

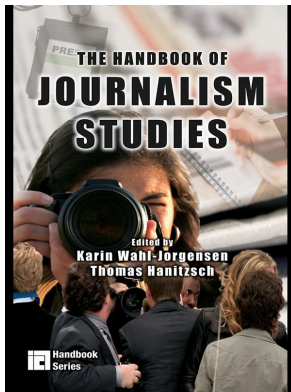
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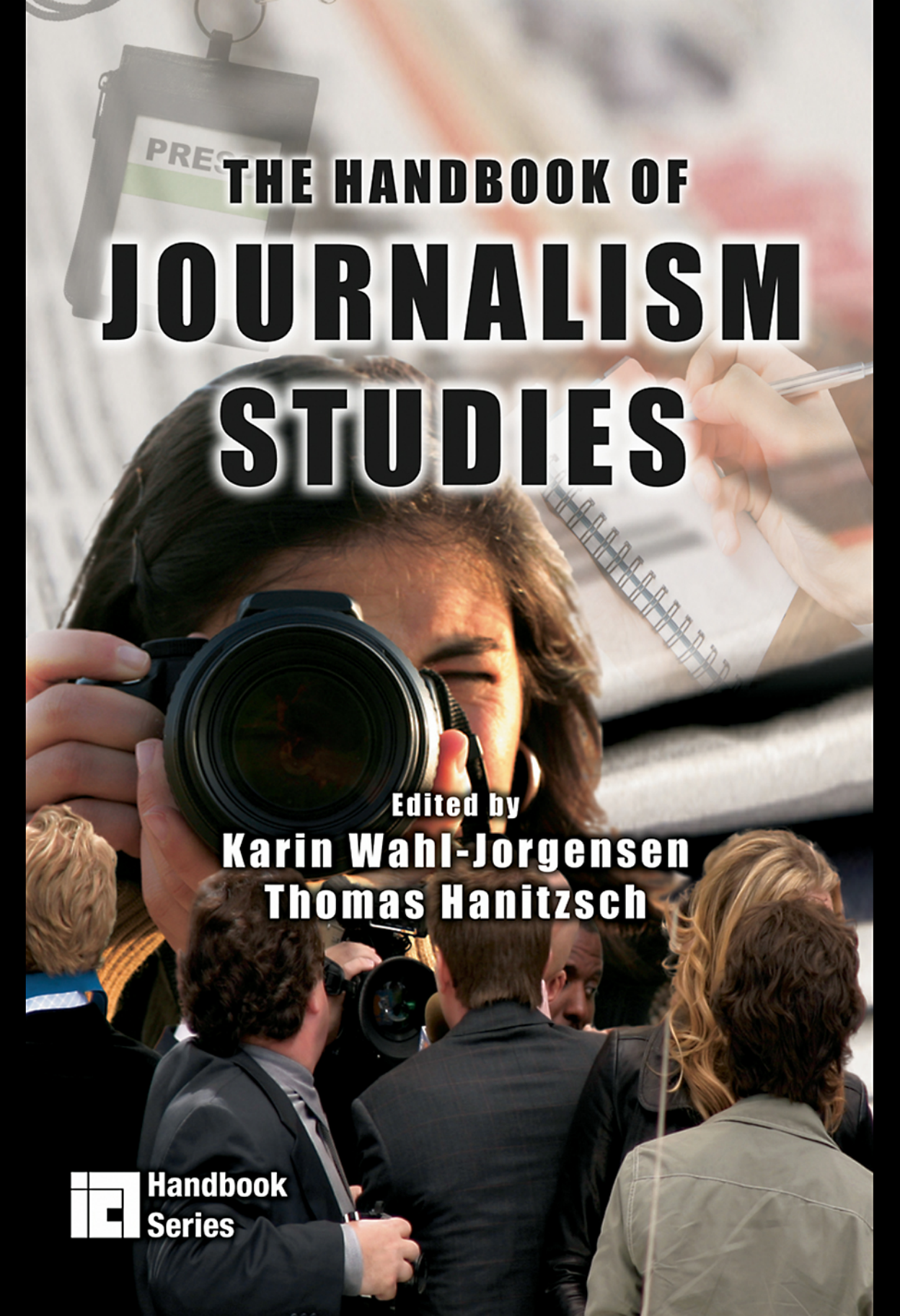
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Edited by
**Karin Wahl-Jorgensen
Thomas Hanitzsch**

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Comparative Journalism Studies

Thomas Hanitzsch

GEARING UP FOR CROSS-NATIONAL RESEARCH

International studies of journalism have demonstrated that the onward march of globalization coincides with a convergence in journalistic orientations and practices. The ideals of objectivity and impartiality dominate many newsrooms around the world, indicating a “diffusion of occupational ideologies,” or “transfer of ideology,” from the West to the East (Golding, 1977, pp. 292–293). Similarities in professional routines, editorial procedures and socialization processes exist in countries as diverse as Brazil, Germany, Indonesia, Tanzania and the United States (Hanitzsch, 2005; Herscovitz, 2004; Ramaprasad, 2001; Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2007; Weischenberg, Malik, & Scholl, 2006). At the same time, research has shown that substantive differences continue to prevail, and that professional views and practices of journalists are deeply colored by national media systems (e.g., Berkowitz, Limor, & Singer, 2004; Deuze, 2002; Esser, 1998; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Patterson & Donsbach, 1996; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006; Splichal & Sparks, 1994; Weaver 1998b). Hence, the attempt to probe deeper into these similarities and differences in journalistic cultures around the world has become one of the most fascinating sub-domains in the field of journalism studies, and researchers in this area increasingly adopt a comparative perspective.

Over the years, comparative research has not only yielded valuable insights beyond a mere description of similarities and differences, but also contributed to our understanding of specific countries. A tradition of almost 40 years of research has revealed that news production is contingent on the cultural, political and historical contexts that shape the journalist’s work. International studies have raised awareness of the fact that the Western conception of journalism in a free-press system does not reign supreme in many parts of the world, and may not even be desirable in some. Comparative research is, therefore, not only indispensable for establishing the generalizability of theories and findings, it also forces us to test our interpretations against cross-cultural differences and inconsistencies (Kohn, 1989).

Political changes and technological advancements have supported a trend towards cross-cultural research. The end of the cold war and the advent of a globalizing world gave a fresh impetus to the mobility of researchers, with academics finding more and more opportunities to meet their colleagues from afar. New communication technologies triggered the rise of institutionalized global networks of scientists, including sections devoted to the study of journalism in the International Communication Association and the European Communication Research and Education

Association. Moreover, it has become much easier to acquire funding for international studies, as sponsoring institutions become aware of the virtues of comparative research. The European Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, for instance, has created unprecedented opportunities for those who seek funding for multi-national and interdisciplinary research projects.

This chapter provides an overview of the growing field of comparative research in journalism studies, as well as a critical examination of this field. It begins with a historical introduction to comparative research and continues with the discussion of key studies. Subsequent sections elaborate on critical and methodological issues, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of directions for further research.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES IN COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

Historical Backgrounds and Definitions

The origins of cross-cultural research can be traced back to the work of Edward Tylor, who is generally credited as the “father” of anthropology. In his book *Primitive Culture* (1958[1871]), which became a milestone in English-speaking anthropology, Tylor proposed the first known formal definition of culture as the “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (p. 1). The first major comparative study was probably Emil Durkheim’s (1897) research on suicide and social anomie, but it was not until the Second World War that comparative research became common in the social sciences and humanities. It rapidly influenced psychology, sociology, history and political science and led to the creation of a number of academic journals devoted to cross-cultural studies, most notably the *International & Comparative Law Quarterly* (founded in 1952), *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1958), *Comparative Politics* (1968), *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (1970) and *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* (2006).

However, terminology in comparative research still tends to be ambiguous and confusing. Labels such as “cross-country,” “cross-national,” “cross-societal,” “cross-cultural,” “cross-systemic” and “cross-institutional,” as well as “trans-national,” “trans-societal” and “trans-cultural” are used both as synonymous with “comparative” research, and to denote specific kinds of comparisons (Øyen, 1990, p. 7). There is also a considerable disagreement on the kinds of research that the term “comparative” refers to, or should refer to. Some scholars have limited it to the comparison of two or more *nations* (Edelstein, 1982), others argue that *all* social research is comparative (Beniger, 1992). The latter is certainly true to the extent that all new evidence needs to be tested against, and thus compared with, the existing stock of knowledge. Cross-cultural studies, on the other hand, entail several specific conceptual and methodological challenges that make them distinct from mono-cultural research. For the purposes of this chapter, I will refer to a study as comparative if two or more *a-priori*-defined cultural populations are compared according to at least one functionally equivalent concept. This formula, however, excludes the temporal aspect of comparative research, that is, the comparison between different points in time.

Paradigms

The historical evolution and development of comparative journalism research can be divided into four broad paradigms:

- *The US and the rest*: This paradigm has dominated communication and media studies from the 1950s to the 1960s, and is exemplified by the influential work of American scholars such as Daniel Lerner (*The Passing of Traditional Society*, 1958) as well as that of Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm (*Four Theories of the Press*, 1956). US-centrism and the juxtaposition of the “modern” West and the “traditional” East were particularly prevalent in this period of time. In the field of journalism studies, Jack McLeod is generally credited with having pioneered comparative research. He invented a scale to measure the level of professionalism among journalists, which was first applied to news workers in the United States (McLeod & Hawley, 1964) and later to Latin American journalists (McLeod & Rush, 1969a, b). Other researchers followed suit, including Wright (1974) in Canada, Donsbach (1981) in Germany and Henningham (1984) in Australia. The paradigm slowly faded away in the mid 1970s when researchers began to realize its ideological bearings (see below).
- *The North and the South*: This period was primarily shaped by major political processes that took place within UNESCO and the European Community. In the mid 1970s, the growing recognition of uneven communication flows between the industrialized North and developing South fuelled a controversy, staged at UNESCO, on the need for a New World Information and Communication Order. This debate inspired a 29-nation study on foreign images that was replicated in the 1990s on a sample of 38 countries (Sreberny-Mohammadi, Nordenstreng, & Stevenson, 1984; Wu, 2000). These studies are, to date, the largest concerted research endeavors in the field of communication and media studies. At the same time, as the European Community became further integrated during the 1970s, the political processes that took place within its institutions attracted the interest of several European researchers. Foremost among them was Jay G. Blumler (1983), who coordinated a nine-country study on the role of television in the campaigns that led up to the 1979 European Parliamentary elections.
- *The West and the West*: This paradigm dominated the field between the mid 1980s to the late 1990s. It was very much driven by European scholarship and also marks the beginning of methodologically more advanced comparative research. Scholars became more cautious in selecting countries, turning their attention to mostly Western countries due to their similarities and, hence, their comparability. Köcher (1986) and Esser (1998) investigated journalists and newsrooms in Germany and the UK, while Chalaby (1996) compared the histories of journalism in France, Great Britain and the United States. A more recent example is the comparison of online journalists in Germany and the United States (Quandt, Löffelholz, Weaver, Hanitzsch, & Altmeppen, 2006). The most deliberate comparative design to date was employed by Patterson and Donsbach (1996) who administered identical questionnaires to 1,361 journalists in Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Sweden and the United States.
- *The West and the Global*: Within this most recent paradigm, researchers are interested in the universal and the specific in journalistic cultures around the world, though most studies still rely on Western-grown concepts. One of the first studies within this strand of research was Golding and Elliott’s (1979) analysis of broadcasting organizations in Sweden, Ireland and Nigeria, but it was not until the 1990s that this paradigm gained popularity. Splichal and Sparks (1994) coordinated a survey of first-year journalism students in 22 nations, while journalists in the United States have been compared to their counterparts in China and Taiwan (Zhu, Weaver, Lo, Chen, & Wu, 1997), Russia (Wu, Weaver, & Johnson 1996), as well as Australia, Great Britain, Germany and the Netherlands (Deuze, 2002). David Weaver (1998c), in his seminal collection *The Global Journalist*, reported evidence

from surveys of an unmatched body of 20,280 journalists from 21 countries. Pamela Shoemaker and Akiba Cohen (2006) recently published their findings from the *News Around the World* project that involved ten countries from all inhabited continents. At the same time, theoretical and methodological reflections on comparative research have become much more common in the field (e.g., Chang et al., 2001; Johnson & Tuttle, 2000; Livingstone, 2003; Wirth & Kolb, 2004).

Units of Analysis

In theory, the units of analysis in comparative research can be selected from various social levels, but in practice, journalism researchers tend to compare two or three, rarely more, countries to which they happen to have access. Nations, however, may not always be proper units of comparison since they are far from self-contained but rather comprise multiple cultures (Livingstone, 2003). National borders do not necessarily correspond to cultural, linguistic and ethnic divisions, nor do they correspond to a common sense of identity (Hantrais, 1999). However, nations also offer a convenient shorthand for comparative studies since they possess clearly-defined boundaries and are often the only kinds of units available for comparison (Hofstede, 2001). Even more importantly, news production is still strongly geared towards news agendas that prioritize domestic news, as well as media coverage that champions national actors, and journalists speaking to national or local audiences.

Despite the overwhelming dominance of cross-national research, comparisons of units on the sub-national level have found their niche. Several studies have compared language areas within countries, exemplified by surveys of journalists in Canada (Pritchard & Sauvageau, 1998) and Switzerland (Marr, Wyss, Blum, & Bonfadelli, 2001). Other studies explored similarities and differences between (former) states within a particular nation (East and West Germany: Schoenbach, Stuerzebecher, & Schneider, 1998), or ethnic groups within a country (Indonesia: Hanitzsch, 2006). In addition to the sub-national level, there are other options for a creative selection of units for comparison, most notably cross border regions, such as the European Union, the ASEAN, or culturally cohesive regions like Latin America. Other possibilities are news organizations that operate transnationally, such as the *International Herald Tribune*, Euronews or Al Jazeera.

KEY STUDIES

Professionalism and Professionalization

Early comparative research in journalism studies focused on professionalism and processes of professionalization. These two terms were often used interchangeably, although they clearly have conceptually different meanings. Professionalism is something that journalists embrace or pursue, while professionalization refers to a process of an occupation gradually becoming a true profession.

The first truly comparative study in journalism research was carried out by Jack M. McLeod in the late 1960s. McLeod, together with Searle E. Hawley Jr. (1964), developed a 24-item scale to measure the level of professionalism among US journalists. Data were gathered from 115 journalists working for two local newspapers based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Five years later, McLeod and his former doctoral student Ramona R. Rush (1969 a, b) published two articles based on data from the original Wisconsin study and an additional sample of 46 Latin American journalists. In their comparative study, McLeod and Rush (1969a) found greater similarity than

dissimilarity between Latin American and US journalists in all areas. The only major difference occurred in the greater desire of Latin American journalists for prestige in the organization and the community, and for respect regarding their newspapers and co-workers. They were also less satisfied with their jobs. American journalists, on the other hand, gave relatively more emphasis to the enjoyment of the job, availability of support on the job and having a job that is valuable to the community.

In a subsequent paper, McLeod and Rush (1969b) reported that those journalists in Latin America who were more likely to be professionally oriented tended to be younger, male and had journalistic training in their university backgrounds. Consistent with the findings from the US study, they found that the “professional” Latin American journalists were more critical of the content of their own newspapers. Those who had newspaper reporting or editing jobs in newspapers were also found to be more professional than their colleagues who had newspaper managerial positions or other media jobs. Contrary to what was commonly believed, McLeod and Rush (1969b) concluded that professional journalists seem no more likely to have come from the developed countries or from countries with lesser restriction on press freedom than do those who are less professional.

Drawing on McLeod’s work on US and Latin American journalists, as well as on Wright’s (1974) study of 77 Canadian journalists and his own data from 261 West German journalists surveyed in 1974, Donsbach (1981, pp. 55–56) found that relationships with colleagues played a considerably less important role among Latin American journalists than for their counterparts in the developed countries. Also, the possibility of exercising social influence seemed substantially less central to Latin American journalists, while they regarded career and prestige as more important. German journalists, on the other hand, were characterized by their desire to influence political and social processes, a strong aspiration to increase their own chances for participation, as well as a relatively firm peer orientation. Given the sometimes striking differences between journalists from the countries he had compared, Donsbach (p. 64) concluded that “professionalization is neither a universal nor a value-neutral concept.”

Conceptions of professionalization and professionalism, however, have received substantial criticism from scholars arguing that these notions have evolved in a Western context, and the application of these concepts to non-Western societies has been inadequate (Starck & Sudhaker, 1979, p. 34). Birkhead (1982, p. 130) also noted that “there is no clearly defined counter-concept, no alternative focus for looking at occupational behavior and structure in a different light.” In a forceful critique of the professionalization concept, Starck and Sudhaker (1979, p. 41), somewhat pessimistically, concluded that “[s]tudies in comparative professionalism so far have yielded findings narrow in dimension, short on insight.”

News Decisions

Another tradition in comparative journalism studies emerged when German researchers turned their attention to the political views and professional roles of journalists, and how these influence their news decisions. The interest in journalists’ political orientations was largely driven by the fact that German newspapers were much stronger aligned with particular ideological positions than, for instance, US newspapers. Such an orientation, it was speculated, makes it more likely that the political views of the journalists substantially shape their news decisions. The emphasis on political roles was very much informed by Cohen’s (1963) and Janowitz’s (1975) work on professional role models.

Renate Köcher’s (1986) dissertation on German and British journalists was the first deliberate comparative attempt to tap into this area. Her study was based on face-to-face interviews with

450 German and 405 British journalists in print and broadcast media. The findings confirmed Köcher's initial expectation that German and British journalists differ in their perception of roles, their professional motivation and their evaluation of work norms. German journalists were in favor of a more active role of advocacy, whereas their British counterparts were inclined to embrace a more neutral reporter role. The roles of criticizing abuses and of spokesman for the underdog, which stand for value judgments and advocacy, tend to be accepted by German journalists more than by their British colleagues.

British journalists, by way of contrast, outdid their German colleagues in terms of claiming a political influence. This finding, however, together with British journalists embracing an instructor or educator role more than the Germans, ran somewhat counter to the evidence presented earlier. Both inconsistencies were not convincingly resolved by Köcher. Her claim that the responses indicated that German and British journalists would "tend to act differently" (p. 59) was also not warranted by her findings since she did not look at the actual practice but relied on the journalists' responses to the questionnaire. The somewhat sweeping conclusion—that British journalists viewed themselves as "bloodhounds" or "hunters of news," while their German colleagues perceived themselves as "missionaries" (p. 63)—was an over-interpretation of what was actually ambiguous evidence. This, to the credit of the study's author, has been admitted by Köcher, when she conceded that German and British journalists interpreted their roles more as a conglomerate of neutrality and advocacy.

Some of Köcher's results were, a few years later, confirmed by the findings from the *Media and Democracy Project* coordinated by Thomas E. Patterson and Wolfgang Donsbach (1996). A mail survey was administered to journalists in Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Sweden and the United States sequentially from 1991 to 1993. In each country, 600 journalists were contacted, but varying response rates (between 51 and 36 percent) produced a total sample 1,361 respondents. Patterson and Donsbach asked the respondents to make 24 news decisions about four hypothetical situations. The news decisions were developed from actual news stories, with 17 framed in a way that favored a partisan view and the remaining seven news stories framed neutrally.

Asking the journalists about their political orientations, Patterson and Donsbach found that all journalists—in the broadcast and newspaper industries at both the national and local levels—were somewhat left of center in their political beliefs. Journalists also viewed themselves as more liberal than the news organizations for which they worked. In addition, in all five countries, journalists positioned themselves to the left of where they perceived their news audience to be. One of the main findings of the study was that the journalists' partisanship was significantly related to their news decisions, although the actual correlations were rather weak. Patterson and Donsbach nonetheless claimed that their survey provided "substantial evidence" (p. 465) that partisan beliefs intrude on news decisions. The authors concluded that "the hues of journalists' partisanship tend to shade the news rather than coloring it deeply. Partisanship is a measurable but not a robust influence on journalists' news decisions."

Among the five countries, the German news system was found to be the most partisan, and the British and American news systems the least. In all countries, journalists were motivated primarily by the task of gathering and disseminating information. US journalists, however, liked to exert political influence, though not by championing their subjective values and beliefs, as did their German and Italian colleagues (Donsbach & Patterson, 2004). The differences between German and American journalists were seen as resulting from specific newsroom structures, most notably the division of labor. This molded news production in the two respective countries to become "two very different professional worlds" (Donsbach, 1995, pp. 25–26): US newsrooms were dominated by a strict role-division of reporter, editor and commentator roles, while German journalists tended to mix these different roles.

Another interesting finding of the *Media and Democracy Project* was the different perception of the objectivity norm in at least four of the countries. Journalists in the United States and Great Britain seemed to prefer a more retained notion of objectivity by stressing the news media's function to act as a common carrier between interest groups and the public. News people in Germany and Italy, on the other hand, were more inclined to investigate the assertions of interest groups, and try to get to the hard and "true" facts of the political scene. Donsbach and Klett (1993, p. 80) concluded from their analysis that there are "partially different 'professional cultures' where the boundaries can be drawn between the Anglo-Saxon journalists on the one, and the continental European journalists on the other side."

Considerable similarities, on the other hand, were found recently in the *News around the World* project, led by Pamela J. Shoemaker and Akiba A. Cohen (2006). The study was conducted in ten countries that cut across different cultures and political systems, including Australia, Chile, China, Germany, India, Israel, Jordan, Russia, South Africa and the United States. The selection was made to represent large, medium-sized and small nations. It covered countries from the West and the East, the North and the South, as well as the developed and the developing world. The study combined a quantitative content analysis with qualitative focus group discussions: A total of 32,000 news items were investigated from newspapers and television and radio news programs. Focus group discussions were conducted with journalists, public relations practitioners and audience members.

In their analysis of news topics, Shoemaker and Cohen found a remarkable agreement across the ten countries on what kinds of events, ideas and people should constitute news: An event, person or idea is most likely to become news "if it deals with sports, international or internal politics, cultural events, business, internal order, or human interest" (p. 45). Science and technology, the environment, labor relations and trade unions, energy, fashion and beauty, and population, on the other hand, are least likely to make it into the news. Shoemaker and Cohen also discovered a substantial agreement among the focus group participants in terms of the perceived newsworthiness of news items. The correlations between the perceived newsworthiness and the actual newspaper coverage, on the other hand, were much lower. Particularly perplexing was the fact that the relationships between the journalists' individual views on news values and the actually produced content were unexpectedly weak and even negative at times. This may be seen as an indication that organizational imperatives of the news media override the journalists' individual preferences. Shoemaker and Cohen concluded that, across the board, people tend to agree more with each other about the newsworthiness of the stories than with the news decisions made by their cities' newspaper editors. The authors therefore speculated about a "general sense of malaise or disappointment with the media as expressed by citizens—both media professionals and laypeople—around the world" (p. 89).

Global Journalists

One of the major sources in comparative journalism research to date is David Weaver's (1998c) meticulous compilation, *The Global Journalist*. The key assumption behind this volume was that "journalists' backgrounds and ideas have some relationship to what is reported (and how it is covered) in the various news media around the world, in spite of various societal and organizational constraints, and that this news coverage matters in terms of world public opinion and policies" (Weaver, 1998a, p. 2). The book reports evidence from surveys of a total of 20,280 journalists from 21 countries, with remarkable methodological variation among the 25 studies: Some studies have used either mail surveys, telephone or personal interviews, others have combined different methods of data collection. Sample size ranged from 5,867 obtained questionnaires in

China to 100 interviewed journalists in Mexico; and response rates varied from a low of 32 percent in Brazil to a high of 95 percent among Canadian women journalists. The compared body of data stretched across ten years, with the first study conducted 1986 in Algeria and the last one 1996 in Canada.

Given the methodological constraints posed by this kind of data, Weaver (1998b, p. 455) noted that “[c]omparing journalists across national boundaries and cultures is a game of guesswork at best.” He concluded that the “typical journalist” is mostly a young college-educated man who studied something other than journalism and who came from the established and dominant cultural groups in his country. In terms of professional roles, Weaver found a remarkable consensus among journalists regarding the importance of reporting the news quickly and some agreement on the importance of providing access for the people to express their views. There was much less support for providing analysis and being a watchdog of the government. Weaver also reported much disagreement on the importance of providing entertainment, as well as reporting accurately and objectively. It remains questionable, however, if the strong support expressed by Chinese journalists for investigating government claims stands up to closer scrutiny.

Weaver also found considerable national differences in the journalists’ ethics of reporting. With the exception of the case of revealing news sources that have been promised confidentiality, journalists generally disagreed on whether some ethically questionable reporting practices might be justified in the case of an important story. They differed in the extent to which they would pay for information, pretend to be someone else, badger news sources, use documents without permission, as well as get employed to gain inside information. In light of these very large differences with respect to the justification of ethically questionable reporting methods, Weaver concluded that it seems “there are strong national differences that override any universal professional norms or values of journalism around the world” (p. 473). Many of these heterogeneities seemed related to differences in political systems, more than to the influences of news organizations, journalism education and professional norms. However, cultural norms and political values did appear to have at least some influence on journalists’ views of their values and ethics.

Weaver’s attempt to get added value from survey data that were not tailored to cross-national comparison can certainly be contested on methodological grounds. Varying conceptualizations and research methodologies make this kind of “second-hand comparison” problematic, if not inadequate. However, the book is still the most comprehensive collection of findings from studies of news people around the world, and it continues to be a major reference for journalism researchers who engage in comparative research.

Historical Studies

Weaver’s conclusion that influences stemming from political systems may be most important in shaping a given country’s journalistic culture is also supported by a historical study authored by Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004). Their research focused on media systems in North America and Western Europe, due to their relatively comparable levels of economic development and their common culture and political history. Although Hallin and Mancini did not limit their analysis to journalism, many of their conclusions are of immediate relevance to journalism studies, since the study’s main concern was political communication.

Hallin and Mancini identified four major dimensions according to which media systems in Western Europe and North America can be usefully compared: (1) the development of media markets, with particular emphasis on the strong (or weak) development of a mass circulation press; (2) political parallelism, or the extent to which the media system reflects the major political divisions in society; (3) the development of journalistic professionalism; and (4) the degree

and nature of state intervention in the media system. With these four factors in mind, Hallin and Mancini distinguished between three models of media and politics. The *Mediterranean* or *Polarized Pluralist Model* (e.g., France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) is characterized by an elite-oriented press with relatively small circulation and a corresponding centrality of broadcasting media. In countries that fall under this model, the news media tend to have a strong political leaning, and professionalization of journalism is rather weak, as journalism is not particularly strongly differentiated from political activism. The press is marked by a strong focus on political life in which opinion-oriented or advocacy journalism has a bolder presence compared to other models.

The *Northern European* or *Democratic Corporatist Model* (e.g., Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland) is characterized by early development of the newspaper industry and very high newspaper circulation. Another attribute of this model is the history of strong party newspapers which coexisted with the commercial press throughout much of the 20th century. Opinion-oriented journalism still persists in this system, though it is of diminishing importance, while journalists increasingly embrace neutral and information-oriented roles. Journalistic professionalism is above average and is marked by a high degree of formal organization. The *North Atlantic* or *Liberal Model* (Canada, Great Britain, Ireland and the United States), on the other hand, is distinguished by the early emergence of a mass-circulation press, although circulation today tends to be lower than in Democratic Corporatist societies. With the exception of the highly partisan British press, newspapers do not show a strong political leaning, thus information-oriented journalism predominates. Journalism is highly professionalized in this model, even though journalistic autonomy is more likely to be limited by commercial pressures.

While Hallin and Mancini's study was primarily geared towards the understanding of the interplay between media and politics, the work of Jean K. Chalaby (1996) tapped into the relationship between journalism and culture. Chalaby's well-cited main argument is that "journalism is an Anglo-American invention" (p. 303). He based his thesis on a historical comparison of French, British and US journalism between the 1830s and the 1920s. Chalaby's contention is that American and British journalists invented the modern conception of news, that Anglo-American newspapers contained more news and information, and that they had much better organized news-gathering services. Among the factors that contributed to the rapid development of journalism in Great Britain and the United States were the independence of the press from the literary field, parliamentary bipartism, the ability of newspapers to derive substantial revenues from sales and advertising, the dynamics of the English language, as well as the Anglo-Saxon central and dominant position in the world. Another difference between Anglo-American and French journalism has to do with the way news reports are structured. In the Anglo-Saxon tradition, news accounts place the most newsworthy first and are constructed around "facts." In French newspapers, on the other hand, the organizing principle of many articles is the mediating subjectivity of the journalist. However, French journalists do not only wrap information into their own observations but construct their articles according to their own interpretation of the related events. Here, Chalaby's conclusions resonate with findings from survey researches that emphasize the more interpretative style of news reporting found in many continental-European media cultures.

CRITICAL ISSUES AND METHODOLOGICAL PITFALLS

Although comparative research is currently a rapidly growing subdomain of journalism studies, its rising significance has not been accompanied by adequate development in theory and

methodology. While new technologies have made it possible to conduct extensive surveys, process enormous quantities of data and then make this data available to researchers working in various countries, a sophisticated discussion about theories, concepts, designs and methods in comparative communication research has only just begun (Hantrais & Mangen, 1996; Wirth & Kolb, 2004).

Major Challenges to Comparative Research

One of the major challenges in comparative research lies in the epistemological domain. Since cross-cultural studies often implicitly assume methodological and theoretical universalism, they are vulnerable to the production of out-of-context measurement (Livingstone, 2003). It is still common that investigators conduct their research, at least partly, in a cultural context different from their own. In this kind of “safari research” (Hantrais & Mangen, 1996, p. 4), they mostly compare other nations to their own countries by evaluating other cultures through the lens of their own cultural value-systems. If they then focus on differences between the units of analysis, they tend to understate heterogeneities within the examined cultures, ignoring the fact that, occasionally, variances within cultures may be greater than those across cultural boundaries (Blumler, McLeod, & Rosengren, 1992; Øyen, 1990). This is, for instance, the case in the analysis of professional orientations of journalists across nations, as the diversity of journalistic cultures within nations often remains unaddressed.

When very different systems or time periods are analyzed, the extent of the differences may overwhelm any meaningful comparison (Blumler, McLeod, & Rosengren, 1992). These differences may not only be large and multidimensional, but may also vary by domain. What we treat as a similarity at one level of analysis may reveal myriad differences at more detailed levels of analysis (Kohn, 1989). Furthermore, differences and similarities, for instance between British and American journalists, may be “caused” by the genuine features of the two media systems, but they may also result from diffusion across national boundaries. Diffusion is particularly likely when countries share a common cultural origin. It can also be accelerated by ongoing globalization processes. The professional ideology of objectivity, for example, has spread from the United States to many parts of the world. An analysis that does not address these processes of diffusion, therefore, may be inadequate.

Ideological Bearings and Western Bias

Another problem in comparative journalism research is Western bias. According to Josephi (2006), the Anglo-American dominance in journalism studies has resulted from the long tradition of journalism studies in America, accompanied by the concentration of academic and textbook publishers in Great Britain and the United States, and the fact that English has developed into a world language. Colonial history is another important factor, as mass media in Africa, Latin America and Asia have developed as derivatives of those in the West (Golding, 1977). With the gradual decolonization of the Third World, however, Western scholars have failed to realize that the normative expectations of their models have biased their interpretations. If standards of developed nations are applied to developing countries, the result can only be a fundamentally unsympathetic view of the problems of journalism and journalists in those societies (Starck & Sudhaker, 1979).

This Western bias in journalism studies had some notable ideological implications. News people in the Third World were portrayed as needing to “catch up” with journalistic norms in the developed world, while the ideology of “professionalism” was transferred from the North to the

South (Golding, 1977, p. 292). For Halloran (1998, pp. 44–45), this “research imperialism” legitimized and reinforced established order, while strengthening the Third World’s economic and cultural dependence on the West. However, there is a growing awareness among Western media researchers who “feel embarrassed about viewing the rest of the world as forgotten understudy” (Curran & Park, 2000, p. 3).

The Problem of Equivalence

Weaver’s (1998c) international compilation of studies is a case in point for this Western bias in journalism research. The measurement of professional roles in the surveys conducted in Brazil, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan, and the Pacific Islands almost exclusively relied on translations of the original US questionnaire. With other role conceptions, most notably the concept of development journalism, only rudimentarily included or even entirely excluded, this measurement may well turn out to be inappropriate for many of these countries. Hence, if researchers speak of “professional roles” as a concept, they need to ensure that it covers its functional equivalents—that is, all relevant aspects in a given cultural realm—in every single culture included in a comparative study. Equivalence should therefore be seen as the major problem in comparative research (van Vijver & Leung, 1997; Wirth & Kolb, 2004). Researchers should not only make sure they apply concepts equivalently in all cultures, but they also ought to use equivalent research methods and administrative procedures. Furthermore, researchers need to invest considerable effort in the development of research instruments which must be thoughtfully developed, consequently pre-tested, carefully adjusted and strictly applied.

Selection of Cultures

Another important consideration in comparative research is the selection of cases. Hantrais (1999, pp. 100–101) rightly noted that “[a]ny similarities or differences revealed by a cross-national study may be no more than an artifact of the choice of countries.” Geddes (2003) has convincingly demonstrated how case selection can affect, or even render unreliable, outcomes of a comparative study. Whatever considerations serve as the rationale for the sampling, the units of analysis should be chosen within a conceptual framework that justifies their comparison (Chang et al., 2001). In reality, however, investigators in comparative journalism researches have often failed to present a rationale for their mix of countries.

Related to this issue is the question of how many cases should be selected in a comparative study. There is no general answer to this. Most common in journalism research are small-sample designs with two or three countries being compared. Medium-sample studies, which range between five to 60 countries, are rare but increasingly proliferating (e.g., Patterson & Donsbach, 1996; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006; Splichal & Sparks, 1994; Weaver 1998b), whereas large-sample designs are still nonexistent in our field. While medium-sample and large-sample studies certainly have their advantages in terms of causal inference and generalization, it is not necessarily true that the more cultures included in the analysis, the more we learn (Kohn, 1989).

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As comparative research is proliferating in most fields of the social sciences and humanities, journalism scholars need not to reinvent the wheel. They can take advantage of the rich literature and theoretical and methodological advances in other disciplines that have an established tradition in

cross-cultural studies; most notably sociology, anthropology, psychology, and political science. The problem of equivalence should be taken much more seriously; it needs to be addressed in every comparative study. In this respect, the insight that “[e]quivalence should be established and cannot be assumed” (van de Vijver & Leung, 1997, p. 144) should guide any comparative work.

Journalism studies needs to develop concepts that deliberately serve a comparative purpose, and extend beyond Western-grown models. Some reconceptualization of professional roles (“media roles”) has been done by Donsbach and Patterson (2004), Pan and Chan (2003) and Ramaprasad (2001). Pfetsch (2001) developed the concept of a “political communication culture,” while Hanitzsch (2007) proposed a universal theory of “journalism culture” for the purpose of comparative analysis. Shoemaker and Reese’s (1996) levels-of-analysis approach has also proven to be a useful heuristic tool for a cross-cultural look into the factors that shape the similarities and differences in the news.

Another important deficiency is the lack of sophisticated explanatory analyses that assess the relative contribution of contextual factors (such as gender, media ownership, cultural values, political and economic structures) to the variations among journalistic cultures around the world. Such studies should make optimal use of the potentials of quasi-experimental designs by purposefully selecting countries or other cultural units so as to attribute similarities and differences to their underlying causal factors. These similarities and differences ought to be addressed at different and multiple levels of analysis in order to take account of the diversity of journalistic cultures that cut across and nest within countries.

Finally, collaborative research should be a principal venue in comparative journalism studies since it is the most powerful approach to overcome ethnocentrism in research. While it is true that collaborative research often requires enormous resources and, most importantly, willingness to compromise among the participating scholars, it has, in fact, turned out to be efficient and advantageous in many scientific disciplines.

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