

Tomorrow's Journalists

Trends in the Development of the Journalistic Profession as Seen by Swedish and Russian Students

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Abstract

The present article describes trends in the development of the journalistic profession as seen by Swedish and Russian students in journalism. The study focuses on the results of a survey carried out among students at three Swedish and three Russian institutions of higher education. The survey demonstrates numerous similarities in ideals and values as well as in understanding of the professional code of journalism among students in Russia and Sweden. Historical background is evident in the students' different interpretations of key problems of journalism and in their assessment of freedom of the press. Finally, the research questions the professional future of journalism, focusing on possible threats and presenting several development scenarios for the industry.

Keywords: professional culture of journalists, press freedom, values and attitudes, de-professionalization, 'bloggization', commercialization.

Introduction

Convergence and multimedia practices, the appearance of blogs, and rising commercial interests are some of the significant changes we are now observing in the media sphere almost all over the world. This also influences the professional identity of journalists and the future journalists now being educated in journalism departments at universities. In light of this background, Swedish and Russian media researchers initiated a common project to compare the trends among journalism students in the two countries.

The aim of the present article is to demonstrate the expectations and attitudes of Swedish and Russian students studying journalism, media and communications with regard to the mass media in the country they live in and the values of the journalistic profession (how they regard them in modern terms, taking into account the current situation on the media market). A further aim is to compare the obtained results with the results of earlier comparative analyses of journalistic reality. We also try to reveal 'global' and 'nationally determined' trends in students' views and answer the question of what they have in common and what is distinctive in their perceptions of the professional values and norms in the journalism environment in Sweden and Russia.

The analysis concerns four areas:

1. The professional values, norms and expectations for the future among the students.
2. The students' opinions about the media situation in relation to the state, commercial pressure and the audience.
3. The interrelationship between the current situation for the media and the professional values shared by the students. Can differences in norms and values be explained by differences in the media situation in the two countries?
4. Are there common professional values and norms among journalism students in Sweden and Russia? What kinds of values are national, and what values are common?

Theoretical Background

Comparative media studies are a growing field in media research. *Glocalization* processes place questions about similarities and differences between media systems in the center of media studies, and a wide range of books have given a broader picture of media systems around the world than is provided by the dominant Anglo-Saxon perspective (e.g., Curran/Park 2000). Most of this literature on journalism and mass communication, which has produced innumerable media models, is different from the conventional extremes of libertarianism and authoritarianism, and the suggested classification of media models is rather various (see, e.g., Nordenstreng 2007: 168-177).

Thus, Daniel C Hallin and Paolo Mancini compare the media systems in 18 countries in Western Europe and North America in a book that has become a classic (2004). They argue that most literature on media is highly ethnocentric, only referring to a single country and written in general terms, as though the model being analyzed were universal. Hallin and Mancini emphasize that comparative analysis can protect media research from false generalizations, but they also encourage giving more general explanations when this is appropriate.

Nevertheless, Hallin and Mancini chose to compare media systems in countries with a generally similar historical and political background. They did not include any post-communist country or other countries outside the Western sphere among the 18 countries compared in the book. They compared the systems in relation to four dimensions: development of the mass press, relations between the political system and the media, journalistic professionalism and the role of the state. The result is three different models of media systems:

- The polarized pluralist model (The Mediterranean countries)
- The democratic corporatist model (The northern European countries)
- The liberal model (USA, UK, Canada and Ireland)

They did not argue that the revealed models are valid for all countries. Hallin and Mancini concluded that the liberal model is gaining in influence due to globalization and neo-liberal dominance, but that nevertheless the polarized pluralist model is most widely applicable to other media systems outside the 18 countries they covered. For example, in post-communist countries and developing countries where the state has a strong role,

the media are an instrument of political struggle, the press has a limited circulation and professional norms and values are relatively weak (Hallin/Mancini 2004: 306).

Without casting doubt upon their views on the issue mentioned above, but having in mind that each country has its own model of the so-called interdependence of media-politics-economy-society interactions that might be reflected in journalistic activity, we in our research are concerned with the third dimension of the Hallin/Mancini model – the degree of professionalization of journalism, professional values and ethics – based on perceptions of the profession among journalism students in Sweden and Russia.

Using this limited scope, it is also possible to make a comparative analysis of parts of the media systems in Sweden that belong to the democratic corporatist model and Russia – a country outside the suggested models. Recent studies have claimed that Russia is related to a not yet widely accepted synthetic construction called the “Eurasian” media model (Vartanova 2007; De-Smaele 1999), which combines ‘Western’ and ‘Asian’ features in terms of legislation, state-media relations and self-regulation mechanisms.

A Craft of Profession?

There has been an ongoing debate as to whether journalism is a *craft* or can be considered a *profession* like the traditional professions of medicine and law (Tumber and Prentoulis 2005), where a profession is seen as more than an occupation. According to sociological research, the professional logic is a way of controlling the work using rules and standards defined by the professionals themselves.

To constitute a profession, the members of an occupation have to be able to control their own work, to have autonomy in their everyday practice. Sociologists provide a number of means that allow them to exercise such control (Freidson 2001): a knowledge monopoly and a clear division of labor, and the power to keep others outside the profession by requiring, for example, some kind of legitimization, a strong professional education and research, professional organizations with ethical rules and standards, and finally an ideology that asserts greater commitment to doing good work than to economic gain and to the quality rather than the economic efficiency of work.

Journalism cannot be fully regarded as a profession; it would be against freedom of expression to demand any kind of legitimization from those expressing themselves in the media. Media scholars have thus considered journalism as a semi-profession, mostly because it is not possible to exclude non-professionals from the field. There will always be many routes into journalism (Shoemaker and Reese 1996; McQuail 2005), making it difficult to identify an exclusive professional track.

However, having said this, a process of ongoing professionalization has been observed by media scholars over the past 30 to 40 years. An important factor in this process has been the development of a professional ideology (which includes the attention given to notions such as objectivity, integrity and public service), the growth of professional institutions, and codes of practice (Tumber and Prentoulis 2005). Moreover, comparative studies have shown that journalistic values – as concerns the role of journalists, ethical standards and what is important in the job – are very much the same in different parts of the world, even though the interpretation of these values may differ. The differences are considered to be a result of differences in cultural background and history more than of the difference between media systems (Weaver 2005).

The journalistic profession is also changing due to media developments, both in technology and in economy/ownership/structure. The notion of evolving consensus on the qualities and skills belonging to the world of journalism will change as “technologies of news relay broaden the field of who might be considered a journalist and what might be considered journalism” (Zelizer 2004: 23).

Some suggest that the three major constituencies in the world of news – journalists, newsmakers, and the audience – will blur into each other, with audiences becoming part of the process of journalism (Gillmor 2004: xxiv-xxv). Others suggest that the professional culture of journalism is becoming more diverse, open and dynamic, as journalists begin being identified as ‘media workers’ with a ‘portfolio work life’ based on flexibility and multi-skilling (Deuze 2007: 141-170). Some researchers describe the development as the ‘de-professionalization’ of journalism (Nygren 2008).

Values Reproduced in Education

Education is a central part of a profession. In a professional education, ideals and norms for the profession are transferred to and reproduced in new members. In the US, journalism education developed during the early 20th century and was an important part of professionalization (Tumber/Prentoulis 2005). Still, one of four journalists in the US has never studied journalism, and in many other countries the proportion is below 50 percent.

In Sweden, the proportion of journalists with a background in some kind of professional journalism education has risen since 1989 from 42% to 67% (Edström 2007). But during the same period, journalism education has become a more diverse system, where links to the profession are weaker. Journalism education started quite late in Sweden. In 1959, the Newspaper Publishers and the Journalist Union started the first one-year course for journalists, and three years later it was transformed into two state journalism schools, each offering a two year course.

From the beginning, journalism education was very professionally oriented, and students were supposed to take other courses at the universities, such as political science. There has also been a sector of professional education programs on a non-academic level (*‘folkhögskolor’*). During the past 20 years, journalism education has expanded within the academic system, the two state schools became parts of the universities, and new programs have started in six other universities. Academic journalism education is now broader, different kinds of media work as well as other academic subjects are also often included in the exam (Hultén 2000).

In Russia, journalism education, as a self-determined branch (sections, courses) of the educational system, appeared during the first years of Soviet power (1918-1921). Later in the 1930s, these sections were re-organized into journalism departments at philological faculties of universities, and then in the 1950s, self-governing faculties of journalism were created at the universities. Unlike Western standards of journalistic education and concepts of higher education (included this field as well) in Western states, higher journalism education in Russia (university level) stipulates cycle studying (for 5 years) of philological, economic and social disciplines and special courses (for example, history of Russian and foreign journalism, journalistic genres and editing, etc.) including obligatory practice in mass media.

During the second half of the 20th century, it was considered highly prestigious (owing to the strong competition over enrollment at journalism faculties) to study journalism at such an institution, and here we mean free higher education, as opposed to paid education, which had been actively developed since the early 1990s. Journalistic education was a matter of prestige, even if one was not going to devote his future to the journalistic profession. Journalism students received a classical humanitarian education, which was basic and at the same time practically oriented towards the needs of today that could help one find a good job – this was one of the main reasons why journalism faculties in Russia were so popular. Post-perestroika stimulated free markets that resulted in the appearance of different journalistic schools that did not meet the demands of traditional journalistic education in Russia. It led to a labor surplus, which in its turn seriously affected journalistic activity and journalists' salaries in particular.

Earlier Research

In a major survey conducted in 22 countries during 1987-1988, journalism students were asked about journalistic ideals and their opinions about journalism as their future profession (Spichal/Sparks 1994). They found a similarity in journalism students' desire for independence and autonomy in journalism. They argued that some universal ethical and professional standards were emerging in journalism, at least among the students in the survey. Other surveys among professional journalists have revealed greater differences, for example concerning the role of journalism as a public watchdog on government and the role of entertainment in journalism. Also concerning ethics there were strong national differences between journalists in different countries (Weaver 2005). National surveys among journalism students show quite stable opinions and ideals, for example the reasons for becoming a journalist in the UK. The key motivations remain the same, from arrival to the program to completion (Hanna/Sanders 2007).

According to Hallin and Mancini, the Nordic countries belong to the same media-system model. Despite this, a Nordic survey among journalism students in 2005 found clear national differences when they were asked about their future profession. There is a general pattern of similarity in the values and norms of Nordic journalism students, but still there are differences (Bjørnsen et al. 2007).

Swedish journalists have been surveyed since 1989 by Gothenburg University. The surveys show stable ideals among journalists, the small changes in the results revealing a stronger commitment to their role as watchdogs on power in society and the decreased importance of functioning as a neutral mirror of events. The surveys also show the increasing influence of commercial interests in the media companies, as reported by the journalists. Journalists also accept more commercial values (Asp 2007).

The changes have been greater among Russian journalists. In a research project at Södertörn University, interviews were conducted with 40 journalists in St. Petersburg during 1997-1999 (Sosnovskaja 2000). As shown in the interviews, the journalistic identity ten years after perestroika looked less stable than it did during the Soviet era. This identity differed a great deal across different age groups, and many young journalists preferred to be market oriented and wanted to work in PR and commercial journalism with no borders towards advertising. Education was still important in making contacts for them, but their identity was not always that of a journalist. They often had close

contacts with Westerns education and values, and saw themselves as apolitical. But at the same time, interviews showed that it was difficult for Russian journalists to assimilate into a professional environment in Western countries. Their professional identity differed too much, for example in their literary style and attitudes towards facts and opinions (Sosnovskaja 2000: 156-195).

Method and Survey

The Survey

To explore the attitudes and opinions of Swedish and Russian students of journalism, media and communications, we use data collected at Swedish and Russian Universities, three from each country: Stockholm University (SU), Göteborg University (GU), Södertorn University (SH), and Moscow State University (MSU), Nizhniy Novgorod State University (NNSU), Ural State University (USU). The universities in question are major schools in both countries situated both in capitals and regions. All of them vary in size, geographical location, traditions and history (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1. Universities in Sweden and Russia: Selected Characteristics

Country/ University	Year of establish- ment	Location	Faculties/ Depart- ments	Number of students	Journalism Faculties/ Departments	Students in journalism
<i>Sweden</i>						
SU	1878/1960	Stockholm	67	50.000	1989 D.	450
GU	1954	Göteborg	57	50.000	1990 D.	250
SH	1996	Flemingsberg	8	12.000	1998 D.	310
<i>Russia</i>						
MSU	1755	Moscow	40	30.000	1947/1952; D/F	2 700
NNSU	1916	Nizhniy Novgorod	19	29.600	1992 D.	510
USU	1920	Yekaterinburg	13	16.000	1939 F.	1 130

The survey was conducted during spring 2008. A total of 198 students from Sweden and 244 from Russia completed the survey (see *Figure 2*). The survey shows some differences between journalism students in Russia and Sweden:

Figure 2. Description of the Participants (without non-answered)

Country/ University	Location	Survey: number of students	Age under 25		Experience in journalism		Gender			
			%	Qua	%	Qua	Male %	Qua	Female %	Qua
<i>Sweden</i>										
SU	Capital	62	41.9	26	58.1	36	24.2	15	71.0	44
GU	City	76	67.1	51	25.0	19	46.1	35	48.7	37
SH	Suburb	60	60.0	36	31.7	19	31.7	19	63.3	38
Total: Sweden		198	56.3	113	38.2	74	34	69	61	119
<i>Russia</i>										
MSU	Capital	70	100	70	92.9	65	20	14	77.1	54
NNU	City	98	99.0	97	74.5	73	17.3	17	82.7	81
USU	City	76	93.4	71	76.3	58	11.8	9	81.6	62
Total: Russia		244	97.3	238	81.2	196	16.4	40	80.5	197

- The Russian students are young, nearly all of them under 25. They are also dominated by women; 80 percent of the students are female and most of them have some experience in journalism.
- The Swedish students are older, 44 percent over 25 years. The female majority is less strong, at 61 percent of the students. The majority has no earlier experience in journalism.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed with two main aims: to define the standpoint of future journalists and understand their attitudes towards existing journalistic norms/traditions and to illustrate the respondents' views on the current situation in the contemporary media sphere in Sweden and Russia. All respondents were allowed to choose one answer or more and/or to write a free comment. Moreover, the separate section 'Free comments' was added at the end of the questionnaire to give students an extra opportunity for self-expression. Completing the survey took approximately 15-20 min.

A brief analysis of the data in the first stage of the research indicated some tendency towards 'correct' answers, that is, the kinds of answers students have learned from books and teachers. Thus, the role of the journalist was defined by students in both countries as 'informative, educational and entertaining'. What does this tell us? It probably indicates a high level of education, but not the ability to think critically and maturely.

'Free Comments'

Our respondents were asked to make a comment (if they wished to) on press freedom and the current state of mass media in their country (there is a space for comments following each question). Approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of all participants wished to write (add) something at the end of the questionnaire. They generally wrote about commercialization of the media sector and limitation of freedom of the press for economical reasons. Swedish students expressed a great deal of concern over the situation in Swedish Public service, which they felt has become increasingly profit oriented. Some students evaluated the national media as relatively free, but many of them also insisted on the impossibility of press freedom in general and wrote about the dependence of media on owners and so on.

Results and Data

The questions in the survey can be divided into two categories:

- 1) Journalistic values among the students
- 2) Students' views on the situation for journalism in each country.

The first type of question deals with the students' interests and their views on press freedom and the duties of professional journalism. The second category consists of questions about the current state of media in the countries, about the threats to freedom of the press and their opinions on the future of journalism.

First we address the questions about professional values:

Question 1. What Kind of Journalism do You Want to Work with?

Both Swedish and Russian future journalists intend to devote themselves primarily to culture (student from both countries have the highest index in this category compared with other figures in the column). The Swedes are ready to actively cover political events and political affairs, which is different from the Russians: the Swedish figure in the category ‘political’ is more than twice as high as the Russian figure. This difference may have several explanations:

As it can be seen from the Russian students’ responses, relatively few of them intend to deal with politics, probably because as witnesses (or bystanders) to societal changes in the country, they understand how difficult it could be to be independent – especially if one plans to devote his or her professional career to political journalism.

In Sweden, political reporting has a higher status among students. Political journalism is an important part of the curriculum in Sweden, and the role of the media in democracy is often emphasized. The high figure for political reporting is also equal to the survey among Nordic students (Bjørnsen et al. 2007).

The Russian students are more interested in business and economics than the Swedish students are. The Russian students’ interest in business press (BP) may have been caused by the reconstruction of basic industrial enterprises and hence by the economic growth and development of different markets in the country, all of which make financial information and specialized publications/programs increasingly relevant. On the other hand, looking at the history of BP in Russia and the correlation between professional values and success, we notice that the business press in Russia has a good reputation in society as a quality product¹.

In Sweden, business journalism has grown during the past 20-30 years with the growing importance of economy and markets. But it has less prestige among students than culture, science and sports. Moreover, many business journalists are recruited from business schools and not from journalism.

Entertainment and glamour is the third largest area of interest among Russian students, at Nizhniy Novgorod it is even the biggest. In Sweden the figure is lower, perhaps because many media outlets make no distinction between culture and entertainment. In the Swedish survey, the figure for entertainment is lower than the figure for culture – perhaps the word ‘glamour’ gives a low status image to the phenomenon in the present survey.

Table 1. What Kind of Journalism do You Want to Work with? (number and percent)

Question	Sweden		Russia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 Political	89	44.1	48	20.2
2 Business/economic	18	9.4	43	18
3 Entertainment/glamour	38	18.6	66	25.8
4 Sport	42	21	31	12.5
5 Culture	127	63.8	85	35.5
6 General	82	41.1	66	26.3
7 Science/technology	32	16.8	13	5.7
8 Don't know	7	3.4	3	1.1
9 Other	31	15.5	39	16.1

Question 2. *Why do You Want to Work with this Kind of Journalism?*

Both Swedish and Russian students are primarily going into journalism because it is interesting. Altogether their responses in this category surpassed 80% in each case (all six universities). But differences present themselves for other reasons – for Russian students, journalism is also a profitable occupation (the combination ‘interesting-profitable’ was rather popular), especially for students studying in Moscow. Journalistic activity also could help them become famous (students from regional NNSU chose this option most of all).

In Sweden, very few students reply that fame and earning a great deal of money are important. One reason may be that journalists’ wages are not comparatively high in Sweden. This result is similar to results from UK students in journalism – having a good income is not important to them. The work itself is most important, the fact that journalism seems to be an interesting and challenging job (Hanna/Sanders 2007).

Table 2. *Why do You Want to Work with this Kind of Journalism? (number and percent)*

Question	Sweden		Russia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 It is interesting	181	91.2	205	84.6
2 It is profitable	9	4.7	59	24.8
3 It can make me famous	7	3.4	28	11.2
4 Don't know	5	2.5	6	2.3
5 Other reason	32	16.4	27	11.3

Question 3. *What do You Think about Professional Journalists’ Duties to the Audience?*

Here we have discovered that the young generation of Swedish and Russian journalists is generally ready to follow the well-known BBC slogan: Journalists must inform, then educate and only then entertain. Students from both countries agree that the duties of professional journalists are not to serve any state or political interests, and that representatives of this profession must scrutinize the powers that be.

Entertainment is an important part of journalism. This opinion is widely presented in the Swedish students’ answers, while future journalists from Russia do not agree entirely. At the same time, the Russian respondents’ attitude towards the duty to entertain is not as unanimous, for example, only 4.3% of Moscow respondents chose this option, while 44.9% of those from Nizhniy Novgorod agreed with this assertion.

The concept of the media as an arena for public discussion has great support among Swedish students; it is the second most important duty for journalists (77% agree). In Russia, the figure is much lower, only 21.5% (Moscow shows the lowest figure). The difference could be explained in relation to history. In the Nordic survey, too, the ‘public discussion arena function’ is important, because the media have long had such a function in the Nordic countries. In Russia, public discussion was often associated (especially in late 1990s) with political struggles between the powers that be, something the Russian students of journalism do not want to be a part of. This is also clear in the next question, where the Russian students say that the most important part of press freedom is freedom from the state and those in power.

Table 3. *What do You Think about Professional Journalists' Duties to the Audience? (number and percent)*

Question	Sweden		Russia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 To provide an arena for public discussions	154	77.4	53	21.5
2 To serve state/government interests	6	2.9	15	5.7
3 To serve political interests	4	1.9	14	5.3
4 To educate	119	60.3	105	41.4
5 To scrutinize the powers that be	85	42.3	76	29.9
6 To inform	180	90.8	176	69.4
7 To entertain	105	52.8	69	26.1
8 Don't know	2	1	1	0.5
9 Other	8	3.9	8	3.1

Question 4. *How do You Personally Define "Press Freedom"?*

As already mentioned, the interpretation of 'press freedom' differs between students in the two countries. Not completely, but in a way that reveals different ways of understanding the question:

In Russia, freedom from the state and those in power is the most important part of press freedom. Freedom from commercial influence is also important. But many Russian students also think that freedom of the press is impossible, and that plurality could be an alternative. In Sweden, the students also emphasize freedom from state and commercial interests. But equally important are the freedom to criticize political power and to write anything one wishes.

The Russian students emphasize the structures and do not think as much about the limits of expression. The opposite applies to the Swedish students – to them, freedom means the freedom to criticize and to have no limits on expression. We would explain the Russian students' 'inattention' to this option with reference to the post-perestroika period, when the freedom to say anything and everything you wish constituted a peculiar kind of breaking of the Soviet tether – a freedom that, in its turn, was actively used everywhere and by everybody.

This freedom without rational limits (in relation to journalistic ethics, for example) and this unbridled criticism led to a loss of trust in the mass media among the Russian population. And hence, in responses to last question about professional values, we discover the marks left by this experience: To the Russian students, it is important to consider whether the information may lead to injury or undermine state security. This is not an important issue for the Swedish students. Such a difference in students' responses to option 2 (freedom to say anything and everything you wish) could be also explained as follows: The Russian students have a better understanding of what the famous journalistic assertion – "The word is our weapon! But it is also our disaster..." – can entail (Agranovsky 1999: 365).

Table 4. *How do You Personally Define ‘Press Freedom’? (number and percent)*

Question	Sweden		Russia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 Freedom from state/power holders	133	66.7	36	56.1
2 Freedom to say (write) everything you wish	130	65.2	50	20.4
3 Freedom of press is impossible; plurality of press could be an alternative	16	8.1	75	30.9
4 Freedom from commercial influence	81	41.1	79	32.1
5 Freedom to criticize the government/ political power	140	70.2	44	18
6 Don't know	1	0.6	0	0
7 Other	5	2.5	6	2.2

Question 5. *Which Values do you Consider to Be Most Important in Determining Press Freedom?*

Students in both countries ranked people’s right to be informed as the main value after press freedom. But when we look further at the responses, there are clear differences:

Aspects of excessive use of freedom of the mass media are written down in detail in the Russian federal law on mass media, Article 4. And despite the fact that people have the right to be informed (the majority of Russian respondents agreed with this assertion) – many of them also understand (as mentioned above) that some information can lead to injury – a combination of variants 1 and 3 is more common in the Russian students’ responses. But nevertheless, they feel that ‘state security’ is of much less importance than citizens’ rights to information.

In Sweden, the students assess democratic values much higher than the Russian students do, because the aspect of possible *traumatization* is not as important to Swedish students, at least not when they talk about press freedom. There is a system of self-regulation in Sweden concerning such cases, for example whether a journalist should publish the names of suspected criminals or how to avoid harming personal integrity. Still this system is not discussed in terms of press freedom, rather in terms of ethical questions. State security is not a hot question for Swedish students.

Table 5. *Which Values do You Consider to be Most Important in Determining Press Freedom? (number and percent)*

Question	Sweden		Russia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 People have the right to be informed	163	82.5	177	73.6
2 Democratic values should come first	131	66.4	41	16.8
3 Some information can lead to injury	31	15.7	100	40.0
4 The security of the state should come first	1	0.6	28	10.8
5 Don't know	5	2.4	0	0
6 Other	1	0	5	2

Opinions on the Situation for Journalism and Media

The second category of questions concerns the situation for journalism in the two countries. The responses are not meant to give any kind of ‘objective’ evaluation of the situation -- rather the students’ views on the professional area they are planning to enter in a few years.

Question 6. *What are Your Views on the Current State of the Media in Your Country?*

Swedish students define the current state of the mass media in their own country primarily as commercial and too entertainment oriented. But the situation also differs a great deal depending on media type, according to the Swedish students. The situation is quite stable in the eyes of the students, and very few think that the media are highly political.

Russian future journalists understand that the trend towards commercialization is becoming increasingly visible on the Russian media market, 54.4 % says the media, as a whole, are very commercial (the figures for students from the provinces were even higher). Entertainment is most vividly presented in the Russian media sphere – more than a half of the Russian respondents agree with the assertion that there is too much entertainment in the media industry today. But at the same time, they do not think journalists’ primary interest is in entertaining (see Question 3).

Besides this commercial trend, the Russian students feel the media are very political. This answer was given by 38.7%, with the highest figure from Ural State University. This figure echoes the question above about the importance of freedom from the state and those in power – the students see that the media are often used for political purposes.

Table 6. *What are Your Views on the Current State of the Media in Your Country? (number and percent)*

Question	Sweden		Russia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 Stable	58	28.7	14	5.9
2 It is very political	16	8.2	92	38.7
3 It encourages investigative journalism	24	11.7	18	7.1
4 It is very commercial	90	46.0	134	54.4
5 Other	7	3.4	14	5.7
6 It is under stagnation	27	13.8	32	13.6
7 Too much like entertainment	65	33.9	159	64.5
8 Depends on the media type	74	37.6	23	9.7
9 Don't know	8	4.1	0	0

Question 7. *Do you Agree with the Following: “Journalists in My Country Fulfill Their Responsibilities to the Audience”?*

The Russian students are also more critical of journalists in their country than the Swedish students are of Swedish journalists. The majority agree that the journalists fulfill their responsibilities, but a rather large minority disagree (38%). In comments written by the Russian students, we read that journalists often follow the publication’s points of view and that journalists’ attitude towards their own activity is not critical (serious).

But at the same time, here we observe that youth write about the need to encourage and develop alternative mass media and non-commercial projects and they stress that there are journalists who do not hide any information. In their opinion, the most important thing in journalistic activity is being honest (Moscow respondents). But a great deal depends on self-censorship, which in its turn ‘depends on the political situation’. There is also an opinion that journalists working for commercial media organizations are the most objective, because they do not depend on the state.

Among Swedish students, the opinions are less critical – 72% think that the journalists fulfill their responsibilities. Identification with their future profession is strong, and their opinions about the media are less critical (see also *Table 6*). The figures are also more positive when Swedish students answer the question about ordinary people’s trust in the media.

Table 7. *Journalists Fulfill their Responsibilities to the Audience (number and percent)*

Question	Sweden		Russia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 I agree	21	10.0	16	6.2
2 I partly agree	122	62.4	114	46.7
3 I neither agree nor disagree	22	10.8	22	9.5
4 I partly disagree	31	15.8	72	30.3
5 I disagree	2	1.1	20	7.6

Question 8. *Do you Agree that “The Media are Trusted by Ordinary People”?*

When we talk about the mechanisms and functions of public confidence, we must first note that the term ‘trust’ can be understood in multiple ways. It presupposes a cluster of numerous relationships and prescriptions, for example, trust in authorities (delegating power, chosen policy approval, loyalty, hope for positive changes), and trust in representatives including personalization of institutions, relations to images, comparisons with others (according to the principle of the lesser evil), etc. (Levada 2006: 177). Different kinds of trust and degrees of confidence shape one’s own system of coordinates in the world, which can be seen in both positive (to a greater or lesser extent) and negative (to a greater or lesser extent) perceptions of the situation or reality as a whole.

According to the Russian respondents’ opinion, media consumers generally trust the mass media. We can see that more than half of all responses from the Russian universities include the option ‘partly agree’. But at the same time, there are young Russian journalists who are not satisfied with the quality of journalistic activity in Russia, and who are not so optimistic: One in four answered that they disagreed with the assertion that “people trust the mass media” (here we also observe that almost the same number of respondents who disagreed with the assertion “the media are trusted by Russians” also disagreed with the statement that journalists fulfill their responsibilities to the audience). We find some explanations for this in their comments (see Question 6).

In Sweden, the students believe that people have a great trust in the media, probably greater than in the real life, as surveys among Swedes show lower figures. Only a small majority trusts in the daily newspapers, and a larger majority trust in TV and radio. If we take a closer look at the different kinds of newspapers and TV channels, the public

trust varies considerably – from great trust in public service TV and the local daily newspaper to mistrust of the tabloids and most commercial TV channels (Holmberg/Weibull 2007).

Table 8. *The Media are Trusted by Ordinary People (number and percent)*

Question	Sweden		Russia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 I agree	47	23.2	35	14.2
2 I partly agree	114	58.0	136	55.6
3 I neither agree, nor disagree	16	8.0	10	4.3
4 I partly disagree	19	9.8	54	22.3
5 I disagree	2	1.0	9	3.4

Questions 9-10. *What do You Think about the Future of Journalism in Your Country?*

In Sweden, the future of journalism seems to be quite stable, according to the students. Nearly half of them think it will be like it is today, and the figures are highest at the old journalism departments. Among the rest, the group of pessimists is a somewhat larger than the optimists. According to the pessimists, the threats against journalism are: journalism turning into an entertainment industry, ‘*bloggization*’, and journalism turning into PR, and the rewriting of stories from strong information sources.

In Russia, students feel the future is more uncertain. The Russian students are more pessimistic – as well as more optimistic. Only 27.2 % think that the situation will remain the same. The Russian students express largely the same opinions that have been expressed by leading Russian journalism academics. Thus, Zassoursky believes that there are three scenarios according to which the mass media will develop (Zassoursky 2005: 22-23).

The optimistic scenario presupposes a big economic push for the mass media due to the presence of an educated audience that is able to pay and a diverse advertising market. Such an audience and such a market, in their turn, are created through economic reforms, which might be introduced under the optimistic scenario. The more qualified newspapers will experience increased circulation, and de-politization and de-criminalization of journalism will occur. Under the pessimistic scenario, the role of the state will strengthen so much that the mass media will turn into a symbiosis of propaganda and PR, resulting in a large proportion of tabloids. If the situation on the Russian media market remains like it is today (the third, stagnant way), we will witness economic difficulties whereby the circulation and influence of the tabloids will keep increasing, while the circulation and level of quality of the broadsheets will decline.

Table 9. *What do You Think about the Future of Professional Journalism in Your Country? (number and percent)*

Question	Sweden		Russia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 Optimistic future (profession will flourish)	34	17.1	68	28.0
2 Like today	88	44.4	67	27.2
3 Pessimistic future (profession will vanish gradually or will transform into other activities)	41	21.0	76	30.7
4 Don't know	28	14.0	20	8.8
5 Other	5	2.4	17	7.1

Question 11-14. *How is Press Freedom Developing in the Two Countries?*

Four questions in the survey concerned the situation of press freedom. The answers show a great difference in the opinions among the students in their assessment of how press freedom is practiced in Sweden and Russia.

In Sweden, nearly all students agree fully or partly that press freedom is practiced. Answering the question about the development, only one fifth says that the level has declined over the past decade. In Russia, half of the students think that press freedom is not practiced and a 43 percent think it has declined.

Table 10. *Do you agree that: "Freedom of the Press is Practiced in Swedish/Russian Media Today" (number and percent)*

Question	Sweden		Russia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 I agree	71	35.3	11	4.6
2 I partly agree	105	53.3	91	36.8
3 I neither agree, nor disagree	10	5.0	10	4.3
4 I partly disagree	9	4.8	73	30.8
5 I disagree	0	0	55	21.9

Table 11. *Do you Think that the Level of Press Freedom has Declined over the Past Decade? (number and percent)*

Question	Sweden		Russia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 No	143	71.6	134	55.4
2 Yes	42	21.7	107	43.3

The threats against press freedom in Russia are clear, according to the students who see a decline. Political reasons are a threat, says 81.1% of the students. There are also commercial reasons for the declining press freedom and in connection with this the editorial policies of media companies. Self-censorship and threats of terrorism are not major reasons, according to the opinions expressed in the survey.

In Sweden, commercial factors are the most important underlying cause of declining press freedom, according to the minor pessimistic proportion of Swedish students.

Political reasons are important for only 21 percent of the pessimistic students. In the Swedish survey, the majority of students also see state and party ownership of the media as a threat to journalism. One explanation for the difference in the opinions expressed in the surveys is that our question implies a more active threat, one not understood by so many students. But according to the survey in Sweden, state/party ownership is a potential threat to press freedom.

Table 12. *If you Think that the Level of Press Freedom has Declined over the Past Decade, What are the Reasons for This? (percentage of those answering “yes”)*

Question	Sweden		Russia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 Political reasons	11	23	104	65
2 Editorial policies if media companies	13	30.5	28	17.9
3 Self-censorship	6	14.8	18	10.4
4 State security	3	5.6	22	13.1
5 Economical/commercial reasons	30	74.1	52	33.9
6 Threats of terrorism, extremism, etc.	8	20.4	14	9.3
7 Don't know	7	14.8	5	3.3
8 Other reasons	1	2	3	1.8
Number of answers (“yes” in the Table 10)	42		107	

Conclusions and Discussion

The survey shows many similarities in the ideals and values of journalism students in Russia and Sweden. According to all students, the main reason for working with journalism is a kind of realization of their own potential – it is interesting. Four of the five top areas of interest are the same, only business (Russia) and sports (Sweden) differ. Four of the five duties for professional journalists are the same – to inform, to educate, to scrutinize power and to entertain. And the most important part of press freedom is people’s right to information – both in Russia and in Sweden.

The survey results confirm earlier research in comparative studies, showing ideals and values that are largely the same all over the world (Weaver 2005). For example, in a UK survey, the key motivations for becoming a journalist are that the job is interesting and challenging. The areas of interest are the same, with ‘soft’ news such as culture and entertainment at the top, and politics/society closely thereafter (Hanna/Sanders 2007).

But at the same time, the survey also shows clear differences in interpretations of these values and ideals. The differences can be explained both by the cultural and historical background and by the current situation in the two countries.

The Russian students emphasize commercial factors and entertainment when they describe the current state of the media. There is also a larger proportion of Russian students who want to work with business journalism and entertainment/glamour. A significant proportion of Russian students say that high wages and fame are important reasons for their area of interest.

Their views on the current situation in the mass media sector in their own country once again confirm that convergence of media cultures worldwide is taking place and that universal commercial media standards (I. Zassoursky 2002: 75) have already been

set. But the decline in newspaper reading caused by the dramatic decline in living conditions and social disappointment and the loss of respect for major social institutions like political parties and the media during the post-perestroika period in Russia (Vartanova 2002: 25) have shaped the way of thinking of future journalists.

Students in both countries emphasize the influence of commercial factors and entertainment as a main trend in the modern media world. In Sweden commercialism and entertainment are important trends in media, according to the students. But still many Swedish students want to cover politics, culture and science. Not many answer that fame and profit are important.

An important and very clear difference lies in the opinions about media as an arena for public discussion. This is because the media themselves do not have a fixed place in the state-market-civil society and are varyingly related to each other depending on the historical circumstances (Nordenstreng, Paasilinna 2002: 194).

In Sweden, serving as an arena for public discussion is the second most important duty, but among Russian students, support for this duty is very low. One explanation for this may be the relatively strong civic society in Sweden, and a history of popular movements outside the state that have used the media as a public arena.

Russian media history even after the collapse of the Soviet Union reveals different patterns: There was a very strong media machinery that was not under the control of political or market forces that seems to have marked an exceptional episode in Russian media history. Then we witnessed a period of a hard instrumentalism in journalism: Politicized capital accumulated through media holdings, media were used in info wars and profoundly discredited, civil society was weak, and the idea of independent media was considered almost laughable (I. Zassoursky 2002: 91), but nevertheless a public sphere was being created primarily via Internet resources – Runet (Zassoursky 2002: 183) – and was actively being formed especially during the presidential elections beginning in the mid-1990s (Raskine 2002: 99).

This historical background is also evident in the different interpretations of ‘press freedom’ and attitudes towards the values underlying the concept of press freedom among the Swedish and Russian students. For the latter, freedom from the state and the power that be is one of the most important parts of press freedom; they also are more willing to discuss whether information can harm people.

For the Swedish students, press freedom is more a question of being able to criticize and write what you want without any obstacles. In Sweden, it is more a question of how you can *use* the freedom you take for granted. For the Swedish students, democratic values are much more important than are questions of injury and state security, while for the Russian students state security is not a matter of small weight.

There is also a clear difference in the values underlying the concept of press freedom. In Russia, students are more willing to discuss whether information can harm people and some even to discuss state security. For the Swedish students, democratic values are much more important than are questions of injury and state security.

The Influence of the Current Situation

The interpretation of the concept of ‘press freedom’ can also help to explain opinions about the current situation. Russian students are more pessimistic about the situation for journalism, 43% (in Sweden 21%) think that the level of press freedom has declined

during the past decade. The Russian students are much more critical of their future colleagues in journalism and a half of them do not think freedom of press is practiced in Russia today. Even the more limited interpretation of 'press freedom' among the Russian students is under threat, and the single most important reason for this is political, according to the students' very clear response.

In Sweden, the threats to press freedom come from another side, not from the political powers but from economical and commercial spheres. In Sweden, the proportion of respondents that see a decline press freedom is much smaller (21%), and the Swedish students are less pessimistic about the future of journalism. But the Russian students also see this mix of entertainment and PR as a threat to journalism.

To sum up: Several important ideals and values are shared by journalism students in Sweden and Russia. The question of whether or not they are getting closer depends on the time perspective:

- Compared to the Soviet era, the values and ideals are much closer now. Even some threats to the values are the same – commercial demands and the development towards entertainment.
- But at the same time there are clear differences. The Russian students show a more limited interpretation of (read: low-keyed approach to) the concept of press freedom, and they feel a stronger pressure from the state. One way to handle this is to get involved into areas other than political reporting (to cover culture, entertainment, business). Another way is to go into PR and other areas that are more profitable than journalism. The Swedish students stick to more traditional ideals, both concerning areas of coverage and the definition of press freedom. Freedom from the state is important in Sweden – but what is most important to Swedish students is to be free to say what you want.

These results are in accordance with previous research showing emerging common standards and values among journalism students in different countries (Spichal/Sparks 1994) but also differences in relation to the national context – both the history and the current political situation. These differences reflect societal influences (for example the political system) more than the influences of education and professional norms (Weaver 2005). This is visible, for example, in the view on media as an arena for public discussion (Table 3): In Russia, the media have traditionally been oriented towards the higher classes; they have mainly functioned as a channel delivering information from the powers that be to the people (Trakhtenberg 2007). The strong censorship of the past, which was transformed into the self-censorship of the present, remains within the ordinary practices of Russian media (Simons, Strovsky 2006). Only a few of the Russian students view the media as an arena for public discussion, because the public sphere in Russia did not develop in a way traditional for the West. In Sweden, the media have historically been connected to parties and popular movements and are more open to discussion – which is clearly visible in the large proportion of Swedish students who consider this an important duty of the media.

The high degree of commercialization of the media system is also visible in the Russian students' responses. Only a few want to cover politics – culture, entertainment and business are more attractive to the students. Working in these areas allows one to earn a good wage – which remains important to many Russian students. Among the Swedish students, politics and 'public service' are more important than being well paid

(at least according to the answers in the survey). However, it is interesting to see that many students in Russia and Sweden have reported that an interest in the journalistic profession/activities is their main professional motivation. Accordingly, further research should focus on the core, nature and driving mechanisms behind this interest, taking into consideration and comparing nationally determined factors, as outlined above.

Professionalization or Not

One of the four dimensions in the model of media systems created by Hallin and Mancini is the degree of professionalization (Hallin/Mancini 2004). What can the survey results tell us about Sweden and Russia in this sense?

In both countries the journalistic profession is under pressure, according to the survey. In Russia the pressure comes both from the state and from commercial forces, giving students the opinion that press freedom is declining. Many students are pessimistic about the future and fear that journalism will be transformed into entertainment, PR, propaganda and '*bloggization*'. This confirms that social and moral ideals are increasingly being made to run the gantlet; information ersatz can angle a real story.

In Sweden the situation is more stable. Journalism students think that fulfilling their responsibilities to the audience is important, and they see no major threats to press freedom. But still the profession is under commercial pressure. The media are highly commercial and there is too much entertainment, according to the Swedish students. Still they are quite optimistic and feel that journalism will go on like today. Only one of five is pessimistic and fears that journalism will be transformed into entertainment and '*bloggization*'. Commercial pressure is also seen as the greatest threat to press freedom.

A professional education is one of the most important bases for an autonomous profession. Through education, the students are being formed as journalists, and their self-confidence should be strong. Still, they feel a pressure towards the ideals and autonomy of the journalistic profession. The forces behind this pressure are partly the same, commercial forces and entertainment. But they also differ – the Russian students feel a double pressure given that the political pressure is much stronger than in Sweden.

The answers from the Russian students show clearly that they understand the tendency towards *instrumentalization* that limits the autonomy of the profession in Russia, and how political and economical powers outside journalism use the media for their own purposes (Hallin/Mancini 2004: 37). The ideals among the students are in many ways the same in Sweden and in Russia, but the possibility of living up to these ideals seems to be smaller in Russia, at least according to the students.

Note

1. The Russian Managers Association regularly evaluates quality and the level of popularity of Russian BP among all federal editions. In formativeness, relevance, independence, objectivity, reliability and presence of opinions have been the main criteria for selection, while circulation, format, periodicity and polygraph do not influence the result.

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Acknowledgements

The paper has benefited from comments by Prof. Håkan Hvitfelt, Department of Journalism, Media and Communications, Stockholm University, Sweden, Prof. Elena Vartanova, Faculty of Journalism, Moscow State University, Russia, Dr. Marina Gersetti, Department of Journalism and Mass Communications, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

Partial financial support for the research: Swedish Institute: <http://www.si.se>; within the framework of the international project "Freedom of the press in Russia and Sweden: A Comparative Study of Professional Cultures and Censorship/Self-Censorship Mechanisms", 2007-2009, JMK/SU (Stockholm, Sweden) – JF/MSU (Moscow, Russia).

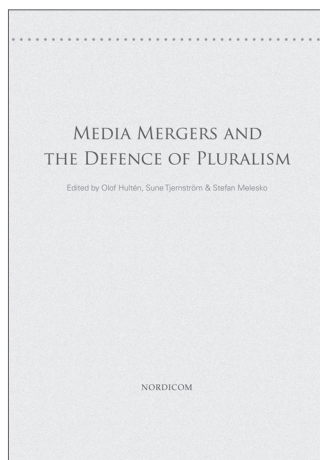
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