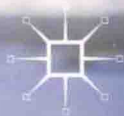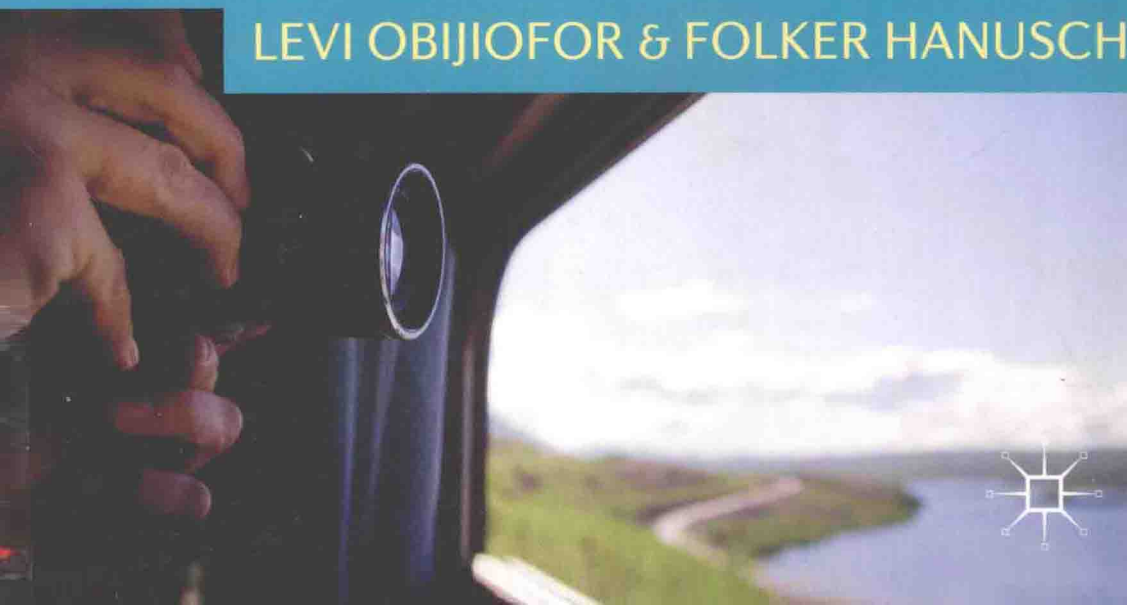# JOURNALISM ACROSS CULTURES: AN INTRODUCTION
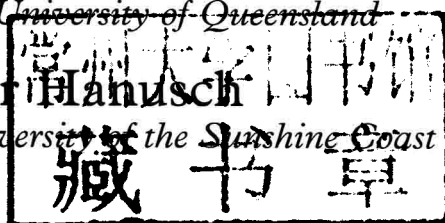
LEVI OBIJIOFOR & FOLKER HANUSCH

Journalism Across Cultures: An Introduction

Levi Obijiofor
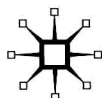*Senior Lecturer, University of Queensland*

Folker Hanusch
Senior Lecturer, University of the Sunshine Coast

palgrave
macmillan

For
Edith Nneka (Levi)
Stephi, Finn and Felix (Folker)

Acknowledgments

Right from the time this book was conceived through to its conclusion, a lot of people influenced its final outcome. They encouraged us in various ways; they shared ideas with us and provided valuable insights. We would like to acknowledge everyone who contributed to the success of our effort. They are too numerous to name. However, we would like to mention, specifically, Zala Volcic, who was an original member of our team that started working on this book. Zala had to withdraw from our team for family reasons. However, we are extremely grateful to her for her contributions during the original planning stages. Credit must be given to her for bringing fresh ideas and her multicultural background to the project. We enjoyed collaborating with her in teaching and research and regret very much that she had to pull out of the book.

Levi would like to acknowledge all the people who made remarkable and indelible impact on his life that is difficult to recount in an acknowledgment page. They include his parents (Caleb and Esther Obijiofor) and his wife (Edith Nneka). My parents have been the pillar that supported and motivated me throughout my primary, secondary and university education. In good times and bad times, they assisted me. I am eternally indebted to them. I am also indebted to my wife for her support and her extraordinary spirit of understanding, tolerance, patience and humour which kept me going even when I felt like giving up. My special appreciation must also go to Polycarp Emenike (Odenigbo Nanka) who has been a mentor and an inspiration to me in so many ways. I have benefited from his words of wisdom and encouragement, his work ethic, his strive for excellence in all his endeavours, his achievement record and, above all, his uncommon generosity.

Folker would like to thank Stephi and Finn for their unconditional love, support and incredible patience during a time when work encroached on family life far too often. I know it was not easy at times, and I am lucky to have you. I would also like to acknowledge my family, especially my parents, for teaching me to think for myself and to be critical. A number of other people have had formative influence on my life more generally, and they are too many to mention. You know who you are. In the context of this particular book I would like to thank: Claudia Mellado for her advice on journalism in

Latin America; Louise North, who provided valuable feedback on the topic of gender and journalism; and Thomas Hanitzsch, who allowed me to look at a forthcoming journal article and from whose expertise on comparative journalism studies more generally I have benefited incredibly.

We would both like to thank a number of people at Palgrave Macmillan, without whom this project would not have been possible. They include our commissioning editor, Rebecca Barden, who graciously granted us an extension in order to complete the book following our colleague's withdrawal. Our gratitude also goes to Paul Sng, as well as former commissioning editors Emily Salz and Beverley Tarquini who showed interest in our original proposal and saw its potential.

It is said that all works are co-operative enterprises. So is this book. If this book holds some merit, it must be attributed to the contributions of all the people we acknowledge here. If, however, there are errors in the book, we take full responsibility for them.

Contents

Introduction

Journalists operate in human societies, and consequently, how journalism is practised and the degree of freedom and autonomy that journalists exercise are affected by the existing technological, social, economic, political, cultural and legal frameworks and contexts in a globalized world. These complexities and interlocking relationships underpin not just the nature of journalism but also how it is practised, how journalists are trained, the definitions of news, those who are qualified to serve as journalists and the communication infrastructure that creates the environment that facilitates professional journalism culture.

The interdependent and interconnected nature of our world spawned by increasing globalization and technological changes underlines the importance of analysing journalism practices from a global perspective. However, quite a number of scholars have expressed dissatisfaction with the current performance of journalists and media organizations in capturing diverse issues of global concern (Cottle, 2009), including the failure to recognize and appreciate people from non-western cultures (Hafez, 2009). Thus, Wasserman and de Beer (2009, p. 428) call for 'a definition of journalism that is more inclusive of global political differences'. Although we live in a globalized world, research evidence suggests that news agendas are dominated by domestic news events, a focus on popular personalities, soft news and entertainment-driven content, concentration on regional news or 'Eurocentrism', as well as diminished attention to international news in general (see, e.g., Sutcliffe et al., 2009; Altmeppen, 2010; Joye, 2010).

This book examines theoretical and practical issues that underpin journalism across cultures. It demonstrates that journalism can be taught, practised and analysed through different epistemological backgrounds and frameworks. It examines, for example, the interface between practitioners and the technologies they use (e.g. how technology impacts on journalism practices), as well as the various frameworks that inform models of journalism education and training across the world. The book is interdisciplinary in theoretical

and practical approaches because we draw on other fields such as media and cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, as well as politics and international relations. We show – through examples taken from diverse countries – how journalism can be examined through a wide variety of socio-cultural and educational contexts, including professional and practical experiences. In an increasingly globalized world, we believe a more in-depth focus on, and global insights into, journalistic cultures are important. In this context, this book is inclusive and international in scope because in it we look at issues that cut across cultures.

The book integrates major theoretical and practical approaches, including non-western and Western contexts, in exploring international journalism perspectives from around the world. As new technologies blur the boundary between content producers and content consumers (e.g. the growing phenomenon of citizen journalism or participatory journalism), increasing globalization facilitated by new technologies has compelled journalists, media owners and managers, journalism academics as well as media consumers to critically re-think news reporting and production conventions. Technological changes have also generated new business models for survival in an increasingly competitive industry. These developments have influenced not only global journalism practices but also the frameworks and pedagogies for the teaching of journalism across the world. These issues are explored in this book.

Research in journalism studies shows that similarities and differences abound across cultures, underlying the diversity that exists around the world. Specifically, studies conducted to explore journalistic professional routines, editorial conventions and socialization mechanisms show similarities in countries such as Brazil, Germany, Indonesia, Tanzania and the United States (in Hanitzsch, 2009, p. 413). Other studies, however, show that differences exist in the way journalists in different countries perceive their roles and the way they make news judgments in their professional practice (Deuze, 2002; Hanusch, 2008a). Exploration of the similarities and differences that mark journalistic practices across the world constitutes not only a valuable contribution to the scholarship of journalism studies but also an appreciation of the value of diversity in human societies. Hanitzsch (2009, p. 413) states that comparative studies in journalistic practices are important because they enrich our understanding of different countries. Thus, comparative studies have shown that 'news production is contingent on the cultural, political and historical contexts that shape the journalist's work' (p. 413), as no two countries share exactly the same culture. One value of comparative studies is that they help to draw our attention to diverse perspectives of journalism, not just

the dominant Western version. This explains our interest in the phrase 'journalism cultures' rather than journalism, which suggests one conceptualization of journalism. Interest in global journalism studies therefore suggests a growing fascination for knowledge of journalistic cultures and conventions around the world. While we cite examples (in this book) from specific nations and regions, our analysis goes beyond national boundaries because, as Hanitzsch (2009, p. 416) points out, 'National borders do not necessarily correspond to cultural, linguistic and ethnic divisions, nor do they correspond to a common sense of identity.'

In comparative journalism studies, the work of Hallin and Mancini (2004) is widely cited not only for its comparative value but also for its scope and analytic rigour. For example, Hallin and Mancini's book is considered significant because it provides an important framework that enables us to explore the relationship between Western media models and media systems in nonwestern cultures, although the major focus of the book is on media systems in Western Europe and North America. For example, in terms of historical relationships, major European powers such as Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Germany played a key role in shaping the preindependence and post-independence philosophies that underpinned media systems in their former colonies in Africa in the twentieth century.

In their book – *Comparing Media Systems* – Hallin and Mancini categorized Western Europe and North America into three media models, namely the Liberal Model (seen mostly in Britain, Ireland and North America), the Democratic Corporatist Model (observable in northern continental Europe) and the Polarized Pluralist Model (applicable to the Mediterranean countries of southern Europe). The authors state that one of the distinguishing elements among media systems across the world is that 'media in some countries have distinct political orientations, while media in other countries do not' (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 27). In this context, Hallin and Mancini argue that journalism, as practised in every part of the world, is never neutral. As they put it, 'even where journalists may be sincerely committed to a professional ideology of "objectivity", news incorporates political values, which arise from a range of influences, from routines of information gathering to recruitment patterns of journalists and shared ideological assumptions of the wider society' (2004, p. 26). This argument reinforces the widely held view that media in every country are tied to various political and economic interests at any one time in history. Notwithstanding this point, Hallin and Mancini's book has been criticized for its excessive emphasis on Western media systems and for overlooking other perspectives that exist in other parts of the world. This is not surprising as journalism is often regarded as 'an Anglo-American

invention' (Chalaby, 1996, p. 303). Wasserman and de Beer (2009) argue that the marginalization of some parts of the world (e.g. Africa) has undermined past and current scholarly attempts to construct media models and press systems. 'The end-result is too often that the Western democratic model of liberal democracy remains the implicit or explicit normative ideal against which journalism in non-western societies is measured, with media-state relations as a primary determinant of journalistic standards' (2009, p. 431).

In his analysis of the growth of French and American journalism from the 1830s to the 1920s, Chalaby (1996) argued that there were political, legal, economic, educational and language factors that encouraged the development, sustenance and dominance of Anglo-American genre of journalism. This historical dominance means that other journalistic conventions and practices in non-western societies are regarded as mere derivatives of the Anglo-American system. Although the Anglo-American model of journalism may have influenced the origins of other forms of journalism, Wasserman and de Beer (2009, p. 428) argue that 'the dominant Anglo-American view of journalism is being challenged by studies showing up the gap between theory and practice'. This again suggests that, rather than talk about one type of journalism, it is appropriate to speak of journalisms or different types of journalism. In this context, Hanitzsch (2009) has suggested that comparative journalism studies should go beyond excessive focus on Western models of journalism to explore other models of journalism. The significance of comparative analyses of journalistic practices conducted by Chalaby (1996) and by Hallin and Mancini (2004) is that they helped to draw out the major differences between Anglo-American journalism and the types of journalism that exist in other parts of the world. This is the key reason why, in this book, we constantly cite examples or draw on journalistic systems and practices that exist in other cultures.

We argue that an examination of journalism practices across cultures will enrich rather than dilute public knowledge and understanding of the similarities and differences in journalism. Previous comparative studies provide compelling evidence that similarities and differences exist in journalistic practices at the national, regional and international levels. We have therefore set out in this book to analyse systematically: the different media models and press systems that exist in various parts of the globe; how journalism is practised and taught around the world; how gender is reflected, recognized and overlooked in newsroom cultures; how new technologies have transformed the landscape of foreign news reporting; the growing debate about the role of journalists in peace and conflict reporting; the increasing commercialization of journalism and the factors that are aiding the practice; and the impact that new technologies are having on journalism practices around the world. Therefore, global

perspectives and representation constitute the overarching schema of this book. Where similarities and differences exist, we have tried to identify them. Where contradictions blur arguments, we point them out. By analysing global differences and similarities in journalism, our objective is to explore the world from as diverse perspectives as are possible. This means we have deliberately refrained from presenting a framework that analyses journalism cultures in terms of the narrow and polarizing binary division of North versus South or the Manichean duality of 'light versus darkness', 'good versus evil' or 'right versus wrong'. Examining journalism in different societies in a globalized world enables us to understand what is happening in other cultural contexts. For example, as Wasserman and de Beer (2009, p. 429) point out, 'While the political-economic context of journalism studies in Africa might differ considerably from some non-western contexts like Asia, it might correspond with, for instance, Latin America, for both historical (such as the history of colonialism) and economic (as developing regions in the global economy) reasons.'

Blumler et al. (1992) have identified three ways through which comparative research in communication has contributed to knowledge. First, comparative research exposes us to communication trends and dilemmas that are not easily observable in our world. Second, comparative research has the capacity to surmount or prevail over 'space- and time-bound limitations on the generalizability of our theories, assumptions and propositions' (1992, p. 3). Comparative research can also enable us to examine and expose the implications of the disparities that exist in the way communication is structured in our larger world (pp. 3–4). Similarly, Livingstone (2003, p. 479) has identified the various values attached to comparative research, namely: to improve our knowledge of our own country and others; to examine scholarly postulation in different environments; to analyse how local audiences receive imported cultural products; and to enhance cross-cultural understanding. Nevertheless, Chang et al. (2001) examined 151 comparative international communication studies published in six leading communication journals between 1970 and 1997 and found: clear evidence of the lack of theoretical progress in comparative international communication research; few efforts to examine theoretical postulations cross-nationally; the requirement for better articulation of knowledge and assumptions that would offer productive ideas cross-nationally; and failure to observe systematic sampling methods that would yield data that are representative of the larger population (pp. 430–1).

Despite the advantages of comparative communication research, there are certain drawbacks. Comparative research is not without its difficulties, such as the complexities associated with examining different systems or time periods which may constrain 'meaningful comparison' (Blumler et al., 1992, p. 13).

Livingstone (2003, p. 491) argues that 'comparative research is challenging because one must balance and interpret similarities and differences while avoiding banalities and stereotypes'. Among the difficulties that impede comparative research are: the enormity of the differences being studied and their various components or elements, both of which would complicate the kind of meanings to be derived; and studying the differences in social systems could lead to the devaluation of the differences within the system. As Blumler et al. (1992, p. 13) point out, 'Nations and cultures are not typically homogeneous; they often encompass different language and ethnic groups, regions, and social classes that are in symbolic and pragmatic competition'. There are also methodological and theoretical dilemmas involved in comparative research, such as the danger of universalizing research approaches and theoretical frameworks that often ignore cultural distinctions or details (Livingstone, 2003; Hanitzsch, 2009). For example, research in the field of development communication which dominated intellectual discourse in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s adopted Western-oriented approaches prescribed by communication scholars such as Daniel Lerner, Everett Rogers and Wilbur Schramm, and pushed the notion that 'development in the Third World should be measured in terms of the adoption and assimilation of Western technology and culture. The main emphasis of the work was on increasing efficiency within an accepted and unquestioned value framework' (Halloran, 1998, p. 44). As a reflection of the mood of that era, most of the research conducted at the time affirmed and emphasized the validity of Western approaches and ideologies. In the developing countries, these viewpoints underlined existing economic and cultural reliance on the West rather than the socio-cultural, political and economic sovereignty of those emerging nations (Halloran, 1998, p. 44).

By identifying the drawbacks of comparative communication research, we also acknowledge the limitations of our own work. In general, many intellectual efforts are never perfect because they serve as a reflection of the political, economic, social and cultural climate in which they are produced. Although we did not set out to accommodate inadequacies, there is, however, value in limitations that may emerge owing to changes in global geopolitical and economic systems, as well as developments generated by technological transformations. These changes, whenever they occur, will offer us an opportunity to engage in future revisions of the approaches we adopted and the arguments we made in this book in order to reflect the realities of a globalized world in the twenty-first century. Cultures are dynamic and so too are journalistic practices. The changing nature of journalism strengthens the need for scholars to revisit their work regularly. In this book, we have made conscious efforts to draw on Western and non-Western journalistic systems and practices. We

have also drawn on different cultures that inform journalism practices across the world. At the heart of these differences and similarities is the need to recognize diversity. The following section provides a synopsis of the chapters that follow. This serves as a foretaste of the contents of the book.

Chapter outline

The history of media systems and press theories and the extent to which media systems influence journalistic practices and philosophies are explored in Chapter 2. The chapter analyses contemporary and past media models and theories of the press, as conceptualized by different scholars. The chapter delves beyond dominant media models to explore other global perspectives, including media systems in Africa, Latin America, the Arab world and the Middle East, media transformations in China, as well as North American and Western European media models, not forgetting the classical but controversial *Four Theories of the Press*, which is widely regarded as the vehicle that sparked scholarly interest in the construction of press systems across the world. The strengths and drawbacks of these media models and press systems are examined and critiqued in-depth. In this chapter we also draw attention to the political, social, cultural and economic factors that distinguish journalistic practices in different societies. For example, many of the past approaches to classifying media systems were examined through political economy frameworks that tended to overlook larger cultural issues (Mowlana, 1997). This chapter recognizes the impact that technological changes have had on the conceptualizations of press systems and media models, including the meanings traditionally attached to concepts such as the press. We therefore pose the question: Do existing media models still constitute an accurate representation of global media systems in the twenty-first century and are such classifications still valid?

With emphasis on journalistic practices and how journalists perceive their roles in different societies, Chapter 3 explores the various types of journalism that exist in different parts of the world. It examines the differences and similarities in journalists' professional views about their role in society. The analysis includes scholarly insights into the factors that influence journalistic practices across individual, organizational, media system and cultural levels. For example, a comparative study of national news cultures conducted in the Netherlands, Germany, Britain, Australia and the United States noted how journalists' approach to work distinguished Dutch and German practices of journalism from the Anglo-American conventions (Deuze, 2002). In terms

of role perceptions, we see across different regions the various ways that journalists perceive their role. The first large-scale comparative study in this regard was conducted by Weaver (1998a) who reported results of journalists surveyed in 21 countries and territories around the world. One role perception that appeared to receive support from journalists generally was 'getting information to the public'. However, Weaver (1998b, p. 478) notes that, 'beyond these roles, there is much disagreement over how important it is to provide entertainment, to report accurately and objectively, to provide analysis of complex issues and problems, and to be a watchdog on government'. In the Arab world, Pintak and Ginges' (2008) survey showed that many Arab journalists subscribed to an active role in trying to bring change. Similarly, a study of Brazilian journalists identified three types of role perceptions – the interpretive, adversary and disseminator functions (Herscovitz, 2004). Chapter 3 also examines the debate over adoption of culturally appropriate values in journalism practices in various regions. In that context we analyse arguments for regional approaches that originated from a belief that journalism works best if it is practised in accordance with local cultural values. Many of the regional models emerged from a resistance to imported Western models which local journalists did not see as applicable to or useful in their cultural circumstances. For example, there is the contested view that Asian news media should reflect Asian values. Massey and Chang (2002, p. 992) clarify that the argument is based on the notion that 'the modern, economically strong Asian society is best built on a foundation of traditional Eastern beliefs, not transplanted Western values'. Similar debates have dominated discussion on the scholarship of African journalism. Thus, Chapter 3 offers a kaleidoscopic analysis of discussions about how culture is embedded in journalism practices and how it defines the way journalists approach their job in different social and cultural milieu.

The quality of journalism around the world is often attributed to the nature of the education and training that journalists receive. At the centre of this discussion is the question of whether journalism education should be tailored towards more vocational aspects or whether it should reflect a mix of theory and practice. These issues are explored in detail in Chapter 4. The literature on journalism education suggests that models of journalism education tend to be designed to suit the specific objectives of each country (Nordenstreng, 2009). Analysis of models of journalism education is important because, according to Gaunt (1992, p. 1), 'journalism training perpetuates or modifies professional practices and moulds the perceptions journalists have of the role and function of the media'. This chapter also reviews the current state of journalism education around the world, taking into consideration the diverse