

# Journalism and Institutions

Some important opposing terms to begin:

- **Public vs. Private**

- Can apply to individuals or institutions
- Includes information, documents, many things

- **High Profile vs. Low Profile**

- Community standing, job title, etc.
- Does not equate to importance, knowledge, effectiveness, impact

- **Active vs. Passive**

- Applies to everything from writing styles to people to organizations
- Seeking attention and action or not?

- **Dependent vs. Independent**

- Applies across institutions and individuals
- Can dramatically affect how jobs are done

- **Accepting vs. Critical**

- Individuals and groups at all points along this continuum
- Reasons can vary dramatically case by case

# Journalism and Institutions

- **Public Sector:** The part of a society that is controlled by the government and paid for with taxpayer money
- **Private Sector:** The part of a society owned by private companies and groups, usually for profit
- **Voluntary Sector:** Area of society operated for a collective, public or social benefit, often staffed by a few paid staff members and many volunteers

# Journalism and Institutions

## Public's Right to Know

- Linked to open government, free speech
- Holds government and other institutions accountable for actions
- Seen as essential to operation of democratic society

## **Allows journalists and public to:**

- Get information
- Publish/disseminate without prior restraint
- Publish without fear of illegal retaliation
- Access facilities and material essential to communication
- Distribute information without interference by government acting under law or by citizens acting in defiance of the law.

Adapted from Paul and Kim, Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context, 2004.

# Journalism and Institutions

## Public's Right to Know

Applied to Public Sector:

- Paid for with taxpayer money
- Virtually all employees, budgets, actions open to public scrutiny
- Journalists can freely request information, examine critically

Applied to Private Sector:

- Entirely privately financed, or funded by investors?
- Open to scrutiny to extent that it affects public interest
- Journalists often need inside sources to get information

Applied to Voluntary Sector:

- Relatively small part of overall economy
- Open to scrutiny based on regulations governing nonprofits
- Main question: Performing their stated public service?

# Journalism and Institutions

## Roles journalists and news outlets can fulfill in society:

- **Disseminator**
  - Find and verify facts, supply needed context
  - Publish as quickly and broadly as material can be verified
- **Interpreter**
  - Provide clear explanation and analysis of complex issues
  - Clarify work of organizations that affect the public
- **Watchdog**
  - Critically examine work of government & major institutions
  - Expose wrongdoing, hold those in power accountable
- **Adversary**
  - Actively confront public officials and others in power
  - Publish material fighting for public interest over private gain
- **Mobilizer**
  - Organize citizens to act against powerful interests
  - Use own identity as populist tool to rally people behind causes

# Journalism and Institutions

## Main Question 1:

How critical are different kinds of media likely to be of different kinds of institutions?

## Main Question 2:

How critical should audiences be of THIS media outlet's coverage of THAT institution?

# Journalism and Institutions

## Common Local Institutions:

- Government
- Military
- Law Enforcement
- Emergency Services
- Civil Service
- Public Utilities
- Chamber of Commerce/  
Promotional Entities
- Businesses/Employers  
(private vs. public)
- Health Care
- Transportation
- Community Service/  
Charities
- Churches/Religious  
Organizations
- Corporations  
(HQ or regional)
- Schools (K-12)
- Colleges & Universities

# Journalism and Institutions

## Journalism as an institution in America:

- Private, profit-making businesses
  - Covering/analyzing other institutions is part of mission
  - Subject to scrutiny like other private businesses
  - Attracts more attention & criticism than most
- Supported by subscriptions & advertising
  - Serve needs of subscribers, community
  - Link w/advertisers can sometimes cause ethical issues
- Constitutionally protected
  - Unusual status allows some legal & cultural leeway
  - Different protections in different states
  - Limits of freedoms tested frequently



# Journalism and Institutions

## Ongoing Public Discourse

- Old Model
  - Major media (national and local) determine main stories
  - Institutions and individuals make concerns known
  - Most important get media attention, laws/policies change
- New Model
  - Everyone has something to say
  - Relatively little distinction between sources
  - No vetting of importance of information
  - Ocean of information for audiences to process