

# Reporting and the Transformations of the Journalistic Field: US News Media, 1890-2000<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

How have journalistic ideals of public service arisen? To what extent do journalists live up to these ideals? Can we make any claims as to the social conditions, which this performance depends on? Using Bourdieu's theory of fields of cultural production, this paper addresses these questions with evidence from the history of journalism in the United States. What is most distinctive about modern journalism is a specific practice: active newsgathering or reporting. This practice became common in the 1860s and 1870s with the emergence of journalism as a field with its own stakes, relatively independent from political advantage or literary merit. The power of field-specific capital to organise practices in the media has varied since then. The field consolidated in the era from 1890 to 1914, with newspapering expanding as an industry. In the interwar years, the boundary between PR and journalism became blurry and the institutional basis for active newsgathering declined. Under favorable economic and political conditions reporting practices, including local and investigative reporting, flourished between 1945 and 1970 across media forms. In the past 40 years the importance of active news-gathering has declined.

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In the past fifteen years a new generation of activists has expressed concern that commercial pressures are undermining professional standards in journalism. In this debate the values of public service are often taken for granted and are rarely put into historical context. Claims about ‘the end of journalism’ (Underwood 1993; Squires 1993) are not always grounded in consideration of evidence regarding institutional transformations and where commentators do look at past developments they rarely go back further than the 1950s.

How have journalistic ideals of public service arisen? To what extent do journalists live up to these ideals? Can we make any claims as to the social conditions, which this performance depends on? Using Bourdieu’s theory of fields of cultural production, this paper addresses these questions with evidence from the history of journalism in the United States.

The concept of the journalistic field offers a number of advantages:

(1) Field theory allows us to historicize journalistic ideals and analyze their institutional base (Benson 1999). Following Bourdieu (1995) and Chalaby (1996, 1998), I situate the evolution of journalistic ideals in the emergence of a relatively autonomous field around the 1860s and 1870s.

A field is organized around a specific set of stakes, field-specific capital that orients practice relatively independently of other stakes, such as money and power.

(2) Field theory directs us to the prevalence of a distinctively journalistic practice as an indicator of journalistic autonomy. Active news-gathering from a variety of sources is the distinctive innovation of journalistic production and whether and how much this happens needs to be considered in examination of journalism as journalism. Much attention is paid in research on the media to ownership diversity. But the number of different owners might not indicate diversity of owners or diversity of content and might not correlate with other indicators of quality (Entman 1985; Gamson and Latteier 2004).

(3) Field theory allows us to integrate evidence across media forms. News production as a whole is an important and neglected unit of analysis; it is both narrower than ‘the media’ or ‘communication’ as a whole, and broader than specific media forms or genres (Cook 2006; Sparrow 2006). This unit of analysis is relevant both from the point of view of production and from the perspective of users. Media professionals cross genre boundaries, media organizations react to each other, and users combine different news media in their everyday practices.

(4) Field theory allows us to compare field properties across historical periods or national contexts (Benson and Saguy 2005). We can examine the force of field-specific capital to organize practices. We can examine the changing relationships of the journalistic field with other fields, most notably the economic and the political field.

Considering the history of journalism in the United States we see that on the one hand establishing newspapering as a business was instrumental in the development of the autonomy of the journalistic field from politics and the literary world. On the other hand, from very early on, we see claims that commercialism is threatening journalism. When Frank Munsey, the owner of an early newspaper chain died in 1925, a respected editor remarked, ‘He and his kind have about succeeded in transforming a once noble profession into an eight-percent security’ (Squires 1993). In considering such claims, it is important to remember that journalistic authority will be appealed to as part of the competition among actors within the field. Rather than take individual claims about others’ lack of journalistic professionalism at face value or look at specific instances of a lack of professionalism within specific media forms, we move to a comparative inquiry across media forms into the power of field-specific capital to organize practices. Under favorable economic and political conditions, during two periods of high autonomy, 1890-1914 and 1945-1970, reporting practices, including local and investigative reporting, flourished.

In two other periods, 1915-1945 and 1970-2000, the field's autonomy was challenged and local and investigative reporting declined.

### **Newsmedia and Public Service: Toward a Historical Perspective**

A number of classic contributions in sociology and media studies have established that the production of news is a social process. Scholars identify social factors, which shape the news, on a number of levels. Scholars of social problems have shown that journalists selectively frame public issues (Hall et al. 1978; Gitlin 1980, 1994; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Ericson et al. 1991; Beckett 1996). Newsroom ethnographies have shown how organisational constraints operate to influence news coverage (Molotch and Lester 1974; Tuchman 1978; Gans 1979; Fishman 1980). Structural accounts have identified the capitalist organization of news organizations' ownership, sourcing, advertising, and direct intervention as the four filters operating as basic constraints (Herman and Chomsky 1988).

Existing sociological work leaves us with the conclusion that news production is socially constrained. It is only beginning to speak to the varying impact of varying forms of the social organization of the newsmedia. Clearly, objectivity is socially produced as well as constrained. Clearly, journalistic production varies within capitalism, in specific national and historic contexts. The questions 'how do different social forms affect news production differently', 'when' and 'under what conditions' have rarely been posed

We have only begun to analyze the news media and its social context comparatively. Two recent exceptions have compared the media cross-nationally: Hallin and Mancini (2004) have charted new territory by comparing European and US media systems, and Benson and Saguy (2005) compared coverage in the US and France.

In addition to cross-national comparisons, we can compare journalistic production across historical periods. What follows builds on studies of specific transformations within journalism and specific media (Hallin 1996; Kaplan 2002; Schudson 1978; Chalaby 1996, 1998; Wallace 2005), the history of communication more broadly by Starr (2004), and other published evidence to consider the case of the United States. This historical approach allows us to turn the contingent and historical origins of journalism itself into objects of analysis. By holding national culture constant we can focus on economic and political factors that might affect journalistic production.

### **Fields of Cultural Production**

Field theory gained influence in the social sciences since the 1970s, largely due to the work of Pierre Bourdieu but also developed by organizational theorists in the United States (Di Maggio and Powell 1983, 1991). At its most general, field theory suggests a relational approach that does not take any of its units of analysis for granted but rather examines how they are constituted in relationship to each other (Emirbayer 1997; Martin 2003). It suggests a meso-level of analysis between the micro level of interactions and the macro level of the state or the social system (Fligstein 2001). Unlike other perspectives in the tradition of a theory of differentiation, it seeks to avoid assumptions of progress and of the functionality of spheres (Hallin 2005).

Pierre Bourdieu offers a more specific set of claims about fields. In his approach a field is an arena of shared practice bounded by shared assumptions. It is the result of contingent historical developments. It is a cluster of relationships organized around a set of stakes, a field-specific capital. A field is only relatively autonomous. We expect a field to have an autonomous and a

heteronomous pole, depending on its richness in field-specific capital or its dependence on capital from the political or economic field (Bourdieu 1987, 1995).

Field-specific capital (the value attributed to art as art, journalism as journalism) is a stake that orients actors. Denunciation of a failure of others to live up to these ideals is thus constitutive of the journalistic field; rather than take these denunciations at face value, we need comparative research on how this competition, and the tension between field-specific and other forms of authority are managed.

The analytical purchase of the concept 'field' can be increased by including a concern with the variable properties of fields. As a historical product of processes of modernization, fields can be more or less autonomous or lose the character of 'fieldedness' altogether (Calhoun 1995).

Researchers have studied diverse fields of cultural production such as art (Bourdieu 1993; Bourdieu 1995; Sapiro 1996), gastronomy (Ferguson 1998), sport (Defrance 1995), law (Bourdieu 1987; Dezalay and Garth 1997), book publishing (Thompson 2005) and journalism (Benson 1998; Bourdieu 2005; Benson and Saguy 2005; Benson and Neveu 2005; Champagne 1991, 1995; Pinto 1994).

Fields have been compared across both national and historical contexts. Benson's comparison of the French and the American journalistic fields is an example of the former (Benson and Saguy 2005, Benson 2005). A historical comparison is central to arguments about field formation, such as Bourdieu's in 'The Rules of Art.' Arguments about a given field's loss of autonomy also rely on historical comparisons. Bourdieu has famously argued that neo-liberalism has led to a loss of autonomy in fields such as the arts and education. Building on these developments, we can begin to ask how field properties co-vary with various external factors, such as economic developments or political intervention.

## **The Genesis of the Journalistic Field**

Printing and presses have existed in the US since colonial times and some histories of American journalism go back as far as the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Mott 1962; Emery and Smith 1954). They report the issue of the first American newspaper, ‘Publick Occurrences Both Foreign and Domestick’ in 1690 by Benjamin Harris, or the first continuous American newspaper in 1704.

However, as Chalaby has pointed out, there is a danger of anachronism in using the term ‘journalism’ to describe these early practices (Chalaby 1996). Journalism is less and more than what actors identified as ‘the media’ through a modern lens do. Only in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century do we see the emergence of a phenomenon recognizable as ‘modern journalism.’

There has been no consensus as to what precisely characterizes modern journalism, and often the dependent variable has been construed as the rise of specific values, such as objectivity. I suggest following Chalaby (1996) that rather what we see is the rise of a partially autonomous journalistic field organized around a specific textual form and specific practices, most prominently active news-gathering. Journalistic values of objectivity and public service arose as a set of stakes, which motivate practice independently of power and money; as stakes, however, they remain also an object of contestation and competition.

Early newspapers contained business information, literary writings, and political polemic. How did reporting become regarded as something valuable in itself? Economic, cultural, and political factors have contributed to this transformation (Baldasty 1993; Schudson 1978; Kaplan 2002).

One could argue a focus on ‘facts’ was part of the zeitgeist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Kaplan points at the transformation of the party system. It is also worth noting that at this initial moment the market played a key role in furthering the journalistic field's autonomisation from the political

and the literary fields. The revolution of the Penny Press from the 1830s onward marked the establishment of the basic conditions for 'modern' journalistic production. Penny papers were the first papers that sought large circulation and income from advertisers on a large scale, which made them independent of subscriptions and political subsidies. For the first time paid reporters were employed to actively gather news (Schudson 1978).

This move from individual printers to a journalistic field is also the time when local news was invented. Early papers focused on international and national news and, even in reporting prices, were less accurate locally than globally. The Penny Press focused on everyday events and sent its employees to the police, the courts, and the commercial district on a day-to-day basis (Schudson 1978). Russo details how in the 1860s local coverage appeared systematically for the first time and, taken up as a mark of distinction by competing among papers, increased steadily (Russo 1980).

### **Expansion and Consolidation: 1890 - 1914**

The time between 1890 and 1914 brought a rapid expansion of newspapering as an industry and a consolidation of journalism as a distinct area of practice. In this time, we see a rise in professional journalistic education, associations, and awards, which mark the consolidation of a field with a set of stakes and status internal to it. We also see a surge in outlets for reporting, and local and investigative reporting in particular.

Suddenly newspapering had become big business. The number of newspapers increased by one third between 1892 and 1914, the average circulation of papers doubled, and the volume of advertising increased by three-and-a-half times. The 1900s and 1910s saw the beginning of newspaper chains by Scripps, Hearst, and Munsey (Adams 1995). Advertisers, newspapers, and

magazines began to measure circulation at this time, leading to the foundation of the Audit Bureau of Circulations (Mott 1962).

Staff at major newspapers expanded, thus increasing the number of 'ordinary' journalists who were subordinate to an editor, but who were more or less equal in rank among themselves. The largest paper, Pulitzer's New York 'World,' employed 1300 staff in the mid-1890s. Both the rising importance of profits and the increase in staffing decreased editors' power. The editor's personal voice was accorded less importance than before. Journalistic writing becomes less and less the expression of the writer's personality and status. Employed writers found their voice in the ethos of reporting and servicing the reader.

The very first course in journalism - a short-lived course at the University of Pennsylvania's business school - was offered in 1893. The University of Missouri School of Journalism opened its gates as the first separate journalism school in 1908. The Columbia School of Journalism opened in 1912 based on Pulitzer's endowment (Mott 1962). That year the American Association of Teachers of Journalism was formed. A professional fraternity of journalists was formed in 1909. Editors' associations had been formed in the late 1880s. The first code of ethics was adopted by editors in Kansas in 1909. National newspaper conferences were held (Mott 1962). Pulitzer established the Pulitzer Prize in his will in 1904. The prize contained four awards in journalism, four in letters and drama, and one for education. With this prize, Pulitzer, the journalist, established his heritage as that of a patron of the arts but at the same time ennobled journalism as separate from but equal to the literary disciplines.

New entrants differentiated and stratified the field. Yellow journalism increased circulation and brought a new, plebeian audience to the newspapers. Distinctions among newspapers began to matter more, not only among newspapers directly competing for the number of readers (such as

the World and the Journal), but also among different kinds of newspapers. The Times' slogan, 'all the news that's fit to print,' was directed against the yellow press. It was also advertised as, 'It does not soil the breakfast cloth' (Mott 1962).

A rise of newspapers in cities and in rural areas brought with it a rise in reporting practices.

As Kaniss remarked, yellow journalism was a specifically urban type of journalism. Newspapers faced the challenge of providing advertisers with a mass audience while targeting an increasingly disintegrated urban population. 'One of the ways the newspapers approached this task was by working to create an interest in and a concern for the welfare of 'the city' as an organic entity. ...

Newspapers relied on three major devices: boosterism, crusading and the push for the construction of major public works' (Kaniss 1991:21). Reporters characteristically searched the city for incidents and events that could be made interesting and developed their own forms of sociality in the legendary urban press clubs. The post office's introduction of free delivery to rural areas in 1896 produced a boom in rural newspaper circulation and production (Starr 2004).

The 1900s were also the first golden age of investigative reporting. Modern 'muckraking' emerged toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A 1903 sellout issue of McClure's magazine provided an influential model for this form. In magazines, but also in papers, stories appeared about issues such as waste in local government, wrongdoing by insurance companies, poor conditions in tenements, and abuses in the meatpacking industry (Armao 2000).

### **Contraction and the Rise of PR: 1914-1945**

By the 1920s journalism's boundaries, had come under question in a new way. A new group of communication professionals arrived on the scene from which journalists sought to distance themselves. Both businesses and government became increasingly engaged in public relation

activities. Wilson had expanded the government's apparatus for dealing with the press during the First World War (Starr 2004). In 1924 Crawford warned journalists against the serious danger of propaganda. He estimated that a large newspaper received 150,000 words of public relations material daily. In 1932 Stanley Walter of the New York Herald Tribune observed mockingly that the number of PR professionals in New York outnumbered the number of journalists, and that journalism schools produced more PR officials than journalists (Schudson 1978).

The institutional base for the practice of reporting in the newspaper industry shrank. A merger wave between 1918 and 1929 led to a decline in local competition in the newspaper industry. The number of chains increased from 10 in 1900 to more than 40 by 1930. By 1940, 87% of cities had only one local daily newspaper (Demers 2001). The number of different media outlets available to a given resident declined dramatically between 1922 and 1940 (Sterling 1972). The death of country weeklies during that period also contributed to a decline in local coverage (Mott 1962). Armao has found that investigative reporting declined during this period (Armao 2000). There is of course, a new medium to be considered for this period, yet radio did not initially involve much original reporting. Its uptake among audiences, though quick remained incomplete (Starr 2004). Early commercial radio had focused on entertainment (Douglas 1987; Jackaway 1995). In the mid-twenties radio stations began to use newspaper headlines. In the 1930s, radio itself became increasingly concentrated, with few networks providing programming from afar to local affiliates (Leblebici et al. 1991).

The impact of the new medium was mediated by the journalistic field; its incorporation was accompanied by many conflicts that were shaped by field-dynamics. Radio began to discover its unique potential for news coverage with live, long-distance broadcasts of big events such as the 1920 and 1924 presidential elections. Newspaper-owned stations used headlines as

advertisements for their own newspapers. Others read newspaper or wire service news as filler without acknowledging the source.

Worried by this competition early on, print journalists united against radio. They disparaged radio news workers as un-American, inaccurate, and sensationalist. Newspapers sought to limit radio's access to wire services in what came to be known as the Press-Radio War. In a 1934 agreement, network radio stations acknowledged the press' journalistic monopoly. They committed to use limited wire services and present news in such a way as to entice readers to turn to a newspaper. They also pledged not to engage in their own news-gathering activities (Jackaway 1995). In the long run, newspaper journalists' attempt to prevent competition from radio by monopolizing the wire services backfired. Some stations had begun to gather news in response to earlier conflicts with the wire services. Independent stations started their own wire service and, by 1940-41, nearly all radio stations provided regular news programming (Sterling 2002).

That period saw the first sustained wave of activism around news media. The consumer movement started its campaign against the undue influence of advertising. Activists were already worried about ownership concentration in the newspaper industry; and the development of radio was accompanied by the struggle over free airwaves (McChesney 1993).

Political measures established the basis for future regulation within a market system: The 1927 Radio Act had sought to address what policy-makers saw as the problem of overcrowding airwaves, and thereby laid the basis for a licensing system and some amount of content regulation. The 1934 Communications Act established the Federal Communications Commission and gave it exclusive power to regulate broadcasting to 'serve the public interest, convenience and necessity.' The Act ceded to industry pressures and established the principle of private

operation of public airwaves but it also established local and national ownership limits that were designed to prevent media concentration.

### **The Golden Age of Reporting: 1945–1970**

The post-war era marked what Hallin (1992, 1996) called the high-modernist age of journalism, characterized by a strong orientation toward an ethic of public service and towards the practice of reporting. In this period the journalistic field expanded again, and reporting flourished especially due to the rise of news production in TV and radio. This period is also characterized by a high level of federal regulation.

The number of professional organizations rose dramatically during that time, representing a diversity of positions within the field. In 1960 there were 70 different national associations; three-fourths of the states also had a statewide press and broadcasters' organization. Enrollment in journalism programs had been rising since the 1960s.

The number of daily papers continued to decline until 1950 but less sharply than before. From 1950 to 1970, however, the number of dailies rose again, reflecting the growth of suburban print media. By 1960 we count 2000 new suburban papers, 650 community papers, and 1350 interurban papers. Chicago alone had around 80 suburban papers, combined in groups of 10 to 20 papers in each suburb (Kaniss 1991).

Group ownership of newspapers was rising in newspapers (Mott 1962; Davies 2006) as well as TV stations (Howard 1983). FCC regulation, however, mitigated the effects of processes of concentration in local markets. In 1941 it enacted a rule according to which no broadcaster could own TV stations that would reach more than 35% of the national audience. A group of TV stations could maximally encompass five or, after 1953, seven stations. In 1964 measures were

taken to prevent a TV station owner from owning more than one station in one market. In 1970 and 1975 the FCC established rules to prevent ownership of a radio and a TV station, and of a newspaper and a TV station, in the same market. The FCC also regulated content. The 1949 Fairness Doctrine established that licensees were required to seek opposing views on issues of public importance and required broadcasters to air informational programmes. These FCC measures and the sharp rise in broadcast outlets led to a slight decline in concentration measures in local markets and an increase in the number of outlets per market. The number of TV outlets was rising quickly; the number of AM stations increased from about 940 in 1945 to more than 2350 by the end of 1952 and kept rising sharply over the following decade.

News gradually became important in television and became increasingly localized. In 1947 networks initiated a 15-minute newscast to fulfill their public service obligation. Most local stations added a 15-minute local show to the networks'. Pioneering local stations shot their own material. WPIX in New York City (owned by the *Daily News*) produced the first local newscast in 1948, with coverage of accidents, the zoo, and other local sites. In 1948, 17% of stations had staff that was writing their own stories. Until 1959 the most common form of local news seems to have been a talking head reading the news. 'Rip 'n' read' was common, as was co-operation with a local newspaper (Allen 2001).

In 1961 a Los Angeles station extended its newscast to an hour, and local stations began to extend their news-gathering activities. In 1961 the FCC announced a policy that required local stations to research what their audience wanted, called 'community ascertainment.' Local news increased in time, staffing and equipment during the 1960s. News proved very profitable for local stations. The time devoted to news broadcasting grew throughout the 1960s and '70s (Allen 2001).

A key transformation for journalism during this period was the 'localization of radio' (Leblebici et al. 1991). When networks, staff and advertising money moved into TV, the decline in radio network provision did not lead to the end of radio as many contemporaries feared. Rather, radio re-invented itself as a local medium. The FCC abandoned the belief that numerous local stations would create interference. It reduced the allowable range for local stations, which led to a growth in small, independent stations.

Small towns that used to rely on distant stations could now have their own local radio.

Independent stations became the new leaders in the field, emphasizing local programming. Radio was produced cheaply, and could therefore be creative in serving small audiences with news of their immediate neighbourhoods (Hall 1978). Radio also proved to be in a unique position to serve the needs of suburban commuters, who got their news from radio on their way to work (Kaniss 1991).

In the early 1960s a new wave of investigative reporting started, which Watergate came to symbolize in popular representation. This development was also supported by the state, as evidenced by a 1964 Supreme Court decision that protected journalists from libel suits by public figures (Armao 2000).

### **Media without Reporting? 1970-Present**

Since the 1970s, in the context of changes in ownership and regulation, the field's capacity to orient practices around its specific ethic of public service through original reporting declined.

Since the end of the 1960s, the field has been impacted by a transformation of news organisations' ownership structure. Chain ownership in the newspaper industry rose continually, leaving 80% of newspapers chain-owned by the end of the century. The largest chains - Gannett,

Knight-Ridder, Newhouse, and Times Mirror - controlled slightly more than 25% of total circulation today (Demers 2001).

The past decades have seen the rise of a new type of media corporation with global holdings and significant cross-sectional interests. The trend toward public ownership is significant here, because, by law, it obliges managers to place maximising profits over news organisations' field-specific aims. When Gannett began selling stock on the NYSE in 1969, only Dow Jones and Times Mirror were publicly traded. Other chains have since followed their example. Profit expectations have increased throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

While group ownership of TV stations continued to rise throughout the 1970s, the size of these groups was still limited by FCC regulations. In the years following 1981, however, the regulatory regime has changed, considered a 'complete revision' of policy by some commentators. The FCC removed all rules on broadcast programming content, such as the non-entertainment guideline and renewal primers. Advertising guidelines and the requirement to provide program logs were relaxed. In 1990 the FCC announced it would no longer enforce the 1949 Fairness Doctrine, which required licensees to seek opposing views on issues of public importance (Aufderheide 2001). Ownership caps had increased very slowly. In a radical step, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 in effect removed all national radio ownership limits and lifted all ownership restrictions on TV stations, as long as less than 35% of the audience was being reached.

The 1996 Telecommunications Act set off an intense merger wave in the radio industry. In 2003 more than 9000 out of 10,000 existing radio stations had changed ownership at least once since 1996. Although the number of commercial radio stations increased between March 1996 and March 2002, the number of radio owners declined by 34% during that six-year period (Williams

and Roberts 2002). In 2002, 10 parent companies controlled two-thirds of both listeners and radio revenues. Clear Channel and Viacom alone controlled 42% of listeners and 45% of industry revenues (Williams and Roberts 2002).

Evidence also suggests increasing concentration in TV. The growth in TV outlets has been slowing since the 1980s and has fallen sharply during the 1990s. In all of the 10 markets examined by the FCC, the number of owners has fallen or grown by significantly less than the number of outlets (Roberts et al. 2002).

By 1995, 190 groups owned more than three-fourths of all stations in the 100 largest markets (Demers 2001). In 1996 alone there were 185 acquisitions and mergers in the TV industry. One of the beneficiaries of concentration in the TV market has been Sinclair Broadcasting. It started its expansion in 1991 using local marketing agreements to bypass FCC rules. By 2001 it owned 62 stations and reaches 24% of the national TV audience (Schmelzer 2003).

During this period, investigative reporting has suffered from a 'big chill.' By the mid-1980s news-managers had begun to think of investigative reporting as too time-consuming and expensive. Several prominent editors have publicly questioned readers' interest in such stories. The threat of lawsuits also has discouraged editors, as corporations have begun to invest more resources than previously into libel proceedings. Bernt and Greenwald found a sharp decline in investigative stories between 1980 and 1995 in three major metropolitan newspapers. Among the stories published, stories relying on hidden evidence have become fewer, and the stories question almost exclusively public (rather than private) institutions (Greenwald and Brent 2000).

Journalists are defending their positions against PR workers and corporate pressures and are suffering from the increasing technical demands of the new technological environment in multi-media corporations. Educational opportunities for journalists have expanded, but college

programmes focus on reporting as only one among many topics, and PR- and advertising-related offerings are increasing. Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) find that the proportion of graduates with a journalism degree who take a journalistic job has fallen sharply compared to those who go on to work in advertising or public relations. Membership in professional organizations and exposure to a common body of critical literature have also been declining.

Weaver and colleagues found that from 1992 to 2002, employment at daily newspapers fell by more than 8,400, to 58,769. Employment at all print media outlets fell by 3,268, to 81,829 (Weaver et al. 2006). International reporting has declined as well (Hallin 1996). The most pronounced transformation, however, may be the decline in local reporting (Klinenberg 2007). This change has been most radical in radio. Before deregulation almost all stations carried news. Since the FCC's deregulation in 1981, many stations have dropped their news operations. According to an annual survey conducted by Vernon Stone between 1990 and 1993 more than 600 commercial stations dropped their news operations. Between 1994 and 2001 an estimated 100 newsrooms were lost during a time when the number of stations increased (Stone 2001a). Jobs for news workers have continually been lost in the industry. In a 1986 study, Vernon Stone estimated that 2000 full-time radio news jobs had been lost and replaced by 700 part-time positions in the previous year alone (Fox 1993). In the 1990s the radio news force decreased from 19,700 to an estimated 12,000 in 2001, of which an increasing number work part-time (Stone 2001a).

Many stations that still carry news follow the trend of outsourcing radio news without letting the audience know. 'Many radio stations that offer periodic headline reports, and that even promote themselves as 'news radio,' rely completely on syndicated services such as metro networks and shadow broadcasting services, which use a single announcer to service eight or 10 stations in a

market' (Grossman 1998). Passive news-gathering has taken over in many stations that still employ their own news staff. There is an increase in the use of public relations companies' information management services (Andrews 1992; Fairchild 1999; Stauber and Rampton 1995). A decline in competition among local newspapers led to a decline in attention to local detail (Lacy 1988). In a study of front-page content in 96 daily newspapers between 1986 and 1993, Janet and Lamar Bridges found that coverage of local civic news had declined between those years (Bridges and Bridges 1997). The evidence for local TV news is more mixed. Stone and others find an increase in TV news staff since the 1970s (Stone 2001b; Weaver et al. 2006). This time has also seen a rise in the number of stations. Local television is changing under competitive pressures and, as Hallin remarked, has always been and increasingly becomes 'more commercial.' Like in radio, growing television chains such as Sinclair are pioneering non-local programming strategies for 'local' news programs.

Some commentators celebrate cable TV and the internet as sources of unprecedented diversity and a new kind of journalism by citizen. While the internet's potential cannot be overestimated, content analysis and data on usage patterns do not suggest that it has reversed the trends discussed in this section. Most users rely on TV and newspapers for news, and if they consult the internet they use the websites of major news corporations, who rarely collect additional news for their online services. Users' time spent online is heavily focused on a few sites, the ownership of which is extremely concentrated. Nearly 69% of the most popular news websites are owned by one of the 20 biggest media companies. Time Warner controls two of the top four news sites (Project for Excellence in Journalism 2004, quoted in Klinenberg 2007). There are some innovative citizen journalist projects, but few alternative sites can sustain a staff of reporters that

could gather news (Klinenberg 2007). Bloggers have been shown to reference primarily each other and to rely on other news sources (Cross and Butts 2005).

## **Conclusion**

Active newsgathering or reporting is the distinctive innovation of journalism. This practice became common in the 1860s and 1870s with the emergence of a relatively autonomous field of practice with its own stakes, relatively independent from political advantage or literary merit. The power of field-specific capital to organize practices in the media has varied since then. The field consolidated in the era from 1890-194, with newspapering expanding as an industry. In this period we see a first golden era for local reporting and investigative journalism. In the past 30 years this power has weakened across media forms. As during the interwar years, the boundary between PR and journalism has become increasingly blurry, and the practice of active newsgathering has less import within the news-media.

We can see that the autonomy of the journalistic field is not to be equated with the liberty of media actors. At the initial moment of its formation, the market furthered the journalistic field's autonomisation from politics and the arts. But the journalistic field's autonomy seems to depend not only on freedom from political interference but also on political protection and regulation. The role of regulation and technology in particular could be explored further. Making full use of historical, national, and sectoral variation, we can explore the implications of different political, economic, and cultural conditions for field formation and reproduction.

Bourdieu acknowledged that the French nation-state has played an important role in the formation of different fields in that context. We have accounts of state-formation and field-

formation but have yet to consider systematically the effect of different regulatory regimes in different nation-states.

Technological change has played an important yet also limited role in the history of journalism. Innovation has become an integral aspect of maintaining field autonomy vis-à-vis outside forces, by limiting concentration and creating venues and audiences for new forms of journalistic practices - a role first played by radio, then TV, and now the internet. In each case, the new entrant was not initially a journalistic medium but became partially incorporated into the field. This incorporation at the same time limited the role the new medium could play. Under what conditions are new technologies and media incorporated into fields? Under what conditions might they have a more transformative impact?

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