

Chapter Fourteen

Global Media

Chapter Objectives

- Identify and discuss the four theories of the press.
- Discover mass media outlets and their usage in developed and emerging nations.
- Define and discuss Marshall McLuhan’s Global Village.

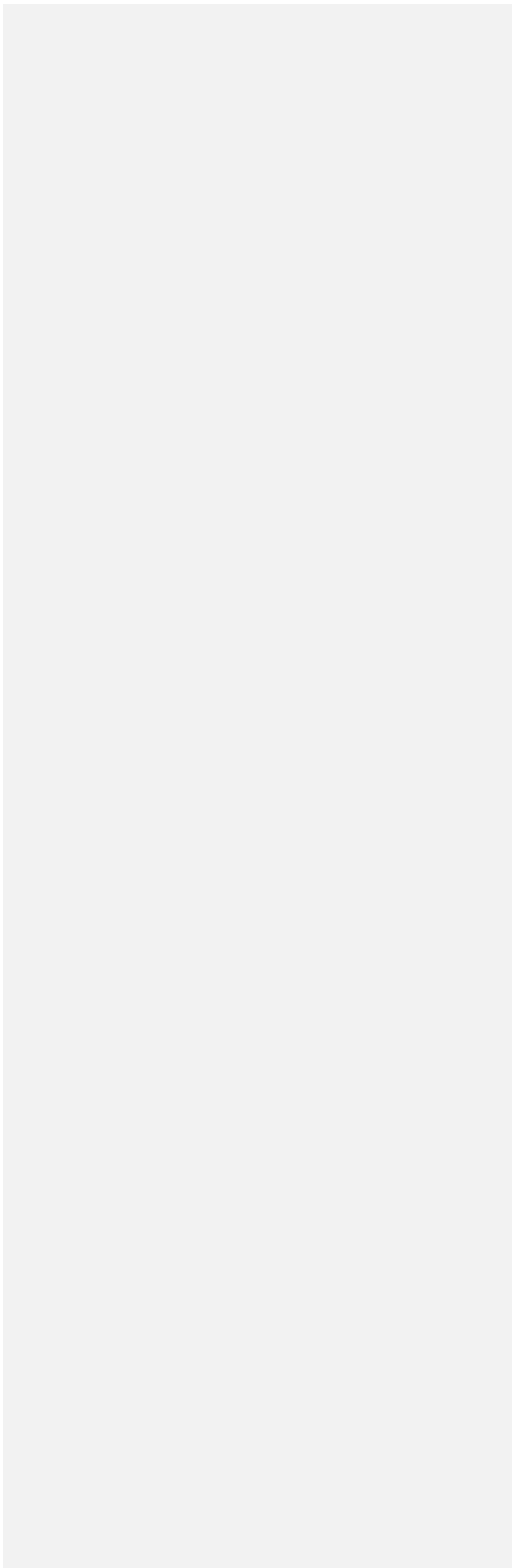
Key Terms

- Theories of the Press*
- Global Village
- Authoritarian Theory
- Development Theory
- Libertarian Theory
- Social Responsibility Theory
- Soviet Theory

Introduction

So often, Americans, as do citizens of most countries around the world, think in a very ethnocentric way. That is, we put our country’s culture at the center of our thoughts and measure all other cultures against it. What we usually surmise is that our culture is superior to all others. While on an intellectual level we know this is not true and is, in fact, the worst type of overgeneralized thinking, we cannot help but turn our patriotism and love for country into something extreme; something not very good.

PHOTO 14.1 WORLD MAP 158199401



Nowhere can this theory of ethnocentrism be more clearly found than on the pages of our newspapers and magazines and as the lead stories on our evening newscasts.

In this chapter, we attempt to discuss the different theological approaches to mass media distribution and control utilized throughout the world and we will also attempt to simply survey the media of different countries without being ethnocentric. So, rather than giving you the author's opinion of how media should work based on his studies and experiences, we will simply report to you the facts as we know them. We will look at what media are used in which countries.

Major Theories of the Press

To begin our discussion, we must establish the guidelines by which we will view mass media systems around the world. In the United States, in 1956, Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm outlined what they considered to be the forms the press could take around the world. Their groundbreaking work simply titled *Four Theories of the Press* continues to be the standard by which we view world media systems.¹ The authors argue that the press takes on the political and societal structures of the country or society in which it resides and that structure usually mirrors the government's and/or society's basic ideology.²

FIGURE 14.1 THEORIES OF THE PRESS

As we know much has changed in the past 50 years in the political landscape making some or parts of these theories outdated to say the least. In order to fully understand the concepts, let's first take a look at the original *Four Theories of the Press* and then we can update the overall viewpoints with more recent theories that expand the original premise.

The *Four Theories of the Press* as brought forth by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm are Authoritarian Theory, Soviet Communist Theory, Libertarian Theory, and Social Responsibility Theory. Let's take a closer look at each.

Authoritarian Theory

Authoritarian theory is the oldest theory of the press and has, historically, been the most commonly seen as monarchies, dictatorships, and theocracies have been the chief rulers of societies. The United States, as we know, was founded at least in part as a rebellion against the British monarchy and its suppression of information in the American colonies. Freedom of information is unheard of in an Authoritarian-type government where the press and all information contained in it are strictly controlled by the government. According to the theory, the role of the press is to be a servant of the government, not a servant of the citizenry. Throughout history, we have seen and continue to see this common practice.³ In 1529, King Henry VIII of England outlawed imported publications because many presses were producing materials that bordered on sedition and treason. The Soviet Union had its own twist on authoritarianism (we discuss that next). Today, dictatorships and theocracies continue the tradition.⁴

Finally, a chief premise of authoritarian systems is that the government is infallible, which places its policies beyond questioning. As stated earlier, the media's role is subservience to the government. We conclude that **Authoritarian Theory** is top-down governance such as a monarchy or dictatorship.⁵

Soviet Communist Theory

The communist theory first implemented boldly by the now defunct Soviet Union is similar to the authoritarian theory, but it goes even further in its control over information. Instead of overseeing the press and punishing offenders, the communist theory dictates that the government actually runs the media; therefore, its needs are met with no resistance.⁶ Thus, the media's main function is to serve as a tool for the government's propaganda. Examples today include China, North Korea, and Cuba. We conclude that **Soviet Communist Theory** says, "the media's main purpose is to act as a tool for government propaganda."

Libertarian

Libertarian philosophy focuses on the ability of the individual to think freely, process information, and apply reason to understand the truth. Therefore, we can say that libertarian theory is the opposite of the authoritarian theory. Instead of the press belonging to and/or being controlled by the government, **Libertarian Theory** says, “the press should be a separate institution that belongs to the people and serves their best interests.”⁷ Obviously, this is the system or theory that the U.S. media began and operated under for decades. This theory of the press is based on several principles: (1) people want the truth and will use the truth as a guide for thinking and decision making, (2) the only way to achieve this is for ideas to be freely and openly discussed, (3) people have varying opinions of which they must be allowed to develop on their own, and (4) the most rational ideas will then be accepted.⁸

Many believe that this system worked and continued to work while others believe that in a capitalist society, the advertisers or larger corporations who keep the media business alive with their sponsorships and support are as much in control of media content as governments are in control of their media outlets in an authoritarian system. It is because of this concern, that we develop a newer, updated take on libertarian theory.

Social Responsibility

While the libertarian theory seems to be the theory that most who wish to maintain a separation between the press and the government refer to, it does have a major drawback. A capitalistic society allows for free enterprise. The majority of all media outlets in a libertarian society are owned by private individuals (regardless of the size of the media conglomerate) through either a large group of investors or an individual family and they exist primarily (if not solely as some believe) to make money for those individuals. This idea called **Social Responsibility Theory** says that even though libertarian media are free of government interference, they can still be controlled by corporate interests and, therefore, must be made strong enough to function against outside pressures.⁹

Today, most would agree that media outlets in democratic, capitalistic societies have made the philosophical shift necessary to ensure that the free press remains free. Further, under this

theory, the press is obligated to (1) provide the news and information needed to make the political system work, (2) give the public the information they need to effectively self-govern, (3) provide opportunities for diversion, entertainment programming, (4) be a watchdog of the government, (5) provide opportunities for buyers and sellers to communicate, and (6) of course, be profitable enough to avoid outside pressures from advertisers and big business.

Updating the Theories

As we updated the libertarian theory, so did we recognize the need for yet another theory of the press to address those nations in states of change that do not fit into any of our previous categories. Times change, as we know, the Soviet Union has not existed for over 20 years now and we have so many new media platforms today that we didn't even conceive of when the original *Four Theories of the Press* was published. Traditionally, in cultural change, 50 years may or may not be that significant; in fact, throughout history, our civilizations remained constant for hundreds of years with no real changes. But to say societies have changed, world views have changed and the way we disseminate information has changed over the past 50 years, is quite the understatement.

With this in mind, we now look at the 1995 publication *Last Rights: Revisiting the Four Theories of the Press* by John Nerone. Nerone and his colleagues suggested several things about the way we should now view these theories. They believed that we should not view them as a timeless set of categories but instead a critique set that was reflective of the politics and economics of its day.¹¹ With this in mind, further critics have suggested that we must deal emerging nations that are in the process of building modern economies.¹²

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Development Theory

These critics believe that a fifth theory should be added, development theory. Development theory addresses the special needs of the aforementioned emerging nations.¹³ **Development Theory** says, "developing nations may need to use temporary controls in order to establish

identity as well as interactions with other nations for commerce and good will.” Dennis McQuail writes that less-developed societies undergoing the transition from colonial rule to independence have different needs because they lack the money, infrastructure, skills, and audiences to sustain a free market media system.¹⁴

PHOTO 14.2 DEVELOPING CITY STREET DIRT 148620908

So we can conclude that whether an established democracy, dictatorship, or monarchy or developing nation, systems, or theories of how to best operate mass media outlets under each of these types of governments have been well documented and are historically well followed. Whether or not you agree or disagree with any or all of these theories is not at question here. What is at the center of the discussion is that mass media is as varied as the nations in which the media outlets do business.

Survey of World Media

Because of the sheer vastness of countries with numerous media outlets that supply countless numbers of media messages daily around the world, we do not have anywhere near the amount of space needed to include a comprehensive survey in this textbook. So, in order to understand the complexities of media systems around the world, we must first simplify our attempt. Instead of offering laundry lists of names of media outlets, this section provides an overview of each country/region’s mass media and societal interactions. This section is, by the nature of publishing an introductory course textbook with so many topics, a very brief look at a very complicated and dense topic and cannot, of course, cover all countries.

North America

Canada

From Canadian scholars Rowland Lorimer and Mike Gasher, we hear a nonflinching account of the mass media industry in their country. They state that the majority of Canadian consumption of television, radio, magazine, and books are of American products and not those of Canadian media sources.¹⁵ In a country that is large in geographic area but small in

population (with the majority of Canadians living on or near the U.S. border), media outlets must fight to maintain a sense of identity that is separate from that of the United States.

PHOTO 14.3. TORONTO DOWNTOWN 120255052

In the broadcasting sector, Canada has a government-funded broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation/Société Radio-Canada, which operates radio and TV networks in English and French. Some provincial governments offer their own public educational TV broadcast services as well, such as Ontario's TVOntario and Quebec's Télé-Québec. Given Canada's small market and its position next to the dominant producer of feature films, the Canadian film industry receives substantial assistance from the government. In the 2000s, about half of the budget of a typical Canadian film came from various federal and provincial government sources.¹⁶

Central and Latin America

As is the case with Canada, most of Latin American commercial broadcasting is dominated by companies in North America with the addition of Mexican and Brazilian companies. Brazil and Mexico have similar systems to that of the United States and they even export programming to the United States such as sports and soap operas. These systems are as sophisticated and profitable as any media system around the world and they are extensive in scope due in large part to the limit of only two languages, Portuguese and Spanish. PHOTO 14.4 BRAZILIAN TV SOCCER FLAG 191539667

This is not the case in Europe and Africa where many languages create problems in expanding media markets.¹⁷ As economies have stabilized throughout this region, mass media outlets have grown. And unlike the rest of the world, Latin America has actually seen an increase in newspaper publishing with more than 1,000 in the region with daily readership exceeding 100 million.¹⁸

United Kingdom

England

Media of the United Kingdom consist of several different types of communications media: television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and web sites. The country also has a strong music industry. The United Kingdom has a diverse range of providers, the most prominent being the state-owned public service broadcaster, the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation).

The most well known of perhaps all media around the world is the BBC or the British Broadcasting Corporation. The BBC, developed as a public service during World War I, operates under a public service model in which audience members pay the costs of programming through equipment licensing fees.

PHOTO 14.5 BBC WEB PAGE 170472521

The BBC's largest competitors are ITV plc, which operates 11 of the 15 regional television broadcasters that make up the ITV Network, and News Corporation, which holds a large stake in satellite broadcaster British Sky Broadcasting and also operates a number of leading national newspapers. Regional media is covered by local radio, television, and print newspapers. Trinity Mirror operates 240 local and regional newspapers in the United Kingdom as well as national newspapers such as the *Daily Mirror* and the *Sunday Mirror*.¹⁹

Western Europe

Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, and Scandinavia

According to Broadcast scholar Matthew Rusher, "Each country in Western Europe seeks to preserve its own culture and language and sees the foreign produced programming on the international channels as a threat to its cultural integrity."²⁰ Cable television is common in the region with satellite programming more prevalent in Scandinavia. Most countries were authoritarian monopolies until 1980s when commercial alternative became commonplace.

There are more advertising revenues than ever before but strict government regulations and guidelines remain.²¹

PHOTO 14.6 EUROPEAN UNION MAP 92325316

European newspapers tend to take a more obvious political point of view than U.S. newspapers. These newspapers are clearly slanted to one political viewpoint designed to appeal to members of the particular political party they portray. Newspaper readership is higher in Western Europe than in any region of the world, but the area still faces decline in publications as more and more readers are seeking out online sources of information.²²

Eastern Europe

Russia

The media of Russia is diverse, with a wide range of broadcast and print outlets available to the consumer, offering all kinds of perspectives and catering for all tastes. In total, there are 93,000 media outlets in Russia, including 27,000 newspapers and magazines and 330 television channels. Television is the most popular source of information. There are three television channels with a nationwide outreach and a multitude of regional channels. Local and national newspapers are the second most popular choice, while the Internet comes third. In all media spheres, there is a mixture of private and state ownership. The three nationwide television channels have been criticized for their alleged lack of neutrality. However, there is no lack of independent media in Russia, especially in print media, radio, and the Internet.²³

PHOTO 14.8 OSTANKINO TOWER IN MOSCOW 116067538

Middle East

Perhaps the most volatile of all regions in the world, the Middle East remains a region in flux and in a state of upheaval. Military actions being carried out in the region continue to make the area one of the most dangerous in the history of the world. With this in mind, we look at how most countries including Syria, Sudan, Jordan, and Egypt all remain primarily authoritarian systems but outside influences continue to shake up the balance of information. Along with the official state-controlled media, many Arab nations have Al Hayat, a regional Arabic newspaper published in London, and the Al Jazeera satellite television news channel (has regular audiences of up to 40 million viewers), which originates in Qatar.²⁴

ALJAZEERA LOGO 172997543

Massive television networks are controlled by the Saudi Arabian government and the Arab League ARABSAT, a network of 21 Arab language channels. Networks such as these provide the majority of citizens with their information and entertainment needs.²⁵

Adding to the complexity of the mass media industry in the region is the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine. For example, although Israel is a democracy, most reporters there are subjected to government control of stories the government deems sensitive military issues.²⁶ And so much has been written about the Arab Spring and all the changes taking place in the region. Frankly, it is very difficult to keep up with those changes and to be current in a textbook like this (what an ironic example of how print media is being slowly and steadily replaced by electronic media).

India

Generally, the media of India consist of several different types of Indian communications media: television, radio, cinema, newspapers, magazines, and Internet-based web sites. Many of the media are controlled by large, for-profit corporations that reap revenue from advertising,

subscriptions, and sale of copyrighted material. India also has a strong music and film industry. India has more than 70,000 newspapers and over 690 satellite channels (more than 80 are news channels) and is the biggest newspaper market in the world—over 100 million copies sold each day.

PHOTO 14.10 BOLLYWOOD LOVE STORY 68783194

The traditional print media, and the television media, are largely family owned and often partake in self-censorship, primarily due to political ties by the owner and the establishment. However, the new media are generally more professional and corporate owned, though these, too, have been acquired or affiliated with established figures. At the same time, the Indian media, viewed as "feisty," have also not reported on issues of the media itself.²⁷

Japan

The communications media of Japan include numerous television and radio networks as well as newspapers and magazines in Japan. For the most part, television networks were established based on the capital contribution from existing radio networks at that time. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the capital relationship between the media (such as the relationship among newspaper, radio, and TV networks).

PHOTO 14.12 JAPANESE MANGA TOY STORES 164803169

Japan is in many ways the technological heart of the modern media world. A great deal of our electronic equipment necessary to create and transmit mass media messages comes from Japan. NHK is Japan's public broadcasting corporation and is financed similarly to the BBC from fees that all television owners pay.

The most popular magazines in Japan are its manga or comic books that account for over 40% of the books and magazines published in Japan.²⁸

Africa

An enormous continent with a large number of countries and different languages, Africa faces many issues when it comes to both geographic and language barriers. However, the media in Africa is expanding rapidly due to advances in telecommunications, especially mobile phones and the Internet.

PHOTO 14.13 MOROCCO SATELLITE DISHES 2551590

However, Africa is still largely rural, and most of the smaller towns do not have their own newspapers. Newspaper circulation is limited by high levels of poverty and illiteracy.²⁹ Radio is the most important medium but it is still mainly received through battery-powered sets. Both of these items are very expensive. The programming is designed to teach people how to improve their standard of living but most often is dominated by politicians.³⁰

Global Village

As we conclude our discussion of global media, we must point out one very basic fact—these systems and countries do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, they are constantly interacting and, therefore, effecting and changing one another. Like no time before in the history of the world have we been able to connect so quickly with people in other parts of the world.

Mass media technology is changing, has changed, and will continue to change the ways citizens of the world interact and view each other.

While this is apparent today, it wasn't always the case. When television first came into existence in the 1940s, broadcasters focused on the local not the global. Most did not see television's vast potential to bring together the people of the world.

PHOTO 14. 14 CELL PHONE WORLD IMAGE 147935969

Enter Marshall McLuhan. Canadian scholar, who first coined the phrase Global Village in his 1962 book *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. Essentially, McLuhan pictured all of us as members of a single **global village** where the electronic media bring us in touch with everyone, everywhere, instantaneously.³¹ He said that closed human systems no longer exist.

While he may not be entirely correct in his view that we will all interact with one another because of the new, electronic media, McLuhan is still discussed because his ideas are sound. We now have the information and we hear about kidnapped school girls taken violently from their classrooms and we hear about Russia taking military movement toward Ukraine. So, as McLuhan said, we now know what goes on. Whether or not we care or we do anything about these occurrences in other countries is always debatable. So, we do live in a smaller world thanks to television and the Internet but do we interact as a small world should?

Conclusion

Our world truly is an amazingly large, amazingly diverse planet with billions of people who live dramatically different lives. Thanks to mass media outlets we know all have the capability of being informed all major news events happening around the world within seconds of their occurrences. We also have the ability to communicate instantaneously with anyone we choose in mostly any place anywhere in the world. It is actually an amazing time we live in.

Summary

The four major theories of the press are authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet theory.

A fifth theory of the press for developing nations is called development theory.

Mass media outlets and their usage in developed and emerging nations are quite extensive and diverse.

Marshall McLuhan exposed that thanks to television and the electronic media we now live a global village where we are in touch with everyone, everywhere, instantaneously.

Discussion Questions

1. Which theory of the press do you believe to be the most just and ethical? Why?
2. Discuss the key differences in media usage between developed and emerging nations. Use an example of each for your answer (in order to create more awareness of global media structure, please avoid using the United States for this question).
3. What do you believe is the major stumbling block that emerging nations face in the adoption of mass media?
4. How does the development theory update the four theories of the press?
5. Define and discuss McLuhan's global village.

Supplemental

Web sites

Readings

Videos

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