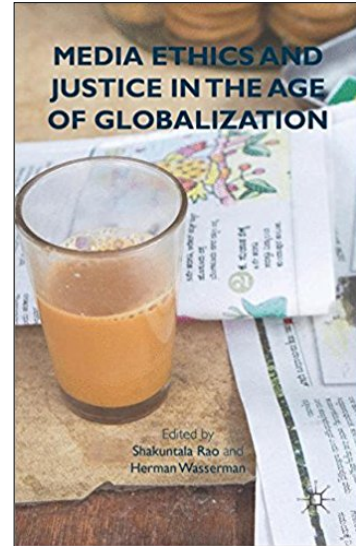


Shakuntala Rao and Herman Wasserman (Eds.), **Media Ethics and Justice in the Age of Globalization**, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 219 pp., \$95.00 (hardcover).

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What is the role of ethics in the current media landscape? The coedited book **Media Ethics and Justice in the Age of Globalization** is a timely publication with the rise of citizen journalism and investigative pieces, such as the Panama Papers, that shed light on content many would like to keep hidden. The book is situated with the premise of adapting and evolving the discussion of media ethics within the framework that it is no longer only professionals who “have rights and responsibilities in relation to the media environment” (p. ix), but that all consumers/amateur producers are to be held accountable for media ethics. Equally important is the approach that the textbook takes to shed equal light on non-Western democratic countries and their practices. What commonalities, if any, exist across the varied democracies in India, the United Arab Emirates, South Africa, Pakistan, and the United States (p. 16)? Can journalists learn from one another across national and cultural boundaries? Are ethics and justice encompassing concepts across different national democracies? While the book aims to answer these questions, no explicit international comparison is provided, and some frameworks provided in the introduction are not supported throughout the chapters.



The introduction (chapter 1) covers the various complexities, suggesting that this anthology will provide a thorough exploration of the multifaceted subject matter. As explained by the editors, Rao and Wasserman, “the relationship between media and globalization is reflexive and dialectical” (p. 2). Not only does any consumer now have the possibility of posting stories or writing comments on published pieces, the sharing of this content internationally adds another dimension to the consumption of news and the ethics involved in the process. Different cultures showcase different morals and ethics codes. The editors illustrate this point effectively with a summary of the types of execution footage of the late Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi shown in different countries (pp. 4–5). No universal set of ethics exists. The editors propose that, currently, “journalism ethics, it seems, [still] stops at the border” (p. 8). This tension will result in further evolution, as consumers (who may also be producers) are continuously reshaping the media with every new tweet or other contribution. Scholars can analyze the development and possibly suggest results and raise awareness of dangers pending some developments. Overall, the introduction demonstrates how complicated the discussion of the subject matter is. It suggests that the book itself is not intended to be the final word, but instead a contribution to the exploration of the subject matter. While it is beneficial to include non-Western democracies, it is unclear why the book limits the inclusion of case studies of Western democracies, as a more inclusive mixture would seem beneficial for this book’s goals.

While it is effective to suggest in the introduction that some topics are completely open for debate and will be present implicitly as the reader engages with the book, this nonetheless does not assist in meeting the aim of the book: crossing boundaries and finding some common ground from which to develop the conversation. One theme that the authors raise and that remains implicitly present throughout this volume is the concept of turning the mirror onto themselves. Rao and Wasserman pose that "the very act of analyzing media and journalism practice is itself an action that is open to ethical evaluation" (p. 4). This notion especially hovers implicitly when reading some essays that provide detailed summaries of specific events, especially when journalistic coverage of government actions is discussed. While the book "advocate[s] for thickening of the language and practices of global media ethics" (p. 9), the discussion of similarities and differences across international boundaries never takes place. Each chapter represents one microcosmic study of a particular country and/or situation or provides a philosophical viewpoint that remains disconnected from the other chapters.

The book is successful to some extent in positioning the text on work from Indian Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, as it supports the notion of discussing ethics from a global perspective, with non-Western viewpoints also receiving a prominent voice. Furthermore, the editors articulate well how Sen's work lays the groundwork for focuses on ethics and injustice, which are to be included in all essays (p. 11). However, the majority of the essays do not integrate or build on the philosopher. As such, the lengthy coverage in the introduction does not set up or support the chapters well.

For readers new to the debate, Rao and Wasserman also include viewpoints more well known to mass audiences, including the issue of the fast turnaround time to beat other news outlets to break a story first. Because the book was published in 2015, the current hot topic, "fake news," is not part of the discussion, but given the complexity of the introduction, this reviewer has no doubt that the editors would include it as well, were an updated version to be published. Fake news illustrates the quickly evolving landscape in which media ethics have to be considered, and its absence indirectly emphasizes how vital this book's illumination of concepts and focuses is.

While the first portion of the introduction sets up high expectations, the brief summaries of the various chapters that follow in the introduction, as well as the very brief conclusion portion, suggest that the introductory goals were too high. After reading the entire book, this impression has been confirmed. Possibly, it would have been more successful to provide a shorter introduction that only sets up the overarching premise of the book and outlines essential background information. Following the essays, a concluding chapter in which the editors analyze whether media ethics commonalities exist across country boundaries would be beneficial. (Currently, only chapter 4, written by coeditor Wasserman, provides a complete discussion.)

Given that the overarching goals of the book are not fulfilled, most chapters represent individual case studies and can be read in any order, based on reader interest. The first essay, "The Moral Priority of Globalism in a Media-Saturated World" (chapter 2), provides a philosophical viewpoint and background of arguments and rebuttals in relation to theories related to global media ethics. It is the only essay that fits with the book's original premise. However, author Stephen J. A. Ward does not provide any new insight that was not already included in the introduction. This is likely not the author's fault though, as he likely

did not have access to the introduction. As a result, the chapter loses the possibility of advancing the discussion of the book's aims.

Chapter 3, "Global Justice and Civil Society," provides more background on the history of "justice" and "freedom" from a philosophical viewpoint but does not apply those concepts to India, which is the case study presented in the chapter. Overall, the chapter does not provide much insight into India's media ethics, and there is a separation between the theoretical concepts and the information provided about India.

Chapter 4, "Social Justice and Citizenship in South Africa," dives into immediate background on the specifics of South African news with regard to ethics and how those have changed due to historical circumstances. Particularly strong is the rich discussion that takes some theories introduced in chapter 1 and discusses their implications in postapartheid South Africa. Exploring strengths and weaknesses of various approaches, the author argues for a culture of listening to audiences to develop, as opposed to preaching to audiences or feeding audiences specific beliefs.

Lee Wilkins, author of chapter 5's essay, "Paying for Journalism," sums up the strengths and weaknesses of the respective chapters when stating about her own work that the first portion of her discussion was "heavy in philosophical theory and somewhat opaque in practical applications" (p. 91). This is the challenge of the book overall. The majority of the text considers the philosophical realm, which limits the usefulness in practically oriented journalism programs. However, the second part of her essay is a very useful tool, summarizing key needs for journalism and journalists in democratic societies.

Chapter 6, "News for Sale," provides an enlightening case study of India's news over recent history. By offering essential background context, it provides those readers with little or no knowledge of the country's media structure with a vivid example of the state of ethics in India and what steps have been and need to be taken to right some of the issues that have been uncovered by investigative journalists.

The shortcoming of this book becomes apparent in chapter 7, "Practices of Indian Journalism," when the author and coeditor of this volume writes that Sen's work "can be a hugely constructive part in developing a theory of justice" (p. 137). The strength of the book is to provide insight into various countries' news media and their relation to democracy, capitalism, and history. However, it stops short of creating a framework for a "theory of justice" to be reviewed and discussed by said authors and applicable countries in general.

Chapter 8, "Justice as an Islamic Journalistic Value and Goal," provides readers with background on key terms, especially *justice*, in the context of Islam. Four types of journalism are identified as typical in Arab countries. This layout permits easy comparison to journalistic practices in nations where other religions represent the majority and allows the reader to begin to think of overarching journalism ethics.

Chapter 9, "Rammohun Roy's Idea of 'Public Good' in the Early Days of Journalism Ethics in India," provides a detailed look into the evolution of journalism in India over the previous two centuries.

However interesting, this historical account does not well support the aims that the book editors set forth in the introduction. Also, returning to India (a third essay on the country at this point, and chapter 11 provides a fourth study) provides a lot of focus on that country at the expense of other countries for a book that aims to discuss journalistic practices across the world in democratic countries.

Chapter 10, "The Chief and the Channels," provides great examples of recent coverage of events in Pakistan, focusing on interplay of the government, the justice system, and the media. It is those "anecdotes," supported by essential background information about the country's court system and government, about which foreigners likely do not know essential details. These details draw in readers and bring the subject alive. What is missing is the analysis of these events and discussion of similarities and differences across similar happenings in different countries.

Overall, the book is a mixed bag and ultimately falls short of succeeding in a discussion that crosses national and cultural boundaries. While various countries are illuminated, comparisons are not provided. Also, India receives the most attention, with four essays dedicated to its media landscape, whereas other (eligible) countries are not represented at all. Related to this, the order of the essays in this volume appears random and even counterproductive at times. Chapter 5, for instance, provides a list of key points to be considered by all democratic societies. It would be beneficial to have read case studies from various countries prior to consuming that chapter.