The professional identity of Czech journalists in an international perspective

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Abstract

This article, placed in the field of comparative journalism studies, explores the extent to which Czech journalists share their professional identity and compares the congruence of their professional identity with selected Western journalistic communities working in the liberal, democratic-corporatist, and polarized pluralism media model defined by Hallin and Mancini. The results show that the professional identity structure of Czech journalists does not, in principle, differ from that of foreign journalists. This implies that they have cut themselves from the Soviet journalistic model. Czech journalists do not significantly differ in the intensity of the selected professional values, and the measure of their professional identity split is comparable to that of their foreign counterparts.

It has been almost three decades since the media systems of 21 Central and Eastern European countries entered the path of transition from an authoritarian, communist system to an open, liberal, free market system serving to support democracy. Besides deep changes in media legislation and ownership structure, transformation process has also brought changes in journalism cultures, and, presumably, professional identities of the journalists (Aumente et al., 1999; Gross, 2002; Gross and Jakubowicz, 2012).

Social, organizational, and professional journalistic identity performs a general integrational function, strengthens the feeling of socio-professional stability, and helps the journalists to withstand the various forms of political-economic pressures

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coming from outside the journalistic field. However, there are several trends and factors that potentially dilute journalistic identity and weaken its stabilization function.

From a general perspective, the current journalistic identity, which still draws on its modernist roots and is associated with a vision of rationally bureaucratized progress, is being weakened by the process of reflexive modernization. This process is characterized by detraditionalization, individualization, and aggravation of economic competition, which deepens professional-identity instability and leads to professional existential insecurity. Hand in hand with this trend, professional journalistic practice is increasingly accommodating to the consumerist logic of late capitalism. Technological individualization on the editorial and production level and fragmenting economical pressure particularly have great potential to split journalistic communities at the level of the organization/editorial office, doing so in the interest of raising work productivity. Standing against this trend is the journalist's yearning for a coherent professional identity, which seems to still be held together by the ideology of liberal journalism (Anikina et al., 2013; Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Hanitzsch, 2011; Hanitzsch et al., 2011).

The impact of these general trends can be especially powerful in case of the journalists from post-Communist countries whose identities were (often repeatedly) dramatically affected by political, economic, and social transformation(s), and presumably can therefore be more fragile and unstable. This article focuses on the case of the Czech Republic, often considered as an example of successful transformation (see e.g., the Bertelsmann Transformation Index) and compares the extent to which, 25 years after the collapse of the authoritarian regime and centralized media system with Soviet journalism doctrine, the professional attitudes of Czech journalists match the attitudes of journalists from the historically different (and more stable) Western journalistic cultures. It also explores the extent of the professional identity in/congruence of Czech journalists with the in/congruence of selected Western journalistic communities. Thus, on the example of Czech journalists, this analysis tests the expectation that the CEE media and journalistic professional culture, including identity, converge with their Western European counterparts (e.g., Gross and Jakubowicz, 2012). It also contributes to the discussion of the validity of the homogenizing hypothesis (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 2012), according to which the models are gradually approaching homogeneity in the sense that they are finding common recourse in the liberal model of journalism.

In search of a new professional identity of Czech journalists

In the course of the 20th century, the Czech journalistic community had to adjust to abrupt changes in 1918 (the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy and formation of Czechoslovakia), 1939 (establishment of the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia), 1945 (the end of Second World War), 1948 (Communist takeover), 1968 (the Prague Spring) and 1989 (the fall of Communist regime). The eras marked by these years has again and again brought ideologically motivated

redefinitions of the professional journalistic role (Volek and Jirák, 2008). The latest professional values conversion was caused by the radical ownership-economic transformation of the Czech media system brought by the fundamental change of the regime in the 1990s.

The transformation of the Czech media took place within the context of a public space expropriated and ruled by the Leninist doctrine that defined the media as an instrument of the 'awareness of the masses'. It had three main stages. The first, pre-transition phase started already before the Velvet Revolution with 'perestrojka politics' when media system 'frozen' for decades accepted some corrective measures according to the Hungarian and Polish model of media liberalization. Especially strong censorship had been weakening and 'positive constructive criticism' of some partial, but non systemic political imperfections was tolerated.

The second, transitional phase saw a real transformation, which rapidly led to the complete elimination of old power and institutional structures. The forces behind this process, especially in the Czech Republic, were liberalization and privatization. Media changed from communist propaganda tool to profit-making commercialized industry (Jirák and Köpplová, 2008). Like in the other post-Communist countries (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015; Milewski, 2013; Vartanova, 2012), the second phase brought massive media commercialization and politicization, which, according to critics, weakens the power of the journalistic community as a fourth estate and inhibits the nurturing of a new democracies as well.

The process of commercial transformation of the Czech media sector set new professional standards and demands and faced Czech journalists with new professional dilemmas (Volek, 2009). The 40-year, ideologically determined media diet has been replaced by a somewhat different set of values in which the market rather than the state or the parties is the determining factor. In other words, ideological censorship has been replaced by profit-censorship in the Czech media (Volek, 2011). Unable to reconcile their former role with the demands of the new technology and economic pressures, journalists have gradually been 'de-intellectualized' and reduced to administering the machinery of communication. While Czech media entered the Western European media orbit during the 1990s by accepting at least some elements of European legislation, it has not yet been able to attain higher professional standards, and instead has passively accepted the consequences of the concentration of media ownership and the commodification of editorial approaches.

The structural transformation of the Czech media system is still vividly illustrated by certain atypical characteristics that separate it from mainstream Euro-US journalism (Volek, 2009). The sharp generational change after 1989 opened a space for young journalists who were not fully prepared in education or skills, and who, without the opportunity of training in many cases skipped past positions as trainees or newspaper 'water-carriers' and very quickly reached positions of authority as editors, publishing directors or editors-in-chief and, in some cases, even management positions. The rapid entry of the new generation of journalists

did not, however, strengthen the journalistic community as a whole, either in experience or education.

In the third, current post-transformational phase, several important trends have affected the Czech media system, most notably the departure of foreign investments, the return of locally based ownership, and the rise of local oligarchs holding economic and political power (e.g., the media house MAFRA publishing the biggest broadsheet daily newspaper was bought by the owner of one of the biggest corporation in the Czech Republic who currently also serves as the Minister of Finance).

The radical change in the professional standards expected of Czech journalists after 1989 has had a distinct effect on their professional identity as well as their self-perception. According to previous research conducted more than a decade ago, journalistic professional self-image of the Czech journalists was marked by unsteadiness, and the majority of them resisted being enclosed into one professional-value paradigm (Volek and Jirák, 2008). However, in the current situation, little is known about the main traits of professional identity of Czech journalists, as well as about their similarity or differences in comparison with professional identity of their Western counterparts. Therefore, this study attempts to fill in the void.

Social, professional, and journalistic identity

By accepting cultural, social, national, and professional identities, we convey who we are and the respects in which we differ, or we want to differ, from others. Professional identity is a form of self-portrait that each profession offers to other actors beyond its field in the form of professional ideals (Heinonen, 1999). Professional identity reflects the measure of identification with these professional values, and it also reflects the affiliation with a certain social group. A professional identity provides its bearers with a feeling of ontological security, a 'psychological home' (Kirpal and Brown, 2007; Raeder and Grote, 2007).

We assume that the professional journalistic identity is born under three formative influences: (a) *professional logic*, which supports the opportunity to conduct independently actual everyday work activities; (b) *bureaucratic logic*, which reflects the opinions of power on journalists' social functions and on the authority with which they should be vested; and (c) *market logic*, which projects into professional journalistic conduct the interests of the consumers of their products.

This article works on the assumption that journalistic identity is closely related to professional self-image (Volek, 2010), the stability of which is provided by a synergistic relationship of professional ideals, routines, and professional status (Wiik, 2010). As a whole, this professional self-image is formed by three factors: (a) the socio-demographic structure of the journalistic community, its generational, educational, and gender homogeneity and its values/political orientation; (b) the compromise between universal ideas on ideal journalistic types and the demands of the specific news coverage organization, whose identity a journalist accepts by signing each new employment contract (if their work identity is not split by parallel

work for more media organizations); and (c) by the pressure of dominant journalistic ideology that affects journalistic decision-making and includes at least five of these ideal-typical values or professional demands: provision of public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics (Deuze, 2005).

Four partial types of journalistic identities within the journalistic field can be distinguished: (a) social, which includes age, gender, ethnicity, and class affiliation, (b) value identity, which includes basic value and political orientation; (c) organizational, which is formed by the work culture of a specific organization/editorial office and its rules and conditions; and (d) professional, which includes professional ideals, practice, and status (Wiik, 2010). This study primarily focuses on the professional identity according to Hanitzsch's (2007) view of the three dimensions of journalistic cultures: institutional roles, epistemological attitudes, and ethical attitudes. Two further types of identity will be seen as determinants of the professional identity that create conditions for its formation (Figure 1).
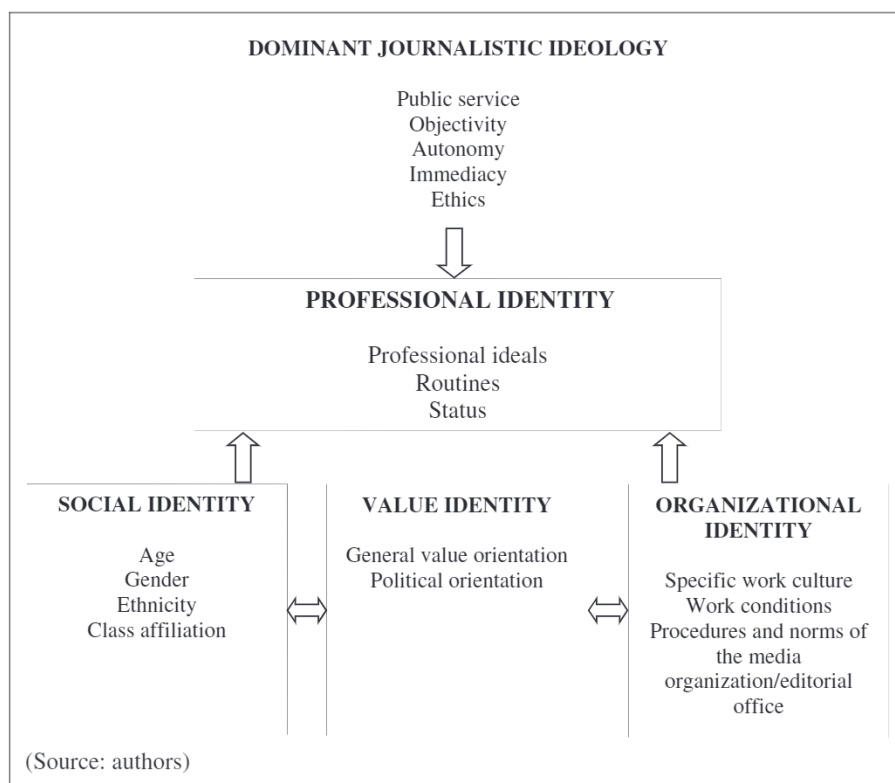

(Source: authors)

Figure 1. Main determinants of professional journalistic identity.
(Source: authors).

The relation between the social and the organizational identity represents the process within which an individual becomes socially identified with a specific group institutional identity that has its own value and professional specifications. These should be in accordance with the social identity of the individual, otherwise that individual is unable to share the professional socialization at the level of the organization (Tajfel and Turner, 1985). Another significant conflict-rich variable is the value orientation or its political dimension. Although journalists should suppress this orientation in their professional conduct, it creates a demand that could, in some cases, deconstruct both their own social identity and the organizational identity in editorial offices with a strong value profile. The relation between the social identity and the organizational identity is dialectical, in the sense that both types of identities influence the other.

The organizational identity is represented by a flexible complex of professional attitudes, part of which is primarily the journalistic experience of frequently changing media organizations. This leads to the need to reformulate or modify professional values according to the demands of the new employer. The organizational identity is in this sense often incompatible with the professional identity, as it is often negotiated by the very actors working in the editorial office (De Bruin and Ross, 2004), where the professional ideals are formed as a result of the compromise between the economic-political interests of the owners and the typical ideal professional identity as a set of more or less universal procedures and ethical norms received from professional codes, journalism textbooks, etc.

The intensity and the coherence of professional journalistic identity are thus given by the measure of identification with professional ideals and routines within the organizational and socio-demographic conditions. The in/stability of journalistic identity therefore depends on the extent to which its bearers accept the professional-ideological attributes defining the criteria of 'good journalism'. These are connected by the acceptance of professional ideals (for example, the ideal of public service as a primary journalistic function) and routine procedures (for instance the acceptance of journalistic objectivity as a key criterion of professional quality).

In a reduced form, professional identity can be studied at the level of epistemological methods, ethical ideologies, and institutional roles (Hanitzsch, 2007). These professional attributes represent the essence of the professional ideal which constitutes the core of the professional journalistic identity.

Split journalistic identity

Professional identity is an aspect of the individual identity, which is made up of a set of partial identities formed in various fields of human activities and interests. The basic professional journalistic identity characteristic is its fragmentedness, its tendency to split, mainly for two reasons. The first reason is the unstable nature of human identity itself: profound splitting mechanisms are related to the formation of a subject and his/her identity. The second reason is connected with the specific

features of the journalistic profession that cause this instability. The process of seeking and accepting the professional journalistic identity is therefore usually far from being one-dimensional or linear.

Constructed human identities (social, cultural, and professional) are in an ongoing process of transformation and have no set form (Gioia et al., 2000). Individuals usually long for a coherent identity; nevertheless, they are confronted with constant changes in its partial manifestations. The personality we believe ourselves to have is a social product constructed by reflections of the views of others. One reflection is offered by a professional mirror. The subjectivity is completely relational in this conception; it is not about an essence, but about a set of relations. The self is put together by a subject's identifications; identity is composed of subsequent identification layers, including the ones that concern work.

In this sense, our subjectivity is divided and it has only a provisional status. Its experience is only illusionary since we just yield to language differences, according to Jacques Lacan (1977). The same happens when we take a position within the bounds of a specific professional discourse. This implies that the nature of any identity is very delicate and unstable. This implication also applies to professional relations.

Some professions contribute more to this (self)-deception than others – their identity is closely related to a symbolic type of expression. The less physical their work performance is, the more imaginary it tends to be; in other words, the greater the risk that they lose the referent of their actual professional behaviour. Journalism is such a performative profession, divided into various types of permanently changing identities.

To be a journalist, and to accept and share the identity of this profession for the long term, represents a more complicated process than being a physician, lawyer, or teacher. Journalism is a semi-profession that fails to meet high-level professionalization criteria (e.g., Godkin, 2008; Tunstall, 1971; Witschge and Nygren, 2009); thus, the professional journalistic identity is much less homogeneous than the identity of the professions mentioned above.

The past decade has witnessed an increasingly hopeless effort in the technologically fragmented Euro-American journalism to stop the splits and diffusions within this profession, or at least to stitch it together provisionally and thereby fulfil journalists' desire for a coherent professional identity. This effort has been ever more keenly disrupted, though, by political-economic pressures and by the socio-technological fragmentation of the journalistic profession, which is currently being devastated by an influx of amateurs who participate in the process of its deprofessionalization.

The firmly fixed social position of a person who lives a professional life according to code-defined rules is a basic precondition for the universal concept of a professional identity. In reality, the professional being of journalists consists of an endless sequence of attempts to unify their divided professional identity. This process, with national, historical, and cultural particularities, does not occur identically across the various journalistic cultures.

Methodology

This article aims to explore the extent to which Czech journalists share selected attributes of professional identity and to compare the professional identity congruence between Czech journalists and selected Western journalism communities following the media models defined by Hallin and Mancini (2004). It is based on the quantitative comparative analysis performed on the data from the representative survey of Czech journalists carried out by the authors and the publicly available data from the international survey carried out within the project The Worlds of Journalism Study (Hanitzsch et al., 2007–2011). In case of both data sources, the identical research method (quantitative survey) and data collection technique (standardized interviews) were used.

Two main research questions and two hypotheses were posited:

RQ 1. Do the attributes of the professional journalistic identity of Czech journalists and foreign journalists differ, in any of the three compared models: democratic corporatist model, polarized pluralist model, or liberal model (Hallin and Mancini, 2004)?

Hypothesis 1. We presume that Czech journalists will differ from their foreign counterparts in the ethical dimension, namely in a higher measure of acceptance of the relativizing attributes of professional behaviour. We proceed from the assumption that the generational exchange of Czech journalists also led to a radical rejection of any normatively generalized ethical perspective that 'new' journalists perceived as the residue of the 'old journalism' with its aim to educate the population in propagandist spirit and to describe reality through the view of pre-defined 'correct' values.

Indicators measuring the extent of ethical relativization will be used.

RQ 2. Does the Czech journalistic community differ in the measure of professional identity division or homogeneity from similar divisions (or homogeneities) among the journalists from the countries following the compared models?

Hypothesis 2. We assume that the professional identity of Czech journalists will be more homogeneous than that of the journalists in the compared models, whose professional community has evolved continually without any considerable value-personnel disruptions.

The index of qualitative variation (IQV) will be used as an indicator. The analysis works with three concepts: (a) professional identity, (b) splitting process/homogenization of professional identity, and (c) media model.

Professional identity (and the extent of its split) will be tested as the measure of journalists' agreement with a set of statements indicating the institutional role attitudes, the epistemological attitudes, and the ethical attitudes, as defined by Hanitzsch (2007). Hanitzsch differentiates three dimensions of the institutional role: interventionism (the extent to which journalists pursue a particular mission and promote certain values); power distance (the journalist's position toward the

loci of power in society); and market orientation (the willingness to subordinate journalistic goals to the logic of the market). The journalists' attitudes to two dimensions of the epistemological positions will be tested: objectivism (a philosophical or absolute sense of objectivity rather than a procedural sense of objectivity as a method) and empiricism (the means by which a truth claim is ultimately justified by a journalist). With respect to ethical attitudes, the acceptance of professional idealism (the consequences of responses to ethical dilemmas) and professional relativism (the extent to which individuals base their personal moral philosophies on universal ethical rules) will be studied (Hanitzsch, 2007).

External conditions and variables that participate in the splitting process/ homogenization of professional identity will be measured through: (a) demographic characteristics (gender, age, education, specialized journalistic education, and political orientation) and (b) socio-professional and professionalizational characteristics (types of employment contracts and lengths of employment contracts).

As an indicator of the measure of professional identity split, the index of qualitative variation (IQV) was chosen. It is a measure of variability for nominal and ordinal variables, based on the ratio of the total number of differences in the distribution to the maximum number of possible differences within the same distribution. The index varies from 0.00 to 1.00. When all the cases in the distribution are in one category, there is no variation (or diversity) and IQV is 0.00. In contrast, when the cases in the distribution are distributed evenly across the categories, there is maximum variation (or diversity) and IQV is 1.00 (Frankfort-Nachmias, 2014).

The formula for the index of qualitative variation is: $IQV = K \ (100^2 - \Sigma Pct^2)/ 100^2(K-1)$, where K is the number of categories in the distribution, and ΣPct^2 is the sum of all squared percentages in the distribution. To express the figures of the variation index in percentages, 100% represents the highest measure of diversity and 0% stands for maximal homogeneity.

The structure of the professional identity of Czech journalists will be compared with the professional identity of journalists from countries with one of the three following media models:

a. democratic-corporatist model (Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Scandinavian countries) whose 'media culture is characterized by a surviving advocacy tradition that sees the media as vehicles for expression of social groups and diverse ideologies, and at the same time by a high level of commitment to common norms and procedures' (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 298).

b. polarized pluralism model (France, Italy, Greece, Spain, and Portugal), in which 'the news media are characterized by a high degree of external pluralism, in which media are seen as champions of diverse political ideologies, and commitment to these ideologies tends to outweigh commitment to a common professional culture' (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 298).

c. liberal model (UK, USA, Canada, and Ireland), in which, from the point of view of journalistic practice, a neutral commercial press and information-oriented journalism prevail and 'the role of the media tends to be seen less in

terms of representation of social groups and ideological diversity than in terms of providing information to citizen-consumers and in terms of the notion of the press as a "watchdog" of government' (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 299).

The analysis is based on a quantitative comparison of four selected journalistic communities: a representative sample of Czech journalists (N = 701) and three samples of journalists from countries following one of the three media models identified by Hallin and Mancini (2004). The North/Central Europe or demo-cratic-corporatist model is represented by journalists from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland (N = 300); the Mediterranean or polarized pluralist model is rep-resented by journalists from Spain, Greece, and Portugal (N = 300); and the North Atlantic or liberal model is represented by the USA and Australia[1] (N = 200).

The data of the 'North/Central Europe', 'Mediterranean', and 'North Atlantic' samples were obtained from the Worlds of Journalism Study[2] (Hanitzsch et al., 2007–2011). In each of these countries, standardized telephone or face-to-face interviews were conducted with a quota sample of 100 working journalists drawn from 20 news organizations.[3]

The representative survey among Czech journalists was conducted by the authors in 2015, as a part of the research project 'Czech Journalists in Comparative Perspective: an Analysis of the Process of Professionalization, Professional Socialization, and Journalistic Career'. As the data collection tech-nique, standardized face-to-face interview was chosen. Quota sampling was used to recruit respondents. To establish the structure of the Czech journalist population, a survey among 82 editorial offices was conducted: the screening questionnaire included information about the basic socio-demographic characteristics of journal-ists in the office. To select these offices, a database of domestic print and audio-visual media that operate on a nationwide and regional basis was used. The basic criterion of choice was a marked share of the specific media on actual journalistic production for a wide audience. Thus, we obtained information about 1806 jour-nalists, based on which a quota for each stratum was calculated (for the stratifi-cation, gender, age, education, and media type were used). Altogether, 701 journalists were surveyed who at the time of the research directly participated in shaping the editorial agenda.

Analysis

Social identity attributes: Right wing, male, and middle generation as determinants of professional identity

Social identity has demographic and value constituents: (a) individual attributes (working position, professional specialization, and type of media), (b) social attri-butes (age, education, and gender) plus various forms of professional capital, and (c) general values and political orientation. These are not necessarily compatible and can cause conflicts among their bearers.

Table 1. Comparison of selected socio-demographic characteristics.

	Czech journalists		Democratic-corporatist model		Polarized pluralist model		Liberal model	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender								
Man	388	55	207	69	169	56	118	59
Woman	313	45	93	31	131	44	82	41
Age								
18–29 Years	162	23	32	10	51	17	34	17
30–39 Years	268	38	107	36	134	45	45	23
40–49 Years	153	22	99	33	70	23	46	23
50–59 Years	96	14	42	14	35	12	39	20
60+	22	3	20	7	10	3	36	18
Education								
Primary	4	1	6	2	1	0	1	1
Secondary	220	31	89	30	54	18	31	15
College	477	68	204	68	242	82	168	84
Specialized journalistic education	255	36	85	28	167	56	120	60

From the perspective of the given socio-demographic categories in all of the monitored communities, journalism is a profession which is predominantly performed by men, particularly by middle-aged men. Men dominate both managing positions and the whole news media office.

Feminist-oriented studies (Van Zoonen, 1998) repeatedly show that the journalistic field is, in terms of gender, divided both vertically – it is ruled by male professional standards, methods, and behavioural patterns (Djerf-Pierre, 2007) and horizontally – on the level of division of labour which gives more space to men to deal with 'hard news', while female journalists deal more often with 'soft news'. Some authors write about a gendered journalistic field, where predominant masculine logic controls the alternative feminine one (Van Zoonen, 1994).

The Czech professional community is the most pluralistic in this respect; the distribution of gender is more balanced than in other compared communities (Table 1).

A comparison of other socio-demographic attributes reveals a higher share of the youngest journalistic generation among Czech journalists whose larger representation indicates a lower entrance threshold or a lower setting of professional criteria – especially the completion of college education in the field. This reflects an instrumental strategy that helps address the aftereffects of the economic crisis by devaluing the journalistic labour force.

Table 2. Structure of the compared journalistic communities according to age – Only managing positions.

	Czech journalists		Democratic-corporatist model		Polarized pluralist model		Liberal model	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
18–29 Years	34	11	1	2	3	6	1	2
30–39 Years	122	40	17	31	10	19	5	13
40–49 Years	78	26	21	39	20	38	15	37
50–59 Years	55	18	8	15	17	33	14	35
60+	15	5	7	13	2	4	5	13
Total	304	100	54	100	52	100	40	100

The Czech journalistic community also demonstrates the highest imbalance in terms of age stratification due to the considerable absence of the oldest journalists, who worked for the Communist media before the fall of the old regime in 1989. This phenomenon is the most distinctive at the level of managing positions (Table 2). Czech journalists are the youngest among the compared communities (the average age of the compared journalists holding positions as senior and junior managers is 41 years for Czech journalists; 44 years for Austrian, German, and Swiss journalists; 43 years for Spanish, Greek, and Portuguese journalists; and 46 years for US and Australian journalists).

In terms of education level, Czech journalists are distinctively less homogeneous than the polarized pluralist and liberal model journalists, including the level of journalistic education achieved (Table 1). This is mainly due to a lower share of university-educated journalists, especially in comparison to the more educationally homogeneous overseas communities. University/college-educated journalists are considerably split in terms of age categories (Table 3). There is a deep drop in the older middle generation category caused by the arrival of a new generation in the 1990s that mostly lacked a specialized journalistic education.

The most striking split in the social identity of Czech journalists is at the level of their value/political orientation. Value orientation represents a more or less suppressed part of professional journalistic identity within the objectivist paradigm. Nevertheless, it can be claimed that the decision to work for a particular editorial office or the acceptance of its editorial ideology, professional role, epistemology, and ethics, is determined by the journalists' values and political orientation, at least in most cases.

Table 4 shows a specific feature of Czech journalists' social (value) identity – right-middle values, which differentiates them from the selected European and overseas journalists who mostly take a leftist position. The Czech journalistic community is sharply divided according to generational political orientation. The share

Table 3. Structure of the compared journalistic communities according to education –
Journalists with specialized journalistic education.

	Czech journalists		Democratic-corporatist model		Polarized pluralist model		Liberal model	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
18–29 Years	88	54	10	31	28	55	28	82
30–39 Years	115	43	35	33	77	57	28	62
40–49 Years	21	14	26	26	46	66	25	54
50–59 Years	22	23	9	21	15	43	18	46
60+	9	41	5	25	1	10	21	58
Total	255	36	85	28	167	56	120	60

Table 4. Political orientation.

	Czech journalists		Democratic-corporatist model		Polarized pluralist model		Liberal model	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Left-wing	98	14	165	58	158	60	101	55
Centre	290	41	68	24	58	22	49	27
Right-wing	313	45	51	18	47	18	33	18
Total	701	100	284	100	263	100	183	100

of left-oriented journalists is 21% in the oldest generation and 13% in the two
younger generations. This share is reversed in the compared models.

Organizational identity: Determinants of deprofessionalization

The form of professional identity is also influenced by working conditions at the
level of the editorial office. Organizational identity and some of its attributes often
conflict with the more universal demands of professional identity, which can dilute
or split that identity in the process. On the most general level, two processes inter-
vene here: the deprofessionalization and the proletarianization of journalistic
labour. These processes appeared when the laws of a neoliberal economy were
applied to the operation of editorial offices, with the objective of increasing the
profitability of news media. For Czech journalists, these processes have been accel-
erating since 2009 when the effects of the economic crisis struck especially the
regional media. The budget cuts were responded to by contracting young 'journal-
ists' without proper education and professional training who were then overloaded

Table 5. Comparison of the selected organizational identity attributes.

	Czech journalists		Democratic-corporatist model		Polarized pluralist model		Liberal model	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Type of contract								
Full-time job	532	76	244	81	260	87	188	94
Part-time job	31	5	38	13	13	4	8	4
Freelance	135	19	12	4	20	7	4	2
Others	1	0	5	2	6	2	0	0
Employment contract for an indefinite period	434	62	275	95	234	83	187	95

and underpaid. Hence, a tension arises in the editorial offices between 'the old' and 'the new' journalists, who are in this heightened competition more willing to violate universal professional rules and thus clash with the advocates of established professional standards and rules on the level of the organization, thereby splitting its identity.

Table 5 shows the highest values of work instability indicators among the Czech journalists. It seems that the application of some neoliberal principles that intensify competition among journalists splits the Czech journalistic community in particular and arouses a feeling of employment insecurity. More than 70% of Czech journalists regard it as probable that they will lose their job. Czech journalists have the smallest share of employment contracts for an indefinite period and a distinctively higher share of freelance workers, although the associated work, in fact, approximates a full-time or a part-time job. The only difference is that the employer does not have to pay health and social insurance for these journalists.

The highest share of employment contract is for a definite period. This increases the instability of a professional identity, and this is further reinforced by the lack of interest in professional associations and trade unions. Fewer than 8% of Czech journalists are members of any kind of professional organization. This extremely low membership in professional organizations, which should help form the basis of a professional identity, reflects the split/divided, identity-poor nature of the individualized professional being of Czech journalists, and it also makes them more manipulable. In contrast, the membership in professional organizations among Western European and American journalists is about 50%.[4]

Both of these identity-splitting mechanisms (social and organizational) have triggered the process of deprofessionalization. This conclusion seems to be supported by the fact that only about a third of Czech journalists have completed a university course in journalism. For the other two-thirds, the professional identity of some evolved in the process of professional socialization in the editorial office, and others have their professional identity settings in some other field, and

journalism is a kind of living-expense support for them. The broad variability in the cultural and social capital of Czech journalists leads to a form of professional 'being' that is split.

The core of professional journalistic identity: Professional values

Among national journalistic cultures, there are historically rooted differences in the degree of acceptance of professional values, which especially applies to the journalistic communities formed after Second World War under the direct influence of the 'Soviet journalistic theory'. This theory regards journalism as a primarily propagandist activity that should raise citizen loyal to the Communist establishment and regards the Communist Party as the leading power that has the right 'if the activity of a journalist does not correspond to the demands of the Party, to deprive him of the right to speak in its name or to choose other means of influence over him' (Tepljuk, 1989: 115). Jakubowicz (1995: 78), for instance, sees the transformation of the professional identity of journalists in post-Communist countries as a transition from vehicles of propaganda 'to providers of competently collected and written information and non-partisan, impartial and neutral interpreters of social reality'.

The professional identity of Czech journalists working in the media of the old regime was formed by different value standards than the identities of Western European and American journalists who were professionally socialized in the environment of a liberal concept of journalism, which Mancini (2000: 267) calls an 'ideology' for their professionalization and for the interpretation of the mass media system. The core of the 'liberal' model is grounded on 'fact-centred' journalism and sees news media as a communication channel that provides citizens with objective and balanced information they need for their political choices as well as for everyday problem solving. The task of journalists is to communicate public opinions to decision-makers and vice versa, and also, through criticism, to draw attention to their mistakes and failures, especially the failures of political elite. To be able to do this, the legal sphere must ensure journalists unlimited freedom of speech and as much open access as possible to the information the publication of which is in the public interest. The liberal model simultaneously expects that news media and journalists will apply professional self-regulation and accept the responsibility for their professional performance. Two key principles of journalistic professionalization meet here: 'professional autonomy of journalists as well as a measure of public accountability' (Nordenstreng, 1998: 132).

To what extent do Czech journalists approach the concept of professional identity formed by these principles of professionalization accepted by their foreign counterparts who did not experience the 'cultivation' of the Soviet theory of journalism? We will observe the variability of professional identity on three levels: professional, epistemological, and ethical.

A comparison of these indicators of professional identity reveals very similar degrees of acceptance of the selected professional values. It seems that all four

Table 6. Acceptance of selected professional values among compared journalistic communities.

	Czech journalists	Democratic-corporatist model	Polarized pluralist model	Liberal model
Professional roles				
Strong market orientation	44% (36%)	37% (41%)	31% (38%)	36% (40%)
Strong power distance	53% (20%)	70% (19%)	56% (26%)	75% (12%)
Strong interventionism	25% (37%)	16% (33%)	23% (28%)	22% (37%)
Epistemological stances				
Strong objectivism	73% (16%)	63% (23%)	72% (17%)	69% (19%)
Strong empiricism	76% (13%)	79% (15%)	68% (19%)	72% (15%)
Ethical stances				
Strong relativism	54% (22%)	29% (23%)	31% (26%)	27% (22%)
Strong idealism	51% (25%)	48% (21%)	47% (23%)	44% (23%)

Note: numbers in brackets indicate percentages of disagreement with the statement.

compared communities share the Western European *liberal journalistic model* (Table 6). The only noticeable difference in professional roles[5] is that Czech journalists are more willing to accept the (pro)market function of the media (they perceive their audiences as consumers, rather than citizens). However, the acceptance of market orientation in all of the compared communities is under 50%. A more important difference is that Czech journalists maintain a shorter distance from political and economic power (they are less willing to see it as a subject of their critical professional interest) than journalists from more developed journalistic communities representing the democratic-corporatist model and the liberal model. Differences in the acceptance of the interventionist role (journalists should promote their own values through their work) are not significant.

A similar congruence can be seen in the epistemological stances[6] of Czech journalists. They are a little less subjectivist and trust a more experiential and empirical depiction of reality than the other compared communities. Here, the attitudes of all compared communities are also spread in a 10% interval (63%–73%) and can be perceived as more or less congruent.

The third professional identity component was the ethical attributes,[7] namely: (a) a tendency to idealism that favours a higher, universal 'good', and considers that it is not always possible to pursue the interests of a particular individual and (b) some degree of relativism that, in its extreme form, rejects the existence of universal rules and gives preference to individual solutions and ad hoc analysis.

Whereas Czech journalists generally concur with their counterparts from abroad concerning the attributes of their professional identity, the extent of their relativism is considerably higher. It is as if Czech journalists, even years later, are still afraid of the value generalizations typical of the old regime journalism, which dogmatically judged whole groups of citizens on the basis of, for example, their class or

Table 7. Degree of acceptance of the selected professional values among the compared journalistic communities according to age.

	Czech journalists, %	Democratic-corporatist model, %	Polarized pluralist model, %	Liberal model, %
Idealism				
18–34	47.4	55.0	45.6	45.0
35–50	50.0	44.1	46.4	42.8
51+	66.0	52.8	54.1	43.3
Relativism				
18–34	53.8	34.8	27.0	37.7
35–50	53.1	28.2	32.6	25.2
51+	55.2	25.2	40.0	21.3

religious affiliation. This raises the question of whether this fear is only generational, or has been passed on to generations which did not experience professional socialization before the fall of the old regime.

If our assumption is correct, the relativism of the youngest generation should be the lowest. As Table 7 shows, the highest measure of relativism is actually among the oldest journalistic generation. The variance is quite insignificant, though, and there is still a considerable difference from the foreign communities, even with the youngest generation. It appears that this contrast cannot be explained only by the generational experience. It is probably connected with some deeper cultural causes that are passed on intergenerationally. A similar gap can be noticed among the oldest Czech journalists. It can be speculated that this high measure of idealism stems from the collectivist ethics of a 'higher good' which marginalizes the interests of an individual or small groups for the benefit of the whole. The Soviet journalistic theory would in this context argue for the benefit of the people and the Party.

Discussion

The professional identity of Czech journalists went through several dramatic transformations caused by the historic changes in 1948, 1968, and 1989. It seems that after over 25 years of seeking a new professional self-concept and approaching the Anglo-American model of liberal journalism, Czech journalists again find themselves in a situation requiring the revision of their professional identity. This time it is due to pressure from new socio-cultural conditions that have been imperatively established by liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000), which, through its boundless destructiveness, makes the pillars and the rules of the first modernity untrustworthy and unreliable. The earliest victims of this destructive process are the soft performative professions with unstable or fragile professional identities, including journalism. Its semi-professional nature easily succumbs to deprofessionalization,

boosted by both global and local economic-technological trends and causing pro-fessional-identity insecurity among journalists, which in turn makes them more untrustworthy in the eyes of their audiences. The weaker the stability and inner coherence of professional journalistic identity, the stronger the consequences of this process of disintegration. Conversely, a stable professional identity, in the form of a strong professional identification, lending journalistic activity meaning, can also partly inhibit the destruction of their trustworthiness in the eyes of their audiences.

The presented comparison of Czech journalists with their foreign counterparts shows only slight differences on the level of demographic characteristics. These dif-ferences reflect in particular the radical structural transformation that occurred in the Czech news media in 1990s and led to a considerable rejuvenation of editorial staff. A lower level of college and specialized journalistic education is also apparent. A more significant divergence is represented by the considerably less stable working position of Czech journalists, whose jobs have a higher share of indefinite-period contracts. The most striking difference is in the values/political orientation of Czech journalists, whose right-centre values contrast with the prevailing left-centre pos-itions of their foreign counterparts in all compared models.

From the point of view of the attributes of professional identity themselves (professional role, epistemology, and ethics), there were only two distinctive dif-ferences. Czech journalists demonstrated, on the level of their role, less distance from power than their foreign counterparts, and, on the level of ethics, a higher measure of idealism and relativism. There was a high congruence on the level of epistemological attitudes.

However, a comparison of the professional identity homogeneity of Czech jour-nalists against individual identity attributes (role, epistemology, and ethics) reveals a high variability, indicating a deeper professional identity split within the Czech journalistic community (Table 8). Comparing it with the attitude variability on the level of individual models, though, reveals minimal differences. In other words, the IQV exceeds 80% in all compared groups, which indicates a similar heterogeneity level of professional identity values. The given indicators show that, in the last quarter of a century, Czech journalists have accepted, at least on the declarative level, the liberal concept of journalism as defined by Curran (1991).

This does not automatically mean that they interpret the meaning of these pro-fessional values in the same way or that they use them in exactly the same way as their foreign counterparts. Lauk (2008: 194) points out that it is possible to find a broader variety of journalism cultures in Central and Eastern European countries than in established Western European democracies that derive their professional philosophy of journalism predominantly from the Anglo-American or 'liberal' model.

Individual journalistic communities are formed under the influence of historical, national, social, and political conditions, which are projected into the inner struc-ture of national journalistic fields, in the frame of which professional journalistic communities are shaped. These socio-cultural, political, and global technological influences are so strong that they can hinder building a coherent, stable, and there-fore autonomous journalistic identity. For this reason, a constitutive feature of the

Table 8. Degree of acceptance of selected professional values (IQV) in %.

	Czech journalists, %	Democratic-corporatist model, %	Polarized pluralist model, %	Liberal model, %
Role	95	86	94	85
Epistemology	61	66	70	69
Ethics	92	95	97	95
Average value IQV	83	82	87	83

Note: The measure of split/homogeneity of professional identity was analysed as a measure of agreement with the statements indicating institutional role, epistemological, and ethical attitudes. Its values were transformed from the previous five-point scale to the three following positions: agreement; not agreement, nor disagreement; disagreement. The resulting index of qualitative variation was formed on the base of the distribution among these three categories.
IQV: index of qualitative variation.

journalistic identity is a state of permanent split. This professional identity instability is not an isolated problem of one socio-professional group. Journalists are important actors and co-creators of Euro-American style democracy. The split of their professional identity and the related increase in public mistrust threaten the liberal democratic establishment of Czech society.

The professional identity of Czech journalists is more unstable, as demonstrated by their demographic structure and their working conditions, and therefore also more manipulable or more easily misused, than the identity of journalists within the liberal and democratic-corporatist model. Transformations in the professional identity of Czech journalists are due to the history of economic-political changes that often forced journalists to reconfigure their professional values and to adapt to new circumstances. A small number of journalists suffered tragic existential consequences when the professional identity of the journalistic community was transformed dramatically. However, from a historical perspective, the professional identity of most Czech journalists is characterized by a high measure of flexibility, especially in dramatic historical-political situations. One reason is probably that a sufficiently stable professional journalistic identity or self-conception has never been established – there has never been enough time in Czech history to consolidate democratic values, standards, and practices. Some research projects indicate that the more fragile the journalists' professional identity is, the weaker the self-reflection of their professional self-image (Zelizer, 1993) and thus also their ability to resist the pressure and lure of political-economic power.

Conclusion

Professional identity has an integrative function among the members of a profession who are specialists in certain types of knowledge. It provides them with shared

norms and professional ideology. Thus, professional identity helps to assume social positions within the journalistic field and offers journalists answers to professional dilemmas that go beyond the framework strictly defined by editorial codes.

Professional journalistic identity is not only constituted by professional rules and ideals but also by social positions, value-political orientation, and the socio-demographic composition of the community. The extent to which these professional identity attributes are shared reflects not only their homogeneity or diversity but it mainly reflects the extent of their 'horizontal solidarity'.

The structure of the professional identity of Czech journalists, or the representation of its attributes, does not, in principle, differ from that of the compared foreign journalists. A variance is perceptible only in two partial attributes – the professional role attribute and the ethical attribute. The willingness to subject the representatives of power to criticism is lower than that of the journalists in the compared models. On the other hand, the measure of their relativism and idealism is higher. Both of these attitudes are generationally conditioned; the measure of difference is brought by the oldest journalistic generation.

The biggest split is reflected at the social-employment level, which strongly damages horizontal professional solidarity and divides journalist groups, such that journalists participate in a game in which 'everybody fights everybody'. It is probably the most distinctive variable weakening their professional identification, together with their political orientation, which is, unlike the orientation of journalists in the compared models, markedly to the right. This strong liberal right leaning guides Czech journalists to 'individual biographic' solutions to the systemic discords of their profession. This professional identity division feeds the assertion of hierarchical social control by political and economic powers.

In the remaining attributes of professional identity, Czech journalists demonstrate results comparable to those of their foreign counterparts, which implies that domestic journalists have separated from the Soviet journalistic model and accepted the dominant ideology of journalism shared in Western Europe and North America.

It certainly does not mean that this declaratory acceptance of given professional values will make the professional practice of Czech journalists comparable or identical to the practice of their foreign counterparts. The national cultural and historical specificities and the current socio-political context modify the model of the 'liberal-journalistic' paradigm into a specific national version. However, the mechanical application of this imported cultural and historical model causes dysfunctions that further affect the measure of identity homogeneity of journalistic communities.

If we strictly adhere to the analysed data, Czech journalists do not significantly differ in the intensity with which they share the selected professional values, as the index of qualitative variation shows. Thus, the answer to the second research question is: the measure of Czech journalists' professional identity split is comparable to the split of their foreign counterparts.

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Notes

1. Australia is not included in the original typology of Hallin and Mancini (2004); however, it is a former British colony and it may be assumed that it shares the media culture of other Anglo-Saxon countries. Moreover, it is considered as a representative of the North Atlantic/liberal model by other authors (e.g., Jones and Pusey, 2010).
2. According to the authors of the study (Hanitzsch et al., 2007–2011), interviews were mostly completed between 2007 and 2010 by telephone or face-to-face. Sampling was carried out in two steps. At first, 20 news organizations in every country were selected according to a common quota scheme. Wherever possible, five journalists in each newsroom were selected. Journalists were defined as those who had at least some editorial responsibility for the content they produce.
3. The presented comparisons should be seen as only approximate, as the data provided by WJS are not representative, unlike the data about Czech journalists.
4. The compared models show 57% association membership (average membership among Austrian + German + Swiss journalists), 53% membership (average membership among Spanish + Greek + Portuguese journalists), and 49% membership (average membership among US and Australian journalists).
5. We asked journalists to indicate the measure of importance on a scale of 1 to 5 of the following journalistic roles: (a) to concentrate mainly on news that will attract the widest possible audience (an indicator of high market orientation), (b) to act as watchdog of business elites; to act as watchdog of the government (the average value of importance of these two roles was used as the indicator of high power distance), and (c) to influence public opinion (an indicator of high interventionism).
6. This was measured by questions related to (a) journalist attitudes towards the impossibility of finding objective truth, (b) their views on reporting methods, which oscillate between pure empirical and analytical/value-related. Journalists were asked to indicate their measure of approval on a scale from 1 to 5 with the following statements: (a) I do not allow my own beliefs and convictions to influence my reporting; I remain strictly impartial in my work; I think that journalists can depict reality as it is (the average value of agreement with these statements was used as an indicator of high objectivism); (b) I think that facts speak for themselves; I make claims only if they are substantiated by hard evidence and reliable sources; I always stay away from information that cannot be verified (the average value of agreement with these statements was used as indicator of high empiricism).
7. We asked journalists to indicate their measure of approval on a scale from 1 to 5 with the following statements: (a) Journalists should avoid questionable methods of reporting,

even if this means not getting the story; reporting and publishing a story that can potentially harm others is always wrong, regardless of the benefits to be gained (the average value of agreement with these statements was used as an indicator of high idealism); (b) ethical dilemmas in news coverage are often so complex that journalists should be allowed to formulate their own individual codes of conduct; What is ethical in journalism varies from one situation to another (the average value of agreement with these statements was used as an indicator of high relativism).

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