

The paradox of journalistic objectivity in pursuit of truth



Writing a news story can be challenging for journalists when the subject matter is contentious and polarizing. The process often involves spending time interviewing sources, crafting central messages, creating an eye-catching opening and verifying and fact-checking information provided by sources. This requires carefully weighing the statements of sources while remaining mindful of their potential biases, aiming to ensure that when the news reaches the public, inaccuracies have been corrected and the story is truly presented.

Through this process of newsgathering, reporting and creating narratives, journalists gain valuable insight into a wide range of subjects. Maintaining objectivity while covering socially relevant issues can be a challenge, as journalists are expected to present information without

bias. As Broersma (2010) noted, the notion of objectivity has become the cornerstone for journalism's discursive strategy, which aims at presenting audiences the finest version of truth that reporters have done all they can to reveal (8).

However, even though journalists may not have strong opinions on every topic they cover, their experiences often lead them to form informed perspectives. Everyone must have come from somewhere and has their own perspectives. Journalists may often find themselves in situations where one side of an issue carries more weight than the other, making it difficult to provide equal emphasis to both perspectives without compromising the truth. Broersma (2010) argued that journalism is a performative discourse that turns journalists' interpretation into truth based on their own forms and styles rather than facts (7).

Objectivity itself is a complex concept that subjects to interpretation and scrutiny. While journalists strive to maintain neutrality, they are not devoid of personal perspectives and experiences. Zelizer (1993) asserted that journalists operate within an "interpretive community" bound by a common set of rules and norms, a professional culture that produces common narratives and consensual meanings. These customs are socially learned, both through formal journalism education and through workplace experiences. Journalists create a shared and consensual interpretation on things through lessons learnt from past key public

events and reaffirm their community (2-3). These communal bonds do not only shape the stories journalists tell but also the lenses through which they perceive the world. As such, the challenge lies not in eliminating their own bias but in acknowledging and mitigating their influences on reporting.

In his article *A Reckoning Over Objectivity, Led by Black Journalists*, Wesley Lowery suggested that a better practice for journalists would be promising to actively seek out the opinions of people that we may personally tend to disagree with and be equally sure to challenge those who we tend to agree with. By acknowledging their own biases and opinions, they can ensure their coverage remains balanced and fair. This commitment to accuracy is reinforced through rigorous editing processes and a dedication to professional standards.

Ultimately, journalism is a journey marked by uncertainties and complexities, where objectivity is not a destination but a guiding principle. Journalists believe that providing educated analysis and informed perspectives can be more valuable to the community than simply presenting facts without context. Their work is fueled not by indifference to the world, but by a desire to actively engage with the truth-seeking process.

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