Journalism Ethics in Perspective: Desirability and Feasibility of a Separate Code of

Conduct for Online Journalism

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October 14, 2008

Abstract

The spreading of online news media has given a new impetus to the debate on codes of conduct as instruments to ensure a responsible press. Scholars and media professionals have raised the question whether a specific code of conduct for online journalism is desirable and feasible. This discussion revolves around several, intertwined issues pertaining to ethical dilemmas, journalistic role perceptions, self-regulation and professionalization. First, this paper makes a systematic inventory of the issues at stake. Next, we offer a framework, grounded in the philosophical foundations of human ethics, that clarifies the different issues, and enables us to indicate the issues on which online journalists, media professionals and scholars fundamentally differ in opinion. We argue that the issues can be reduced to two key questions: Should changes in societal or technical circumstances alter traditional journalistic ethics? And should online journalism be inclusive or exclusive?

Introduction

"The Internet makes so much information public, that it is nonsense to use initials of suspects or victims instead of their full names. We [i.e. online journalists] will not cause more damage to these people by reporting their full names."

"Some people say: "Information is so easily found on the Internet, why make a big secret of the full names of suspects." I think this is the beginning of the end for journalism. We [i.e. online journalists] should stick to the traditional journalistic standards, and not be influenced by the current standards of some popular weblogs."

The two statements illustrate how the advent of the Internet has challenged journalistic ethics. This paper presents a theoretical basis for investigating whether a specific code of conduct for online journalism is necessary and, if so, feasible.

Codes of conduct are the articulations of the norms and values developed to guide journalistic activities - the do's and don'ts of journalism (Limor & Himelboim, 2006). They have been adopted by many professional news outlets (Boeyink, 1994; Pleiter & Frye, 2007; Pritchard & Morgan, 1989), but nevertheless remain a matter of considerable dispute in journalism (Laitila, 1995; Pleijter & Frye, 2007; White, 1996; Wulfemeyer, 1990). Some journalists maintain that formal codes improperly impinge on the constitutional freedom of the press. Others believe that formal expressions of professional values enhance the quality of journalistic work and protect the profession against outside interference. The development of codes of conduct, and the enforcement of sanctions are considered the final step in the professionalization of traditional journalism (Wentink,

1972). However, little is decided about the necessity and feasibility of a code of conduct

in the online environment. The discussion revolves around several, interwoven issues.

These issues pertain to ethical dilemmas, journalistic role perceptions, self-regulation and

professionalization, and do not only refer to journalism on the Internet, but also to

journalism in general.

Our goal is to clarify the different issues, and to indicate the issues on which

online journalists, media professionals and scholars fundamentally differ in opinion. We

start by making a systematic inventory of the issues surrounding the desirability and

feasibility of a code of conduct for online journalism. Next, we present a model,

grounded in philosophical foundations for human ethics, that can explain the views and

arguments underlying the issues at stake.

<div align="center">Journalism and codes of conduct: a sensitive subject</div>

Accountability

Journalists have an important role in the public domain; they are seen as

intermediary between politics and citizens (Van Cuilenburg, Scholten & Noomen, 1992).

Because of their important public function, journalists are considered to be responsible

for their products, and accountable to their public (Commission on Freedom of the Press,

1947; RMO, 2003; ROB, 2003; VMC, 2007; de Graaf & Broertjes, 2006; Pleijter & Frye,

2007). Journalistic codes of conduct –next to media ombudsmen and press councils- are

believed important mechanisms to guarantee journalistic responsibility and public

accountability. The necessity of a code of conduct is expressed at a regular basis by

policy-makers, politicians and scholars, usually after criticism on news coverage during

crisis situations (for example, the 9/11 attacks). In these cases news media and journalists

are accused of framing events (RMO, 2003; ROB, 2003; VMC, 2007; Bertrand, 2000; Bardoel, 2003).

Ethical dilemmas and journalistic values

Journalists have always been facing ethical dilemmas in their daily practices, for instance: serving society at large at the expense of individuals or protecting the privacy of individual, reporting information as quick as possible or carefully scrutinize information before publishing, and holding back information to protect government officials or providing the public with relevant information. The solution to these dilemmas depends on underlying values. Following Rokeach (1968), Black et al (1992) and Braithwaite & Law (1985), Plaisance and Skewes (2003) developed and examined all the values newspaper journalists in the United States consider to be important to journalistic work. These values are (starting with the values ranked as most important): "honest, fair, responsible, capable, broadminded, just, aboveboard (e.g., transparent), intellectual, logical and imaginative, ambitious, courageous, independent, minimizing harm, empathetic, helpful, self-controlled, civic minded, polite, forgiving, cheerful, obedient, loving and clean" (p. 839).

These values can not be paired in absolute opposites. For example, the wish to be honest (e.g., giving full information) can conflict with the wish to minimize harm (e.g., manipulating images for a less shocking representation of reality, or protecting individuals or government officials), but it can also conflict with civic mindedness (e.g., holding back racial background information to stimulate cohesion in society).

There are a number of ways to deal with the ethical dilemmas: laws that define what journalists can and cannot do, leaving it over to the values of the individual

journalist, self-regulation by the journalistic community by means of codes of conduct,
and lastly, full professionalization of the journalistic practice with enforced codes of
conduct and sanctions.

Journalistic role perceptions

Without rules, journalists themselves have to decide what the 'right' value is
when facing these dilemmas. A problem of standardizing journalistic practices is that not
all journalists adhere to the same values. Journalists may have different role perceptions,
and different role perceptions relate to different values (Johnstone et al, 1972-1973;
Deuze, 2002). The different role perceptions that can be distinguished are a neutral role, a
participant role, a public role and a market role.

A neutral journalistic role perspective implies that journalists "function as an
impartial transmission link dispensing information to the public". Journalists are neutral,
detached, and merely conveyers of reality (Johnstone, Slawski & Bowman, 1972-1973, p.
523).

The participant style of reporting is defined as "investigative, analytic, and
interpretative reporting" (Johnstone et al, 1972-1973, p. 526). It demands an effort of
journalists to give meaning to reality. According to Johnstone et al (1972-1973)
participant journalists believe that being objective is not the only and best way to be
social responsible, because objective reporting would stand in the way of meaningful,
relevant and diverse reporting (see also: Udick, 1993). The participant role corresponds
with Schudson's (1999) description of trustee journalism. Trustee journalists will provide
news they think citizens need in order to be well informed participants of a democracy, in
stead of advocating political parties or serving the demands of the public.

The public role corresponds with Schudson's description of public journalism. Public discontent with the performance of journalism leads some journalists to renew their role perception. Public journalism, as an alternative version of the trustee model of journalism, is aimed at stimulating public participation in the democratic debate (Haas, 1999; Deuze & Dimoudi, 2002). It requires journalists to listen and respond to the needs of their public.

A fourth role present in the field is the market role (Schudon, 1999). Market journalism is aimed at economic benefit: selling the biggest possible audience to advertisers. In constructing news stories, market journalists will consider what the public wants, instead of what it needs to be well informed about society (McManus, 2002).

Journalists can have different journalistic role perceptions at the same time. Balancing between two or more different media roles leads to conflicting journalistic values (Johnstone et al, 1972-1973; Deuze, 2002). For example, whereas in the neutral role journalists "stay away from stories where factual content cannot be verified", in the participant role journalists "discuss national policy while it is still being developed" (Johnstone et al, 1972-1973, p. 527), e.g., before policy has become fact.

Functions of codes of conduct for journalism

Codes of conduct are articulations of the norms and values of journalists. They are formulated and adopted by journalistic organizations as mechanisms for self-regulation that complement journalists' claim for autonomy (Limor & Himelboim, 2006). Codes of conduct can fulfill several functions. Research on the opinions of journalists about codes of conduct in The Netherlands shows that codes of conduct have internal and external functions. Internally, codes stimulate cohesion of the journalistic profession and they act

as rules or guidelines that influence ethical decision-making of journalists. Codes may enforce editorial policy, but also may protect journalists against internal pressures (Pleijter & Frye, 2007).

Externally, codes are ways to make journalistic practices more transparent, they are ways to make the journalist profession accountable to audiences and other stakeholders, but at the same time codes may protect journalists against outside interference from for example government, advertisers and consumers (Pleijter & Frye, 2007).

Not all journalists agree on these functions. Some believe that general norms and values are impossible; every journalist has its own set of beliefs. A more pragmatic objection points to the discrepancy between general rules and actual ethical dilemmas. The standards in (inter)national codes of conduct are formulated in an abstract terms, which make them less useful as practical guideline. On the other hand, detailed standards would never fit daily dilemmas, because the context of dilemmas differs from case to case. With regard to transparency, some journalists question journalists' compliance with prescribed methods of producing news. Lastly, some journalists hold that being dependent on a code of conduct could result in homogeneous news coverage (Pleijter & Frye, 2007).

In spite of these objections a considerable number of news outlets have adopted journalistic codes of conduct (Boeyink, 1994; Pleijter & Frye, 2007; Pritchard & Morgan, 1989), either at the level of individual media outlets (e.g., the NOVA code; Arlman, 2006) or at the level of national or international professional organizations (e.g., the 'Gedragscode' of the Nederlands Genootschap van Hoofdredacteuren; the 'Leidraad' of

the Raad voor de Journalistiek; and the Code of Bordeaux of the International Federation of Journalists). Not all news outlets comply with the same ethical standards. So called serious news media use stricter ethical standards than more popular news media.

These codes, however, are not binding, as they are in for example medicine or law; breaking these codes does not result in formal sanctions. This reflects the weakness of codes of conduct as accountability-mechanism: why follow codes of conduct if breaking them has no consequences?

Journalism as certified profession

Professionalization of occupations in general is characterized by (1) evolving into a daily job, (2) establishing educational programs, and (3) labor unions, and (4) developing formal codes of conduct and enforcement of sanctions (Bardoel, 2003).

Referring to traditional journalism as a profession however, is under debate. Some believe that journalism is an open profession. Because of the constitutional freedom of the press all citizens should be allowed to name themselves journalists. The same argument is used against formal codes: "First Amendment freedoms precludes enforceable codes" (Christians, 1985-1986, p. 17). Others see journalism as a potentially certified profession, stating that everybody can publish news, but that this does not make everybody a journalist.

Although the relationship between journalism and professionalization is a sensitive subject, some of the characteristics of professions in general can be found in journalism: a professional identity (see also: Deuze, 2005), journalism education programs at different levels, press councils, and journalistic codes of conduct- even though they are not binding. This suggests that professionalization in journalism has

started (Wentink, 1972). Because of the resistance to binding codes, however, some scholars consider journalism a semi-profession that may not develop into a full profession (Bakker & Scholten, 2005).

<div align="center">Ethics in online journalism: new issues</div>

Does the spreading of online journalism and the popularity of the web as a news medium really add new issues to the described discussions about the desirability and feasibility of codes of conduct for journalism in general?

New dilemmas?

Interactivity, multimedia, hyperlinks and (a)synchronity have changed traditional journalistic routines of news making (Singer, 1998; Deuze, 1999; Evers, 2002, Colson & Heinderyckx, 2008; Cawley, 2008). Some argue that these changes are technical in nature and that they do not have any consequences for the core activities and functions of journalists. In this case online journalism is treated as an extension of traditional (print, radio, television) journalism to another medium. Others hold that online journalism is a distinct type of journalism, with its own logic, its own moral dilemmas and its own values (Deuze, 1999; Friend & Singer, 2007; Pavlik, 2001; Arant & Anderson, 2001). In this case online journalism is treated as a new, fourth model of journalism (Deuze & Yeshua, 2001).

These views have implications for the desirability of separate code for journalism on the Internet. In the first view online journalism is regarded as traditional journalism in a new environment, ergo traditional journalistic codes are applicable. In the second view one assumes both environment and journalistic practices have changed. Traditional codes can be insufficient, or even too comprehensive. Several scholars in the field of journalism

and communication ethics have explored the ethical dilemmas of online journalism (Deuze & Yeshua, 2001; Pavlik, 2001; Evers, 2002; Friend & Singer, 2007; Arant & Anderson, 2001). These dilemmas refer to commercial pressure, hyperlinks, immediacy and accuracy, plagiarism and sources, privacy and identity.

Commercial pressure. Most of the online news content is freely accessible for the user. Therefore most websites are dependent on ads for their income (Deuze & Yeshua, 2001). The intertwining of editorial and commercial content is regarded as an important moral dilemma of online journalism (Evers, 2002; Pavlik, 2001; Arant & Anderson, 2001). Furthermore, "the design and the nature of the medium itself make it difficult to separate […] editorial and commercial content in the same way they are separated in print and broadcast" (Friend & Singer, 2007, p. 180). Users may not be aware which content is commercial and which is not (Deuze & Yeshua, 2001).

Hyperlinks. Hyperlinks give users direct access to the sources journalists use, they can provide extra information about the news story. But the use of hyperlinks raises the question to what extent journalists are responsible for the content they link to online (Evers, 2002; Deuze & Yeshua, 2001)? Should they check the information they link to? Besides that, journalists have to choose between protecting users from finding shocking or illegal content and providing more information. Journalists could struggle with the choice between providing users a link to information they want and being responsible for potential harmed caused by doing so (Deuze & Yeshua, 2001).

Immediacy and accuracy. Journalists working for traditional media have to make a fixed deadline. According to Pavlik (2001, p. 94): "Online news organizations […] have no particular deadline, or, rather, they face continuous deadline: their deadline is

totally self-imposed." Scholars consider immediacy as a threat to accurate, complete and balanced reporting, because "the pressure now is even more intense to get the story before any of a thousand (or more) competitors." (Pavlik, 2001, p. 94-95). In addition, "the internet can create a shift in responsibilities where the work mentality is "first we put it online and when it appears to be wrong we take it out" (Deuze & Yeshua, 2001, p. 297). The tension that results from trying to achieve both "seems to force journalists to establish […] a protocol for handling and correcting mistakes (2001, p. 285) (Arant & Anderson, 2001).

Plagiarism and sources. Copying someone else's work and publishing it on your website in a somewhat modified form is not done in traditional journalism. On the Internet there seems to be a different standard; 'sharing' information has become common (Deuze & Yeshua, 2001, p. 280). Sharing, however, could easily become plagiarizing (Deuze, 1999). This raises questions about author rights, and the reusing of information correctly (e.g., in the right context) (Evers, 2002, p. 165).

The same applies to images. Technological possibilities make it easy to manipulate images (Evers, 2002). For the user it is impossible to check whether images are real (Deuze, & Yeshua, 2001). With regard to sources, "it is difficult to trace original source online […]; the user has no control over the sources that the journalist uses, unless the reporter offers links to original documents, which is still a rarity in online journalism" (Deuze & Yeshua, 2001, p. 280).

Privacy. According to Evers: "The meaning of the concept privacy is changing" (2002, p. 164). Private information of citizens is made public. Users may put their lives intentionally online (community-sites, public discussion groups, blogs). But they might

not be aware of the activities of organizations and websites designed especially for

collecting private information, for example about one's "surfing behavior" (Deuze &

Yeshua, 2001, p. 281). Either way one could question if journalists are allowed to use

information that is not intended for a broad audience.

Identity. Should journalists reveal their identity on the web when collecting

information? Online everybody can be impersonating anyone else. Does this make it

acceptable for journalists to have a fake identity (Deuze & Yeshu, 2001, p. 287-288)?

Deuze and Yeshua (2001) explored the experiences and professional views on

these ethical dilemmas by means of a survey among, and interviews with online

journalists, and online journalism graduate students in the Netherlands. They conclude

that "there is no agreement whatsoever among Internet journalists regarding the ethics of

Internet journalism" (2001, p. 288). Online journalists do not agree on the newness or

urgency of the presented ethical dilemmas. Moreover opinions differ on how journalists

should deal with the dilemmas. "Yet the topic does feature prominently on the

professional agenda" (2001, p. 288).

Journalistic role perceptions online: new values?

As discussed earlier, journalists have different perspectives on their function in

society, which could lead to different journalistic values. Following Johnstone et al

(1971-1972) and Weaver and Wilhoit (1991), Deuze and Dimoudi (2002) examined

journalistic role perceptions of online journalists in the Netherlands. They conclude that

half of online journalists have several role perceptions at the same time: a neutral role, a

participant role, a market role and a public role. The other half favor a public-service role,

which Deuze and Dimoudi (2002)describe as "a strong emphasis on public wants and

needs, coupled with both commercial and an idealistic mindset" (p. 95). According to this description, the public-service role can be regarded as a combination of the market role and the public role.

Functions of codes of conduct for online journalism

Even if online journalists do agree on the need for (new) values for online journalism, there seems to be no consensus on writing them down as guidelines in a code of conduct. A code of conduct for online journalism could –just as a code of conduct for traditional journalism- guide online journalists' ethical decision making and protect online journalists from commercial pressures. Lastly, it could also offer transparency of journalists' practices to citizens. This is essential according to some, since citizens have become more skeptical towards journalistic conduct; they are able to check the sources and correct the work of journalists themselves (Nederlands Genootschap van Hoofdredacteuren, 2008). For the same reason, others believe that the online public is not interested in accountability; on the Internet, citizens can collect and check information themselves.

Online journalism as profession

The most important argument against a code of conduct for online journalism - mainly expressed by online journalists working outside mainstream news organizations- is that doing journalism is no longer reserved to the professional. Citizen journalists, public affairs bloggers and independent online news services are participating in the online information supply. This raises the question of what (types of) online journalists an online code should address. Some journalists state that the added value of the internet is the possibility for every citizen to engage in public debates (Berkman & Shumway,

2003); thereby implying that moral regulation of online publications besides the law is undesirable. Everybody who is not a journalist should not be bothered with journalistic ethics (Nederlands Genootschap van Hoofdredacteuren, 2008).

Journalists working outside mainstream news organizations are feared by traditional journalists to set new –and, as is often implied; lower- moral standards for doing journalism, because they are said to lack a professional attitude and accompanying professional moral values and norms (Hayes, Singer & Ceppos, 2007; Welch, 1998; Deuze & Yeshua, 2001; Friend & Singer, 2007). A code for online journalism could distinguish professional online journalism from 'unprofessional' online journalism (Ugland & Henderson, 2007). This, however, brings the discussion back to the problem of professionalization of journalism in general. Defining who is an online journalist and who is not would mean redefining (the different genres of) journalism in general (VCM, 2007). Furthermore some people "believe the question should not be addressed at all, fearing that any agreement on a definition might be a first step toward licensing of journalists and ultimately to censorship" (Ugland & Henderson, 2007, p. 242).

<center>Four philosophical approaches to ethics</center>

The issues and conflicts of opinions surrounding the desirability and feasibility of codes of conduct for traditional and online journalism can be viewed from a broader perspective on ethics.

The concept of ethical decision making does not originate from, or is exclusive to journalistic practice. The underlying ideas about ethics – and the motives behind ethical decision making- are grounded in classic philosophical theories about moral human conduct. Different philosophical approaches to human ethics can clarify (1) how

journalists reflect on norms and values, and (2) if ethical behavior should be determined. In the literature on the relationship between ethics and journalism, many ethical perspectives are used. Four ethical perspectives seem to be dominant. These four perspectives can be classified into two spectrums with one perspective on each end: deontological versus teleological ethics, and communitarian versus libertarian ethics.

(1) Deontological versus teleological ethics

The first frequently discussed ethical continuum is the 'deontological-versus-teleological' continuum. This continuum represents journalists' attitudes towards the 'right' action when facing moral dilemmas in their daily activities. In the literature on journalistic ethics this continuum is used exclusively or in combination with other perspectives (Lambeth, 1992; Christians et al, 2005; Friend & Singer, 2007). In his work "Committed Journalism", Lambeth (1992) begins his argument for "An ethic for the profession" by explaining "the classic ethical theory" consisting of teleological ethics versus deontological ethics.

Deontological ethicists focus on the act of behaving moral, regardless of the consequences of an act. Most renowned deontologist in ethics is Kant. According to him an act should be based on self-imposed duty. People should feel it to be their duty to follow absolute, rational principles, that originate from common sense (Lambeth, 1992; Merrilll, 1997). So to act ethical is to feel the duty to follow these principles in every situation, regardless of one's own desires and the possible consequences of the act. The principles are universal; applied by all humans, as Kant states that one should "act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become universal law" (Kant, in Merrill, 1997, p. 65).

Teleological ethicists focus on the consequences of an act, in stead of the nature of the act itself. Teleology has two forms: egoism and utilitarianism. Egoists base decisions on what will have the best consequences for him or her. The altruistic form of teleological ethics is described by Mill, in his work *Utilitarianism* (1861). According to a utilitarian, one must do what will bring the greatest happiness or benefit to the greatest number. This means one must consider the different alternatives in every situation before acting, taking into account all concerned in the act (cf. Merrill, 1997; Lambeth, 1992).

(2) Communitarian versus libertarian ethics

Historically, the ethical perspectives most often related to journalism are liberal-based ethics and communitarian-based ethics (Christians, Ferre & Fackler, 1993; Glasser & Ettema, 2008; Aldridge & Evetts, 2003). According to Merrill (1997) liberal ethics and community ethics can be regarded as two opposites of one continuum. Merril (1997) calls it the 'two ethical mega-emphases' in journalism (p. 34). This continuum represents journalists' attitudes towards responsibility and accountability to society, and the mechanisms to ensure these notions (e.g. law, codes of conduct, self-regulation, individual morality).

Communitarian ethicists focus on the social aspects of morality. They "subliminate personal ethical values to societal desires and expectations", which leads to community-based ethics (Merrill, 1997, pp. 38-39). Individualism would stand in the way of community cohesion and development (Merrill, 1997). This approach can be traced back to Plato, who, in addition, believed that common morality can only be achieved by unlimited authority of the state (Merrill, 1997, p. 36). The idea of state-control however is (partly) rejected by contemporary communitarians. They do advocate some kind of

pressure to enforce social ethics, but instead of pleading for government intervention, they are vague about methods of enforcement (Merrill, 1997).

Libertarian ethicists focus on the individual aspects of morality. Unlike communitarians they attach value to "enlightenment concepts as individuality and freedom" (Merrill, 1997, p. 39). Libertarians believe in personal moral development and self-enforcement. This does not mean that interests of society are neglected, as communitarians criticize. It means that libertarians place responsibility for morality in society on the individual (Merrill, 1997).

Journalism ethics in perspective

Translating the four approaches to journalism offers a framework for structuring and interpreting the differences in opinion about the issues at stake.

Deontological versus teleological ethics: ethical dilemmas and values

The deontological approach to ethics applied to journalism results in a fixed set of internalized norms. Following these norms automatically leads to acting ethical. Journalists are not occupied with the consequences of their stories for others (for example their public) (Merrill, 1997). Following a strict deontological approach a primary duty for journalists is "telling the truth" (Friend & Singer, 2007, p. xxii). In facing ethical dilemmas, the fixed norms prevent journalists from using situational or relativistic ethics. They act according to the same norms in every situation.

Teleological journalists focus on the consequences of an act, instead of the nature of the act itself (Merrill, 1997). With regard to the ethical dilemmas, journalists will consider what the best alternative is in every situation. The context of the situation will influence the decision of the journalist.

In reference to the ethical dilemmas of journalism on the Internet, one could expect that the journalists, media professionals and scholars with a deontological view on ethics, do not consider online journalism as a new type of journalism -with new dilemmas and values. Online journalists should have the same ethical standards as offline journalists. The technical possibilities do not change the core activities of collecting and presenting news. From a teleological perspective, one could expect that online journalism is regarded as a new type of journalism with new ethical standards. For example, online journalists may want to provide accurate and full information, but in the online environment the public expects frequent updates, therefore providing current information is important. Journalists will base their decision on the specific context and situation, dependent on the best way to serve the online public.

The deontological-teleological continuum describes two different ways of solving ethical dilemmas. Both ends, however, do not give insight in the specific values (online) journalists consider to be important. The journalistic role perceptions may clarify the exact values.

Communitarian versus libertarian ethics: Professionalization and codes of conduct

Communitarian journalists will agree on community-based ethics that guarantee quality of journalistic work. They advocate professionalization and believe journalistic codes of conduct should be enforced by means of peer pressure (Merrill, 1997).

Libertarian journalists believe that every citizen is capable to understand developments in society, and to form and express his or her ideas about them. Therefore libertarian journalists advocate a pluralistic flow of information. The plea for a maximum freedom of expression hinders journalistic professionalization, which implies a certain

extent of standardization of conduct. Journalistic morality depends on the integrity of the individual journalist (Merrill, 1997, p. 34).

The main argument against enforced codes of conduct and professionalization, is that the constitutional freedom of the press allows everybody to be a journalist. This argument represents a liberal perspective on ethics; journalism as an open profession. With regard to online news media outside mainstream news organizations, one can expect that journalists, media professionals and scholars with a liberal perspective on ethics do not consider it to be desirable to differentiate between what is online journalism and what is not, and therefore do not believe in defining ethical rules that limit freedom of expression other than the law. Journalism is considered to be "inclusive" (Ugland & Henderson, 2007, p. 243). From a communitarian perspective, journalism is regarded as a defined profession with "established benchmarks of professional practice" (p. 243). According to this view, not all online news services are considered journalism, instead journalism is considered to be "exclusive" (p. 243).

Using the four philosophical perspectives on journalism ethics, the debate about the desirability and feasibility of a code of conduct for online journalism revolves around two key questions: Should changes in societal or technical circumstances alter traditional journalistic ethics? And should online journalism be inclusive or exclusive?

The arguments presented in this paper represent the ends of both continuums. This will probably not be the case in reality; some journalists, media professionals and scholars may hold extreme views, others may hold moderated views. Empirical research is needed to explore if the perspectives used encompass all of the issues and the differences of opinion pertaining to the desirability of codes. By analyzing and indicating

the issues on which stakeholders in the field of online journalism agree, on which they

fundamentally differ in opinion, and on which they could negotiate, the debate on codes

of conduct for online journalism can move forward.

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