

## Book Reviews

### **Global Journalism Research: Theories, Methods, Findings, Future**

Martin Löffelholz and David Weaver (Eds.)

Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2008. Pp. 304.

ISBN 978-1-4051-5332-4 (paperback)

Löffelholz and Weaver's book *Global Journalism Research: Theories, Methods, Findings, Future* is perhaps the first of its kind in journalism research to question the conservative approach practiced by a number of scholars in journalism research, which, they believe, should be carried out within their respective national paradigms. With the whole book revolving around this basic premise, the book is indeed a great effort on the part of the authors, who not only offer a comprehensive treatise of journalism research through an array of different approaches, methods, and paradigms followed around the globe but also successfully place the whole perspective in the context of an international situation. Divided into six parts, each part dedicated to a specific theme, the editors themselves contribute Part I: "Introduction to Journalism Research" and Part VI: "Conclusions." The remaining four parts are: Part II: "Theories of Journalism Research," Part III: "Methodology and Methods of Research," Part IV: "Selected Paradigms and Findings of Journalism Research," and Part V: "The Future of Journalism Research." On the whole the book consists of 22 invaluable contributions on journalism research.

In the introductory chapter, Löffelholz and Weaver set the tone for a call for global journalism research and a questioning of national, cultural, and disciplinary boundaries and they also logically articulate the reasons for such a call. While tracing the steps in journalism research to the early 1930s, the authors point out how early researchers such as Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Harold D. Lasswell, and Carl I. Hovland narrowly focused on media uses and effects on society without trying to know how society could have influenced journalism, journalists, and the news production process. Early research in journalism was mostly limited to studying the messages or content as given out in the media and was grounded mainly in descriptive and interpretive histories of journalism that examined the relationship between societal forces and journalistic institutions.

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With the exception of a few works like Leo Rosten's book *The Washington Correspondents* (1937), David Manning White's study on the "gatekeeper" (1950), and Warren Breed's study on social control in the newsroom (1955), not much research was conducted on journalists and the factors that influence their decisions in news production processes. In support of this, authors cite P. Shoemaker and S. Reese (1991, p. 5), who have argued 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 the content on people and society. We believe that it is equally important to understand the influences that shape content." Corresponding with these views, the authors argue that the attitudes of journalists do affect the kind of reporting they do, but more so at the organizational level than at the individual level. They also clearly put forward the mechanism by which organizational influences impact news content and coverage.

Tracing the early normative and individualistic descriptions of journalism, which even today continue in many countries around the globe, Löffelholz argues in chapter 2 that German sociologists Max Weber, Ferdinand Tönnies, and Robert E. Park should be considered predecessors of modern theoretical understandings of journalism, even though their influence on the development of journalism theories in other parts of the world has been quite limited. Narrating the sequence of events from normative individualistic journalism research to empiricism and middle-range theories of journalism research, Löffelholz credits Wilbur Schramm with first using the social sciences and empirical research to enhance journalism studies.

From this empirical analytical approach in journalism studies emerged the sociological theories of action developed by sociologists such as Weber, Alfred Schultz, and Thomas Luckmann. The journalism research based on these theories primarily focused on a typology of journalistic action forms, patterns, and rules. The distinction between journalists as persons and journalism as a social system raised a number of new questions, such as: Is journalism a functional system *within* society, as Manfred Rühl (1980) assumes, or does it operate as a subsystem within a larger functional system such as "public" or "mass media"? Such questions not only led to a refinement of the systems theoretical approach but also resulted in an opening up of new social integration theories such as Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchy of influences model.

While dwelling on the societal approaches theory or societal systems theories, Rühl effectively points out in chapter 3 some of the important missing points in globalized journalism research. His elaboration of Niklas Luhmann's communication system theory in relation to Parsonian world societal action system theory is quite impressive. The way Luhmann assumed that the complexity of the world society is reduced by the social system was central to describing journalism as a system rather than as a subsystem of media.

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In chapters 4 and 5, Hartley and Altmeyden offer deep insights into the working definitions of their domains of research that are not only refreshing but also thought provoking. Altmeyden offers an impressive array of methods using survey methods and questionnaires as tools of research. He proposes the triangulation method—in-depth interviews, case studies, and observations—as an effective measure of conducting qualitative and semi-quantitative analyses, which offer both reliability and validity to the organizational approach to journalism research.

While highlighting the missing links concerning the news decisions of journalists, Donsbach proposes in chapter 6 to take advantage of psychology, particularly of cognitive psychology. He hypothesizes that two general needs or “functions” involving specific psychological processes can explain news decisions: a need for social validation of perceptions and a need to preserve one’s existing predispositions. According to Donsbach, one is related to the social nature of journalists and the other relates to individual recognition, though both are intertwined. This has led to an extension of the “social comparison theory” of Leon Festinger (1954) to shared reality, in which C. D. Hardin and E. T. Higgins (1996) combine the theory of symbolic interaction with empirical evidence on the communication process. This assumes that even basic cognitive processes are defined by the social activities in which they are manifested. Another dimension to the decision-making process in media institutions is the gender and cultural approach. In chapter 7, Robinson analyzes some of the systemic biases inherent in the social reproduction of the journalistic profession in North America and Europe.

In chapter 8, Hanitzsch poses the question, “What is comparative research and how relevant is it for journalism research?” He offers the discourse and methods of research by which one can determine the compatibility of cultures on which one would like to pursue comparative research, and he also provides a short guide to systematic comparative research. Weaver deliberates in chapter 9 on the strengths and weaknesses of survey methods and offers numerous insights as to how to proceed with this particular approach. Kolmer in a discussion of the content analysis approach in chapter 10 and Quandt in an outline of the observation method in chapter 11 present some new and refreshing ideas on these much-debated subjects around the globe. Part IV (chapters 12–17) offers a range of case studies that address the current status of research in the United States, Germany, United Kingdom, China, South Africa, and Mexico. Although these articles do not make any major theoretical advances, the reviews of the status of research in a range of countries are themselves very informative.

To sum up, with its heterogeneous approach to global journalism research, Löffelholz and Weaver’s book discusses a range of issues starting from normative theories through to middle-range theories and on to the integrative systems approach. A range of subjects is discussed from diverse angles. The book is well

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grounded both in historiography and discursive analysis besides empiricism, which makes it quite unique and different from other books on research methodology. Most research methodology books are traditional in their presentation of content and follow a conventional approach to journalism research. They often do not offer a systematic and connecting story of evolutionary developments in the different phases of research in journalism. In addition to the lucid presentations of the editors themselves, the contributions from the other authors are highly impressive and offer a deep, systematic and scientific rationale for extending research in journalism beyond narrow and national paradigms. The book is therefore a must-read for every academic and media practitioner, as well as being a valuable addition to every media institution offering research and academic programs.

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## Writing Left: The Radical Journalism of Ruth First

Donald Pinnock

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Donald Pinnock has set out to tell the story of “a political tradition, its press and a single individual” (p. xiii)—the South African Left, the radical press, and Ruth First. The book is in the Hidden Histories Series published by Unisa Press under the editorship of Raymond Suttner, intended in part to research and record actions that of necessity were secret during the long years of government repression. This volume thus puts together the visible public journalism and political activities of First and her colleagues from the 1940s through the early 1960s, with their underground political activity and their determined attempts to counter government censorship of the press by any means possible. It brings together several histories that form the background and the context for First’s journalism and activism, from the emigration of leftist Jews from the Russian Pale to South Africa, to the origins of radical political journalism in Britain, to Communist Party and Comintern politics and changing analyses of South Africa, to the contentious struggles between the radical press and the apartheid state—refracting them all through the life, work, and ideas of Ruth First.

Pinnock wrote for radical newspapers in the 1980s in South Africa and has since written criminology studies and done science and travel writing. But he has been doing research about Ruth First since shortly after her assassination in Maputo by South African agents on August 17, 1982. Pinnock has published extracts from this work as *They Fought for Freedom: Ruth First* (1995) and a biographical introduction to a collection of her newspaper articles in *Voices of Liberation: Ruth First* (1997).

This work is far more ambitious. It includes a more detailed account of First’s life and of her work as a leader in the South African Communist Party (SACP), and particularly of interest for those concerned with media studies, an engaging narrative of the struggles—and sometimes exhilarating successes—of the radical press and her key role in it. He focuses on *The Guardian*, published from 1937 to 1963 (published under various names after repeated bannings, including *New Age* and then *Spark*), identified by many historians of the struggle as the central voice of the African National Congress (ANC), and *Fighting Talk*, started by the left-organized Springbok Legion in World War II, but turned into a monthly of the Congress movement, with First as editor, in 1953. Pinnock draws on extensive interviews with colleagues, friends, and family members; historical documents, and the publications themselves; and both scholarly accounts and memoirs of the period. He provides a clear narrative of the complex and overlapping political

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events in the 1950s and early 1960s, centering First's experiences and connections. And in so doing, he makes plain the complicated web of banning orders and house arrests that the apartheid state used to gradually make radical journalism impossible, and makes just as plain the clever uses that these indefatigable journalists made of South Africa's laws to keep publishing as long as they did.

Other historians and journalists have written about the radical press in South Africa. Zug's (2000) rich narrative makes a useful companion reading to Pinnock's book. But Pinnock has produced a unique take on radical journalism through his focus on First and his interlacing of her story with other histories that enrich our understanding of her life and work and of left journalism in South Africa.

He also is attempting to construct and convey a particular understanding of radical political journalism. He argues that First's investigative journalism, initially conceptualized by her as investigating the conditions of Africans' lives under apartheid, led her to a much deeper analysis of apartheid as a labor system. He credits her with being the first to put in print the SACP analysis of how apartheid functioned to support capitalism, as opposed to the South African white liberal view that apartheid would wither away under pressure from capitalist "modern" development. Thus Pinnock sees First's radical journalism interacting with her analysis as a Marxist and Communist activist, to the betterment of both.

Second, he connects this process to the central part that *The Guardian* and *Fighting Talk* played in maintaining links of information and analysis among activists, often otherwise not linked through nationwide political information networks, and not informed of oppositional news or perspectives by the mainstream press. Both publications let apartheid's opponents know what their comrades were doing. The silencing of their voices in 1963 was therefore an extremely significant part of the state's silencing of the movement in the decade after the Rivonia trials.

Third, Pinnock draws on contemporary sensibilities about how language constructs political actors' understandings of themselves to argue that First's journalism became itself a form of political action beyond the more obvious sense of revealing injustice and providing information to activists. He uses case studies of political issues and events covered by First to demonstrate this process, such as her coverage of the women's protests at the Union Buildings in Pretoria in 1956.

By comparing First's stories with those in the mainstream press, Pinnock shows how she constructed the women protesters as heroic, as women who had overcome the government's attempts to silence them and who would not be silenced in the future. By contrast, the mainstream story emphasized their "colourful dress" and their "patience" and said nothing about government attempts to prevent the demonstration. First's articles "mirrored" an image of stalwart, strong women bound into a collective, unstoppable force. Pinnock argues that this is *not* best understood as positive propaganda, but as a political act that enables other political actors to see themselves as effective and so to go on with the struggle with greater

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confidence in themselves. This suggests a fruitful way to understand what we are doing when we write about our own actions and those of others we support.

The book would have benefited greatly from better proofreading, and I found the placing of the many excellent photos puzzling, as often they do not match the chronology of the text. Perhaps this can be corrected in a future edition.

Pinnock wrote this book with a passion that does not seem to have diminished over the decades in which he worked on it. He wrote the first words in July 1986, “on the run,” with “many friends and comrades” in prison, “out of a deep respect for a heroic woman, a fine journalist and a fighter for truth and justice in this tortured land. *Hamba kakuluhle!* Your struggle will not go unrecorded” (p. xv). It has not.

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## Press, Politics and Public Policy in Uganda: The Role of Journalism in Democratization

Jim Ocitti

Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press. 2005. Pp. 139.  
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The most important contribution of Jim Ocitti’s book *Press, Politics and Public Policy in Uganda* is its punctual documentation of media events. This is not a small feat, given the lack of literature in this area. Ocitti offers readers a comprehensive chronological account of how the media have evolved and of the often tense relationship with those in power. He draws on a variety of secondary sources including newspaper articles across the decades of the history of the press. In many respects this book is a refreshing change from many studies of the media in Africa that tend to overlook the complex negotiations of political power. This book is a good start for someone interested in the media in Uganda,

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but readers who have some familiarity with Ugandan politics will find it the most engaging.

Ocitti's account could, however, benefit from stronger analysis and a focus on key issues or transitional periods. The media are full of colorful characters and, particularly, under the National Resistance Movement (NRM) have been engaged in a complex dance with power. This does not come out sufficiently in the book.

While Ocitti clearly has a rich experience working with the media in Uganda, it is unfortunate that he does not include any interviews with journalists or policy makers. He only draws on secondary sources that refer to arguments made by journalists such as Ben Bella Illukut, probably one of the country's most notable journalists cum storytellers, as well as the outspoken Charles Onyango-Obbo. These journalists have been instrumental in shaping the media in Uganda and this book is a missed opportunity to gather primary data on how such actors shaped and viewed the role of the media in Uganda's political evolution.

I would argue that perhaps the three significant moments for journalism in Uganda, and for examining the role it plays in public policy and democratization, can be gleaned from looking at specific publications during times of transition. Ocitti tends to focus on the period of rule—namely, the press under Idi Amin or under Obote. But looking at how the media blossomed or the character of the debates during the period of transition can be more instructive. For example, he glosses over the importance of *Transition* in the 1960s, *The Daily Topic* in the 1980s, and *The New Vision* in the late 1980s. These three newspapers, and their eventual evolution, tell a great deal about the environment that they were trying to operate in and shape.

In the beginning of chapter 5, "Political Rhetoric, Press and No-Party Politics 1986–1996," Ocitti rightly begins by pointing out that the press for years "unflinchingly supported the NRA and other opposition governments" (p. 91). The NRM had widespread support from the media, and even papers that soon took a critical stance, such as *The Monitor*, never questioned the fundamentals of the NRM's political agenda or how it came to power through force. This has been extremely important in the consolidation of political power. Onyango-Obbo is quoted as arguing in *The Sunday Monitor*, "The NRM needed the press to consolidate itself . . . in order to take care of its image as a more open and progressive government. . . . Since it had banned multi-party activities it did not want to look like a barefaced one party regime" (p. 93). And papers such as *The Sunday Monitor* willingly stepped in to provide this space for criticism (within bounds) and at the same time offered legitimacy for the government.

Ocitti's account focuses on how the government used legal instruments to control the media. But in the early days of NRM rule, Museveni was highly skillful in co-opting parts of the media and mediating with those that criticized the system. *The New Vision* was an important element in this and was in haste to turn to other,

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less significant papers during this period. Ocitti only dedicates a few paragraphs to what *The New Vision* is and why it is important. *The New Vision*, particularly in its early days, is extraordinary in many respects, not least of all because it is a government newspaper that is actually read. It has one of the highest, if not the highest, circulations in the country. And it has played a key role in setting the debate, engaging with more critical papers and also providing an accessible and popular forum for the government to argue its policies and political ideology.

A significant portion of the book deals with the legal environment. And scholars should look at the broader enabling environment of the media in Uganda. While this analysis is important, Ocitti overlooks the more subtle and particular aspects of Ugandan politics and culture that have shaped the media system. The book is a fascinating example, nonetheless, of the complex negotiation of single-party rule and media that in many respects, but certainly not all, have been among the more dynamic on the continent.

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### **Media Studies, Volume 1: Media History, Media and Society (2nd edition)**

Pieter J. Fourie (Ed.)

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### **Media Studies, Volume 2: Policy, Management and Media Representation (2nd edition)**

Pieter J. Fourie (Ed.)

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Pieter Fourie's *Media Studies, Volume 1* and *Media Studies, Volume 2* are the first two of a four-part textbook series geared to servicing undergraduate students in southern Africa.

*Media Studies, Volume 1* is divided into two parts. Part 1 deals with the history of the media in South Africa and the rest of the continent. South Africa's media

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history is adequately addressed. However, the chapter examining “The Media in Africa” is, in reality, a discussion of the media in Anglophone sub-Saharan Africa. In future editions of the book, this chapter should either be called “The Media in Anglophone Africa” or its contents expanded to also cover Francophone and Lusophone Africa. It would also be useful if future editions of the book could embed the discussion of African and South African media within a comparison of Africa’s media with media in other parts of the world.

Part 2 of *Volume 1* provides undergraduates with an overview of media and communication theories. Students are introduced to a wide range of theoretical approaches and the epistemology of these approaches. Within the spectrum of theories discussed, the following themes are specifically highlighted—functionalism, communication effects, cultural studies, globalization, ideology, and the public sphere. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the book, from the point of view of South African undergraduates, is that these theories, concepts, and themes are tied to South African case studies. This serves to demonstrate to students how such theories can be deployed to analyze and understand the South African context. Overall, *Media Studies, Volume 1* provides first-year media studies students with a coherent introductory textbook wherein they can encounter key theories, concepts, and issues that are useful for engaging with the South African media environment.

*Media Studies, Volume 2* is divided into three parts. Part 1 deals with media policy; Part 2 addresses media management; and Part 3 deals with media representations. Fourie, as editor, has pulled together an enormous array of knowledge in this book, which is written by 16 media studies specialists based at a range of universities in South Africa, the Netherlands, and Britain.

Part 1 of *Volume 2* provides students with a solid understanding of the emergence of media policy as a field; why media policy is required; how policy is made; and the reasons governments become involved in establishing media policy frameworks. The differences and similarities between American, European, and South African media policy frameworks are also sketched out. Perhaps more attention could have been paid to discussing why the gap between the American, European, and South African media policy frameworks has been narrowing as both European and South African policies become increasingly Americanized. Both the chapters dealing with “external media regulation” and “internal media regulation” build their discussions around South African themes, thereby successfully enlivening the content for the intended undergraduate audience. Perhaps the next edition of this book can include a chapter on ethics, which is, after all, one of the ways societies “regulate” their media content.

Part 2 of *Volume 2* provides a well-constructed outline of the key principles of how to manage a commercial media operation. This focus on “commercial” organization seems fair enough, given the way in which media organizations

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across the globe are increasingly being organized as commercial operations. However, perhaps students might at least have been made aware that there are other ways of organizing the media, such as through the public service model. In addition, Part 2 would have benefited from a chapter examining advertising, plus a chapter examining how commercialization impacts media content—as seen in the Hollywoodization of movies and television, and the way in which news is being turned into infotainment by the pressures of commercialization.

Part 1 (media policy) and Part 2 (media management) of *Volume 2* complement each other rather well. What would have added value to the book is a (brief) discussion, explicitly drawing together Parts 1 and 2, by way of explaining to students how media managers operate within a policy framework, and how policy makers deliberately set about devising ways to steer managements. In this way students could be made more explicitly aware of how managers and policy makers set the contexts within which media producers work.

Part 3 of *Volume 2* discusses a wide array of “representation” topics that cover the sorts of themes currently widely used in media studies around the world, that is, news as representation; media and construction of identity; media and race; gender and the media; media and sexual orientation; media and environment; media and HIV/AIDS; media and violence; plus media and terrorism. Perhaps in the next edition of the book this list of themes could be expanded to include some, or all, of the following: the construction of celebrity; representations of body image; and the professional manipulation of representation (in advertising and public relations). In addition, it might be useful to have a chapter looking at how the media promote certain conceptualizations of social order, while demonizing others. This could be achieved by examining media representations of modernity, development, traditionalism, social hierarchy, social elites, and egalitarianism. In a similar vein, another chapter might consider how the media’s understanding of what constitutes “acceptable” and “unacceptable” representations can produce a form of self-censorship. Discussing shifts in what representations have been deemed “acceptable” and “unacceptable” in South Africa, plus looking at shifts in what the South African media have “demonized” and “promoted,” could prove to be a valuable addition in an undergraduate text of this sort.

Overall, it has to be said that Part 3 does not fit comfortably with Parts 1 and 2 of *Volume 2*. Of course, the themes discussed in Parts 1 and 2 do impact media representations. However, in the existing *Volume 2*, these impacts are not made explicit. Furthermore, attempting to spell out how media policy and media management impact media representations would probably be too complex an undertaking for an undergraduate text of this nature. Instead, it might be better for the publisher to consider splitting *Volume 2* into two separate books in any future editions—one dealing with media policy and management and the other dealing with media representations. The advantage of this would be that each could

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then offer a coherent body of knowledge, plus it would offer space for the sort of additions proposed above. However, broadly, Fourie has pulled together an array of authors and perspectives that together provides undergraduate students with a useful body of knowledge.

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