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SCHOLARSHIP

BART NILLESEN

A QUEST FOR "VOORLICHTING:" COMMUNICATION SCIENCE AND THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS A THEORY OF "VOORLICHTING"

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This dissertation constitutes a quest for understanding the Dutch term *voorlichting*, and transpires in six stages: a qualitative empirical investigation (stage 1), a review of the literature (stages 2 & 3), a meta-study (stages 4 & 5) and an overall review and assessment (stage 6). Before outlining these stages, the term *voorlichting* deserves explanation. It has been described by Nillesen and Stappers (1987) as a form of elucidation, and is generally regarded as a formal intentional communication process. In the Netherlands *voorlichting* has been frequently the topic of lively public debate, in contrast to the situation in other countries where similar discussion seldom includes elaboration on the name of the process. Several definitions of propaganda, public relations and *voorlichting* can be found in the literature, and these may be thought of as belonging to the general class of formal communication. They all describe the organised legitimate public provision of constructed messages. However, the intention of the sender is not only to present a message which substantiates an information source; there is also an expectation that the message will be understood (and executed) by the receiver(s) according to what s/he has in mind. Since the intention is to go beyond mere delivery of a message for the perception of information by receiver(s) and pursue the intended receiver(s) to conform with the message, this can be expressed and perhaps better understood as so-called "pursuant communication" (cf. Nillesen, 1995). It therefore follows that advertising should also be included in this sub-classification of formal communication. In order to assess whether a definition of *voorlichting* is commensurate with how executive practitioners perceive it, it was necessary to analyse the opinions of a panel of experts on a selection of definitions. To gain insight into possible reasons for (dis)agreement, the Delphi method was employed. The panel consisted of communication executives from major industries (n=32) and non-profit organisations (n=14), directors of public relations agencies (n=13), and executive public information officers from departments (n=8), provinces (n=8) and major cities (n=10). The findings from this investigation constitute the first stage of the dissertation, and suggest a general consensus and broad agreement among these executive practitioners concerning the general concept of *voorlichting*. However, when the judgements of certain sub-categories of the panel are reviewed and studied by means of correspondence analysis, there also appear to be notable differences of opinion. The most remarkable finding was acquired by means of Rasch analysis where it became clear that irrespective of their profession, all of the experts in the panel thought a general definition of *voorlichting* consisted of (at least) two dimensions.

The second stage of the study focuses on propaganda. In many studies of propaganda scholars appear to have struggled with problems with which Dutch

authors on *voorlichting* presently must deal. For instance, there has been a gradual growth of the amount and variety of meanings attached to the term. The inevitable interference arising from this plethora of definitions and these and connotative meanings makes effort at coming to grips with the concept difficult. The solution to this diversity, proffered by scholars studying the concept of propaganda, will be put to further use when similar and related problems in the study and definitions of *voorlichting* are analysed.

The third stage is an inventory of the ways and means used by scholars in dealing with "intention" when analysing or reviewing (the study of) communication. In our opinion intention is a necessary condition for communication. However, not many of those authors on communication who would agree with such a proposition have dealt with this substantive characteristic satisfactorily. Even in the cases where the theoretical importance of this point have been recognised, there is little evidence to suggest that relevant materials have been studied. So, even though the study of pursuant communication, e.g. propaganda, has received a considerable amount of attention from social scientists, the core of the matter — "intentionality" — has been too often overlooked or circumvented.

The fourth stage is a critical review of how "influence" is conceptualised and operationalised in some classical studies of communication research. The opinion leader in the two-step flow of communications hypothesis is a point of focus, because the position of this person and his/her contribution to the communication process are similar to the position and contribution of the *voorlichter* and how the ensuing process of *voorlichting* is viewed and understood. Consequently, the findings as well as the recognised problems in this type of communication research are relevant to this study of *voorlichting*. Despite many prolonged studies of "opinion leaders" and/or into "opinion leadership", this concept remains ambiguous and is therefore not compatible with the alleged cumulation of empirical communication research findings.

The fifth stage is an analysis of definitions of *voorlichting*. Most authors of the texts examined fail to justify the differences or state for what purpose these differences have been introduced. Sociologists, social psychologists, and various disciplines devoted to studying social change, for example, consider mainly, and sometimes only, their own domain or the subfield of *voorlichting* with which they are concerned. Communication is generally conceived by these authors to be only a transmission of symbols for the ultimate sake of change. However, this linear and severely restrictive notion of *voorlichting* nearly always seems to preclude the understanding of communication as a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed, and this is the main factor leading to an incomplete understanding of what *voorlichting* is and how it works. Moreover, these authors do not pay adequate attention to informal communication as an important contribution to the communication process and consequences of public communication.

In the sixth stage a common denominator is extracted from the former stages of the quest. Early research in the first half of this century suggests that a distinction should be made between the "flow of influence" and the "flow of information". These are thought to be analytically different concepts. This study presents a review of research into pursuant communication from which it can be easily deduced that it is the lack of application of such an important distinction, and other distinctions in communication, which are primarily responsible for a part of the previous — and still current — confusion among communication researchers.

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DEMOCRATIC SPEECH, THE MEDIA AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT

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This critical law and policy study addresses the question of whether speech rights in the United States, as manifest in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, have been interpreted in a way that protects democratic communication in U.S. media systems. In order to answer this question, the dissertation first develops a systematic and concise definition of democratic communication. The dissertation engages in an historical review of the different perspectives on the role of communication in democratic societies offered by two contending strands of liberal political philosophy, a philosophical tradition which is based on the notions of individual rights and the participation of citizens in democratic processes. These contending strands of liberalism entrain radically different views of the individual's relationship to society, the definition of freedom or liberty, the appropriate domain of state action, and the meaning of speech rights. The neo-liberal perspective, with roots in classical liberalism, fosters a "defensive" approach to speech rights. This perspective, as it appears in the writings of Locke, Mill, Friedman, Hayek, and Nozick, asserts that individuals possess adequate opportunities to exercise their rights in private spaces, such as competitive markets, which are defended from government intrusion. The countervailing strand of liberal political theory, participatory democratic theory, takes an "empowering" approach to the question of speech rights. Participatory democratic theory, as exemplified in the writings of Green, Dewey, and Barber, argues that the exercise of rights may require the government to insure that individuals encounter the opportunity to act on their will and capacities. Combining the insights of the critical political economy of communication, including the work of Mosco, Garnham, Murdock and Curran, and political philosophy, this dissertation critiques the neo-liberal approach and offers a normative definition of speech rights grounded in participatory democratic theory.

This definition of democratic speech is compared to legal understandings of speech rights as evinced in current U.S. Supreme Court decisions on First Amendment law. In particular, the dissertation critically examines the cases that have made law with regard to the ability of individuals to engage in social mediation through sending and receiving information conveying their unique experiences and perspectives, and the ability of politics to establish public communicative arenas or forums. The dissertation

demonstrates that tensions which exist in American law over normative interpretations of the First Amendment derive from conflicting views of speech rights within liberalism itself. Furthermore, in cases where the defensive approach to speech rights prevails, democratic speech is not protected. In the U.S., First Amendment media law has determined that the public has no right to speak in dominant communications forums and only a limited right to receive information. Furthermore, the Court has refused to grant First Amendment protections to citizens who utilise the ostensibly public spaces carved out on private media systems, such as cable access television channels. Case analyses indicate that at present there is a serious disjuncture between legal interpretations of the First Amendment and the speech rights necessary to support democratic communication.

The dissertation goes on to assess whether new technologies or communication industry restructuring alter the terms or conditions of democratic speech in modern media systems. The dissertation argues that despite deregulationist rhetoric about the emancipatory potential of competition and new technologies, a close examination of both of these phenomena reveals the fallacy of unproblematically equating either with democratic communication, as well as the need for policy makers to engage in serious examination of the actual conditions affecting public participation in communication markets and processes. Finally, the dissertation offers an alternative set of policy principles, based in democratic theory and legal precedent, to guide future judicial and legislative policy on democratic speech. In short, this study advances research in the area of democratic communication by constructing a definition of democracy grounded in liberal political theory, by demonstrating the ways in which judicial reasoning on the First Amendment falls short of protecting democratic speech, and by translating these insights into concrete and pragmatic policy recommendations.

The first two chapters of the dissertation present an overview of the study and lay out its theoretical foundations. Chapter one examines critical legal studies perspectives on the First Amendment, reviews the literature on democratic communication scholarship, and considers the contributions which critical political economy and political philosophy make to theories of democratic communication. Chapter two conducts a review of classical and neo-liberal approaches to speech rights. Participatory democratic theory is then used to critique classical and neo-liberal theory, and this critique is augmented by a critical political economy analysis of contemporary communications markets. Drawing on these latter theories, a comprehensive redefinition of speech rights is posited.

The following two chapters consider legal policy on the right to send and receive communication and on the right to public communicative spaces. In chapter three, legal theories of media access are reviewed and their fate examined through an analysis of the judicial treatment of the Fairness Doctrine and right-of-reply statutes in print and broadcasting. Chapter four considers the judicial treatment of public spaces on private media systems through an examination of the statutory and judicial history of public, educational and governmental access channels.

The final chapters of the dissertation consider whether new technologies or policy reforms offer increased opportunities for democratic speech. Chapter five discusses the speech issues raised by new technologies and the restructuring of media industries. Specifically, the chapter looks at the terms of the 1996 Telecommunications Act and at the current state of speech rights on computer networks. Lastly, chapter six summarises

the dissertation findings and suggests alternative principles to guide public policy towards a fuller realisation of democratic speech. The chapter argues for a reconceptualisation of the role of the state and state interests in media regulation, a recognition of the nongovernmental factors inhibiting speech, an acknowledgement of the public function of communication systems and institutions, and political and legal support for hybrid regulatory models. The chapter also reviews legal cases that set precedents for empowering speech rights and media regulation.

PAHMI WINTER

THE MASTERS OF TRUTH AND JUSTICE? TVNZ NEWS-CULTURE AND "THE DISCIPLINE OF THE MARKET:" 1989 - 1992

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, 1994

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During the 1980s, New Zealand was among the first countries to translate the re-emergent neo-liberal ideology of economic rationalism into legislation and policy, thereby bringing about a radical shift in the ethos and organisation of many of New Zealand's public corporations. The public sector was restructured according to the principles of market liberalism. Broadcasting policy was radically reregulated, and the public television system commercialised, before citizens had a chance to consider and debate the social, cultural and political issues these changes presented. In 1989, New Zealand's public television corporation, Television New Zealand (TVNZ), became a "market-led" state-owned commercial telecommunications enterprise (SOE), Television New Zealand Ltd. The executives appointed in 1987-88 to manage TVNZ's Department of News and Current Affairs identified their brief as preparing the department for the "discipline of the market." This study is an inquiry into what this means in its practical application within the daily routines of news production at TVNZ.

This thesis presents an ethnographic account of the culture of TVNZ news production immediately after the company's transition from public to commercial broadcaster. It examines occupational and organisational ideologies in the newsroom, journalist and managerial interests and practices, and the competing interests engendered by structural ambiguities inherent in the organisation. Through focusing on journalists' practice and editorial control in the production of TVNZ's prime time news Programme One Network News (ONN), the thesis demonstrates how a commercial scale of values was introduced and institutionalised within the production process. TVNZ news executives hold that market forces and populist production values enhance their representation of the broad public interest. This thesis challenges their claim that they effectively balance organisational and journalistic goals, and public service and commercial interests, through assessing it in the context of ideological, material and regulatory structures shaping news production. It argues that the problem

of conflicting goals, which beset TVNZ prior to its restructuring into a SOE, has not been resolved. The tensions and ambiguities engendered by conflicting commercial and social objectives remain.

The thesis proposes that discrepancies between journalists' professional norms and routine practices in TVNZ news culture are concealed through the co-option of journalists' professional ideologies into the wider market-oriented discourses of TVNZ corporate culture. It demonstrates how the demands of a broadcasting organisation dominated by commercial interests compromises, in significant ways, the professional interests and autonomy of TVNZ journalists, and the public interest through the redefining of journalistic standards in relation to the market performance of the commodities they produce.

Part One establishes the wider social and historical context which gives this analysis its meaning and relevance. Chapter One introduces the reader to news production at TVNZ from the perspective of the viewer who is more familiar with the television program ONN than the conditions of its production. It establishes the program's identity as a historically produced and contested form of popular culture in New Zealand, then acquaints the reader with the public debate about TVNZ news production standards. Chapter Two reviews classic texts on journalism as the organisation of social action in order to establish the theoretical points of departure and rationale underpinning the research. Chapter Three addresses research strategies and issues of method and technique.

Part Two establishes the institutional context of news production at TVNZ. Chapter Four sets out the historical development of broadcast journalism in New Zealand. It highlights aspects of the political and organisational conditions and dynamics from within which the present formulation of "professional television journalism" at TVNZ emerged. In particular, it examines the confluence and contesting of broadcasting interests during the 1980s when the New Zealand public sector became subjected to the ideologies of managerialism and economic rationalism. Chapter Five looks at the meaning and significance of news production for the state-owned enterprise TVNZ. Chapter Six describes the hierarchical arrangement of journalistic responsibility and expertise in the Department of News and Current Affairs.

In Part Three, the journalists tell their own story. This section gives an exposition of journalist rationales and definitions of the situation according to where they are placed in the hierarchy of accountability within the Department of News and Current Affairs. Chapter Seven identifies key constructs underpinning the newsroom norm of "good television journalism," teasing out the criteria by which the journalists legitimate and explain their practice. This chapter highlights the shift in newsroom ethos to a populist orientation and the way in which professional commitments and organisational concerns dovetail in journalistic rhetoric. Chapter Eight places the normative framework naturalised in journalists' rationales within the wider defining context of the hierarchical mediation of editorial authority. It sets out the TVNZ senior news executives' interpretation of their responsibilities as managers of a TVNZ business unit or profit centre and how they ideologically reconcile the organisational demand that TVNZ's Department of News and Current Affairs be "competitive" with their professional duty to "inform." In Chapter Nine, the apparent consensus suggested by the normative accounts explored in Chapter Seven is shown to be deliberately constructed by the TVNZ news executives as they seek to mobilise journalism in the

organisation's interests. This chapter details the structures and processes by which the tensions engendered by competing interests within TVNZ news-culture are effectively managed so that orderly and profitable production is maintained.

In Part Four, Chapter Ten, the fieldwork evidence set out in Part Three becomes the point of departure for an analysis of the news-executives' response to the requirements of the organisational structure and their perceived "problem of control" over the social relations of news-production. Key discursive constructs in TVNZ news-culture are interpreted as defensive managerial strategies which foster and protect the commercial interests of the organisation.

In summary, news executives claim that market forces have improved the performance of the department's journalists, that they have become more "professional" as a consequence of being exposed to competition and the "discipline of the market." This thesis argues that the "discipline of the market" does not enhance journalistic practice through an equitable balance of public service and commercial objectives. What it does do is facilitate management interests in achieving a strong central chain of command and a compliant workforce in order that financial commitments and targets are met.

In a wider frame it is indicated that the public debate about standards of TVNZ journalism focuses too exclusively on the programs and their producers without addressing standards in terms of the statutory framework which requires TVNZ management to operate the company as a cash-cow for the state. In conclusion, the thesis contends that the state has a responsibility to ensure the television network, set up for and largely paid by New Zealand taxpayers, provides a public space for citizen discourse.