
Janet M. Harkin, Deakin University, Associate Lecturer Journalism, Faculty of Arts and Education.

Journalism academics Levi Obijiofor and Folker Hanusch set out in this book to examine ‘theoretical and practical issues that underpin journalism across cultures’ (p.1). Issues include models of journalism, the news agenda within a global context, the impact of media commercialisation and new technology on journalistic practices, models of journalism education and training, and gender issues influencing the sourcing and production of news. Obijiofor and Hanusch set out to redress the preponderance of research on US and western European journalism by ‘going beyond Western media models to explore other global perspectives’ (p.13), including research focused on the Asia/Pacific region, the Middle East and Africa.

The book provides a thematic overview of scholarship, outlining significant theories and research paradigms and highlighting major debates and areas for further research. As such it is a valuable tool for those embarking on research projects, particularly in comparative journalism, forming a substantial starting point for any literature review. For example, the first chapter – entitled ‘Evolving press theories and media models’ – gives an overview of seminal work *The Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert et al., 1956) and follows this with critiques of the text and modifications of the theory, such as those put forward by Altschull (1995), and more recent media models proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004). The chapter also outlines research and analysis of media systems in parts of Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and China, and concludes that ‘media systems across the world are more heterogeneous than they are homogeneous’ (p.36).
The scope of the text is ambitious but as its title suggests it is ‘an introduction’ to comparative journalism studies, rather than a comprehensive analysis of media systems worldwide. Questions at the end of each chapter encourage comparative analysis of journalism in the readers’ own country, an approach further enhanced by the authors’ highlighting of gaps in current scholarship, such as the need for further research on the way foreign news is covered online, to increase knowledge of the influences affecting balance and diversity of news (p.129).

The strengths of the book are its comprehensive bibliography, which includes articles from the major academic journals as well as books from significant scholars; its outline of research approaches, such as the coding categories used in Lee and Maslog’s research on peace/war journalism (p.145-6), and the categorisation of influences on journalists used by Hanitzsch et al. (p.41-2); summation of the major strands in discussions of journalism education and training (p.67); and explanations of concepts such as the ‘CNN effect’, framing theory and the Habermasian public sphere.

One omission from the section on journalism practice is French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s discourse *On Television*, although a 1998 translation of his lectures is included in the bibliography. Bourdieu’s omission from in-depth discussion highlights Obijiofor and Hanusch’s greater emphasis on scholarly research.

As an overview of the main trends in research into the culture of journalism the text accomplishes what the authors set out to achieve. This is the sort of text that warrants an annual update.

[Review: 500 words (Microsoft wordcount) - plus publication information and reviewers details at top.]