CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY

Contemporary Journalism in the US and Germany

Agents of Accountability

Matthias Revers

Cultural Sociology

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Für meinen Adam

Series Editor Preface

Journalism has all too rarely been a topic for contemporary sociology, which is quite extraordinary given its vital importance in contemporary societies. Sociologists seem to take it for granted that journalism provides information, for the institutions, movements and associations that form the usual topics of their study. In his deeply researched and elegantly theorized comparative study, however, Matthias Revers shows this is hardly the case. The factual status of journalism is sociologically constructed. It is rooted in deep cultural structures that must be continuously performed in public and in private, so that influential audiences will "see" the factual status as true.

To maintain the mythology of objectivity, Revers suggests, journalists devote themselves, not just to reporting and interpreting news but also to cultivating and sustaining the boundaries of their professional ethics and organizations. Even as they usually maintain cordiality, they strive to separate themselves from the social powers upon whose actions and motives they report and from the sources upon whose information they depend. Maintaining boundaries is not about money but about meaning, about sustaining a moral community against fragmentation, conflict, and despair.

To study journalism in this manner one must practice a particular sort of cultural sociology.

At the core of the practice of independence Revers finds the idea of journalism as a sacred profession, one whose mythology celebrates heroes who have struggled courageously to reveal truth in the face of daunting, punishing and sometimes even physically dangerous conditions. Journalism that sustains autonomy is revered and storied as the foundation

of democracy; journalism that betrays autonomy is polluted and narrated as insidiously anti-civil. Upholding professional ethics and civil morals is not just pragmatic, something practical, but a symbolic performance, projected to other reporters and the public at large.

Journalists must continuously work to properly situate themselves, their research, their stories, and their reactions to the reactions to their stories—inside the sacred myths that portray professional purity. The boundaries of professional journalism are porous, the lines separating it from outside pressures and organizations uncertain. Maintaining boundaries requires continuous symbolic work, framing descriptions of, and declarations about, news reporters and their stories in frames that appeal to professional heroes and mythological imaginaries. When journalists succeed in aligning text, performer, and audience, Revers shows, they have the sense that they are making the broader moral community whole.

Comparative social scientists have sometimes described US journalism as quite alone in its insistence on professional autonomy. Revers confirms the more overtly political identities animating German reporting, but he finds deep concerns for independence as well. The question is not whether autonomy is valued, but how it is imagined differently in the national context. Separation, boundaries, and autonomy are sacred on both sides of the Atlantic, the distinctive mythology of contemporary journalism widely shared.

New Haven, CT, USA Jeffrey C. Alexander

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which "doctoral adviser" or "chair" does not, and I could not have asked for a better one. As a committed father, Ron also served as a role model for how to balance family and professional life.

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List of Abbreviations

AFP	Agence France-Presse
ARD	*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Consortium of public broadcasters in Germany)
BR	*Bayerischer Rundfunk* (Bavarian Broadcasting)
CDU	*Christlich-Demokratische Union Deutschlands* (Christian Democratic Union of Germany)
CSU	*Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern* (Christian Social Union in Bavaria)
DAPD	Deutscher Auslands-Depeschendienst
DPA	*Deutsche Presse Agentur* (German News Agency)
FAZ	*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*
FDP	*Freie Demokratische Partei* (Free Democratic Party)
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
GPA	George Polk Awards
HJFP	Hanns-Joachim-Friedrichs-Preis
HNP	Henri-Nannen-Preis
LCA	Legislative Correspondents Association of New York State
LP	Bayerische Landtagspresse
NYT	*The New York Times*
PA	The George Foster Peabody Awards, simply Peabody Awards
PP	Pulitzer Prize

SPD	*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SZ	*Süddeutsche Zeitung*
TWP	Theodor-Wolff-Preis
ZDF	*Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen* (literal translation: Second German Television Station)

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Textures and Porosities of Journalistic Fields

The secret documents leaked by Edward Snowden about the National Security Agency (NSA)-governed surveillance programs in 2013 not only stimulated international debates about government overreach, surveillance, privacy and state secrecy; journalists took the Snowden revelations and follow-up stories as instances for occupational self-reflection. Discussions centered on news media as stages for whistleblowers, balancing accountability and national security, and contemplations about the future of journalism.

One salient theme was the fine line between journalism and activism with regard to Glenn Greenwald who broke the story in *The Guardian*. Greenwald appeared as a new archetype of a journalist in these stories. The "Greenwaldization" of journalism was identified as both inevitable and threating to proven ways of journalism. Even though the question whether Greenwald could be considered a journalist was fundamentally about constitutional protection,[1] journalists used these discussions to negotiate occupational norms. Aside from the fact that leading US as well as German news outlets dealt with this issue, debates were colored and filtered by lenses specific to each occupational culture of journalism.

In discussing the difficulty to draw a line between journalism and advocacy, Günter Hack of *Zeit Online* argued that there was a reluctance to clearly delineate journalism in Germany, which went back to the rigid codification of occupational obligations during National Socialism. Post-war Germany preferred to have this definition "negotiated time and again" and to perceive indeterminacy as a "productive and necessary grey

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area" (Hack 2014). In this grey area, a commentator like Hack firmly argued that it was impossible for journalists not to be actively involved in stories about surveillance. Another commentator of the same outlet and grey area evaluated the role of Greenwald differently days before: "Glenn Greenwald can no longer be considered a journalist. The NSA disclosures are not just stories for him anymore, they are a struggle for freedom" (Biermann and Beuth 2013).

Some German journalists were quick to undermine or dismiss Greenwald's professional credibility: "Someone like Greenwald—passionately committed to his issue, irritable and a bit vein—inevitably makes mistakes" (Fischermann 2013). Sometimes, this led to Greenwald not even labeled as a journalist anymore: "The *blogger* Glenn Greenwald, who is not a profound authority on the NSA, obviously falsely interpreted some foreign cases [of government surveillance]" (Leyendecker 2013; my emphasis).

Despite the blow against Greenwald, Hans Leyendecker—a figurehead of investigative journalism in Germany—was generally positive and optimistic toward participatory data journalism (as long as it is practiced by *The Guardian*). After the release of Laura Poitras' documentary film about the leak, Citizenfour, German news outlets judged more harshly: "Poitras and Greenwald are certainly not merely deliverers of Snowden's message, they are also his escape agents. As his apostles, they also have to stay away from the USA to do their work" (Richter 2014).

Influenced by the government backlash to the Snowden leaks, some US news outlets took a much sharper turn by insinuating whether Greenwald should, in fact, be criminally persecuted, most notoriously in a TV interview on NBC Meet the Press (2013).[2] When several journalists lent support to this position, others, like David Carr, sprung to Greenwald's defense by attacking these journalists for "giving the current administration a justification for their focus on the ethics of disclosure rather than the morality of government behavior" (Carr 2013b).

Whenever US news coverage on the Snowden leaks and its aftermath turned its attention to journalism, detailed discussions of practices and norms about a wide range of issues followed—from source protection to transparency, the loss of gatekeeping authority and dissolution of the business model of newspapers through the internet. Similarly, distinctions between journalism and activism were made much more firmly than in the German debate. David Carr disagreed with both positions, that a journalist is or should be a "political and ideological eunuch" and that activists are nothing more than ideologues (Carr 2013a). Carr warned, however, that

an activist agenda could "impair vision," that the "tendentiousness of ideology creates its own narrative" and that its "primary objective remains winning the argument" rather than to "reveal the truth" (ibid.).[3]

In taking this position, Carr was in line with his former boss, at that point fellow columnist at the *New York Times*, Bill Keller. The lengthy e-mail exchange between Keller and Greenwald, which was published on the Op-Ed pages of the *Times* (Keller 2013), epitomizes tensions in US journalism that have grown since the rise of online news making. On the traditional side of the argument, Keller defended impartial journalism, which "in most cases … gets you closer to the truth, because it imposes a discipline of testing all assumptions, very much including your own" (ibid.). Keller argued, on the other hand, that "journalism that starts from a publicly declared predisposition is less likely to get to the truth, and less likely to be convincing to those who are not already convinced" (ibid.).

Promoting journalism-with-a-stated-point-of-view, Greenwald argued, "all journalism is subjective and a form of activism even if an attempt is made to pretend that this isn't so" (ibid.). More honest and trustworthy journalism, therefore, needed "honestly disclosing rather than hiding one's subjective values" to both supply the public with "accurate and vital information … [and] provide a truly adversarial check on those in power" (ibid.). Greenwald framed the journalistic mission personified by Keller and the *Times* as "donning a voice-of-god, view-from-nowhere tone that falsely implies that journalists reside above the normal viewpoints and faction-loyalties that plague the non-journalist and the dreaded 'activist'" (ibid.). The kind of news stories that followed from Greenwald's mission treated "official assertions [as] stating point to investigate ('Official A said X, Y and Z today: now let's see if that's true'), not the gospel around which we build our narratives ('X, Y and Z, official A says')" (ibid.). Clearly, he put the journalism of the *Times* in the latter category.

Reading through a cross-section of articles in leading media outlets of both countries on this subject, one is struck by a more diverse and lively debate about journalism and advocacy in the US coverage. This is certainly connected to but not a mere consequence of the more rapid and profound weakening of the institutional authority of legacy news media in the USA since the early 2000s. The discussion also drew from specific bases of legitimacy, beliefs, and ongoing debates within US journalism. Even though objectivity and separating news from opinion are working practices in German journalism, this differentiation does not reach as deeply into their

conception of professionalism. The dignity of US journalists rests much more on these symbolic distinctions and their public display.

This study is about how German and US journalists define and perform professionalism. It deals with symbolic boundaries of journalism, that is, the criteria journalists use to distinguish between professional and unprofessional actors, practices, relations and pronouncements. It pays close attention to how journalists assert professionalism in performative action, including by displaying symbolic boundaries. The comparative analysis in this book shows that the intensity of performances of professionalism by US journalists does not accrue from particularly strong professional boundaries. To the contrary, I will argue that the assertiveness is a consequence of professional boundaries that are rather porous for deviating and novel norms and practices.

This book examines historically evolved cultural principles of journalism that are formative for the structure of its boundaries and the democracies it serves. The analysis utilizes the fact that self-monitoring, reassuring, renegotiating and adjusting of professional boundaries are constant companions of conversations between journalists, occupational practices, news coverage, and commemorative and celebratory occupational discourses. The main objects of investigation are conversations that I had with members of one press corps in each country, who I followed and observed for over 3 years. I talked to them about occupational norms and values and how they manifest themselves in political environments. The second component of the comparison is an analysis of jury statements of major journalism awards and obituaries of renowned journalists in both countries. This two-level approach allows inferences from discourses to practices. Before contextualizing occupational cultures in their institutional and historical context in each media system in Chap. 2, I will now discuss the theoretical framework that guides this analysis.

Theorizing Journalistic Professionalism

Journalistic Autonomy and Professionalism

Even though media sociologists have questioned whether autonomy is desirable at all cost,[4] it is common sense that the democratic capacity of news media rests on whether journalism is free to apply scrutiny to and request accountability from representatives of the public. Autonomy is conditioned by the ambitions of journalism to serve the public independently as well as the media systemic conditions in which it takes place. Leaving aside material constraints for the moment, I conceive of professionalism

as the intrinsic aspirations of autonomy that arise from the occupational culture of journalism.

Journalism misses some crucial elements commonly associated with professions: It lacks formal knowledge and closure of its labor market, which means there are no clearly circumscribed qualifications required to enter the occupation.[5] Beyond how it is organized as an occupational group, journalism is also defined as a field of practice that performs certain tasks more or less exclusively, which is what Andrew Abbott (1988) termed *jurisdiction*. The tasks of journalism are to gather, process, and distribute information to a broader public. Its power consists of conferring publicity to certain information and the actors providing or voicing this information. Journalism struggles for this jurisdiction in two main ways. First, since the internet age, journalism competes for discursive authority with other institutional actors and citizens on various digital infrastructures. Second, journalism has always struggled with specific institutions in each subject area it is involved with. Whether politics, arts, business, sports—journalism makes truth claims in these areas. Whereas challenges do not concern the jurisdiction of journalism in toto, institutions compete with journalism for interpretive authority within their specific domains.

The combination of relatively fuzzy professional boundaries and rather firm public service claims makes journalism an interesting object of study from a sociology of professions perspective. Fundamental agreement about a common purpose—serving the public with information—thus a unique position of the occupation and its service, goes a long way toward professional autonomy.[6] According to Durkheim ([1957] 1992), this common purpose is substantiated with civic moral principles, even if the means to achieve this purpose are subject of ongoing negotiations and debates within occupations, even the most highly professionalized ones.

Civic morals are not only the ordering principles and bases of solidarity of these occupational groups but also of their special position in society, which is relatively autonomous from forces of the market and bureaucracy. Contrary to the general knowledge claims of these forces, professionalism is based on discretionary specialization and transcendent values of public service (Freidson 2001:105–123).[7] In journalism, especially political journalism, *democracy* serves as a transcendental source of legitimacy and autonomy of action.

Of course, professionalism does not find complete and permanent expression. Besides the challenges on the jurisdictional level of occupational practice, autonomy is always limited by the material context which facilitates journalism—the media industry and news organiza-

tions. Tensions between journalistic professionalism and the institutional and organizational conditions of possibility of journalism are profound and continuous. These tensions epitomize the opposition between the material-institutional (*real civil society*) and ideal-aspirational (*civil sphere*) dimensions of civil society (Alexander 2006). As the realm of moral regulation according to shared civic values, the civil sphere originates journalistic professionalism. Because the civil sphere is the medium through which different social spheres (civil and non-civil, which includes state and economy) legitimate themselves and engage with each other, journalism has a special role in mediating between them as well as classifying their motives and relations in civil and uncivil terms (ibid.:75–85).

A comparative analysis of journalistic professionalism needs to account for the institutional conditions of its realization, which includes limiting and enabling material and cultural circumstances. The analytical tools of field theory (Bourdieu 1993, 1996; Fligstein and McAdam 2012) lend themselves for locating expressions and acts of journalism in their institutional context.[8] Rodney Benson (1999, 2013; Benson and Neveu 2005) specified this framework for comparative media analysis and disentangled complex interactions between self- and other-determining influences on news media and public discourse. The analysis in this book mainly focuses on two dimensions of journalistic fields—its position and its logic (Benson 2013).[9]

Chapter 2 determines the position of German and US journalism in the larger field of power, in relation to market and non-market (civic) heteronomous powers.[10] Between these two powers arises autonomy, which, as Benson emphasizes, "should not be privileged as the sole locus of journalistic excellence" (Benson 2013:13). This accounts for the fact that both profit-oriented news organizations, like the *New York Times*, as well as public service media which receive significant funding from the state and which are subjected to influence by political parties can produce hard-hitting accountability reporting and other professionally esteemed acts of journalism. I view these heteronomies as conditions of possibility for journalistic professionalism to be realized.

The main subject of this book, however, is professionalism as the cultural logic of the journalistic field, which is based on occupational traditions, symbols, and historically conditioned norms and practices. Benson conceived news formats, that is, stylistic differences of news presentation, as the most reliable empirical manifestations of these logics while dismissing journalists" subjective beliefs as "surface discourse" one needs to "dive below" of (Benson 2013:26). This book, on the contrary, *dives deeper*

into these discourses. This is not only due to a different theoretical position but also encouraged by recent empirical research suggesting a strong correlation between journalists' role conceptions and news outcomes (Albæk et al. 2014). Besides questioning the correspondence between occupational practices and beliefs, Benson underplays the power of field logic as a stable source of professional autonomy,[11] which in his mind is inherently transitory and negotiated (Benson 2013:13). I conceive of professionalism as a stable resource of journalistic autonomy.

State house press corps serve as miniature fields, remaining cognizant that political reporting represents one particular yet important subfield of journalism. Subfields are *embedded* within and subordinated to larger fields, which means that positions and relations carry forward into lower field orders (Fligstein and McAdam 2012:59–64). From a Bourdieuian perspective, relations within the field are exclusively competitive and its members primarily motivated by status enhancement and the desire to shape the rules of the game in order to generate dominant interpretations of reality.[12] Thus, Fligstein and McAdam's argument that actions in fields are at least as much about cooperation as competition is a useful addition to this theory. In their view, humans share an existential need to associate and cooperate with each other "by appealing to and helping to create shared meanings and collective identities" (ibid.:46). The following section deals with how journalists make sense, ritually affirm, and negotiate shared meanings of occupational identities. It presents an analytical framework to examine these expressions of professionalism.

Professionalism as Cultural Practice

With its in-between status, the study of professionalism promises to be a particularly rich subject for cultural sociology. It is a code that guides members of the moral community in distinguishing professional from unprofessional motives and relations. This system of moral classification is ingrained in shared symbols of the occupation, which are expressed in narratives and rituals. With the help of this symbolic vocabulary, journalists make sense of their collective experience, negotiate and contend professional worth with each other, and assert themselves toward other institutions and within civil sphere more generally.[13]

This book looks closely at acts and expressions of purification and pollution to sanctify and revive shared values and condemn transgression within the moral community of journalism. With this in mind, this study exam-

ines professionalism at two strategic research sites (Merton 1987): (1) Celebratory and commemorative discourses of professionalism, specifically in obituaries of journalists and journalism award statements, and (2) state house press corps in which journalists constantly seek to maintain their professional worth toward each other and defend and negotiate their professional autonomy against the appropriation by political interests. This struggle for worth and autonomy is intensified at a time of economic predicament and technological upheaval of the news business. The maintenance of professional authority in a state of crisis unfolds as a perpetual *social drama* (Turner 1974) for journalists, a continuous struggle over their integrity and relevance.

Two, partly overlapping, cultural practices help journalists accomplish these celebratory, differentiating, distancing, and self-elevating demands: boundary work and performance. Boundary work is relevant to journalists in two ways (see Gieryn 1983): Firstly, to protect their autonomy, which mainly concerns relations with politics and involves procedures of boundary maintenance. However, I will show that journalistic autonomy also involves a selective blurring of boundaries. I refer to the interplay between maintaining and blurring of boundaries as *boundary management*. Secondly, to expand their professional authority, which is particularly relevant since the rise of the internet and the broadening of the field of news production through participatory media (Singer et al. 2011). Because journalism, like any other professional project, seeks *cognitive exclusivity* over its task domain (Larson 1977), it has to adapt to new conditions of the networked public sphere in order to confront the gradual dissolution of established institutional authority (Benkler 2006; Friedland et al. 2006). Adaption involves advancing into participatory media spaces in which "everyone can be a journalist" by showing the qualities of "real journalism." These engagements are not friction-free and set off discussions within journalism about means and ends of the occupation.

The motivation of boundary work cannot be reduced to status and power interests but involves the realization of moral and cultural convictions. Accordingly, autonomy aspirations and assertions in journalism are also rooted in beliefs about the inherent purity of the professional project. These beliefs are partly universal, partly informed by nationally specific cultural representations and *schemas of evaluation* (Lamont and Thévenot 2000).

In the first instance, symbolic boundaries are cognitive schemas. They are "conceptual distinctions that we make to categorize objects, people, practices, and even times and space" (Lamont 1992:9). But they are not

only that. Journalists externalize boundaries toward others in *boundary performances*. Performances are not merely situationally conditioned, as Goffman (1956) examined them, but draw authenticity from appearing as "motivated by and toward existential, emotional, and moral concerns" (Alexander 2004:530). Performers create these impressions by referring to collective belief systems. In this particular case, boundary performances signal symbolic affirmation of professionalism or opposition to *un*professionalism.[14]

The effectiveness of performances rests on their "ritual-like" character, which is the case when participants and audience members "share a mutual belief in the descriptive and prescriptive validity of the communication's symbolic contents" (ibid.:527).[15] Establishing shared belief is key, since the purpose of any performance is to fuse dispersed elements of meaning. Applied to journalism, what a performance of professionalism seeks to accomplish by aligning text, performer and audience is to make the moral community whole, which in Durkheim's understanding is consonant with civil society.

'Making the moral community whole' is, furthermore, particularly prevalent at a place (state government) where journalistic autonomy is constantly attacked and a time when news making is in search of a viable business model and slipping professional journalism's jurisdictional authority. These somewhat aggravating locational and historical circumstances bring forth salient features of occupational cultures of journalism, especially by examining their varying ability to innovate, adapt, and resist change.

Research Procedures

I examined boundary work and performances in different venues and situations: when reporters dealt with sources; in conversations they had with each other and that I had with them; in metadiscourse, that is, when journalists talked about journalism in situ as well as in the news[16] and other public venues; at ritual moments of occupational consecration.

The main portion of the empirical analysis is based on field research on two state house press corps: The Legislative Correspondents Association (LCA) in Albany, New York, and the Landtagspresse (LP) in Munich. I chose state capitals over national capitals to study national press culture because the latter are places of exceptional concentrations of political power and media competition. I was in the field between April 2009 and August 2012. The first part of the research was in Albany and lasted until July 2011,

with a 2-week follow-up in February 2012. I continued my research in Munich in October 2011 and stayed in the field until the end of July 2012.

Field research involved observation of reporting practices and 72 interviews with journalists from 31 different news organizations and spokespeople from different branches of government and legislature. In Albany, I did a total of 42 interviews with 31 journalists (seven of whom I interviewed twice) and four spokespeople; in Munich, 30 interviews with 24 journalists and six spokespeople. The larger part of the 300 hours of observation in Albany occurred between Governor Andrew Cuomo's election in the fall of 2010, and the end of his first legislative session in office in June 2011. In Munich, I gathered 50 hours of observational data. I developed a coding matrix to analyze interview and observational data, using the Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) application HyperResearch.

Interviews were semi-structured, which means I used an interview guide with a list of issues and questions and saw my role as an interviewer in facilitating narration and keeping it on the issues of interest. This required varying efforts of probing and steering conversations. I asked reporters what they considered bad journalism, occupational virtues, their responsibility to the public, and triumphs and failures of their national press culture. I confronted them with the notion of pack journalism—a pejorative term for press corps reporting— and asked them how they felt about it. Aside from this conversation about occupational values, I talked to them about what they considered the most fundamental changes in their work lives. If they did not address digital media themselves (most of them did) I asked them directly. Another section of the interviews dealt with the specific conditions of newsgathering within a political institution (including spatial arrangements), source relations, and professional autonomy. I talked to spokespeople about some of these issues, especially about press–politics relations.

Regarding observation, I spent time in the general area of the LCA, went to press conferences and witnessed more casual encounters between reporters and politicians. I shadowed four specific reporters in their offices at the State Capitol and followed them around, two of them extensively. Observation in Munich was basically reduced to plenary session days since journalists were only at the Landtag on these occasions for the most part. On those days I spent most time in the common area at the Maximilianeum (the state legislature). Observation in Munich was limited for reasons of spatial arrangement and access (see Appendix). Because of this imbalance,

observational data play a subsidiary role in this book, more for illustrative purposes than systematic comparison.

Chapter 3 is mostly based on a comparative analysis of sacred discourses of professionalism and occupational mythologies in journalism. I considered jury statements of major national journalism awards in both countries between 1980 and 2013: The George Polk Award, Peabody Award and Pulitzer Prize in the USA; Hanns-Joachim-Friedrichs-Preis für Fernsehjournalismus, Henri-Nannen Preis, and Theodor-Wolff-Preis in Germany. The sample included a total of 417 award statements. Furthermore, I analyzed obituaries of journalists in national newspapers and news magazines. Most of these were randomly chosen from a list of winners of aforementioned journalism awards who deceased between 1980 and 2013, amounting to a total of 151 obituaries of 88 journalists.

In the discourse analysis of award statements and obituaries I looked for reoccurring conceptions of good journalism and professional worth. The analyses of these two distinct bodies of text partly overlapped, partly complemented each other. Obituaries expressed ideas of professional worth through the achievements and embodied qualities of commemorated journalists. Award statements discussed professional worth more through journalistic works of excellence, the more or less particular accomplishments (specific news stories or lifetime achievements), and the reporting that made them possible. Another way how both bodies of text articulated criteria of good journalism was by drawing boundaries toward bad journalism.

Overview and Key Findings

Chapter 2 situates journalism in its institutional and cultural context in Germany and the USA. On the institutional level, it compares the two media systems, focusing particularly on market and non-market influences and professional organizational infrastructures of journalism. On the cultural level, it examines the history of journalism in each country and connects it to national repertoires of evaluation. This chapter suggests a pervasiveness of market logics, weaker and more malleable professional boundaries, less occupational solidarity, and a more differentiated journalistic field in the USA. The influence of market and non-market heteronomies are more balanced in the German journalistic field, which is defined by relative economic health, collectivist professional organizational infrastructures, and influence of politics, especially in the public service media sector.

The empirical analysis is written as a continuous rather than a segmented comparison (à la: German case—US case—comparison) and tackles professionalism on different levels: Chapter 3 focuses on sacred discourse encapsulated in mythologies and articulated in moments of occupational consecration. The discourse analysis of journalism award statements and obituaries of journalists is followed by an examination of interview data of reporters of the two press corps engaging in occupational mythologizing. This chapter demonstrates a greater emphasis on the concrete social impact of journalism in the USA, corresponding to the image of the ideal journalist as a change agent of history. The German professional imaginary envisions less immediate impacts of journalism, focusing more on revealing wrongdoing and hidden aspects of our world and shaping public debates.

The following field-research-based chapters examine occupational self-conceptions and cultural practices asserting the professional autonomy of German and US journalists. Chapter 4 maps US and German journalists' definitions of occupational virtues and ideals, public responsibility, and boundary drawing between "good" and "bad" journalism. US reporters stood out by engaging in much more self-examination in metadiscourse and drawing boundaries more assertively toward each other (implicitly and explicitly). Rhetorically, they strictly separated news and opinion, despite continuous softening of this requirement, and defined their public responsibility in terms of accountability journalism. German reporters stressed the importance of taking positions in the news and were more modest in articulating their responsibility to the public, more as *Einordnung* (contextualizing) and explaining issues than acting as a countervailing power of politics.

Chapter 5 examines collective dynamics of German and US journalism. Even though competition and solidarity are realities of both groups of reporters, the analysis identifies the US case above all as a competitive press culture and the German case as an associational press culture. While US reporters thrive on competition, German reporters evaluate it as inherently negative. While US reporters contest associational structures, German reporters fall back on them. These differences accrue from varying strengths of market logics, individualism, and collectivism, which also yield different kinds of pack journalism.

The specificity of the research setting—reporters embedded in political institutions—is utilized in Chap. 6 to examine the maintenance of professional autonomy. Source relations constitute a continuous social drama for US journalists and involve meticulous signaling of professional boundaries (*boundary performance*) and perpetual adjustments of closeness and

distance (*boundary management*), performatively and otherwise. German reporters treated their social context much more matter-of-factly, and their lives were not at all pervaded by the elaborate purification rituals their US counterparts took on. These findings reflect varying levels of historically evolved and symbolically significant institutional distances between media and politics. Yet, despite the consecrated distance, there were substantial deviations of this cultural consensus in the US press corps.

The conclusion of relative porousness and malleability of professional boundaries in US journalism and rigidity in German journalism is further corroborated in Chap. 7. It focuses on resilience and change of professionalism with respect to digital media. For US reporters, the hybridity of traditional and online journalism did not only have practical implications but also changed their professional self-understanding. Even though German reporters used the same media (except blogs), they had relatively little impact on their work and professional identity. Especially Twitter featured US reporters as susceptible to an ethic of transparency, even though it clashed with traditional occupational norms and their greatest defenders in the press corps. I conceive this shift in the US case as a diversification of professionalism.

Notes

1. The late David Carr, media columnist for *The New York Times*, put it most poignantly: "[W]hen it comes to divulging national secrets, the law grants journalists special protections that are afforded to no one else. To exclude some writers from the profession is to leave them naked before a government that is deeply unhappy that its secret business is on wide display" (Carr 2013a).
2. The critical passage starts at minute 9:12.
3. Tragically, Carr died only hours after hosting a panel discussion with the filmmaker Laura Poitras, Greenwald and Snowden (via video conference) about the film "Citizenfour" which documented the leak.
4. Schudson (2005) problematized the normative preference of "journalistic autonomy." Complete self-determination does not inherently promote "good journalism"; it can actually be systematically out of tune with issues of public concern. Nor is other-determination inherently promoting "bad journalism." Benson (2013) conceives of journalistic autonomy as a transitory state that is constituted by the tension between market and non-market heteronomies.

5. Rather, as Silvio Waisbord put it, journalism represents a *professionalizing project* that seeks to "streamline practices and ideals across newsrooms" and is driven by "the desire to preserve integrity and authority over a certain field of practice" (Waisbord 2013:89–90). Barbie Zelizer (1993) suggested that we should not even bother ourselves with conceiving journalism in professional terms but rather consider it as an *interpretive community* that defines itself through collective interpretations of events.
6. Another important element of professional autonomization, which Larson (1977) so aptly defined as the *negotiation of cognitive exclusiveness*, is regulation of training and access to the occupation.
7. Though Talcott Parsons assigned considerable importance to profession for social integration, he believed that they follow the same principle differentiation logic as bureaucracies—according to functional specificity (cf. Dingwall 2008).
8. On a metatheoretical level, the approach suggested here departs from a full-blown Bourdieuian analysis in two fundamental ways, subsumable under the heading of the interpretivist paradigm (Reed 2008): It takes a weak ontological position of assuming arbitrariness of social formations. Furthermore, it seeks "truth" at the intersection between the interrelated "systems of signification" of researcher and research subject. In other words, this approach is carried by the conviction that research subjects can make sense of their actions and, thus, so can the researcher. From this vantage point, what comes closest to a social ontology—culture—is neither conceived as an objective, external determinant nor purely based on individual intentions but conventional and subject to interpretive analysis.
9. The analysis in this book only roughly differentiates individual journalists and their organizations according to the internal *structure* of the field, which is mainly defined by status hierarchies between and within news organizations and class relations and affinities between media professionals and audiences. There is a practical and a theoretical reason for this: Practically, the ability to relate status and affiliation of informants to their pronouncements and actions are limited by field research confidentiality agreements. If relevant, however, I will situate individual reporters according to the type of medium they worked for (e.g. tabloid, broadsheet and public service media) and to their (and their organizations') status within their news ecosystems. Theoretically, the analysis starts form the assumption that the underlying cultural commitments of journalism are the same across the journalistic field, even if they are expressed differently at different locations. The empirical results confirm this assumption.
10. Journalism is not only a field of cultural production but also part of the field of power, which is not a field in the strict sense of the word (an institu-