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Abstract

Based on interviews with 300 journalists in Chile, Brazil and Mexico, this article describes similarities and differences in their professional cultures. Two competing conceptual explanations are tested: the dominance of political structures, levels of press freedom and the size and concentration of media ownership vs the predominance of political cultures and political parallelism. Although the study provides some evidence in favour of the second scenario – overall in terms of the institutional roles supported by the journalists – neither of the two explanations can fully account for the differences between the countries. Meanwhile, the epistemological and ethical views of the journalists seem to be trapped in contesting terrains of ambiguity, where organizational, media routines and individual factors override country differences.

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Brazil, Chile, journalism, journalism culture, journalists, Mexico

Introduction

Journalism studies worldwide are increasingly adopting a comparative strategy. The end of the Cold War, the transnational flow of media information and technologies and the expansion of a free market economy around the globe have created greater opportunities for data exchange among scholars, who have experienced important processes of opening-up through the consolidation of international organizations (Hanitzsch, 2009). Because of these changes, specific scientific journals as well as collaborative teams inside the field have become more and more interested in the cross-national study of the work practices of a large variety of journalists, rather than research that only covers unique national realities.

The fact that media are deeply involved in the globalization process, the formation of public opinion and the establishment of democracy (Cook, 1998; Deuze, 2007; Zelizer, 2009) have been determining factors when scholars reconsider the ethnocentric perspective they use to research the field of journalism, to one which prioritizes the understanding of the systemic forces that shape the media and communication phenomenon.

Indeed, during the past two decades, several studies indicate the existence of substantial variation in journalism professional orientations around the globe (Weaver, 1998), pointing out that the societal level seems to have much more influence than individual or organizational variables (Berkowitz et al., 2004; Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Zhu et al., 1997).

In this context, the nation-state has been used as an object, context, unit of analysis or locus for a transnational trend (Kohn, 1989), while journalism culture has become a key strategy to frame and evaluate the changes in journalism practices and attitudes.

However, most of the comparative studies are based on second-hand analysis of data coming from national studies (Weaver, 1998; Wu et al., 1996; Zhu et al., 1997), and very few have made a truly tailor-made cross-national effort (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Patterson and Donsbach, 1996). Likewise, although several scholars have questioned the excessive westernization of journalism research (Curran and Park, 2000), the majority of the studies have focused on the comparison of developed countries, generally using normative starting points where classic western values are believed to be more professional than others (Joseph, 2005). Therefore, functions like partisanship, advocacy and editorial involvement, among others, have been portrayed in a negative way (Márquez, 2010: 3).

Also, given the different conceptualizations of journalism, there have been just as many ways of confronting the study of journalism culture as types of journalism and existing cultures have been developed, inviting misunderstanding and theoretical ambiguity (Hanitzsch, 2006: 181).

Considering these theoretical and methodological shortcomings, the Worlds of Journalism Project¹ operationalized a conceptual approach that drove the systematic sampling of journalism cultures for comparisons across countries, putting culture at the centre of its enquiry. This collaborative endeavour included 22 culturally diverse countries around the world: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Egypt, Fiji, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Israel, Iraq, Mexico, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Uganda and the United States.

The article reports key findings from the three Latin American countries involved in the main study – Chile, Brazil and Mexico. Unlike the general results previously published by the same project, where the countries are considered as data points or units of analysis (Hanitzsch et al., 2010, 2011), the three countries studied here will be considered as objects of analysis, in order to conduct more fine-grained interpretations. Indeed, we identify important trends and explore the variation in journalism culture across the three nations, based on the nature of the observed societal differences.

Specifically, the following research questions should be raised: How do Chilean, Brazilian and Mexican news media workers evaluate their institutional roles, epistemological orientations and ethical ideologies? How do the Chilean, Brazilian and Mexican journalism cultures relate to each other with respect to their similarities and differences? What particular societal factors seem to explain the journalism culture among those countries?

Literature review

In Latin America, the quantitative study of journalists' professional roles, orientations and attitudes has been very sporadic. Specifically, Chile, Mexico and Brazil have no strong tradition in this type of research, nor have their journalism cultures ever been simultaneously compared.²

The only work where journalists from these three countries are directly and indirectly connected is the Weaver's 1998 seminal book, *The Global Journalist*. In one of the chapters, Wilke (1998: 441) develops a comparative analysis between Chilean, Mexican and Ecuadorian journalists, characterizing the Chileans as neutral reporters and public entertainers, much less active and adversary than Mexican journalists.

Within the same book, Herscovitz and Cardoso (1998: 425) describe the professional roles and attitudes of Brazilian journalists, comparing them with their North American counterparts. The results showed that Brazilian news media workers strongly embraced the disseminator, as well as the interpretative and adversary roles, even more so than US journalists.

In the concluding chapter, Weaver compares the journalistic demographics and work practices across the 21 countries analysed in the book, and reports that, even among countries with similar social systems, there were important differences in the journalists' roles, attitudes and ideologies. All of the comparisons made within the book, however, correspond to a post hoc analysis of different questionnaires, applied at different times and with different goals. Also, the information is somewhat out-of-date, particularly considering the important developments and changes in journalism since the turn of the millennium.

Data presented in this article were collected as part of the field research on news media conducted for the cross-national Worlds of Journalism Project, which, for the first time, studied the journalists from these three countries under a common conceptual and methodological design. Based on the heuristic model proposed by Hanitzsch (2007), the project targets three principal domains of journalism culture, corresponding to the areas of disagreement among news media workers in terms of their attitudes, professional values and role conceptions.

The first domain is *institutional roles*, and refers to journalism's normative and real functions in society. The second domain is *epistemologies orientation*, and is related to the accessibility of reality and the validity criterion used by journalists to distinguish what is false from what is true. Finally, *ethical ideologies* point to the question of how journalists respond to ethical dilemmas.

The three domains can be further divided into seven dimensions, each of which spans two ideal-typical poles, along a continuum.

Interventionism reflects the extent to which journalists follow a particular mission and promote certain values. The distinction is made between two types of journalists: one active, involved, socially committed, and the other impartial, passive and distant. The level of *power distance* refers to the journalist's position towards loci of power in society. The adversary pole of the continuum captures a type of journalism that denounces wrongdoings and challenges those in power. The 'loyal and opportunist' journalism, on the other hand, tends to defend authorities, and serves as a messenger for the political and economic elite. *Market orientation* accounts for the journalists' viewpoint of the audience as either citizens or consumers. In the latter perspective, journalism cultures strongly submit to the market logic (consumer-oriented approach), as opposed to the citizen-oriented approach, which gives priority to what journalists think the public should know.

The *objectivism* dimension marks the distinction between two fundamental beliefs: the existence of a truth that can be portrayed 'just as it is', and the belief that news is just a representation of the world that requires interpretation. *Empiricism* refers to the relative weight given to an empirical justification of truth. Journalism cultures close to the active pole of the continuum emphasize observation, measurement and experience, while the journalism closer to the passive pole, accentuates reason, opinion and analysis.

Relativism refers to the way in which journalists confront ethical decisions. While some base their personal moral philosophies on universal ethical rules, others believe that ethical decisions are very dependent on the situational context. Finally, the *idealism* dimension measures the importance that journalists give to the consequences of their actions, when they deal with ethical dilemmas. While some journalists are more means-oriented and believe that desirable consequences should always be obtained with the 'right' action, others are more goal-oriented and admit that harm will sometimes be necessary to produce a greater public good.

National journalism systems in a comparative perspective

At present, Chile, Mexico and Brazil are all democratic countries, and together, they make up the most important, competitive and stable economies in Latin America (PNUD, 2004). The three countries had to recover from big political traumas in their past; and the press has played a key role in this process (Waisbord, 2000). In the case of Chile and Brazil, both countries experienced military dictatorships under a national security doctrine (Dinges, 2004): Brazil between 1964 and 1985, and Chile between 1973 and 1989. In Mexico, the state was built and developed during 70 years of rule by the same political party, el Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). In 2000, the PRI lost the presidency to the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN).

The three countries have overcome severe economic crises (1995's *el tequilazo* in Mexico; the crisis in Brazil during 1998–9; and the consequences of the Asian crisis that hit Chile at the end of the 1990s), and they still suffer from substantial poverty rates, as well as social inequality (CEPAL, 2010).

At first glance, one would then think that a comparative study between the three countries would be simple, having many of these social variables controlled. However, despite general similarities, the nations present important contrasts, both at a cultural and political-administrative level, as well as in the structure and concentration of their media systems. Considering that all of these differences can have significant effects on journalism culture, next they will be briefly contextualized in order to better understand the findings of this study.

There are four characteristics that bring Mexico and Brazil close together, separating Chile from the group. First, they both have large media industries that are much more complex and diversified. The two countries are the leaders in audiovisual production, as well as the home of the two biggest media groups in Latin America: Globo, in Brazil, and Televisa, in Mexico (Becerra and Mastrini, 2009).

One of the reasons that explain this important difference is their population sizes. While Brazil and Mexico have 195 and 110 million inhabitants, respectively, the Chilean population only reaches 17 million (CEPAL, 2010). Likewise, both in Brazil and Mexico, media industries, especially audiovisual, were encouraged and financed by the state, as they were seen as strategic sectors for the establishment of national identity (Amaral and Guimarães, 1994; Fernández and Paxman, 2000; Moreira, 1998).

A second aspect that differentiates these three countries is the concentration of media ownership, which is much less pronounced in Mexico and Brazil, in proportional terms. In fact, Chile registers the highest concentration rates in the entire region (Becerra and Mastrini, 2009). In the case of the print press, Chile faces a duopoly structure made up of the *El Mercurio* SAP and Copesa. While television is a mix of public³ and private undertakings, radio is dominated by a reduced number of consortiums, such as the Spanish Prisa group and the Grupo Dial, which belongs to Copesa.

Nevertheless, Chile is in a better position in terms of press freedom, because of less government regulation and intervention, but, above all, because of the little effect that organized crime and corruption networks have had on the press's work and journalists' safety. According to Freedom House's 2010 ranking, Chile is categorized within the group of countries that have a free press, placed number 67 on a world level. In contrast, Brazil and Mexico are evaluated as only having a partly free press, ranked 88 and 130, respectively. Mexico is recognized as one of the most vulnerable countries in this sense. Between 2000 and 2008, seven journalists were murdered as a direct consequence of their jobs (CPJ, 2010). For 2010, the Reporters Without Borders ranking established similar differences: they consider Chile to be satisfactory in terms of freedom of expression, and placed the country in 39th place out of 175, while Brazil and Mexico appear in 71st and 133rd place, respectively).

Another factor that could generate differences among these nations is their political structure. While all of them are democratic systems, Chile presents a unitary state, with a higher centralization of political, economic and social decisions in the capital (Mellado et al., 2010). Brazil and Mexico are federations, with power shared among the federal states.

Although this study is not able to determine which of the previously analysed distinctions has greater explanatory power, we assume that if some of them significantly influence journalism culture, then Brazilian and Mexican journalists must share similar professional orientations and attitudes, and both should differ from their Chilean colleagues.

There are two other dimensions, however, that link Mexico with Chile. The first of them does not have to do with the political structure, but rather with the political culture (Almond and Verba, 1963). Chile and Mexico have a strong 'parochial culture', where citizens are only remotely aware of the presence of central government, living their lives well enough regardless of the decisions made by the state. In Brazil, a 'subject political culture' is observed, where citizens are aware of central government, and are heavily subjected to its decisions with little scope for dissent.

Second, they both present higher levels of political parallelism, where media, political parties and economic powers are extremely linked. Currently, a large part of media owners in Chile belong to the political class and economic powers (Mönckeberg, 2009). Mexico has grown in a political system where social and cultural conventions have arisen from vertical communication and dissemination of news, with blatant partisanship and clashing economic interests aimed at defending the status quo (Márquez, 2010: 2).

Again, although this study will not attempt to determine the explanatory force of each one of these factors, it is assumed that if some of them significantly influence journalism culture, Mexico and Chile will tend to be more similar in terms of their journalists' professional orientations and attitudes. Of course, the possibility exists that journalists from Chile and Brazil exhibit a similar professional culture. Conceptually, however, both countries should present significant differences in the majority of the dimensions measured within this study.

Methodology

Research design and sampling

The data reported in this article come from a survey of role perceptions, epistemological orientations and ethical views of Chilean, Mexican and Brazilian news media journalists. Following Weaver and Wilhoit's (1986: 168) classic definition, a journalist was considered as someone who has 'editorial responsibility for the preparation or transmission of news stories or other information . . . rather than those who created fiction, drama, art, or other media content'.

In each country telephone or face-to-face interviews were conducted on a sample of 100 journalists working part-time and full-time from 20 news organizations, according to the common quota scheme presented in Table 1. Online newsrooms were omitted from the sample, because the degree of their institutionalization varied considerably across countries participating in the major project. Following Hofstede (2001: 463), we intended not to generate representative samples but 'matched samples' of journalists that were comparable across countries.

Five journalists were selected from each newsroom. People working for 'hard news' as well as 'soft news' beats were included. Within the news organizations, one journalist

Table 1. Sampling scheme

Type of medium	Sublevel	National	Local	Total
Daily newspaper	Quality: citizen-oriented	2 (10)	3 (15)	5 (25)
	Popular: consumer-oriented	1 (5)	1 (5)	2 (10)
General interest weekly (magazine/newspaper)	Quality: citizen-oriented	1 (5)	–	1 (5)
	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)

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

Table 2. Sample basic characteristics

	Brazil (<i>n</i> = 100)	Chile (<i>n</i> = 100)	Mexico (<i>n</i> = 100)
Female journalists (%)	45	61	30
Age (mean)	39	36	38
Graduated from college (%)	96	89	89
Years of experience as journalist (mean)	17	12	15
Terms of employment (full-time)	92	87	89

was selected from the highest level of the editorial hierarchy (e.g. editors-in-chief and their deputies), one from the middle level (e.g. senior editors and desk heads) and three from the lowest level of the editorial hierarchy (e.g. reporters). A description of the basic sample characteristics is provided in Table 2.

Field research was carried out between October 2007 and June 2009. Of the 60 newsrooms that were initially chosen, seven refused to cooperate, and were subsequently replaced. On the level of the journalists, 16 interviewees had to be substituted from the overall sample of 300 journalists, as they also chose not to participate.

Measures

The fully standardized master questionnaire, developed in English by the central administration of the project, was translated into Spanish, for Chile and Mexico, and into Portuguese for Brazil. The measurements were designed on the basis of the seven dimensions of journalism culture discussed earlier. First, 12 items were asked in order to measure the journalists' self-perceptions regarding the importance of different institutional roles. Each item was scored on a five-point scale where 1 corresponded to 'not important at all', and 5 corresponded to 'extremely important'. Then, 14 items were designed to measure the journalists' level of agreement or disagreement with certain important

epistemological beliefs and ethical ideologies. These items were also scored on a five-point scale, where 1 corresponded to 'strongly disagree' and 5 corresponded to 'strongly agree'.

Findings

A general characterization of the three culture domains among journalists was achieved by comparing the mean scores as well as percentages of 'extreme importance' and 'strong agreement' of the journalists' responses in each of the evaluated dimensions. The significance of differences across countries was determined through analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Institutional roles

The results show that the professional values of detachment and non-involvement have greater acceptance than the interventionist functions of journalism among the Brazilian, Mexican and Chilean news workers (see Table 3). However, journalists from Mexico and Chile scored higher on the active pole of this dimension, giving significantly more support to set the political agenda and to influence public opinion. Brazilian journalists, in contrast, tend to favour a passive approach when it comes to intervention in the political and public opinion process.

This result tends to contradict Wilke's (1998) findings, which point to important differences between Chile and Mexico in this respect. One possibility is that Chilean journalists have significantly evolved in their position, since the country is moving towards the end of its political transition in an environment of greater stability and individual freedoms.

Differences between countries are especially important in terms of influencing public opinion, as they account for 19 percent of the overall variance. It seems that the high political parallelism shared by Mexico and Chile, as well as the more political tradition that the press has historically had in both countries since their origins, would be similarly modelling the importance that journalists give to the interventionist role.

In the Chilean case, for instance, the press had turned into a political battlefield until the start of the military dictatorship in 1973, and were called by many authors the 'trench press' (Bernedo and Porath, 2003; Dooner, 1989; Lagos et al., 2009). Although this characteristic disappeared during the military regime, the make-up of the Chilean press is based on the political parties' influence: in fact, a large part of the opposition media that came about during the 1980s survived because of the financing provided by political parties and national and international political movements (Dermota, 2002).

Advocating for social change is the only aspect of interventionism that the Mexicans value more than their Brazilian colleagues, but especially more than their Chilean peers.

Regarding the second dimension, power distance, journalists from the three nations tend to give more support to the functions linked to the adversary pole of the continuum (see Table 3). This evidence corroborates earlier findings suggesting that Latin American journalists have a more critical attitude (Waisbord, 2000), especially during

Table 3. Institutional roles

	Chile		Brazil		Mexico		Differences among countries ^b Significance
	Mean ^a	% Saying 'extremely important'	Mean ^a	% Saying 'extremely important'	Mean ^a	% Saying 'extremely important'	
To be an absolutely detached observer	4.24	46.0	4.42	58.6	4.48	59.0	.080
To act as watchdog of the government	3.80	30.0	4.45	58.0	3.90	41.0	.000**
To provide citizens with the information they need to make political decisions	3.98	32.3	4.81	83.0	4.49	62.0	.000**
To concentrate mainly on news that will attract the widest possible audience	3.44	12.2	2.74	3.0	3.39	17.0	.000**
To set the political agenda	3.30	17.3	2.65	3.0	3.20	9.0	.000**
To convey a positive image of political and business leadership	2.01	3.0	1.43	1.0	1.70	3.0	.000**
To provide the audience with the information that is most interesting	3.89	31.3	3.85	26.0	4.15	47.0	.064
To influence public opinion	3.93	36.4	2.59	8.0	3.55	24.0	.000**
To support official policies to bring about prosperity and development	3.23	14.1	3.17	16.2	3.11	19.0	.779
To advocate for social change	3.25	12.1	3.49	23.2	3.89	38.0	.000**
To act as watchdog of business elites	3.52	20.4	3.28	25.0	3.49	24.0	.365
To motivate people to participate in civic activity and political discussion	3.51	16.0	3.74	28.0	4.16	51.0	.000**

** $p \leq .001$.

^a Scale ranges from 1 = 'not important at all' to 5 = 'extremely important'.

^b Calculated by one-way independent ANOVA.

moments of political tension, illustrated by the growing number of investigative reports over the last years (Brito, 2003; Hughes, 2006; Lagos, 2009; Lawson, 2002).

Although no differences are observed in terms of the importance awarded to vigilance of the economic elite, Brazilian journalists give significantly more support to acting as a watchdog of the government than Mexicans and Chileans. The results support the evidence found by Herscovitz and Cardoso (1998) among Brazilian journalism over 10 years ago, showing a certain stability of the news workers' professional culture, at least within this aspect.

In contrast, opportunist values in journalism tend to find little support. Although in general, most of the journalists surveyed disagree with the idea that media should convey a positive image of political and business leadership, the Brazilians and Mexicans reject this notion more than the Chileans. The higher centralization of the country, as well as the small size and larger concentration of the media could explain the greater proximity that, comparatively, Chilean journalists have with *de facto* powers. It is also possible that the better evaluation of the Chilean political class in comparison with the rest of the region, as well as the low levels of fragility presented by its democratic institutionalization, influences journalists' conceptions.

Willingness to support public policies that generate social development and well-being is the only aspect of this dimension positively evaluated by the three groups studied. One of the reasons that could explain this result is the level of developing characteristics in these countries. In fact, journalists from all of the developed nations included in the larger project to which this research belongs gave significantly less importance to this function (Hanitzsch et al., 2011).

In addition, the relevant public debate on policies that deal with poverty and inequality, as well as government plans that have been considered to be central by the current administrations in the three countries ('Plan Hambre', from Luis Inácio Lula da Silva's government; or the 'Programa Puente', in the case of Presidents Ricardo Lagos and Michelle Bachelet, to mention two examples), would also contribute to this being a sensitive aspect for the press. At the same time, there are initiatives that tend to focus and raise awareness on these areas (such as the 'Pobre el que no Cambia de Mirada' prize in Chile; or the Mexican initiative www.periodistasdeapie.org.mx).

Parallel to this, the findings point to a relatively strong general support of the functions that measure both poles of the market orientation dimension. Nevertheless, important disagreements can be seen in the magnitude of importance given to the citizen-oriented approach, although different from what was hypothesized.

First, journalists from each country value the need to provide citizens with the information they need to make political decisions in significantly different degrees (see Table 3), Brazil and Chile being those who give the most and the least support, respectively, to the latter function. Second, Brazil and Chile are different from Mexico in the willingness of their journalists to motivate people to participate in civic activity and political discussion. Although the three groups pay high regard to this role of the press, the Mexicans value this idea more than their colleagues. One element that could be influencing this difference is related to the debate and institutionalization of transparency and access to public information in Mexico, which started before it did in the other two countries, where the press played a fundamental role in its acceptance.

In the case where the functions strongly submit to the market logic, providing the most interesting information tends to characterize journalism in all three countries alike. Nevertheless, concentrating on news that brings large audiences is not a vital function for the Brazilian journalists, which may confirm the importance of the local/regional public, especially in the case of radio and the printed press.⁴

Epistemological orientations

Regarding journalists' levels of objectivity in news making, the results provide evidence of the strong agreement among the Chilean, Brazilian and Mexican journalists, in terms of not letting their personal beliefs and convictions influence their reporting. In a similar vein, the journalists from the three nations support impartiality and neutrality in their journalistic practices, showing that these values are no longer a distinct trait of western journalists. Nevertheless, significant differences are observed among the groups regarding the importance given to each one of these aspects. The journalists also make a clear distinction between both of the related items linked to journalism's objectiveness (see Table 4).

In the first case, the country scores reveal that Mexican journalists are different from the Brazilians, as they give more importance to impartiality. This could be explained by the fact that a non-ideological stance is the safest way to operate when trying to minimize conflict or confrontation with the political and economic powers, and it helps to cater for a wider audience (Márquez, 2010).

In the second case, differences are generated specifically between Chilean and Brazilian journalists, the latter giving more support to the notion that journalists can depict reality as it is. Albuquerque and Roxo da Silva (2009) argue that the neutral role of the press defended by Brazilian journalists has allowed them to claim that they are performing a public service, and they therefore require autonomy from their superiors.

On the other side of the continuum, little general support was found among journalists' views towards providing orientation and making clear which side of a dispute has the better position. Nevertheless, it is again the Brazilians that differ significantly, rejecting this position more than the Mexicans and Chileans.

In terms of the empirical dimension, Table 4 shows that Brazilian, Chilean and Mexican journalists have a positive attitude towards both providing analysis in reporting, and the separation of facts and opinion, the Mexicans giving significantly more support to both aspects.

Journalists from Brazil and Mexico have the most favourable attitude towards making claims only if they are substantiated by hard evidence, although Chilean journalist also agree with this idea to a great extent. The high importance given by the former two to this aspect may be seen as an indication of the stronger regulations and constraints that the press must face there.⁵

Not publishing information that cannot be verified is comparatively the worst evaluated item in this dimension, not generating a significant difference among countries. It seems that political and media influences do not strongly account for this dimension of professional epistemology, which makes us suspect that this could be better explained at the organizational, media routines or individual level. The proportion of variance

Table 4. Epistemological orientations

	Chile		Brazil		Mexico		Differences among countries ^b Significance
	Mean ^a	% Saying 'strongly agree'	Mean ^a	% Saying 'strongly agree'	Mean ^a	% Saying 'strongly agree'	
I do not allow my own beliefs and convictions to influence my reporting	4.29	54.5	4.29	52.5	4.28	55.0	.993
I provide analysis of events and issues in my work	3.99	38.0	3.97	39.0	4.55	62.0	.000**
I think that facts speak for themselves	3.75	18.0	3.76	26.3	4.16	48.0	.000**
I remain strictly impartial in my work	4.24	49.5	3.98	32.3	4.34	54.0	.014*
I make claims only if they are substantiated by hard evidence and reliable sources	4.36	46.0	4.71	74.7	4.60	65.0	.000**
I think that journalists can depict reality as it is	3.62	16.2	4.05	40.8	3.82	34.0	.013**
I always make clear which side in a dispute has the better position	3.00	9.0	2.26	3.0	2.78	5.0	.000**
I always stay away from information that cannot be verified	3.55	22.0	3.46	38.4	3.66	35.0	.571

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .001$.

^a Scale ranges from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'.

^b Calculated by one-way independent ANOVA.

explained by the variables within this dimension (less than 7 percent) also supports this view.

Ethical ideologies

Regarding the relativism dimension, the findings show that most Chilean, Brazilian and Mexican journalists support the existence of universal ethical principles that should be followed regardless the situation and context (see Table 5). Comparatively speaking, however, Chilean journalists are the ones who present the greatest levels of flexibility in this sense, being significantly different from their Brazilian and Mexican peers.

Of all the lists of items that characterized the three domains of journalism culture, the possibility that journalists formulate their own codes of conduct is, specifically, the aspect that ended up being the most controversial. One-fifth of the overall variation in the journalists' responses is due to cross-country differences, with all three differing

Table 5. Ethical ideologies

	Chile		Brazil		Mexico		Differences among countries ^b Significance
	Mean ^a	% Saying 'strongly agree'	Mean ^a	% Saying 'strongly agree'	Mean ^a	% Saying 'strongly agree'	
There are ethical principles which are so important that they should be followed by all journalists, regardless of situation and context	4.02	38.0	4.82	87.0	4.57	73.0	.000**
Journalists should avoid questionable methods of reporting in any case, even if this means not getting the story	3.83	33.7	4.02	38.4	3.95	41.0	.434
Ethical dilemmas in news coverage are often so complex that journalists should be allowed to formulate their own individual codes of conduct	3.57	27.0	2.08	4.0	2.78	7.0	.000**
Reporting and publishing a story that can potentially harm others is always wrong, irrespective of the benefits to be gained	3.44	26.3	2.16	12.1	2.96	18.2	.000**
What is ethical in journalism varies from one situation to another	3.27	19.0	2.15	8.0	3.14	19.0	.000**
There are situations in which harm is justifiable if it results in a story that produces a greater good	3.48	19.4	3.31	26.3	3.05	11.1	.053*

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .001$.

^a Scale ranges from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'.

^b Calculated by one-way independent ANOVA.

significantly from each other. Brazil is the most reluctant to accept said practice, tending to follow the ethical ideologies usually present in most western, and particularly US and German journalism practices (Hanitzsch et al., 2011).

In terms of the levels of idealism declared by the journalist, the majority agreed with the necessity to avoid questionable methods of reporting, even if this meant not getting the story.

Nevertheless, Chilean journalists showed a stronger normative orientation regarding the acceptance of harmful consequences in comparison to the Mexicans, and especially to the Brazilians (see Table 5). On the other pole of the dimension, surprisingly, Chilean journalists agree with the Brazilians and distance themselves from the Mexicans in assuming that harm is justifiable in situations where the results in a story produce a greater good. Although the differences between countries in this respect only accounts for 2 percent of the overall variance, some organizational, media routines or individual factors could be responsible for the similar pattern that Brazil and Chile show on this aspect. A possible candidate could be the greater development that investigative journalism has had on television in both countries, using ethically controversial methods (Christofoletti, 2008; Lagos, 2009).

In the same vein, the great diversity of the levels of idealism declared by the Chilean journalists could have to do with large internal divisions about how to confront the profession. Besides, it is possible to think that the desire for flexibility also relates to the relative importance of means vs ends in a professional context, leading them to adapt their more or less idealist position depending on the circumstances.

Discussion

This work described Chilean, Brazilian and Mexican journalists' role conception, epistemological orientations and ethical ideologies, finding both common and particular trends that emerge from the comparative analysis.

Although the professional values of detachment, being a watchdog of the government and business elite, as well as both the citizen-oriented and consumer-oriented approach, are considered the most important institutional roles among Mexican, Chilean and Brazilian journalists, significant differences were observed in terms of the levels of importance given to each dimension.

Regarding *interventionism* and *power distance*, the data support, to some extent, the idea that the type of political culture and higher political parallelism that exist in Mexico and Chile could explain the level of approval that journalists give to both media functions, trying to intervene and influence public opinion, but without significantly damaging the de facto powers.

In terms of the *consumer-oriented approach*, but above all the *civic role* of the press, the findings do not present enough evidence for our initial conceptual frame.

Concerning the journalists' epistemological orientations, more support is given to the press's *objective stance*, although specific functions bring Chile closer to Mexico. In this sense, it is interesting that while the journalists from both these countries give greater importance to the value of impartiality, it is Brazilians who give the most relevance to neutrality. Donsbach and Klett (1993) already found different notions of objectivity among US and European news media journalists almost two decades ago, as did Pounds (2010) between Italian and British hard-news reporters. Although the proportion of variance explained by those variables was low, this is an aspect that should be examined in-depth in future studies, in order to understand how journalistic values are being interpreted in the Latin American context.

Within the dimension of *empiricism*, the results reveal that Chilean and Brazilian journalists, but above all, the Mexicans, tend to be close to both providing analysis in

reporting, and the separation of facts and opinion, and to a lesser extent, to not publishing information that cannot be verified. These mixed signals, which appear contradictory at first glance, may reflect a distinctive structure of Latin American journalism culture, where both extremes of the dimension are equally relevant.

Regarding the ethical ideologies domain, journalists in general tend to strongly promote low levels of relativism. Mexican and Brazilian journalists, however, are likely to approve of universal ethical practices more than Chileans, supporting one of our conceptual expectations. Finally, the *idealism* dimension is another of the measured aspects not able to clearly sustain any of the two competing scenarios that this study proposed.

Conclusions

The results reported in this article contribute to the research and theory of professional journalism culture in several ways. On the one hand, journalists' roles, values and professional attitudes are described for three countries not previously compared in this respect. At the same time, the study analysed how the differences that these nations have in their political culture, political structures and media systems fit with their professional journalism cultures.

Two competing conceptual explanations were tested: the predominance of political structures, levels of press freedom and the size and concentration of media ownership vs the dominance of political cultures and political parallelism. Although the findings are more consistent with the second expectation – especially those related to the domain of institutional roles – the amount of variance explained by the variables was only moderate, and none of the two proposed scenarios appears to explain the differences among countries on its own. Meanwhile, the epistemological and ethical values embraced by the journalists seem to be trapped in struggling areas of ambiguity and duplicity, where organizational, media routines or individual factors could play a more important role than social differences, as previous findings of the Worlds of Journalism Project have suggested (Hanitzsch et al., 2010, 2011).

There are, however, important limitations that need to be pointed out: the original purpose of this study was to allow researchers the establishment of functional equivalence of constructs that would allow for comparison among nations, which has affected sample size. In fact, the individual country samples are rather small, and may not warrant a perfect representation of the various national populations of journalists. Furthermore, considering that this is a cross-national comparison of some Latin American countries, we only have three cases on the sample at this level, making the proportion of variation hide the real weight of the countries when the sample is complete. In this sense, the existence of social variation should be fully tested in the future by multilevel analysis that includes more nations from the region.

Second, this study was based on the journalists' professional self-perception, which may not fully correspond with their actions, as many authors have suggested (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Vos, 2002). In fact, several results that turned out to be contradictory could be understood as an internal struggle between what the journalists feel they should do (or want to do), and their everyday practice.

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Notes

1. www.worldsofjournalism.org.
2. In the case of Brazil, comparative research in the field has been even more difficult because of the language barrier, since it is the only Portuguese-speaking country in Latin America.
3. It is important to point out that Chilean public television – Televisión Nacional de Chile, TVN – does not follow the traditional models for public channels: it has political autonomy, but it does not receive public funding and is self-financing like the private television networks.
4. Even though three Brazilian newspapers present themselves as of ‘national reach’, only a small proportion of the daily circulation is distributed nationwide.
5. Brazil, for instance, had until 2009 a Press Law, created in 1967 by the military regime.

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