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**MEDIA TRANSPARENCY THROUGH JOURNALISTS`
INTERPRETATIONS:
RESEARCH IN UKRAINE**

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Introduction

Ethics is commonly associated with normative area. However, in a real-life professional practice ethics could be hardly limited to normative concepts and imperatives. It is also an internal process of making individual choices that may or may not correspond with established rules. There is a *human element* in media practice that highlights the ethics of every person within the mass media organization and how they approach their freedom and their responsibility doing the job (Forunato, 2005).

This is especially true for such young developing democracies, as Ukraine is, where the value system is establishing, where journalism is an emerging profession that is still to determine its rules and mission, and where practitioners are formulating their professional roles and obligations. So, they are often questioning their professional intentions, individual choices and ethical issues, including transparency of their work. There are many discussions in Ukraine criticizing journalism for not being ethical, transparent and independent. At the same time, less attention is paid to in-depth understanding how journalists actually behave and how they evaluate their rules that guide their work.

The initial idea of my work is to look at the ethics of media practice through the eyes of people who experience this practice as a part of their professional lives. “Real people” working in Ukrainian journalism nowadays, facing its challenges, achievements and failures, participating in its changes and transformations have been the main actors and sources of my investigation. My intention was to get a deeper insight into what is going on in Ukrainian journalism and its ethical development, to listen to the voices of people working in media and place them in light of current theoretical discussions, looking at the existing literature that might be helpful for analysis.

The Phenomenon Under Investigation.

The concept of media transparency is rooted in normative ethics. Honesty, independence of opinion, fair judgment and unbiased, balanced coverage are listed among the main journalistic principles that serve public right to access true and objective information. Transparency in journalism is generally defined as one of the key requisites

for credible media practices that are based on trust between the media representatives and their audiences (Tsetsura & Kruckeberg, 2009). As truth seekers and truth presenters, media practitioners are obligated to stay open and honest with their audiences (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001) and all the stakeholders of communication process.

However, giving a formal definition to professional standards and values, normative conceptualization may also represent serious difficulties in inculcating substantial ethical values in individual journalists and in the profession as a whole (Black & Barney, 1985). The codes do not always work in practice, as they should work, and in case of transparency, there are evidences of violations in different countries, including Ukraine (Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009).

Besides, the majority of previous works and studies approached media transparency from the *normative* position: media practices are examined as ones, which may or may not violate formally specified norms and professional standards (Tsetsura, 2005a; Tsetsura, 2005b; Pasti, 2005; Harro-Loit & Saks, 2006; Klyueva, 2008; Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009; Tsetsura, & Zuo, 2009; Kluyeva & Tsetsura, 2010). *Normative approach* to media transparency research is effective, as it makes possible to *examine* the existing practices, *reveal* non-transparency by comparing the existing practices with formal professional rules.

Nevertheless, a normative approach to investigation of ethics leaves less space for people and provides less information about how professionals understand and interpret the actions they take, based on their shared experiences, values and perceptions. Meanwhile, theorists mark a critical gap between “moralistic” codes, which usually imply “general precepts,” and specific professional practices covered in codes (Black & Barney, 1985), therefore, when faced with ethical challenges, the journalists rely first on their personal codes of ethics rather than on formal codes of ethics (Bruno, 2008). And understanding the process of ethical decision-making of journalists, as they work on the stories, may be just as important as studying what ethical codes guide behavior of journalists (Craig, 2006, 2008). Mainly, it indicates a need in in-depth qualitative studies that would explore ethics of media practice in various and specific contexts and, based on

empirical data, expand the understanding of media transparency phenomenon through a real-life experiences.

In my work I am especially interested in the *'practical' meaning of transparency*: how media practitioners understand this phenomenon and what meaning of ethical and transparent practices they share by their professional choices. Recognizing the values of honesty and transparency in communications, ethical codes of the Ukrainian journalists and public relations practitioners follow similar ethical standards that are in line with codes of ethics of international professional associations. However, existence of ethical rules does not guarantee ethics of communication practices. A recent survey-based media transparency research has revealed the evidences of influences on Ukrainian media that distort independent news coverage in the country (Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009). Being owned by business and learning to work in new market conditions, Ukrainian media remains a primary platform for political elites and business interests (Gromadzki et al., 2010); many media outlets work for purposes of influence rather than to provide the public with information or generate profits (Dyczok, 2009).

Statement of Purpose

Therefore, my study is aimed at *understanding of* the phenomenon of media transparency through the experiences and interpretations of media practitioners - individuals involved in constitution of the phenomenon by their ethical judgments, shared values and informal rules that work in practice. Specifically, this interpretative study seeks to answer the following research question: *how do Ukrainian media practitioners understand and interpret the phenomenon of media transparency and how they perceive their professional role in the existing practices?* Based on the case of Ukraine, I elaborate the understanding of media transparency phenomenon as it is constructed by journalists' professional experiences, perceptions, attitudes, values and ethical considerations that work in practice.

Epistemological Assumptions and Methodology

As a way to understand media practices and media transparency this study approaches the phenomenon of media transparency within the social constructionist

paradigm, assuming that social life is processual, there are emergent, multiple realities, and facts and values are linked (Charmaz, 2006, p. 126). My investigation is built on the methodology of grounded theory (Glaser, & Strauss, 1967; Corbin, & Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2006) and applies methods of individual interviews and focus-group discussions with media practitioners in Ukraine as well as the elements of creative art-based method. Qualitative methodology was utilized to allow study participants express their views and tell their stories, reflecting what they experience in their work and explaining me how they understand the phenomenon under investigation (Charmaz, 2006, p. 27). Hence, in this work I intend to go beyond the explanation of media transparency as a “given” normative concept, involving practitioners into articulation and making sense about the phenomenon they experience.

This study lies on individualist perspective on media ethics and principles of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969). Concentrating on journalists’ personal values and interpretations, applied in practical decisions, it shifts emphasis away from “*normative*” examination of media transparency as static and objectively existing phenomenon and focuses on *understanding* transparency through the lenses of *subjective meanings and interpretations* that journalists employ in their decisions.

Theoretical Implications

As media and public relations practices develop and globalize, the need for empirical and interpretative research grows. Taking the case of Ukraine and using the first-hand data as a primary source, this study advances the understanding of media practices, media ethics and professionalism. It also contributes to media research of post-soviet countries and young and developing democracies. Inviting the leading journalists (as moral agents) into the a global discussion on media ethics and transparency, it was intends to describe how media practitioners understand and deal with ethical dilemmas and how they make professional decisions based on shared meanings and interpretations.

The study is aimed to expand the understanding of media transparency analysing it, first, *as a socially constructed phenomenon*, focusing on the individual values and ethical deliberations of media gatekeepers. Second, it offers to approach media

transparency *as a process* of making decisions and making meanings on the on-going media practices. Here I refer to the recent definition by Craft and Heim (2009) who write that transparency is about *revealing motives* and *providing explanations* about decisions.

Based on journalists' experiences and interpretations, my interpretative research findings sheds light on the existing media practices and ethical challenges media practitioners face in their every day work. Further, it enables to look at the meaning of media transparency as the constructed phenomenon and compare it with its "normative", or theoretical, conceptualization. It also helps analyse the differences between formally defined values, on the one hand, and their interpretations, on the other hand. In addition, the conclusions based on original textual and visual research data, contribute into inquiries about the nature of media practices and media ethics, and allow better understanding of journalism profession and challenges for its development in Ukraine and worldwide.

I would also like to add that little work on Ukrainian media is presented in English, and very limited data from Ukraine is available for international community today. Since this research seeks to contribute into understanding of media practice in post-communist countries by providing analysis of original data collected in Ukraine, I hope my work would also assist in filling this existing gap.

My work consists of the four chapters. The first chapter is a critical literature review in which I elaborate a theoretical background of the study. In particular, I discuss the ideas contributing to the theoretical conceptualization of transparency in media and constructing normative understanding of this phenomenon. Afterwards, I review individual approaches to media ethics. The first chapter also includes description of the context: a detailed review of history and current media situation in Ukraine as well as previous studies, conducted in the area of media ethics and transparency. In the second chapter the research epistemology and methodology are discussed; besides, I describe my research design, sample and technical details of the study. Finally, the third chapter is dedicated to data analysis, here I present textual and visual research findings that are summarized and discussed in the section of conclusions.

I. Literature review

1. Normative concept of media transparency: Commitments to Content, Process and Tools for “Visible” Journalism

The concept of media transparency has normative nature. According to Craft and Heim (2009), importance of transparency rests on the norms and obligations that are grounded in distinct public and democratic purpose of journalism. Having deontological roots in ethics of communication, media transparency is defined as *a normative guideline* associated with professional standards of journalism (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Harro-Loit & Saks, 2006; Plaisance, 2007; Singer, 2007; Klyueva, 2008; Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009; Tsetsura, & Zuo, 2009, Klyueva & Tsetsura, 2010; Karlsson, 2011).

Although transparency of media practice is one of the topical issues, discussed in both professional and academic communities today (similar to the notion of “journalistic objectivity”), it remains an abstract phenomenon (Karlsson, 2010). Mass communication scholars and researchers continue to offer their perspectives on what transparent media practice means putting various expectations and professional obligations to fulfill for transparent media practice.

In this chapter I will synthesize the ideas contributing to the theoretical conceptualization of transparency in media and constructing normative understanding of this phenomenon. I will also review various dimensions of transparent and non-transparent practices as they are presented in the works of scholars and classified by empirical studies` findings. Identification of theoretical framework by examining previous works and research are especially helpful as it provides preliminary insights, direction and initial concepts for further investigation.

1.1. The Nature of Media Transparency: Notions of Visibility and Movement

The ideas of *movement* and *visibility* are central for transparency. In Latin “transparent” means ‘shining through’ and consists of two words trans - ‘through’ and parere - ‘appear’. According to the global non-government organization Transparency

International (Transparency International, n.d.), “transparency” is defined as principle that allows those, affected by decisions or transactions or charitable work, to know not only the basic facts and figures but also the mechanisms and processes. It is the duty of civil servants, managers and trustees to act *visibly*, *predictably* and *understandably* (ibid.).

Since journalism deals with news and information, media transparency generally defines the *visibility* of the whole newsgathering and news production process and, theoretically, includes numerous duties that ensure this visibility. The media transparency concept, as Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2004) explain, determines how and why information is conveyed through various means. Media is considered to be transparent when: 1) there are many competing sources of information, 2) much is known about the method of information delivery, and 3) information about the funding of media or media productions is publicly available (ibid.).

Generally, transparency requires all the stakeholders in communication process and, primarily, audience *to witness* how, why and in what way media gets, processes and produces information. Tuchman (1972) wrote that journalism procedures must be *discernible* to the news consumers. Such *visibility* of media practice allows balancing competing interests and values; it also makes possible that all the participants of media communication speak the same language (Plaisance, 2008) and understand the motives and intentions of the other players (Craft and Heim, 2009). And finally, discernibility of media practice protects media people from external critics (Tuchman, 1972).

Meanwhile the notion of visibility reflects the core and general idea of transparency, in media this phenomenon is often presented through the number of commitments, for instance, the commitment to truthful editorial content that is clearly separated from advertising, honest and visible news-making process, openness of motives and reasons behind the news-making process. In some works media transparency is also associated with tools for strengthening public trust, condition for unbiased coverage, independent and free media practice, absence of pressures and corruption in news media. In the following paragraphs I will discuss in details the main commitments that compose the normative understanding of media transparency.

1.2. Transparency As a Truth-Telling: The Right of Public to Know the Truth

The concept of transparency in media practice is usually associated with fundamental requirements to media content, specifically, with values of truth and honesty in media practice. Journalists are to seek out and speak the truth in the public interest (Gregory, 2010), and as *truth seekers* and *truth presenters*, the journalists must be open and honest with their audiences (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). Commitment to truth in media transparency concept is based on the notion that public depends on truthful media information to make informed judgments and decisions, for instance, decisions about election of public officials or about what products to buy (Day, 1991).

Transparency, when it is linked primarily to the quality of media content, manifests capacity of truth and limits misinformation. Here the concept of transparency, as Plaisance (2008) concludes, comes close to the Kantian duty of acting in ways that respect others: “even if transparency is not always sufficient condition for more ethical behavior its absence is a prerequisite for deception” (p.48). Universal value of truth and honesty, then, indicates journalists’ respect to audience, his or her will to treat readers as ends but not as the means to meet any other interests than professional obligation to provide true and unbiased information.

Truth-telling in journalism is associated with trust and professional authority. Activities of transparency help revitalize journalism as a profession and authoritative source of information (Karlsson, 2011). Commitment to truth in transparency concept serves credible media practices based on trust between the media representatives and their audiences (Tsetsura & Kruckeberg, 2009). Consuming media content, citizens expect certain quality of information to aid in self-governance and community sustenance, and journalists have unique qualification for providing that information (Craft and Heim, 2009).

Therefore, truth-telling can be perceived as an essential attribute of transparent media practice that serves both accountability and credibility of media institution. Media non-transparency, then, may be described as secrecy, prerequisite of chaos (Plaisance, 2008) and deception that dehumanize media’s audiences by limiting their ability to

exercise free will and shape informed opinions and judgments about different issues (Klyueva & Tsetsura, 2010).

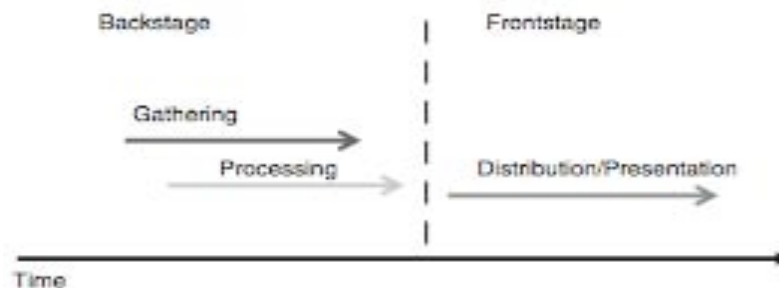
1.3. Transparent Process: Disclosure of Motives Behind the News-Production

More and more often media transparency definition goes beyond the requirements about truthful content stressing the importance of the whole news-making process to be transparent. Plaisance (2008) offers to expand the understanding of media transparency and suggests approaching this phenomenon as one of the main principles of professional journalism that addresses not just *content* of media messages but also *form* and *nature* of interactions.

In traditional medium news manufacturing process happens on both backstage and frontstage that are not equally visible to the audience (Karlsson, 2011). Specifically, Karlsson notes that the first stages of newsgathering (1) and news processing (2) are performed on the backstage that is often concealed from the audience. Meanwhile, the final stage of news distribution (3) is presented on the frontstage area, where audience can observe and consume the product (Figure 1).

Therefore, in transparent news making process all the stages of the news manufacturing process are to be on the “frontstage”, or visible to the audience. As Karlsson concludes, such transparency has become achievable in the digital media system.

Figure 1. The parts of the news manufacturing process that is visible to the audience in a traditional medium



Source: Karlsson, 2011, p. 282.

Generally a transparent process obligates to reveal methods of news production and *provide explanations* about journalists' decisions (Craft & Heim, 2009). How do you know what you know? Who are your sources? How direct is their knowledge? What biases might they have? Are there conflicting accounts? Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) pose these questions as determinants of the Rule of Transparency. This rule, according to Plaisance (2008), «calls for journalists to disclose the limitations and methods so that the reliability of their work can be assessed by others» (p. 61).

O'Neill (2002) relies on transparency as «checkability» and the way journalism work can be verified by others. “The transparency of the newsgathering process is important because it clarifies the mediating character of communication in news media; it reminds the reader that there is a journalist between reality and representation of reality” (Rupar, 2006, p. 128). In fact, transparent media process is a realization of audiences' right to understand how media materials are produced: if one or several fundamental principles of journalism are violated, the public has the right to know what influenced certain editorial decisions (Craig, 1999, 2006, 2008).

Transparency of news-production process indicates the public's need to know *how* editorial decisions are made and *why* journalists make decisions to cover specific topics. It signals the journalist's respect for the audience (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001), as “the only way in practice to level with people about what you know is to reveal as much as possible about sources and methods” (p.80). According to Heim (2007), transparency calls upon the journalist to explain his/her readers how the news was constructed and what makes one account more or less plausible than any other. In fact, transparency in terms of open and visible process enables each participant (and each reader, in particular) of media communication to know and understand the motives and intentions behind this process.

In real-life media practice transparency of news making process can be exercised through special techniques, or *rituals of transparency*, as Karlsson (2010) name them. Disclosure is the first 'ritual' of transparent practice. Commitment to transparent process puts obligation to provide *full disclosure* about the methods and motives of journalist's work as a way to increase accountability: media leaders should meaningfully and

regularly explain to the public why they make the decisions they do (i.e. what are their principles, standards, and values?), and how those decisions are made (Black, 2008). This is what Karlsson (2010) classifies as a *'disclosure transparency'*, when news producers are open to explain the way news is selected and produced, provide the sources, manifest the mistakes that have been made. Craft and Heim (2009) describe *'disclosure'* as an active transparency, or the process of bringing information into the audience view. For instance, disclosure may contain the source of information or inform the reader whether the article was composed from the press release or as a result of journalist investigation (Rupar, 2006). Involving audience into the news production process is another way to realize the norm of transparency. Interactivity, or "communication from the audience" and public open participation in news production, that has become possible in digital age, are crucial for achieving transparency in media (Karlsson, 2011). Karlsson (2010) defines it as *participatory transparency*. Such *'rituals of transparency'* expand the understanding of media truth telling and ensure the visibility of the newsgathering and news processing phases of media practice.

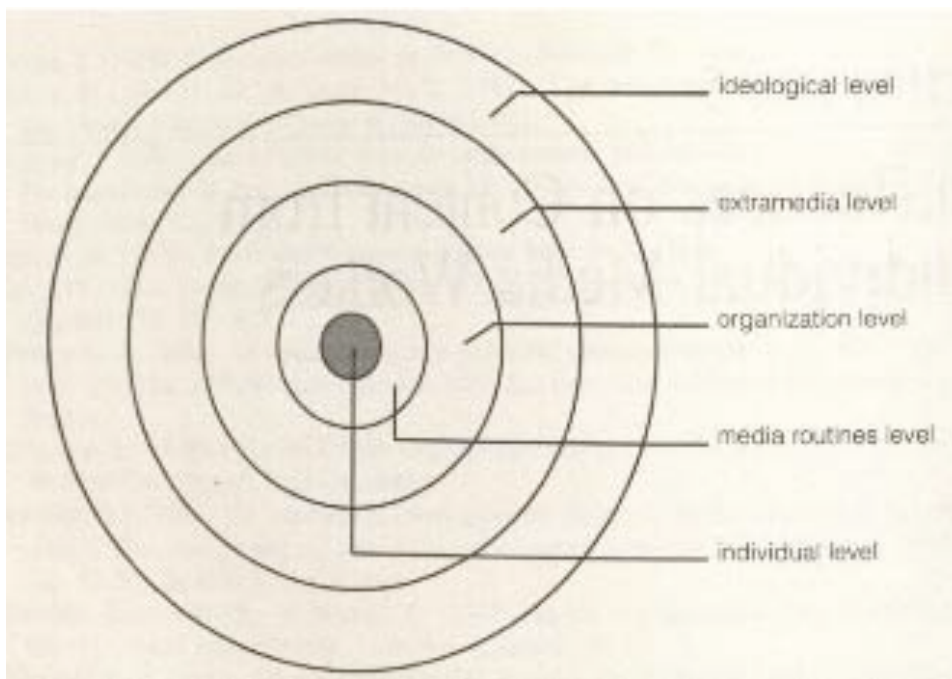
1.4. Editorial Freedom: Non-transparent Influences and Relation With News Sources.

In its normative meaning transparency emphasizes the claims of non-corrupted, non-bribed and unbiased practices. In the concept, offered by Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2004), absence of any direct and indirect influence on newsgathering and news-making process is placed as a central idea of media transparency. Based on this conceptualization, media transparency is understood as journalists' objectivity and freedom in their relations with news-sources (i.e. business, political, non-government organizations or public relations professionals), publishers, other departments of media organization and absence of any pressures or influences on editorial decisions. Editorial freedom as a condition of transparent practice serves in building trustworthy relations with audience as "*the credibility* of any news and information supplied is largely dependent of confidence that it is not unduly or secretly influenced by partisan or vested interests - of government, advertiser, proprietor, source etc." (McQuail, 1996, p. 72).

Such conceptualization of transparency is placed within a broader discussion about

the journalists-news-sources relations and various influences, affecting media practice and content. In particular, several authors attempted to analyze a wide range of sources of influences on journalists' work and media content, including political (Blumer & Gurevitch, 1995; Hallin & Mancini, 2004), economic (McManus, 2009), and ideological values of the society (Gans, 1979). Shoemaker and Reese (1996) provided the hierarchical model of influences on media content, specifying that influences occur on different levels - individual, media routines, organization, the extramedia, and the ideological level (Figure 2).

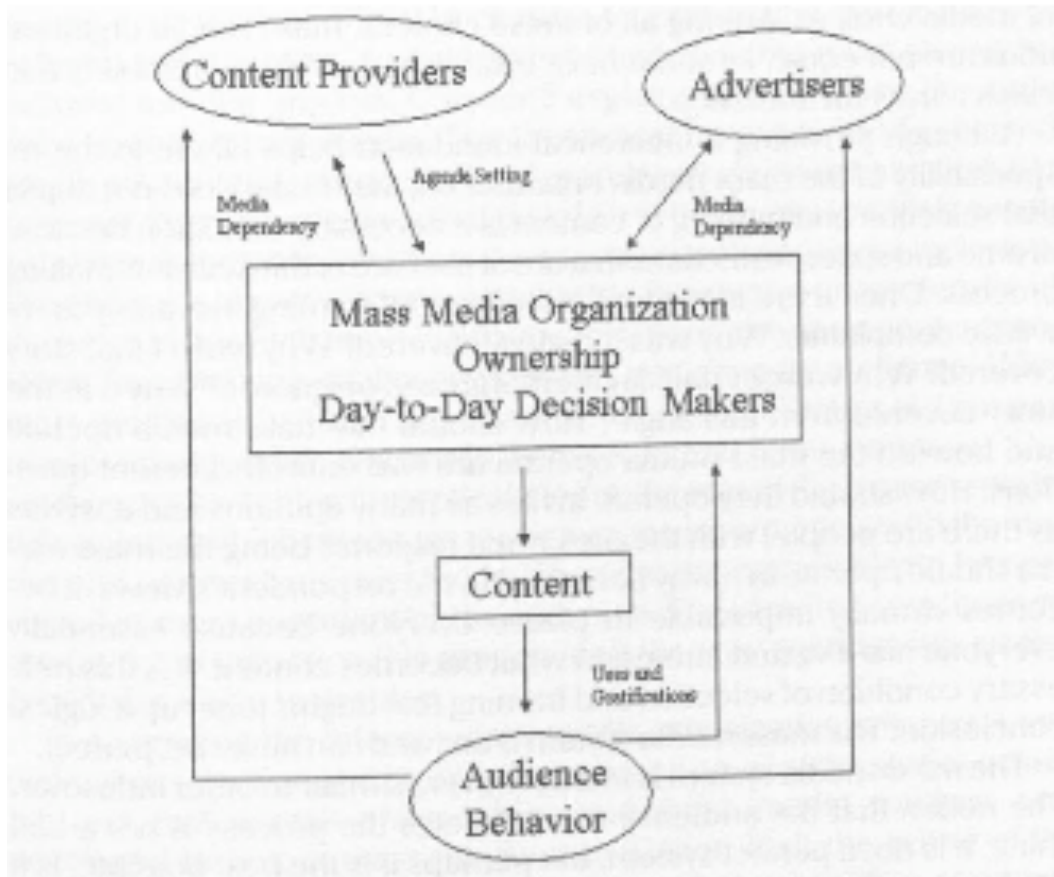
Figure 2. Individual influences on media content in the hierarchical model.



Source: Shoemaker and Reese, 1996.

Speaking about the routine decision-making process in media, Fortunato (2005) highlights the influences of different constituency groups related to media practice. (Figure 3). These influences constitute individual and organizational dependency of media organization.

Figure 3. The process of mass media content decision-making.



Source: Fortunato, 2005.

Therefore, when conceptualized in terms of biased and corrupted practices, media non-transparency claims to take into account the dimension of media - news-source relations, that, according to Manning (2001), involves the struggle to control information flows.

Conceptualization of transparency through the notion of freedom from hidden, not visible and unethical influences on news production makes possible to explore, indicate and measure concrete practices that challenge transparent (unbiased and independent) media coverage, or the practices of non-transparency. Kruckeberg and Tsetsura (2003) define *non-transparency* as biased or misleading coverage journalists produce as a result of benefits gatekeepers (e.g., journalists, editors, producers, and other media managers) get from the news-sources (e.g., public relations practitioners, governmental officials, advertisers or other interested parties).

Since non-transparency is a relatively broad and abstract term (Yang, A., in press), some authors prefer to utilize more concrete terms to describe corruption in media system, for instance, “media bribery” or “bribery for news coverage”. *Media bribery* is understood as “any form of payment for media coverage or any influence on editorial decisions that is not clearly indicated in the finished product or the media” (Tsetsura, 2009, p. 3). These practices have got different definitions, such as cash for news coverage (Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2003), media bribery (Tsetsura, 2005), envelope journalism (Shafer, 1990; Romano, 2000), media non-transparency (Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009), and media opacity (Tsetsura & Kruckeberg, 2009; Tsetsura & Klyueva, 2010). Meanwhile many practitioners prefer to use slang words to refer to this phenomenon: *zakazukha* in Russia (Holmes, 2001), *pay-for-play* in the USA (Tsetsura, 2008), and *dzhynsa* in Ukraine (Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009; Grynko, 2010).

The practice of placing paid-for materials without informing reader about it occurs worldwide, and the pervasiveness of such practices in specific regions and countries is especially alarming (Davies, 2008; Tsetsura & Kruckeberg, 2009). In 2003, the global index of media bribery ranked 66 countries from 1, most transparent, to 33 as least transparent (Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2003). Considering such factors of media system development as anti-corruption laws, professional education of journalists, existence of well-established and enforceable journalism codes of ethics, and free press and free flow of information, the index demonstrated the likelihood of “cash for news coverage” existence in each of the listed country. Afterwards, more and more empirical studies were conducted in different countries for further and more detailed investigation of media transparency. In the next paragraphs I will discuss how the values of truth telling and transparency are formalized in professional obligations of journalists and public relations professionals (who often play the role of the news sources). Further, I will review media transparency research and how these studies contributed to better understanding and classification of the phenomenon.

1.4.1. Journalists and Public Relations Professionals: Different Goals and Common Values

When articulated within the framework of media – news sources relations and issues of paid-for coverage, media transparency concept includes the moral obligations of two professions – journalism and Public Relations. Scholars and professionals are seeking to clarify which one of two professional groups is responsible for non-transparent practices: journalists who accept influences and take payments or PR-practitioners who “do whatever it takes to gain exposure for their client organization in media” (Grunig, 1990, p.18). The definition of professional goals, values and responsibilities of two professions should be considered as one of the issues in resolving the problem of "cash for news coverage".

Traditionally journalists are defined as people who gather and disseminate information about current events that are newsworthy. Hence “*newsworthiness*” may be analyzed in terms of degree of importance, or significance, of the news item and people’s interest (Halberstam, 1992). Kovach (2001) declared that journalism is storytelling with a purpose of providing people the information they need to understand the world and live their lives. Meanwhile, considering the numerous complexities of journalism and the role of the journalists Kruckeberg (1995) suggests define the nature of journalism with less normative bias and look at the practice per se, arguing that “journalism’ is what ‘journalists’ do.” He notes, that a journalist could be a public affairs reporter of government activity or an advice columnist, an ideological interpreter of news for a propagandistic medium owned or sanctioned by an authoritarian government or a reporter for a commercially "controlled" medium. "Journalism" is defined as "the process of reporting news," and a "journalist" is “someone who is engaged in this process for his or her primary livelihood” (Kruckeberg, 1995, p. 78-79).

Public Relations evolved from journalism (Grunig, 1990), and these two professions continue to be closely related in their working techniques and duties. As writing is a common activity of both public relations professionals and journalists and both groups of professionals do their jobs in many of the same ways, many people, including journalists, came to the incorrect conclusion that little difference exists between

public relations and journalism. Wilcox (2006) states that for many, public relations practitioner is simply being “journalism-in-residence” for non-media organizations as PR-professionals interview people, gather and synthesize large amounts of information, write in a journalistic style, and are trained to produce good copy on deadline. However, despite the sharing of many techniques, the two fields are different in scope, objectives, audiences, and channels. Kvit (2008) remarks the fundamental differences between journalism and public relations, explaining that mission of journalism comes from its “mediating” role in society - to serve public interest and auditoria needs. Meanwhile the role of PR originates from the mission of social institute of public relations. This mission lies in communication management, systematization of informational flows and organization of “optimal communication environment” (Kvit, 2008, p.122). Smith (1996) defines PR as the management function that evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and patience. Another definition, which describes the modern practice of PR, says that PR is a communication management through which organizations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organizational goals (Wilcox, 2006).

As a profession Public Relations has many components, ranging from counseling to issues management and special events. Journalistic writing and media relations, although important, are only two of these elements. In addition, effective practice of public relations requires strategic thinking, problem solving capability, and other management skills (Wilcox, 2006; Kulish, 2001; Chumikov & Bocharov, 2007). PR-practitioners operate on two distinct levels – as advisers to their clients or to organizations’ top-management and as technicians who produce and disseminate messages in multiple media channels (Hunt & Grunig, 1994; Sydorenko O. & Sydorenko N., 1998).

Journalists’ goal is to gather and select information for the purpose of providing the public with news and information. Nevertheless Dozier, Gruning J. and Gruning L. (1995) explain that in public relations communication activity is only a mean to the end. Public Relations personnel also gather facts and information for the purpose of informing

the public, but the objective is not only to inform but to change people's attitudes and behaviors in order to further an organization's goals and objectives. PR-practitioners develop two-side communication between organization and audience, explain and defend the interests of organization, journalism "asks tricky questions" and allows auditors to articulate the opinion and reach right decisions" (Kvit, 2008, p.122).

Different missions of journalism and public relations professions also determine different audiences and channels (Wilcox, 2006). Journalists write for a mass audience – readers, listeners, or viewers of the medium for which they work. By definition, mass audiences are not well defined, and a journalist on a daily newspaper, for example, writes for the general public. A public relations professional, in contrast, carefully segments audiences into various demographic and psychological characteristics. Such research allows messages to be targeted to audience needs, concerns, and interests for maximum effects. Most journalists, by nature of their employment, reach audience through one channel – the medium that publishes or broadcasts their works. Public relations professionals use variety of channels to reach the audiences. The channels employed may be a combination of mass media outlets – newspapers, magazines, radio, television, Internet, direct mail, pamphlets, posters, newsletters, trade journals, special events, and posting messages in Internet (Wilcox, 2006).

News and media products are commodities and most news organizations are actors on a commercial market. Public relations, and media relations in particular, are aimed at targeting media and communicating organizations, government entities or individuals (Hendrix & Hayes, 2007). However, media relations may also serve the media by providing them with information. The term "information subsidy" was offered by Gandy in 1982 to describe information that is generated by a public relations practitioner to publicize the organization, its products, or a specific point of view (Gandy, 1982). Information subsidies are generated by public relations specialists to influence the media agenda and affect public opinion (Turk, 1985); they also have enormous potential to help getting important social issues on the public agenda (Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Doerfel, 2005). However, extreme forms of information subsidies may facilitate the emergence of media transparency phenomenon and damage the credibility of media.

Therefore, public relations and journalism have a symbiotic relationship. They both realize that communication integrity is paramount and both believe that information is essential for market place of ideas in democratic society.

Although public relations and journalism organizations have different goals, channels, audiences and rules that are specific to the profession, commitment to truth and concern about bribery are common areas in two professions (Wilcox, 2006). Both public relations practitioners and journalists have a vested interest in ensuring the integrity and credibility of the news media. Tsestura and Kruckeberg (2009) state that “in new era of competing information sources and multiple communication channels both “media gatekeepers and their sources, including particularly public relations practitioners, must recognize that consumer trust that could have been safely assumed in earlier eras now must be regained and jealously guarded” (p. 13).

1.4.2. Truth and Transparency in the Codes of Ethics

The duty of transparency is closely connected with commitment to truth and requires acknowledging the moral dimensions of all communicative acts (Plaisance, 2008). Although Public relations and journalism organizations have different codes specific to the profession, commitment to truth and concern about bribery are common areas in two professions (Wilcox, 2006).

Truthfulness in gathering and reporting information and independence/integrity by refusing bribes or any other outside influences on the work are the principles, which are usually declared in codes of ethics for journalists (Laitila, 1995). International Federation of Journalists declares that respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist (IFJ, 1986). Society of Professional Journalism also empathizes that “the duty of the journalism is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues” (SPJ, 1996). International Public Relations Association (IPRA), and the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC, 1970) also forbid practitioners to participate in corrupting the integrity of communication channels, particularly of consumer news media that are perceived to be "objective" and "fair" in using newsworthiness as the sole

criterion in their role as gatekeepers. International Public relations association (IPRA, 2006) says that “members shall refrain from subordinating the truth to other requirements, and circulating information which is not based on established and ascertained facts”., and International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) states: “Members shall engage in truthful, accurate, and fair communication that facilitates respect and mutual understanding”.

The professional codes of ethics of the Ukrainian journalists and public relations practitioners share similar ethical standards with codes of ethics of international professional associations. The Ukrainian Commission on Journalists Ethics Code of Ethics manifests journalists should be independent (CJE, 2002). Article Eight of the Code of Ethics of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine specifically states that journalists should be objective and should not accept any rewards that may influence their judgment or prepare any materials in order to self-promote or to materially benefit from publications (NUJU, 2005). The Ukrainian Commission on Journalists Ethics Code of Ethics manifests journalists should be independent (CJE, 2002): the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine specifically states that journalists should be objective and should not accept any rewards that may influence their judgment or prepare any materials in order to self-promote or to materially benefit from publications (NUJU, 2005).

The Ethics Code of the Ukrainian PR Association (UAPR) code mirrors ethical standards of international public relations codes of ethics, including the code of IPRA among others. The UAPR Code obligates all members to act according to professional standards, which do not tolerate any media bribery. The Code states that honest practice of information exchange can help society to feel the difference between journalist honest opinion and hidden advertising material that looks like journalistic materials (UAPR, 2006). The UAPR Code of Ethics consists of five articles which address professional activity, relations with clients, rights and responsibilities of the professionals, unethical conduct, and problems of discrimination. Article 2.5 states, “News must appear just as a result of editors’ solutions but not any kind of payment.” Article 2.6 confirms that advertising materials must be marked as advertising and information given for media must contain news, therefore, any direct or indirect payment is prohibited. The Code of Ukrainian Public Relations League states that each public relations specialist and

company must follow the principle of true, full and accurate information expansion (UPRL, 2008).

Professional groups in journalism and public relations have condemned bribery, acceptance of expensive gifts, or other favors that would compromise the integrity and credibility of the media. International Federation of Journalists (IFJ, 1986): “The journalist shall regard as grave professional offenses the following: plagiarism, malicious misinterpretation, calumny, libel, slander, unfounded accusations, acceptance of a bribe in any form in consideration of either publication or suppression”. Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ, 1996): “Journalists should refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatments, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office, and service in a community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity, and deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage. International Public relations association (IPRA, 2006): “Members shall not give an expensive gift to a journalist as a bribe so that he or she will write favorable stories about the organization or its product/services. Lavish entertainment and travel junkets for government officials, beyond the limits set by law, are also improper”. International Association of Business Communicators (IABC): “Professional communicators will not accept undisclosed gifts or payments for professional services from anyone other than a client or employer”. Gifts of any kind, according to Public Relation Society of America (PRSA, 2000), can contaminate the free flow of accurate and truthful information to the public. Although the exact words, “corrupting the channels of communication”, are no longer used in the PRSA code, there are still the same strictures about gifts of products, travel, and services to reporters.

Shaped by moral principles of society and aims of the occupation (Christians & Traber, 1997) media and Public Relations ethical codes of professional organizations manifest the values of truth and objectivity. Codes formalize the normative concept of transparency attaching it to truth-telling and honesty with audience and all the stakeholders of communication process. However, giving formal definition to professional standards and values, codes of ethics may also represent serious difficulties in inculcating substantial ethical values in individual journalists and in the profession as a whole (Black & Barney, 1985). The codes do not always work in practice, as they should

work, and in case of transparency, there are evidences of violations in different countries, including Ukraine (Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009). In the following paragraphs I will review these evidences.

1.5. Media Transparency Research: Empirical Evidences and Classified Types of Non-Transparency

Since media transparency phenomenon is hard to access and observe directly, researchers in number of countries choose to study its antithesis - non-transparent practices; in fact, they analyze unethical and deceptive practices that undermine impartial media gatekeeping (Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2003; Kruckeberg, Ovaitt, & Tsetsura, 2005; Tsetsura, 2005a, 2005b; Klyueva, 2008; Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009). Examples of media non-transparency, such as directly paying cash or presenting products or services to journalists or editors, or indirectly influencing the media to receive news coverage, have been widely studied in the last few years in specific countries such as Estonia, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, China and Romania (Tsetsura, 2005a; Tsetsura, 2005b; Pasti, 2005; Harro-Loit & Saks, 2006; Klyueva, 2008; Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009; Tsetsura & Luomaaho, in press; Tsetsura, & Zuo, 2009, Kluyeva & Tsetsura, 2010). Generally, the practice of offering and paying cash for publishing news releases and other publicity materials is common in many countries, particularly of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Bloc (Harro-Loit & Saks, 2006; Kruckeberg, & Tsetsura, 2003).

Previous research around the world identified that non-transparent media practices may be both direct payments and indirect influences. Direct payments are cash or other monetary payments for news coverage (Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2003). Indirect payments and influences were classified based on the study by Tsetsura (2005b) as: 1) publication or production of materials in exchange for paid advertising, 2) written media rules of conduct that allow the receipt of samples, free gifts, or attractively discounted items from third parties to media representatives, 3) conflict of interests, when a journalist is employed with media and a company, institution, government, or public relations agency, 4) pressure from the advertising departments of media on editors in regards to which news from which sources to cover, and 5) financial and psychological pressure from

news sources, companies, and public relations agencies on the media to present the information that they desire.

Journalists can experience both direct and indirect pressures in terms of which news to cover at three different levels: individual, intra-organizational, and inter-organizational (Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009). At the interpersonal level, news-sources could offer individuals working in media money, meals, products and services for favourable coverage (Lo, Chan, & Pan, 2005). At the intra-organizational level, journalists experience pressures from their colleagues in media organizations, for instance, they can be asked by editor, media advertising department, or publisher to cover or ignore publicity activities of certain companies because these companies did or did not buy advertising from that same media outlet (Tsetsura, 2005a). Finally, at the inter-organizational level, journalists can be forced to write or not to write news stories about certain companies because these companies have or do not have formal contracts with the media outlet to “provide informational services” (Klyueva, 2008). This is a case when two independent institutions consciously and formally involved in the paid-for informational collaboration, establish formalized relations, which ensure consistent and proper news coverage in the media.

Based on the theoretical framework of media transparency and empirical results from the number of countries, Tsetsura and Kruckeberg (2009) developed the concept of *media opacity* that is an antithesis of media transparency. Media opacity is determined as a powerful hidden influencer of ostensibly unbiased media gatekeepers whose role is to present news (ibid.).

Later, Tsetsura and Klyueva (2010) offered their classification of the media opacity cases. Specifically, the practices of media opacity may take the forms of influences and compensations (Tsetsura & Klyueva, 2010). *Influences* are the deliberate actions of news sources that produce effects on the actions, behaviour, opinions, etc., of the media. Influences mostly happen at the intra-organizational and inter-organizational levels. At the intra-organizational level owners or advertising department influence on media editorial policy and content. At the inter-organizational level other institutions (or news sources) exert influence on the media that is expressed in media content (ibid.).

Based on empirical data, Tsetsura and Klyueva (2010) identify five types of influences: 1) publication or production of materials in exchange for paid advertising; 2) a disguise of advertisement as a regular article; 3) conflict of interests when a journalist is employed by the media and a company, institution, government, or public relations agency; 4) pressure from the advertising departments of media on editors in regards to which news from which sources to cover; and 5) financial pressures from news sources, companies, and public relations agencies on the media to present information which comes from them.

Compensations are defined as something given or received as an equivalent for the offered services and products. This form of practice of media opacity usually happens at the interpersonal level, when news source influences particular journalist in order to receive favourable publicity. Tsetsura and Klyueva (2010) define two major types of compensations: 1) monetary compensations (or cash for news coverage) that can be produced in any form of payments, and 2) non-monetary compensations, when a media practitioner benefits from the provision of a product or service, for instance, presents, press tours, free hotel stay. These monetary and non-monetary compensations can be formalized in a form of written policy that outlines the terms of acceptance of these compensations.

1.5. 1. Normative Bias of Media Transparency Studies

Previous media transparency studies, mentioned above, tend to approach the phenomenon of media transparency *normatively*: media practices are explored from a standpoint whether they do or do not violate formally specified norms and professional standards. (Tsetsura, 2005; Pasti, 2005; Harro-Loit & Saks, 2006; Klyueva, 2008; Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009; Tsetsura & Zuo, 2009). The majority of the studied applied the method of survey to collect data on specified close-ended questions. A positivistic nature of the majority of the mentioned studies had its advantages. Firstly, it helped to compare existing `real-life` media practices (as they were reported by respondents) with professional norms and ethical ideals. Besides, using the same instrument in number of countries made possible to find similarities in the results from different states and regions.

Undoubtedly, putting normative concept at the center of investigation is effective, as it makes possible to examine *existing* practices and understand how these practices do or do not conform to the formalized professional rules. It also provides a global view on the phenomenon and helps to uncover various macro socioeconomic causes of the problem (Yang, A., in press). Although previous empirical works helped to look at the status of non-transparency worldwide and enables classification of possible influences on media, they provided limited information on the particularities on journalism practices in specific countries and on how individual practitioners perceive and evaluate those practices. There is a need in in-depth qualitative studies that would explore ethics of media practice in various and specific contexts and, based on empirical data, expand the understanding of media transparency phenomenon.

Conclusions. In this chapter we have examined the ethical values that constitute the concept of media transparency. Grounding in the ideas of openness and visibility of news-making process, the norm of transparency rests on the values of journalism truthfulness, honesty, and editorial freedom. The normative meanings of transparency are all built on the notion of public and public interest as the main goal of media practice. Specifically, the visibility, openness and disclosure are necessary to serve public interest or realize public right to know and witness the news-making process. Here transparency takes the role of condition for credible and accountable media practice and tool to establish trustworthy relations with audience.

However, besides the normative dimension, the idea of transparency might have its special meaning in real-life media practice. Moving back from normative understanding of transparency, in my study I look at transparency as a practical issue and through the lenses of individual ethics of media workers. In fact, I approach transparency and non-transparency as one of the *individual ethical challenges* media professional faces in his or her everyday work and explore how and why their choices are made. Therefore, in my study I put participants' experience and meanings they attach to their everyday practices at the focus of investigation rather than look for evidences of non-transparency or other violations of normative ideals. In the part devoted to methodology will discuss in

detail my epistemological vision, explain how and why I choose to conduct interpretative study and how it shapes my study methodology.

In the further literature review parts I will present the theoretical and contextual framework for my study. Specifically, I will discuss the individualist approach to media ethics on which I built my investigation of Ukrainian journalism and journalism ethics. Further, I will provide background information on media history and situation in Ukraine, review development of journalism and current changes in journalism ethics in the country.

2. Individualist Approach to Media Ethics and Media Transparency

The question “why journalists behave the way they do” is one of the most important in media ethics. Media practice is a very much a *human process*, and the human element highlights the ethics of every person within the mass media organization and how they approach their freedom and their responsibility doing the job (Forunato, 2005). Although ethics is traditionally associated with rules and imperatives, in a real-life practice ethical decisions go beyond normative concepts and formalized rules. It is also an internal process and personal choice that may or may not correspond with the established imperatives.

In previous part I have reviewed the normative roots of media ethics and examined how phenomenon of transparency is conceptualized by different professional rules and obligations. Meanwhile, journalist undoubtedly belongs to a certain media and moral systems that impose their rules and social expectations, and at the same time he or she also remains a free individual with personal character to make original choices. Merrill (in Gordon et al., 1996) notes that it may be beneficial to the society that most people accept the group standards and do not ask questions, as if all journalists constantly asked questions about rightness and wrongness of the rules, there would be a breakdown of stability and traditional principles would not be passed. This notion would be true for perfectly established and stable societies that could hardly exist in a real world. However journalists in many countries, and especially in the countries overcoming democratic transformations, work in changing conditions and need to adapt to new political, economical, cultural and technological opportunities and challenges. To do this they also need to ask ethical questions and look for answers.

The goal of this chapter is to look at media ethics beyond the rules and obligations, and approach it as a matter of personal motives and choices. Such perspective helps to elaborate different, non-normative, understanding of media ethics and media transparency phenomenon grounded in individual ethics. To do it, I will review the ongoing discussions on normative and individualistic approaches to ethics, concentrate on the main notions of existential ethical reasoning and subjective component of decision-making process in media, that contribute a lot to my theoretical understanding of

media practice and media ethics in this work. Based on the previous works on ethics, I will also look how internal, individual, beliefs govern personal decisions, influence professional behavior, and ask the questions that would be interesting to explore within Ukrainian context. Finally, I will attempt to show how media practice and media transparency could be understood within this theoretical framework that places individual journalist (as a moral agent) at the center of the discussion.

2.1. Direction of Ethical Concern: Normative and Individual Ethics

Ethical decisions are always about the choices, and the main force in this choice is composed by the *ethical concern*: when media person realizes commitments and thoughtful decisions among alternatives (Gordon et al., 1996). There are two main schools of ethics explaining the direction of journalists' ethical concerns. The first one says that journalist may be guided primarily by the external societal rules or community customs (normative, or communitarian ethics). Meanwhile the second one argues that journalists first and foremost ground their decisions on the internal, personal perspectives (individual or libertarian ethics).

Communitarians build their arguments on the normative concepts and codes, asking for professional cooperation, universal ethics and solidarity. Underlining the social functions of media, communitarian ethicists call for universal rules that are to be common across the societies and to govern professional choices. According to Merrill (in Gordon et al., 1996), while communitarian ethics calls for agreement on common rules, and conformity, it restrains *personal freedom*. Another emphasis or ethical orientation is the *liberal (libertarian)*. It asks for maximum personal autonomy in ethical decisions. Here individual and his/her values are put in the central of the ethical system.

Consequently, the discussions on normative and individual media ethics often move to the necessity and values of ethical codes. On one hand, formalizing professional commitments, ethical codes reflect the normative nature of ethics serving media professionalism and accountability. Jensen (1997) discusses the necessity of *oughtness*, saying that ideals are to stand at the central of ethics. Thus, *prescriptive ethics*, he writes, helps to measure acts accordingly and makes possible to change the situation for better:

intervention is always needed to improve the practice. Gordon (1996) also agrees that codes are useful and necessary to the mass media and to society, as they provide standards that help both public and journalists (on more personal level) discuss, debate, and measure the media's performance. Codes also protect the mass media and each practitioner from unrealistic expectations, demands, and criticism (ibid.).

Although codes construct ethics on fundamental level, they are much less effective on the level of daily life practice. Meanwhile, codified moral rules are criticized for being “too watered down”, too vague and general, rarely absolute and distant from the existing culture and, thus, providing little or no guidelines to practitioners (Gordon, 1996; Bertrand Claude-Jean, 2000).

In the early-twentieth-century United States, there were attempts to gather the norms of professional journalism into a single document. However, the codes did not achieve the logical unity of a philosophical system – some were merely lists of loosely related principles (Ward, 2004). “Ethical codes are impressive, even inspirational, but they are of limited value”, - writes Carol Reuss (in Gordon et al., 1996, p.65). The mass media codes may suggest nirvana – uniformly applicable practices, universally acceptable and applied – but that is not possible. Codes have some influence on media practitioners and practices but because they are neither universally applicable nor enforceable they are, at best, of limited importance (ibid.). Smith (2003) adds that in practice journalism codes of ethics can only fix easy ethical problems, as they are not specific enough, since codes are usually addressed to reporters, they cannot be applied to media corporations, media managers and media owners.

Discussing the limited value of codes Reuss (in Gordon et al., 1996) also notes that there is no agreement whether the codes prescribe the highest or the lowest acceptable standards of practice, attainable or ideal performance whether they can ensure the media quality society needs and deserves. It is also questionable how fully these formal rules are understood and embraced by those for whom they are written.

Therefore, the codes of ethics usually provide just general and “moralistic” direction (Black & Barney, 1985). However, individual values and attitudes make the

basis for informal norms and every-day practices, which may be either consistent or inconsistent with formally codified norms. McDonald and Nijhof (1999) argued that informal norms and values must be in place that support and reinforce formal ethical policies. Pelletier and Bligh (2006) studied the factors which influence ethical decisions on the organizational level and remarked the importance of congruence between formal ethical codes and informal ethical norms in influencing perceptions. Pelletier and Bligh (2006) emphasize the importance of informal rules and suggest the framework for understanding ethical decision-making that previous studies have addressed (Ferrell & Gresham, 1985; Hunt & Vitell, 1986; McDonald & Nijhof, 1999). Singer and Ashman (2009) conducted ethnographic research in Britain's Guardian to analyze ethical constructs of freedom and responsibility and understand how journalists negotiate personal and social ethics within a digital network. Based on the complex empirical study conducted in Catalonia, Salvador Alsus and team of researchers analyzed the shared values that shape and govern journalists' behavior. Specifically, they found out how journalists link normative principles with professional decisions and explored the attitudes and values that affect their professional activity (Alsus et al., 2010; Grynko, 2011).

2.2. Ethical Reasoning and The Role of Norms In Making Decisions

Ethics is always a process (or action) of moral reasoning through which people express themselves, articulate their visions, make moral agreements and establish principles: "ethics is not a passive act of obeying set of rules handed down to us. It is the dynamic activity of imagining new norms and adapting old principles to changing social conditions and human purposes", - writes Word (2004, p.27). Looking at ethics as a process of *invention*, Ward (2004) insists on practitioners' ability to construct conceptual schemes, norms, and test their interpretations in various contexts.

Individual factors (values, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and intentions) are crucial component for moral reasoning and ethical decision-making, according to Ferrell and Gresham (1985). Other factors which influence ethical actions are "significant others in the organizational setting" and "opportunities for ethical/unethical action" (i.e.,

establishment of professional codes and corporate policies, reward/penalty systems) (Ferrell & Gresham, 1985, p. 90).

2.2.1. Moral Reasoning and Moral Development

Ethical reasoning is closely connected with experience, learning and moral growth (Coleman & Wilkins, 2009). Lawrence Kohlberg (1981), psychologist, introduced the argument that morality is a basis for ethical behaviour and suggested that congruence of moral standards and internal principles indicate the highest level of individual moral development that leads to ethical acts. Specifically, Kohlberg went from an unsophisticated moral stage to a progressively more advanced one (Merrill, Lee & Friedlander, 1990; Crain, 2005) (Table 1).

Table 1. Stages/Schemas of Moral Development

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Sample statements from PR and journalism dilemmas</i>
Preconventional/Personal interest	Avoid punishment, gain rewards. Does not consider the interest of others.	Keeping quiet would help my firm's bottom line. Would it advance my career?
Conventional/Maintaining norms	Belief in the Golden Rule. Living up to what is expected by others. Desire to maintain rules and authority, uphold laws. Right is contributing to society, group, or institution.	Whether a community's laws are going to be upheld. There is nothing illegal about not telling everything we know. What my client wants.
Postconventional	Concern that laws be based on rational calculation of overall good. Recognizes	What would best serve society? If I would want everyone else who is ever in a

	<p>moral and legal points of view sometimes conflict.</p> <p>Laws are valid when they rest on universal principles of justice People are ends themselves and must be treated as such.</p>	<p>similar situation to do the same thing.</p>
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Source: Coleman and Wilkins, 2009.

The first level of moral development is called “*pre-conventional*” and represents reasoning that is concerned with one’s own welfare: individuals focus on the direct consequences of their actions on themselves; they have limited interests in the needs of others. *Pre-conventional stage* is also called the *Personal Interest schema*, as self-interest and punishment for wrongdoing are the main reasons of actions (Coleman & Wilkins, 2009). Obedience to rules and authority is “good” with the threat of punishment or rewards guiding the determination of right and wrong. Merrill, Lee, and Friedlander (1990) offered the comments that might be provided by the journalists on this level: “my director said to do it, so I will as I do not want to be fired” (fear of punishment) (p. 120).

The second level, *conventional*, “is defined by conformity to the expectations of society. Rules and law are accepted not simply for their own sake but for the sake of all. At this level, “doing one’s duty” and maintaining social order dominate the reasoning. Conventional reasoning is also called “Maintaining norms schema”, as rules are respected for maintaining social order (Coleman & Wilkins, 2009). The morality of actions is compared to society's views and expectations. Merrill, Lee, and Friedlander (1990) forecasted that at this level a journalist argues: “I will do it as I may win a Pulitzer Prize” (hope of reward) and “I will not do that so as not to upset my readers” (community approval) or “It is my magazine policy and I must follow my editor’s directions” (authority and law orientations) (p. 125).

The “*post-conventional*,” or principled level, is the third and highest level, according to Kohlberg (1981). At this level, universal principles guide moral reasoning

and mutual respect becomes a universal principle. Shared moral standards and individual principles of conscience are internal and based on thought and judgment. Journalists' arguments at this level might be: "I will publish this story as it will help the sanitary conditions in my city" (social utility) and "I will follow my principles, which I feel are just. I must tell the truth" (justice and duty) (Merrill, Lee, & Friedlander E, 1990, p. 132).

Merrill (in Gordon et al., 1996) concludes that there are three main levels of moral progress:

"The first level is instinct, in which right conduct is determined by the person's fundamental needs and instincts. On the next level of custom, what seems right to the person is conduct that is in accordance with the customs of the various groups to which he/she belongs. On the highest level, the conscience, conduct is approved by the agent's own personal developed judgment. The conscience is developed by the person's own reasoning, building on custom and instinct" (p.6).

The level of custom, as Merrill notes, is more non-rational and inflexible than the level of conscience. Being ritualistic and conformist, it makes morality less likely to progress and adapt to the special needs of the individual or the particular situation.

2.2.2. Individual Ethical Judgments: Rules vs Consequences

Individual's ethical judgments are the function of the personal evaluations that can be deontological and teleological (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). Deontological, or duty-based, approach to ethics, first offered by Immanuel Kant, claims that we are obligated to act morally as the only way to carry our duties to others. Deontological evaluation involves considerations about the inherent rightness or wrongness of the decision. Plaisance (2008) wrote that, according to a deontological approach, the acts are ethical/unethical by their nature, not by their consequences, and individuals' decisions are to be universalized, in other words, should be evaluated whether they are acceptable if everyone were to apply the decision as a standard behavior. Meanwhile, teleology approaches the acts by their consequences, not by their nature (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). The teleological position, developed by John Stuart Mill in contrast to Kant's system, claims that the moral worth of an act lies in its consequences, or whether it generates pleasure or happiness for those

affected (Plaisance, 2008). According to Mill's perspective, the action consists of four constructs: (1) perceived consequences of each alternative for various stakeholder groups; (2) desirability or undesirability of each consequence; (3) probability that each consequence will affect each stakeholder group; and (4) the importance of each stakeholder group (Hunt & Vitell, 1986).

Plaisance (2008) concluded that deontological and teleological ethical positions can be reflected by the questions: "What exactly are we judging when we make a judgment about an act?" and "Are we assessing the motive of action or the effect the act has on society." Merrill, Lee, and Friedlander (1990) wrote that the reporter who accepts as a maxim to tell the truth or to indulge in full-disclosure reporting and feels an ethical duty to perform in this way is a deontologist. The other journalist may construct a story so as to bring about the best consequences instead of looking for a formalistic practice of truth telling. She or he, then, is a teleologist. A journalist's ethical judgments about media practice and transparency may employ different arguments. The duty-based position would be accented on the intention of action and its meaning in terms of universal principles; meanwhile, the consequences' position would emphasize the quality of the "ends," results, and impacts of certain practices.

2.3. Individualist Approach to Ethics: Personal Ethos and Subjective Beliefs of Journalists

Subjective beliefs of journalists are one of four main factors that influence a journalist's decision to cover the story and how to present it (Donsbach, 2004). Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) defined journalism as "an act of character" and Hove (2007) added that "the character" in this case must be understood as the *individual ethos* of a journalist that involves individual judgments of the journalist and is usually decisive in media practice. Jensen (1997) defines ethics as the moral responsibility to choose, *intentionally and voluntarily*. The notion of voluntary choice is crucial, and ethics implies intentionality in decision-making process: "When choice is by chance unintentional, a communicator's ethical judgment is meaningless" (p.4).

The individualist approach to media ethics emphasizes journalists' subjective decision-making processes and personal ethics. This approach stresses the individual

value systems that are defined by Rokeach (1968) as a fundamental basis for understanding how journalists perceive their jobs and perform their responsibilities (Craig, 2006). Carol Reuss (in Gordon et al., 1996) argues that the individual values of media practitioners shape their ethical decisions, and media practice is a result of combined individual values, that are based on life experience, education and interactions with others.

Although media ethics has to do with standards and practices, media are made up of individuals, and ethical concerns of mass media are ethics of individuals (Merrill, Lee, & Friedlander, 1990). Merrill (1997) insisted that we should distinguish personal and social responsibility in journalism ethics. Donsbach (2004) gleaned that most journalists' work is about perceptions, conclusions, and judgments. Quinn (2007) also emphasized the importance of internal view of media ethics that utilizes an internalized moral psychology for journalists based in virtue.

2.4. Existential Journalism: Freedom of Choice and Personal Responsibility for Actions

Although journalists are always united by one media system that provides common context, puts external limitations, and establishes its rules and obligations, they remain free to act according to their personal choices and realize their individual views. By this freedom persons create values, express their selves and fill the world with sense: "values are created only by free act of human agent who takes this or that to be good or bad, beautiful or ugly, in the light of his endeavor to give significance and order to an otherwise meaningless world" (Grene, 1948/1984, p. 11), and "it is in the context of the interests, preferences and goals of human beings that things come to have value" (Gordon, 2004, p.88). Living and working in different conditions and facing constraints, journalist do not loose their freedom to choose, their individual criteria of choices, their free will and aspiration to keep autonomy.

Radical freedom that enables individual to make things valuable and make sense about the world around constitutes the main idea of existentialism. Although the term "existentialism" gained prominence only after World War II, it describes an exciting area

of philosophical school and original thinking that emerged in the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Albert Camus, Søren Kierkegaard. Existentialists hold freedom as a central to human and focus on the existence of the whole being of each person (Gordon, 1999).

Ethics for the existentialist must be personal, it begins with the “individual” rather than “universal”, and so does not aim to arrive at general truths: its insistence on the personal insights as the only means to real understanding entails that it makes no claims to objective knowledge (Earnshaw, 2006). Existential freedom first of all means *freedom to choose the values and style of life*: “in some deep sense we define ourselves and what we stand for. One consequence of this radical freedom is that individuals have to accept full responsibility for what they do and are and believe. There is no Good or external standard of “the Good” to refer to, and no sociological or psychological conditioning to blame” (Gordon, 2004, p. 95).

“What should we choose to do with our lives?” is a key question for Kierkegaard (as cited in Earnshaw, 2006, p.3). Freedom, then, is realized through the choice; it is the possibility of possibilities, and choice of one course of action means close off other possibilities. So, the true nature of person’s life is founded on choices that we must make based only on what we as individuals create as values, it also means the refusal to conform society’s values, “not belonging” and being “outside” the imposed social frameworks (ibid.). Following traditional and created by group rules, journalists lose their existential freedom and authenticity (Merrill, 1995).

For existentialists “man makes himself” (Greene, 1948/1984, p.1) searching for his/her path and seeking his *own* freedom (ibid., p.145). Sartre (as cited in Earnshaw, 2006, p.2) perceived being as a *freedom to be*, so that each individual is unique in his or her being, and, thus, escapes categorization at fundamental or universal values. Both freedom and responsibility for individual actions constitute human’s self (and human’s reality) in a way which ensures *really* existing, rather than sleepwalking through life (ibid.).

Existential ethics puts personal responsibility for both our actions and others' freedom. Being free means keeping responsibility for others and others' liberties. For Sartre (1973) individual's freedom depends on freedom of others, and freedom puts obligation to will the liberty of others and guarantee the freedom of others. Therefore, existential freedom claims for internal morality rather than external ethics. "Why if I am completely free should there be the suggestion that I need to take into account a morality which could only ever be given to me externally, that is, ethics only relate to a pre-given social system and social code, a constraint on my freedom that is not self-derived, even if I internalize and individualize it," -writes Earnshaw, 2006, p. 156). True morality, thus, does need formalization; it is a matter of purely free will, individual's integrity and dignity. The person realizes that he/she lives in society where other people have the same freedom and dignity, and, thus, moral people transcend self, common rules, instincts and passions.

For Sartre (1973) the *self* is process of choosing the life style that never ends. Existentialism underlines that journalists create the values in the process of their work. By these choices, they provide their definitions of values and also define themselves. Media practice is the mean of journalist's *self*-expression and *self*-gratification. The news making process affect the moral character of the media process:

"What such people communicate is, in very real sense, what they are. They please or displease themselves, not just for whom they are writing. What they do to live up to their personal standards affects not only the beliefs and activities of others but, in a very real sense, the very essence of their own lives. Through their actions they existentially make their ethical selves" (Gordon et al., 1996, p.2).

Therefore, existential framework puts individual person at the center of decision-making process; there is no blueprint for what individual media person can become or should do, the individual decides him or herself. "No matter the provocation or pressure, the existentialist can never say with any sense of authenticity that "they made me do it" (Singer, & Ashman, 2009, p. 8).

2.5. Conclusions. Media Practice and Media Transparency from the Position of Individual Ethics

Going beyond the rules and normative concepts, existentialism and individual approach to media ethics enable to look at journalism practice in a different way. First, it presents ethics as never-ending process in which media practitioners take the role of individual moral agents involved into construction and reconstruction of rules, values and circumstances of their behavior. It also shifts discussion about ethics on the level of real-life practice and individual decisions. So, journalism is about making the every-day choices and taking responsibility for each of the choices; through these choices media practitioners “experience their profession” within social, political, economic and cultural contexts, they manifest their freedom and fill external phenomena with shared meanings.

Generally, scholars identify and analyze journalism in different ways, for instance, as an institution, profession, or as the text (Zalizer, 2004). This work will be grounded on the perception of journalism *as people* (individuals who constitute and share values) and *set of practices* (that currently take place in Ukraine). Journalism is about people who are making decisions and making choices, and practitioners are free to find their reasons and rationales for their choices that stay or do not stay in line with formalized rules. In existential meaning, journalists are what they make of themselves. Their morals are what they decide to do, and their principles are those, which they choose to act (Solomon, 1996).

Media transparency, then, could be understood as a phenomenon constructed by ever-lasting choices, and meanings attached to professional actions and decisions journalists make while experiencing the social world and the practice. How journalists experience and understand the practices they are involved into? What meanings do they apply to them and why they choose to behave they way they do? These questions become especially important when we look at the media practice through the lenses of individual and existential ethics. Importantly, this approach stresses the notions of freedom in every

decision practitioner makes. Through this freedom moral agents construct phenomena in their practice and shape their professional selves.

Meanwhile, scholarship on normative behavior is more prevalent stream of research especially in sociological studies of journalism (Zelizer, 2004); media ethics research is usually concentrated around studying which values ought to drive good journalism (Plaisance & Deppa, 2009) and is criticized for apparent gap between theory and practice in the field (Starck, 2001). Since ethical discussions are too often centered on normative standards and best practices (Plaisance, 2009), little attention is paid to the “ethics of journalists” - the ways deontological norms are perceived and exercised in every-day media practice; and even less works analyze ethics through systematic data-based research providing “the voices” of those who work in media. Therefore, the focus on individual conscience is classically underregarded, even though it might be particularly effective for making sense of the internal perspective that journalists bring to ethical dilemmas in practice.

Ethics deals with both what ‘ought to be done’, or with what kinds of actions are good, and with personal values and individual character (Merrill, Lee, & Friedlander, 1990), it is the study of values and their justification (Solomon, 1996). That is why journalists’ subjective perceptions and interpretations are significant in ethical decision-making and influencing media practices. Media representatives play a role as moral agents whose attitudes and values shape their professional roles and daily professional actions. Journalists apply personal values and meanings in practical situations and in particular circumstance. “While ethical questions may remain relatively constant over time, the underlying principles must be considered and reconsidered internationally and transculturally. Some concepts cross cultural boundaries; others do not. Even most basic moral rules vary according to particular circumstance”. (Alia, 2004, p.12)

So looking at the case of Ukraine, it would be interesting to explore *the meaning* of ethical and unethical, transparent and non-transparent practices as they are perceived and shaped by journalists’ individual values. My study applies ideas of descriptive ethics that empathizes that ideals are usually unattainable and we must focus on what “is” rather than what “ought to be” (Jensen, 1997). I find this approach useful and suitable for

investigation of media in Ukraine as it helps to stimulate deeper ethical analysis and understanding of “what ethical guidelines people actually use” and why they decide to act the way they do and what guides their decisions. There are many discussions in Ukraine criticizing journalism for not being ethical, transparent and independent. At the same time, less attention is paid to in-depth understanding (not judging) how actually journalists behave and why they behave the way they do. This interpretative study conducted within the tradition of descriptive ethics reflects my intention to get in-depth understanding of ethical values, that are created by individuals and that emerge and work in real-life and in current moment of social, cultural and political development of Ukraine. I would also like to include the journalists` voices into discussion and look at the meanings they construct and share in their practice.

3. Ukrainian Journalism: The Path Towards Freedom and Professionalization

This work is primarily devoted to Ukrainian journalism and Ukrainian media practitioners working in the profession. My intention is to present their ideas, opinions, and ethical considerations coming from their everyday experience. However, before to speak about journalism “in terms of people” and to listen to their voices about professional ethical challenges, I will review an overall situation in media practice and journalism profession as it has been developing throughout recent years. Those developments are especially important since they have been taking place along with political and social dynamics in the country and contribute into shaping practitioners’ working conditions, framing their perceptions and defining the meanings attached to the professional phenomena.

Ukraine is a young democracy that is living through times of its development. And one of the main challenges of transforming communication after the breakdown of authoritarian rule is to secure the independence and quality of journalism (Voltmer & Dobрева, 2009). Since Ukraine became an independent state in 1991, Ukrainian media entered a new era of transforming from ideology-governed system, development and survival in new market conditions. These transformations, or “recovery” (Ivshina, 2008), are still going on, and Ukrainian media practitioners experience challenges similar to those their colleagues have in other countries of the Eastern Europe: limited freedom of speech, little room for advancement, heavy workloads, and inequality at work (Baysha & Hallahan, 2004; Willard, 2003). Therefore, a free flow of information and media independency are still open to question in Ukraine, and numerous professional and public discussions on media transparency in the country are referred to autonomy from political and financial pressures, professionalism and maturity of journalism.

In this chapter I will provide a brief review on the path of Ukrainian journalism has passed during the recent years. While describing Ukrainian context, I rely on the previous local and global research, academic and media publications, experts’ opinions as well as on my personal experience of living in Ukraine and working in media practice as a

journalist, public relations manager, and, later, as the teaching fellow at the Mohyla School of Journalism.

Generally, my main goal in this chapter is to present the context in which media practitioners are working, provide details on the history and current conditions that are crucial for deeper understanding of practices under investigation and people involved into the practices. For sure it is difficult to embrace all possible influences on practical routine and individual's minds, so I will still look at ones I find especially important for Ukrainian context. Specifically, I will mention the issues of media ownership in light of post-soviet transformations, discuss the role of media during the key political events (in particular, elections) in the country, review an available information on the state of media freedom in Ukraine, development of ethics and legislation, media professionalization and development connected with digital technologies, and some other issues, that contribute to better understanding of current changes in the profession and interpret experience of people working in media. They also illustrate why the issues of media liberty and transparency are among the topical ones and why they really matter when we look at the journalism in Ukraine.

3.1. Media After 1990: “Oligarkhization” and Instrumental Role of Media

The function of the media in Soviet Union was largely as a channel for communicating decisions of the regional and local government, and, like all Soviet, Ukrainian media was controlled from the top to down. Therefore, once Ukraine gained independence, the media needed to create its own national press on short notice (Baysha & Hallahan, 2004). At the beginning of the 1990's, many newspapers and magazines were closed as they struggled to become economically and politically independent in the turbulent political and economic times. Many stopped functioning simply because of the lack of experienced journalists. Whereas the circulation of print media increased to 1,493,210 copies in 1988, compared to 1,417,090 copies in 1986, in the early 1990s, the print media experienced a rapid decrease in circulation (Gabor, 2006).

When transition from state-owned into private hands was over, it became evident that it did not bring media expected liberty. Marta Dyczok (2009) notices, “that many

new media outlets were created for purpose of influence rather than to provide the public with information or generate profits” (p. 21). In fact, the issues of media ownership, its structure and transparency are often positioned as a starting point for all further discussions about journalism and its real purpose in Ukraine.

Between 1995 and 1996, Ukraine experienced a second wave of press development, but the circulation of newspapers in Ukraine increased only after 1999 (Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009). During that period, newspapers such as *Den* (“Day”), *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, (“Mirror of the Week”) the tabloid *Kievskie Vedomosti*, (“Kiev News”) and others appeared. The next wave started in 1998-1999 when the largest, best-selling national tabloids such as *Segodnia* (“Today”), *Fakty i komentarii* (“Facts and Commentaries”), *Vechirni visti* (“Evening News”), *Stolichnye novosti* (“Capital News”), and other so-called metro/street newspapers were introduced to the market. Most of the local and regional newspapers were transformed from Soviet communist publications into new Western-style publications. They re-registered, changed their names, and in some cases changed editors. Besides, the main national TV channel were found „1+1“ (1995) and „Inter“ (1996) TV channels; news website Korrespondent.net (2000) and news magazine „Korrespondent“ (2002) (Dutsyk, 2009).

Importantly, during the mid of 1990s, the formation of large financial industrial groups that concentrated substantial media assets under their ownership started. This was the beginning of media resources concentration that continues until now. It was also the time of the “oligarkhization” process. Media started to play the role of instruments to influence public opinion. Because of the close relation between media and political elites, the state authorities could easily press on media outlets (ibid.).

The beginning of the 2000-ties was the time when Russian capital entered Ukrainian media market; “Kommersant Ukraine”, “Komsomolskaya Pravda in Ukraine” were founded. New forms of media funding appeared then. Grants of foreign donors supported such media projects as ‘Ukrainska Pravda’ (online media that is still influential and popular for its objectivity and journalists’ investigations) and ‘Telekrytyka’ (media specialized in journalism issues).

In 2005-2010 (under Victor Yushenko presidency) western investors demonstrated the growing interest to Ukrainian media market. However, non-transparent business practices, difficulties in distribution and political instability made impossible for foreign investors to develop profitable media projects within the country. The situation became even worse as a result of economic crisis. Thus, the majority of foreign owners had to leave to market. Later, under the presidency of Yanukovich, the media ownership was redistributed among the main business groups in the country that own enterprises in different industrial sectors (refining, chemical, heavy machinery construction etc.) and, therefore, those businessmen are often loyal to the authorities in order to save their own businesses (Dutsyk, 2009).

Today, media business seems to exist in few “parallel realities”. There are big media owners who control the major media corporations in the country. Besides, there are state and communal media that cover regions. There are also separate media projects in regions, founded by small local businessmen (Ivanov et al., 2011). Besides, media ownership remains non-transparent in Ukraine. Although the Law „On television and radio broadcasting” requires the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine to provide information about the media owners, this information is not enough to make a complete picture of real owners hidden in offshore zones.

Therefore, being owned by big business and learning to work in new market conditions, Ukrainian media remains a primary platform for political elites and business interests (Gromadzki et al., 2010). This situation, and mainly instrumental role of media, influences media routines and constructs the background for journalists` practices.

3.1.1. Pressures on Media Before 2004

The lack of freedom, pressures and influences on media is an important characteristic that is usually attached to media situation in Ukraine. Together with some other Soviet Socialist Republics, such as Moldova, Belarus, and Russia, Ukraine has been mentioned as the country where media are still politically controlled and press freedom is limited or non-existent (Mickiewicz, 1998). Ukrainian journalists have continued to experience various pressures that are especially visible in coverage of political issues and

elections. Further, I will discuss how the pressures have been changed with transformations in media field during the recent years in Ukraine.

Ukrainian slang word “*dzhyntsa*” was coined in 1996, when the articles written-to-order appeared. This pseudo-journalism was at its most brutal in 1999, during Leonid Kuchma’s second bid for the presidency. Later, at the end of 2001 the sources of influences were mainly concentrated in the hands of state authorities that started to use administrative power to influence media. Centralized censorship and so called “*temnyky*” appeared. Specifically, the President’s Administration pressed media organizations with formalized instructions about angles for news coverage. Dyczok (2009) writes that during 2002 parliamentary election campaign, the mainstream media was clearly biased in favour of the pro-presidential bloc, while excluding opposition parties or presenting them in a negative light.

Then, during presidential campaign in 2004 the ruling elite strengthened their efforts to use media to win the presidency. Specifically, they expanded news censorship including denying candidate Yushchenko access to media, discredited him in analytical and current affairs shows (Dyczok, 2009). The journalists’ revolution that started in October 2004 (at the time of Orange revolution) was directly connected with the political events in the country and united journalists who refused to accept pressures and work under political censorship. In October 2004, Ukrainian media communities initiated the action supporting the journalists of the 5th Channel that was under the strong political pressure at that time. As a result on November 21, the 5th Channel began broadcasting the events on Maidan [central square in Kyiv] where more than 20 thousands Ukrainians came to support Yuschenko, a presidential candidate from the opposition. The protests were supported by international journalists’ organizations (Ligachova & Ganza, 2005). The revolution mostly involved the regions that were supporting Yuschenko, and its intensity also varied depending on the city; big cities like Kharkiv and Lviv were more active than small regional towns (Pavlenko & Klymenko, 2006). Public solidarity of journalists struggling against censorship was one of the main reasons that made journalism revolution happen.

3.1.2. Transformation of Pressures After 2004

After the Orange Revolution in 2004 Ukrainian journalism experienced positive changes, and journalists started to enjoy a relative freedom from centralized government censorship. As Freedom House reports, Ukrainian media transition from “Not Free” to “Partly Free” happened from 2004 to 2005, matches the Orange Revolution time line (Freedom House, 2011). However, after 2004 the problem of influences was shifted from direct government intervention to indirect influences intra-organizational – level relations between the media owner and journalists. Belyakov (2009) states that “censorship of money” has started from 2000s when oligarchs or just advertisers manipulated media following the goal to get profit. Syumar (2008) also writes about the “censorship of money” that has changed government pressure in Ukraine and notes “election campaign in 2007 was followed by the significant growth of paid-for media coverage”.

Ukrainian oligarchs who own media manipulate editorial policy according to their private interests and also allow manipulation by the third parties if paid (Belyakov, 2009). Victoria Syumar (IREX, 2008) claims:

“there used to be censorship by government; now it is censorship by money... Before, the censorship of the powerful was performed by the stick. Then those in power came to realize that the stick is too crude, and the journalists were starting to resist. So they started to exercise it with the carrot, as money is much more pleasant, and it is hard to refuse.”

Thus, media owners came to understanding that elections campaign may bring good profits and start selling pages in press and time in TV programs to different political parties. The 2007 parliamentary election campaign reinforced such practices. So, the publishers became major actors who negotiated ‘media plans’ of coverage with major political forces and their headquarters (Dovzhenko, 2009). According Syumar (as cited in Orlova, 2007), as a result of conscious policy of media management. many video materials about the election process were paid-for on TV channels.

During elections of Kyiv mayor in 2008 media started to provide “preelection services” that combined consistent loyalty towards one candidate and serving others when paid (ibid.). As a result, journalists demonstrated more and more loyalty towards paid-for materials, thinking this is only way to get profit for media. Accordingly, they were losing motivation for professional work, and this negatively impacted the overall quality of media products. Therefore, the influences on media have been transformed from “retail” into “wholesale system”. “All agreements and payments between media and headquarters take place at the level of owners or, more rarely, of top managers. Journalists, having accepted payments, protest little and service the needs of politicians. Most principled journalists are squeezed out of the profession”, - claims Otar Dovzhenko (IREX, 2010).

3.1.3. Empirical Evidences of Influences on Media And Media Transparency Research in Ukraine

The studies devoted to media in Ukraine also confirmed the problematic situation in press freedom and independency. In 2003, the global index of media bribery ranked 66 countries from 1, most transparent, to 33 as least transparent. Ukraine was placed 19 (out of 33 countries) and tied with Argentina, Mexico, and Taiwan (Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2003). Ukraine scored low on the perceived effectiveness of anti-corruption laws, professional education of journalists, existence of well-established and enforceable journalism codes of ethics, free press and free flow of information. Other research and anecdotal evidence shows that current Ukrainian communication and media practitioners experience challenges while practicing media relations in Ukraine similar to those in other countries, such as limited freedom of speech, little room for advancement, heavy workloads, and inequality at work (Baysha & Hallahan, 2004; Willard, 2003).

The IREX study “Media Sustainability Index” showed that non-transparent paid-for copy, also known as “dzhynsa”, “overwhelmed the media for commercial as well as political reasons” (IREX, 2006/2007). MSI panelists reported that “dzhynsa” reflected “both the cynicism of media owners and journalists and the low professional level and poor education of most journalists” (IREX, p.6). In 2008 Media Sustainability Index (IREX, 2008) evaluated media sustainability in Ukraine the lowest since 2001. All five

indicators of sustainable media (free speech, professional journalism, plurality of news sources, media business management and supporting institutions) were rated lower than previous years. MSI panellists also reported that media wealth was increasing with continued growth of the advertising market and unexpected profits from elections.

Previous studies also showed that editorial interests and special issues of magazines and newspapers in Ukraine are often managed solely by the advertising department and not by the editorial department (Ligachova & Ganzha, 2005); it was also revealed that quantity of paid-for materials in leading Ukrainian regional printed and on-line media varies from 30 to 70 articles per month in each of the regions (IMI, 2008).

Money pressure, absence of personal position, bribability and apathy of media workers were ranked as the first risks for free media in Ukraine by journalists participated in sociological study in 2008 (The Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2008). Ukrainians also characterize mass media as one of the corrupted institutions in the country (Transparency International, 2006). According to The Barometer of Global Corruption media received 3.1 points (based on the five-point system of assessment) and follow political parties, parliament, courts and police in the list of the institutions with high rating of perceived corruption.

Finally, an exploratory study aimed at getting data on the status of influences on media and media transparency in Ukraine confirmed the existence of non-transparent practices and revealed their variations in the country (Tsetsura & Grynko, 2009). Survey of journalists and public relations practitioners revealed both direct and indirect forms of media influence occur at three levels (interpersonal, intra-organizational, and inter-organizational) and distort the independent news coverage Ukraine. According to the research, public relations practitioners, advertisers, and publishers often press on media to place publicity materials appearing as news stories.

Thus, the previous research indicated the potential problems and obstacles for media transparency in Ukraine and confirmed the existence of non-transparent influences that are experienced by journalists and PR-specialists in their practical activities.

However, no qualitative researches exist for deeper phenomenon investigation and understanding its nature and variations through practitioners' interpretations.

3.2. Recent Challenges for Freedom of Journalism.

3.2.1. Non-Transparent Media Practices During Presidential Elections 2009-2010

The elections of 2010 were the fifth presidential election since declaring independence of Ukraine in 1991. The first round was held on January 17, 2010, followed by the second round on February 7 during which Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko and opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich were competing. Media coverage of election process 2009-2010 continued to demonstrate the violations of such journalistic standards as honesty, transparency and balance as it was during previous elections in Ukraine (Orlova, 2010).

It specially concerned national-wide TV channels. The monitoring, conducted under the project of the non-governmental organization Internews Network «U-Media», showed that the practice of paid-for news was widely used by most leading TV channels during the 2009-2010 election campaign. Paid-for news on TV were often placed in the format of short pieces of news about election campaign events of candidates, like meetings with voters, press conferences, electoral tour events, electoral promises and statements of candidates etc. (Dovzhenko, 2009). Some TV channels (Inter and ICTV) created special sections in news programs to cover such events that usually were not newsworthy at all.

Table 2. The number of materials containing violations of standards that evidence about possible 'paid-for' status of the materials in major news programs of nation-wide TV channels, by weeks of election campaign.

<i>week</i>	ICTV	«Inter»	Novyi	First National	«1+1»	«Ukraine»	STB	5 th Channel
<u>19-24.10</u>	7	3	7	7	4	1	2	0

<u>26-31.10</u>	12	4	6	5	8	3	3	4
<u>2.7.11</u>	15	6	4	7	9	5	6	1
	<i>Data is missed</i>							
<u>23-29.11</u>	17	18	9	7	9	8	5	0
<u>30.11-5.12</u>	28	27	13	11	13	14	5	0
<u>7.12.12</u>	33	26	14	15	11	9	7	3
<u>14-19.12</u>	29	30	18	17	6	9	9	2
<u>21-26.12</u>	30	32	21	19	18	9	10	7
	<i>Data is missed</i>							
<u>4-9 .01.10</u>	20	21	10	8	7	12	-	10
<u>11-16.01.10</u>	26	27	21	19	17	12	10	-
The number of materials	<i>217</i>	<i>194</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>102</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>27</i>

Source: Results of the monitoring conducted under the project of the non-governmental organization Internews Network «U-Media» (Monitoring of compliance with journalism standards and increasing media literacy of Ukrainian citizens) by the Telekrytyka and the Institute of Mass Information.

Monitoring of TV news has shown the trend of largely growing number of paid-for news in the course of the election campaign. The majority of news pieces that had traits of paid-for materials presented positively one of six main candidates (Tymoshenko, Yanukovych, Lytvyn, Yushchenko, Tihipko and Yatseniuk).

Media experts generally conclude that elections 2009 demonstrated that financial pressures on media have completely replaced governmental censorship of 2004. Increasing pluralism in news observed during elections 2009 is deceitful as it was primarily based on “equal opportunities of political leaders to get into news for payments (Dovzhenko, 2009). Considering the observed violations of new standards in media coverage of elections, this study seeks to explore the influences on media during elections 2009 as they are experienced and understood by media practitioners.

3.2.2. Ukrainian Media After 2010: Temptation to Control

After pro-Russian opposition leader Viktor Yanukovych took office as president, broadcast frequencies were withdrawn from critical outlets and extralegal harassment of journalists increased, leading to greater self-censorship. Ukraine, which has consistently been one of the best performers in its subregion in recent years, saw an erosion of media freedom, falling from 53 to 56 points (Freedom House, 2010).

According to the recent research conducted by the Democratic Initiative Foundation (2010), although there is no formal censorship in the media, it does exist “informally”. Media experts and activists state that governmental control is one of the main challenges of media transparency in the country today. Based on the monitoring of daily TV news, Ukrainian NGOs (Internews Network, Telekrytyka and the Mass Information Institute) find the signs of biases in TV news and state that censorship policy is mostly aimed at forming the positive image of the government. In the report titled “Either praise or in no way” NGOs conclude that Ukrainian TV Channels are follow the two main lines - produce positive coverage about authority and criticize opposition (Telekrytyka, 2010). Sociological poll conducted in September 2010 shows that 41% of Ukrainians recognize the decrease of freedom of speech after President elections comparing to results in April 2010 when just 18% of citizens believed that there was a problem with freedom of press in the country. According to another survey conducted by Razumkov Center more than

55% Ukrainians agree that political censorship exists in the country (Sociological Group “Rating”, 2010).

International organizations also express their concern about increase in press freedom violations. In the report of fact-finding visit to Ukraine in summer 2010 titled “Temptation to Control” international organization Reporters without Borders (2010) expresses concern about the increase in attempts to directly obstruct the of the media, including physical attacks on journalists and allocation of broadcasting licenses as mean of censorship: “acts of censorship that favour the new government have been growing steadily in the strategic broadcasting sector. In most cases, it has been the management itself that told staff not to broadcast certain stories or to eliminate passages critical of the government.” The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatovic has marked media “self-censorship” as one of the topical problems of free media in Ukraine and mentioned that Ukrainian media tend to publish less critical materials about government (Pronicheva, 2010). As EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Fuele stated in recent interview, the European Union looks to Ukraine improving on the situation with the freedom of expression in the country (The Ukrainian News agency, 2010).

4. Ukrainian Journalists: Struggles for Freedom and Ethical Values

Working under political and financial pressures, Ukrainian journalists have overcome several stages of so called “professional renaissance” and demonstrated the solidarity in the intention to freedom and independence.

The 2000-2001 period united Ukrainian journalists across the country and contributed to active resistance of the independent media against the Soviet-style government pressure and censorship. This resistance was a response to the disappearance of a popular opposition journalist Georgiy Gongadze, a widely-recognized media personality. His decapitated body was found soon after his disappearance. The brutal killing of a famous journalist generated a strong wave of protests in the media across the country. Ukrainian media covered the protests, which became major news at the time.

Protests became possible because journalists wanted the truth and were able to say it (Kucheriv & Odarich, 1993; Pikhovshek, 1997).

In 2001 to counterbalance the state mechanism and administrative pressure, media activists initiated the self-regulation democratic system not to let the state intrude into the journalism. Several groups of active and initiative journalists appeared in Kyiv: “Telekryryka” (Natalia Ligachova), Institute “Republic” (Iryna Cheremys), “Charter-4” (Olexandr Kryvenko, Julia Mostova, Serhiy Rakhmanin, Mykola Veresen, Taras Kuzmov, Olena Prytula); these organizations (and many more created at that time) received international donor funding at the time. The goal was to develop and reinforce journalists’ ethical standards during the coverage of the parliamentary election campaign in March 2002. At the meeting, participants adopted the program document which became the first version of the Ukrainian Journalists Ethics Code. The Code was signed by 78 journalists and the staff of the Journalist Ethics Commission, which later became an executive organ of “Ukrainians – for Transparent Elections” (Commission on Journalism Ethics of Ukraine, 2006).

Another significant stage in the development of the independent media in Ukraine was the journalists’ revolution, which started in October 2004. This revolution was directly connected with the Orange revolution in Ukraine. On October 23, 2004 a few Ukrainian media watchdog organizations, most notably Telekrytyka, initiated a protest to support the journalists of TV Channel 5, which was under strong political pressure at the time. On October 25th, the journalists of Channel 5 began a hunger-strike as a protest against this political pressure. Later, other journalists joined the action to demand their rights to work without *temnyky* (direct governmental pressures that dictated content of news coverage). On October 29, 2004, 19 Ukrainian TV companies supported anti-censorship protests (Ligachova & Ganzha, 2005) and Channel 5 that was the only channel, which had an editorial policy that allowed resistance to the government control at that time. The protests brought the desired results: on November 21, Channel 5 began broadcasting the events in Maidan square, the central location of the Orange revolution, where more than 20,000 Ukrainians came to support Yushchenko, a presidential candidate from the opposition. These protests were also supported by international

journalists' organizations. The success of the Orange revolution in 2005 brought the changes to the country and to the Ukrainian media landscape. The Orange revolution has been widely celebrated as a victory of civil democratic society in Ukraine and a victory for the Ukrainian people.

Since the election of a new president, Mr. Victor Yanukovich, a slow but steady change to a more centralized and controlled governance, which had not been effectively eliminated after the Orange revolution, started. Specifically, government pressures and threats to freedom of information and media have become very real in the last two years. Particularly, it is visible at the central TV programming (pressures to control news coverage on Channel 5 and STB among others) and major national newspapers (including *Den* ("Day"), *Zerkalo Nedeli* ("Mirror of the Week") and *Gazeta po-Kievski*, ("Newspaper, the Kiev Way").

The political and financial pressures on the media have become so pronounced in Ukraine in the last two years that in the fall of 2010, the most notable journalists, media representatives and NGOs (which now number 135 media and civil society organizations and over 570 individuals) united to organize a civic movement aimed at protecting freedom of speech and preventing any censorship that interferes with the relationship between the media and those in power. Stop Censorship! [«Стоп цензурі!»] is an independent non-political movement which is not supported by any political party. The main activities of Stop Censorship! include "movement activists' professional and civil rights protection; prevention of censorship in the mass media, as well as prevention of pressure on journalists aimed to force self-censorship; launching a massive long-term anti-censorship campaign with NGO's and civic activists from Ukraine and other countries; professional standards in TV news of all leading Ukrainian TV channels monitoring; informing on facts of important social topics and facts concealment and manipulation; furthering of media branch self-regulation" (Stop Censorship! official website, 2011). The movement is active in voicing real concerns about growing pressures and attempts to control the freedom of speech and information in Ukraine, which result from the current political discourse and initiatives of the new president Yanukovich.

Another civic movement “Chesno” was created to counteract corrupted practices in Ukrainian Parliament. It united numerous civic activists and journalists from different parts and regions of Ukraine who support and promote the values of freedom, transparency, and human rights. This movement is decided take control over the Parliament and work of deputies (Chesno, official website, 2011).

5. Internet: Territory for New Opportunities for Media Professionalization

Financial hardships caused by financial crisis 2010 and constraints of journalists' freedom opened new opportunities for online activities in Ukraine. Because traditional media depend on political and business forces, and there are virtually no attempts at censoring online media content, the Internet is usually perceived as a territory of freedom and, as a result, generates a value as a credible resource. Besides, due to the budget cut, media organizations go online to find new platforms and cheaper formats. For some media, like the business newspaper Delo.ua, this has meant closing down their print operations and going online only.

Strong competition and usage of Internet pushed journalists to develop new skills of online work. Some of them have also started to use personal blogs to express their opinions or present information that did not get in media. Journalists also believe that online work give them more opportunities for combination of formats: in past there was a clear separation of formats according to type of media (TV, radio, printed), and now text, photos, video and audio can be combined online. They get new formats and instruments for story-telling (personal communication, Svetlana Panyushkina, editor-in-chief of newspaper Delo, Kyiv, January 2012). Moreover, journalists have realized that new formats and types of news content require constant learning and keeping the hand on the pulse.

Digitization has also led to emergence of civic journalism in Ukraine. Digital technologies made possible for everyone to become a journalist. Each user that has computer can compete with journalist today. If something happens in the city the person can film it and broadcast via Internet. Thus, journalists are losing their functional uniqueness, and audience gets more sources for news than traditional media (Personal

Interview with Serhiy Danylenko, founder and editor-in-chief of civic journalism internet-portal <http://h.ua>, Kyiv, March 2010).

In the first attempts to engage the Internet the media has started many online portals (the same information is distributed online as well as in print or on TV), added blogging platforms on these websites, and has provided opportunities for interactive communication with visitors, introduced new voices. Almost every respected media outlet has blogging platform on the website where experts, and famous people post their ideas, for instance, Korrespondent, LigaBusibessInform, Segodnia, Ukrayinska Pravda.

Besides, every major national media outlet in Ukraine today has social media presence, in addition to its official website. The most popular social networking platforms among media in Ukraine are the blogging site platform Live Journal, followed by Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn. According to Yandex, a Russian-based search index, in 2009 Ukraine had one of the highest rates of social networking in the world. An overall lack of trust in traditional news media providers has accelerated the development of the blogosphere. LiveJournal (LJ, or ЖЖ in Ukrainian) is the most popular platform among bloggers. Ukrainian LJ users are ranked fifth place in world rankings (Rozvadovskyy, 2010). The social media have presented new opportunities – unequalled access to potential sources, pool of ideas, testing ground for new journalism projects. Journalists at the forefront of media progress are learning to harness the power of social networks to gather information, generate comments and build up their personal brand (Sergey Leschenko, Mustafa Nayyem of Ukrayinska Pravda), and it is clear that ignoring social media is not an option (Personal communication, Tetyana Lokot, former journalist, Head of New Media Sequence, Mohyla School of journalism, December 2011).

5.1. Digitalization and Challenges for Professional values

While there is a new reality with digital technology changing journalism, the ethics of journalism have essentially remained the same, as well as the ethical problems journalists face. The new production cycle for convergent media means the deadlines are now 24/7, and creates the illusion that speed is above all. Because of fast flow of information in Internet, a constant “race for speed” that distinguishes online journalism

and necessity to be first and attract more readers, online media causes simplification of journalism, declines the quality of materials and puts at risk some ethical values.

Svetlana Panyushkina, an editor-in-chief of online newspaper 'Delo' noted, that journalists in printed press feel more responsibility for their articles, they put their names under the text, and, consequently, they are more careful with verification on their materials. As immediacy is especially important in Internet journalism and practitioners always lack time for preparation, online texts are often short, contain less analysis and less voices. (Personal communication with Svetlana Panyushkina, editor-in-chief of online newspaper 'Delo', Kyiv, January 2012.) Therefore, deep and interesting analytical publications are rare online, and professionals who produce unique materials are disappearing; journalism is losing its deepness and faces.

Diana Dutsyk, former editor-in-chief of group of the project Glavred web-sites adds, that moving towards "universalism", journalism loses its original quality. "Since audience still needs journalists as a "filters" of information, and journalists should be able not only use camera and Facebook but also apply analytical skills and deep knowledge of subject and they work on material" (personal communication with Diana Dutsyk, former editor-in-chief of Glavred, group of web-sites, Kyiv, January 2012).

Journalists who strive to get the news out first may become lax with checking their sources, and this is still an important task. Whether discovered from own sources, found in social networks or sent in by users, all information must be verified, since this role of journalists remains one of the most important today. Users do not have the skills/resources to verify information; therefore it is up to journalists to verify their facts in order to inform people and to preserve their trustworthiness.

Copyright has become a more important issue, since plagiarism and stealing copyrighted content is much easier online. Ukrainian legislation offers very weak protection to copyrighted content online, and Ukrainian media often have to deal with theft of photos, exclusive quotes or even whole articles. Since it is hard to control and regulate transparency and originality of Internet publications, the situations when one website places material and other sites copy it without links on the resource, are frequent.

To avoid plagiarism some editors of respected media organizations try to make informal oral agreements about sharing content and putting links on the resource.

5.2. Internet Tools for Investigative Journalism

Increasing digitization and proliferation of the global network have certainly helped Ukrainian journalists in their investigative activities by providing a number of new useful online resources and tools. Moreover, journalists widely use new tools such as social media and blogs to promote their independent investigations online and, thus, draw readership to their media outlets. Many recent examples of investigative journalism (for instance, investigative reports published at *Ukrainska Pravda*, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnya*) utilized access to global databases and documents to illustrate their stories and digitalized their findings.

Ukrainian journalists largely agree that online media offer more advantageous platforms for investigative journalism, because they generally enjoy more freedom, on the one hand, and do not carry as many format limitations as traditional media, on the other hand. Thus, while TV imposes many restrictions in terms of time and printed media - in terms of space, online media can easily provide both without many limitations. Remarkably, many investigative stories eventually find their coverage in traditional media after their initial publication online (Kapluk, 2011).

Major media publishing investigative reports online include *Ukrainska Pravda* (exclusively online publication - www.pravda.com.ua), *Dzerkalo Tyzhnya* (online version of a weekly newspaper), *Obozrevatel* (<http://obozrevatel.com/>), *Glavcom* (<http://glavcom.ua/>) and some other. Apart from those, there are several organizations in Ukraine that engage with users online while not describing themselves as mainstream media. Among them are investigative bureau *Svidomo* (<http://www.svidomo.org/about>) which produces investigative pieces for regional newspapers; a multi-partner movement *New Citizen* (<http://newcitizen.org.ua/>), which mainly campaigns for greater freedom of information and fair elections – one of their most popular projects is *Vladometr* (<http://vladometr.org/>), a website which tracks officials' promises and how they deliver; *Nashi Groshi* (<http://nashigroshi.org/>), a project which monitors state tenders and how

budget money is spent, <http://investigations.redactor.in.ua/home.htm> - a resource for investigative reporters.

While these examples are not personal blogs, they play a significant role as the instances of grassroots activity online, contributing to the journalistic efforts of mainstream media. The blogosphere in Ukraine is, in general, less politicized than in Russia. However, Ukrainian bloggers eagerly repost and discuss the investigations produced in mainstream media and the independent projects described above.

Investigative journalists use online resources and tools primarily as sources of information and ideas for further investigations and as points of access to experts and open databases in wide terms. Particularly, journalists monitor blogs (mostly on Livejournal platform) and social networks (Facebook, Вконтакте (Vkontakte)) in order to identify interesting topics, actors, as well as collect voices and evidences. Some of them use social networks to contact local citizens who witnessed illegal construction in their districts; they also exchanged photos and video by means of the Internet. Besides, journalists of investigative bureau Svidomo have created the network of citizens who counteract construction. Network participants use Internet instruments to share information about violations, protests or other civic actions, and to inform investigative reporters (personal communication with Chrystyna Zanyk, journalist, former reporter in investigative bureau Svidomo, Kyiv, 26 January 2012).

Apart from using new media as sources of ideas, investigative reporters utilize public databases and open documents. For instance, activists of the above-mentioned project Nashi Groshi monitor and analyze the Newsletter of State Procurement and Record of Court Decisions and bring to light many of the questionable decisions of the authorities that are hardly noticed otherwise. Thus, many investigative pieces online are based on the publicly available sources, which are, however, ignored to a great extent by many journalists. It has also been noted that, although there are many open data, Ukraine still hangs behind other European countries in terms of existing publicly available records.

Another asset brought by digitization concerns profusion of multimedia options for journalism and investigative journalism in particular. Along with traditional text,

photo and video materials, journalists supplement their stories with information graphics, audio podcasts, hyperlinks, documents, which all together contribute to richer and more professional coverage of a story from different angles. At the same time, many online media outlets still lack variety of multimedia tools employed for coverage.

Although the Internet tools and social networks provide an easy access to information and speakers, thus, facilitating journalists' work, the issue of trustworthiness remains quite crucial. Respondents of one of the cited above studies noted that they had been offered false information from anonymous sources (Kaplyuk, 2011).

Therefore, journalists and editors are getting even more challenged by the need to check accuracy of the information. Furthermore, any information, used for investigation, that is taken from Internet may be changed or may disappear (for instance, when someone wishes to conceal some illegal actions) before journalist publishes his/her article.

Blogosphere and the social networks have also become a great distribution network for investigative journalism. Most of the major investigative media/journalists/independent projects have accounts on Facebook and Twitter, and promote their content, which other users share in abundance. As for impact, while digitization helps inform a wider circle of citizens about the results of journalistic investigations, the impact on the government/officials/corrupt practices by other entities remains weak, having more to do with political will rather than digital technology.

Conclusions

This chapter was aimed at reviewing the recent changes that have taken place in Ukrainian media field and influenced current situation in journalism.

Therefore, media independence is still open to question in Ukraine. So-called journalists' revolution (which sparked the Orange Revolution in 2004) succeeded in eliminating centralized censorship and established a free and independent journalistic environment, for the first time since 1991.

However, this change did not automatically guarantee a rebirth of Ukrainian journalism. Problems have persisted with ethics of Ukrainian journalists, poorly developed systems of professional journalistic education and practice, and with the interactions between journalists and editors and the media owners, who have become increasingly influential.

Hence, the problems of media ethics and transparency remain topical in Ukraine. Besides due to a very limited number of media researches, there is a need in in-depth empirical studies aimed at better understanding of practices taking place in local media and values guiding these practices.

II. Epistemological Background and Methodology

Every research methodology rests on a specific worldview about the nature of knowledge and of knowing; it is rooted in epistemological assumptions behind the research methods, research procedures and techniques. “Stating a knowledge claim means that researchers start project with a certain assumptions about how they will learn and what they will learn during their inquiry” (Creswell, 2003, p. 6).

In this chapter I will discuss my epistemological premises and ontological assumptions that informed and framed the methodology of my study and guided me throughout my fieldwork and data analysis. Particularly, I will mention theoretical framework that contributed into my philosophical worldview behind the study and provided theoretical background for qualitative methodology application. I will also describe research methodology and sampling procedures as well as research technical details and procedures of investigation.

1. Social Constructionism and Interpretative Research:

Discovering a Subjective Sense of Reality

This study follows the perspective of social constructionism, which sees the social world as the constructed by social processes and interactions. It is assumed that social world is complex and consists on multiple realities:

“...there are multiple realities which incorporate materials and subjective components. The central world is world of meanings. Meaning is a product of social action. The multiple realities of meaning are not necessary orderly nor coherent. Change, even chaotic change, is to be expected. The world is created in our knowledge of it...The way we make sense of the material existence is the product of our conscious efforts not of the structure of universe” (Anderson, 1987, p.78)

According to social constructivism, a meaningful social reality is made by human practices and interactions (Crotty, 1998), and the language of humans involved in social practice is not a neutral medium of description (Elliott, 1996). People possess an

internally experienced sense of reality, and this subjective sense of reality is crucial for explaining human social life (Gunter, 2000). Humans' values, beliefs and meanings of phenomenon form the main intention of interpretive research (Conbere, 2004). Therefore, interpretivist approaches people and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understandings as the primary and complex data sources:

“...there are no simple explanations for things. Rather, events and the result of multiple factors coming together and interacting in complex and often anticipated ways. Therefore, any methodology that attempts to understand experience and explain situations will have to be complex...” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.8).

The position of social constructivist is different from positivistic point of view that assumes that everyone shares the same meaning system, and that we all experience the world in the same way. The interpretative approach is based on the notion that people may or may not experience social reality in the same way, and that multiple interpretations of human experience, or realities, are possible because social reality is based on people's definitions on it (Gunter, 2000).

Hence, an interpretative research, according to Mason (2002), is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted. Its aim is to produce *rounded and contextual understandings* on the basis of rich, nuanced and detailed data. It is oriented to discover the truths and realities of others. Blaikie (2000) adds that “interpretivists are interested in understanding of social world people have produced and which they reproduce through their continuing activities” (p. 15). Social science in this case becomes a form of self-understanding or self-interpretation. By probing the past as well as present, by looking at values as much as at facts, such a social science is able to make connections that are not obvious and to ask difficult questions (Bellah et al, 1985, p. 310).

Therefore, the intention of my research is to discover what actions mean to the people (practicing journalists) who are engaged into them. Specifically, I am primarily oriented on *understanding different real-life experiences* than on attempting to deduce social life from abstract logical theories that may not relate to the feelings and

experiences of ordinary people, because “individual motives are crucial to consider even if they are irrational, emotion-laden and contain false facts and prejudices” (Gunter, 2000, p.6). In fact, interpretative researchers value common sense as a way to interpret the world, while positivists would generally dismiss common sense for being “unscientific (ibid.).

Following this epistemological framework, in this work I am looking for the meanings constructed by individuals engaged in media practice. *What are the realities constructed by journalists in their every day work and interactions? How they understand practices they are involved into? What meanings do they attach to the actions they realize in their professional lives? What so they mean for them? How do they construct and understand their professional roles?* These are the questions that guided my investigation on every stage of the fieldwork.

1.1. Symbolic Interactionism: Intersubjective Nature of Meaning

Explaining the social life, as based on social interactions and socially constructed meaning systems, this interpretative research is rooted in the ideas of symbolic interactionism. The founder of this school Herbert Blumer (1969) believed that people produce and reproduce meanings through shared perspectives; these perspectives shape interactions and courses of interaction.

According to Blumer, symbolic interactionism rests on three primary premises (Silverman, 2004). First, that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings those things have for them; second, that such meanings arise out of the interaction of the individual with others, and third, that an interpretive process is used by the person in each instance in which he must deal with things in his environment. Interactionism or constructionist notions of meaning hold that content is only part in a process of meaning construction. The other parts are the communicants and the contexts in which behavior takes place (Anderson, 1987).

Blumer insisted that the meanings of objects are primarily a property of behavior and depend only secondarily upon the intrinsic character of the objects themselves. Meanings, for Blumer, are constructed in social interaction and are derived from the

process of interpretation. Thus, interpretation becomes the matter of handing meanings and is explained as internalized social process in that the actor is interacting with himself:

“The actor selects, checks, suspends, regroupes, and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action. Accordingly, interpretation is a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action” (Blumer, 1969, p.5).

The ideas of how the mind and self emerge from the interaction by significant signs and symbols are rooted in social philosophy (behaviorism) of George Herbert Mead. His work marks an early development of social psychology as a science. According to Mead (1934), mind and self are generated into and developed through social process, and individual's action must be viewed within the social act. Every action of individual changes the social structure to some degree. Consequently, human development takes place within the social process, and through the symbols individual takes the role of the other in the regulation of his own conduct. The calling out of the same response in both the self and the other gives the common content necessary for community of meaning.

Mead (1934) believed that mind is the internalization within individual of the social process of communication in which meaning emerges. In virtue of the internalization or importation of the social process of communication, the individual gains the mechanism of reflective thought; acquires the ability to make himself an object to himself and to live in a common moral and scientific world; becomes a moral individual with impulsive ends transformed into conscious pursuit of ends-in-views.

Therefore, interactionism paradigm sees meaning as social products formed in and through the defining activities of people: “it does mean that the manner in which we respond to the world characteristics – our explanation of them, our uses of them, the value we place on them – is the result of the negotiated constructs we mutually hold” (Anderson, 1987, p 242). In short, our understanding of life is relative to the system in which we live.

1.2. The Role of Human Agency

Symbolic interactionism is an approach to social phenomena stressing the human agent (Burns & Flam, 1987). In fact, Blumer provides the empirically oriented scheme of human society that consists of people engaged in action: “action on the part of a human being consists of taking account of various things that he notes and forging a line of conduct on the basis of how he interprets them” (Blumer, 1969, p.15).

If we say about the way we experience the lifeworld, on the one hand, lifeworld is already there; on the other, we take part in shaping and creating it. In symbolic interaction every social event is facilitated both by pre-existing, generalized definition and emerging situational perspective developed and shared by actors; each actor enters interaction with a set of attitudes, anticipated goals and conceptual understanding of situation (Clagett, 1988). As Manen (1997) writes, world is given to us and actively constituted by us, we may be presented with possibilities of individual and collective self-understanding and thoughtful praxis.

Generally, symbolic interactionism may be characterized as a down-to-earth approach to the scientific study of human conduct. It views social meaning as incorporated in roles. The role functions to provide identity, location, action, and purpose for the individual while within that role.

Known for development of dramaturgical analysis in symbolic interactionism, Erving Goffman (1959) wrote that by social contacts and acts every person expresses his or her view of the situation; through social actions person also expresses evaluation of other interaction participants as well as evaluation of the his/her own self: “face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good for himself” (ibid., p. 5).

According to Goffman (1967), person lives in a world of social encounters, involving him either in face-to-face or mediated contact with other participants. Thus, the person becomes a kind of contract, built up not from inner psychic propensities but from moral rules that are impressed upon him from without:

“These rules, when followed, determine the evaluation he will make of himself and of his fellow-participants in the encounter, the distribution of his feelings, and the kinds of practices he will employ to maintain a specified and obligatory kind of ritual equilibrium “ (ibid, p. 45).

“...whether or not the full consequences of face-saving actions are known to the person who employs them, they often are habitual and standardized practices they are like traditional plays in a game or traditional steps in a dance. Each person, subculture, and society seems to have its own characteristic repertoire of face-saving practices” (ibid., p.13).

In terms of social agents symbolic interactionism paradigm offers a possibility to describe the practice through the stakeholders` interpretations, or a possibility of “self-empowerment rather than being relegated to obtaining power from organizational dominant coalitions” (Gordon, 1997, p. 64).

The significance and meaning of personal experience is determined by its interpretation provided by human agent. This approach gives the central place to human agency – media practitioners whose experience is meaningful and who are involved into shaping media practices. Thus, the main focus is made on how media representatives create meaning during their professional practices, how they present and construct the selves within these practices, and how they perceive (or define) different professional situations and practices.

Besides, interactionism is concerned with the creation and change of symbolic orders via social interaction. Concern with identity and the symbolic order has an important implication for how integrationists view methodology (Silverman, 2004). Gordon (1997) concluded that Blumer’s approach provides a basis for reconsideration (or redefinition) of the practices that are usually presented in normative conceptualization. In case of media practices it provides the freedom for new research directions and methods aimed at reassessing and redefining the worldviews, professional roles and values shared by media practitioners and reflecting their ethical development.

2. Qualitative Research Methodology

Many theorists associate qualitative research with methodological approach of the grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) that retain concepts from symbolic interactionism (Alvesson, & Sköldberg, 2009). The purpose of qualitative research is to explicate social action from the actor's point of view. According to Anderson (1978), qualitative research begins with our own experience: "it is in our own lifeworld that we discover that the lifeworld of others is different from own and, therefore, worthy for our study" (p.254). Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) explain that qualitative research can be seen as a fundamentally interpretive activity...all research work includes and is driven by interpreter – who in the social sciences, moreover, often with and contemplates other interpreters (people studied) – here provides the key to a qualified methodological views" (p. 6-7). Mason (2002) sees the purpose of qualitative research in producing social explanations or addressing intellectual puzzles.

The meanings others attach to social process are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories and ideas (Creswell, 2003). As Corbin and Strauss (2008) write, "it is not the event itself that is the issue in our studies, because each person experiences and gives meaning to events in light of his or her biography or experiences, according to gender, time and place, cultural, political, religious, and professional backgrounds" (p. 10). Hence, the goal of research is to rely as much as possible on the participant's views of the situation that is being studied.

Explorative function is central in qualitative methodology. In contrast with natural sciences with their emphasis on operationalization for purposes of testing, "qualitative social research enjoys more flexible method of data collecting, whereby the principles of selection are successfully revised in the course of research process" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 14).

The qualitative research can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate

(Mason, 2002, p. 1). Due to natural and dynamic nature of qualitative research, it allows enjoying serendipity and discovery; qualitative researchers have natural curiosity that leads them to study. Using language as a tool, the researcher is able to plumb the depths of other people` experience to glean meanings that are not otherwise observable and that cannot be gathered using survey or other data-gathering strategies (Morrow, 2007). Therefore, qualitative research has an unrivalled capacity to constitute compelling arguments about *how things work for people* in particular contexts.

Applying qualitative methodology in this study, I pursued the goal to understand what meaning people (research participants) give to reality and professional practice, but not to determine how this reality works apart from their interpretations. This study is aimed at *understanding media practice and* phenomenon of media transparency through the experiences and interpretations of media practitioners who are involved in constitution of the phenomenon by their ethical judgments, shared values and considerations.

Specifically, this interpretative study seeks to answer a following research question: *how do Ukrainian media practitioners understand and interpret the phenomenon of media transparency and how they perceive their professional role in the existing practices?* Based on the case of Ukraine, I am looking at the understanding of media transparency phenomenon as it is constructed by journalists` professional experiences, perceptions, attitudes, values, ethical considerations and conventions that work in practice.

2.1. Focus Group and Individual Interviews: Research Design and Procedures

The research methodology was designed in a way to allow collecting qualitative experience-based data and exploring practitioners` interpretations of the practices they are involved into. Combination of individual and group interviewing approaches made possible getting deeper into both persons` individual experiences and meanings practitioners attach to their experience and share within professional group.

In-depth one-on-one and discussion group interviews with Ukrainian practitioners presenting Kiev and regional media were conducted from 2008 till 2011. Individual and focus group interviews were aimed at getting detailed experiences about the challenges participants face in their every day practices and ways they experience media practices and interpret the phenomenon of media transparency. Following the study tasks, the researcher intended “to obtain descriptions of the lived world of the interviewees with respect to interpretations of the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale, 1996, p.30).

In 2008 I started the fieldwork with 4 pilot interviews with journalists from both Kiev and regions. Each interview lasted between one hour and one hour and half; it helped to get the first look at the personal experiences and practice under investigation, explore the language and key terms practitioners apply when speak about professional issues and elaborate methodological tools for further data collection.

Afterwards, in 2008, 2009 and 2010, I conducted eight focus-group discussions with leading journalists and editors from Kyiv and regions. Six focus groups took place in Kiev and two focus group discussions were organized in Kharkiv, Eastern part of Ukraine, and Lviv, Western Ukraine. Importantly, this time period also included presidential campaign and elections; so, it allowed getting more insightful experiences and responses on practices under investigation. Focus group discussions provided rich and meaningful data on how practitioners experience the practices they are involved into and what meanings and interpretations they are sharing while discussing those practices.

Finally, 49 individual interviews with editors and journalists were conducted in 2011 (February-April). Individual interviews provided more details on specific personal experiences and interpretations that sounded but were not discussed deeply enough in the groups. Interviews were suitable to verify the obtained categories, determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings, specific themes and descriptions. They also helped to probe and get specific details (some personal insights and more “sensitive” data) on specific questions that were not provided by group discussions.

2.2. Interviewing: Methodological Approach

Since the study was aimed at understanding the professional practice from the individual perspectives of those who experience it, the methodology was designed in a way to allow participants share their responses and minimize researcher's intrusion into conversation. So, the main goal of the researcher was "to step beyond the known and enter into the world of participants" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 16). Corbin and Strauss also underline that qualitative researcher should be driven by curiosity and be creative, flexible and trusting his or her instincts while working in the field.

Interviewing was chosen as one of the most popular qualitative methods used in communication research. As Berger (2000) puts it, "we have no chance to observe people for a long period of time, we cannot know much about their past activities... but we can discover this information by asking them about it" (p. 112). In addition, the interviews are among the most effective techniques to collect narratives from participants, they allow researchers to get rich data and uncover central themes the participants manifest in their everyday professional lives (Gilbert, 2008).

The unstructured (specifically, on the very first stages of data collection, pilot interviews and group discussions) and semi-structured (mainly on the final stages of data collection and verification) types of interviewing were applied for data collection. Berger (2000) explains that in unstructured interviews researcher is focused on specific topics of the study but he or she exercises relatively little control over the responses of the informant, and in semi-structured interviews interviewer has a written list of questions to ask but at the same time he or she tries to maintain the casual quality found in unstructured interviewing (p.112). This methodological approach provided a free flow conversation and allowed to get insights based on the respondents' professional experiences. Imposing too much structure on the interview inhibits the interviewee's responses and may cause an incomplete understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Zhang, & Wildemuth, 2009).

According to Gilbert (2008), non-standardized interviewing allows the interviewers to phrase the question as they wish, ask them in order that seems sensible at

the time, and even to join in the conversation by discussing what they think on the topic themselves. It also enables respondents to use their own particular ways of defining the topics, describing the practice variations and raise the considerations that the interviewer has not thought of (ibid.). Moreover, the method of interviewing provided the flexibility that is especially important for investigation of unexplored phenomena and understanding human experiences.

McMillan (2008) emphasizes the natural settings, relaxed conditions and flexible designs of qualitative studies, which may be changed during the process of researching. In this study the researcher intended to take position of involved person who interacted with participants and built trustworthy relations. Rooted in symbolic interactionism, this method allows respondents to use their own particular ways of defining the topics, describing the practice variations and raise the considerations that the interviewer has not thought of (Gilbert, 2008).

2.3. Discussion Group Interviews: Justification of the Method

Generally research data can be divided into two categories: emic data arises in a natural or indigenous form, minimally imposed by the researcher or the research setting, and etic data represents the researcher's view on situation. As Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) explain, even the most natural situations may not yield data that are completely emic, because the researcher must make decisions about what to attend and what to ignore. Nevertheless, focus group provide data that are *closer to the emic* side of the continuum because they allow individuals to respond in their own categorizations and perceived associations (ibid, p.13).

Focus group research helped to collect qualitative data engaging a study participants in an informal group discussions, "focused" around a particular topic or set of issues (Wilkinson, 2004, p. 177). This method was selected as a tool for discovery and exploration, especially when little is known about a particular subject or certain phenomenon (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) and one that allows to link theoretical terms and practical understanding of phenomenon (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). Frey and Fontana (1993) emphasize that group discussion are especially effective as it can provide

data on realities (as they are defined in a group context) and helps to revise or solidify the researcher's image of reality of a social setting.

Focus group interviewing is suitable for exploring new themes and hidden meanings, understanding phenomena as respondents experience them and as they exist in their reality. This method provides a rich and detailed set of data amount perceptions, thoughts, feelings, an impressions of group members in the members' own words (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p.140); they are especially useful for exploring the way particular groups of individuals think and talk about phenomenon. It is also an effective tool for collecting rich data relatively quickly from a large number of people.

Besides, focus-group interviews are more "naturalistic" than one-to-one interviews, because they are closer to everyday conversation and they typical include a range of communicative processes - such as storytelling, joking, arguing, teasing, persuasion, challenge, and disagreement (Silverman, 2004). They allow the researcher to interact directly with respondents and provide opportunities for clarification of responses, for follow-up questions. Moreover, it is possible for the researcher to observe nonverbal response, gestures, and smiles, which may carry information that supplements the verbal response.

It is considered a friendly research method that is respectful and not condescending to research target audience (Morgan & Krueger, 1993, p.18). Since the researcher takes a less directive and dominating role in the group discussion, participants can comment on the areas they think are most important:

"..the emphasis of nondirective interviewing ... [is] to shift attention from the interviewer to the respondent, placing considerable emphasis of getting tune with the reality of interviewee" (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

The spontaneous interaction of focus group members often produces insights that are not obtained readily, if ever, in individual surveys or experiments. (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p.141). They help to understand how individuals conceptualize the world, how they categories phenomena. The open response format makes possible to obtain large and rich amounts of data in the respondents' own words. The researcher can

obtain deeper levels of meanings, make important connections, and identify subtle nuances in expression and meaning (ibid, p.16).

Ponterotto (2002) notes that constructivism research paradigm demands interactive, symbiotic nature of researcher-participant relationship helping to uncover deeper meanings and insights based in participants' lived experiences. In this study my intention was *to hear the voices* of practitioners; how they experience and understand how they negotiate the values that guide their every day practices. Focus group method was chosen as an effective tool to collect practitioners' shared meanings and real-life ethical values rather than normative concepts of professional ethics. The idea of the research study was to allow journalists choose the words and categories with which they are comfortable and which they apply in their every day professional routine.

Listening to participants' comments and observing their both verbal and non-verbal responses, provides a significantly deeper understating of their experiences, promotes familiarity with the way they talk, perceive and experience themes under investigation. The questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation, and the meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons (Creswell, 2003, p.8). By creating and sustaining an atmosphere that promotes meaningful interaction, focus groups convey human sensitivity, a willingness to listen without being defensive, and a respect for opposing views that is unique and beneficial (Morgan, & Krueger, 1993).

Communication during the focus group has symbolic nature. Meaning does not reside in the specific messages that are expressed but in the perceptual processes of each participant. Individuals attach meanings to the symbols they exchange to create meaning (Albrecht et al., 1993, p.52) To the extent interactants have similar referents for the symbols they exchange, meanings are shared and understanding is achieved. Therefore, focus-group discussion creates a synergistic effect as in-group interactions allow to react to and build upon the responses of other group members (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p.16).

One greatest advantage of this method is that it produces a very rich body of data expressed in the respondents' own words and context. There is minimum of artificiality of response, unlike survey questionnaires that ask for responses expressed on five-point rating scales or other constrained response categories (ibid, p.12). Respondent can qualify their responses or identify important contingencies associated with their answers.

2.3.1. Moderator and Questioning

Krueger (1994) suggests that moderator team for focus group discussion should include moderator and moderator assistant. To strengthen the reliability (Albrecht et al., 1993) all focus-group discussions were conducted by me, same person (moderator/researcher) with the help of assistant of moderator. Krueger & Casey (2009) recommend the researcher to serve the functions of moderator, listener, observer and analyst. The moderator was responsible for facilitating the discussion, prompting members to speak, and encouraging all the members to participate. The moderator was also taking notes, elaborating potential emergent questions to ask, and engaged participants into group exercises.

One of the strength of focus group research is that may be adapted to provide the most desirable level of focus and structure. The moderator can ask very general and nonspecific questions about the topic in order to determine the most silent issues on the minds of the participants (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p.11). As the moderator, I allowed the group members to interpret or rephrase the questions rather than provided my own interpretations. According to Stewart and Shamdaani (1990), it helps to minimize the influence of moderator on other group members.

Interview guide (or questioning route) was arranged in a natural and logical way. Although it included preliminary topics/blocks of conversation, moderator was extremely attentive to the flow of conversation, careful to responses of participants, and flexible to direct discussion in a way that was comfortable and suitable for every single group.

The following themes emerged from the pilot and first focus group interviews and were included into the interview protocol for further exploration and probation: (1) situation and problems faced by Ukrainian media today, (2) factors and sources of

influences of media, (3) relations between journalists and news sources, (4) transparent and non-transparent media practices (perceptions, interpretations, attitudes).

The less-structured types of questions precede those with more structure because more structured ones tend to be more directive and establish directions for responses. In my study I structured questions looking for stimulus in previous answers of the respondents, using their “key” words and expressions. However, sometimes there was a need to give more specific cues in the questions: “to elicit salient or memorable portions of the communication” (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 64). However, my main purpose as moderator was not to “lead” the responses by prompting the answers and minimize imposing my previous experience on the flow of conversation.

Since less structures groups tend to pursue those issues and topic of greater importance, relevance, and interest to the group members themselves, the moderator asked open-ended questions, usually starting with broad ones and then probed specific ideas and examples that were verbalized during discussion. This is perfectly appropriate if the objective of the researcher is to learn about those things that are most important to the group (Stewart& Shamdasani, 1990, p.11). According to Creswell (2003) broad and general questions are especially helpful as participants can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons:

“...the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life setting. Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals` lives” (p.8).

The questions were phrased in a way to be easy for participants` understanding and often referred to their mentioned examples and experiences. This flexible style of questioning helped to adapt the questions according to members` experiences and specific themes that emerged during discussion. Some questions were placed within the natural flow of discussion. As Stewart and Shamdaani (1990) note it reduces the anxiety or embarrassment of respondents.

The assistant moderator's responsibilities included the provision of video-recording, taking notes, and creating an environment that is conducive for group discussion. In Kiev focus group discussions were conducted in a specially equipped focus group studios (provided by the sociological department of the National University Kyiv-Mohyla Academy) and at the Media Center of the Mohyla School of journalism. In Lviv and Kharkiv research participants were invited to the meeting rooms that were specially equipped for focus group discussions.

3. Data Collection Procedures

Each focus group discussion lasted between 90-120 minutes and included between 5 and 10 participants. "The group must be small enough for everyone to have opportunity to share insights and yet large enough to provide diversity in perceptions" (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 6). According to Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009), the rationale for the range of focus group size should stem from the goal that focus groups there should be enough participants to yield diversity in information provided; yet they should not include too many participants because large groups can create an environment where participants do not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences.

To provide a maximum variation and diversity of experiences and perceptions, each group included representatives of different types media (printed, online, TV, radio), both males and females. Some researchers believe that heterogeneous groups are more effective than homogeneous because the variety of skill, perspectives, and knowledge can be brought to bear on the performance of tasks. Mixed-gender groups are more effective in encouraging participation than focus groups comprised of members of the same sex (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

So, group members varied by gender, age and types of media, but had the commonality of being leading media practitioners who have been working in media for at least 2 years and who are responsible for or can influence the selection of topics and angles of coverage. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) explain that interaction is easier when individuals with similar socioeconomic backgrounds comprise the group (p. 38). A lively, interesting discussion tends to build a sense of cohesiveness. Equally important,

the sharing of experiences and recognition that other participants have had similar experiences add to the cohesiveness of the group (ibid.).

Each individual interview ran anywhere between 45 and 120 minutes. All interviews took place at the time and place convenient for participants; it helped to create the relaxed and unconstrained conversation. Interviews were tape-recorded in Ukrainian or Russian (depending on language which was convenient for the participant), completely transcribed, and then analysed to identify all relevant statements for inductive analysis of identifying emerging themes through multiple readings.

Almost all interviews took place at the participants' workplace, at the time suitable for participants. Interviews were conducted and recorded in Ukrainian and Russian, completely transcribed, and then analysed to identify all relevant statements for inductive analysis of identifying emerging themes through multiple readings (Charmaz, 2000). The researcher then partially translated relative materials, and an English-speaking research assistant, together with the researcher, corrected the style of some translated quotations to read better in English. A bi-lingual research assistant back translated quotations and, together with the researcher, compared them with original transcripts to check data for accuracy.

4. Study Participants and Sampling Strategy

The application of qualitative methodology in this study was based on the assumption that media practitioners have meaningful experiences that can be interpreted for in-depth understanding media practice and media transparency phenomenon.

In interpretative studies the sample is to provide a useful and empirical contexts, illustrations and scenarios (Mason, 2002). People's experiences are meaningful, and every experience matters. This was my main assumption for selecting study participants and interacting with them. To identify potential informants, a non-probability purposive sampling was utilized. This method is often used in studies when individuals are deliberately selected because they have special knowledge, position, and characteristics important to study and, thus, they are the most informative (McMillan, 2004). A

theoretical, or purposeful, sampling strategy is broadly intended to facilitate a process whereby researchers generate and test theory from the analysis of their data, rather than using data to test out or falsify a pre-existing theory (Blaikie, 2000, p.138). Masson (2002) suggests this strategy stands close to the research when theory, data generation and data analysis are developed simultaneously in a dialectical process. Specifically, this sampling strategy demands moving back and forth between data analysis and the process of explanation or theory construction.

Totally, 100 media practitioners participated in the study. 49 persons (34 journalists and 15 editors) were interviewed and 51 (23 editors and 28 journalists) took part in 8 focus-group discussions. The practicing media representatives, editors and leading journalists, of national and regional media were invited to participate in the study. The selection of study participants was based on their current active leadership position (top or middle-level management/ editor /leading reporter) and participation in making decisions about topics and angles of media coverage, extensive work experience in the field of at least two years, specifically, and, finally, a volunteer agreement to participate in the study.

Respondents were accessed through the gatekeepers` assistance: the Mohyla School of Journalism at the National University “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy” (within the educational program “Digital Future of Journalism”) and the Independent Association of broadcasters. Both gatekeepers selected for accessing potential research participants have been working in the field of media development and education for more than 10 years (from 2001 and 2000 respectfully) sustaining a wide network that involves leading media practitioners from different parts of Ukraine.

The Mohyla School of Journalism is a leading educational center in Ukraine that combines theoretical training, practical experience, and research in mass communications, film, and journalism. The purpose of the School is to develop the media and mass communications industry, and to train a new generation of professional journalists able to lead this development. In the past 10 years the Mohyla School of journalism conferred degrees on 167 graduates of MA program in journalism. It has also held a number of thematic training workshops, as well conferences for journalists, educators, government

representatives, and NGOs. The “Digital Future of Journalism” is a post-degree professional development program realized by the Mohyla School of Journalism. This program that was initiated in 2007 with the support of the local donor Rinat Akhmetov “Development of Ukraine” Foundation, and over 100 leading national and regional media practitioners have taken part in the “Digital Future of Journalism” professional education program. The aim of the Program is to train young journalists –newsroom leaders – through engaging them in the digital culture of the new media. The program is aimed at young journalists under 35 who already have a degree (specialist or master, not necessarily in journalism) and 1-3 years of experience working in the media.

The National Association of Broadcasters is an all-Ukrainian network uniting the leading Ukrainian radio and television broadcasters from Kiev and regions of Ukraine. Founded in 2000, it has become a premier trade association for broadcasters that advances the interests of its members in federal government, industry and public affairs, improves the quality and profitability of broadcasting, encourages content and technology innovation, and spotlights the important and unique ways stations serve their communities.

5. Area of Sensitivity and Research Ethics

It is important to consider that this study contained the elements of sensitive research as it involved participants into discussion of individual experiences that may have concerned socially or morally unaccepted behaviors or demanded them to reveal behavior that is considered unethical or even illegal. Renzetti, C., & Lee, R. (1993) define sensitive topics are ones that deal with behavior that is intimate, discreditable, or incriminating. In research sensitive topic poses substantial threat for those involved and make problematic the process of data collections, holding and dissemination. Renzetti and Lee name the areas which are usually associated with sensitivity: 1) where research introduces into the private sphere or delves into some deeply personal experience, 2) where the study is concerned with deviance or social control, 3) where it impinges on the vested interests of powerful persons or the exercise of coercion or dominations, and 4) where it deals with things sacred to those being studied that they do not wish profaned (ibid, p.6).

Social research sometimes needs intruding into the private knowledge and experience, and thereby challenges researchers to think seriously about the methods of data obtaining and revealing (Adler & Adler, 1993). As Lee (1993) mentions, research, that might bring to light something which was formerly hidden', can be problematic for those taking part, because the participants may face some sort of discrimination or stigma if a hidden part of their lives is revealed (p.74). According to Sieber and Stanley (1988) "socially sensitive research" includes the studies in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research (p. 49). Sensitive topics present problems because research into them involves potential costs to those participating in the research.

Because of the flexibility in questioning and relaxed atmosphere, interviewing was well suited to exploring some sensitive areas and topics, including ones that concerned the experiences in moral issue and professional ethics. Morgan and Krueger (1993) argue that people do talk about sensitive topics in focus groups: practical experience shows that people readily talk about wide range of sensitive issues and sometimes may even over-disclose sensitive information. "This can happen when the momentum in a group leads participants to reveal details of their personal lives that they would ordinarily keep private" (p.7).

The social psychological principle of legitimation should be used to ensure that a wide diversity of thoughts, opinions, and descriptions are seen by the participants as acceptable within the context of the group discussion. Moderators need to provide enough legitimation to ensure that the range of comments from socially desirable to socially undesirable are aired but not to provide so much legitimation for one position that those holding other positions feel that their comments would not be well received. (Zeller, 1993, p.183)

Consequently, a favorable group context may be often effective in facilitating personal disclosures; and the "solidarity" among peers decreases discomfort with the topic (Silverman. 2004). Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) write that in group discussion of sensitive topics, the more intimate approach serves to relax respondents and to stimulate discussions: "all members of the focus group should be made to feel that their presence

and opinions are not only valued, but also necessary for the success of the group” (p.94). Sensitive topics sometimes need to invite participants to discuss the experiences or views of their acquaintances, friends, or neighbors. This eliminates some potential for personal embarrassment. It also helps to create the atmosphere conducive for sharing personal experiences later in discussions.

Before taking part in the research all study participants were informed about study purpose, the nature and role of their involvement. By signing consent form before the interviews every research participant provided his/her agreement that interview was audio/video recorded and their participation was voluntary. Journalists participated in this study were ensured that only anonymised quotes would be used in research report and publication.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Qualitative data analysis is a very dynamic process involving continuous interpretation (Blumer, 1969) and translation of other persons` words and actions that can be compared to both an art and science (Corbin & Strauss, 2008):

“...analysis is never quite finished, no matter how long a researcher seems to work on a study. Since researchers are always thinking about their data, that are always extending, amending, and reinterpreting interpretations as new insights arise and situation change”(p.49-50).

Corbin and Strauss (2008) also explain that analysis is process of generating, developing, and verifying concepts that builds over time and with the acquisition of data (p. 57). Knodel (1993) adds that given subjective nature of the data gathered by focus group methodology and a considerable amount of subjective judgment is necessary involved in their interpretation and analysis (p.43).

Data interpretation involved examination of the context of a broader discussion. This study data interpretation came along with the process of data collection that lasted until the all emerged themes and categories were clarified, completed and saturated. Rubin H.and Rubin I. (1995) associate data completeness with situation when what you

hear provides an overall sense of the meaning of a concept, theme, or process. Hence, data saturation is identified by the stage when you gain confidence that you are learning little that is new.

Data analysis was realized through the process of constant comparison; in which collected information is constantly compared to emerging themes as part of a more encompassing theory (McMillan, 2004). Interviews and focus-group discussions were tape-recorded and transcribed, and then the resulting transcripts were analyzed. In the preliminary stage of analysis transcripts were repeatedly read and re-read and prominent concepts —topics, themes and issues—recorded.

A three-step qualitative narrative analysis of finding reduction, identifying participants' explanations, and approaching grounded theory through researchers' data sense-making was applied (Lindlof, 1995). The three-step analysis is a variation of a thematic analysis as a process to organize the qualitative data (Boyatzis, 1998). This method includes three stages: finding repetitiveness in responses (1), identifying participants' explanations of the phenomena in these responses through a systematic close read of the written narratives (2), and grouping responses through the reflective analysis of the data (3). The three-step analysis is particularly useful in qualitative research when recurring themes might lead to the analysis of the data beyond participants' interpretations and to identification of systematic reasons behind accounts of the narratives (Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

The process of grouping is similar to a thematic analysis technique used to identify and scrutinize recurring themes within the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The transcripts were read and reread to ensure the meaning of each unit is understood and to identify preliminary categories to identify and to scrutinize recurring themes within the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Central to an analysis of qualitative data (given in transcripts) is the process of coding the material into analytically distinct segments that can then be examined together with drawing conclusions concerning one or more of the topics and related concepts under investigation (Knodel, 1993, p. 45). Coding is defined as deriving and developing concepts from data, that is realized by taking raw data and raising it to conceptual level (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The process of code mapping included reading the manuscript and marking in the margins segments corresponding to different codes start and end. Knodel (1993) describes code mapping by following steps: development of an initial set of codes corresponding to each item in the discussions (1); creation of additional codes for topics for topics that arise and are of special interest (2); development of nonsubstantive codes that are of particular help in the analysis and write-up phases (3); development of subsequent detailed code to use for analysis of specific topics (4).

As this research was aimed at identification of how media practitioners experience and understand media practices, the main focus was made on *interpretative repertoires* presenting media transparency in editors' and journalists' narrations which, according to Wetherell, Taylor and Yates (2001), provide a basis for shared social understanding. Specifically, in the angle of my analysis was both *what* journalists say about media practice and transparency and *how* they say it (or how they express their perceptions about it, what meanings they convey). Besides, the interviews provided rich data on *how study participants identify journalists' roles* in media practices. The analytical tools of making comparisons, thinking about different meanings of a word, drawing upon personal experience, looking at language, emotions, metaphors and smiles, "playing game "so what? And what is?" with data.

7. Research Limitations and Reflexivity

A descriptive nature of this qualitative study allowed obtaining in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. However, due to the limited number of respondents it "does not allow for empirical generalizations, the production of law-like statements, or establishments of functional relationships" (Manen, 1997, p.22). Instead, based on the practitioners' interpretations and focused on the uniqueness of their experience, it enables researcher "to get inside the minds of people and gain access to material of considerable importance" (Berger, 2000, p. 125).

This research provides the insights and experiences of media practitioners and does not consider the responses of others professionals (particularly, Public Relations

professionals, specialists of media marketing departments, press-offices) and who are also involved in media relations and influence media practices. It also does not intend to analyse responses of media audience. Besides, this study is not designed to provide the representativeness of media professionals (demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, media type and media geography): it does not reach or represent all practitioners working in Ukraine but, following the phenomenological approach, is focused on limited number of respondents, which are studied deeply. Specifically, I am interested to learn the experiences of selected respondents, which have relevant practical experience and are involved in decision-making about news coverage. Thus, it is not expected to get the data that can be generalized to whole population of Ukrainian journalists.

At the same time an open-ended qualitative approach applied in this study allows individuals under investigation to respond freely using their own linguistic codes and displaying their natural behavioural forms. This advantage, according to Gunter (2000) also contributes to its limitations as a research orientation: “despite its preference for observing naturally-occurring behaviour, such observations per se often lack the information necessary to explain why particular behavioural patterns occurred” (p. 277).

A significant research challenge was connected with sensitive issues that were brought into discussion with study participants. Mainly they are connected with the experiences and attitudes about the practices that concern moral and ethical questions. Even though this challenge was taken into consideration when research methodology was designed, there is still uncertainty about whether respondents were honest and revealed their real experiences and shared their true attitudes.

In this study the researcher takes position of involved person who interacts with participants, builds trusting, relations with them, based on empathy and understanding. According to Ponterotto (2002), in constructivism research paradigm researcher experience and vales biases are inevitable and should be discussed and bracketed. The combination of the researcher, interviewer, focus-group moderator and analyst roles helped to bring the experiences of interviewing to the interpretation, and start analysis from the very first interaction with study participant. It is important to mention that an active involvement at its every stage may cause the focusing on issues related to the

researcher's individual views and perspectives. Although my previous experience in journalism and Public Relations practices makes easier the interpretation of professional language and deeper understanding of meanings imposed on study issues and, it may also be the reason of some kind of 'biased' interpretation and imposing of personal perspectives on the issues that were studied.

It is also important to mention limitations connected with qualitative methodology. Even though interviews and focus group discussions provide a rich qualitative data, they may also give information in a designated "place" rather than a natural field setting, researchers' presence may bias responses (Cresswell, 2003). Focus group method face criticism as it "does not yield "hard" data", and the concern of group members may not be representative of a larger population (because of both the small numbers and the idiosyncratic nature of the group discussion (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Besides, purposive sampling procedure (applied in this study) decreases the generalizability of findings. However, interpretivism rejects generalization as a goal and never aims to draw randomly selected samples of human experiences: every instance of social interaction, represents a slice from the life that is the proper subject matter for interpretative inquiry" (Geertz, 1973).

Conclusions

Interpretative science believes that social reality is socially constructed and the goal of the scientist is to understand what meaning people give to reality, not to determine how reality works apart from these interpretations (Schutt, 2006). Interpretative research paradigm focuses on the experiences of individuals and is less concerned with drawing wide general statements and human nature. This approach sees unique features of specific contexts and meanings as essential for understanding social meaning. Working under mentioned assumptions, researchers rarely ask objective survey questions, aggregate the answers of many people, and claim to have something meaningful. Instead, each person's interpretation must be placed in a more personal, idiosyncratic context, and the true meaning of a person's answer will vary according to

the interview or questioning context and how the situation is perceived by individual respondents (Gunter, 2000).

Applying qualitative methodological approach, this study is based on the assumption that journalists possess an internal sense of media practices in which they are involved, by sharing the meanings of their professional actions and interactions they understand and construct their professional roles and identities. Through their experience they constitute their understanding of right and wrong, ethical and non-ethical, transparent and non-transparent, acceptable and non-acceptable practices. These shared understanding and meanings are enacted by their choices and decisions.

III. Data analysis.

This chapter presents empirical research findings grouped according to the main themes emerged from the data. Describing my study results, I follow the responses of individuals who participated in focus group discussions and individual interviews and stay as close as possible to their experiences and explanations. That is why this chapter includes numerous practitioners' quotations. I find especially valuable to present selected pieces of conversation for making sense about the ideas verbalized by professionals. They also illustrate general trends and patterns I have found in data. Sometimes, I make references to the theoretical concepts and previous research findings when it helps in better understanding of some specific issues as well as finding the links with other studies, and incorporate my obtained results into global theoretical discussions on the topic.

Following the research goals and flows of the majority of the interviews with research participants, I have grouped and divided the research findings into several parts. First, I analyse about how journalists described a general situation in Ukrainian media and professional problems they face in their everyday work. Second, I discuss the influences and non-transparent practices as they are experienced by study participants focusing on types and mechanisms as well as on participants' attitudes, perceptions and ethical considerations about those cases. Further, I provide more details on specific practices experienced by journalists during Ukrainian presidential elections 2010 and how the research participants characterized them. After analyzing *what* journalists have told about the practices they are involved into I will look closer at *how* they were talking about them. Particularly, I analyze the main patterns they use to construct their professional roles and functions in discussions about current media practices. This part also includes analysis of visual data collected during the focus group discussions: I discuss visualized images (collages) that journalists created. Finally, I summarize the ideas about how the work of journalists can be improved, according to research participants' points of view, including their ideas about the growing potential of Internet and new media.

1. Perspectives On Media Situation in Ukraine: the Main Problems and Challenges

Sharing professional stories, journalists provided numerous general commentaries regarding current media situation in Ukraine. Those evaluations were mainly critical and included reviews on the state of the field as well as professional problems and obstacles for further media development.

Generally, **a low professional level** of journalists was named as one of the main problems of Ukrainian media. As a rule, it was referred to younger professionals who *“usually are not competent to prepare a high-quality material”* and *“prefer to copy-paste press-releases than to write something new and interesting for the reader”*. Some editors also added that **laziness** is a key reason of a low quality of journalists' articles: *“... journalists are just too lazy to create a good product, they do not check sources, they prefer to use the texts given by news sources and do not even try to prepare a good product”, “the number of people who work hard and like what they do is becoming smaller... the majority of authors write for form but not for content”*. Finally, **the lack of professionals** was named as a significant problem of media market in Ukraine: *“today it is hard to find good professionals in media market that is why random people who do not have a necessary understanding of profession are working”*.

According to journalists who took part in the research, **undeveloped media business** in Ukraine was named as a primary problem and obstacle for development of journalist profession. Specifically, journalists agreed that media usually *“do not follow strategic business plan”* and, thus, *“are not managed to be a long-term effective business”*. One media practitioner commented:

“...first and foremost it depends on how long you plan the business. If it is planned for 15 years, it must be professional and transparent. Meanwhile, our media businesses are usually planed as a short-term business aimed at getting quick profit or publicity, and follow so-called “now-and-here –strategies””.

Weak competition was also mentioned as a characteristic of Ukrainian media market that makes a negative impact on the quality of media practice and product. Besides, journalists agreed that **the dependence on owners and sponsors** is one of the most significant factors of influence, which complicates media development and causes the violations of journalism principles. Moreover, some participants said that there are many media in Ukraine that were created as a “*platform for the owner’s communication*” and are aimed at promotion the owner’s messages rather than being a competitive business project. In fact, almost all participants shared their experience about the owner’s pressure. Two ways of owner’s pressure were defined:

- 1) Controlling the coverage content, coverage of preferable topics and avoiding unfavorable ones. As journalists explained: “*the owner has his interests or his friends’ interests, so we [reporters] have to cover concrete topics*”; “*...we are sponsored by “Privat Group”, and that is why we never place any negative information about their business even if it is newsworthy*”.

One regional journalist shared her example :

“...two TV channels in our region belong to two different businesses: “Zaporizhstal and “Motor Sich. So, these channels “are specialized ” in different sectors and never mention news of competitors even if something important and newsworthy happens”.

- 2) Maximizing the profit is another reason behind the owners’ pressure on media. As research participants explained, intending to get profit, owners tend to keep friendly relations with advertisers and may establish internal policy that violates ethical principles of media, for instance, by asking journalists to cover topics that are preferable for advertiser. Specifically, journalists recollected examples when owner, being manipulated by the advertiser, manipulated the work of editorial department: “*the founder manipulates editorial staff ‘to satisfy’ the advertiser and get more money*”. Consequently, journalists mentioned **advertisers** as a factor of influence on Ukrainian media but also noted that this is an “*indirect influence*”, which is usually realized through the owner or media marketing department for profit maximization.

2. Experienced Pressures and Influences

According to the research findings, the **lack of media independence** on both individual and organizational levels may be identified as a significant problem for media development in Ukraine. Almost all journalists spontaneously mentioned various influences on news coverage when they were discussing the problems of Ukrainian media; these influences were usually associated with the **phenomena of non-transparency** in media. Specifically, respondents described the situations when journalists are forced to cover topics that are not newsworthy and were chosen as a result of the pressure.

Two themes emerged from the narrations of research participants: 1) direct forms of influence, such as cash payments to journalists or editors, exist in Ukraine, and 2) publicity in exchange for advertising is the most widely spread indirect form of influence on the media.

2.1. Direct Forms of Influence: Cash Payments and Monetary Bonuses for “Editorial Tasks”

Interviewees and participants of focus group discussions agreed that the practice of cash for news coverage, or so-called “*dzhynsa*”, exists in Ukraine. According to journalists, “*it is still a problem in Ukraine, journalists and editors take money for placing paid-for materials*”.

Generally, participants provided examples on two variations of direct influence which may happen on interpersonal level: 1) when editor gets cash from news sources and gives journalists task to cover the topic; 2) when journalist is offered cash for coverage. One journalist explained: “*The scheme when journalist gets cash works in my media. In this case he just gives journalists a so-called “editorial tasks” for coverage. Sometimes journalist also gets cash bonuses for these materials...* ”

The practice of accepting cash for coverage was generally characterized as **unprofessional** and **unethical**. Some journalists also confessed that practice of taking cash for news coverage effects journalist professional reputation. It is possibly an

explanation, why no one respondent told about any direct payments` practices he/she was personally involved into, even though the interviewing was completely confidential. Nevertheless, journalists mentioned their colleagues` or friends` experiences and noted that they *“heard about it, but have never experienced themselves”*.

As it was also noticed during the interviews, some journalists tend to justify the practice of accepting cash for news coverage by low salaries and financial struggles journalists face in Ukraine. Other ideas, aimed at justification of cash payments, concerned the general situation in Ukraine where *“all fields and institutions are corrupted”* and, therefore, *“it is hard to survive if not accept the bribes”*.

At the same time it was stated that direct personal payments tend to become less widespread in Ukrainian media practice. Specifically, this trend was connected with media self-censorship – a strong control of advertising department specialists *who usually “proof-read the articles to be sure that no one contains concealed advertising”*. It was also mentioned that editors often control closely the topics and commentators mentioned in the articles, thus, *“there is a risk to be fired if “dzhynsa is revealed”*.

However, respondents agreed that there are no established and effective regulations and sanctions for accepting cash for news coverage, and, therefore, it is still a matter of journalist`s personal decision and internal control that is usually *“chaotic”*.

2.2. Indirect Influences: Access to Exclusive News and VIP Speakers In Exchange On Free Publicity

While sharing practical experiences, the respondents mentioned a number variations of **indirect influences** (when editors/journalists are not paid cash but influenced by other mechanisms) by which they are forced to cover topics that are not newsworthy. Analysing the interviewees` narrations, I could group indirect forms of influence as ones occurring on the **three levels**:

- 1) **interpersonal** - presents from new-sources and informal relations with PR-specialists;

- 2) **intra-organizational** - the advertiser's pressure through the media owner or media marketing department;
- 3) **inter-organizational** - controlled coverage is formalized as a paid informational service, offered by media.

2.2.1. Interpersonal Level: Presents and Friendly Relations

The cases of interpersonal relations were often mentioned when journalists shared their professional stories and experiences. Mainly, journalists noted that news sources (through their press-officers and Public Relations managers) intend to establish "loyal" relations with individual journalists. Speaking about interpersonal relations with news-sources, study participants mentioned that they are usually congratulated by Public Relations practitioners and get **presents** from business companies and political parties. Flowers, alcohol and branded souvenirs are the most frequent presents from the news sources that, as the respondents declared, are never returned to the presenter. Mainly, the journalists decided that the presents priced less than 200 *hryvnas* [Ukrainian currency] may be considered as souvenirs and are not to be returned. Nevertheless, some respondents confessed that they had accepted even more expensive presents from the news sources.

Even though journalists noted that there was a pressure from the presenter later, expecting positive coverage for the presents, but at the same time they did not think it somehow obligated them or influenced the loyalty towards the company:

"Once I got an expensive present from one company. Afterwards they attempted to force me to write positive article, but I refused and answered that I did not ask them to present me expensive things. So, I never promise presenters anything..."

"The Mary Kay Company always presents a lot of cosmetics, they give samples for free during the press-event. Afterwards, they call and ask when they should expect the article. It does not mean that we will cover their news though."

Journalists also explained that the majority of media presented in the research by the respondents, the practice of presents is often not codified by internal editorial rules and,

consequently, is not regulated. Moreover, one editor stated that he does not care “*whether the journalists get free products or presents, they must create good and unbiased media product*”. Participants also agreed that media materials almost never inform that the author used a free sample presented by the company or participated in a free press-tour.

Participants of the research recollected that only some (few) media have informal rules about the presents that are not codified and are usually applied spontaneously. One journalist said, “*there is a rule to inform the editor about any present which is more expensive than 200 UAH*”. Another respondent added that the decision about accepting of presents is “*usually made collectively*”, and recollected that once it was *decided* “*to return the mobile phone to the presenter as the colleagues decided it was not ethical to accept it*”. Meanwhile it is important to note, that participants also agreed that presents may increase the awareness and loyalty towards the news source and could remember the names of their regular presenters.

Besides, participants emphasized that some Public Relations practitioners tend to establish informal (friendly) relations with journalists:

“Imagine that I have been working with the company for a long time, and I am interested to get information from it. Finally, I have good friendly relations with this company representative. That is why I decide to mention it in my article every time I can. To keep our good relations.”

“Journalists and PR-people are now appreciated for the number of personal contacts they have. It is obvious.”

This practice is another example of interpersonal level influences that journalists characterized as “*mutually beneficial*” because “*journalists’ gets access to exclusive news and VIP speakers, while news source gets more possibilities for “free publicity”*”.

2.2.2. Intra-Organizational Level Practices

The **pressure of advertiser**, realized though indirect influences was named as the strongest obstacle for placing balanced and newsworthy information. This pressure, according to the journalists, is usually indirect and realized through the two channels: 1) the

owner, who wants to maximize profit and does not consider media duty to convey only true messages; and 2) media advertising/marketing department.

The **pressure of media advertising or marketing department** was one of the top-listed influences on media coverage. The participants shared experiences of the practices connected with situations when media marketing departments intend to support good relations with advertiser and define topics of coverage.

“Our marketing specialists ask to give editorial page as a “bonus” for advertiser. So, we write article that is not marked as advertising. Or they may ask not to cover special topic.”

“...it is not a direct influence ...as I experience it. Marketing department may delay publication, and I have to rewrite the material and have overtime in office”.

Another mechanism of indirect influences was connected profit maximization policy, followed by **media owners**. Journalists explained that advertiser may influence editorial stuff through the owner who “*recommends*” topics for coverage and may be interested to make advertising looking like editorial materials.

“The advertiser pays good money for placing ads in our newspaper. And the owner realizes that if we give “wrong” information about this company we will lose the money, the profit and salaries”.

The influence of advertiser that happens through the owner or marketing department and is not formalized may be classified as non-transparency occurring on intra-organizational level. This finding confirms previous researches on media *self-censorship* on intra-organizational level to avoid conflicts with large advertisers in other parts of the world, including China (Lo, Chan, & Pan 2005), Poland (Tsetsura, 2005b), and Russia (Klyueva, 2008).

Nevertheless, as research results showed, there are media in Ukraine that try to protect their reputation by avoiding publication of concealed advertising. According to the participants` commentaries, these are mainly national printed media, TV and some

specialized on-line resources that have started to promote the separation of advertising from the rest of the news content.

2.2.3. Inter-Organizational Level: Formalized Media Services

Ukrainian media representatives, participated in the research, mentioned the frequent examples of “informational services” media provide for payments. These services are paid by the “clients” (business companies, political parties, non-government organizations) according to the official price-lists. Specifically, journalists described the practices of placing paid press-releases and promotional materials in a separate rubrics called “press-releases”, so that *“the reader understands that it is written by the Public Relations person and is not the editorial materials, so it is not objective”* or paid-for articles placed on the page where the advertising is usually located. Although such publications are almost never marked as advertising, the respondents insisted that *customers “must understand that those materials are not editorial articles” and “the place where it is located must inform the reader that this article is placed for payment”*.

Another interviewee told about the official service rendered by TV-channel where she works:

“The journalists working on our TV-channel prepare video materials about the company which paid for this service. We call it “business news”. It goes separately after a regular news program, it is not labeled as advertising though”.

These are the examples of formalized media transparency practices at the **inter-organizational level** that is in line with other research on media transparency in Eastern Europe (Klyueva, 2008). In the cases of inter-organizational influences journalists are forced to cover news stories about certain companies because these companies have formal contracts with the media outlet. Therefore, as the ability to change the situation seems to be beyond the journalists’ or editors’ power as decision is made (and formalized) on the level of media management. This could mean that journalists recognized a broader indirect influences and pressures on the media, beyond simply pressures from one editor, one media advertising manager, and even one publisher. This also could mean that journalists minimize or find the way to dismiss their professional responsibilities to quality journalism

precisely because of apparent media non-transparency practices at the inter-organizational level.

3. Attitudes and Ethical Consideration

Generally media practitioners expressed negative attitudes towards any kind of influences on media and agreed that those cases can hardly be characterized as professional and ethical. However, I have noticed a *significant difference* between the perceptions and attitudes study participants expressed about different types (and levels) of influences they discussed during the interviews.

Mostly, direct **form of influence**, or **cash for news coverage**, was criticized and called unethical. Journalists frequently criticized “dzhynsa” - the practice of accepting cash for news on interpersonal level. In fact, because of the lack of effective system of punishments, this practice mostly depends on the *personal responsibility* of each media professional and is considered to be the issue of the journalist *personal reputation*. So, this finding shows the close relation between the *direct payments (inter-personal level influences)* and *personal decisions* of media practitioners. Moreover, this “personal” component in cash for news coverage practice may possibly explain why journalists were extremely categorical in their negative attitudes about the cash for news coverage practice:

“...cash for news” practice is not acceptable. Journalists are obligated to take care of “clean” individual reputation as well as image of their profession, and must remember that there are millions of people behind his/her back expecting the true information”.

As it was reported, journalists tend to discuss the practices of direct payments and cases of “dzhynsa” with their peers, colleagues and within their professional communities; moreover, they usually blame individuals who are known for accepting bribes. Some research participants shared examples about their colleagues who are famous within journalists’ community for receiving a cash for coverage or extremely expensive presents from the news sources. According to the interviewees’ opinion, “*being noticed in any “shady story, related to “dzhynsa”, journalist has a risk “to lose his/her name, reputation and*

collogues respect”. Some editors also added that they would never employ the journalist who is known for involvement in such kind of practices.

Meanwhile, other variations of influences, mentioned by media practitioners, got less critical comments and were rarely referred to unprofessional or unacceptable. Generally journalists were less critical towards the **indirect non-transparent practices** that happen on intra- and inter-organizational levels. The figure 4 illustrates the mechanisms of influences happening on Ukrainian media organizations and the way these influences are perceived by practitioners.

Although, it was mentioned, that the pressure of the owner and advertising department (ones that may be referred to intra-organizational level) are only sometimes opposed by the participants:

“My colleagues often discuss these influences, we do not like it, but it is hard to avoid them or struggle against them. Finally, we have a risk not to get our salaries”.

The majority of journalists participated in the study confessed that they prefer to refuse making paid-for (advertising) materials, as this work can be hardly refer to professional journalism. Some respondents also mentioned that such articles that are “ordered” by media advertising department to serve the advertisers are usually signed by fake names, as authors do not will (or are ashamed) to be mentioned in such types of publications. Even though practitioners accept this practice and are involved in it, they characterize it not professional:

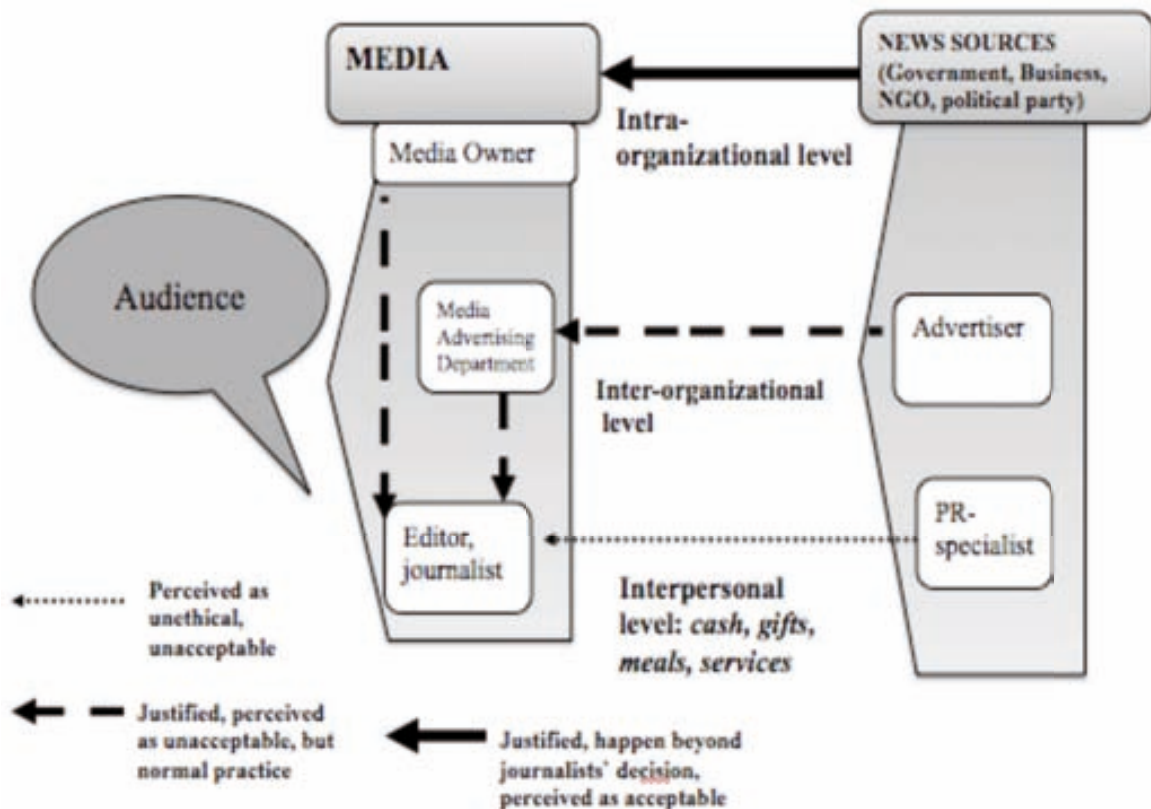
“My older and more experienced collogues usually refuse to write stories imposed by the advertising department. Nobody wants to be a “copyrighter”, it is not our job; we are journalists! So, these tasks are often given to younger journalists or “newcomers.”

“Journalists in our media never sign their real names under these [imposed by the owner or advertising department] articles. We prefer to write under the pseudonyms...who want to put the name under the advertising material....”

Meanwhile, one editor also added: *“I do not like when journalists start striking or refuse to do their job, they must realize that this can not change anything. If you do not like your work, just choose another one. Anyway, the same happens in every media whichever you choose”*.

Interestingly, that official service provided by media on inter-organizational level faced fewer protests of the journalists who participated in research. These practices were mostly described as ones that happen beyond the journalists’ decisions, and they were not often considered as unethical, unprofessional and associated with violation of the professional principles. Some journalists even noted that *“it is a quite transparent and mutually beneficial practice”* as *“media makes good money for concrete services formalized in the contract”* and *“the company which buys these services gets publicity which is not marked as advertising”* while *“media customers understand it was paid for”*.

Figure 4. Influences on media practitioners as they are experienced and perceived by Ukrainian journalists.



Therefore, according to the research findings, journalists tend to accept and consider ethical the practices that happen beyond their personal decisions and that are agreed on organizational level (intra- or inter-organizational). The influences that happen on the level of interpersonal relations when practitioners are offered cash, presents, any other rewards, or when they establish informal one-to-one relations with news sources, are mostly referred to nontransparent and unethical. This may be explained by the fact that in these cases journalists feel individual involvement and personal responsibility for making decisions, and they also associate these practices with personal reputation.

Therefore, the pressures happening on interpersonal level meet more counteraction than ones that occur on higher organizational levels. The figure 4 presents the mechanisms of influences as Ukrainian journalists participated in the research experience them. Besides, it shows the differences between perceptions of influences occurring on different levels of journalist work; specifically, it is visible that influences happening to the levels that are closer to journalist (mainly, inter-personal and sometimes inter-organizational) and involving his or her individual professional decision (and reputation as an outcome of the decision) are perceived as more unethical and unacceptable. However, when influences are moving up at higher levels and become the matter of intra- or inter-organizational relations, individual professionals feel less responsibility and tend to perceive them as normal and acceptable

4. Media and Presidential Campaign 2010:

False Pluralism of Opinions and ”Time for “Harvesting”

This section provides key findings about the practices that were experienced by journalists during elections 2009-2010. As I have mentioned in the methodology chapter, this study was designed in a way to allow collecting data during the time of presidential elections when media become even more influential (and targeted by political figures) in coverage of political events in the country. Indeed journalists often linked their experiences and specific cases of influences with political events, and elections in particular, when the problem of influences “comes on the surface”, becoming more visible, clearer and easier to explore.

The journalists participated in the study marked that during elections 2010 the situation in media has become more complicated than it was in 2004: *“I would say that there were even more paid-for news on TV than in 2004...Journalists have become more hypocritical and more cynical about their work.”* As one respondent from regional media noticed: *“Today many journalists think that journalism and politics are both “messy”, and all candidates are equally bad. Thus, elections is a time for “harvesting” for media, they take this time take to collect money”.*

However, some journalists find positive changes comparing to previous elections. In particular, one respondent from regional media said that there were just one or two lines in media coverage before, but in 2009 regional media started to follow diverse lines (even though they usually do it for payment): *“before media could choose whose materials they take for coverage, but now they do their best to serve as many sides as possible.”*

4.1. Elections 2010: Experienced Influences

The majority of participants agreed that even though the practice of direct pressures through “temnyky” has gone in past in 2004, presidential campaign-2009 demonstrated that Ukrainian media continue to work under the influences. According to

the qualitative research results, pressures that journalists experienced during elections 2009 mainly happened on inter-organizational and intra-organizational levels.

Participants informed about the influences that happened on **inter-organizational level** when new source pays media organization for positive coverage. In this case influences on media were exercised as “information services” that media provide for payment: *“newspapers sign agreements with political parties...thus, journalists have to manipulate pay more attention to information from these parties, strengthen its importance in news.”* So, news sources take the role of “clients” of media organization, and media lose their professional functions limiting them to serving “client’s interests” for payments. Some respondents also labeled these practices as **“self-censorship” or “internal editorial policy”**, and noted that publishers or media managers usually mediate them.

According to the study results, the profits from the paid-for materials are usually got by media organization as a whole entity; nevertheless, individual journalists may also get *monetary “bonuses”* for covering paid-for news. These monetary compensations come from payments media gets from news source for coverage; and media managers (or owners) usually control rewarding with these monetary compensation as well as decisions about acceptance of the payments from news sources. Although journalists get additional monetary compensations for writing paid-for materials, these practices happen on **intra-organizational level** (within the hierarchical structure of media organization).

Interestingly, one journalist stressed that Ukrainian journalists perceive elections as the best time for earning money: *“it is an opportunity to buy new car or repair apartment...”* (the journalist working Kyiv), *“journalists can get additional bonuses to salaries, for instance, for coverage of political press-conferences”* (the journalist working in Lviv). However, other practitioners marked that cash for coverage practice do not only encourage journalists to get additional money, in some cases it is a matter of saving their jobs (not to be fired). Thus, while exercising influences on journalists, media managers apply not only positive (monetary compensations and bonuses) but also negative motivational tools (punishments for not following “editorial policy” including job loss).

4.2. “Grey” Practices and Justifications

Although the journalists involved in this research expressed their concern about influences of owners and advertisers as threats for professional journalism, while discussing concrete practices and cases they often characterized them as normal and acceptable. This corresponds with my recent conclusion about the decisions made on intra- or inter-organizational levels that happen beyond journalists’ personal decisions and, therefore, practitioners feel involved in only an execution of the decisions made on a higher level of media management.

It is also worthy to note that journalists often found the ways to justify non-transparent practices that happen beyond their decisions (on intra- and inter-organizational levels) and that are aimed at earning money. Justifications were mainly based on financial struggles of media, low salaries and the fact that “*others do the same*”.

Besides, journalists verbalized examples of so-called “*grey practices*” when media organization or individual journalist find alternative ways to keep balance between “*being ethical*” (or “*looking ethical*”) and “*getting money*”. For instance, some respondents mentioned the situations when journalists managed to place paid-for information from two sources (competing political parties) in one material to make it sound “more balanced” and “unbiased”. Some journalists characterized this practice as a “*skillful journalism*” and “*professional journalism*” as in this case author still provides two points of view in the material, even though they both are paid for. Media practitioners also mentioned examples when paid materials are placed in a separate section that goes after editorial materials. Although these sections are not clearly marked as advertising, journalists perceived them as ethical.

Some journalists recollected specific examples of alternative ways to get money from news sources during elections. For instance, one respondent mentioned that some of his friends working in media conduct investigations and collect materials against one of politicians, and then “sell it to the interested person and gets money for not publishing it.

4.3. Interpretation of Ethical Rules and Unethical Practices

All journalists participated in the research were familiar with the number of ethical standards that prohibit pressures on media and media practitioners. Several respondents also mentioned that after 2004 some media adopted corporate codes of ethics to regulate internal policy and, specifically, relations between editorial and marketing, or advertising departments. Meanwhile respondents agreed that declared ethical norms rarely work in real-life practice:

“There are a lot of principles, but not many of them are realized in practice... After 2004 some TV channels adopted editorial statutes that regulate relations between journalists, editors and owners. It was an attempt to counteract internal censorship...but these statutes do not work now, these norms are violated. These are other informal and non-formalized rules that media set and exercise”.

“Norms of ethics are like norms in Bible... everyone must try to follow them. But if you live in real life you have to follow these real-life rules. You know, it is like living among wolves makes you wolf as well...”

Discussing materials, which are published as a result of influence on journalist, journalists often defined them as “biased”, “unbalanced”: *“you may notice such publications by newsbreak that does not correspond with content of news, or just one side of the problem may be presented...”*. Some respondents also insisted that paid-for materials could be written well, so that one may even do not recognize that the publication was paid. Besides, these materials are usually not marked as advertising: *“written-for-order publications have no advertising disclosure, no formal signs of being paid-for. It is illegal practice, but it exists in Ukraine.*

Therefore, journalists indicated a gap between formalized norms and informal rules that work in media practice. Although participants were familiar with ethical principles of the profession, they informed that real-life practice makes them follow different, “informal”, rules established in their editorial offices. One journalist also added that it usually looks like *“unfair and dishonest compromise, and if you have accepted it once, you will never be able to work honestly”.*

All the practitioners participated in research agreed that paid-for materials are a widespread practice in Ukraine. Some journalists also noted that corrupted media practice is both result and reflection of overall situation in Ukraine: *“corruption exists in other spheres – legislation, business etc., and media is just a part of it”*. One journalists from Kyiv also concluded: *“corruption that we have been experiencing in media during 19 years directly reflects the problems of Ukrainian society...Non-transparent media practices is a problem of whole Ukrainian society, Ukrainians has got used to living and working this way”*.

5. A Constituted Role of Journalist Within Experienced Practices

Going through a long path of data collection and analysis process, I was trying to get a deeper sense of the experiences journalists shared and have a closer look at the participants' accounts beyond the verbalized stories. Specifically, I noticed that while discussing concrete practical issues and cases of professional life, journalists somehow place themselves as professionals within the existing practices and provide their understanding of professional roles and obligations they take within the mentioned practices. In fact, describing the problems they face and solve in their everyday work in media they provided an interesting shared patterns of explanations “why” and “how” they think it works and how they see individual journalist (or themselves) in the mentioned practices.

In the following part of analysis I will present my findings that come from the shared perspectives on experienced media practices. They help to understand some of the specificities and complexities emerging in participants' accounts and identify how the mentioned practices and journalist professional identity are discursively constituted in these accounts.

5.1. *“I Do Not Do It While They Do”*: References to The Experiences of “Others”

As I have found during my talks with participants, editors and leading journalists negatively characterize any kind of influences on editorial decision. Although non-transparent practices are problematized and defined as a widespread in Ukraine, they are not usually connected with media practitioners “*personal*” professional *experience and is given as “other’s” experience*. Hence, there is a conflict in the general problem identification and how it is reflected in concrete practical experience; it constructs a complex situation where participants articulate multiple, shifting and often contradictory nature and reasons of media non-transparency.

Whilst there were numerous instances when research participants defined non-transparent media practices as existing and widespread in Ukraine, they also frequently articulated the problem as one which is “*my personal*” experience. Mainly, *the pattern of*

being a problem-free professional dominated in both journalists and editors stories. For example:

“I have never experienced it personally but have heard much from my friends, they told as they were offered money and placed materials for that. As for me, I am not a person of this kind, may be I am not a right person” (journalist).

“It is strongly controlled in our newspaper; journalist will be fired for accepting bribes. But not all media organizations have such a strict policy.” (editor)

“I have only heard from my friend that they are rewriting materials five times depending on which side gives more money to editor. They have hard time at their work...” (journalist)

Such statements might be interpreted as perception of influences as ones happening “somewhere there” and do not really refer to individual respondents’ experience. Equally important, they also function rhetorically to conceptualize the problem which is **“not mine” or “my media”** but **“theirs”**, for example, “other journalists”, “friends”, “colleagues”, “other newspapers”, “magazines”, “TV-channels”, “competitors”.

Although the non-transparent practices were problematized and labeled as topical for Ukrainian media field, the participants’ description of the problem as not “mine” but “their” might then be interpreted as the intention to present themselves in terms of *noninvolvement* into media practices that are perceived and characterized as nontransparent.

This can be connected with a sensitivity of the issue that was discussed in the part on methodology. Possibly, the participants intentionally avoided speaking about the practices of pressures as “their own” experiences because those practices are assumed to be unethical. This may also mean that the journalists have had personal experiences of non-transparent practices and they did not want to reveal them in group or during individual interviews; consequently, I would conclude that they find this experience “uncomfortable”, “immoral” and prefer not to be associated with the mentioned professional cases.

5.2. *“It is not because of me, it is because of them” and “our hard life”:*

Shifting Responsibility and Problem Legitimization

As I have noticed during the interviews and group discussions, while sharing the experiences, study participants were mainly focused on explanations “*why media bribery happens*” and “*who is responsible for it*”.

As it was noted from the transcriptions, the reasons of non-transparent practices were often referred to “they” or “other” markers and were connected with other people’s decisions or external factors rather than personal decisions and responsibilities. Specifically, the patterns of *shifting of responsibility* and *problem legitimization* were constructed by the expanded explanations of the reasons and responsibilities for non-transparent practices. Hence, responsibility for the problem was often shifted on the third persons - “them” (someone or generalized others) while the reasons were referred to a broader conditions (social, economic, professional contexts) which, according, to respondents, force to behave unethically.

The marker “*they*” referred to different participants of media team who were blamed media bribery existence and called responsible for non-transparent practices. Specifically, by “they” journalists usually meant editors, who were blamed in causing the pressure on journalists as a result of acceptance cash or other benefits. Meanwhile, editors called journalists responsible for paid-for materials as “*they are lazy, non-professional*” and that is why accept cash from news-sources. Besides, both journalists and editors expressed the shifting of the responsibility on advertising departments or media owners that “*influence editorial policy to maximize profits from advertisers*”. This pattern of blaming of other stakeholders in existence of media bribery practice also concerned PR-specialists, who are “too aggressive”, “not professional”, “unethical” and “lazy”, so they prefer to pay for publicity than to work professionally. Another variation of “blaming others” or “shifting responsibility” pattern concerned readers and media product consumers who are not very fastidious, “do not demand high quality product” and usually “can not even recognize paid-for materials”.

The problem legitimization was another pattern that, in participants' accounts, functions like the "good" reason for accepting bribes and pressures from news sources. It was articulated in a broader context of social, economical and political conditions:

"... Journalists get not much money nowadays, but they have to feed their families. Their life is hard, believe me".

"It is hard to survive without taking bribes now, everyone takes them, and our life is corrupted starting from politics".

"This practice is not regulated here, so there are no sanctions and almost every media takes bribes. Why and how should we be transparent?"

By these phrases respondents made attempts to prove the necessity of accepting bribes and tried to legitimize this practice by hard social, economic conditions or commonness of corruption in different spheres. The legitimation is realized through the construct of "hard reality" which is perceived with the meanings of "low salaries" and "financial struggles", "undeveloped system of law and ethical regulations", "absence of competition in media field", "lack of good example" "corruption in social and political fields which is common".

Meanwhile, research participants almost *never focused on the effects and outcomes of the practice*. Thus, there was a kind of unbalance in the way journalists talked about non-transparency. Specifically, the research indicated the lack of attention to consequences of non-transparent work of journalist and overbalanced attention to the reasons (especially, their justification) and responsibility (who is responsible) for unprofessional actions.

5.3. Helpless And Powerless: Construction of the "Journalist" Through the Perspectives on Everyday Practices

As it was found during the research, the patterns of shifting responsibility and problem legitimization may be linked with the further construction of the journalist roles and functions. Speaking about "others" who are responsible for professional decisions, research participants tended to describe journalists as **helpless, powerless and having no**

opportunities to change the situation for better. In the following extracts the construction of the ‘self’ (‘journalist’) as helpless, passive and powerless is articulated by the journalists:

“...just imagine, that you are said to cover one topic and not to mention another... of course you may not do that but this means you will loose your job then. Or you will have to rewrite the article over and over again until it looks like they [advertising department, owner or editor, new-source] expect it to look and sound. I know that, so try I to work in a way to meet their expectations.”

“What we can really do? Nothing. The whole system should change before...”

Thus, respondents formulate a subject position that is entirely encompassed by “others” influences and pressure and which is, thus, entirely devoid of attributes of decision-making and problem solving. These extracts also include the same markers of “them” and “others” (‘...until it looks like they expect’) as those discussed earlier. Significantly, this construction of “self” as thoroughly powerless (‘What can we really do’) so called “victim” of undeveloped system figures as a position which closes off the possibility to make professional decisions, define topics for news coverage and counteract the pressures. I would characterized it as a kind of *victimized position of the journalist that*, in its turn, constructs the meaning of media non-transparency as the way *to adapt* to a complicated reality and *survive* for both journalists (‘have money to feed the family’) and media (‘be financed by new sources, advertisers or owners’).

Meanwhile another self-positioning with mainly **idealistically positive characteristics** and **active professional role** was also articulated my media practitioners. In this case ‘the journalist’ was opposed to the existing system and presented as “*the fighter*” for professional standards and ethical values, who is conscious “*that there are millions of people interested in true information*”, and journalist “*asserts public right to know*” and “*realizes public expectations*”. Interestingly to note, that this in such positioning of ‘the journalist’ as the “fighter” for the social good was often opposed to news sources (mainly associated with Public Relations specialists) whose professional role and functions where given in a mainly negative tonality: “*they are not professional*”, “*oriented to misinform*”

rather than inform”, “*real liars*”, “*an ostrich which hides its head in the sand instead of saying truth*”, “*work for business interests rather than society*”.

In this context Public Relations practitioners’ position appears as the “opponent”, or even “enemy” to the journalists rather than helping and cooperative (if ethical rules are followed by both of the sides). These negative patterns defining Public Relations activities might be caused by a low level of Public Relations professionalism in Ukraine, as journalists experience it, as well as by the lack of understanding of its professional goals and social functions. In this case media non-transparency was articulated as the *danger to violate professional rules* (described as numerous “musts” by the respondents) and the final “knockout” in the fight with PR-professionals.

Interestingly to note, that while verbalizing the examples of influences and corruption in media and specifying the names of professionals known for being involved into such practices, research participants often constituted the image of bribed journalist as *successful, rich and one who succeeded to achieve the target and realize himself or herself*. A key phrase sounded in this context was: “*journalist should not sell himself now but he should work hard and create the reputation of high-level and not bribed professional to be able to sell himself more expensive price in future*”. This quite a pragmatic and even cynical notion did not deny corruptibility and was closely connected with “higher prices” for “*better reputation on sale*”.

Thus, professional success was closely connected with being rich, popular and, what is significant, in some cases, was associated with positive (monetary) outcomes of the corrupted practices. So, in some responses of media practitioners the non-transparent influences and monetary compensations appeared as **rewards** (‘be paid for professionalism’ and ‘awarded for good skills’) and, therefore, “**natural attributes**” for successful career in journalism and almost **unprecedented tool for journalist to gain profit and popularity**.

Further, I will continue discussion of constructed images of journalist and meanings of non-transparency based on the visual data.

6. Visualization of Media Practice:

Application of Art-based Method and Justification of Mixed-Method Approach

My main goal as the researcher doing the fieldwork was to get as much as possible of participants' experiences and make sense of what meaning those professional experiences have for them and for overall media practice. That is why when I interacted with study participants I was looking for effective techniques to encourage individuals taking part in the discussions to *bring into expression their experiences, understandings and their real, true and spontaneous reflections* on every point they found significant.

Since knowledge can not be reduced to language (Eisner, 2008) and verbalized notions, I have combined traditional qualitative interviewing with elements of visual method (creation of collages), allowing people to reflect creatively on the topics of the research interest and show the world beyond the text, words and verbal descriptions. Creatively mixing methods encourage *thinking 'outside the box'* and generating new ways of interrogating and understanding the social realities (Mason, 2002). Inclusion of non-linguistic dimensions in research has exceptional potential as it expands expressive possibilities and allows accessing and representing different levels of experience (Bagnoli, 2009).

Focus group participants were asked to create collages reflecting how they see (and experience) journalists' work in Ukraine. Collage is constructing a picture by sticking images or other materials to a surface. To make the collages journalists got colorful magazines, booklets, newspapers, so they had plenty of choice and could cut and stick any pictures, photos, headline and pieces of texts from there; they were also given markers and pencils to write and draw anything they wanted to express their view in a graphic way. Journalists were asked to create collages in small groups of two-three people, and then to give commentaries on what they have depicted.

Methodologists refer collage to creative art-based visual methods that helps to enhance participants' reflexivity and to take into account also their different needs and expressive styles. Applying drawing methods in the context of an interview opens up participants' interpretations of questions, and allows a creative way of interviewing that

is responsive to participants' own meanings and associations (Bagnoli, 2009).

Collage seems to work best when we move from the intuitive to the conceptual so it is an appropriate medium for exploring identity, ethics and professional dilemmas (Ridley & Rogers, 2010). The work with images helps to communicate more holistically and through metaphors (Prosser & Loxley, 2008). Besides, a collaborative work helped to get more insights as participants were sharing ideas and discussed images they chose for collages. Collaborative drawings produced in larger groups can extend the insights to more complex forms of communication and meaning-making (Ridley & Rogers, 2010).

Consequently, the work on collages was effective in two ways. First, it provided a rich graphical data and deep metaphoric meanings. Second, it helped to prompt and support meaningful conversations and encouraged more detailed discussions and commentaries. Collecting and selecting images, photos, and pieces of texts, journalists depicted their vision of journalism profession and journalists' roles in Ukraine. Therefore, this exercise provoked more spontaneous comments and ideas, which significantly enriched textual data.

6.1. Visualization of Media Practice And Journalist Roles: Analysis of Collages

Visual data produced by research participants showed how they view and describe the work of journalists and depict situation in journalism in Ukraine in a metaphorical way. To conduct analysis I had to move from review of abstract graphical materials to systematic and more or less structured process of interpretation. To elaborate the categories for collages' analysis and decide what exactly I am interested in, I was comparing the pictures created by focus-group participants, looking for specific commonalities that matter.

Specifically, my analysis includes review of the main components (both people and objects) that appeared on the collages and that, according to research participants, influence professional lives of Ukrainian journalists (1). Here I was looking at what (objects) and who (actors) were present on the collages. Second, I analyze the representation of 'the journalist'; specifically, how journalist role and professional functions are visualized (2). The third category is the review of general composition of the collages (how elements are located, what are their sizes and proportions) (3). It is also

important to note that every single collage made by journalist was original and contained its unique details that I will also mention as additional meaningful features and descriptions.

Generally, collage analysis provided rich graphic information on *what components and elements* media practitioners select to construct an overall picture of journalist work. These components (actors and subjects) showed what are the main stakeholders (‘players’) of media practice and who or what, according to research participants, make the main influence on journalist work.

The figure of journalist was present on every collage. Besides, the pictures of influential **political and business figures** appeared on the collages. Mainly they were shown as important and powerful stakeholders in journalism practice and ones who influence journalist work. The influence was mainly related to *financial pressures* or *financial dependence*, and it was mainly reflected by the issues of ownership or financial manipulations (which may be associated with corrupted practices). Much more rarely journalists drew political and business actors as ones who influence journalists only as news makers.

The concept of money was somehow marked at almost every collage. Specifically, the sign of “money” was presented as a tool of manipulation and influence on media practice (collage 1) and as the purpose why media owners open media outlets (collage 5). This may indicate that journalists are especially concerned with financial side of their work and, especially, their financial dependence. The concept of money also appeared at the collage 1 at the part titled ‘How journalism should work; here the creators put their expectation about “high salaries” journalists should get for keeping their professional autonomy.

Mainly, research participants who created collages, described money as a *tool of pressure* politicians and business owners apply to manipulate media. The makers of the collage 1 placed the numbers meaning certain (big) amounts of money under the pictures of two business figures illustrating oligarchs who competing and fighting for making more money; in their fights they use media as **instrument** for their business goals.

Collage 3 also contains the fragments illustrating money issues. As journalists depicted it, the thoughts about money (profits) determine decisions of media owner and frame editorial policy. Finally, at the collage 4 the Presidential Advisor Anna Herman is depicted portrayed as the one asking journalists “*How much do you cost?*”. This image illustrates a cynical attitudes of state authorities towards journalists.



Collage 1. (Translation of the phrases, from left to right: “23 mln, hryvnas”, “Who pays more?”, “2 billion hryvnas”).

Generally, the images of politicians and businessmen were often selected as the main stakeholders of media practices and ones who influence the work of journalist a lot. These figures, presenting ones who have greater power and influence, were often bigger sized, brighter colors and located at the center or on the top of the whole picture.

Interestingly, **the figure of journalist** on this collage was often placed *under the photos of oligarchs and under the “money”*. The question *“Who pays more?”* is written near his head, indicating real thoughts and intentions of media professional. It may illustrate that journalists are serving interests of ones who have financial resource and power in the country.

This situation, as research participants believe, diminish professional ethics of journalism. They have illustrated it in a metaphoric way, selecting the picture of journalist's ID/certificate (*“посвідчення журналіста”*) in a dirty oily trash-like pan (collage 1). This picture, according to the practitioners who were working on the collage, illustrates a real state and nature of journalism in Ukraine. This was an ironic way to show that values of profession are cynically neglected and “burnt to ashes”. It is significantly to note, that the same photo of journalist ID, fried in a dirty pan with the pieces of stale food, was used by the creators of another collage (Collage 5). Therefore, this picture seemed to be meaningful for participants and worked best to present how they characterize their professional work.

The composition of the collages also says a lot about how research participants present the way the power is distributed in media practice. Specifically, the figure of journalist is located on the bottom; meanwhile the faces of ones who represent political and business elites are in the middle of the picture (Collage 1). On the top of the picture journalists put the sign of “struggles between, those two influential figures”.

It may say that business (and political) interests and struggles are interpreted as the main issue that guides and shapes the work of journalist. Collage 3 also presents the figures of journalists working in editorial department on the bottom. Central and top parts of the picture are occupied by a big image of media owner (particularly, his head) and the

image of “the President Administration”; this finding may convey the meaning that the owner and government play a crucial role in the work of media.



Collage 2. (Translation of the phrases, the first part: a journalist – smaller figure, “Investor” - a bigger one; the second part: “ideal journalism”, “big salaries”, “airy goals”, “true values”).

Minor and instrumental role of journalist was clearly illustrated by the collage 2, where focus group participants showed the figures of journalist and investor in a metaphoric way. Media owner is given as a huge faceless and grey monument, meanwhile a small cartoon-like (childish looking) character following the monument and looking at his back, represents 'the journalist'. The figure of the journalist makes the impression of *a small, powerless and manipulated man* who has nothing to do but hiding behind a big figure of the owner. Powerless and instrumental role of media is nicely reflected on the collage 3. The editorial department is drawn as a group of grey small and similar looking people (journalists) and is titled as a *news-selling (instead of news production) division*. Focus group participants also drew journalists as *speechless and silent* who cannot (or do not will) to express their opinion; the pictures of *people with closed (plastered) mouths* represent media workers on the collage 4.

Therefore, the visualized of journalist role and functions stays in line and adds new metaphoric features to the image of journalist constructed by research participants' narrative stories and interpretations.



Collage 3. (Translation of the phrases from right tot left: “President Administration”, “What offers does the President of Russia have?” “News-selling division”).

Therefore, media owner, influential politicians, state authorities and businessmen are drawn as the **main actors** in media practice together with journalist. The latter was often shown as small powerless figures that are doing mainly technical work of producing “news for sale” or news for serving owners` interests.

However, no one collage contained any piece representing neither the audience nor any interests of public consuming media products. **The concept of audience and public interest was not portrayed at any of the collages.** Having analyzed the visual data I have noted that images of people reading newspapers or watching TV or any visual signs that could be interpreted as their needs, interests, expectations were not included into the pictures of journalist work.

The absence of audience among the actors at the picture of Ukrainian journalism and at the focus group transcriptions may be interpreted by the fact that research participants may experience very small (or extremely small) influence of news consumers on their work. The issues of money and purposes of serving interests of influential people (political and business elites) seem to replace audience needs and expatiations. This finding corresponds with the ideas sounded during the interviews, when practitioners mentioned that many media organization play instrumental role rather than intend to meet audience needs and serve public interests.



Collage 4. (Translation of the phrases: “How it happens now” (meaning current situation)- from the top to the bottom: “Terrible love and beautiful betrayal”, “keeping silence in all the languages”, “Beauty does not rescue so far”; How it should work: “Expert”).

6.2. Desired Situation and Visualized Gap Between The Real and Ideal

Although the majority of collages depicted a kind of pessimistic image of journalism, showing it through the weaknesses and obstacles for editorial freedom and realization of journalists' professional functions, some participants also decided to draw an ideal (desirable) picture showing how they see journalism should work in Ukraine. Providing comments and interpretations of the created images, many journalists have also mentioned that they are not satisfied with the way media work in Ukraine and agreed that changes are needed. So, it may indicate that journalists are not satisfied with the current situation in media, and even though they do not always choose to counteract against it, they are still keeping in mind the picture of ideal journalism contrasting to how it works in Ukraine now, and they are ready to discuss their vision of profession.

For example, the creators of collage 4 divided collage in two parts; the first one showed a current work of journals, and the second part of the picture described how it should work. Specifically, research participants marked that journalist should develop his/her expertise and professionalism, stay close to readers protecting their needs, and work hard to deserve the best reward that is respect and high authority among audience.

Collage 6 illustrates the number of duties journalists must realize in his work, meanwhile their main professional obligation, according to the focus group participants, is *“to dig up”, reveal and investigate issues of public interest*. Collage 5 also contains the visualization of the role journalists should take; here journalist is shown as a powerful strong and tall man with the boxing glove saying that he *“is ready to take a punch”*. At the same time, the reactors of the collage noted that today journalists hardly work this way and more likely they take the role of *“the waiter”* serving the interests of the political and business elites.



Collage 5. (Translation of the used phrases (from left to right): “Defend yourself!”, “Prepared to take a punch”, “30 % of evil”)



Collage 6. (Translation of the phrase: “To dig out?!...”).

Besides visualizing how media should work, research participants discussed some specific changes, that may be helpful, and verbalized suggestions on what could be done to develop media professionalism and improve media practice in Ukraine. Further, I will present those findings and analyze potential of Internet, as media practitioners involved in focus group discussion explained it.

7. Journalists` Suggestions About Improvement of Media Practice

Generally, all the participants highlighted the **undeveloped system of reinforcement of professional ethical standards** in Ukraine and insisted that there is no effective professional regulation in Ukraine, naming it among one of the main reasons why non-transparent practices exist in the country.

Journalists expressed interest in reinforcement of ethical standards at the organizational level, saying that *“each media must have an internal code which would provide concrete sanctions for those who take bribes”* and that *“journalists` salaries are to be high enough not to make people accept bribes as the only way to survive”*. As one of the editors noted, *“general professional principles should be adopted and followed on the national level”*. However, they also noted that when codes are in place they are not followed.

Several respondents also suggested that the “customers”, or **media audience**, must influence the regulation the non-transparent practice though the selecting consumption and sophisticated demand to consume a high quality well-balanced media products. In this context journalists noted that: *“Ukrainians are not still critical enough towards what they watch and read, and almost never recognize journalists` “biases”*. Besides the lack of critical consumption of media products, it may also correspond to the problem of undeveloped media market, limited specialization and orientation on narrow target audiences and weak competition. Specifically, Ukrainians may not have a wide range of choice, and that is why they may have nothing to do but consume any media product, even if it is not good enough.

Some journalists also mentioned the efficiency of self-regulation, saying that media should to be supervised by the **competitors** which are to take care of transparent practices and control the ethical level of their peers at the market. At the same time it was stated *“no one competitor would never clamor against the media which placed corrupted materials as it places bribed news as well”*. It illustrates a general prevalence of non-transparent practices in media Ukrainian media field and corresponds to the main orientation on increasing the profit through non-transparent relations with news sources

rather than following professional standards and making a high-quality and competitive product.

The experiences and ideas connected with Internet and new media sounded a lot when journalists shared their views on recent developments that influence profession and possible ways to improve media practice. Many participants speaking about the issues of **media freedom and independence** in Ukraine mentioned a positive tendency of growing interest in Internet. Since media stay dependent on political and business forces, Internet is usually perceived as a **territory of freedom** that has a strong potential in fostering free information exchange, allows both professional and civic journalists to cover topics they find important and stay uncensored. It also allows involving audience into reading, evaluation and criticism of journalists' materials that could contribute into the raise of media literacy level and push journalists to develop their skills and professional reputation.

Generally, financial crisis, general political situation and the process of digitization are the main factors that influence Ukrainian journalists' work during the past 6 years. In the second half of 2008 financial crisis hit the Ukrainian economy and caused the closure of many media outlets. Media practitioners started to lose their jobs, consequently, the competition among journalists increased, and many of them had to agree with usually working conditions including external intrusions to editorial work. Therefore, against the background of the financial crisis and the structure of media ownership, journalists' freedom was limited by the editorial policy or by direct owners' interventions (Chebotayeva, 2009). Moreover, media preferred to employ "cheaper" workers rather than "expensive" professionals; thus, some experienced professionals (especially ones who protested against pressures on editorial policies) had to look for alternative job, this fostered involvement of media professionals to civic and Internet activities.

Comparing to previous presidential campaign in 2004 when non-transparent practices were mainly direct and occurred in form of government censorship, media practices during elections 2009 showed that direct governmental pressures were replaced by

«censorship of money» when media serve interests of different political forces if paid. These practices are mainly indirect and are often supported (or initiated) by owners and managers who use media to serve their private, business or political interests (to influence public opinion) or\and to maximize media profits by placing paid-for materials that are disguised as editorial. Consequently, media owners and media practitioners perceive elections as “time for harvesting” that give opportunity to maximize profits.

Hence, the practices of pressures media during elections 2009 were exercised in form of financial influences that happen on both inter- and intra-organizational levels. Media practitioners often labeled these practices as self-censorship or media “internal policy”. According to the study results, journalists are encouraged to follow this policy and get involved into the practices of influences by monetary compensations (“bonuses”) or penalties.

Therefore, if we look at the changing influences on media in Ukraine, the step-by-step transformation to inter- organizational-level influences becomes visible. It means that journalists are losing their role in gate-keeping process; the decision about coverage is often made on a “higher” level of owners or is a result of inter-organizational-level-negotiations, when news sources (government, political parties or business organization) manipulate media organization as a whole. In this situation the way journalists perceive, understand and interpret the practices in which they are involved and their roles in this practices become especially important as well as their ability to recognize the pressure and take active position in counteraction against the cases of non-transparency.

IV. Conclusions and Discussion

Ethics is a creative, dynamic and never-completing process. It is the process of “*inventing, applying and critiquing, imagining new norms and adapting old principles to changing social conditions and human purposes*” (Ward, 2004, p. 27). This idea has been a key guideline throughout my investigation.

As Lauk notes (2008), after fall of the communist regimes in the Central and Eastern European countries media and journalists found themselves in a certain *normative vacuum*, and there was confusion as to how to behave in the changing public sphere where the old patterns did not work and new ones were yet to be introduced or adapted. Being a young post-soviet country and developing democracy, today`s Ukraine should be approached as a case where the value system is emerging from combination of old and new rules, keeping transforming and adapting to conditions of an imperfect free market, a disoriented society and an immature democracy. It makes the work of individual media professionals both complicated and interesting for investigation.

Aimed at exploration of professional choices and challenges journalists face in Ukraine, this study contributes into understanding of Ukrainian practice from the position of people, working in media, and sheds some light on their experiences, purposes and conditions behind their everyday decisions. Qualitative methodology, rooted in symbolic interactionism approach, allowed to hear the voices of journalists dealing with media practices every day at their working places, to look at professional ethics as a dynamic process, explore the changing values, reassess theoretical concepts, redefine assumptions, professional goals, roles and ethical views.

Further, I present the conclusions made as a result of my fieldwork including them into discussion on media development and ethics. I will also mention some practical dimensions of the investigated and share ideas about possible directions of further research in this field.

The pressures journalists experience in Ukraine shifted up on organizational level. Based on the experiences of journalists, the study has indicated the lack of media freedom and independency that remains one of the topical problems Ukrainian media

face today. Research participants agreed that after Orange revolution in 2004 media managed to get some freedom from direct and centralized governmental pressures. However, after this short and temporary progress media continued to experience influences that significantly limit editorial freedom and transparency of media practice (Grynko, 2010).

The influences journalists experience are mainly caused by dependence on owners and/or advertisers and happen on both intra- and inter-organizational levels. Therefore, according to the research participants, even though direct and centralized government control seems to come into the past and practices of bribing journalists by cash are also considered to be rare at the moment, Ukrainian media could hardly be characterized as free and independent. As one of the journalists noticed, *media are often* "voluntarily selling their "freedom of press" to anyone who will offer a bigger price for this freedom". Specifically, journalists feel their dependence on the publishers, who, having close connections with political and business elites ("oligarchs"), utilize media to achieve their business and political goals and, therefore, determine editorial policy. Hence, the pressure Ukrainian journalism experiences today can be best characterized as the influence of business and political interests exercised through the pressures of the publishers and advertisers. So, according to the journalists, **a centralized and direct censorship has mainly turned into indirect and concealed forms of so called "self-censorship" or media "internal policy"**.

Discussing the motives owners pursue when impose their control over editorial policy, journalists mentioned **two main goals of the publishers**. The first and the main one is usually to **influence public opinion**; in this case publisher uses media to serve private, business to political interests publishers. The second motive of publisher, as interviews and group discussions informed, is the interest to **maximize profits**: in this case media owners and managers sell editorial pages and time to advertisers who are interested to pay for coverage. As a result, media place advertisement that is disguised as a regular article (materials that were pre-paid but are not clearly marked as advertising). "Money pressure" may also occur when advertising department controls media content to serve advertisers' interests and keep loyal relations with them. Therefore, journalists did

not manage to achieve their professional role in gate-keeping process, as the decision about coverage is often made (or framed) outside the editorial departments, specifically, on a „higher“ level of owners, and news sources (government, political parties or business organization) that tend to manipulate media organization as a whole.

Besides, the study has indicated that the problem of pressures on media becomes especially visible at the time of political events, and elections in particular, which media workers have ironically characterized as “time for harvesting”. So, political struggles seem to bring the problem of media bribery and manipulations on the surface and clarify a real role media play.

Importantly to note, that, according to the study results, **the pressures should be taken as one of the main obstacles for journalism development and professionalization.** Journalists mentioned that dependence on owners and sponsors does not allow realizing their professional functions. This situation turns journalists to do the work of copywriters writing texts-for-sale and serving others, than public, interests. Moreover, using media as a tool for promotion of their own messages, publishers seem not to be interested in growth of the professional level and attraction of prominent professionals who have good reputation among readers and can counteract against the pressure. It also contributes to a general decrease of market demand on high level of media education and professionalism.

The changes that were expected to ensure media independency and transparency have not fully worked in Ukrainian context. The analysis of empirical data allows to make the conclusion, that, having experienced the years of state control under the communist regime, Ukrainian journalists did manage not get expected independence after Soviet Union collapse. The reformations of media system that were realized with the help of non-government organizations, media and civic activists in independent Ukraine and were expected to provide necessary conditions for media independency (as those conditions work in the Western democratic countries), worked only partly. Specifically, **the process of media privatization** that started after 1991 in Ukraine did not bring predicted freedom to media, which face pressures from the side of

political and business elites. The case of Ukraine shows, that formal independence from the state and getting the status of private ownership does not necessarily lead to real press freedom and independence.

Later, the main outcome of the Orange and journalists revolutions 2004 was that journalists united for open and public protest and achieved freedom from centralized government control (exercised through the practice of “temnyky”). The further goal for achieving independence was connected with **getting freedom from “political sponsorship” and establishing business model making profit from advertising.** However, this condition has worked only partly. This study indicated that, even though Ukrainian media established profitable relations with advertisers, this cooperation does not really make them free from the influences and serving both political and business interests.

Thus, although Ukrainian media have become privately owned businesses placing advertising, journalists did not manage to get the position of the fourth power in Ukraine. **The pressures have transformed into indirect influences and pressures happening inside media organizations** (when advertising department or publisher control editorial content) or on the level of the formalized relations between media organization and news sources (any entity that wants to get positive coverage, including business company, non-governmental organizations). It corresponds with a trend that Lauk, (2008) signifies for Central and Eastern European countries where journalists face pressures from the new political elites, media owners and investors, and the uncertainty of employment conditions, and at the same time they work in post-communist media systems that have been affected by global trends: market concentration, commercialization, fragmentation of channels and audiences and drastic newsroom cutbacks.

The transformation of the experienced pressures influences ethical considerations of journalists. The findings of the study provided evidences of how influences on journalists have been transformed and, what is especially important, how it has influenced ethical considerations of media professionals. In fact, having shifted to a “higher” organizational levels, the pressures and influences exclude necessity of

individual journalists participation in making decisions about every single practice he or she is involved into (specifically, decision- making process about both topics for coverage and acceptance (or not acceptance) of payments from news-sources). In this situation media and journalists loose their professional role of gatekeepers; **influences happen beyond journalists` professional decisions**, so **journalists feel themselves less responsible for accepting (or not accepting) non-transparent practices. As a result, journalists seem to be demobilized and demotivated to struggle against pressures, follow ethical standards and improve their professional level.**

Generally, Ukrainian journalists tend to justify the influences of news sources by referring to personal or organizational financial struggles, professional immaturity and undeveloped media market. However, journalists mainly blame colleagues who accept cash for coverage at interpersonal level and relate this non-transparent practice to personal decision and consciousness of the journalist. So, speaking about the direct payments, they tend to link personal ethics, professionalism and professional reputation. Hence, direct influences occurring at an interpersonal level are mainly evaluated as unacceptable and non-transparent. In this case journalists` attitudes stay in line with the ideas of normative ethics that do not tolerate any influence on journalist.

Nevertheless, journalists feel less responsible for the practices of indirect influences on both intra- and inter-organizational levels and tend characterize them as acceptable and ethical. Therefore, participants quite often perceive pressures inside the organization (inter-organizational level) as normal and find reasons to tolerate it. Moreover, the cases of formalized non-transparency at the inter-organizational level are usually considered to be acceptable and ethical. Hence, there is a risky difference between the practices that are not transparent by their nature and the ways they are perceived by practitioners. It primarily concerns intra-organizational and inter-organizational-levels` influences that happen beyond professionals` personal decisions and are rarely counteracted.

Therefore, working under the pressures that are usually beyond the practitioners` decisions, Ukrainian journalists are often lacking autonomy, intention and power to

initiate the changes in existing media practices. **The non-transparency has mainly shifted on “higher” level (intra- and inter-organizational), and journalists become less and less involved into decision-making process. Moreover they tend to justify the practices that happen beyond their decisions and participation perceiving them as normal and acceptable. It creates new challenges for counteraction against media transparency. As a result, verbally and visually participants created rather a pessimistic picture of media situation in Ukraine describing pressures as common and omnipotent and showing journalist as weak and powerless.**

Meanwhile media owners and managers usually do not take media transparency and media independency as essential for business success. It is hardly debatable that working in such conditions Ukrainian media still do not play the role of “agent of democratic change”. Justifying the influences, Ukrainian journalists also tend to reformulate ethical norms and concepts adjusting them to existing practices. It causes further conflict between normative standards and their interpretation and implementation in practice that is, according to Voltmer K. & Dobrova A. (2009), typical for new democracies in which old structures and values coexist with new democratic norms (or what is understood to be democratic norms).

Understanding of media transparency phenomenon and perceived role of ‘the journalist’. Research participants connected the phenomenon of non-transparency with the challenges for media freedom and influences on editorial policy. To explore media transparency as a phenomenon constructed by journalists’ interpretations, I was specifically looking at the **actors** they mention speaking about the experienced practices (ones who are more and less important, according to research participants), **values and ethical considerations** in their explanations, **focus (accents) of the participants stories, positioning of their “selves”** in the discussion and **presentation of the image and role of journalist** during discussion. Those are the categories I elaborated and found significant for understanding the issue of media ethics and transparency through individuals’ experiences. Both textual and visual data were helpful for exploration and getting the picture of phenomenon under investigation.

Discussing the function of media in Ukraine, respondents argued that journalists still have not gained the role of the “fourth power” in Ukraine; **the figure of journalist was often depicted as powerless, manipulated, and speechless**; some participants also noted that journalists need to survive and adopt to the existing system, and this adaptation often costs them a diminished ethical values: *“journalism is corrupted and compromised...so journalists have to operate in “muddy water” and some of them try to “catch fish” in it and gain profit”*.

The research has indicated a significant demarcation between “I”/ “we” (usually problem-free) and “they”/ “other” (bribed and corrupted) in the stories that journalists shared. This may mean that **journalists do not judge about unethical influences and pressures as about the practices that concern “me”, “my own work” and do not perceive them as “my professional problem” and “my” professional reality**. This also corresponds with the patterns of shifting of responsibility to “them” and legitimization of the problem by a broader (social, economic, professional) conditions, which were constructed in participants` stories, and constituted passive position of journalist as helpless and powerless. Thus, the shared understanding of non-transparent practice is marked **by the ‘others’` problems and ‘others’` guilt** and carries the meaning of *‘legitimated’ way to survive* for journalist (as a *‘victim of situation’*) or for media as the organization (*‘involved into corrupted practices that are common for other fields and industries’*).

Therefore, discussing media practices in Ukraine, research participants tended to take a **victimized role**. Positioning themselves as victims of the existing practices (and manipulations in media), journalists explained the pressures by mainly **“external factors”** (in particular, “unethical” journalists or representatives of other professional groups as well as political and economic hardships or general “culture of corruption” in the society) and rarely mentioned the factor of **personal choice and responsibility** for dealing with non-transparent media activities.

Other patterns of media non-transparent practice were articulated as the *“danger to violate professional rules”* (described as numerous “musts” by the respondents) and

“awarding attribute for professionalism and experience”. Discussions about non-transparency are mainly focused on **“why”** and **“how”** questions and almost never contained references to effects and outcomes of bribed practices and influences on editorial decisions. Hence, the **non-transparent practices are constituted as the ones caused by the external forces (that are usually hard to overcome) rather than through the notions of personal involvement, shared practices, its effects and consequences.**

Generally, the discussions about transparency and independency we often focused on justification of practices and blaming “others”. So, speaking about the issues of transparency, journalists tend to pay much attention to the **reasons** and **actors** of experienced media practices. Meanwhile, **they almost never mentioned the outcomes and results of the journalism that works under the pressure.** When sounded, the results were usually associated with personal reputation of journalist and did not refer to audience, public interests or reputation of media organization, its credibility, professional and business success. Therefore, journalists did not mention the value of media credibility and public interest in light of the influences that are practiced in media.

The value of “making money” was usually depicted as the main one in media practice. According to the study results, the influences on media content were justified by financial struggles of media (for profit) and journalists (for salaries). Other justifications concerned the fact that *“other media do the same”* and all media practices in Ukraine are generally corrupted. Speaking about ethics, on the one hand, journalists agreed that professional ethics does not tolerate any kinds of non-transparent influences on media; on the other hand, they provided examples when media organization or individual journalists exercise ‘grey’ practices that “make non-transparency look ethically”. For instance, according to the interviewed journalists, some media organizations “exercise ethical standards” by placing paid-for materials in a special block that is separated from the rubric of news. However, it is also not clearly indicated as advertising, so that audience could know that materials were paid. Journalists also interpreted the cases of putting paid-for materials from two sources in one publication as ethical as “in this case article provides two points of view”. **Generally, research has showed a difference between**

normative ethics and routine ethical considerations of the practitioners; it has also indicated a kind of relativity of ethical rules when it comes to the issues of pressures and non-transparent practices.

Interpretations of media transparency in terms of actor and diminishing role of audience. Availability of information about how and why media act the way they do is a key idea in media transparency normative concept. So, public is placed as a central actor in transparent and ethical media practices. Meanwhile, the notions of audience and public interest were usually excluded from the journalists' discussions about media ethics and transparency. Both textual and visual data demonstrates that journalists do not perceive readers and viewers as ones who influence or somehow present at the overall picture of media practice. Media owners, political figures, businessmen, advertisers, editors and reporters are mentioned among the main actors who compose and influence media practice, establish the rules and deal with the issues of transparency. Moreover, business interests (profits) and political interests are named as the main driving force for media manipulations and influences of editorial decisions.

Meanwhile normative concept of transparency, claiming for visibility of news production, places news consumers (audience) at the center of discussion, public interests seem not to be perceived in the same way by media practitioners participated in the study. This idea corresponds with the conclusion that media are not created as a long term business projects, so interests of consumers are not encountered as target audience whose interests and expectations should be analyzed, understood and considered as the main guidelines for successful work.

Speaking about the purpose of transparent practices, journalists often mention the issues of personal reputation of journalist, realization of professional functions and following ethical principles. This finding stays in line with the conclusion of Ukrainian journalist Vitaliy Portnikov (Ukraine Media Sustainability Index, 2008): *“journalists haven't realized their responsibility to the society, in recent years, most of them were busy increasing their wealth but not improving professional skills”*.

First, it may indicate a need to raise professional conciseness and understanding of social responsibility among both practicing journalists and other professionals. High-quality media training and education may be helpful to achieve it. Besides, the training of other professionals involved into media practices is also important; it should also include media managers, specialists of media advertising departments, public and media relations practitioners. The discussions about social roles of media should be expanded and involve representatives of other stakeholders of media practice.

Therefore, working in media and interacting with each other and other professionals, journalists construct and share the meanings of the practices and ethical considerations about those practices. Even though media practitioners showed their familiarity with the commitment of transparency, formalized in ethical code, and characterized it as important for professional ethics, their professional stories and examples illustrated that constructed and shared meaning of transparency is different from its normative conceptualization.

First, the perceived transparency is usually limited to the idea of media independency and do not include the idea of news making process visibility. Besides, the difference is especially clear when it comes to the pressures that happen on organizational (inter- and intra-) level and do not involve journalists' individual decisions. The difference also concerns a rare inclusion of audience and the concept of public interest (needs and demands) into discussion about media transparency.

Discussion. Expanding the Borders of Media Ethics.

In journalism, ethical requirements are usually addressed to editorial departments and regulate the work of individual journalists. In fact, we are usually speaking about the *ethics of journalists* meaning moral and ethical expectations from media practice and product. As Merrill (in Gordon et al., 1996) state, when we deal with media ethics we are really concerned with ethical standards of media workers and what kinds of actions they take.

Taking an ethical issue of media transparency and approaching it through the lenses of practitioners, this study has indicated that normative ethical concepts does not always

correspond with their real-life practical meanings. Being involved into media practices, journalists have to deal with numerous and various challenges that are transforming under different circumstances, including political events, market and profession developments. So, normative concept formalized in codes may turn to be too “static” and general to be applied in every practical case and challenge. Therefore, more specific rules elaborated on the level of the editorial department may be helpful in guiding journalists in their everyday practical choices.

Besides, today media practices and decisions about media production are not limited by only editorial departments and involve other stakeholders. Taking the case of transparency, this study has shown that decisions about influences on editorial content are often moved above the level of interpersonal “journalist - news source” relations. Now they are happening on intra- and inter-organizational levels and often depend on ethical views and considerations of people working at media advertising departments, media managers and investors (owners).

Consequently, **ethics of news-making process seems be a wider notion than the editorial and ethics of reporters (even though it is very important); it has become the issue of the whole circle of people involved into media practice and media business.** Here, I would agree with Smith (2003) saying that journalist codes are too specific and narrow, and they cannot be applied to media corporations, media managers and media owners.

Therefore, journalism ethics should not be narrowed to ethics of journalists; I would rather expand the view on journalism ethics to understanding of *media ethics or ethics of media practices involving the choices and purposes of other stakeholders acting on different levels and representing different professional groups and interests.* Meanwhile, this should not be interpreted as that journalists obligation are losing their primacy and become more dependent on other external rules and other stakeholders` values. **This mainly means that for improving media practices the ethical rules of all the stakeholders should also be considered.**

Besides, we should not disregard the importance of practical layer of ethics and real-live values that guide journalists in their work. The research in Ukraine has shown that even though journalists are familiar with formalized ethical rules and generally criticize

violations of professional ethics, the practice usually put more complicated ethical dilemmas and, therefore, in real-life working conditions journalists may assume the relativity of ethical rules and justify violations.

So, although professional codes are helpful to declare the rules of profession, individual values seem to play extremely important role in making decisions when it comes to every practical task and situation. That is why I could only partly agree with Black and Barney (1985) saying that individual professionals should transcend socially approved conventions codified by "regulators," and become social catalysts in their own rights and values. A recent empirical investigation has also illustrated that the key to effective codes in journalism lies in a "bottom-up approach" built on individual, experience based, codes of ethics of journalists (Bruno, 2008). Therefore, to work better, ethical codes should stay as close to practice as it is possible and give clear answers on various moral dilemmas that appear in practice, they should be more specific to every newsroom needs and practices, their elaboration should be initiated by practitioners and agreed within professional community, they should be discussed and updated regularly based on the changes in the activities and new challenges professionals face. Meanwhile, individual values, professional culture and individual responsibility remain crucial for ethical behavior.

Practical dimension of media transparency

Hence, transparency is a primarily obligation of media practitioners, who are responsible for the final quality and credibility of their work. However, we should not neglect **the role of other stakeholders in improving media practice**. In fact, transparency has interactive nature that calls all participants of media communication be aware and responsible for high-quality journalism.

Media system will never be transparent if there is *no public demand or need in transparent media*. Thus, the transparency should be required, first of all, by citizens (readers and viewers) interested in independent media and unbiased news coverage, or at least in being informed about the influences journalists may experience. Transparency of media practice should also be the issue for news sources, and specifically, for public and media relations professionals, who should be also interested in decreasing corruption in

media practice, as it also becomes an obstacle for honest and credible communication activities.

Consequently, a free flow of information and media autonomy should be recognized and shared as crucial values by all participants of news making and news consumption. Reflecting the mediating character of communication in news media, media transparency assures that all the players in communication speak the same language, respect each other and share understanding of journalism professional goals and functions.

Craft & Heim (2009) argue that perfect transparency is unattainable in practice and find reasonable to consider circumstances or practices as affording more or less transparency relative to others. Discussing media transparency as availability of explanations, Craft and Heim (2009) review practical options on how news organization can implement the principle of transparency. For instance, media can post the list of the commonly used criteria of newsworthiness on the web site so that viewers and readers could consult the rubric to figure out how any story matches up. Another option is to provide the editor's note with each story explaining its newsworthiness, or this explanation could also be given on editor's blog.

My study provided the evidences that Ukrainian journalists keep in mind the vision of ethical and professional journalism even though many of them find it unattainable at the moment. As Dyczok (2009) noted, "despite decades of communist rule, the desire for free speech and understanding its importance for democracy survived in this society" (p.10). Although both textual and visual data presented a rather pessimistic image of journalism stressing its weaknesses and obstacles for editorial freedom and realization of journalists' professional functions, participants insisted on mentioning an ideal (desirable) picture showing how they see journalism should work in Ukraine.

I would also note that there are some positive cases, when Ukrainian journalists attempt to make the steps towards independency and transparent practices. Some of them exercise it through announcing the cases of pressures and publication of censored materials at personal blogs, discussing the issues of press freedom publicly, participating

in the civic activities and protests. According to the study findings, Internet is often perceived as an exclusively free territory for journalists that have a great potential to promote the ideas of free journalism in Ukraine. Many journalists have referred to Internet using is as uncensored area and find support of their peers and readers. Besides, there are examples of successful business model working in printed media that have recently appeared in regions, where professional journalists and former editors found small community-oriented and independent newspapers (personal communication with Oksana Brovko, CEO at the Association of Independent Regional Publishers of Ukraine, March 2011).

Theoretical Implications And Further Research Directions.

According to Koltsova (2006), the study of media practice is especially helpful for finding observable units of social reality and struggling with normativism as it describes *how* people act, and not *how it is required* by perspective rules. By this study I suggested to look at media ethics and transparency as a practical issues experienced by individuals working in journalism. Analyzing transparency beyond the formalized professional rules, it indicated the differences between the normative conceptualization and shared meanings practitioners apply in their work. It has also pointed the importance to consider the practitioners' attitudes and evaluations for media ethics and transparency further investigation.

In terms of theoretical implications, this study extended the work on media transparency in countries with transitional economies (Harro-Loit & Saks, 2006; Klyueva & Tsetsura, 2011; Kruckeberg & Tsetsura, 2003; Lo, Chan, & Pan, 2005; Tsetsura, 2005a), and illustrated a typical for Post-Soviet countries "advertising-propaganda motivation" in media practice that is realized through obtaining indirect benefits from dissemination of information (Koltsova, 2006). It has also showed dynamical changes of media practices (transformation of pressures) and illustrated how these changes may influence ethical values and perceptions of people working in journalism; based on empirical data, it showed the link between individual involvement to decision-making process, issues of personal responsibility and ethical evaluation of the practice. In terms of methodology, this study provides an example of mixed-method research that includes

a rich graphical data analysis allowing reaching in-depth insights and shared meanings of the participants.

Further research may expand the targeted group and involve analysis of attitudes and perceptions of other professionals acting in media practices (specifically, public relations practitioners, publishers, representatives of media advertising department). Besides, it would be interesting to look at how audience perceive and understand media ethics and the values of media transparency.

I agree with Klarsson (2011) who writes that future research regarding transparency might include exploration of audience appreciation and perception of the respective roles of journalists and audience in the co-creation of news. I would also suggest conducting comparative study of ethical values and meanings transparency shared by different groups. Besides, more investigation is needed to understand the *why* Ukrainian practitioners behave the way they do. Kvit (2010) also addresses the importance of in-depth research of reasons, including the analysis of value systems in both developed and new democracies: “the new reality makes us keep in mind not only consistent patterns of political economics and the nature of person and society, not only the structure of the state politics and common journalistic values, but also priorities and values that are common for some societies” (p.12-13). Overall, it calls for further, more detailed examination of the value systems of journalists, media owners and news sources (i.e. public relations professionals) that contribute to understanding and enacting the values of ethics and transparency.

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*Appendix 1. Interview protocol***INTERVIEW PROTOCOL****PART 1 – INTRODUCTION AND WARMING UP****5-10****MIN**

- *Introduction of topic for conversation, discussion rules and duration, confidentiality and video recording*
- *Contact and warming up (Please, introduce yourself, (media type, position, age, education, length of experience)*

UKRAINIAN MEDIA: GENERAL SITUATION AND PROBLEMS**15 MIN**

- Please, describe the situation in media field in Ukraine. What are the most topical problems of Ukrainian journalism today? What are the barriers for profession development? What problems journalists do face in Ukraine today? (probe respondents` experience)
- What people are journalists in Ukraine? How they usually live? What are their needs? What difficulties do they face? (*Probe: financial, professional, lack of education etc.*)
- What education they usually have? Are they educated enough?
- How could you access the level of salaries media people have in Ukraine? Do they get enough? What does it cause?
- What could you say regarding the Ukrainian media credibility? Do Ukrainians trust media? What media are trusted more? (*Probe: national, local, all-Ukrainian, printed, TV, radio, on-line etc.*)

FACTORS OF INFLUENCE ON MEDIA**15 MIN**

(Probe: state, government, local authorities, advertisers, PR-specialists, owners, political parties)

- What do you think makes the main impact on media in Ukraine? (*brain storming – recalling who and what may influence journalist and media*)
- How does each of these influences happen? What experience do you have?
- In what cases of influence media information is not to be trusted? Why?
- Does journalist always decide by him/herself about what news to cover? Who/what can influence? What do you think about it? Would cases of influence would you characterize as transparent/ non-transparent, ethical/unethical? Why?
- How do you always define the topics for coverage? Do you do that by yourself? What or who may influence the topic choice? How would you comment these situations?

RELATIONS BETWEEN JOURNALISTS AND NEWS SOURCES

15 MIN

- Do you/your colleagues often work with PR-specialists? How do you/your colleagues work with them?
- Please, share your impressions about this cooperation. Is it effective? Is it helpful for you?
- Please, give your comments about PR in Ukraine? Is it professional? Is it ethical? Why?
- What are advantages for journalist in working with PR-people? What are the disadvantages? What causes the main difficulties?
- What kind of information do you/your colleagues get from PR-people? How you/your colleagues decide if it is worth to be published? What may influence this decision? Why?
- What instruments do news sources usually use to promote their information? What experience do you have? (probe: *gifts, press tours, press-releases, personal communication, press-events, financial encouragements*). What is your attitude to each of these instruments? (Probe each instrument: how ethical it is, does it correspond professional norms and standards?)
- Do media in Ukraine offer special informational services to new sources for payments? (probe: *to place the press-releases, coverage of company/organization events, monitoring, media events organization etc.*) What experience do you have?

MEDIA TRANSPERANCY: PERCPETIONS, INTERPRETATIONS, VALUES

25 MIN

- How would you explain the notion of transparency in media? What does this mean for you? Give examples for transparent and non-transparent practices?
- Does it happen that Ukrainian journalist writes on topic which is not newsworthy? Could you describe these situations? Why does it happen? What do you think about this situation?
- Who may influence the decision about what topic to cover? (*probe: owner, new sources, advertisers, marketing department ...*) What do you think about it?
- How often do you experience/hear about it? From what sources?
- Have you experienced this practice? Please, share your experience. How did feel about it? What doubts did you have?
- What do you think are the differences between advertisement and editorial material? Is it important for reader to know whether material is an advertisement or editorial? Why? How they can the reader distinguish them?
- Please, give a determination what paid-of materials ("jynsa") mean. What are the key words here? How do you understand it? How would you characterize them? What cases could be called "jynsa" and what are not "jynsa"? Why? Please, give your examples.
- Is it a topical problem for Ukraine? Why?
- Could you describe a typical paid-of material? (TV, printed, internet). How does it look like? What makes you feel it was paid-off? What are the features?
- What schemes of payments\influences from news source exist in Ukraine? (*Probe: direct/indirect, interpersonal, bonuses from advertisers, marketing department pressure, gifts from companies? Other cases?*) How do you estimate each of these schemes? Which one can be justified? Which one is ethical? Which one is not? Give your comments please.
- What kind of influences from news sources are more typical for printed media? Local? All-Ukrainian? TV? Radio? Online? etc.
- Do you have colleagues or friends which work experienced financial remuneration from news source? Have you experienced? Could you share this experience, please? How it happened? Did you consider these practices ethical? Transparent? Why?
- What are the limits for transparent relations with news sources? When would you be sure that certain practice is not transparent? Give your criteria please.
- Does Ukrainian journalist always have a choice to make decision about taking financial remuneration from news source or not? How could you estimate this choice (dilemma)? What are the pros and contras of decision?
- How does the journalist usually feel in these cases?
- What do think the reasons why journalists place materials for payment or under influence? What factors cause it in Ukraine?
- Is this topic usually discussed inside your professional community? How? Why?

- How to change the situation? What ways would you recommend? What solutions would you offer?

ETHICAL AND LAW REGULATIONS 20 MIN

- How could you estimate the PR-professionalism in Ukraine? Education level professional standards, ethics of specialists which work in PR?
- What does happen if it is revealed that journalist places news for financial remuneration from news source in Ukraine? What are the sanctions for journalist? Or for editor? What are other results? *Probe: colleagues` attitudes, readers opinion, cases and examples, sanctions and punishments.*
- Is there any law regulation of taking payments for coverage in Ukraine? How do they work? Estimate their efficiency.
- Are there ethical regulations? Codes? Professional Associations? Corporate Codes? What do you know about it? How do they work? Estimate their efficiency.

Gratitude for participation

Appendix 2. Dates and participants of the focus group discussions.

Date of the focus-group	Male/female	Type of media	Editor/journalist	City
08.12.2008	Female	TV (national channel)	Editor	National
	Male	Online version of magazine	Editor	Internet
	Female	Internet	Journalist	
	Male	Printed (newspaper)	Journalist	National
	Male	Printed (newspaper)	Editor	National
	Male	Printed	Journalist	National
	Male	Internet	Editor	
	Male	Information agency	Editor	National
9.12.2008	Female	TV	Editor	National
	Female	TV	Editor	Regional, Zaporizhzhya
	Female	Printed, magazine	Editor	National
	Male	TV	Editor	National
	Male	Online	Editor	
	Male	Online	Editor	Regional, Mykolayiv
10.12.2008	Female	Printed	Journalist	National
	Female	Printed	Journalist	National
	Female	Online	Journalist	
	Female	Online	Journalist	Regional
12.12.2009	Female	Online	Journalist	
	Female	TV	Journalist	National
	Male	Online	Journalist	
	Female	Newspaper	Journalist	National
	Female	Online	Journalist	
13.12.2009	Female	Convergent newsroom (printed news, online, video)	Journalist	National
	Female	Newspaper (daily)	Journalist	National
	Male	Internet	Journalist	

	Female	Internet	Journalist	
	Male	Newspaper	Editor	Regional
	Female	TV	Editor	National
14.12.2009	Female	Newspaper	Editor	Regional
	Female	Online media	Editor	-
	Female	Online media	Editor	-
	Female	Online media	Journalist	-
	Male	TV	Journalist	Regional
	Male	Newspaper	Journalist	Regional
20.11.2009	Female	Radio	Editor	Regional (Vynnytsky region)
	Male	Newspaper	Journalist	Regional, Lutsk
	Male	Information Agency	Journalist	Regional, Lviv
	Female	Radio	Journalist	Regional, Lviv
	Female	Internet	Editor	Regional, Rivne
	Male	Newspaper	Journalist	Regional, Uzhgorod
	Male	TV	Editor	Regional, Ivano-Frankivsk
	Male	Radio	Editor	Regional, Zhytomir
15.12.2010	Female	Newspaper	Journalist	Regional, Lviv
	Male	Information agency	Editor	National
	Female	TV	Journalist	National
	Female	TV	Journalist	National
	Male	Newspaper	Editor	Regional, Rivne
	Male	Internet	Editor	-
	Female	Internet	Journalist	-

*Appendix 3.***CODE OF ETHICS OF UKRAINIAN JOURNALIST**

1. Freedom of speech and expression is inseparable part of journalistic work.
2. Serving the interests of the government, NOT the public is breach of the code.
3. Journalist has to respect people's private life.
4. Court procedures coverage has to be impartial. Journalist cannot call person criminal before an appropriate court verdict has been reached.
5. Journalist doesn't uncover his (her) informational sources except cases when Ukrainian legislation insists on it.
6. Journalist's first duty is to respect public's right for full and objective information on facts and events.
7. Information and analytical materials have to be clearly separated from advertising.
8. Editorial correction of the material including pictures, texts, headings, video and script accordance, etc. cannot distort the content of the material.
9. Facts, thoughts and assumptions have to be clearly separated one from another.
10. Opponents' points of view including those who became an object of journalist's criticism have to be presented in a balanced way. Independent experts' evaluations have to be presented the same way.
11. Sociological research cannot be quoted in the way, which distorts the content. Opinion polls cannot be fabricated by journalists for a pre-meditated purpose.
12. Journalist has to do everything possible to correct any publicized information if it is proved to be untrue.
13. Journalist cannot use illegal methods of gathering information. While gathering information journalist works under Ukrainian law and can use all legal procedures, including courts procedures against those who prevent them from gathering information.
14. Plagiarism is incompatible with journalistic profession.
15. No one can be discriminated because of gender, language, race, religion or ethnic, regional, social origin or because of political preferences. This information could be pointed out only if it's unnecessary part of the story.
16. Nobody can use work discipline to make journalist write or do

- something that is against his (her) own principles.
17. Illegal receiving of profit or any benefits for any done or undone journalistic material is incompatible with journalistic profession.
 18. Journalist has to be particularly careful while covering children issues. Journalist and editor have to obtain well-founded reasons to cover private life of under age person (persons) and permission from his (her) parents or guardian. It is inadmissible to publish names of under age persons (or other features which could let to recognition), who were connected to crime or violence.