
Ethical Orientations of Journalists Around the Globe: Implications From a Cross-National Survey

Communication Research
XX(X) 1–21
© The Author(s) 2012
Reprints and permission:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0093650212450584
<http://crx.sagepub.com>



Patrick Lee Plaisance¹, Elizabeth A. Skewes², and Thomas Hanitzsch³

Abstract

Journalism ethics theorizing is increasingly preoccupied with identifying and articulating universal norms and standards for media systems across various cultures. This study offers an empirical contribution to this topic by examining the ethical orientations of journalists in 18 countries. Country-level, or ideological, factors, rather than individual-level variables, appear to have the greatest impact on journalists' degrees of idealism and relativistic thinking. Findings affirm hierarchy-of-influences theories regarding news work. They also raise questions about the nature of universal standards that would constitute a cross-cultural journalism ethics theory and underscore concerns about the viability of Enlightenment assumptions to serve as universal journalism ethical norms.

Keywords

journalism ethics, universal norms, cross-cultural comparison, influences on news

Whether they are explicit in doing so or not, journalists are in constant engagement with ethics theory as they move through the continuous cascade of decisions that comprise the messy, complicated and often compromising production of news. They exhibit both “pre-conventional” and “postconventional” levels of moral reasoning. They commonly draw on strict utilitarian justifications, but they also regularly aspire to Kantian absolutes. They are pragmatic, idealistic and relativistic. Extensive research has sought to tease out these often contradictory strands by using scenario-based data. Other work has sought to be more

¹Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, USA

²University of Colorado, Boulder, CO, USA

³University of Munich, Munich, Germany

Corresponding Author:

Patrick Lee Plaisance, Colorado State University, Campus Delivery 1785, Fort Collins, CO 80523, USA
Email: patrick.plaisance@colostate.edu

inferential, drawing on moral-psychology tools to methodically assess moral reasoning. These approaches, however, have not been incorporated into systematic international cross-national comparisons of professional journalists.

The ethical orientations of journalists are important because they both reflect and shape normative professional guidelines and arguably govern work practices on a daily basis. They are also indicative of the state of journalistic professionalism itself (Beam, Weaver, & Brownlee, 2009). Furthermore, reflecting the nature of ethical deliberation as primarily an individual or interpersonal activity, much contemporary media ethics theorizing of universal principles largely implies a simultaneous individual- and societal-level focus.

Although a description of journalists' ethical orientations is certainly an important issue to explore, this article is interested in the extent to which the professional ethics of journalists varies across news organizations and societies, and in the factors that explain this variation. As a consequence, this study inevitably deals with multiple levels of analysis, including the individual level of journalists, the organizational level of newsrooms, and the societal level of media systems. So far, much research, due largely to measurement and other methodological issues, has tended to treat these dimensions of influence in relative isolation. This is particularly true in media ethics research.

In their hierarchical theory of influences on the production of news, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) identify the values, judgments and beliefs of individual journalists as constituting the weakest of five levels of influence. This assumption has received empirical support by findings from a comparative study of the ethical attitudes of Israeli and American journalists (Berkowitz, Limor, & Singer, 2004). A number of gatekeeper studies point to a significant but modest influence of individual factors on the journalists' news decisions (Flegel & Chaffee, 1971; Kepplinger, Brosius, & Staab, 1991; Patterson & Donsbach, 1996), but several researchers have shown how organizational forces eventually outweigh individual values in newsroom decision-making (Beam, 1990; Donohue, Olien, & Tichenor, 1985; Voakes, 1997; Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2007; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986; Zhu, Weaver, Lo, Chen, & Wu., 1997). At the same time, there is a growing awareness of the supremacy of systemic influences (Berkowitz, Limor, & Singer, 2004; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Preston & Metykova, 2009; Weaver, 1998).

A multitude of factors comprise what is referred to as a culture, including issues of social-psychological norms and standards, structures of political and social power, and epistemological and ideological assumptions about bodies of knowledge. Individual members of a culture also can be said to share a range of philosophical orientations, such as pragmatism, skepticism, or deontological justifications for behavior. Although these and other philosophical approaches each have deep roots and voluminous studies in moral philosophy, they can be referred to as occupying particular space in relation to each other regarding reliance on or rejection of external, discernable moral laws, and the extent to which various approaches rest on our notion of the inevitability of the human good. A key part of journalistic cultures found around the world, by extension, necessarily features a degree of ideological consensus on the acceptable approaches and responses to ethical dilemmas. To what extent do specific journalism cultures, for example, base responses to ethical dilemmas on a deontological orientation that acknowledges the

inevitability of some harmful effects? Conversely, to what extent might journalists in a certain culture exhibit a greater sense of idealism in their quest for the best course of action in an ethical dilemma? This article represents an effort to explore these and other similar questions of culturally based ethical ideologies through cross-national comparisons of journalists. Researchers previously found that whereas journalists around the world tend to follow universalist ethical precepts and are wary of questionable methods of reporting, journalists in a range of countries “cluster” according to how much personal latitude they feel individual journalists should have in handling ethical dilemmas and in arguing that serving a greater good justifies the means (Hanitzsch et al., 2010b). The purpose here, conversely, is to explore the driving factors, and the relative strength of each, behind these apparent groupings: which characteristics of individual journalists, their news organizations, and the media systems in which they work contribute to these clusters.

By employing multilevel modeling as analytical technique, this article is part of a growing empirical literature in the communication field that acknowledges the multilevel structure of influences that stem from various levels of analysis (Hwang & Southwell, 2009; Park, Eveland, & Cudeck, 2008; Slater, Hayes, Reineke, Long, & Bettinghaus, 2009; Southwell, 2005). In the case of the present study, journalists are nested within news organizations which themselves are nested within countries. Ignoring the multilevel structure of influences can have serious inferential consequences, most notably expressed in deflated standard errors and, by implication, dubious tests of significance for regression coefficients (Hox, 2002; Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998; Southwell, 2005).

The Worlds of Journalism project, involving a systematic sampling of journalists and media organizations from 18 countries, is the most ambitious study of its kind and provides a framework to understand multidimensional influences on news production as well as to discern distinct journalistic cultures across the globe (Hanitzsch et al., 2010a, 2010b). By measuring and analyzing interactions among journalists’ ethical beliefs and specific variables on the cultural, socio-political and organizational dimensions of influence, this project provides an opportunity to explore the relative influence of individual ethical beliefs on news work and better understand moral connections and disparities among journalists around the globe. It also stands to contribute to the search for and articulation of universal journalism ethical principles that is the focus of much theorizing in the field of media ethics.

Research on Ethical Orientations

Cognitive moral development and moral ideological orientations are two theoretical frameworks used to explore and assess how individuals deliberate on ethical issues. Cognitive moral development rests on a developmental approach to explain various levels of moral reasoning ability from childhood to adulthood (see Kohlberg, 1984; Rest, 1986). Drawing from this approach, Wilkins and Coleman (2005, p. 39) found that American journalists exhibited a relatively high level of moral reasoning compared with other professions, based on a measure of their conceptualization of justice.

Measuring individuals' orientation to different moral philosophies, conversely, has enabled researchers to tie degrees of idealism and degrees of relativistic thinking to proclivities to view ethical questions in certain ways. Idealists generally express greater concern for avoiding harm to others and generally reflect a Kantian sensibility that emphasizes moral obligations, whereas less idealistic individuals tend to believe that some degree of harm is unavoidable even with the noblest of intentions, reflecting a more utilitarian outlook. Relativistic thinking generally rejects the claim that external moral laws should guide behavior and insists that moral judgments are primarily situational. The tensions among the strains of moral thought embodied by these two dimensions stretch back to Socrates and remain the focus of much contemporary moral philosophy (e.g., Audi, 1997; Moore, 1903; Ross, 1930).

An empirical approach to measure the extent to which idealism and relativism is endorsed by individuals was applied by Plaisance (2007), who draws on a theory originally developed by the psychologist Donelson Forsyth (1980, pp. 175-7; 1981, pp. 218-9). In his approach, *relativism* denotes the extent to which individuals base their personal moral philosophies on universal ethical rules. Whereas some individuals believe in and make use of moral absolutes, others may be reluctant to rely on universal moral rules. The second dimension, *idealism*, refers to the consequences in individual responses to ethical dilemmas. Individuals with high degrees of idealism assume that desirable consequences can, with the "right" action, always be obtained, whereas others are more outcome-oriented, for they admit that harm will sometimes be necessary to produce a greater social good.

Most recently, a meta-analysis of research examining variables influencing ethically questionable business decisions concluded that measures based on Forsyth's idealistic-relativistic typology served as reliable predictors of perceived ethical and unethical conduct. Individuals with strong internal, accessible beliefs prohibiting harming others were found less likely to make unethical choices. Furthermore, a relativistic moral philosophy was also positively related to unethical choice (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Treviño, 2010).

Given our expectations that patterns of ethical orientations will be related to the larger (and more influential) structural systems in which they are found, our first hypotheses consequently reads as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Journalists' ethical orientations vary significantly across news organizations and, even more so, across societies.

Professional ethics is firmly believed to be an essential curricular component in journalism education. Although individual factors have repeatedly been found to be of minor relevance in predicting journalists' ethical orientations (Berkowitz, Limor, & Singer, 2004; Voakes 1997), this study tries to test this assumption in a multi-country context. Professional education, as well as perceived levels of professional influence and membership in professional organizations (e.g., journalist unions), may therefore have a positive effect on idealism and may be negatively related to relativism. Within the context of professionalism, the relative amount of professional experience may also play a role, as was indicated by a study of police officers (Catlin & Maupin, 2002). At the same time, we

expect the perceived importance of economic influences to result in a greater degree of relativism and a smaller degree of idealism among journalists. In a 2004 survey of journalists, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2004) found increased worries about economic pressures to be the major problem in American newsrooms. In addition, we also expect the extent of the journalists' perceived editorial autonomy, as well as the time they devote to information gathering, to influence their ethical beliefs. Journalists may get more cynical in their ethical orientations as they spend more time with information gathering because they are more often exposed to attempts of deception and information withholding by sources. We therefore pose a second block of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a (H2a): With respect to their individual characteristics and predispositions, the journalists' levels of relativism are positively related to autonomy, economic influences, and the time devoted to information gathering, whereas they are negatively related to professional influences, education, experience, and membership in professional organizations.

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): Still on the individual level, idealism is positively related to professional influences, education, experience, and membership in professional organizations, whereas it is negatively related to autonomy, economic influences, and the time devoted to information gathering.

The newsroom context has been found most influential in the process of ethical decision-making in Weaver and Wilhoit's (1986) early survey of U.S. journalists. Surveys conducted in Germany and Indonesia have also found organizational factors to be strong predictors of journalists' professional views (Hanitzsch, 2005; Scholl & Weischenberg, 1998). Furthermore, ownership has long been established as a major source of influence in news production (Donohue, Olien, & Tichenor, 1985; Weaver et al., 2007; Zhu et al., 1997). Most relevant for the study of journalists' ethical orientations is the distinction between privately owned news organizations and public or state-owned media as journalists who work in commercial media may be exposed to greater economic pressures, which in turn leads to higher relativism and lower idealism. In addition, we expect the same to be true for the level of competition which has been found to show influential strength by Voakes (1997). We thus present a third block of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a (H3a): On the organizational level, the journalists' relativism is positively related to market competition and private ownership, whereas it is negatively related to the existence of codified editorial rules.

Hypothesis 3b (H3b): Still on the organizational level, the journalists' levels of idealism are positively related to the existence of codified editorial rules, whereas they are negatively related to market competition and private ownership.

General studies on relativism and idealism have pointed to considerable cross-national differences. In comparing Russian and American business executives, for instance, researchers found that whereas the Russians exhibited higher relativistic tendencies, their

American counterparts were more willing to sacrifice moral standards if profits could be substantially improved (Robertson, Gilley, & Street, 2003). We therefore expect the journalists' levels of relativism and idealism to be related to characteristics of their national media systems. That societal factors profoundly shape journalists ethical orientations has been demonstrated by a number of studies. Voakes (1997), for instance, identified legal influence as the single most influential factor, whereas Berkowitz, Limor, and Singer (2004) pointed to the social or national context of news-making to be most important in shaping journalistic decisions. We expect journalists in countries with higher levels of press freedom, professionalism, and economic development to be more idealistic and less relativistic in their ethical orientations, and therefore pose the final block of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4a (H4a): On the level of media systems, relativism is negatively related to press freedom, professionalism, and economic development.

Hypothesis 4b (H4b): Still on the level of media systems, idealism levels are positively related to press freedom, professionalism, and economic development.

Method

This study examines data gathered by a consortium of researchers in 18 countries: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Egypt, Germany, Indonesia, Israel, Mexico, Romania, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, and the United States. The countries in the study represent a range of cultural and political contexts, and a range of levels of professional training received by journalists.

The data set was constructed by using a questionnaire to gather individual information from 100 randomly selected journalists at varying levels of management in 20 different news organizations, selected through stratified random sampling, in each country. The interviews were conducted between October 2007 and April 2009. Most of the interviews were conducted by telephone, though personal interviews were conducted in Bulgaria, Egypt, India, and China (in part), because journalists in those countries were less cooperative with telephone interviews. In Turkey, journalists completed the questionnaire on their own in the presence of the researcher. The study uses "matched samples" in each of the 18 countries, which allow for comparisons across the countries (Hofstede, 2001, p. 463). Samples in the individual countries were matched so that all national teams selected an identical or highly similar number of journalists in the several types of media primarily defined by channel, quality versus popular media (print), primary ownership (broadcasting media), as well as national versus local/regional media. The purpose was to generate country samples that are highly similar, and therefore comparable, with respect to their internal composition of selected news organizations and journalists.

In practice, this means that all national collaborators worked on the basis of a target sample that was collaboratively designed in an early stage of the project. More specifically, news organizations in each country were purposively sampled to represent both quality and popular media, as well as state and local media. Thus, in each country sample, there are 10

national and 15 local journalists from quality daily newspapers; five national and five local journalists from popular daily newspapers; five national journalists from a quality weekly publication and five from a popular weekly publication; five from a national news agency or wire service; five each from a national and a local public television station; 15 national and five local journalists from a privately owned television station; five each from a national and local public radio station; and five each from a national and local privately owned radio station. Popular print media outlets were identified by circulation size, and popular radio and broadcast programs were selected based on audience share for their broadcasts. Quality news outlets were identified based on their ability to influence the public agenda as determined by common agreement among journalists and scholars in each country. The research teams in each country tried to match the sampling frame for the media outlets, but researchers in a few countries had to use alternative sampling methods.¹

We realize that the number third-level units is, with only 18 countries, relatively small, which can pose some problems to multilevel modeling. Although regression coefficients are most likely not affected by such small sample size, it can lead to biased estimates of higher-level standard errors (Hox, 2002; Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998). A simulation study of Maas and Hox (2005), however, showed that even with a sample of ten higher-level units, the estimates of the regression coefficients are sufficiently accurate. To reduce at least some of the potentially negative consequences of small sample sizes at the country level, we followed a recommendation of Snijders und Bosker (1999) and used restricted maximum likelihood estimation throughout.

Measures used in this study were based on those developed by Forsyth (1980); however, they were adapted for the purposes of this study and to work more effectively across the countries included in the project. The six measures of ethical ideologies used Likert-type scales that asked respondents, from a range of strongly agree to strongly disagree, on three questions related to relativism and three related to idealism, where strongly agree indicates high relativism or high idealism. The three statements assessing relativism include:

- What is ethical in journalism varies from one situation to another.
- Ethical dilemmas in news coverage are often so complex that journalists should be allowed to formulate their own individual codes of conduct.
- There are ethical principles which are so important that they should be followed by all journalists, regardless of situation and context. (signifies low relativism)

And the three statements assessing idealism are:

- Journalists should avoid questionable methods of reporting in any case, even if this means not getting the story.
- Reporting and publishing a story that can potentially harm others is always wrong, irrespective of the benefits to be gained.
- There are situations in which harm is justifiable if it results in a story that produces a greater good. (indicates low idealism)

Journalists also were asked about their educational backgrounds, experience in internships or apprenticeships, professional experience (in terms of years of employment), as well as perceived levels of editorial autonomy, and levels of economic and professional influences. Although for editorial autonomy we used a single variable, the measures of economic and professional influences consisted of multiple indicators. Economic influences included the perceived influence of advertising considerations, advertisers, profit expectations, as well as market and audience research (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$). Professional influences were indicated by the influence of professional conventions, newsroom conventions and media laws ($\alpha = .679$). In a previous study we were able to demonstrate that for the two dimensions of influence, the indicators loaded consistently across countries (Hanitzsch et al., 2010a).²

The questions asked in the survey were included as part of the larger comparative "Worlds of Journalism" study. The research tools were collaboratively developed to guarantee a maximum degree of intercultural consistency and validity. A fully standardized master questionnaire was first developed in English and then translated into the relevant languages. We used relatively simple wording to reduce potential translation problems. Because language is not devoid of culture, translation usually involved several people in each country to achieve a best possible approximation to the original master questionnaire. In some countries, a translation-backtranslation procedure was used, whereas other teams employed a committee approach involving several bilingual experts.

At the organizational level, data were recorded on the number of competing media outlets, the presence of codified editorial rules and dominant type of ownership. Finally, at the societal level we used country scores on press freedom as published annually by Freedom House³ and the World Bank's data on each country's gross domestic product (GDP) at purchasing power parity (PPP) per capita.⁴ In addition, we compiled information about the percentages of journalists who hold a college degree and those who majored in journalism or a related field.

Results

Cross-National Variation

An examination of the ethical-orientation data across the 18 countries in the study reveals some mixed findings (see Table 1). On the three relativism measures—the rejection of universal ethical principles, the embrace of a situational view of ethics, and the belief that complex dilemmas require journalists to rely on their own ethical standards—China, Indonesia, and Uganda were the three countries that were either well above or above the average for all of the countries on the measures. The statement that ethical behavior varies from one situation to another was supported by a majority of journalists in China, Russia, Indonesia, and Uganda.

Indonesian journalists were the most likely to support the notion that journalists should be allowed to develop their own codes of conduct, followed by their colleagues in Turkey. What these countries have in common is that they are rated on the Freedom House scale for freedom of the press as being either partly free (Indonesia, Turkey, and Uganda) or not free (China).

Table 1. Ethical Ideologies by Country (Percentage of Journalists Saying “Strongly Agree” and “Somewhat Agree”)

	N	Australia	Austria	Brazil	Bulgaria	Chile	China	Egypt	Germany	Indonesia	Israel	Mexico	Romania	Russia	Spain	Switzerland	Turkey	Uganda	USA
Ethical principles should be followed by all journalists, regardless of situation	1,784	69.7	93.0	97.0	82.3	78.0	92.8	89.0	93.0	88.9	81.6	90.0	82.8	70.0	89.0	96.0	94.9	95.0	91.8
Journalists should avoid questionable methods of reporting in any case	1,758	62.6	88.7	75.8	42.3	61.2	64.2	60.0	77.0	69.7	45.3	70.0	59.2	35.7	77.1	76.5	70.2	62.0	82.1
Harm is sometimes justifiable if the story produces a greater good	1,734	56.0	68.0	55.6	32.7	54.1	20.0	62.9	72.0	76.8	65.6	41.4	57.0	39.4	47.9	80.2	69.3	75.0	60.0
What is ethical in journalism varies from one situation to another	1,759	50.0	40.4	27.0	50.0	50.0	71.1	39.4	26.0	62.6	47.9	47.0	44.2	68.7	49.5	42.9	17.0	51.5	28.6
Journalists should be allowed to formulate individual codes of conduct	1,755	19.2	31.3	20.2	62.5	58.0	35.8	47.4	13.5	70.4	27.6	29.0	31.6	32.0	30.2	21.2	68.4	42.4	12.0
Reporting and publishing a story that can potentially harm others is always wrong	1,750	16.3	19.4	24.2	37.9	51.5	45.7	64.6	12.2	25.3	20.8	32.3	34.0	42.9	26.0	15.5	17.6	39.0	14.3

On the low end of those two relativism measures is the United States, where journalists agreed with the statement on situational ethics only 28.6% of the time and with the idea that journalists should form their own ethics codes only 12% of the time. German journalists also had low agreement rates on situational and personal ethics. Both of those nations are rated as having free press systems.

On the measure for relativism that says that there are ethical principles that are so important that they should be followed regardless of context, the results are more highly mixed, and the overall agreement with the statement is high. Across all countries, 87.5% of journalists endorsed the statement on ethical principles, whereas overall support for situational ethics was only 45.2% and for journalists developing their own ethics codes was 34.6%. At the level of the individual nations, then, there is not a lot of variance in the responses. The countries that are highest on the measure include partly free countries such as Brazil, Turkey, and Uganda, as well as free countries such as Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. The countries that are below average on the measure include free countries such as Australia and Chile; partly free countries, including Bulgaria and Romania; and Russia, a non-free country.

The same pattern of mixed results shows up in the three idealism measures. Journalists in Germany, Switzerland and the United States—all countries with free press systems—generally report stronger agreement with the statement that journalists should avoid questionable methods of reporting, yet tend not to embrace the statement that reporting a story that could harm others is always wrong. On the first measure, the country agreement average is 65.5%, but the agreement rates for Germany, Switzerland, and the United States were much higher. That statement also was rated highly by journalists in Austria and Spain, two other countries with free press systems.

On the second measure—that reporting a story that could cause harm is always wrong—journalists in Germany, Switzerland and the United States recorded the lowest levels of agreement, followed closely by Australia and Turkey. All of those levels of agreement were well below the average range of 30% on the measure. The countries with high agreement on the measure included Chile, a free press country, Egypt, a non-free country, and Romania, a partly free country.

Low idealism was indicated by the journalists' support of the idea that there are situations in which harm is justifiable if it results in a story that produces a greater good. A majority of journalists in most of the countries agreed to this statement. Journalists in Germany and Switzerland, as well as their colleagues in Indonesia and Uganda, were most affirmative of this practice. News people in China, Bulgaria, and Russia, on the other however, were least likely to accept potential harmful consequences of certain ethical decisions.

Influences on Ethical Orientations

To test our hypotheses, we estimated three-level random intercept regression models for each of the six dependent variables. Random-intercept models factor in two essential

properties of our sample and hypothesized associations: First, they recognize the nested structure of our sample, with journalists being nested within newsrooms, and newsrooms being nested within societies. Second, they take into account the fact that hypothesized predictors are situated at three different levels of analysis, including the individual, organizational and societal level. Technically, a major difference between a three-level random-intercept model and the traditional ordinary least squares (OLS) regression technique is that intercepts are allowed to vary across organizations (second level) and societies (third level) (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Hox, 2002).

In a first step we estimated empty or “null” models for each dependent variable. These models did not carry any predictor but provided useful information to answer Hypothesis 1, which predicted the journalists’ ethical orientations to significantly vary across news organizations and across societies. The hypothesis was largely supported. The variance components for the organizational and societal levels were all significant at $p < .001$ with two exceptions: The variance component at the organizational level was significant at $p < .05$ for the statement, “Journalists should be allowed to formulate individual codes of conduct,” and slightly missed the significance threshold for the item, “Ethical principles should be followed by all journalists, regardless of situation” ($p = .063$). This means that the journalists’ ethical orientations do indeed vary across news organizations and societies.

Based on the information provided for the variance component, we calculated the intra-class correlation coefficients (ICC) that denominate the variance in the dependent variable that is “accounted for” by each level of analysis. Table 2 indicates that percentage of variance that is due to the organizational level ranges between 2.2 and 7.5%. The country level, however, makes a stronger contribution to the variance: between 8.0 and 18.5%. This confirms our hypothesis and constitutes a substantial contribution in the context of multilevel regression. This means that in the journalists’ perceptions of professional ethics, country-level differences matter more than organizational differences.

To test the remaining hypotheses and identify the key factors that explain the variation in journalists’ ethical orientations, we estimated a second set of random-intercept models that included all hypothesized predictors. According to the results, Hypothesis 2a was partially supported. Table 3 shows that high relativism was indeed positively associated with time devoted to information gathering, autonomy, and economic influences, and was negatively related to professional influences and journalistic experience. The third statement, indicating low relativism, was negatively related to professional influences and positively associated with professional experience. Professional education and membership in journalist unions did obviously not produce any significant association in the model.

Table 4 shows that Hypothesis 2b met with little support. High idealism was indeed positively associated with education and professional experience, and low idealism was negatively related to professional influences. However, other predictors in the model either

Table 2. Decomposition of Variance Across Levels (Intraclass Correlation Coefficients, ICC)

	<i>Level of organizations</i>		<i>Level of media systems</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>ICC</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>ICC</i>
Ethical principles should be followed by all journalists, regardless of situation	319	.022	18	.103
Journalists should be allowed to formulate individual codes of conduct	319	.062	18	.185
What is ethical in journalism varies from one situation to another	319	.074	18	.101
Journalists should avoid questionable methods of reporting in any case	319	.029	18	.080
Reporting and publishing a story that can potentially harm others is always wrong	319	.065	18	.126
Harm is sometimes justifiable if the story produces a greater good	319	.049	18	.112

failed to have a significant effect, or the effect was significant but contradicted our hypothesis. This was the case for autonomy and economic influences.

On the organizational level, Hypothesis 3a assumed that journalists' degrees of relativism were positively associated with market competition and private ownership but negatively related to the existence of codified editorial rules. This hypothesis was not supported, as none of the assumed associations turned out to be significant (see Table 3). Similarly, Hypothesis 3b—stating that idealism is positively related to the existence of codified editorial rules but negatively related to market competition and private ownership—was also not supported (see Table 4). Only the statement “Journalists should avoid questionable methods of reporting in any case” was significantly related to the existence of codified editorial rules.

On the level of media systems, Hypothesis 4a, which predicted relativism to be negatively associated with press freedom, professionalism and economic development, was partly supported. Press freedom and professionalism (i.e., the proportion of journalists who majored in journalism) was indeed negatively related to high relativism (see Table 3). For economic development, however, the model came up with mixed evidence: Although the negative sign of the beta coefficient of economic development indeed supported the hypothesized relationship for the statement, “Journalists should be allowed to formulate individual codes of conduct,” it was positive—though only significant at $p < .01$ —for the item, “What is ethical in journalism varies from one situation to another.” Both statements, however, were supposed to be indicative of high relativism.

Still on the level of media systems, Hypothesis 4b—assuming that idealism levels were positively related to press freedom, professionalism and economic development—received very limited support (see Table 4). Our analysis indicated significant relationships only

Table 3. Multilevel Regression for Relativism Indicators, Standardized Beta Coefficients

	Journalists should be allowed to formulate individual codes of conduct	What is ethical in journalism varies from one situation to another	Ethical principles should be followed by all journalists, regardless of situation
Intercept	2.738	3.164***	4.273***
Journalists: R ²	0.145	0.100	0.044
Information gathering	0.051*	-0.005	-0.024
Autonomy	0.103***	0.018	0.027
Economic influences	0.076**	0.140***	-0.034
Professional influences	-0.022	-0.064*	0.107***
Journalism apprenticeship/ internship	-0.026	-0.045 ^a	0.009
Majored in journalism or related field	0.024	0.031	0.009
Professional experience	-0.015	-0.109***	.086**
Member of professional organization	0.039	0.026	0.007
Graduated from college	-0.015	-0.032	-0.003
Organizations: R ²	0.512	0.345	0.183
Competing media outlets	-0.028	0.011	-0.001
Codified editorial rules	-0.032	-0.010	0.042
Private ownership	0.050 ^a	0.002	-0.011
Media systems: R ²	0.666	0.442	0.201
Press freedom	-0.040	-0.277*	0.029
Journalists with college degrees	0.116	0.118	-0.093
Journalists who majored in journalism	-0.220*	-0.077	0.041
Economic development (GDP)	-0.331*	0.235 ^a	-0.048
Variance components			
Journalists (σ ²)	1.322	1.578	0.668
Organizations (τ ²)	0.099***	0.109***	0.015 ^a
Media systems (φ ²)	0.111***	0.110***	0.064***

Note: GDP = gross domestic product.

^ap < .10.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

between professionalism and the statement, “Reporting and publishing a story that can potentially harm others is always wrong.” These relationships, however, contradicted each other: Whereas the proportion of journalists who hold college degrees in a given country was indeed positively associated with this aspect of high idealism, the relationship was negative for the percentage of journalists who majored in journalism.

Table 4. Multilevel Regression for Idealism Indicators, Standardized Beta Coefficients

	Journalists should avoid questionable methods of reporting in any case	Reporting and publishing a story that can potentially harm others is always wrong	Harm is sometimes justifiable if the story produces a greater good
Intercept	2.518***	1.931**	4.514***
Journalists: R^2	0.055	0.111	0.071
Information gathering	0.014	0.016	0.018
Autonomy	0.068**	0.041	0.029
Economic influences	-0.021	0.108***	0.001
Professional influences	0.050 ^a	0.0	-0.058*
Journalism apprenticeship/internship	-0.021	-0.001	0.001
Majored in journalism or related field	-0.032	0.019	-0.031
Professional experience	0.077**	0.006	-0.039
Member of professional organization	0.011	0.022	0.035
Graduated from college	0.072**	0.018	0.008
Organizations: R^2	0.335	0.514	0.383
Competing media outlets	-0.031	0.007	-0.058*
Codified editorial rules	0.069*	-0.065*	0.035
Private ownership	-0.010	-0.005	0.047
Media systems: R^2	0.373	0.767	0.526
Press freedom	0.104	-0.072	0.124
Journalists with college degrees	0.0	0.220**	-0.155 ^a
Journalists who majored in journalism	0.028	-0.237**	-0.040
Economic development (GDP)	0.024	-0.159 ^a	-0.080
Variance components			
Journalists (σ^2)	1.203	1.435	1.267
Organizations (τ^2)	0.027 ^a	0.108***	0.067***
Media systems (ψ^2)	0.069***	0.052***	0.081***

Note: GDP = gross domestic product.

^a $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

Our results indicate that patterns of journalists' ethical outlooks are indeed related to the larger structural system in which they operate. Ideological, cultural and societal factors outlined in hierarchy-of-influence theories are critical, and sometimes, dominant, influences on the way journalists around the globe approach ethical dilemmas. Recent journalism

studies initiatives around the globe appear to suggest a growing consensus around claims that theories of cognitive processing, professional socialization, and cultural ideology point toward elements of universalism in journalistic behavior. In their study of U.S. and Chinese journalists, Zhong and Newhagen (2009) used a cognition-based model of news production to suggest a trend toward “ever-increasing globalization of journalistic standards” (p. 603). Deuze (2004) has argued we can identify a professional ideology among journalists that “presumes the corresponding ideas and values are carried” across cultural boundaries, and “thus suggests a certain kind of similarity or even universality in the characteristics of media practitioners” (p. 278). A similar evolution is taking place in the explication of media ethics principles. Elliott (1988, 2009) argued for the existence of normative journalistic values that “are sustained across culture.” Hamelink (2000) calls for media systems to rely on a framework of international human rights to support normative professional standards. Ward (2005, 2010b) also builds a global journalism ethics, relying on a modified contractualism. Christians (2008a, 2008b) argues that veneration of human life is the touchstone of a universal ethic for media practice. Rao and Wasserman (2007), cautioning against the cross-cultural imposition of Enlightenment media ethics norms, urges “a more pluralistic search for global ethics” in which “truth-telling, no harm to the innocent, empowerment and human dignity, among others, need to be examined and, if necessary, reinterpreted depending on the context and culture to which they are being applied” (pp. 46, 47). All of these and others strive to ensure that cultural diversity is not subsumed by a metaphysics, yet it remains uncertain how in practice that threat is to be nullified. Journalism ethicist Stephen Ward neatly outlines this tension:

Global journalism ethics will have to amount to more than a dreamy spiritualism about the brotherhood of man and universal benevolence. Conceptually, there is work to be done. Global journalism ethics must show, in detail, how its ideas imply changes to norms and practices. What exactly do journalists “owe” citizens in a distant land? How can global journalists integrate their partial and impartial perspectives? How can journalists support global values while remaining impartial communicators? (2010a).

Although the results of this study do not necessarily refute this evolutionary theoretical consensus, the “snapshot” of journalistic thinking and influences here does reinforce the need for caution in asserting grand universalizing ethics-based claims.

In detailing their hierarchy of influences on news media content, Shoemaker and Reese argued that ideological assumptions involving government and economic structures (e.g., democratic action and free-market capitalism) as well as other expressions of sociocultural power “subsume” organizational- and individual-level influences on news content:

The ideological level differs from the previous levels in that all the processes taking place at lower levels are considered to be working toward an ideologically related pattern of messages and on behalf of the higher centers of power in society. . . . [R]outines, values and organizational structure combine to maintain a system of control and reproduction of the dominant ideology (1996, pp. 223, 224).

Although the design of this cross-national study was aimed at enabling valid multidimensional comparative analyses of journalists, its matched-quota sample is not necessarily representative. Thus, the lack of potential for generalizability is an important limitation. Also, cultural imperatives that required alteration of the original Forsyth idealism and relativism measurement items curtailed our ability to harness their full explanatory power. However, the findings of this study appear to reaffirm the hierarchical theories of influences on news by Shoemaker and Reese, Donsbach (2000), McQuail (2000) and others in terms of explaining general ethical orientations of journalists: country-level, ideologically based factors such as degree of press freedom, economic development and professionalization appear to have some influence on journalists' degrees of relativistic and idealistic thinking. The high media freedom and professionalization measures of countries appear to explain a significant amount of journalists' embrace of relativistic thinking. Professionalization, as well as the existence of codified editorial rules, also appears to be a determining factor in the adherence of idealistic thinking of journalists. In light of the widespread emphasis on identifying and universalizing journalistic norms in contemporary media ethics literature, results of this study provides a valuable illustration of the global gaps and similarities in journalistic thinking. Findings here also correspond with those of Berkowitz and Limor (2003) who examined influences on journalists' decision-making: "Rather than a universal normative perspective, we found differences related to the socializing experiences a reporter encounters during the course of a journalism career" (p. 799). Not only must media ethics theorists be concerned about the possible Eurocentric, Christian, and even imperialistic assumptions implicit in recent invocations of a universalist media ethic, but we must acknowledge that journalistic norms are rooted in deeply invested social value systems that serve a variety of needs. "It is important to interrogate the logic of universality and explore alternatives to it," Alleyne suggests (2009). The present normative ethics theorizing to establish universal norms of journalism practice is of enormous value both to construct a more powerful notion of moral agency among journalists and as a way to counter ethically questionable relativistic assumptions in news media (p. 386). However, the theorizing must adequately account for the increasing amount of data suggesting the persistent, pluralistic nature of culturally and ideologically bound ethical orientations. The findings of this study suggest that although plenty of agreement exists among journalists regarding what constitutes pressing concerns of professionalism, diverse cultural and ideological contexts, not universally internalized values, often drive journalists' ethical orientations. Results, then, echo those who have voiced concern and caution about the viability and legitimacy of the imposition of Enlightenment assumptions as universal norms for news media.

Appendix

For each of the dependent variable we estimated two three-level-models using the specialized software package HLM6: The empty (or "null") model served the purpose of establishing whether there was enough variance across news organizations and countries to warrant further multilevel analysis. The formal structure of the model was as follows:

$$Y_{ijk} = \gamma_{000} + r_{jk} + u_k + e_{ijk}$$

In this model, Y_{ijk} denotes the outcome for journalist i of newsroom j in country k when γ_{000} is the average across all respondents in all news organizations and countries and the remaining three estimates designate this journalist's deviation from the average across all respondents in newsroom j in country k (e_{ijk}), the newsrooms deviation from their mean in country k (r_{jk}), and the country's deviation from the average across all countries (u_k). Variance components for journalists (σ^2), news organizations (τ^2) and media systems (φ^2) were calculated on the basis of these summed deviations.

Then a second model was estimated that included all hypothesized predictors. All predictors were modeled as fixed effects, whereas intercepts were allowed to vary (random-intercept model). This second model had the following formal structure:

$$Y_{ijk} = \gamma_{000} + \gamma_{001} (\text{PRSSFREE}_k) + \gamma_{002} (\text{PRF_COLL}_k) + \gamma_{003} (\text{PRF_JOUR}_k) + \gamma_{004} (\text{GDP}_k) + \gamma_{010} (\text{COMPETE}_{jk}) + \gamma_{020} (\text{ED_RULES}_{jk}) + \gamma_{030} (\text{OWN_PRVT}_{jk}) + \gamma_{100} (\text{INVEST}_{ijk}) + \gamma_{200} (\text{AUTONOMY}_{ijk}) + \gamma_{300} (\text{INFL_ECO}_{ijk}) + \gamma_{400} (\text{INFL_PRF}_{ijk}) + \gamma_{500} (\text{INTRNSHP}_{ijk}) + \gamma_{600} (\text{J_STUDY}_{ijk}) + \gamma_{700} (\text{EXPERNCE}_{ijk}) + \gamma_{800} (\text{J_UNION}_{ijk}) + \gamma_{900} (\text{COLLEGE}_{ijk}) + r_{jk} + u_k + e_{ijk}$$

This model contains following predictors at the media system level: Press freedom (γ_{001}), the percentage of journalists with college degrees (γ_{002}), the percentage of journalists who majored in journalism (γ_{003}), and economic development (γ_{004}). At the organizational level, predictors were competing media outlets (γ_{010}), the existence of codified editorial rules (γ_{020}), and private ownership (γ_{030}). Finally, additional independent variables were factored in at the individual level: information gathering (γ_{100}), autonomy (γ_{200}), economic influences (γ_{300}), professional influences (γ_{400}), journalism apprenticeship/internship (γ_{500}), majored in journalism or related field (γ_{600}), professional experience (γ_{700}), member of professional organization (γ_{800}), and graduated from college (γ_{900}).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Austria had no significant local television station, so researchers there increased the number of national channels. In Egypt, researchers increased the number of national newspapers and state-owned radio channels to offset the absence of local newspapers and privately owned radio stations. In Uganda, the number of local radio stations was increased to compensate for the lack of local television stations.

2. Evidence for cross-national invariance of these two measures is based on a comparison of factor structures. Congruence coefficients for the entire factor solution (including six dimensions) were within acceptable limits.
3. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=16>
4. <http://data.worldbank.org/>

References

- Alleyne, M. D. (2009). Global media ecology: Why there is no global ethics standard. In L. Wilkins & C. G. Christians (Eds.), *The handbook of mass media ethics* (pp. 382-393). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Audi, R. (1997). *Moral knowledge and ethical character*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Beam, R. (1990). Journalistic professionalism as an organizational-level concept. *Journalism and Mass Communication Monographs*, 121, 1-43.
- Beam, R. A., Weaver, D. H., & Brownlee, B. J. (2009). Changes in professionalism of U.S. journalists in the turbulent twenty-first century. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 86, 277-298.
- Berkowitz, D., & Limor, Y. (2003). Professional confidence and situational ethics: Assessing the social professional dialectic in journalistic ethics discussions. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 80, 783-801.
- Berkowitz, D., Limor, Y., & Singer, J. (2004). A cross-cultural look at serving the public interest: American and Israeli journalists consider ethical scenarios. *Journalism*, 5, 159-181.
- Bryk, A. S., & Raudenbush, S. W. (1992). *Hierarchical linear models for social and behavioural research: Applications and data analysis methods*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.
- Catlin, D. W., & Maupin, J. R. (2002). Ethical orientations of state police recruits and one-year experienced officers. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 30, 491-498.
- Christians, C. G. (2008a). The ethics of universal being. In S. J. A. Ward & H. Wasserman (Eds.), *Media ethics beyond borders: A global perspective* (pp. 6-23). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Christians, C. G. (2008b). Universals and the human. In K. G. Roberts & R. C. Arnett (Eds.), *Communication ethics: Between cosmopolitanism and provinciality* (pp. 5-21). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Deuze, M. (2004). Journalism studies beyond media: On ideology and identity. *Ecquid Novi*, 25(2), 275-293.
- Donohue, G. A., Olien, C. N., & Tichenor, P. J. (1985). Reporting conflict by pluralism, newspaper type and ownership. *Journalism Quarterly*, 62, 489-507.
- Donsbach, W. (2000). Journalist. In E. Noelle-Neuman, W. Schulz, & J. Wilke (Eds.), *Fischer lexikon publizistik massenkommunikation* (pp. 65-91). Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Elliott, D. (1988). All is not relative: Essential shared values and the press. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 3(1), 28-32.
- Elliott, D. (2009). Essential shared values and 21st century journalism. In L. Wilkins & C. G. Christians (Eds.), *The handbook of mass media ethics* (pp. 28-39). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Flegel, R., & Chaffee, S. H. (1971). Influences of editors, readers, and personal influences on reporters. *Journalism Quarterly*, 48, 645-651.
- Forsyth, D. R. (1980). A taxonomy of ethical ideologies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39, 175-184.

- Forsyth, D. R. (1981). Moral judgment: The influence of ethical ideology. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 7, 218-223.
- Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Hamelink, C. (2000). *The ethics of cyberspace*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Hanitzsch, T. (2005). Journalists in Indonesia: Educated but timid watchdogs. *Journalism Studies*, 6, 493-508.
- Hanitzsch, T., Anikina, M., Berganza, R., Cangoz, I., Coman, M., Hamada, B., . . . Yuen, K. W. (2010a). Modeling perceived influences on journalism: Evidence from a cross-national survey of journalists. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 87, 5-22.
- Hanitzsch, T., Hanusch, F., Mellado, C., Anikina, M., Berganza, R., Cangoz, I., . . . Yuen, K. W. (2010b). Mapping journalism cultures across nations: A comparative study of 18 countries. *Journalism Studies*, 12, 273-293.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Hox, J. (2002). *Multilevel analysis: Techniques and applications*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hwang, Y., & Southwell, B. G. (2009). Science TV news exposure predicts science beliefs: Real world effects among a national sample. *Communication Research*, 36, 724-742.
- Kepplinger, H. M., Brosius, H. B., & Staab, J. F. (1991). Instrumental actualization: A theory of mediated conflicts. *European Journal of Communication*, 6, 263-290.
- Kish-Gephart, J. J., Harrison, D. A., Treviño, L. K. (2010). Bad apples, bad cases and bad barrels: Meta analytic evidence about sources of unethical decisions at work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95, 1-31.
- Kohlberg, L. (1984). *The psychology of moral development: the nature and validity of moral stages*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.
- Kreft, I., & de Leeuw, J. (1998). *Introducing multilevel modeling*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Maas, C. J. M., & Hox, J. J. (2005). Sufficient sample sizes for multilevel modeling. *Methodology*, 1(3), 86-92.
- McQuail, D. (2000). *McQuail's mass communication theory*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Moore, G. E. (1903). *Principia Ethica*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Park, H. S., Eveland, W. P., Jr., & Cudeck, R. (2008). Multilevel modeling: Studying people in contexts. In A. F. Hayes, M. D. Slater & L. B. Snyder (Eds.), *Advanced data analysis methods for communication research* (pp. 219-245). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Patterson, T. E., & Donsbach, W. (1996). News decisions: Journalists as partisan actors. *Political Communication*, 13, 455-468.
- Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2004). *How journalists see journalists in 2004: Views on profits, performance and politics*. Washington, DC: Pew.
- Plaisance, P. L. (2007). An assessment of media ethics education: Course content and the values and ethical ideologies of media ethics students. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, 61, 378-396.
- Preston, P., & Metykova, M. (2009). From news to house rules: Organisational contexts. In P. Preston (Ed.), *Making the news: Journalism and news cultures in Europe*. London, UK: Routledge.

- Rao, S., & Wasserman, E. (2007). Global media ethics revisited: A postcolonial critique. *Global media and Communication*, 3, 29-50.
- Rest, J. R. (1986). *Moral development: Advances in research and theory*. New York, NY: Praeger.
- Robertson, C. J., Gilley, K. M., & Street, M. D. (2003). The relationship between ethics and firm practices in Russia and the United States. *Journal of World Business*, 38, 375-384.
- Ross, W. D. (1930). *The right and the good*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon.
- Scholl, A., & Weischenberg, S. (1998). *Journalismus in der Gesellschaft: Theorie, Methodologie und Empirie*. Opladen, Germany: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (1996). *Mediating the message: Theories of influence on mass media content* (2nd ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Slater, M. D., Hayes, A. F., Reineke, J. B., Long, M., & Bettinghaus, E. P. (2009). Newspaper coverage of cancer prevention: Multilevel evidence for knowledge-gap effects. *Journal of Communication*, 59, 514-533.
- Snijders, T., & Boskers, R. (1999). *Multilevel analysis: An introduction to basic and advanced multilevel modeling*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Southwell, B. G. (2005). Between messages and people: A multilevel model of memory for television content. *Communication Research*, 32, 112-140.
- Voakes, P. S. (1997). Social influences on journalists' decision making in ethical situations. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 12, 18-35.
- Ward, S. J. A. (2005). Philosophical foundations for global journalism ethics. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 20, 3-21.
- Ward, S. J. A. (2010a). *Global journalism ethics*. Montreal, Quebec, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Ward, S. J. A. (2010b). Journalism ethics for the global citizen. Retrieved from http://www.journalismethics.ca/global_journalism_ethics/index.htm
- Weaver, D. (1998). Journalist around the world: Commonalities and differences. In D. H. Weaver (Ed.), *The global journalist: News people around the world* (pp. 455-480). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.
- Weaver, D. H., Beam, R. A., Brownlee, B. J., Voakes, P. S., & Wilhoit, G. C. (2007). *The American journalist in the 21st century: U.S. news people at the dawn of a new millennium*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Weaver, D. H., & Wilhoit, G. C. (1986). *The American journalist*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Wilkins, L., & Coleman, R. (2005). *The moral media: How journalists reason about ethics*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Zhong, B., & Newhagen, J. E. (2009). How journalists think while they write: A transcultural model of news decision making. *Journal of Communication* 59, 587-608.
- Zhu, J.-H., Weaver, D., Lo, V., Chen, C., & 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 & Mass Communication Quarterly* 74, 84-96.

Bios

Patrick Lee Plaisance received his PhD. in mass communication from Syracuse University. He is an associate professor in the Department of Journalism and Technical Communication at Colorado State University and is author of *Media Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible*

Practice (SAGE, 2009). His research focuses on the philosophy of journalism, normative ethics theory, and moral psychology in media.

Elizabeth A. Skewes received her PhD. in mass communication from Syracuse University. She is an associate professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Colorado and is author of *Message Control: How News is Made on the Presidential Campaign Trail* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007). Her research focuses on political communication, media sociology and the transmission of political messaging.

Thomas Hanitzsch received his PhD. in applied media studies from Ilmenau University of Technology, Germany. He is professor of communication at the University of Munich's Institute of Communication Studies and Media Research, and is coeditor of the *Handbook of Journalism Studies* (Routledge, 2009). His research focuses on comparative analyses of journalism cultures and the effects of national variables on the production and consumption of news.