

Journalism beyond Leveson: Professional Culture versus Delinquent Subculture

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This book considers whether journalism is, or could be, a profession as the concept is normally understood.

Its focus is on the culture of journalism as expressed in the values, norms and ways of behaving of journalists, rather than the culture of the newsroom or press organisation. Leveson was concerned with the latter, but the concept of culture was treated only superficially by his Inquiry and the broader notion of the culture of journalism, as something distinct from corporate culture, was not examined at all.

The book argues that journalism is not a profession in the normal sense of the word. It is increasingly university-based but there is no agreed core body of scientific knowledge underpinning it; the majority of journalists are not accredited; there is no clear set of values and norms conditioning behaviour; representative organisations and training organisations are disjointed and conflicted; and the primacy of the attachment to the freedom of the press (that is, the freedom of the organisations journalists work for) creates a barrier to the development of an agreed responsible ethical practice.

The book discusses the culture of a free press and evaluates journalism as a profession. It examines professional authority and regulation and investigates the history of journalism as an occupation in search of professional values. One of the historic features of the press has been the creation of 'moral panics' in the general population but, it is argued, the irrational response to Leveson can be characterised as an 'immoral panic' in defence of the press's corporate interests.

The culture of journalism is not the same as the culture of the newsroom, but there is some way to go before it can be considered as a professional culture. The final chapter sets out how this might be brought about by university educators and the journalists they train.

The book is available on Amazon as an Kindle e-book and as a paperback.