

Chapter 1

Questioning National, Cultural and Disciplinary Boundaries

A Call for Global Journalism Research

David Weaver and Martin Löffelholz

In many countries the past few decades have witnessed an upsurge in interest in studying journalism. Some of the more visible signs of the increasing relevance of journalism studies include the publication of two new journals in this first decade of the 21st century – *Journalism Studies* in February 2000 and *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism* in April 2000 – as well as the many books and articles that have focused on journalism in the past decade (e.g. Ettema and Glasser, 1998; Weaver, 1998; Heinonen, 1999; Deuze, 2002; Gans, 2003; Schudson, 2003; Hanitzsch, 2004; Löffelholz, 2004; Zelizer, 2004; de Burgh, 2005; Franklin et al., 2005; Quandt 2005; Altmeppen, 2006; Hess, 2006; Weischenberg et al. 2006; Weaver et al., 2007).

Moreover, the International Communication Association (ICA) as well as the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) recently launched specific divisions in order to provide better opportunities for researchers to study journalism comparatively and beyond narrow national paradigms. The ongoing institutionalization of internationalized or even globalized journalism studies is not only indicating a growing importance, but also demonstrating that journalism research can no longer operate within national or cultural borders only: Media industries, media corporations, and public institutions in the field of communication are “going global,” computer-mediated communication spreads around the world, and cultural borderlines are becoming blurred by the hybridization of cultures (McPhail, 2006). In this increasingly global media environment, advertising, entertainment, public relations, and – last but not least – journalism are becoming global phenomena affecting media content, the process of news production and even the actual working background of journalists in many countries.

This insight provides a central starting point for our book of global journalism research. It aims to give a comprehensive overview on journalism research and its different approaches, methods, and paradigms around the world. Thus, the book brings together, for the first time, four main aspects in one volume. The first part introduces major theories of journalism research while the second part focuses on traditional research methods in the context of globalization. Aspects of

comparative research are especially emphasized. In order to provide a real global perspective, for the third part we selected six contributions describing paradigmatically the state of journalism research in Asia, Africa, Europe, and North and Latin America, while the fourth part discusses important aspects of future journalism research in an era of globalization. In order to acknowledge the current trends of journalism research, it is, however, useful to briefly look back at the beginnings of a scholarly understanding of news production.

Early Steps in Journalism Research

In a sense, we have come full circle from the 1930s, when the emphasis was on broadening what was considered narrowly focused journalism research into the more general study of mass communication processes and effects. One of the early influential books of this movement, *Mass communications*, edited by Wilbur Schramm and published in 1960 by the University of Illinois Press, includes the following tribute: “This volume is dedicated to three pioneers in the study of mass communications through the social sciences: Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Harold D. Lasswell, and Carl I. Hovland” (Schramm, 1960, p. v). These three pioneers of mass communication research were known mainly for their studies of media effects, of course, not for studying the producers of media content, although Harold Lasswell (1948) did put more emphasis on analyzing actual content than did the other two. But none of these early pioneers were much concerned with studying media organizations or journalists. They tended to accept media messages as given, and they were not very interested in studying how and why these messages came to be what they were. In addition, many of the studies of journalists and journalism before the 1930s were mostly descriptive, often anecdotal and uncritical histories of printing, newspapers and periodicals that focused on the lives of major editors and publishers.

From the 1930s to the 1950s, in the United States as well as in other countries, there were more interpretive histories of journalism that examined the relationships between societal forces and journalistic institutions, and there were also a few more systematic studies of journalists, including Leo Rosten’s 1937 book on Washington correspondents (Rosten, 1937). Among those early research projects were David Manning White’s study of the “gatekeeper” selecting the news (White, 1950), and Warren Breed’s study of social control in the newsroom (Breed, 1955). Other studies of journalists during this period included one of the editorial staff of the *Milwaukee Journal*, of Oregon editorial writers, of Kansas weekly publishers, of American correspondents abroad, and of foreign correspondents in the United States (Schramm, 1957). This shows that there were studies of journalists and journalism before the 1970s, but they were few compared to the dozens of studies of media uses and effects. It was not until 1971 that, as far as we know, the first and truly large-scale national survey of journalists working for a variety of media was carried out by the sociologist John Johnstone and his colleagues at the University of Illinois Chicago Circle campus (Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman, 1976).

Another important step of empirical journalism research is connected with the work of the German scholar Manfred Rühl. Based on a societal approach to journalism, Rühl conducted in the 1960s the first empirical study that focused on an organized social system instead of journalistic individuals. His case study of a German newspaper marked a radical change in perspective because he did not describe journalism by identifying characteristics and attitudes of journalists as individuals but by analyzing it as a rationalized production process taking place in an editorial setting that was defined as an organized social system (Rühl, 1969). It took, however, decades before the relevance of theoretically driven empirical journalism research was adequately recognized.

The Indistinct Relevance of Journalism Research in the 1970s and the 1980s

Some years after John Johnstone and Manfred Rühl conducted their influential studies, David Weaver and Richard Gray argued in a paper reviewing trends in mass communication research presented at the 1979 AEJ convention in Houston that many mass communication researchers had become more concerned with media audiences and the effects of media messages upon them than with journalism, journalists and the actual production of messages (Weaver and Gray, 1979). They also argued that even though the programs of research on media uses and effects had some relevance to journalism education and journalism, it was limited. Weaver and Gray concluded that continued concern over media effects had resulted in little systematic research on the effects of society on the media, even though journalists are greatly influenced by societal and organizational constraints, and even though their training and values and news organizations are shaped by political and economic forces.

A dozen years later, in the first edition of their important book, *Mediating the message*, first published in 1991, Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese made essentially this same point when they wrote that “Most books on mass media research mainly cover studies dealing with the process through which the audience receives mass media content or with the effects of content on people and society. We believe that it is equally important to understand the influences that shape content” (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996, p. 3).

Why was not there more systematic research on journalists and journalism compared to the outpouring of studies of media messages, audiences, uses and effects? Shoemaker and Reese (1996) suggest that it was due to several factors, including the uncritical nature of mass communication research that rarely questioned media institutions themselves, dependence on media industry funding for large-scale surveys and the interest of large media organizations in their audiences (the so-called “dominant paradigm” exemplified by Paul Lazarsfeld and his Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University), as well as the interest of governments worldwide (quite often significant funders of research) in media effects, especially the effects of propaganda in wartime and the possible harmful effects

of films and television. These factors largely correspond with those discussed by David Weaver and Richard Gray in their 1979 paper on research trends (Weaver and Gray, 1979).

Another reason for fewer studies of journalists and news organizations has to do with limited access. It is still far easier to study media messages and audiences than it is to study journalists, media organizations or the entire process of structured news production, particularly from a comparative perspective. Experiences with the most recent national survey of US journalists (Weaver et al., 2007) or with the first comparative survey of German and American online journalists (Quandt et al., 2006), for instance, showed that getting access to journalists is still not an easy task. A comparison of the various national surveys of US journalists suggests that the responses of journalists to surveys are on the decline (Weaver et al., 2007). Getting access is even more difficult in newsroom observation studies because they require not only willingness of journalistic individuals but also acceptance within the entire news organization (Quandt, 2005). Hence, newsroom observation studies are perhaps the most difficult of any journalism studies, without personal connections that provide the needed access to the newsroom.

Linking the Diverse Levels of Journalism Research: The 1990s until Today

Although the relevance of journalism research is still being disputed in some countries and although empirical studies more than ever have to take into account the limited access to journalists and newsrooms, the overall number of studies on journalism and journalists is increasing steadily on a global scale. Above and beyond surveys, interviews with journalists or newsroom observations there are some very insightful and useful journalism studies that rely entirely on analysis of journalistic messages or that study the economics, culture, policies and practices of media organizations from a more macro level (Schudson, 2003; Zelizer, 2004). But there are relatively few studies until today that try to link the characteristics and attitudes of journalists, the attributes of their news organizations, and societal influences with the kinds of messages journalists produce.

Certainly the surveys of journalists that the editors of this book on global journalism research have been involved with (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986, 1991, 1996; Weischenberg, Löffelholz and Scholl 1998; Quandt et al. 2006; Weaver et al., 2007) have done little in this regard, and the same is true for most other surveys of journalists that we know about. In the 1982 and 1992 surveys of American journalists and in the 1993 survey of German journalists, it was attempted to correlate the demographics and attitudes of journalists with samples of their best work (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1991, 1996; Weischenberg, Löffelholz, and Scholl, 1998), but in the most recent 2002 national study of US journalists (Weaver et al., 2007) and in the 2005 national study of German journalists (Weischenberg et al., 2006), there was no way of matching individual journalists in the survey with their samples of work, particularly due to increased privacy protections for survey respondents.

There is value in systematically studying representative samples of journalists to document their characteristics, backgrounds, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions, but much of that information will always be descriptive rather than explanatory or predictive. Although this kind of descriptive baseline information is useful for documenting who journalists are and what they believe about their work and their organizations, especially over time and across national and cultural boundaries, it does not by itself contribute very much to explaining why news coverage is the way it is or why journalists do their work as they do.

There are some fairly recent exceptions, however, that hold out more promise for advances in theory than many of the more descriptive surveys of journalists. These include a growing number of integrative journalism theories searching for the micro–macro link in journalism research (see the chapter of Martin Löffelholz in this book) as well as empirical studies such as that by Stephanie Craft and Wayne Wanta (2004), which examines the influences of female editors and reporters on the news agenda, an article by Shelly Rodgers and Esther Thorson (2003) that examines the news coverage of male and female reporters at three US dailies, and a paper by Tim Vos (2002) that examined the correlation between journalists' perceived roles and the roles manifested in their news stories, building on the work that Lori Bergen (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1991) and Divya McMillin (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996) did with the 1982 and 1992 surveys of American journalists and the samples of best work sent to the authors by these journalists. These studies that attempt to correlate the characteristics and beliefs of individual journalists with their news coverage often find rather weak relationships, especially between role perceptions and the roles evident in news coverage, but they are at least starting to examine relationships that could lead to more explanation and prediction.

We suspect that the attitudes of journalists do matter to the kind of reporting they do, but more so at the organizational level than the individual. For example, if most journalists in a particular news organization rate the adversarial role highly, it seems likely that more of the news articles produced by that organization will be adversarial in nature, and we think that the same is true for other roles such as neutral disseminator and interpreter. Because news media reporting is usually not the product of isolated individuals, we think that it is likely to be more fruitful to study the links between journalists' attitudes and news content at the organizational rather than the individual level.

This is true, we think, even for those studies that suggest that gender of journalists is correlated with reporting. As Kay Mills points out in her chapter on what difference women journalists make in Pippa Norris' book, *Women, media, and politics* (Mills, 1997, p. 45), women at some newspapers and broadcast media lack the "critical mass" to alter definitions of news and to change the agendas of news coverage. Katherine Graham of *The Washington Post* is quoted in another chapter in this book by Maurine Beasley as saying that there is "a difference between having the authority to make decisions and the power to make policy" (Beasley, 1997, p. 240). Thus it seems likely that this important individual characteristic may exert its influence indirectly through first influencing the priorities of a news organization, which then in turn influences the kind of news reporting produced

by that organization, as Siegfried Weischenberg and Maja Malik argue in their chapter on journalism research in Germany.

It is possible to view these influences in the opposite order, of course, so that the organizational characteristics have their influence indirectly through individual journalists' characteristics and beliefs, as Wolfgang Donsbach is suggesting in his chapter of this book, but in the longer run the characteristics of news organizations are probably influenced by individuals, especially those who achieve positions of influence and power such as prominent editors, publishers, news directors, producers and owners.

This example points out the importance of studying influences on news content not only at the individual level, but also at the organizational and even more abstract levels such as extramedia and societal, as Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese (1996) have advocated. It is possible to aggregate individual level data from surveys of journalists into the organizational level, if one has enough cases from each organization, but studying extramedia factors such as the economic and political environments and societal ideologies cannot be done by surveying individual journalists in one country or culture. Comparative studies across national and cultural boundaries are necessary to assess these influences, as in the analysis of journalists from mainland China, Hong Kong, and the United States (Zhu et al., 1997).

Journalism Research in an Era of Globalization

The growing number of comparative studies indicates that journalism and journalism research no longer operate within national or cultural boundaries. As international events such as war, terrorism, international conferences etc. gain more attention in the media around the globe, research has to examine the new complex networks and institutions that produce news. This implies many challenges for practicing journalists as well as journalism researchers who will have to set up international cooperation if they do not want to lose a grip on the phenomena they try to explain. Comparative research and theories of wide scope are needed that take into account these developments. Therefore this book includes sections on journalism theories, methods, selected paradigms and findings from various regions of the world, as well as on the future of a globalized journalism research.

The theories that are needed to better understand journalism cultures, systems, structures, functions and practices include those at different levels of analysis (psychological, organizational, societal, and cultural) and also those that focus on different dimensions of journalists, such as gender. The second section of this book is a comprehensive review including the most important theories of journalism research. While Martin Löffelholz gives an introductory overview of the approaches, the following contributors offer insights into various theories and approaches in the field. Manfred Rühl introduces the societal approach, followed by John Hartley, who draws on the cultural studies approach when he claims "everybody is a journalist." Klaus-Dieter Altmeppen points out the organiza-

tional aspects of journalistic institutions, their structures and processes. Besides structural factors, journalists as individuals and their decisions of what becomes news depend on psychological variables. Therefore, Wolfgang Donsbach presents a model that tries to integrate various theories about news decisions. Another central variable, of course, is gender, which Gertrude J. Robinson considers to be a constituting element of human society. As all interaction is influenced by it, journalism research has to analyze systemic gender biases within the journalistic profession as well.

Of course journalism research cannot be done without its tools. The classics among them are survey, content analysis and observation, so this book includes chapters on each of these by scholars who have done recent studies using them. But first, in an era of globalization, the methodology of comparative journalism research is one of the central issues. The difficulties and models of cross-national or cross-cultural research are the starting point of the first chapter in this section by Thomas Hanitzsch. The first method described in detail, survey research, is discussed by David Weaver and is based on the American Journalist surveys (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986, 1991, 1996; Weaver et al., 2007) and his edited book, *The global journalist*, which brought together surveys of journalists from all over the world (Weaver, 1998). Christian Kolmer, of the Media Tenor organization, has specialized in news media and its contents. He presents insights into the analysis of the world *in* the media. The professional routines and working patterns as conditions of news production can also be observed directly, so Thorsten Quandt, who recently conducted a detailed study of online journalism, introduces a rarely applied, but very promising, method of journalism research: the systematic news-room observation.

After discussing major theories and methods in journalism research, the book turns to selected paradigms and findings from studies of journalism and journalists in several different countries and regions, including China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (by Zhongdang Pan, Joseph Man Chan, and Ven-hwei Lo), Germany (by Siegfried Weischenberg and Maja Malik), Great Britain (by Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Bob Franklin), Mexico (by Maria Elena Hernández Ramírez and Andreas Schwarz), South Africa (by Arnold de Beer), and the United States of America (by Jane Singer). The central aim of this section is to bring together researchers who discuss approaches and main findings of journalism research in their countries in the context of globalization and its challenges.

Finally, the last section raises questions and challenges traditional paradigms based on the concept of the nation-state and its boundaries. The contributors discuss how globalization affects journalism itself as well as journalism research as a discipline and thus suggest new ways that scholars should go. Barbie Zelizer, for instance, argues that despite wide-ranging scholarship, few attempts are being made to share knowledge beyond disciplinary boundaries. She analyzes five main types of inquiry concerning journalism research – sociology, history, language studies, political science and cultural studies – and points out their limitations. However, Ari Heinonen and Heikki Luostarinen from Finland focus on the object of scholarly research, journalism, which is characterized by its changing nature. They outline the

dual nature of journalism consisting of media-centric and society-centric dimensions and analyze the “signs of change” that can be observed in times of globalization. These changes, they argue, will affect journalism both internally and externally. Stephen Reese considers globalization as a process that extends beyond economic changes into political and cultural spheres. He describes the role of journalism in that process as crucial and raises the question of how it supports democratic life in a globalized society. Mark Deuze points out the lack of coherence in the field of journalism research as well as education and, as a consequence, suggests considering journalism as an occupational ideology.

The objective of this final section is to suggest a new orientation for journalism research, which needs to take into account the processes of globalization and how they affect all parts of society. Both national and disciplinary boundaries have to be overcome in this new approach, which is no easy task, as this book makes clear. Journalism is, of course, only one form of public communication, but it is one of the most important, if not the most important, for any democratic system of government. Advertising, public relations, and entertainment are all important and influential genres of public communication, but often their importance is measured more in economic terms than political terms. Therefore, some of the theories that are successful in describing and explaining these other forms of public communication are not likely to fully apply to the study of journalism. However, journalism is not so different from other forms of public communication that it needs completely different theories, as the agenda-setting theory is illustrating.

We hope that this book on global journalism research will stimulate and refine our thinking about the approaches and methods that will be most fruitful in studying journalists and journalism in this decade and beyond. And we hope that in our forthcoming discussions of old and new paradigms, theories and methods for studying journalism we will keep in mind opportunities to link our studies with those about media uses and effects to produce a more unified, theoretical and useful body of knowledge about the complex processes of this form of public communication known as journalism.

References

- Altmeyden, K. D. (2006). *Journalismus und Medien als Organisationssysteme. Leistungen, Strukturen und Management* [Journalism and media as organizational systems. Functions, structures and management]. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Beasley, M. H. (1997). How can media coverage of women be improved? In P. Norris (ed.), *Women, media, and politics* (pp. 235–44). New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Breed, W. (1955). Social control in the newsroom. *Social Forces*, 33, 326–35.
- de Burgh, H. (2005). *Making journalists*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Craft, S., and Wanta, W. (2004). Women in the newsroom: Influences of female editors and reporters on the news agenda. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81, 124–38.
- Deuze, M. (2002). *Journalists in the Netherlands*. Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers.

- Ettema, J. S., and Glasser, T. L. (1998). *Custodians of conscience: Investigative journalism and public virtue*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Franklin, B., Hamer, M., Hanna, M., Kinsey, M., and Richardson, J. E. (2005). *Key concepts in journalism studies*. London, Thousand Oaks, CA, and New Delhi: Sage.
- Gans, H. J. (2003). *Democracy and the news*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hanitzsch, T. (2004). *Journalismus in Indonesien. Akteure, Strukturen, Orientierungshorizonte, Journalismuskulturen [Journalism in Indonesia. Actors, structures, orientation horizons, journalism cultures]*. Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag.
- Heinonen, A. (1999). *Journalism in the age of the net: Changing society, changing journalism*. Tampere, Finland: Acta Universitatis Tamperensis.
- Hess, S. (2006). *Through their eyes: Foreign correspondents in the United States*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Johnstone, J. W. C., Slawski, E. J., and Bowman, W. W. (1976). *The news people: A sociological portrait of American journalists and their work*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Lasswell, H. D. (1948). The structure and function of communication in society. In L. Bryson (ed.), *The communication of ideas* (pp. 37–51). New York: Institute for Religious and Social Studies. Also reprinted in W. Schramm (ed.), *Mass communications*. 2nd edition (pp. 117–30). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1960.
- Löffelholz, M. (ed.) (2004). *Theorien des Journalismus [Theories of journalism]*. 2nd edition. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- McPhail, T. L. (2006). *Global communication. Theories, stakeholders, and trends*. 2nd edition. Malden, Oxford, and Carlton: Blackwell Publishing.
- Mills, K. (1997). What difference do women journalists make? In P. Norris (ed.), *Women, media, and politics* (pp. 41–55). New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Quandt, T. (2005). *Journalisten im Netz. Eine Untersuchung journalistischen Handelns in Online-Redaktionen [Journalists in the net. A study of journalistic action in online newsrooms]*. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Quandt, T., Löffelholz, M., Weaver, D. H., Hanitzsch, T., and Altmeppen, K.-D. (2006). American and German online journalists at the beginning of the 21st century: A binational survey. *Journalism Studies*, 7(2), 171–86.
- Rodgers, S., and Thorson, E. (2003). A socialization perspective on male and female reporting. *Journal of Communication*, 53, 658–75.
- Rosten, Leo. (1974 [1937]). *The Washington correspondents*. New York: Harcourt, Brace. Reprint of 1937 edition published by Arno Press.
- Rühl, M. (1969). *Die Zeitungsredaktion als organisiertes soziales System [The newspaper's editorial department as an organized social system]*. Bielefeld: Bertelsmann Universitätsverlag.
- Schramm, W. (1957). Twenty years of journalism research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 21, 91–107.
- Schramm, W. (1960). *Mass communications*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Schudson, M. (2003). *The sociology of news*. New York: Norton.
- Shoemaker, P. J. and Reese, S. D. (1996). *Mediating the message: Theories of influences on mass media content*. 2nd edition. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Vos, Tim P. (August 9, 2002). *Role enactment: The influence of journalists' role conceptions on news content*. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Miami, FL.
- Weaver, D. H. (1998). *The global journalist: News people around the world*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

- Weaver, D. H., Beam, R. A., Brownlee, B. J., Voakes, P. S., and Wilhoit, G. C. (2007). *The American journalist in the 21st century: US news people at the dawn of a new millennium*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Weaver, D. H., and Gray, R. G. (1979). *Journalism and mass communication research in the United States: Past, present and future*. Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism. Houston, Texas. Also published in G. C. Wilhoit and H. de Bock (eds.) (1980). *Mass communication review yearbook*, 1 (pp. 124–51). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Weaver, D. H., and Wilhoit, G. C. (1986). *The American journalist: A portrait of US news people and their work*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Weaver, D. H., and Wilhoit, G. C. (1991). *The American journalist: A portrait of US news people and their work*. 2nd edition. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Weaver, D. H., and Wilhoit, G. C. (1996). *The American journalist in the 1990s: US news people at the end of an era*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Weischenberg, S., Löffelholz, M., and Scholl, A. (1998). Journalism in Germany. In D. H. Weaver (ed.), *The global journalist: Studies of news people around the world* (p. 229–56). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Weischenberg, S., Malik, M., and Scholl, A. (2006). *Souffleure der Mediengesellschaft. Report über die Journalisten in Deutschland [Prompters of the media society. Report about the journalists in Germany]*. Konstanz: UVK.
- White, D. M. (1950). The “gatekeeper”: A case study in the selection of news. *Journalism Quarterly*, 27, 383–90.
- Zelizer, B. (2004). *Taking journalism seriously: News and the academy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zhu, J., Weaver, D. H., Lo, V., Chen, C., and Wu, W. (1997). Individual, organizational, and societal influences on media role perceptions: A comparative study of journalists in China, Taiwan, and the United States. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 74, 84–96. Reprinted in M. Prosser and K. Sitaram (eds.) (1999), *Civic discourse: Intercultural, international, and global media*. Vol. 2. (pp. 361–74). Stamford, CT: Ablex.