakers.

Meiklejohn's conception of freedom of communication, built on the model of the New England town meeting, focuses on precisely what journalism in a direct democracy needs to facilitate: dialogue. Whereas dialogue implies deliberation, deliberation does not require dialogue;[5] and this becomes one important way of distinguishing civic from direct democracies. By virtue of its commitment to provide a forum for "everything worth saying," journalism in a direct democracy plays the role of parliamentarian. Not to be confused with a common carrier role for news media, in which journalists make few or no judgments about what they disseminate (journalism often plays the role of common carrier in its treatment of advertising), a parliamentarian role calls on the press to manage debate and discussion in a way that ensures that all issues receive a full and fair hearing.

If the conditions for dialogue and direct participation "are increasingly remote from the actual circumstances in which decisions have to be taken today," as Thompson claims (1995, 254), they nonetheless exist in any number of neighborhoods and small communities and in a wide variety of organizations and associations. Where and when a direct democracy remains a viable and desirable option, journalism promotes deliberation by providing a space for dialogue.

The Media and Democracy: Key Concepts

Among the many terms and concepts that have been used over the years to develop accounts of democracy and democratic practice, six stand out as particularly relevant to our interest in understanding media roles in democratic societies: liberty, equality, public opinion, popular consent, community, and communication. Rather than describing each separately, we pair them in a way that highlights some of the tensions and differences in democratic thought.

LIBERTY AND EQUALITY

All types of democracy embrace the principle of "equality of liberty," but in practice liberty and equality often denote very different, even competing, perspectives on power, participation, and responsibility. To be exact, liberty and equality, the cornerstones of any theory of democracy, intersect in ways that distinguish one type of democracy from another.

As a general proposition, democracy in the republican tradition assigns a priority to equality, while democracy in the liberal tradition assigns a priority to liberty. Although both traditions recognize the interdependence of liberty and equality, their difference in emphasis rests on very different assumptions about

how democracy works and what democratic participation demands. Specifically, liberalism celebrates individuals as separate and sovereign; the liberty of individuals protects their sovereignty and thus ensures their freedom of choice. Republicanism, to the contrary, regards the community as sovereign; equality among individuals ensures their opportunity to participate in their common affairs. By prioritizing liberty, liberalism defines basic rights and freedoms in terms of individual autonomy. By prioritizing equality, republicanism views the same rights and freedoms as enabling the formation of a community that is responsive to the needs and interests of its members.

Isaiah Berlin, in his widely cited essay on "Two Concepts of Liberty," captures a key tension in the two democratic traditions when he examines the differences between "negative" and "positive" freedom (1969, 124–30). Understood negatively, liberty means freedom-from; viewed positively, it means freedom-to. The shift in prepositions points to not only different conceptions of liberty but differences in the conditions liberty requires. Liberals understand liberty as requiring only the absence of certain conditions, typically the absence of coercion and other sources of external constraints on conduct. Republicans begin with this conception of liberty but add to it the requirement of empowerment, a requirement Hannah Arendt (1963) explains with reference to the distinction between being liberated and being free. Being liberated, according to Arendt, means being liberated from something, whereas being free implies the capacity to do other things. Although, schematically, the proposition "We are free from X to do Y" expresses the logic of positive freedom, Y in the republican tradition needs to be understood broadly and politically as the opportunity to participate in the life we live with others (MacCallum 1967, 314). This amounts to an important addendum to liberalism's emphasis on individual liberty, insofar as it moves freedom beyond merely permitting individuals to pursue their private ends and toward empowering individuals to achieve in common what they might not be able to achieve alone. For Arendt, then, freedom is not a means to individual ends but an end itself, a shared and common good, the "actual content" of which "is participation in public affairs, or admission to the public realm" (Arendt 1963, 25).

The private freedom liberalism promotes—private in the sense of being personal and idiosyncratic—celebrates the importance of freedom of choice, a type of freedom that may or may not require the assent of others. When freedom of choice involves embracing certain beliefs or expressing certain opinions, no one else is implicated. But when freedom involves the freedom to select one product over another, or one political issue rather than another, it assumes the availability of options provided by others. In either case, equality enters the equation only insofar as the state distances itself from any particular choice or

set of choices and thus treats individuals equally with regard for their preferences. Even when the state intervenes for purposes of creating or improving the conditions for more or better choices, it cannot favor any particular outcome.

The public freedom that republicans embrace—public in the sense of being shared and common—accentuates the importance of self-discovery through processes of public deliberation. It implies, as Christiano puts it, "a substantive commitment to promoting the common good" (1996, 29). By defining democratic participation as an essential feature of self-government, republicans presuppose an equal opportunity for individuals to engage each other in debate and discussion. The state creates and sustains equality as a way of conferring legitimacy on the outcome of democratic participation. This is what Christiano calls an "equality in resources" (in contradistinction to the "equality in well-being" that liberalism prefers). Equality, it follows, is a principle the state affirms with its policies, rather than an ideal it supports through its inaction.

With liberty as the bedrock value, democracies in the liberal tradition—for example, the pluralist and administrative models of democracy—seek to protect individuals in their "natural state," which, following the "respectable tradition of Locke," is all that individuals need to "order their actions and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit" (Nozick 1974, 9, 10, quoting Locke). Liberty means the absence of interference, especially interference from an overbearing state. Accordingly, Robert Nozick rails against the "illegitimate power of the state to enrich some persons at the expense of others" (272); his language illustrates the liberal—and especially the libertarian—aversion to any redistribution of resources and other measures aimed at securing opportunities for presumably disadvantaged individuals. Equality exists only as a commitment to fair play. The state—what Nozick would prefer to see as a minimal state with little more than "night watchman" responsibilities—honors individual initiative by limiting its role to the enforcement of agreements: "contracts, prohibitions on aggression, on theft, and so on" (272). Any grander conception of equality, any larger role for the state, would impose on individuals the state's preferences, which would, in turn, limit individual liberty and restrict freedom of choice.

With equality as the bedrock value, democracies in the republican tradition—for example, the civic and direct models of democracy—seek to achieve political parity among individuals as a precondition for individual liberty. Republicans take seriously the "effects of economics and social inequalities on political equality" (Christiano 1996, 142); hence the republican emphasis on the redistribution of resources and other measures aimed at creating and sustaining the conditions for inclusive political communication. An "egalitarian approach to democracy," Christiano writes, "requires that each person's *interests* ought to be given equal consideration in choosing the laws and policies of society" (53).

COMMUNITY AND COMMUNICATION

The liberal community works as a voluntary association that furthers its members' aims and interests. It can be strictly instrumental, in the sense that its members agree to associate because an association will advance each member's interests, or it can be sentimental, insofar as individuals with similar sentiments find some advantage in their collective pursuit of common ends. In either form, community in the liberal tradition exists for individuals and is not in any fundamental way definitive of them.

One important characteristic of the liberal community, then, is an unqualified faith in the individual to understand the world and to decide how best to live within it. Communities and other forms of voluntary associations might at times aid individuals in their understanding of the world, but such associations can never be a condition for that understanding: "society is to be understood by the individual mind, not by the tradition of community" (Waldron 1987, 135). The liberal community does not present itself as a good worthy of achievement but rather as a means to ends already known.

Just as individuals in the liberal tradition can prosper without the benefit of community, meaning in the liberal tradition can exist without the benefit of communication. Meaning, like opinions, is the property of the individual mind; it is something individuals have. From Locke and the Enlightenment we inherit what Carey (1975) appropriately describes as a "transmission" or "transportation" model of communication, where meaning is to communication what freight is to a train: one simply transports the other. In a liberal community, individuals are entitled to understand the world in their own ways and to express those understandings. But there is no corollary right to communicate what is publicly expressed if by communication we mean transmission or transportation.

Communication as transportation is, logically, an aspect of commerce, which is privileged in the same way—or for basically the same reasons—as any private transaction. Unlike "free" expression, which can flourish in the absence of suppression by the state, communication can flourish only as it succeeds in the marketplace. Accordingly, individuals in a liberal society only have the right to speak *in* public; to speak *to* the public requires communication, and communication is not a public right but a private privilege.

Community in the republican tradition can be fairly termed "constitutive," in the sense that it represents an opportunity for individuals to know themselves through their association with others. It is constitutive insofar as it views individuals "as constituted by and at the same time constitutive of a process of intersubjective interactions" (Cornell 1985, 297). The community and the individuals who comprise it are in reciprocal relation to one another, a process

that requires the community to be substantively democratic. Community life is not, then, what democracy brings about but what democracy is.

Communication in this tradition falls within the domain of culture, not commerce. Individuals turn to communication not only for purposes of exchanging ideas, goods, and services but to discover common goals and shared interests. Identity and political purpose are the consequence of communication. Communication thus needs protection not as a means to unknown ends but as an end in itself. The freedom to communicate is therefore best understood positively as the freedom to engage others, an individual liberty defined and defended with reference to the power of community to transform individual self-interest into a form of collective self-interest. Freedom of communication is not, it follows, simply or narrowly an individual right but more broadly a public commitment intended to cultivate, as Michael Sandel puts it, "the shared self-understanding necessary to community in the formative, constitutive sense" (1984, 93).

PUBLIC OPINION AND POPULAR CONSENT

Liberals view opinions as personal property; opinions belong to individuals. These essentially private preferences become public only through some form of *publicity,* the noun we use to denote the process through which the private becomes public. Public opinion, therefore, represents a full account, a broad summary, or at least a well-constructed composite of individual opinions. In modern times, it usually means the publication of the results of public opinion polls.

Polls illustrate, literally and figuratively, the logic of public opinion in the liberal tradition. Public opinion polls legitimize a view of democracy that celebrates the importance of self-determination, self-expression, and self-interest. They vivify the political authority of the citizenry by affirming the viability of each individual, separate and sovereign, as the locus of democratic power. To be sure, the use of polls as a measure of public opinion began, at least with the pioneering work of George Gallup, as an effort to combat the disproportionate and arguably undemocratic influence of special interest groups. Gallup applied to public opinion the techniques of consumer preference research, which he developed in his master's thesis (1925) and then refined in his doctoral dissertation (1928), as an act of social reform. He wanted to bring about a "truer democracy" by going directly to the "voice of the people." By recognizing the value of individual opinion and by granting everyone, at least statistically, an equal opportunity to be heard, polls foster an entirely open and egalitarian form of democracy (Salmon and Glasser, 1995).

In their recent defense of the use of surveys of large samples of citizens as a reasonable measure of collective public opinion, Benjamin Page and Rob-

ert Shapiro make the point that the opinions of individuals add up to public opinion in ways that transform instances of individual ignorance into a kind of collective wisdom. While acknowledging that any individual's opinion on a given topic at a given point in time might lack the rationality that Page and Shapiro believe characterizes public opinion, they argue that an individual's policy preferences over time exhibit a central tendency; and this central tendency shows that a stable, reasonable, coherent, and ascertainable opinion can be added to other stable, reasonable, coherent and ascertainable opinions in ways that yield "rational public opinion." Despite "the evidence that most individual Americans have only a limited knowledge of politics . . . and that individuals' expressions of policy preferences vary markedly and somewhat randomly from one survey to the next, collective policy preferences have very different properties" (1992, 384).[6]

Because public opinion, as Page and Shapiro understand it, can be known only through "the statistical aggregation process, in which the expressed opinions of many individuals are summed or combined into a collective whole" (1992, 15), popular consent can be known only as a measure of allegiance to one or more of the policy choices that pollsters present to their sample of citizens. In other words, if public opinion exists mainly through the polls that measure it and give it its public appearance, then consent, too, becomes an artifact of statistics. It becomes, specifically, a claim about the quantity or weight of public opinion, a claim about whether the amount of public opinion, in one direction or another, is adequate to infer consent of the governed.

Public opinion in the republican tradition requires what in the liberal tradition it might only benefit from: public deliberation. Although Page and Shapiro acknowledge that public debate often refines and enlarges public opinion, the absence of debate in no way precludes the formation of the individual opinions that, when added up, become public opinion. The principal difference between individual opinion and public opinion is measurement error. Republicans, however, view the difference in more fundamental ways; they regard public opinion as a consequence of, and thus not incidental to, public debate.

Public opinion from a republican perspective stands in contrast to the liberal presupposition, as Page and Shapiro develop it, that equates individual opinion, when properly measured and aggregated, with public opinion. Republicans do not assume, as Nancy Fraser puts it, that the public's preferences and interests "are given exogenously in advance of public discourse." Rather, republicans contend that public preferences and interests "are as much outcomes as antecedents of public deliberation" (1992, 130). Thus the republican framework for understanding public opinion rests on a conception of *public* that, first, designates the place where individuals engage each other; and, second, refers to interests that emerge from this engagement as common or shared.

By operationally defining public opinion as a compilation of individual opinions, polls defy the very publicness of public opinion that republicans want to honor. Polls accentuate the privateness of opinions by not requiring individuals to speak in public about what they want and why they want it. Individuals express themselves anonymously and without any responsibility for explaining and defending their preferences and the grounds for them. More than that, polls can frustrate and even alienate the public, as Susan Herbst (1993) found in her study of a politically diverse group of Chicago area residents, by dictating the issues that can be "discussed" and by limiting the "discussion" to responses chosen and fashioned by a pollster. If indeed the substance of political life is public discussion, as countless republicans have argued over the years, then polls not only fail to capture it but might at times inhibit it.

This connection between public discussion and public opinion underscores the role individuals play in the construction of opinions that transcend personal and private interests. The opinions of publics, in contradistinction to the opinions of individuals, focus on general or common interests. The opinions of publics represent a collective wisdom that benefits from an open and accessible discussion focused on issues of common concern, a discussion dedicated to the possibility of reaching a resolution of issues that meets with the approval of everyone engaged in the discussion. Ideally, then, public opinion reflects what Habermas calls a rational consensus, a full and uncoerced agreement on what needs to be done. In practice, of course, public opinion often signals a compromise, an agreement that fails to identify truly general interests and instead strikes a balance between competing personal interests.

Understood as a byproduct of acts of public deliberation, public opinion confers consent with the critical authority of a distinctively public point of view arrived at through an open and unfettered debate. This consent through argumentation, unlike the consent by acclamation proffered by polls, requires either a consensus or a compromise on the issues of the day. Without one or the other, no matter how abundant festering individual opinions might be, what prevails is not, properly speaking, public opinion but what Habermas calls "nonpublic opinion."

The Future of Democracy

Since the mid- to late 1980s, considerable work has been done to develop a model of "deliberative democracy," a phrase coined by Joseph Bessette in a 1980 essay on republican forms of government. Most of the work in this area focuses on methods to bring the liberal and republican traditions together in ways that will make democracy more responsive to, and more viable in, a world where global trade and communication have fundamentally altered the demands of

democratic practice. Political participation now extends beyond traditional nation-states and requires forms of democracy that are sensitive to centers of power unbound by geography. Held thus calls for the implementation of a model of cosmopolitan democracy, one that extends and deepens the "mechanisms of democratic accountability across major regions and international structures [and] would help to regulate the forces which are already beyond the reach of national democratic mechanisms and movements" (1995, 283).

Held, among others, focuses on what he understands to be a new and pressing need for a global democratic order, an international arrangement aimed at sustaining "diverse and distinct domains of authority, linked both vertically and horizontally" (1995, xii). Without discounting the importance of local, national, and regional democratic orders, Held's "cosmopolitan model of democracy" envisions a framework for a "transnational structure of democratic action" (235). Cosmopolitan democracy recognizes local, national, and regional authority but also coordinates and integrates this authority in ways that build an even larger democratic community: "an international community of democratic states and societies committed to upholding democratic public law both within and across their own boundaries" (229).

More abstractly, Held's model of democracy embraces a type of democratic community built on Kant's principle of "universal hospitality," which Held develops into an argument about the importance of transcending "the particular claims of nations and states" and focusing instead on "mutual acknowledgment of, and respect for, the equal rights of others to pursue their own projects and ends." Universal hospitality, Held explains, thus entails "both the enjoyment of autonomy and the respect for the necessary constraints on autonomy"; it requires the "mutual acknowledgment" of the "equal and legitimate rights of others to pursue their own projects and life-plans," which at a minimum means not shaping or determining the "quality of life of others . . . without their participation, agreement or consent" (1995, 228).

Through the creation of a global parliament—an assembly of *democratic* states rather than the more inclusive interstate organization the United Nations functions as—Held's plan for a global democratic order begins with a legislative commitment to deal with the very conditions that threaten any effort to internationalize democracy: "health and disease, food supply and distribution, the debt burden of the 'Third World,' the instability of the hundreds of billions of dollars that circulate the globe daily, global warming, and the reduction of the risks of nuclear and chemical warfare" (Held 1995, 274). Held also anticipates "general referenda cutting across nations and nation-states in the case of contested priorities concerning the implementation of democratic law and the balance of public expenditure, with constituencies defined according to the nature and scope of disputed problems" (273). Beyond a legal infrastructure

that binds together the democracies of the world, Held recognizes the need for "non-state, non-market solutions in the organization of civil society," including the creation of a "diversity of self-regulating associations and groups."

Notes

1. Indeed, *democracy* means rule by the people or popular power. But its combining two Greek words already suggests a conceptual complex rather than clear meaning. *Demos* refers to a citizen body living in a polis, but it also refers to the lower classes, "the mob." *Kratos* for its part could mean either power or rule. Regardless of the fact that the majority of Greeks were women and slaves who were not considered to be free citizens, the idea of democracy introduced the problem of wealth, as highlighted by Aristotle: "Whenever men rule by virtue of their wealth, be they few or many, there you have oligarchy; and where the poor people rule, there you have democracy" (in Arblaster 1994, 13–14). No wonder, then, that democracy has always been a controversial concept. On the other hand, it has inspired much analytical reflection, from the Greek classics until now.

2. See Cohen and Rogers (1983) for an argument in favor of a more expansive view of democracy, one that extends democratic ideals beyond the "formal arena of politics" (150) and specifically rejects as undemocratic the "subordination of the interest of workers to the interests of capitalists" (146). See Hardt (1995) for a discussion of the neglect of workers in most accounts of American journalism, including a lack of a sustained and programmatic critique of a "media environment that is determined more by commercial interests than by the professional judgments of newsworkers" (24).

3. See, for example, Baker's (2002) conception of "elitist democracy" (129–34) and Held's (2006) model of "competitive elitism" (125–57).

4. See Young (2000) for a thoughtful discussion of the criteria for "inclusive political communication" (52–80).

5. As Thompson (1995) points out, "[t]here are no good grounds for assuming that the process of reading a book or watching a television programme is, by itself, less conducive to deliberation than engaging in face-to-face conversation with others. On the contrary, by providing individuals with forms of knowledge and information to which they would not otherwise have access, mediated quasi-interaction can stimulate deliberation just as much, if not more than, face-to-face interaction in a shared locale" (265).

6. "While we grant the rational ignorance of most individuals, and the possibility that their policy preferences are shallow and unstable, we maintain that public opinion as a collective phenomenon is nonetheless stable" (Page and Shapiro 1992, 14).

5

Roles of News Media in Democracy

The first news media were newspapers, that is, regularly appearing written accounts of current events, mainly of a political, diplomatic, military, or commercial character. They claimed to offer reliable information, or at least to be an authoritative, official source of information. They primarily served the needs of a mercantile class in growing urban centers of trade and administration. While early European newspapers had only limited freedom in practice and were sometimes organs of authority, the press institution could not have developed without making some claim both to freedom of publication and to economic freedom. The newspaper press grew slowly, its fortunes bound up with economic development and the reigning degree of political freedom. It was more vigorous in northern Europe and in North America than elsewhere.

Gradually, new forms of print media emerged alongside the original models of mercantile newsletter and official gazette. Partisan presses of various types came to serve the interests of factions struggling for power or movements for political and social reform. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the mass newspaper formed a new bridge between the established quality press and the true mass media, yet to emerge. The commercial newspaper aimed to be truly popular and universal. Its owners' primary goal was to make money; but there was often a secondary goal of exerting political influence. These developments, briefly summarized, have made it difficult to combine the various print news media under a clear concept of the newspaper press, so diverse are the forms and goals of publication. The popular press of the twentieth century claimed the rights and respect due to the earlier newspaper—but did not offer to carry out the same roles, fulfill the same social responsibilities, or observe the same norms of conduct. This tension, which in part reflects a disjunction between economic and political goals, remains at the heart of normative debate over the role of journalism in society.

There have been continuous changes in the newspaper press, with ever newer journalistic forms. The emergence of broadcast news, first by radio and then by television, has made it even more difficult to treat the news media as a single institution. In these newer media, the provision of news often takes second place to other communication tasks, especially advertising and entertainment. And journalists face entirely new pressures of space, time, and format. The more international character of television news has added to the complexity, since televised news is much more likely to circulate beyond its original context and to convey its meaning more directly than written accounts alone. Print news is largely confined to a national arena and is designed to meet local expectations. Competition between news media has intensified, often leading to a loss of product diversity and new dilemmas of editorial decision making. On the one hand, there is an increased impetus toward objectivity and neutrality, and also toward specialist news in an increasingly secular and information-hungry age. On the other hand, competition generates pressures to make news and information more homogeneous, as well as more digestible and entertaining for a wide audience. The consequences are very mixed, with competing goals and unclear prescriptions for quality and professionalism.

While circumstances vary a good deal from one country to another, the many variants that have emerged can be represented approximately by Schudson's three models of journalism: "advocacy," "market," and "trustee" (1999, 118–21). The first describes an essentially partisan press, and the second the commercially driven journalism of popular press and broadcasting. The third refers to professional journalism that aims to look after the varied informational interests of the public in an independent way. In the United States, these three models appeared more or less in sequence, with the first one largely disappearing and the second two now competing for dominance. In Europe the advocacy model, although in decline, has survived longer and with more general acceptance as one model of professional journalism. In Europe, too, the trustee model appeared in an additional guise: that of publicly regulated broadcasting, editorially independent of the state and other interests but charged with broad informational and educational tasks on society's behalf. These models may have arrived in sequence, but they can and do coexist and compete with each other for predominance.

These brief historical notes are relevant for understanding the press's position in any contemporary society that subscribes to the democratic principles of freedom and self-government. The internal contradictions, as well as divergent purposes and practices, affecting the media make it impossible to be definitive about the central characteristics of journalistic activity or the norms that should apply. Despite this uncertainty, it can be argued that the trends described, coupled with globalization of the media, have converged on a dominant type of journalism in which several loosely related features coexist. This model applies

to most mainstream news media, whether in the commercial or public service systems. The main features of this type are pluralism of news and opinion; neutrality and objectivity in reporting; market orientation; and professionalization according to shared norms of practice. We might add "media sectorial identity" as a characteristic, given the large and persistent differences between news and information in newspapers, television, radio, and—increasingly—the Internet. This dominant model was favored in Western eyes to replace the extinguished communist variants of the press in central and Eastern Europe, and was exported to developing countries as well. It is typically supportive of established forms of democracy and respectful of legitimate authority whether judicial or governmental. However, in choosing a neutral or middle position, it is not very accessible to radical voices and avoids partisan attachments. In the same sense, this version of professionalism is not very open to direct social and political participation and is wary about new movements and ideas until they have clear popular support. As many critics have observed, this is a formula for caution and conservatism that limits the social purposes of journalism.

News Media Tasks and Types

Against this background, we provide an initial framework within which to locate the basic tasks of the news media, which have origins internal to the media (professional, commercial, and idealistic) and also external (in the form of various pressures and claims). Journalism has been guided by the enterprise, vision, and purpose of many individual editors, publishers, and journalists who have sought to record or influence the course of history with diverse motives. The press has also been a channel of communication for political and social activists. In addition, the press tries to meet the economic and cultural demands of owners and many different clients, including publicists and prospective audiences. This is true irrespective of the relative predominance of material or idealistic goals. From this perspective, the basic tasks of journalism in a democracy can be classified under three main headings:

1. The task of *observing and informing,* primarily as a service to the public
2. The task of *participating* in public life as an independent actor by way of critical comment, advice, advocacy and expression of opinion
3. The task of *providing* a channel, forum, or platform for extramedia voices or sources to reach a self-chosen public

For these tasks to be carried out, different requirements must be met. The first relies on the public's trust, which in turn depends on the public's perceiving the media as both independent and competent. The second relies primarily on the existence of an efficient and extensive information collection and distribution

system, plus an editorial intention to give access to a wide range of sources and views. The third task arises from journalism's involvement in democratic action and debate, and depends on an active use of press freedom in the context of a healthy public sphere.

This differentiation of news media tasks can also be understood in terms of the intersection of two dimensions, as shown in figure 3. The vertical dimension contrasts the observer/informant task with that of active involvement in political and social life. At one end, the media operate as a passive but reliable mirror; at the other end, they are seen as a weapon in activists' hands. The horizontal dimension records varying degrees of neutrality or intervention in the channeling task, affecting gatekeeping, access, and processing of whatever is carried in the channels. Access can vary on a range between fully open and closed. Openness requires that no limiting criteria are applied to selection for transmission or amplification. The reverse is a situation of limited access, but usually according to restrictive criteria that are transparent. Media systems (as well as individual media) are also diverse in the way their component media perform in these respects. Figure 3 identifies four main types of news media according to the two dimensions discussed. These types can be described as follows:

1. The internally pluralist and secular media that seek to maximize circulation or audience in their chosen market (not necessarily a mass market), partly by appealing to a wide range of political and social groups
2. The externally pluralist commercial media that also seek a high circulation but also adopt a particular ideological or political line to appeal to a like-minded audience
3. The partisan media, usually noncommercial and small in scale (local or national) and dedicated to the interests and ideas of a particular (political) group
4. The minority media of opinion and debate, dedicated to the expression and exchange of new and diverse facts and opinions

We are reminded of the varied and complex character of the operating context in which media roles are performed. This typology (figure 3) is derived primarily from examples taken from such print media as newspapers and periodicals. Broadcast news media, especially television, have not shown the same range of differences. Most television news systems, whether commercial or public, still tend to have a location in the upper left area of the quadrant. They seek undifferentiated large audiences for content that is informative according to the dominant concept of news objectivity outlined above. At the same time, as a result of regulation, unwritten convention, or commercial pressure, they typically are less fully open and less editorially independent than the print media. This at least was the later twentieth-century model of broadcast journalism,

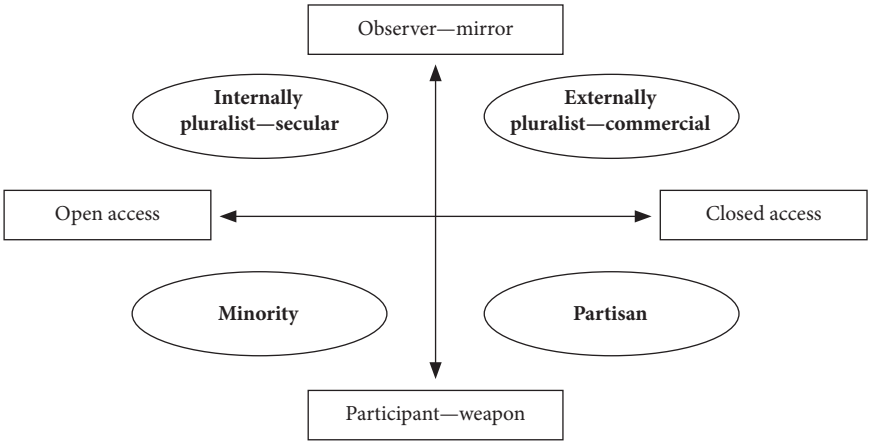

Figure 3. Typology of News Media

even if it is breaking down under the impact of channel multiplication, and the escape from regulation and format diversification offered by the Internet.

The Concept of Journalistic Role

In choosing to retain the concept of a *role,* embedded as it is in a particular history of journalism in certain Western liberal-democratic societies, we run the risk of continuing to carry much of the baggage that has accumulated over the last fifty years of research and theorizing about the media. Unfortunately we have no other term that would allow us to avoid this history, and some other terms are even more limiting, such as the words "duty," "responsibility," "task," "goal," or "function."

The term *function,* derived from sociology, is often loosely used to describe various practices, services, or objectives or the satisfaction of certain needs. However, it has little precise meaning unless embedded in some system with operating needs that are met by specialist components and elements. Thus a democratic political system can be sketched as having informational needs or requirements that are satisfied by the activities of the media. But we have no such model of a political subsystem that would be any more than a description of a complex of interrelated flows of information.

The word *task* is too narrow on its own for our purpose, but it can be incorporated in our concept of role as explained below. Ideas of duty and responsibility are also involved and can be applied readily to the news media. However, in isolation they are not very useful, since they draw on a diversity of value systems and perspectives that may not be relevant or appropriate for assessing the

work of journalism in a particular case. External judgments of performance or the attribution of purpose to news media are often made on the basis of ethical, political, or cultural criteria that do not take adequate account of the constraints placed on the journalist. Such judgments and attributions are not invalid for that reason, but they do not help to construct a normative theory that is helpful for journalism itself.

The term *role* refers here to a composite of occupational tasks and purposes that is widely recognizable and has a stable and enduring form. Roles are normally located within an institutional framework, and they are regulated according to the main activities, needs, and values of the institution, in this case the mass media. A role has a dual aspect, consisting of empirical elements and evaluative dimensions. The first comprises the tasks that media journalists actually carry out. The second is understood in terms of the purposes or ends to be served and the relative value or importance attached to them. Purposes are not always declared or obvious and may be interpreted or identified in different ways. The primary source of purpose for most professional journalists is provided by their own particular location within the media system, since that is where journalists are trained, socialized, and directed.

The specific occupational tasks of news journalists are too many to enumerate, but they usually involve four basic activities: discovery, collection, and selection of information; processing into news accounts; providing background and commentary; and publication. These basic activities are translatable into more generalized role descriptions that acquire in the process a larger purpose and thus evaluative loading. This translation produces another set of terms that seem to explain what journalism is for in the wider scheme of things. There are alternative versions of these role descriptions, but the most typical list includes the following:

- Providing surveillance of the social environment
- Forming opinion
- Setting the agenda of public discussion
- Acting as a "watchdog" in respect to political or economic power
- Acting as messenger and public informant
- Playing an active participant part in social life

Although we can separate out the empirical from the normative components of the journalists' role in relation to society, there is an underlying problem in reconciling the two aspects, since the modal type of "objective" journalism described above represents the role as more or less value free. Professional journalism should not be biased toward any point of view or interest group and should aim to represent the social world, as far as possible, as it is. This is itself a normative judgment, but relates to something that is generally considered

essential and thus above debate. In any case, it can be argued that objectivity is more an issue of good practice than an abstract ideal. From this perspective, it does not matter that perfect objectivity is not attainable.

As noted, media institutions are not the only source of normative purpose or of evaluation. Other sources include the authoritative views of respected figures in the wider society, sometimes expressed by way of commissions and inquiries; pressure groups on behalf of various causes and beliefs; appeals to patriotism and public necessity; and personal moral principles and conscience. Internal personal loyalties and attractions can also have a normative impact.

These observations take us to the wider question of media accountability that we discuss later in this chapter. The media are linked to the surrounding society by various ties of attachment, obligation, and even subordination that affect how purposes are determined. These influences work by way of internal lines of control and also by way of interaction with external agents. The latter include: the intended audience most of all and the wider public; owners, clients, and sponsors; other social institutions, groups, and organizations that depend on the media; and ultimately government and the state. Although the media control their own activities in detail, they are constrained and directed at many points by more remote, sometimes powerful forces.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that research into the role conceptions journalists hold has uncovered a number of basic tensions, oppositions, and choices that confront media institutions and journalists personally, despite the protection given by the consensual or dominant version of the journalistic task, as outlined above. The main oppositions that have emerged are the following:

- Adopting a neutral versus a participant role vis-a-vis the surrounding society
- Concentrating on facts versus setting out to interpret and provide commentary
- Acting as a gatekeeper for all voices in society versus being an advocate for a chosen cause or interest
- Serving the media organization versus trying to follow an idealistic conception of the journalistic task
- Choosing between social and nonprofit purposes and the criteria of the marketplace

These dilemmas are distinct and to some extent independent of each other, but there is an underlying theme, and they also reflect the pull of divergent normative poles. They reflect the diversity of what we call journalism and the variety of forms the news media can take, each with its own purpose, self-selected public, and market niche. The arrival of new media forms, especially those based on the Internet, have added to the variety and clouded the issue of what journalism is.

News Media Roles as Normative

It is clear from this discussion that it is impossible to make any definitive statement concerning what *should* be the main tasks of the media institutions and the norms appropriate for carrying them out. There are two fundamental problems. First, there are varying, even opposed interests and expectations on the part of those inside and outside the press. Second, no formal claim can legitimately be made on a free press to carry out any particular task. Freedom of the press is a much wider concept than the freedom of the news media to act. It includes both the freedom not to publish and also the right to refuse or evade any externally imposed communication obligations. The first critiques of the early twentieth-century mass press drew on then-current ideas of appropriate standards for publication and the conduct of public life, as well as on notions of fairness and the rights of minorities and opposition groups to be heard. Principles of democracy were a basis for claims against a venal and capitalist press and also a source of norms for good practice. Critics and claimants attributed obligations to the press in the absence of any formal basis or means of enforcement.

The privately funded U.S. Commission on Freedom of the Press (1947) made the first significant move in modern times toward attributing specific social responsibilities to the press, from an established and consensual rather than a radical position (Blanchard 1977; Commission 1947; Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm 1956). The Royal Commission in the United Kingdom soon afterward offered its own views about press responsibilities to society and democracy (Royal Commission on the Press 1949). The starting point for American concerns was the excessive power of large newspaper magnates and sensationalist tendencies debasing the flow of public information. The critique of the press in Britain followed similar lines, although with more emphasis on the lack of political diversity in the newspaper press arising from the concentration of ownership.

The report of the U.S. commission spoke of several duties incumbent on the press in a democratic society, in which the press occupied a somewhat privileged social position. These duties included providing a full and reliable account of daily events; separating fact from comment; providing a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism; and providing a representative picture of the society. These obligations expressed commonly held views of the liberal political class of the day concerning good journalistic practice. They were not widely endorsed by the owners of the press or even by radicals on the left but were somewhat high-minded ideals of the bourgeois intelligentsia and were held by the Commission to arise as a moral duty, without which the claim to press freedom could not be sustained. The unwritten contract that gave the press its right to publish in the public interest and protected it even beyond the freedom of an ordinary citizen called for some services in return.

A leading member of the commission, William Hocking, referred to the "right of the people to have an adequate press" (quoted in Nerone 1994, 97). It was in effect a positive interpretation of the meaning of the press's freedom, in place of the predominant (then as now) negative sense of freedom from any particular duty and constraint. An important component and support of the Commission's views was an appeal to professionalism. The report suggested that "the press look upon itself as performing a public service of a professional kind" (92). Hallin comments on this notion of professionalism as follows: "What I mean by professionalization here is, first of all that journalism like other professions developed an ethic of 'public service.'" It was "part of a general trend, beginning in the Progressive Era, away from partisan politics as a basis for public life and towards conceptions of administrative rationality and neutral expertise" (1996, 245).

The version of the press's duties that the Commission on Freedom of the Press first put into words in an authoritative way has never been accepted as binding by the newspaper press itself, although many of the same or similar requirements have been included in various codes of ethics in many countries (see Laitila 1995; Nordenstreng and Topuz 1989). The ideas contained in this social responsibility notion of press duties are congenial enough to professionals who practice the dominant liberal mode of objective journalism following Schudson's trustee model (see chapter 6). A similar range of ideas has, not surprisingly, emerged from subsequent research into the views of journalists and editors about their own role perceptions (e.g., Fjaestad and Holmlov 1976; Johnstone et al. 1976; Weaver 1999; Weaver and Wilhoit 1986; 1996). Basically the same tasks envisaged by the Commission are still recognized by professional journalists today, although with varying views on how far they should be engaged in the controversies of the day and how far they should be neutral observers and reporters rather than interpreters and even advocates.

Research on the views of news audiences has also tended to emphasize the demand for full and impartial information (Andsager and Miller 1994; Andsager, Wyatt, and Martin 2004; Fitzsimon and McGill 1995; Immerwahr and Doble 1982; Wyatt 1991) as well as for scrutiny of government (Gleason 1994). Regarding the needs of the political system, there is also a tendency for political actors in modern democracies to concur on much the same general requirements of media performance. In the absence of dependable political support from the press, or open access for politicians to the channels (neither very professional nor necessarily in the general public interest), politicians usually want access to the news media on what they consider to be a fair basis. This usually means proportionality, with extra attention to the government in office. Politicians also want journalists to treat politics according to consistent and predictable norms of news value and of objectivity, from which politicians can benefit by

doing newsworthy things. Whatever the motivation, the outcome of journalistic, audience, and political actor requirements tends to converge on a model of practice that still seems quite close to the social responsibility version of press theory as enunciated by the Commission.

The content of the roles assigned to or accepted by the modern media is derived largely from the needs experienced by different participants in the political process and from the preferred working practices of the press itself. For instance, Blumler and Gurevitch argue that citizens have needs for material to support their political beliefs; guidance in making choices; basic information about events, conditions, and policies; and affective satisfactions to promote engagement in politics (1995, 15). These needs expressed by audiences in turn call for a relevant response by the media in the form of editorial advice, plentiful information, critical attention to political events, and a manner of presentation that engages attention. In varying degrees, these needs also require the provision of direct access to political agents to persuade, inform, and make themselves known.

However, the apparent consensus that exists about how the media should go about their business in relation to politics and society conceals serious and possibly growing fissures; they largely express a socially desirable and idealized set of outlooks and practices. The media take little account of audience disinterest in politics; the calculative self-interest of politicians, press owners, and managers; the trend to marginalize the traditional press; and the rise of new types of entertainment media (see Bennett and Entman 2001). These points aside, it is not only the substance of media roles in a democracy that is problematic but also their uncertain legitimation and the lack of any accountability, constraint, or sanction in the case of nonfulfilment.

As noted, there is no shortage of typologies of possible roles for the press in relation to the wider society and to politics in particular. The most basic statements of the roles and functions of the media usually emphasize providing information, forming opinion by way of advocacy or forum, and providing critique through the watchdog function (see Nordenstreng 2000). These can be elaborated in terms of different practices and systems, for instance, public versus commercial media forms. To conclude this part of the discussion we return to Blumler and Gurevitch's (1995) summary of the main "functions and services for the political system" that democracy requires. The main elements they propose are:

- Surveillance of the sociopolitical environment
- Meaningful agenda setting
- Platforms for an intelligible and illuminating advocacy by politicians
- Mechanisms for holding officials to account
- Incentives for citizens to learn

- Principled resistance to efforts of forces outside the media to subvert their independence

Blumler and Gurevitch also draw attention to four main obstacles to performing these functions and services. One is the mutual conflict between some of the underlying democratic values, for instance between editorial autonomy and giving access. Second, there is usually a structural inequality between the political elite and ordinary citizens. Third, political goals cannot claim unlimited privilege vis-a-vis other claims and interests. Fourth, the media themselves are constrained by their economic and institutional contexts.

It is clear from this discussion that we have considerable latitude in choosing particular media roles for close attention and also in deciding how to define them. Nevertheless, our choice is significantly narrowed by this book's purpose and is guided by our view of the history of the normative theory of the media. The main criterion for selection is relevance to the democratic process. Next, we keep in mind the different traditions of journalistic activity as outlined in chapters 1 and 2, each of which has its own distinctive origins, theoretical underpinnings, and practical forms of expression.

Central to our concerns has been the ongoing debate about the degree to which the media have any obligation at all to serve society. From a liberal–individual or *libertarian* perspective, it may even be thought desirable that the media eschew all collective goals, whether chosen or allocated. All concepts of the public interest in this view are revealed as particular goals and end up as constraints on a free press. Only the free market and the laws of supply and demand should govern what is published. At another extreme, the perspective of communitarianism and *citizen participation* clearly prescribes that the media should adopt positive social goals and engage the community and society in which they are embedded, seeking to practice universal ethical and related values. In between, we find varieties of professionalism, which define the press's roles according to technical and professional standards or some version of the public interest as defined by expert judgment or legitimate authorities. Two intermediate cases can be distinguished, one termed *corporatist,* with social needs determined by elites acting for a supposed public good, and the other a *social responsibility* type, more open to democratic determination. The corporatist type often includes an administrative version of journalism that, although based on professional values, is quite closely engaged with the dominant social institutions and primarily serves the business and economic elite. The paradigmatic tradition of social responsibility prescribes for media a broad set of obligations to serve the common good, following an unwritten social contract. The precise terms of social responsibility have to be filled in, although the main versions of this tradition agree on certain conventional standards and values of an ordered society. The view that it is a

task of the media to criticize stems from a strong notion of engagement (the participant perspective), but the pursuit of that task can also be encouraged within a libertarian tradition. Social responsibility can also embrace the duty to be critical on behalf of the public and in the interest of truth.

Four Key Roles for Journalism

To highlight the typical issues and key dilemmas that arise when the press encounters conflicting requirements and value positions in its operating environment, we have chosen to focus on four roles, which we label monitorial, facilitative, radical, and collaborative. They are displayed in figure 4 in relation to two dimensions: The vertical one between strong and weak institutional power, and the horizontal one between media autonomy and dependency.

The *monitorial* role is probably the most widely recognized and least controversial in terms of conventional ideas about what the press should be doing, as seen by the press itself, its audiences, and various sources and clients. It refers to all aspects of the collection, processing, and dissemination of information of all kinds about current and recent events, plus warnings about future developments. Some comment and interpretation is appropriate as an offshoot of editorial selection, on grounds of relevance, but is subordinated to representing reality and giving objective accounts. There are different versions of the scope of the monitorial role, and it varies according to involvement of the media in society. It can range from the more or less passive channeling of information to carrying out a watchdog role ostensibly on behalf of the public. However, this role stops short of partisan advocacy and is restrained by precepts of pro-

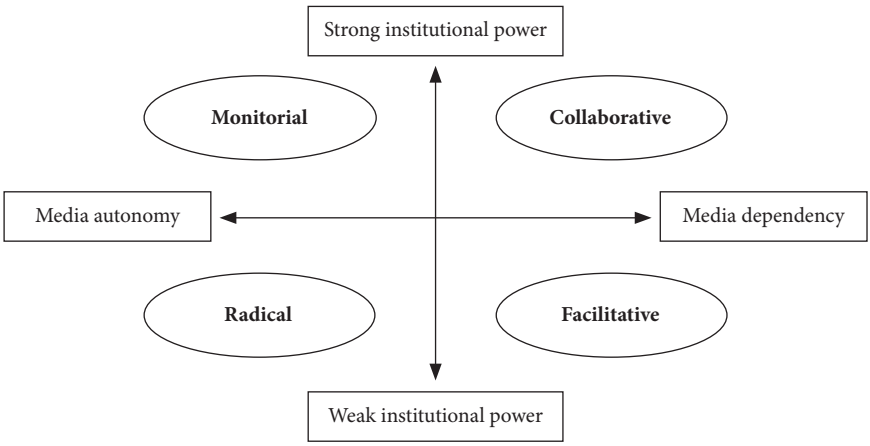

Figure 4. Four Media Roles

fessional journalistic practice, in particular those that require opinion and attitude to be distinguished from facts that can be supported by evidence. The modal version of professional journalism described earlier is expressed most fully in this role.

The *facilitative* role—as we have chosen to conceptualize it—is not prominent in the literature, although it is implicit in functionalist theories of media and society. It draws on several elements in social responsibility theory and on notions of the press as a fourth estate in democratic societies that support debate and people's decision making. The theory of the public sphere has also identified the media as an essential element. That theory refers primarily to journalism that is deliberately practiced as a means of improving the quality of public life and contributing to deliberative forms of democracy as opposed to procedural and constitutional liberalism. It is designed to widen access and promote active citizenship by way of debate and participation. Aside from deliberative democracy, the media facilitate civil society and promote the cultural conditions conducive to democratic life (Taylor 1992a). They promote inclusiveness, pluralism, and collective purpose. According to the concept of the facilitative role, they help to develop a shared moral framework for community and society, rather than just looking after individual rights and interests. The latter are treated as subordinate to a larger good, which itself must not be manifested by decree but developed by way of public communication. The facilitative role is not only in tension with individualism but also hard to reconcile with many of the practices of a press driven by profit and competitive instinct. It may require some subordination of typical professionalism.

The *radical* role is also familiar in accounts of normative expectations from media, even if it has been downgraded in the typical development of press institutions because of its potential clash with journalistic professionalism and market forces. In fact, radical journalism is not inconsistent with professionalism or market criteria. In its fully developed form, however, the radical role cannot be subordinate either to professional norms or to market considerations. It stems ultimately from social and political purposes that lie outside the range of the press institution. It focuses on exposing abuses of power and aims to raise popular consciousness of wrongdoing, inequality, and the potential for change. The radical role is distinguishable from the occasional critical attention given within the scope of the surveillance role and involves systematic and principled engagement according to clearly stated values. The goal is fundamental or radical change in society. Under conditions of authoritarian government, the need for a critical press role is apparent, but the conditions for its practice are limited. In more normal conditions of liberal democratic society, the radical role tends to be fulfilled by a minority sector of the printed press that represents some social or political movements and advocates radical opinions and policies along

partisan lines. It is a role less represented in broadcast journalism because of a mixture of public regulation and commercial pressure. Nevertheless, on occasion this role is fulfilled by documentary films and television shows that can have a high impact.

The *collaborative* role specifies and values the tasks for media that arise in situations of unavoidable engagement with social events and processes. Typical situations where this role is appropriate are those of new nations, with their intense pressure toward economic and social development under conditions of scarce resources and immature political institutions. However, collaboration between media and the state is often advocated, if not mandated, under unusual conditions of crisis or emergency, or threat to the society, from external or internal causes. Terrorism and war are obvious examples of such situations, but natural disasters and crises of crime, health, and safety lead in the same direction. Even under normal conditions, there is usually a latent or partial system of cooperation between the media and organs of government and the state that produces voluntary collaboration. Collaborating meets the needs of both parties, recognizing the fact that the media possess an essential societal resource—the public information network—though authorities often control the supply of "news." While collaboration of the kind described almost inevitably impinges on the independence of the press and other media, it can usually be legitimated on grounds of immediate necessity. The collaborative role, however, is scarcely represented at all in the literature on press roles, largely because it goes against the libertarian and professional journalistic grain and expresses some truths that many would rather leave unsaid.

It should be clear that although this selection of roles is limited, it is not arbitrary, and these four take us directly to the dilemmas and complexities that lie at the heart of any body of normative theories of the media. The main omission in the set of roles relates to the press's role as either a tool of partisan advocacy or a platform for advocating opinions. However, elements of advocacy appear in relation to a facilitative role, since advocacy could not be fulfilled without a flow of articulated positions on controversial issues affecting community and society. Adequate information also implies the availability of diverse relevant standpoints and alternative choices and solutions for problems. Even more strongly, advocacy is central to the radical role of the media, since effective criticism is typically based not on evidence and expert analysis but rather on alternative visions of what is right and good.

Roles in Context

Whether or not the roles are chosen and the constraints placed on their exercise depend on a number of general factors that we describe in the following pages.

The main dimensions of these factors are community, the distribution of power, and issues of legitimation and accountability.

DIMENSION OF COMMUNITY

Social contexts for journalism vary according to the quality of collective life in a given place. The term *community* is used as shorthand for several key elements, although it has itself a complex etymology and carries considerable baggage. While it is now frequently used to refer to any set of individuals sharing some interest or outlook, its fuller meaning refers to an ideal of belonging, shared identity, cooperation, forms of solidarity, cohesion, and continuity. As such it contrasts with a condition of individualism, isolation, competition, anonymity, and flux. National societies are usually internally differentiated in terms of potential for community formation, from the most local to the most extensive sphere of action. Conditions of community in the ideal sense are more likely to be found in neighborhoods and small towns, but also in certain collective movements bringing together like-minded people. The differences are reflected in various kinds of politics and thus in different expectations from relevant media. The more intense the community attachment, the more likely are the media to be active participants, as well as partisan, since this is what audiences want and expect. At the level of large-scale and society-wide political activity, we can expect a more detached, diverse, informative, and balanced mode of media practice. Other things being equal, in the latter circumstances, the monitorial role and the modal concept of professional journalism are likely to predominate.

However, there is also a variation between societies in democratic traditions and the historical circumstances of the moment. If one considers the case of internally divided societies or those that are mobilized for development, or in economic decline, oppressed, misgoverned, or externally beleaguered, there are many deviations from the norm of prosperous, secular democracies. Some societies are more individualistic, secular, and market or consumer oriented, with little evidence of strong public institutions and weak notions of any common good. Elsewhere ideology, religion, ethnicity, class, or regional identity still exert a major influence, and the notion of interventionist political action on behalf of the public good is deployed even if intensely contested. The norms for the way media should work will not be the same across these various cases, but more detached in the prosperous, secular versions and more participatory and adversarial in the latter.

Under the same heading of community, we have to consider freedom of access to information, as well as the freedom to publish and disseminate it. What concept of freedom to publish, within what limits, is dominant? Is it absolute, subject only to the rights and essential interests of other individuals? Must the

media accept any responsibility for wider or unintended consequences of publication that is in itself lawful? Can the community legitimately act to suppress, limit, or punish publication on the grounds of furthering the general welfare in conditions other than that of pressing danger? Is serving public life with informational channels something that should be entirely left to the market? These and other questions are likely to be answered differently in different societies. Of course, it is quite clear that there is a general principle involved, one that pits advocates of liberalism against those of collectivism. This opposition is reflected in the debates about press theory we discussed in chapter 2. However, those debates do not settle the issue, and the daily operation of any media system in matters important for public life inevitably stirs up the same issues. This point is of particular relevance to the adoption or rejection of both the facilitative and the collaborative role.

The issue of equality also arises in relation to community, although the relationship is an ambiguous one. Most relevant here is the question of equal rights to speak out and express views, to participate vocally. The more community-like the setting for operating a medium, the more equal should be the chance for access and the stronger the claim for fair representation of differences and variations within the community served. Egalitarian ideals impel societies toward universal access and set norms for media performance and informational outcomes. Such ideals go beyond what equal opportunity requires, what the media market would support, or what the owners and controllers of the media choose to dispense. The question of ownership takes us beyond the dimension of community to that of power, but it is relevant to note that communal values are violated in situations where the capacity to publish on any large scale is limited to the very rich (whether individuals, organizations, or firms). The issue that arises in terms of the press's role is whether the media belonging to those with large financial interests can be trusted to carry out their tasks in a way that is both fair and sympathetic to the needs of the wider community. If not, how are the interests of the community to be looked after?

THE DIMENSION OF POWER

It is very common to refer to the power of the press. Often the media apply this epithet to themselves when they refer to the press as a fourth estate. Power in this context usually has a dual meaning, referring both to direct media influence on the information and opinion in circulation and to the fact that the otherwise powerful in society (government, business, or others) have to take account of the press in various ways. The press as a fourth estate is analogous to the other three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judiciary. This concept recognizes the essential point that the press in a democracy is normally expected to act in some sense (and thus to exercise its power) on behalf of the people or

the general public interest. Its power is not that of law or force but either the power of truth and of influence with respect to truth, or the capacity of publicity to achieve chosen ends for those who have access to the media.

There is a general assumption that in a democracy, power is ultimately in the hands of the people and the press is, in some sense, independent of the state and government and able to mediate between various power blocs. However, in everyday practice, there are quite a few deviations from this assumption that affect the media's role. A realistic assessment of the working of the media does not entirely support the simple fourth estate model. The principle of editorial independence is both a consequence and a mark of press freedom. Where it obtains, true independence secures the possibility of information and opinion being circulated in an impartial form and therefore not necessarily serving any particular interest but supporting the publication of diverse views.

Perhaps the most obvious deviance from the ideal of a democratic press is not a deviation at all. The fact is that the free press is generally owned by commercial firms with material interests of their own that are not the same as those of the general public or society as a whole. An extensive literature of theory and evidence shows that the media often protect certain sectional economic interests. There is even more reason to believe that the mainstream media frequently serve the interests of government and the state, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, reluctance, or awareness. The collaborative role we have described is often only a more transparent and accentuated case of what goes on much of the time. At least there is enough ground for concluding that the media cannot be assumed to be disinterested—even when they claim to be neutral and impartial.

Another deviation from independence is that of public broadcasting, where a branch of the press is actually employed by a publicly owned body and subject to government rules and regulations about purpose and content. While satisfactory degrees of editorial independence and transparency have usually been achieved in most day-to-day matters, the strategic position of public broadcasting in relation to the state is always potentially problematic.

More in keeping with the ideal of how the media should be related to power in a democracy is the notion of the media as a watchdog in relation to abuses by those with power, especially governments and their agencies. Thus the media are conceived as not so much having power themselves as having the means to place a check on those who really have power by way of sounding warning signals and publishing revealing information and criticism. Zaller (2003) writes of the "burglar alarm" model of the press in public affairs. The ideal of an adversarial press (e.g., Rivers and Nyhan 1973) elevates the notion of independent critic and tends to neglect the many ties that bind an established and successful branch of the media to a variety of other interests, including that of the state itself. A more recent gloss on the watchdog role has pointed out that it can as

easily become a guard dog role, with the press looking out for the interests of its sponsors or chosen heroes (Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien 1995).

Often missing in discussions of the power of the press are the powerless in any society. There are extensive constituencies in any society who are not formally disenfranchised but are excluded or marginalized (thus lacking power) by their level of education, income, place of residence, health, race, social problems, criminalization, or combinations of these factors. Generally, sets of people identified in this way do not participate actively in social and political life and are not well organized or represented. Generally also the media do not view them as a significant or even potential part of their audience. The mainstream media do not usually try to express their views, and when they are visible at all it is in terms of social problems for the rest of society, occasionally treated with sympathy.

These remarks should be sufficient to indicate that any role chosen by or assigned to the press must be examined or specified according to power relations in society. In a more detailed version of democratic theory, as well as in day-to-day media practice, there are many ways power relations shape the role the media play in society.

THE DIMENSIONS OF LEGITIMATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The main issue here is the degree to which the various roles can be justified by taking account of their performance and consequences. The starting point for considering the question of legitimacy is the quality of what is published and the many possible consequences of publication. Relevant consequences for others include, inter alia, reputational harm, breach of property rights, offense to decency, and violation of privacy or confidentiality. There is another range of issues concerning the presumably unintended harmful effects often attributed to the media regarding violence, sexual morality, and other issues.

Formal answers to most questions of potential harm are found in law and convention, but underlying these answers are more fundamental issues. There are few answers to questions about societal obligation, but also numerous fundamental issues. There are alternative, sometimes competing, grounds on which legitimate claims can be made that the press should fulfill one or another of the various roles. What principle of right or authority can be cited or appealed to in calling for the performance of some role? The original *Four Theories of the Press* located legitimacy somewhere in the ruling ideology or spirit of the overall social system, whether this was permissive or restrictive, prescriptive or proscriptive. In a liberal social system, there could be no legitimate appeal to state authority to guide or limit the media, and obligations were not spelled out. In a Communist society, the interest of the working class was supposed to justify actions of and restraints on the media. Moreover, it has been argued that the position and sometimes privilege enjoyed by the media in a liberal society

involves an unwritten contract to make "good" use of the freedom it enjoys, not as an unfettered right but as a trustee of the general good.

Appeal can also be made to majority opinion as to how the media should behave. However, while it is easy to conduct opinion polls on media standards or obligations, the results carry no particular authority, and it would be tyrannical if they did. In a liberal society, the main basis of legitimacy is de facto the market system, which supports the idea that audiences should be given what they are willing to pay for, within the law. Besides the market and the popular will, there are some organized means for expressing relevant (sometimes partisan, sometimes expert) opinion that provide intellectual, moral, or philosophical support for claims for and against the press, even if there is no power to compel. For public broadcasting, there are specific instruments for legitimating intervention to secure certain services and maintain quality. Even so, it is difficult to see how this particular source and form of legitimation for press roles could be extended. Its scope of influence has been contracting, as broadcasting itself is in relative decline. However, it does exert some influence on standards by example and prestige.

Accountability refers to the willingness of the media to answer for what they do by their acts of publication, including what they do to society at large, and refers as well to the feasibility of securing accountability where there is unwillingness. Being accountable is normally linked to accepting, or being given, certain responsibilities, tasks, or goals. It implies some constraint on freedom, and enforced accountability is a denial of freedom. However, some forms of accountability are quite compatible with media freedom as generally understood—especially where freedom does not extend to permitting harm to others (Bertrand 2003; McQuail 2003; Plaisance 2000). For present purposes, the central question of accountability might be formulated as follows: To whom are the media accountable for carrying out a given role, and by what means is accountability achieved?

There are several alternative means by which the media may be called to account, with varying relevance for the roles under discussion. The foremost form of accountability for institutional conduct that affects others and other interests in society is law and regulation. Despite their extensive freedom, the media are typically hedged in with restrictions—especially where there is potential harm to personal reputation or financial interests or to public order and the state's security. For the most part, these restrictions do not entail any positive obligations. Media are sometimes governed by regulations that require them to behave in a certain way and to give an account of their record, especially when there is a question of granting or renewing licenses. Many broadcasting systems, public and private, are regulated, and the once free Internet is increasingly faced with calls for legal control, derived from public demand and the needs of effective

and profitable operation. None of the four roles under discussion—leaving aside public broadcasting—are legally enforceable, and the media are not formally accountable to society for carrying them out. A rare exception arises where emergency situations or legislation require cooperation from the media for protecting vital interests of society and the state.

The second main form of accountability (i.e. the market) works as a "hidden hand" to bring society's needs, as expressed by individuals, into balance with the interests of media communicators. There is no enforcement, but the market can be considered reasonably effective in ensuring the performance of the monitorial role (since it meets a clear audience demand) and only intermittently relevant to the other three. Neither facilitation nor collaboration are much within the scope of market forces, although in some circumstances collaboration receives strong public approval. The radical role is usually independent of the marketplace, despite the fact that critical journalism may also be popular or at least have a niche market.

The third main means of accountability is that of public pressure, either in the form of general public opinion or by way of organized pressure groups and lobbies. While normative pressure from society and communities can be very effective, it is mainly so in relation to negative aspects of press performance on which there is a high degree of consensus. Such pressures do not do much to produce positive results. Tendencies of the media toward facilitation and collaboration in these matters can be encouraged by public pressure, but there is no question of accountability. Despite these remarks, we cannot exclude the possibility that the media are encouraged in the performance of their more altruistic roles by public esteem and enhanced status.

The fourth main form of media accountability is professional self-regulation, which may either emerge from within the media or be requested from outside by society as it were. Adherence to professional standards of conduct and ethical norms requires voluntary acceptance of the need to answer for failings and to promise improvement. This willingness may lead to better fulfillment of the facilitative and monitorial roles; it is largely irrelevant to the radical role, which generates its own internal dynamic toward fulfillment.

Media Roles and Models of Democracy

In chapter 4, four models of democracy were identified under the headings "pluralist," "administrative," "civic," and "direct." Here we need only point to the relative prominence of the roles identified earlier in this chapter in relation to the models.

The monitorial role is required under all four models, but in different variants. In pluralistic democracy it is the dominant role, since competing interests

vie for support on the basis of freely available information and opinions. The main variations are between polarized forms of pluralism (Hallin and Mancini 2004) and moderate or less contested forms. In the former case, the monitorial role has to be carried out from a particular perspective on behalf of a particular group. This requires a vertically segmented form of media system, with different media channels for different political groups. Journalists are committed to reporting a particular selection of events and to offering a particular interpretation of the world scene, rather than just recording it. Journalism reflects the antagonisms of the society, and there is little chance for neutral, objective reporting. By contrast, under conditions of liberal or moderate pluralism, without sharp conflicts of ideas, we are more likely to find internal forms of media pluralism. This means that informing the public does take the form of neutral, objective journalism, plus varied commentaries reflecting different perspectives and allegiances.

The administrative model of democracy requires a flow of information but has less need for reflecting different opinions. The information provided by the media derives mainly from official, independent, or professional sources. Public trust in the media is encouraged by credible claims to accuracy and fullness of information provided, even if the flow does often come from official sources that may be suspect. The chief professional virtue of journalism in this model of democracy is a cultivated reliability. The news media pay less attention than they do under pluralism to minority sources or those perceived as deviant. The supposed national or general interest determines the criteria of news selection and prominence, as well as the frames within which news is reported.

Under civic and direct democracy, the monitoring role has to be performed in more fragmented ways and under less objective forms. There is no central claim to truth as an independent and verifiable attribute of news accounts. There is no way of determining objectively what is more or less relevant. This is a matter for citizens to choose and determine for themselves.

The collaborative role is not very prominent under normal conditions of pluralistic democracy, aside from the situation of a partisan press in its relation to its own party or a government of its own color. The media do not typically seek to help society directly or to cooperate closely with authority, although under the administrative model there is a degree of collaboration with authorities for reasons of supposed national interest. However, the collaborative role is compatible with the media operating in terms of the deliberative model, according to which service designed to meet social needs is a basic feature of democratic society. Under direct democracy, a somewhat theoretical condition in modern times, the media are likely to be subordinate to rather than to cooperate with the elected authorities. These remarks do not, of course, say anything about authoritarian tendencies that can show up in democracies, especially under crisis

conditions. A collaborative role may then be either hard to avoid or democratically legitimated by popular demand and even democratic decision.

The radical role also appears in different guises in different models. Under conditions of contested pluralism, it is very prominent, whether there is strong or weak contestation. Without the critical voice of the media, citizens are less able to choose between alternative parties and candidates: partisanship cannot operate without strong and opposed critical voices. The administrative model does not in principle require a strong media adversarial voice, although the claim to legitimate authority does entail processes of public accountability in which independent media scrutiny plays an important part, albeit without rancor or self-interest. A deliberative model of democracy clearly needs critical journalism. Direct democracy needs critical voices, but not necessarily stemming from a media institution that is somewhat remote from the people. The operation of direct democracy may also involve intolerance of what is perceived as unconstructive criticism for the purposes of selling newspapers or the electronic equivalent.

The radical role is characterized by the perspective of power, whereas the facilitative role is focused on citizenship, the collaborative role is defined in terms of the state or other powerful institutions, and the monitorial role falls between citizenry and institutions. While the distinctive feature of the monitorial role is to *expose,* that of the facilitative role to *deliberate,* and that of the collaborative role to *mobilize,* the keyword for the radical role is to *oppose,* to contradict. Thus the radical role causes the media to be partisan by definition—a medium of advocacy. It also suggests changing things for the better, and this strong normative tone justifies its being called ameliorative.

Conclusion

It should be clear from this account that the very notion of a media or journalistic role remains open to debate and alternative versions are inevitable. Expectations from the media are often inconsistent and also open to continuous change, redefinition, and negotiation. No certain claim can be made upon journalism, under conditions of freedom of publication, to perform a task on behalf of some notion of the public good. Conversely, it is also the case that the media, with all their faults and freedoms, can hardly operate successfully without making commitments to their own audiences and to the many others with whom they have dealings. These commitments inevitably give rise to persistent expectations, which cannot lightly be denied, even if they are not strictly obligatory. Quite aside from this normal feature of all social interaction, whether private or public, the media as an institution have a long history of voluntary engagement with society and have always displayed contradictory tendencies that include strong elements of altruism alongside self-interest.