

**JG010**

Genres of Journalism



# Journalism

## Advocacy Journalism

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# Advocacy Journalism

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## Advocacy journalism

### 1. Defining advocacy journalism

Advocacy journalism is a journalistic genre that, as the name suggests, is aimed at advocating on behalf of particular causes, organizations, and/or viewpoints. As such, it does not adhere to the conventional journalistic distinction between news and views, arguing, instead, that it is neither possible nor desirable to maintain such a distinction. This distinction is not possible to maintain, scholars of advocacy journalism argue, because every time journalists choose to focus attention on certain topics, from certain perspectives, using certain sources of information, they are explicitly or implicitly favoring certain topics, perspectives, and sources of information over other potentially equally legitimate ones. Similarly, this distinction is not possible to maintain because, in practice, media owners and advertisers often exert a strong, if unacknowledged, influence on what is reported and how. This impossibility of separating news from views does not imply that an objective reality does not exist. It simply means that, as a matter of practice, journalists are unable to report on reality in a value-free manner. Indeed, by reporting on what appears to be the common consensus on given topics or events, journalists are in fact reporting on majority views which imply, in turn, that minority voices and perspectives are marginalized.

Finally, and relatedly, scholars of advocacy journalism argue, the distinction between news and views is not desirable because it denies journalism's potential as a tool of progressive social and political change. Indeed, much advocacy journalism stands in a dialectic relationship to broader social movements and political parties, both growing out of them and, in turn, helping to inform them through their advocacy to the wider world. Thus, journalists ought to openly acknowledge their advocacy in the service of promoting greater transparency and awareness among their audiences.

While advocacy journalism, like conventional, objective journalism more generally, is based on information-gathering procedures that are aimed at producing reliable accounts of given topics or events, the goal is not simply to report on those topics or events as accurately as possible, but rather to influence audiences' perceptions of them in particular ways and, ultimately, to change those perceptions in certain, desired directions. Yet, because