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In Search of a Standard: four models of democracy and their normative implications for journalism

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ABSTRACT   *The literature discussing the impact of media and journalism upon democracy, typically criticizes both media and journalism for their content and their negative effects on some aspects of democracy. In turn, this raises the question of identifying news standards by which the quality of news journalism might be evaluated. But neither the proposed news standards nor the criticism levelled against them specify with sufficient clarity the model of democracy to be used as a normative departure. This article argues that the question of proper news standards cannot be addressed in isolation from the question of different normative models of democracy. In order to discover news standards by which the quality of news journalism can or should be evaluated, it analyzes four normative models of democracy and their demands upon citizens: procedural democracy, competetive democracy, participatory democracy and deliberative democracy. Building upon that analysis, the article asks: What normative implications for media and news journalism follow from the distinctive perspectives of procedural, competitive, participatory and deliberative democracy?*

KEY WORDS: *Journalism, Democracy, Normative Models, News Standards*

Introduction

Over 40 years ago, Schattschneider critized political science for its inability to formulate a good definition of democracy and, as a consequence, its inability to come to terms with the fact that democratic theory and American democratic practice more often than not seemed to be quite different things. In *The Semisovereign People*, he wrote "We need to re-examine the schism between theory and practice because it is at least as likely that the ideal is wrong as it is that the reality is bad" (Schattschneider, 1975 [1960], p. 128).

A similar argument can be made in reference to the literature about media, journalism and democracy. On the one hand, media and journalism are often critized for their content and their negative effects on some aspects of democracy. On the other hand, in general, critics are not clear about which democratic standard they are applying when criticizing the media. It is one thing to argue that the media contributes to

political cynicism (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997), that the framing of politics as strategy rather than substance gives citizens less information than they need and does not mesh with the voters' concerns (Fallows, 1996; Patterson, 1993), that television "seduces" modern voters (Hart, 1999), or that modern media force politicians to adapt to media logic in order to gain visibility and electoral success (cf. Altheide and Snow, 1991; Meyer, 2002). It is quite another to specify *why* and *how* this might harm *democracy*.

Based on this, it is easy to agree with Zaller's view that the question of proper news standards needs to be (re)analyzed (Zaller, 2003). According to him, we need a standard of news quality that is realistic, able to highlight shortcomings in existing news journalism and point towards feasible improvements, and help us assess whether news journalism provides the information citizens need to discharge their democratic responsibilities (Zaller, 2003, p. 111–2).

The standard Zaller proposes is called "The Burglar Alarm News Standard", which he con-

trasts to "The Full News Standard", which he interprets to be the predominant standard. In contrast to the Full News Standard, the Burglar Alarm Standard does not see any problem with news being dramatic, entertaining, simplified or focused on conflicts. On the contrary:

> Journalists should seek routinely to cover non-emergency but important issues by means of coverage that is intensely focused, dramatic, and entertaining and that affords the parties and responsible interest groups, especially political parties, ample opportunity for expression of opposing views. Reporters may use simulated drama to engage public attention when the real thing is absent ... As with a real burglar alarm, the idea is to call attention to matters requiring urgent attention, and to do so in excited and noisy tones. News would penetrate every corner of public space so few could miss it. (Zaller, 2003, p. 122)

While the search for a news standard is more than welcome, the Burglar Alarm Standard and the criticism against it has one important shortcoming (cf. Bennett, 2003; Graber, 2003; Patterson, 2003; Zaller, 2003): neither the proposed standards nor the critics are clear enough in the specification of the model of democracy used as a normative departure.

As is well known in political science and political theory, democracy as a concept is not one-dimensional. There is not one model of democracy, but several (cf. Elster, 1998a; Fishkin and Laslett, 2003a; Gilljam and Hermansson, 2003; Held, 1987; Manin, 2002; Sartori, 1987). Therefore, what might be considered to be high-quality news journalism from the perspective of one model of democracy might not be the same when taken from the perspective of another.

The task, therefore, is to connect the discussion of different models of democracy with the search for normative standards by which we can evaluate the quality of news journalism, as well as point towards improvements. Thus, the purpose of this article is to analyze different models of democracy and their normative implications for news journalism.

The article is in four sections. The first outlines a theory of a social contract between democracy, on the one hand, and media and journalism, on the other. The second chooses relevant models of democracy for further analysis regarding their normative implications for media in general and news journalism in particular. The third describes the chosen models of democracy and their normative expectations on citizens. The final section analyzes the normative implications for news journalism which are consequent on each model of democracy.

A Social Contract Between Democracy and Journalism

The relationship between democracy, on the one hand, and media and journalism, on the other, can be described in terms of *a social contract* (Locke, 1988; cf. Kieran, 2000; McQuail, 1992; Strömbäck, 2004). According to this view, media and journalism require democracy as it is the only form of government that respects freedom of speech, expression and information, and the independence of media from the state. By respecting and protecting these neccesary freedoms, democracy fulfills its part of the social contract with the media and journalism.

At the same time, democracy requires a system for the flow of information, for public discussion and for a watchdog function independent of the state. This is where media in general and journalism in particular enter the picture. In theory, they fulfill their part of the social contract by providing citizens with the information they need in order to be free and self-governing, the government with the information it needs in order to make decisions in the common interest sensitive to public sentiments, an arena for public discussion, and by acting as a watchdog against abuse of power in politics and other parts of society.

Media, of course, also provide many other things (cf. McQuail, 1994; Severin and Tankard, 1997). Entertainment and advertisements are but two examples of this. Nevertheless, journalism needs democracy for its freedom and independence and, in turn, democracy needs journalism for the flow of information, for public discussions about political issues, and as a watchdog against the abuse of power. As Carey (1999, p. 51) writes, "Without journalism there is no democracy, but without democracy there is no journalism either".

To some extent, this view is rather uncontroversial. The rationale underlying every discussion about whether news journalism gives citizens the information they need, or acts to fulfill its function as a watchdog, is that media and journalism are under some form of — at least moral — obligation to democracy. However, the discussion quickly becomes controversial as soon as a definition of this obligation is attempted. Even though it is perhaps not controversial that ''the purpose of journalism is to provide people with the information they need to be free and self-governing'' (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 12), the consensus fades as soon as an attempt is made to define what kind of information that is (cf. Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Lupia and McCubbins, 1998; Page, 1996; Petersson et al., 1998; Popkin, 1994).

Underlying the question about what obligations media and journalism have toward democracy, however, is an even more fundamental question: what is meant by the concept of democracy? Consequently, in order to clarify our expectations of media and journalism, as well as the discussion about proper standards by which to evaluate news journalism, it is necessary to specify unequivocally the model of democracy involved when using the word ''democracy''.

Choosing Models of Democracy to Analyze

During the last 15 years there has been an increased interest in different models of democracy. While this development is welcome, the result has been a sometimes confusing plethora of models of democracy in such discussions (cf. Elster, 1998a; Gilljam and Hermansson, 2003; Hadenius, 2001; Held, 1987; Lewin, 1998; Lijphart, 1977; Manin, 2002; Oscarsson, 2003; Strömbäck, 2004). At the same time, there is a growing consensus that the question whether a country should be viewed as democratic or not can be judged by studying if: (1) the political decision-makers are elected by the people in free, fair and frequent elections, (2) there is freedom of expression, of the press and of information, (3) citizenship is inclusive, (4) everyone has the right to form and join organi-

zations of their own choosing, and (5) society is law-governed (cf. Dahl, 1998, 1999; Dworkin, 1996; Hadenius, 2001; Karvonen, 2003; Sartori, 1987).

Beyond this consensus, there are several different normative views regarding what characterizes a *good* democracy. Three of the most important and oftenly discussed models of democracy are (cf. Gilljam and Hermansson, 2003; Oscarsson, 2003; Strömbäck, 2004), *competetive democracy* (cf. Manin, 2002; Sartori, 1987; Schumpeter, 1942/1975), *participatory democracy* (cf. Amnå, 2003; Pateman, 1970; Putnam, 2000, 2002) and *deliberative democracy* (cf. Elster, 1998a; Fishkin and Laslett, 2003a; Gutmann and Thompson, 1996; Habermas, 1995). To these three models, one should add what might be called *procedural democracy*. Expressed broadly, the core idea of this model of democracy is that the basic requirements a polity must fulfill in order to be democratic (see above) are not merely descriptive; they are also normative.

What these models have in common is that they are about the procedures for and processes of political decision making, not about different political policies. This makes perfect sense, since democracy ultimately is an ideology concerning decision making, whereas political ideologies are about different policies within (or outside) the democratic framework. Furthermore, building upon previous theorizing about these models of democracy, we know that these models carry different normative expectations on citizens and politicians. Therefore it is reasonable to expect that they also ascribe different normative obligations upon media and journalism.

In the following, I will first describe each of these normative models of democracy and their expectations on citizens. These descriptions will have to be rather brief, and I will leave the question of their expectations on politicians, as well as their preferences for different electoral systems, aside. Nevertheless, these descriptions will provide the basis for the analysis of their normative implications for media and journalism. This will be the subject of the fourth section of the article.

Procedural Democracy

Procedural democracy proceeds from the minumum requirements a country has to fulfill in order to be democratic. According to this model, the invention and establishment of democracy is still a novelty, and an enormous success in itself. Today, people in established democracies tend to view the minimum requirements for a democracy as merely descriptive, whereas they should, in fact, be seen as highly normative. Looked upon from a global perspective this is obvious, since approximately 40 percent of the global population still do not have the right to vote in free, fair and frequent elections (Freedom House, 1999).

Thus, procedural democracy is not just a value-free description, it is also a normative ideal. To deny that is to forget all those people living in undemocratic countries, as well as what history has taught us: Democracy can never be taken for granted. It must always be defended, and the best way to do that is not to forget its history, its basic values, and that the minimum requirements of democracy are both descriptive and normative.

The basic claim procedural democracy exacts upon citizens and politicians is that they respect the rules and procedures of democracy. The right to vote, the freedom of expression and of the press, and the other basic requirements, must always be protected and respected. As long as this is the case, it is of less importance whether people, for example, use their right to vote or not. Insofar as the basic democratic freedoms and rights are respected, when and if people are dissatisfied enough, they have the opportunity to act. This is what counts.

Therefore, procedural democracy does not put any normative demands on citizens that they should vote, should consume news journalism, should participate in public life, or should be well-informed. How people choose to spend their time and their mental energy is up to themselves, as long as they do not violate the basic democratic freedoms and rights. To demand that people in general spend their life keeping up with the news, getting informed, and participating in public life, is to demand too

much (cf. Graber, 1988, 2003; Lupia and McCubbins, 1998; Popkin, 1994; Zaller, 2003).

Competitive Democracy

In accordance with procedural democracy, competitive democracy can be regarded as a ''realistic'' model of democracy, and both draw heavily on the thinking of Schumpeter. In 1942, he offered the following definition of democracy: ''the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competetive struggle for the people's vote'' (Schumpeter, 1975 [1942], p. 269). This is what Sartori (1987) labels ''electoral democracy'', which points to the fact that in this model of democracy, elections are normatively essential. It is during elections that the political candidates or parties compete for the support (votes) of the electorate.

The implication of this is that, in the competetive model of democracy, it is the political elites that *act*, whereas the citizens *react*. As in the marketplace for goods, political alternatives offer their services and products (platforms, candidates, images) to voters who are then supposed to act as customers and through their votes buy the product that pleases them most. Without clear political alternatives, this process would be undermined.

According to the competetive model of democracy, elections serve several functions (cf. Esaiasson and Håkansson, 2002; Holmberg, 1999; Manin, 2002; Oscarsson, 2003; Sartori, 1987; Schumpeter, 1975 [1942]). First, they produce governments. Second, they are the mechanism through which the will of the people can and should be heard. Third, they make it possible for people to ''throw the rascals out'', that is, claim responsibility from the incumbents for their record in office. Fourth, they make it possible for people to give mandate to the political alternative they prefer. And fifth, the competetive nature of elections makes it likely that the final winners will be more qualified than they would be in absence of elections.

Although the competetive model of democracy is characterized by its emphasis on competitive elections, sometimes the most important

aspect about elections is that they give people the power to throw the rascals out, and sometimes that they give people the power to give a mandate to the political alternative they prefer (cf. Bäck, 2003; Kumlin, 2003; Naurin, 2003; Oscarsson, 2003). In both cases people are reacting, but in the former case people are supposed to look into the past and impose sanctions upon the officeholders (sanctional variant), whereas in the latter case people are supposed to look into the future (mandate variant).

This has implications for the normative expectations on citizens. According to the sanctional variant, people are supposed to have knowledge about what the most important problems are, what problems should have been resolved, how political alternatives have acted and voted during the last term, and who has had the power to resolve what problems. The more informed voters are about the societal development and the actions of the political alternatives during the last term, the higher their ability to claim responsibility in a thoughtful manner. After all, to throw the rascals out one must be able to identify the rascals. Thus, it is particularly important that people know when something has gone wrong and who is responsible for it.

If people at election time are supposed to look into the future and into what the political alternatives propose to do if elected, as in the mandate variant, the normative expectations are somewhat different. Then people need knowledge about their personal views, the opinions of the political alternatives, and an ability to compare the electoral platforms with their own views and priorities (Dalton, 2002; Holmberg, 2000; Peterson et al., 2002). People are also supposed to have an opinion about the most important problems facing the country, so that they can compare them to the issues proposed by the political alternatives. Furthermore, they are also supposed to have some basic knowledge about how society and the political system work, in order to critically evaluate the realism in the promises made by the political alternatives. Finally, people should have some knowledge about the central dimensions of conflict in politics, in order to estimate the likeliness that different political alternatives can cooperate if required to fulfill their promises.

Compared with the procedural model of democracy, the normative expectations upon citizens are higher in the competetive model of democracy. However, it might be sufficient for citizens to monitor their environment in order to find the necessary information—if it is readily available (cf. Zaller, 2003). This is particularly true in the sanctional variant. After all, it is easier to evaluate what has gone wrong, than to thoughtfully estimate the realism and desirability of different promises about the future. On the other hand, since the political elites are likely to talk more about the future than about the past, it might perhaps be easier for citizens to live up to the normative expectations of the mandate variant than of the sanctional variant.

Since people are supposed to react rather than act, there is no expectation that they participate in public life or the public sphere. If any kind of participation at all is deemed normatively important, is is electoral participation. Furthermore, low party identification and high political distrust is not necessarily a problem. As long as there is widespread support for the system and clear competetive alternatives at election time, democracy will be perceived as working.

Participatory Democracy

In the competetive model of democracy, it is the actions of the political elites that are of highest importance. The quality of democracy hinges more on the actions of the political elites than of people in general.

According to the participatory model of democracy, this is normatively wrong as well as a sociologically dangerous reasoning. From this perspective, democracy can never be reduced to the act of voting "yes" or "no" to predefined alternatives every fourth or fifth year. Democracy is not only an institutional arrangement for electoral contests.

More than anything, democracy is a value-laden system with a strong ethos of political equality and tolerance. Democracy thrives when people engage in public life and different types of political action, when they bond through their

activities, and when they develop democrati-cally sound attitudes. Therefore, democracy can never be built or sustained from the top of society, it has to be built and sustained by the actions of a large number of people (Amnå, 2003; Jarl, 2003; Pateman, 1970). Democracy needs a large reservoir of social capital among people in general, that is, norms of reciprocity, civic engagement and trust (cf. Putnam, 1993, 2000, 2002; Rothstein, 2003). The stronger civil society is, and the more social capital a society has, the more democracy thrives.

In the the participatory model of democracy, people are therefore expected to be engaged in civic and public life. They should participate in different kinds of community activities, and learn how to cooperate in order to achieve collective goals. The more people are politically interested, the more they engage in associations and civic organizations, the more they vote, the more they develop attitudes and norms of generalized reciprocity, the better (cf. Putnam, 2000).

Democracy becomes what all citizens make of it. Democracy is the result of the attitudes and the actions in ordinary life among ordinary people. It is not only a system for political decision making, it is also a spirit (Amnå, 2003). In the words of Putnam (2000, p. 341): "Citizenship is not a spectator sport".

To fulfill the role ascribed to them in the participatory model of democracy, people need the kind of knowledge and information that facilitates collective action, participation and engagement. This means that they need knowl-edge about how to participate in and how to influence political decision making and how to find like-minded people. They also need knowl-edge about what problems the country is facing, the opinions and electoral platforms of the political alternatives in an election, and about their own views. They should not distrust their fellow citizens or politicians, if not obviously warranted, but feel bonded to civic associations and political parties. Whereas identification with political parties might be considered irra-tional from the perspective of the competetive model of democracy, it is rational from the perspective of the participatory model of de-mocracy. If people engage in associations and

political parties, and through their activities become a part of and influence these organiza-tions, identification with the parties and other organizations is only natural.

Deliberative Democracy

During the last 15 years or so, the concept of deliberative democracy has gained increased interest (cf. Elster, 1998a; Fishkin and Laslett, 2003a; Gilljam and Hermansson, 2003; Gutmann and Thompson, 1996; Habermas, 1995). The core idea of the deliberative model of democracy, according to Elster, is:

> . . . that the notion includes collective decision making with the participation of all who will be affected by the decision or their representatives: this is the democratic part. Also, all agree that it includes decision making by means of arguments offered *by* and *to* participants who are committed to the values of rationality and impartiality: this is the deliberative part. (Elster, 1998b, p. 8)

What is important in the deliberative model of democracy is that (1) the decisions are pro-ceeded by discussions in the public sphere as well as in smaller settings; (2) that the discus-sions are committed to the values of rationality, impartiality, intellectual honesty and equality among the participants; and (3) that the delib-erative discussions can be seen both as ends in themselves and as means of producing agree-ment or at least a better understanding of the values underlying a conflict. As Gutmann and Thompson (1996, p. 2) write: "The core idea is simple: when citizens or their representatives disagree morally, they should continue to reason together to reach mutually acceptable deci-sions". This could be compared to the definition offered by Fishkin and Laslett (2003b, p. 2): "At the core of any notion of deliberation is the idea that reasons for and against various options are to be weighed on their merits".

Ideally, deliberative discussions should be a part of daily life and decision making on all levels in society: between individual citizens, between politicians, between political institu-tions, and between citizens and their represen-tatives. They should take place in the media, in parliamentary chambers, and in ordinary life. If possible, the deliberative discussions should

continue until mutually acceptable decisions are reached, but if that is not possible, they should continue until all factual and moral aspects of an issue have been weighed and considered.

These expectations affect citizens as well as the media and political actors. Citizens should, to begin with, be politically interested and engaged. They should try to find the information necessary to understand a particular issue, and be able to link factual conditions, underlying moral values, and proposed solutions as to what consequences are likely. Furthermore, they should be willing to participate in discussions, and contribute to making these deliberative—that is, distinguished by impartiality, rationality, intellectual honesty and equality among the participants. No one has the right to dominate and coerce other participants, and passion should be ruled by rationality.

If discussions are to be deliberative, the participants should foster values such as trust, integrity and tolerance, as well as behaviors such as listening, reflecting and getting the facts right. Also, a willingness to change views and opinions must exist. Without these values and behaviors, deliberative discussions are unlikely to occur.

Four Models of Democracy—a comparison

None of the models of democracy discussed here are as unambiguous in their definitions as it might seem. They all deserve more thorough descriptions than the ones offered here. Nevertheless, Table 1 summarizes what each of these models of democracy regard as (1) the central mechanism for securing the primacy of the common good, and (2) the core normative expectations upon citizens. In reading the table, however, it is important to keep in mind that all models of democracy emphasize the importance of citizens respecting the democratic procedures and, perhaps with the exception of the procedural model of democracy, the importance of citizens having at least some basic knowledge about how society and the political processes work.

In reality, no existing democracy can be characterized as a "pure" model of democracy. All existing democracies must fulfill the basic requirements for a country to be counted as a democracy—which is a tautology—but besides that, all democracies show elements from each of the normative models, although in varying degrees. In all democracies, each day some people are trying to realize the ideal of the competetive model of democracy, whereas others try to realize the ideals of the participa-

Table 1. Four models of democracy—a comparison

	Procedural democracy	Competetive democracy	Participatory democracy	Deliberative democracy
Central mechanism for securing the primacy of the common good	Free and fair elections	Competetive elections	Citizen participation in public life, both outside and within political parties	Deliberative discussions among all sections of the public and their representatives
Distinguishing and core normative expectations of citizens	Respect democratic procedures	Clear opinions of societal problems; knowledge of who has had power; knowledge about the record of the office holders; knowlege about party platforms and promises	Politically interested; engaged in associations and in public life; knowledge about how to influence public life; knowledge about relevant factual conditions; clear opinions of societal problems; trustful, cooperative	Politically interested; participate in discussions; trustful, cooperative, listening; knowledge about relevant factual conditions and moral values; readiness to change opinions; strive for consensus; committed to the values of impartiality and rationality; make sociotropic evaluations

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tory or the deliberative models of democracy.

What is important is that this includes media owners, editors and journalists, as well as ordinary citizens and political actors. Which model of democracy a country resembles or is striving to become is not dependent only on its citizens and their representatives. Of equal or larger importance is what kind of democracy media and journalism contribute to.

At a time when most people most of the time rely on media and journalism for information, and when political actors have to adapt to media logic to gain visibility, it is not surprising that research shows that media and journalism have the power to set the agenda for public discussion (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; McCombs et al., 1997; Protess and McCombs, 1991), or to frame events, issues and actors (Capella and Jamieson, 1997; Iyengar, 1991; Norris et al., 2003; Reese et al., 2001; Scheufele, 1999). What might be surprising is that the question of how that power is used, consciously or unconsciously, in order to promote or oppose different concepts of democracy, has not been raised more often than it has.

However, which model of democracy media and journalism contribute to or undermine cannot be evaluated unless one first tries to define the normative demands upon media and journalism of each of the models. Thus, the next question is: What normative implications do the specified models of democracy have for media and journalism?

Normative Implications of Procedural Democracy

According to the procedural model of democracy, the basic demand upon media and journalism is that the rules and procedures of democracy are respected in word as well as in actions. Although the procedural model does not mind if media and journalism do more than that, what is important is that the democratic rules and procedures are not undermined. Beyond that, it is up to the media owners, editors and journalists to decide how they want to use the freedom that democracy grants them.

However, given the diversity of people's interests and opinions, a media system in which maximum freedom resides due to the respect for the democratic rules and procedures will probably provide all kinds of content if asked for by enough people. A free marketplace of ideas as well as of media outlets will grant not only that freedom itself is protected, but also that the truth — if there is such a thing — in the end will crystallize. Therefore, there is no need for specific demands upon media or news standards for journalism.

Of course, if there are events, issues or information that all people *truly* should know about, journalism should provide it. However, if people *truly* should know about it, they will also probably ask for it. That is, as long as the media is catering to the interests of its public, the market mechanisms rather than normative demands will ensure that media and journalism provide the information people need. Thus, commercialism within the media is not perceived as threatening or undermining democracy.

Comparing this with the Burglar Alarm Standard proposed by Zaller, it seems to spring from the procedural model of democracy. In both cases, it is people's real or experienced interests that ultimately should decide what kind of media content or journalism the media should provide. In both cases, there is an underlying conviction that even if much of the news is superficial, dramatized and bordering on fiction, in the end people are able to make meaning out of the noise and some kind of truth will crystallize. Moreover, in both cases there is an unwillingness to specify particular characteristics that media content in itself should display to be normatively regarded as of high quality (cf. Zaller, 2003).

Normative Implications of Competetive Democracy

In the competetive model of democracy, citizens are expected to choose between competing political elites either retrospectively (the sanctional variant) or prospectively (the mandate variant). In order to do that thoughtfully, people need information and knowledge about important societal problems, about how society works

and how the country is governed and by whom, and about differences between the political alternatives. People should also have some basic knowledge about how those in power have governed and about the political promises for the future. In the sanctional model, it is especially important that people can make retrospective evaluations of how those in power have acted during their latest term in office. In the mandate variant, it is especially important that people know what platforms the political alternatives put forward, that they have the ability to compare their own views with those of the political alternatives, and that they have enough knowledge and information to evaluate the likely consequences of different proposals.

There are several normative implications of these demands for media and journalism. First, news journalism should provide information that people can trust and act upon. That is, the news should correspond to the reality the news is referring to. The line between fact and fiction must not be blurred. Thus, it is important to draw a clear line of demarcation between different kinds of media content such as advertisements, entertainment and journalism; and that media content presented as journalism lives up to standards concerning checking the facts, being critical of news sources and being impartial (cf. Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001; Nord and Strömbäck, 2003; Strömbäck, 2004). Second, the news should be proportional, so that it does not direct peoples' attention in the wrong directions. Third, media and journalism should focus their attention on the words and actions of political alternatives. Fourth, that means that media and journalism should monitor political elites, both in what they have done, what they promise to do, and whether they have done what they promised when elected. In the sanctional variant, it is especially important that media and journalism tell people about the record of office-holders. This means that media and journalism should set the agenda rather than let the political actors do this. In the mandate variant, it is especially important that media and journalism provide information about the viewpoints and platforms of the political alternatives. Therefore, media and jour-

nalism should let the political alternatives set the agenda according to the mandate variant.

Fifth, media and journalism should provide basic information about how society and the political system function. This is especially important in the mandate variant, whereas it is more important in the sanctional variant that media and journalism provide information when things in society and the political system does *not* work as they should.

Comparing the Burglar Alarm Standard with the implications of the competetive model of democracy, they do share some features. However, according to the competetive model of democracy, it is more important that news journalism corresponds to the reality it is referring to than it is according to the Burglar Alarm Standard. In that respect, the Full News Standard is more appropriate from the perspective of the competetive model of democracy. The kind of information people need according to the latter is more extensive as well as more factual than according to the Burglar Alarm Standard, in which the line between fact and fiction is of less importance than the ability to "call attention to matters requiring urgent attention" and of "making politics engaging rather than boring" (Zaller, 2003, p. 122).

Normative Implications of Participatory Democracy

In the participatory model of democracy, the role of citizens is active. In order for democracy to thrive, people must be actively engaged in public life and part of political processes and decision making. The more politically interested and engaged people are, the better. They should also be knowledgeable, follow public affairs, and develop attitudes and norms of generalized reciprocity, tolerance, cooperation and trust.

This view has several normative implications for media and journalism. To start with, it is important that the news corresponds to the reality it is referring to, since otherwise people's actions and opinions risk being built on false premises. News should also provide information about important societal problems and about how society and the decision-making processes work. It is also important that the

news allows ordinary people to speak for themselves. Therefore, the news should let people set the agenda for their coverage. Furthermore, the news should frame politics as issues and as open for citizen participation, not as a strategic game played by those already engaged.

News should frame politics in a way that mobilizes people's interest and participation in politics—that is one of its most important responsibilities. As a consequence, news should not only dwell on societal problems but also show when problems are solved. The news should not frame ordinary citizens as passive victims of forces they cannot change, but as active subjects with possibilities as well as responsibilities to change what needs to be changed. Media and journalism should also strive to connect the lives of ordinary people with the words and actions of political parties and other political actors, to show how these domains of actions relate to each other.

These normative implications of the participatory model of democracy correspond closely to the philosophy of public journalism. According to Rosen, one of the proponents of public journalism, journalism must begin to see people as citizens rather than mere spectators. Journalism must learn how to identify matters of broad public concern, and connect these concerns with the actions of government representatives. Furthermore, journalism should make it easier for people to become engaged in politics in all forms, and link active and interested citizens to each other. This includes focusing on problem solving and conflict resolutions, and not only on problems and enduring conflicts (cf. Rosen, 1999, 2000).

In other words, journalists must be attached to, rather than detached from, the democracy within which they work and need for the sake of their freedom and independence. Merritt (1998) has called this role for the journalist in democracy "a fair-minded participant".

Since its beginning, public journalism has been highly controversial, and often the proponents and the opponents seem to speak past each other (cf. Black, 1997; Eksterowicz and Roberts, 2000; Glasser, 1999). One of the likely reasons is that while proponents of public

journalism are referring to the participatory or the deliberative models of democracy while using the word "democracy", the opponents are referring to the procedural or the competetive models of democracy.

Normative Implications of Deliberative Democracy

The deliberative model of democracy can be seen as an extension of the participatory model of democracy. Thus, it comes as no surprise that public journalism fits perfectly well into both. In both models it is important that people are politically interested and engaged, which requires media and journalism to mobilize people's interest and engagement. It is also important that the political processes are inclusive, which in turn invites media and journalism to frame politics as open for everyone. Furthermore, in both models participation presupposes that citizens have some basic knowledge about issues and factual conditions as well as how society and political processes work. Consequently, media and journalism must provide that kind and quality of information.

What the deliberative model of democracy adds is an emphasis on political discussions and the importance of them being deliberative. Since it is through media and journalism that citizens mainly access political discussions, the deliberative model of democracy places exacting demands on media and journalism. In other words: democracy can never become more deliberative without the active participation of media and journalism.

Therefore, the role of journalists as being "fair-minded participants" is of the utmost importance to the deliberative model of democracy. Besides providing factual information about societal problems, the words and deeds of government representatives and how society and political processes work, journalism should actively foster political discussions that are characterized by impartiality, rationality, intellectual honesty and equality among the participants.

Instead of allowing those with the most resources and the harshest criticism to gain

most of the attention — as seems to be the case today in many countries (cf. Fallows, 1996; Franklin, 1997; Jamieson and Waldman, 2003; Meyer, 2002; Norris, 2000; Patterson, 1993; Strömbäck, 2004) — or focus on gaffes and creating feeding frenzies (Sabato, 1991; Sabato et al., 2000) journalism should provide an arena for everyone with strong arguments and direct its attention to those who can contribute to a furthering of discussion.

Instead of reflexively criticizing those who change their views and accusing them of pandering, journalism should see it as a sign of strength if and when people change their views reflecting the stronger arguments of other participants in the discussion. Also, instead of framing politics as a strategic game where the only motivation of politicians is to win elections, journalism should frame politics as a continuous process of finding solutions to common problems; solutions that are either consensual or at least acceptable to everyone.

It should be noted that the emphasis on political discussions and their character does not mean that the deliberative model of democracy de-emphasizes the importance of factual information and of journalism functioning as a watchdog. On the contrary, if public discussions are to be characterized by rationality and impartiality, and if the various options are to be weighed on their merits, it is essential that the discussions are based on solid factual ground.

Four Models of Democracy — a second comparison

As noted earlier, none of the models of democracy being discussed here are as unambigious as they might seem. This includes the implications they have for media and journalism. Nevertheless, the discussion has highlighted both similarities and essential differences in the normative implications of each of the models for media and journalism.

As for the similarities, all models demand of the *media* that they respect the democratic procedures and — except for the procedural model of democracy — that the media provide a forum for political discussions and factually correct and comprehensive news journalism. As for the normative demands upon *news journalism*, with the exception of the procedural model of democracy, all stress the importance of factually correct information and of news journalism providing some basic information about how society and the political processes work.

As for the essential differences, Table 2 highlights the core and distinguishing normative demands upon news journalism of each of the models.

This analysis shows that what might be considered good journalism from the perspective of one model of democracy is likely to be judged differently from an alternative perspective: it might even be considered harmful. Let

Table 2. Four models of democracy and their implications for journalism — a comparison

	Procedural democracy	Competetive democracy	Participatory democracy	Deliberative democracy
Distinguishing and core normative demands upon news journalism	Respect the democratic procedures; act as a watchdog or as a Burglar Alarm exposing wrong-doings	Act as a watchdog or a Burglar Alarm; focus on the record of office-holders and the platforms of the political candidates and parties; focus on the political actors	Let the citizens set the agenda; mobilize the citizens' interest, engagement and participation in public life; focus on problem solving as well as problems; frame politics as a process open for principally everyone and citizens as active subjects; link active citizens together	Act for inclusive discussions; mobilize citizens' interest, engagement and participation in public discussions; link discussants to each other; foster public discussions characterized by rationality, impartiality, intellectual honesty and equality

me take three examples, to add concreteness to the analysis.

The first example is concerned with the excessive reporting of the Monica Lewinsky scandal. According to most observers, this coverage did not contribute to public discussions characterized by rationality, intellectual honesty or impartiality (cf. Kalb, 2001; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 1999). Thus, that coverage failed democracy from the perspective of the deliberative model of democracy. The participatory model of democracy would agree in that conclusion, since the coverage presumably did not mobilize the citizens' engagement or participation in public life. On the other hand, according to the procedural model of democracy, it is up to the media outlets and their audiences to judge the coverage. As long as people continue to read and watch news stories about the scandal, it is good journalism. Last, but not least, from the perspective of the competetive model of democracy, news journalism in this case did exactly what it is supposed to to: it acted as a Burglar Alarm and exposed wrong-doings. Perhaps it should have checked the facts more thoroughly but in the case of the Lewinsky scandal, news journalism did live up to the normative demands of the competetive model of democracy, especially in its sanctional variant.

A second example deals with the strong tendency in contemporary political journalism to frame politics as a strategic game, rather than as substance or issues (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Patterson, 1993; Strömbäck, 2004). From the perspectives of the participatory and deliberative models of democracy, there are several reasons why journalism should refrain from framing politics as a strategic game. One reason is that the game frame treats ordinary people as spectators rather than as active participants in politics. A second reason is that the game frame presumably does not give people the information they need about the *issues* at stake. A third reason is that research indicates that the game frame fosters cynicism and political distrust (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Strömbäck, 2004). From the perspective of the competetive model of democracy, on the other hand, the framing of politics as a strategic game might be worth criticism since it does not focus enough

on the issues, but not because it treats people as spectators or because it fosters political distrust. On the contrary, according to the competetive model of democracy, people are and should thus be treated as spectators. Therefore, whereas the framing of politics as a strategic game is a major democratic problem according to the participatory and the deliberative models of democracy, it is only a minor problem, if it is a problem at all, according the the competetive model of democracy. According to the procedural model of democracy, finally, it simply is not a democratic problem at all.

A third example deals with the fact that news in all contemporary democracies is heavily oriented towards the words and actions of the elites in society (Manning, 2001; Sahlstrand, 2000), and that the media often set their own agenda or follow the agenda of the elites, rather than the agenda of ordinary people (Merritt, 1998; Rosen, 1999). This is a major democratic problem according to the participatory and deliberative models of democracy, but not according to the competetive and procedural models of democracy. According to the former, journalism should let ordinary people set the agenda and, in part by doing that, mobilize their interest, engagement and participation in public life, whereas journalism should focus on the real actors — the political elites — according to the competetive model of democracy. Thus, an elite-oriented coverage of politics and society fails democracy from the perspective of the participatory and deliberative models of democracy, whereas it is doing just what it is supposed to do from the perspective of the competetive model of democracy. According to the procedural model of democracy, finally, it just does not matter, as long as journalism is respecting the democratic procedures and acting as a watchdog or a Burglar Alarm.

Conclusions

The analysis offered in this article is by no means final. It clearly has to be refined, in order to do full justice to the complex theories and realities of democracy and the political communication between media and journalism, political actors, and citizens. However, the analysis

should illuminate the importance of continuing efforts to analyze the models and their normative implications for media and journalism as well as for citizens and political actors. The main conclusion is that it is only by specifying what kind of democracy we are referring to when using the term, and by specifying its normative implications for media and journalism, that we can fully understand how media and journalism affect democracy. Consequently, it follows that it is simply not valid to claim that media and journalism undermine or contribute to democracy *per se*.

It is essential to analyze further the different models of democracy and their normative implications for media and journalism. These implications, furthermore, need to be operationalized to allow for studies on how different media and their respective news journalism fare in the light of the procedural, competetive,

participatory and deliberative (or perhaps other) models of democracy. The ideal would be if the normative implications could be operationalized cross-culturally, allowing comparative studies of which model of democracy news journalism, within different media in different countries, actually contributes towards.

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