This edited volume has originated from a conference on “Journalism research in an era of globalization” in Germany in 2004. *Global Journalism Research: Theories, Methods, Findings, Future* certainly holds many valuable insights ready for the reader. It is not, however, what it claims to be: an introduction to global journalism research. This conclusion is not only owed to the observation that half of the 22 chapters are written or co-written by German scholars based in German-speaking countries. More importantly, it is owed to the fact that the “questioning of national, cultural, and disciplinary boundaries” (p.3) promised in the introduction turns into a partial reinforcement of such boundaries in the course of the book. This is true for at least three of the four sections mentioned in the title of the book.

Let’s start with the book’s theories section. An overview chapter acknowledges that theoretical approaches to journalism today are “heterogeneous”, “multidimensional” and “competing” (p. 15). Disappointingly, the range of theories subsequently presented is clearly skewed towards sociological and socio-psychological perspectives. To a greater or lesser extent, these traditional perspectives all illustrate a preference for detached analysis and quantitative evidence. Only two out of six chapters in this section have been authored by scholars who endorse a critical, culture-oriented approach to researching journalism and pay attention to questions of power and ideology (John Hartley and Gertrude J. Robinson, which are also the only non-German authors in this section). Moreover, the global aspect in the theories section is present but overall de-emphasized.

The same goes for the methods section. The chapters on survey, content analysis and observation are useful summaries of the strengths and weaknesses of those methods. However, the extent to which those classic quantitative approaches are more relevant for global journalism research than others is not made clear (there is no chapter on qualitative methods). The potential inadequacy of “old” methods (for example, content analysis of printed texts that have one single author) to examine new developments in journalism (such as ever-changing forms of media content online co-created by journalists and bloggers) is not problematized appropriately. Only one chapter in the methods section constitutes an original attempt to overcome boundaries in journalism research and mine new methodological territory. Thomas Hanitzsch makes the case for systematic comparative journalism research that is culturally sensitive. All in all, the theoretical and methods sections leave no doubt about the prevailing ideological standpoint that structures most of the book. It is that of the objective researcher who carefully analyzes a given social world, mainly concerned about values such as validity, representativeness and predictability of research results.

The third section is entitled “Findings in journalism research”. Each chapter introduces the reader to the history as well as contemporary problems of journalism
research in one country (the US, UK, Germany, South Africa, China and Mexico). This section thus reinforces the “nation” as the prime organizing principle in journalism research. Although chapter-by-chapter comparisons of the above-mentioned countries are enabled, an exploration of studies that have attempted to transcend the “national boundary” would have been preferable. This is also the only section of the book that offers work by non-Western scholars and thus broadens otherwise exclusively European and US-American views on journalism research.

To better prepare readers for what is awaiting them, the editors of this volume would have needed to title the book differently. “Journalism research from traditional sociological perspectives, with some openings towards cultural and international research” would be one possibility. The word “global” is too ambitious here. It is different from “comparative” or “international” and implies a new quality—one that goes beyond a mere combination, comparison or extension of existing concepts.

However, the book is still a crucial one—due to achievements that may not have been the primary intention of the editors. David Weaver and Martin Loeffelholz should be commended for this rare if not first-ever attempt to present key paradigms of German journalism research in a comprehensive form and make them accessible to an English-speaking audience. Moreover, the book demonstrates that German journalism research, which is still largely nationally oriented and mostly German-speaking, has recognized the need to open itself up geographically and theoretically. In addition, and more importantly, the book also illustrates a glaring divide between two schools of thought in journalism research: empiricist, sociologically oriented approaches versus culturally oriented, critical approaches. It is to be viewed “positive” that those very different academic “world views” appear in one publication. However, the book fails to make these differing perspectives explicit and misses the chance to open up a much-needed conversation about journalism research among them. Thereby, it not only creates an uneasy co-existence of those perspectives but it also clearly privileges the empiricist-sociological paradigm, which is dominant in German journalism research. A truly global perspective, in contrast, would have forced the editors to account more adequately for the “culturalization” of journalism studies that is reshaping journalism research around the world (although, admittedly, in some places more than in others).

This imbalance is straightened out towards the end of the book. Internationally prominent scholars such as Stephen Reese and Barbie Zelizer offer insights on how to cross boundaries in journalism research. The chapters in this section successfully employ a broadly cultural-critical perspective to illuminate pressing issues in contemporary journalism research which should have constituted the theoretical and methodological core questions throughout the book: the challenging of traditional journalism through audience participation, the need for interdisciplinarity in journalism research and the conceptualization of globalizing newsgathering practices. It is telling that not a single objective-empiricist contribution has found its way into this last section of the book, which is entitled “The future of journalism research.”

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