MODELING PERCEIVED INFLUENCES ON JOURNALISM: EVIDENCE FROM A CROSS-NATIONAL SURVEY OF JOURNALISTS

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Surveying 1,700 journalists from seventeen countries, this study investigates perceived influences on news work. Analysis reveals a dimensional structure of six distinct domains—political, economic, organizational, professional, and procedural influences, as well as reference groups. Across countries, these six dimensions build up a hierarchical structure where organizational, professional, and procedural influences are perceived as more powerful limits to journalists' work than political and economic influences.

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Societies increasingly depend on means of public communication; hence, the importance of journalism as a social institution can hardly be denied. If journalism plays such a pivotal role in modern society, studying the social forces that shape its practice is all the more important for anyone wishing to understand contemporary culture.

Unfortunately, the quest for the principal forces that shape the news is not quite an easy one, since "the list of possible variables is

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almost endless."[1] To reduce the complexity of such a vast array of influences, many studies focus on selected aspects of the interrelation between news work and its social contexts. Among the areas that have been extensively studied are journalism and its political contexts,[2] economic imperatives,[3] and organizational structures within newsrooms.[4] At the individual level, researchers are especially interested in professional self-perceptions of journalists[5] and the influence of their political views on the news.[6]

These studies have generated valuable and important insights into the workings of journalism. However, it is very difficult to say which sources of influence—individual predispositions, organizational forces, economic imperatives, or political factors—reign supreme in the process of news production. Such an analysis would need to put the various sources of influence into the context of a complex nexus of forces that affect the work of journalists. This approach would take into account that the work of journalists is affected by *multiple* sources of influence, and most of the time even simultaneously.

Another consideration is the fact that most studies have assessed influences on journalistic content, editorial processes, and professional views in terms of their objective effects. One well-known example is Weaver and Wilhoit's attempt to explain differences in role perceptions of American journalists.[7] This approach tries to explain variation in the journalists' professional views and practices by a set of individual and organizational characteristics, such as gender, professional experience, and media ownership. Only a few studies have tried to investigate sources of influence as they are *perceived* by the journalists. These perceptions do not necessarily correspond to patterns of objective influences. Moreover, influences on news work have rarely been investigated in multiple national contexts. Such a strategy would increase the chance to identify a pattern of influences that responds robustly to cross-national variation.

This paper therefore has two objectives: First, it attempts to extract a perceptional structure from a wide-ranging list of sources of influence. This structure should be relatively invariant within cross-national variation. Second, it assesses the relative importance of these influences on the basis of a pan-cultural analysis.

Studying Influences on Journalism

Theories. Conceptual groundwork about influences on journalism has a long tradition in mass communication research. One of the most widely known attempts is Shoemaker and Reese's levels-of-influences approach.[8] Shoemaker and Reese propose a hierarchical structure of influences consisting of five nested levels. The individual level is in the center of this model and refers to the backgrounds, attitudes, and professional orientations of the journalists. The next higher layers of influence are, in order: media routines (journalistic practices), the organization (organizational goals, roles, structures, and control), the extra-media level (information sources, revenue sources, social institutions, economic environment, and technology), and the ideological level (system-level influences).

The model put forward by Shoemaker and Reese is certainly not alone. Donsbach, for instance, distinguishes between individual, professional, institutional, and societal "spheres" of influences.[9] McQuail sug-

gested a model consisting of five levels, including the individual/role, organization, and medium/industry/institution, as well as societal and international levels.[10] Other researchers prefer to think in terms of three levels, often by distinguishing between the domains of the individual, organization, and institution.[11] A model suited to the realities of the Arab world has been advocated by Hamada, whose approach is based on six levels of analysis, including the global level (notably, the dependence on Western media), national level, legal level, economic and managerial level, human rights level, and the professional level.[12] Preston most recently proposed a typology of five levels, referring to the domains of individual influences, organizational influences, media routines and norms, political-economic factors, and cultural and ideological power.[13] The conceptual overlap between these models is not particularly overwhelming. Although they contain, by and large, similar sources of influence, they often place them on different levels. The only exception is the individual level, on which all reviewed models agree.

Empirical Evidence. Flegel and Chaffee were among the first to explore journalists' perceptions of influences. In their study of seventeen reporters in Wisconsin, they found readers' interests to be a substantial source of influence. Advertisers, on the other hand, were given very minimal consideration.[14] Weischenberg, Löffelholz, and Scholl applied a similar research strategy to their survey of 1,500 German journalists. They concluded that the journalists primarily rely on their colleagues and on their peer groups' consensual professional views. The interviewed journalists clearly perceived the newsroom environment as a dominant source of influence, while they reported external factors were of less importance.[15]

The newsroom context has also been found most influential in the process of ethical decision making in Weaver and Wilhoit's early survey of U.S. journalists.[16] Berkowitz, Limor, and Singer, in their comparative study of Israeli and American journalists, agreed that personal and professional factors actually matter little. Their findings, however, supported the view that the social or national context of news-making is actually most important in shaping journalistic decisions.[17] With respect to journalists' concept of newsworthiness, several studies found the newsroom environment, competitors, and other external media, as well as audiences and news sources, to be the most important sources of influence.[18]

These studies have in common direct measurement of the journalists' perceptions by asking them to indicate the importance of various sources of influence. A different approach infers the relative importance of certain influences from correlational or regression-based analyses. Patterson and Donsbach, for instance, found journalists' partisanship significantly related to their news decisions, although the individual correlations were rather weak.[19] Several researchers using multiple regression techniques came to different conclusions, however. Surveys conducted in Germany, Indonesia, and the United States consistently found organizational factors to be the strongest predictors of journalists' professional views.[20] On the systemic level, a comparative study

of journalists in China, Taiwan, and the United States revealed that political factors seem to exert a greater influence on journalistic orientations than cultural aspects.[21]

Synthesis. The above-mentioned conceptual models, along with more recent empirical evidence, arguably converge toward a structure of perceived influence that consists of five major domains:

- Influences on the *individual level* originate from the journalists' personal and professional backgrounds and orientations, as well as from their specific roles and occupational characteristics within the news organization. These individual factors matter because journalists "constantly have to make perceptional decisions."[22]

- The *media routines level* generates forces that have, over time, led to professional standardization of news production. These forces become manifest, for instance, in the form of routinized investigation, news gathering, and presentation of content.[23] In a procedural sense, these sources of influence often appear as concrete constraints to the journalists' work, mostly in the form of limited resources.

- The *organizational level* is relevant as contemporary journalism has evolved into a highly organized endeavor.[24] Several scholars even argue that journalism is essentially an organizational phenomenon.[25] The editorial organization constitutes the sphere of influence that is most immediate to the journalists' experience. Relevant sources of influence are, among others, technological imperatives, newsroom conventions, advertising considerations, and structures of editorial coordination and decision making.

- The *media structures level* refers to the economic imperatives of journalism which are especially relevant in commercial news organizations. This is even true for media organizations where profit is not a major concern, as in the case of nonprofit media and public service broadcasting. The high costs of news production make economic considerations inevitable.[26] There is robust empirical evidence that economic criteria are increasingly pervading news production in one way or another.[27]

- Finally, the *systemic level* of influence incorporates the relevant social, cultural, and ideological contexts within which journalists work. This includes the political and legal conditions of news making, mostly introduced by the state through means of regulation, media laws, and limitation of press freedom. Other important factors on this level are the nature of professional self-organization and national conven-

tions within the profession.[28] Social and cultural contexts can become relevant with respect to specific areas of coverage, such as religion and minorities.

No definitive answer has been found regarding the relative importance of these levels of influence. There seems to be a growing awareness of the supremacy of systemic influences,[29] as well as the increasing power of economic criteria and media structures.[30] Organizational factors are also believed to have a substantial impact on the production of news,[31] but the extent to which their effects compare to other sources of influences is largely unknown. A number of studies in the tradition of gatekeeper research finally point to a significant but modest influence of individual predispositions on the journalists' news decisions.[32] Once the individual journalist is put into the context of multiple sources of influence, however, these effects are rendered non-significant.[33]

Research Questions. The literature review does not reveal any consistent pattern with regard to the dimensional structure of influences and relative importance of the various sources of influence. In fact, different models and theories generate inconsistent expectations. Even more critical is the fact that most of the approaches and findings discussed above refer to objective effects the various sources of influence have or may have on the production of news. This paper, however, is concerned with the way these influences are perceived by journalists.

Given the lack of clear theoretical expectations in this area, we decided to make use of an exploratory design as a first step. Consequently, the objectives of the analysis were transformed into research questions rather than hypotheses.

> **RQ1**: Can the various sources of influence, in the perception of journalists, be reduced to a set of meaningful dimensions?

> **RQ2**: How does this empirical structure correspond to the approaches discussed in the literature?

> **RQ3**: Is there any hierarchy among the various sources of influence in terms of their relative importance?

Methodology

Selection of Countries and Sampling. This paper reports results from an analysis based on data from seventeen countries, including Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Egypt, Germany, Indonesia, Israel, Romania, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda, and the United States.[34] The goal in the selection of countries was to cover a relatively broad range of journalistic cultures. The country sample cuts across all six inhabited continents, democratic and authoritarian contexts, as well as developed and developing countries. An additional consideration in the selection of countries was the accessibility of existing knowledge about the journalists' professional views, usually

generated by national surveys of journalists. Another important concern was the availability of qualified and committed researchers in the respective countries.

With only 100 journalists interviewed in each country, the study did not attempt to create representative, but to yield comparable, samples. A sampling scheme was designed to accommodate some of the variation between the media systems included in the study (see Table 1). However, not all countries were able to match the standard sample. Whenever this was the case, the sampling scheme was used as a means of best possible approximation, and viable alternatives were taken from a list of pre-defined switching priorities.[35]

The selection of news organizations was stratified on the basis of three criteria. First, the sample was partitioned into daily newspapers, weeklies, news agencies, television, and radio on the one hand, and national and local media on the other. We decided not to include online media as they were virtually non-existent in some of the investigated countries. On a secondary level, we classified print media into quality outlets with a strong citizen orientation and popular outlets that exhibit a stronger consumer orientation. While the choice of popular print media was based on circulation, the quality outlets were selected according to their agenda-setting power.[36] In many cases, the various national teams had to make deliberate choices in order to approximate a good representation of their respective media systems.[37]

Drawing on a classic definition by Weaver and Wilhoit,[38] we classified respondents as journalists if they had at least some editorial responsibility. We tried to be as inclusive as possible by capturing the various domains of news work, including journalists, for instance, from the sports beat, as well as from departments at the intersection between traditional news and entertainment. The extent of editorial responsibility also served as a criterion for the further stratification of the sample. In each newsroom, one journalist was selected from the highest level of the editorial hierarchy (strategic leadership), one from the middle level (operational decision makers), and three from the lowest level of the editorial hierarchy.[39] In each of these categories, journalists were randomly selected.[40] From the 369 newsrooms we contacted in the first place, twenty-two had to be replaced due to refusal. On the level of the journalists, we substituted 236 interviewees from the altogether 1,700 journalists after they refused the interview.

Questionnaire and Data Collection. The research tools used in this "Worlds of Journalism" study were collaboratively created in order to ensure a maximum level of cultural overlap. A fully standardized questionnaire was developed in English and then translated into the relevant languages. Translation was aided by a back-translation procedure in some countries and a committee approach involving bi-lingual experts in others. Field research was carried out between September 2007 and April 2009. In every country, interviews were conducted with a quota sample of 100 working journalists from twenty news organizations. Data collection was carried out by telephone in most countries with five exceptions: in Bulgaria, Egypt, Indonesia, and partly in Chile, interviews were conduct-

TABLE 1
Sample Structure

Media	Sublevel	National Media	Local Media	Total
Daily Newspaper	Quality: Citizen-oriented	2 (10)	3 (15)	5 (25)
	Popular: Consumer-oriented	1 (5)	1 (5)	2 (10)
General Interest Weekly	Quality: Citizen-oriented	1 (5)	—	1 (5)
(Magazine/Newspaper)	Popular: Consumer-oriented	1 (5)	—	1 (5)
News Agency		1 (5)	—	1 (5)
Television	State-owned/Public	1 (5)	1 (5)	2 (10)
	Private	3 (15)	1 (5)	4 (20)
Radio	State-owned/Public	1 (5)	1 (5)	2 (10)
	Private	1 (5)	1 (5)	2 (10)
Total		12 (60)	8 (40)	20 (100)

Numbers in parentheses represent the total subsample of journalists in the respective media category.

ed personally, mostly because we expected journalists in these countries to be less accustomed to and highly distrustful of telephone interviews. Turkey was the only case where journalists completed questionnaires by themselves while a researcher was present.

Measures. On the basis of an extensive literature review and the conceptual ideas outlined above we created a list of potential sources of influence consisting of twenty-nine indicators.[41] In the interview, the question was introduced by the following wording: "Please tell me, on a scale of 1 to 5, how influential each of the following is in your day-to-day job. One means it is extremely influential, 2 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 4 means little influence, and 5 means not influential at all." The scale was later reversed in order to make interpretations more intuitive, resulting in higher values to indicate stronger influences.

We decided not to include indicators that refer to backgrounds and predispositions of the individual journalists. Given the fact that this part of the questionnaire was tailored to the measurement of the perception of influences by individual actors, it seemed methodologically more plausible to limit the list of indicators to those factors that journalists would clearly perceive as "external" forces. Since individual influences do mostly operate in the subconscious, we expected the journalists to rarely reflect on these aspects. Moreover, their responses might have yielded biased scores as a result of social desirability.

Findings

Preliminary Analyses. We used principal component analysis (PCA) to provide an answer to our first research question. The source "Media watch organizations" was excluded as these institutions did not

TABLE 2
Dimensionality of Influences

Source of Influence	Component					
	Political Influences	Economic Influences	Professional Influences	Organizational Influences	Reference Groups	Procedural Influences
Government Officials	**0.849**	0.003	0.081	0.136	0.106	0.047
Politicians	**0.844**	0.038	0.043	0.131	0.141	0.009
Censorship	**0.679**	0.119	-0.014	0.099	0.077	0.185
Business People	**0.649**	0.365	0.021	0.126	0.158	0.010
Advertising Considerations	0.156	**0.801**	-0.053	0.211	0.026	-0.024
Profit Expectations	0.047	**0.766**	-0.004	0.187	0.100	0.051
Advertisers	0.284	**0.753**	0.025	0.059	0.100	0.055
Market and Audience Research	-0.076	**0.603**	0.270	0.087	0.123	0.147
Professional Conventions	0.004	-0.015	**0.814**	0.009	0.026	0.107
Newsroom Conventions	-0.071	0.013	**0.753**	0.127	0.069	0.158
Media Laws	0.215	0.106	**0.655**	0.091	0.021	0.129
Management	0.182	0.214	0.102	**0.838**	0.025	0.092
Ownership	0.192	0.298	0.004	**0.750**	0.000	0.037
Supervisors and Higher Editors	0.100	0.055	0.129	**0.729**	0.189	0.163
Colleagues in Other Media	0.181	0.046	0.003	0.065	**0.812**	0.082
Friends, Acquaintances, Family	0.107	0.026	-0.073	0.190	**0.766**	0.060
Readers, Listeners, or Viewers	-0.021	0.264	0.419	-0.095	**0.545**	0.023
Competing News Organizations	0.214	0.202	0.182	-0.006	**0.531**	0.240
News Deadlines	0.058	0.029	0.115	0.056	0.071	**0.838**
Procedures and Standards	0.030	0.058	0.224	0.126	0.077	**0.743**
Shortage of Resources	0.106	0.065	0.062	0.067	0.104	**0.633**
Eigenvalue	*5.195*	*2.285*	*1.805*	*1.514*	*1.269*	*1.140*
Variance explained	*24.7%*	*10.9%*	*8.6%*	*7.2%*	*6.0%*	*5.4%*
Cronbach's alpha	*0.84*	*0.81*	*0.68*	*0.71*	*0.67*	*0.78*

PCA with Varimax rotation; variance explained = 62.9%; KMO=0.810; Bartlett's test $p < 0.001$

exist in every investigated country. The item "Religious leaders" was also left out, as the varying extent to which the church is separated from the state may lead to unstable component structures. A PCA of the remaining twenty-seven items yielded a solution with six components. However, an inspection of the component matrix revealed several problems: With factor loadings of less than 0.5, the items "Peers on the staff," "New media technologies," "News sources," "Public relations," and "Sensibilities of the community" did not clearly load on any of the six components. A comparison of the global component solution with individual country solutions through the specialized software *Orthosim-2* indicated for these indicators, and also for the item "Journalism unions," considerable inconsistency across countries.[42] We therefore decided to exclude these eight items from our main analysis.

	Congruence Coefficent	Double-Scaled Euclidean Similarity
Australia	0.92	0.92
Brazil	0.93	0.92
Bulgaria	0.94	0.94
Chile	0.77	0.86
China	0.85	0.89
Egypt	0.90	0.91
Germany	0.88	0.90
Indonesia	0.87	0.90
Israel	0.92	0.92
Romania	0.93	0.93
Russia	0.82	0.88
Spain	0.90	0.91
Switzerland	0.89	0.91
Turkey	0.89	0.90
Uganda	0.82	0.88
USA	0.87	0.90

Note: Similarity measures for Austria could not be calculated as all Austrian journalists said that censorship was "not influential at all," which resulted in zero variance for the corresponding item.

Main Analyses. A principal component analysis was conducted on the pooled within-country correlation matrix in order to rule out potential confounding effects from cross-national differences. Such a procedure is believed to provide the best approximation of the global component structure.[43] PCA was conducted on the remaining 21 items with orthogonal rotation (Varimax). Sampling adequacy was verified by KMO = 0.81, and all KMO values for individual indicators were higher than 0.7, which is well above the acceptable limit of 0.5.[44] Bartlett's test of sphericity, $x^2 = 103,883.45$, df = 210, $p < 0.001$, indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. Six components had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and in combination accounted for 62.2% of the variance (see Table 2). The loadings suggest the following interpretation: Component 1 represents *political influences*; component 2, *economic influences*; component 3, *professional influences*; component 4, *organizational influences*; component 5, influences from *reference groups*; and component 6, *procedural influences*.

In order to assess the robustness of the global component solution to cross-national variation, we calculated similarity measures by using *Orthosim-2*. Recommendations for acceptable similarity coefficients vary between 0.80 and 0.95.[45] Table 3 reports the relevant similarity coefficients for the congruence between individual country solutions and the global component matrix. Of all countries, only Chile missed the mini-

TABLE 4

TABLE 4

Comparison of Dimensions of Influence

	N	Mean	SD
Professional Influences	1,684	3.45	0.93
Procedural Influences	1,679	3.51	0.91
Organizational Influences	1,675	3.28	1.07
Reference Groups	1,686	2.58	0.81
Economic Influences	1,682	2.53	1.02
Political Influences	1,684	2.20	1.02

mal threshold, albeit not dramatically. This indicates a sufficient overlap of the individual country solutions with the global PCA result, which is a requirement for further comparative analysis.

Based on these results, we constructed six indices that reflect the dimensions extracted by PCA. The reliability values (Cronbach's α) of the six indices varied between 0.84 and 0.67 (see Table 2).[46] The mean scores for each dimension of influences are reported in Table 4. It turned out that procedural, professional, and organizational influences were perceived to be most important by the journalists. Of relatively moderate importance are economic influences, while political factors are seen to be least substantial. The differences between the mean scores for the six dimensions were highly significant ($F = 772.795$, df = 4.375, $p < 0.001$). *Post hoc* tests revealed that the differences between any given pair of means were all significant at $p < 0.001$, except for the differences between economic influences and reference groups ($p = 1.0$), as well as between professional influences and procedural influences ($p = 0.1$).[47]

Discussion

This study is one of the first large-scale empirical attempts to tap into journalists' perception of influences on their work. The evidence is based on the responses of journalists from a large array of countries, which contributes to the cross-cultural robustness of our findings. Our results also inform theory in several interesting ways, and they have some important implications for future comparative research.

First, the various sources of perceived influence can indeed be reduced to a meaningful set of dimensions. This structure consists of six conceptually and empirically distinct domains, including political, economic, professional, procedural, and organizational influences, as well as reference groups. *Political influences* comprise all sources that originate from the political context, including government officials, politicians, and censorship. Business people, somewhat unexpectedly, seem also to belong to this component. This finding may come as a surprise at first since common sense would expect the perceived influence of business people to cluster together with economic influences. However, there are several reasons why we think that our empirical results make sense. Business people—entrepreneurs, industrialists, protagonists of trade associations, industrial lobbyists, etc.—usually represent business interests in the arena

of economic policymaking. Representing, advocating, and imposing the interests of business and trade are political acts with political implications. These implications may only indirectly, if at all, affect the news organization for which the journalist works. In the view of the journalists, the influence of business people therefore refers to the general interests of business and trade that are commonly negotiated in the realm of the political. Another reason is that in many, especially Asian and Latin American countries, political and business elites are strongly interlinked, which makes it hard for the journalists to clearly distinguish among them.

Economic influences, on the other hand, encompass factors that have direct consequences for the news organizations where the journalists work. This layer of influence reflects the fact that most media companies are profit-oriented institutions that compete in markets. Even when making money is not a primary goal, the high costs of modern news production and distribution introduce economic criteria at every stage.[48] Among the sources of economic influence are the profit expectations of media companies, the needs of advertisers, as well as implications of market and audience research. These factors can be seen as external influences on the newsroom. Advertising considerations, on the other hand, emerge from within the newsroom as journalists and news managers anticipate the needs of advertisers in the process of news production.

Organizational influences refer to the internal apparatus that governs decision-making processes and management routines of newsrooms and media organizations. Contemporary journalism is characterized by its highly organized nature, which puts the individual journalist "within the constraining boundaries of a fairly elaborate set of organizational control structures and processes."[49] The organizational domain includes sources of influence that stem from multiple levels: from within the newsroom (supervisors and higher editors) and from within the media organization (management and ownership). As a consequence, this dimension of influences also transcends the traditional division between the newsroom and the larger structure of the media organization. This can be seen as another indication of eroding walls between newsrooms and boardrooms around the world.

Procedural influences include the various operational constraints faced by the journalists in their everyday work. These constraints largely materialize in the form of limited resources in terms of time and space,[50] in our study represented by the items "pressing news deadlines" and "shortage of resources." Another important aspect of procedural influences is the fact that news production is a highly standardized and routinized process, and journalists have to cope with these procedures and standards as they impose important limits on routine news work.

Professional influences refer to the policies, conventions, and customs of the profession in general and, specifically, the newsrooms for which the journalists work. These cultural conventions mostly pertain to what is commonly believed to be good and acceptable practice in

journalism. They constitute shared assumptions about how journalism is or ought to be practiced. Interestingly, the influence of media laws is also believed to belong to this cluster. Since media laws are made and enforced by the political system, common sense would expect this source of influence to group with political influences. However, our findings suggest that the journalists perceive influences related to media laws according to a different logic. Media laws constitute the space within which journalists can legally operate. Journalists may not be acutely aware of the political component of media laws as they mostly focus on the practical consequences for their work. As such, these limits might already be factored into the conventional model of good practice in journalism.

Reference groups constitute the last dimension of influences, and its independent existence comes as a surprise. This sphere includes remarkably diverse sources of influence, spanning across the domains of the professional (colleagues in other media, competing news organizations, and audiences) and the private (friends, acquaintances, and family). These are the groups and institutions journalists look at, be it for the purpose of monitoring competitors or as a means of self-ascertainment. The audience is an important reference because journalists have certain ideas about the kind of content their readers, viewers, or listeners want, although there is some evidence that they are actually not very good at estimating the audience's interests.[51] Colleagues from other media are an important group because these are the people journalists meet on an almost-everyday basis, in both the professional and private domains. Moreover, the reputation of journalists largely depends on the recognition of their work by their colleagues, peers, and audiences.

RQ2 asked to what extent the empirical structure of perceived influences corresponds to the approaches discussed in the literature. Our results provide mixed evidence. Independent domains of influences stemming from the media system, media structures, and the organization clearly exist—in the form of political, economic, and organizational influences, respectively. Media routines, however, are not perceived as a single domain of influence but as two distinct layers: procedural influences encompass the concrete operational constraints of news work, and they appear to the journalists as givens; professional influences, on the other hand, refer to cultural conventions about what is considered to be good practice. As such, these conventions are not forced upon the journalists, but they are anticipated, accommodated, and reinforced in their practice.

The existence of an independent dimension of reference groups, on the other hand, was not explicitly part of the reviewed models. Here, our findings break the ground for a needed extension of these models. One reason why reference groups have been largely ignored as a potential level of influence may be the fact that most of these approaches were developed to model the constraints on the work of journalists from an objective point of view. In the perception of the journalists, however, these sources of influence obviously appear in a substantially different way.

In response to the third research question, our findings have shown that the six dimensions of influence are not perceived to be equally

important by the journalists. They build up a hierarchical structure in which organizational, professional, and procedural influences are seen to be the most powerful limits to the journalists' work. These influences originate from the journalists' immediate environment, that is, the organization, professional conventions, and the procedural constraints of routine work. Journalists struggle with these limits almost every day; hence, the effects of these factors seem to be much more evident and tangible than external and more abstract influences. Furthermore, news organizations may in fact have a relatively strong grip on their staffs. While their struggle for autonomy alerts and to some extent protects journalists from certain external influences, such as politics and business, it leaves them fairly defenseless against organizational forces. The relatively strong importance of professional influences, on the other hand, may be seen as an indication of a global move toward professionalization and further consolidation of professional values within the occupation of journalism.

The relatively moderate importance of political and economic factors, on the other hand, may contradict intuition. Their objective influence can hardly be denied, and evidence of their existence is overwhelming.[52] A potential reason for this inconsistency may be the fact that our results are based on influences as they were *perceived* by the journalists. Political and economic influences, we believe, are rarely experienced directly by the average journalist. The power of these influences might be absorbed by news organizations and subsequently filtered, negotiated, and redistributed to the individual journalists. News organizations may, in many cases, function as a mediator of external interests and pressures rather than as a buffer. Political and economic pressures, therefore, only *seem* to be less important, presumably because these sources of influence are perceived as being less pervasive and much more remote by the journalists. Relatively few journalists have to deal with these influences under the normal circumstances of everyday news work.

This does not mean that political and economic influences are trivial. Quite to the contrary, it points to the possibility that these factors might actually be more powerful than the journalists' perceptions of their effects suggest. The impact of political and economic factors may be less noticeable under the circumstances of routine news work, mostly because their significance is masked by organizational and procedural influences that have a stronger grip on the journalists' everyday practice. Furthermore, journalists might tend to consciously negate political and, even more so, economic influences as part of a professional ideology according to which journalism is supposed to operate independently of political and economic interests.

The results reported in this paper are based on journalists' responses from multiple countries and news organizations. Future analyses will therefore focus on modeling the relative importance of influences contingent on organizational and national contexts. Moreover, the six-dimensional structure of perceived influences has proven to respond robustly to cross-national variation. For that reason,

researcher may find it useful to apply the reduced twenty-one-item version as a template in their own comparative endeavors.[53]

However, this study also comes with a few important limitations. First, with only 100 respondents in each country, the number of journalists interviewed was relatively small. The surveyed journalists did not constitute representative samples, but matched quota samples. Second, this analysis has focused on influences as they were perceived by the journalists. As some of the contradictions between our findings and common sense suggest, however, these perceptions may not fully correspond with the objective nature of influences on news work. This is also an important direction for further analyses.

Third, and perhaps most important, studying social forces as they are perceived by individuals can only account for influences that are consciously perceived as such. The perceptional approach may be largely insensitive to some of the less obtrusive forces that mold professional practice more subconsciously. Yet, we think that it is still useful to study influences on the news "through the eyes" of the journalists since the way these forces are perceived constitutes an important aspect of practice. Even more important, it renders observable social structures otherwise invisible to the researcher.

NOTES

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34. The study was funded by several institutions, including the German Research Foundation, Swiss National Science Foundation, Rothschild-Caesarea School of Communication at Tel Aviv University, and School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Queensland.

35. This was the case in Austria, Egypt, and Uganda. Austria had no significant local TV station, so the number of national channels was increased. In the absence of local newspapers and private radio stations in Egypt, we decided to raise the number of national newspapers and state-owned radio channels, respectively. In Uganda, we increased the number of local radio stations to compensate for the lack of local TV stations; hence, the resulting sample also reflected the prominence of radio in the country.

36. In every country, there exists a tacit consensus among journalists and media scholars regarding the media that are considered to substantially shape the national political agenda. Hence, we selected those quality outlets which are commonly believed to have the greatest impact in this regard. For popular print media we selected the outlets with the highest circulation numbers. The selection of radio and TV stations was based on the ratings of their newscasts.

37. This was especially true for local media. Here, we sampled media outlets produced in various parts of the country: in urban centers and rural areas or, as in the case of Switzerland and Indonesia, in the regions inhabited by the major cultural populations.

38. Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*, 168.

39. Examples for positions were chief editors and their deputies for the highest level of the editorial hierarchy, senior editors and desk heads for the middle level, and reporters for the lowest level.

40. This means that we provided specific instructions as to how to select the journalists within the news organizations. In most cases, we asked our contact persons within the newsrooms to send us the names and telephone numbers of those journalists whose family names came first according to alphabetical order.

41. The five-level structure outlined in the previous section was used as a starting point here. In addition, we screened previous surveys and qualitative studies that have asked similar questions. See Preston, *Making the News*; Scholl and Weischenberg, *Journalismus in der Gesellschaft*; Voakes, "Social Influences on Journalists' Decision Making in Ethical Situations."

42. *Orthosim-2* allows the examination of the similarity of factor solutions across groups. The program implements an orthogonal procrustes routine to calculate different kinds of similarity coefficients between a comparison and target matrix. The comparison matrix is orthogonally rotated against the target matrix as an attempt to minimize the sum of squared deviations between the comparison matrix and target matrix values. The program reports similarity coefficients for the overall similarity of factor structures and fit measures for individual indicators.

43. The pooled within-country correlation matrix was created by averaging the individual correlation matrices from the seventeen countries. See Fons J. R. van de Vijver, Dianne A. van Hemert, and Ype H. Poortinga, "Conceptual Issues in Multilevel Models," in *Multilevel Analysis of Individuals and Cultures*, ed. Fons J. R. van de Vijver, Dianne A. van Hemert, and Ype H. Poortinga (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2008), 3-26.

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46. The reliability values for professional influences (alpha = .68) and reference groups (.67) were rather low, reflecting the relatively wide breadth of the two components. The two dimensions include fairly diverse sources of influences, and minimizing the number of indicators to

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53. The twenty-one items are reported in Table 2.