

DOCTORAL THESIS

I am a reporter and you are not: how legacy and digital-only journalists in Hong Kong negotiate their professional boundaries

Serban, Florin Constantin

Date of Award:
2017

[Link to publication](#)

General rights

Copyright and intellectual property rights for the publications made accessible in HKBU Scholars are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners. In addition to the restrictions prescribed by the Copyright Ordinance of Hong Kong, all users and readers must also observe the following terms of use:

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from HKBU Scholars for the purpose of private study or research
- Users cannot further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- To share publications in HKBU Scholars with others, users are welcome to freely distribute the permanent URL assigned to the publication

Abstract:

The journalistic field is currently disrupted by digital networked technologies and by the rise of public participation. In the case of Hong Kong, the journalists' situation is complicated by the political uncertainties of the territory and the high economic pressures. This research aims to understand how the legacy press and digital-only media in Hong Kong are patrolling and strengthening their professional boundaries in order to continue doing their work in this new environment. The journalistic field is analysed in relationship to four main themes: 1) technological convergence and actants, 2) public participation, 3) political pressures, and 4) economic imperatives. Anchored in Pierre Bourdieu's field theory and borrowing from Thomas Gieryn's concept of boundary-work, this comparative study highlights the historical developments that have led to the current configurations of the journalistic field. This empirical research is carried out while fully taking into account social and cultural characteristics of the territory, but especially of the journalistic field in Hong Kong. Apart from such an investigative effort, this research analyses where new actors (e.g. the audience through its participation) and recent technological developments are located within the broader journalistic field. Through a case-study method, relying on in-depth interviews, newsroom observations, and annual reports, this study points out to what extent legacy journalists and digital-only journalists adopt similar or different tactics to enforce their professional boundaries and how they adapt to a new environment brought forward by technological convergence, public participation, growing political and economic pressures. On the theoretical level, this research contributes with an inclusive re-conceptualization of the journalistic field and the concept of boundary-work.

Keywords: journalistic field, boundary-work, technological convergence, participation

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vii
List of Abbreviations	viii
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Literature Review: New Dimensions Affecting Journalistic Work: Technological Convergence and Participatory Culture	7
2.1 Technological Convergence and Journalistic Work	8
2.2 Public Participation and Journalistic Work	17
2.3 Conceptualising Technological Convergence and Public Participation	26
3. Theoretical Framework	28
3.1 The Gap between Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Evidence ...	29
3.2 Field Theory: Critique and Characteristics.....	34
3.3 Research Questions	39
3.4 Analytical Framework	40
4. Methodology	48
4.1 Research Design and Data Collection.....	52
4.2 Anonymity and Ethical Considerations	57
5. Press Development Stages of Hong Kongese Media: A Historical Perspective	58
5.1 The Formation of Free Press during Colonial Days (1949 to 1984)	61
5.2 The Second Stage of Press Development in Hong Kong: The Coming of Age of Professional Press during Uncertain Times (1984 to 1997)	67
5.3 The Third Stage of Press Development in Hong Kong: Decline after Handover (1997-2014)	74
6. The Fourth Stage of Media Development: Survival of the Fittest after Occupy Central Movement (2014-present).....	88
6.1 Occupy Central Movement and its Impact.....	89
6.2 Legacy Media and Digital Outlets in a Divided and Protest Society	90
6.3 Contextualizing Media Power in the 4th Stage of Media Development .	93
6.4 Polarized Media, Polarized Public.....	97
6.5 Psychological and Physical Violence against Journalists	99
6.6 Digital Penetration, Media Use and other Characteristics of the Journalistic Field	101
7. The Impact of Technological Convergence and Actants on the Journalistic Field	107
7.1 <i>Immediacy and Liveness</i> Are out of Control: “I am Puppet of Technology”	107
7.2 Creating a Pool of Knowledge to Navigate the Technological Wave ..	116
7.3 Digital-Natives, Professional-Freshmen	121
7.4 The Use of Social Networks	125

7.5 The Impact of Technology on Professional Boundaries	131
8. The Impact of Public Participation on the Journalistic Field.....	134
8.1 What Do Journalists Make of User-Generated Content	134
8.2 Searching for User-Generated Content in Mainland China	140
8.3 How Do Legacy and DoM Journalists Perceive the Public?	144
8.4 How Do Legacy Journalists See DoM Journalists?.....	150
9. The Impact of Political and Economic Pressures on the Journalistic Field	161
9.1. Political Pressures on the Journalistic Field	162
9.2. Concerns over Self-censorship	169
9.3. Growing Economic Pressures.....	175
9.4 A Field Facing the Professional Exodus	178
9.5. The Rise and Rise of Radicalisation	181
9.6. Dark Clouds Ahead	183
10. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research	188
References	200
Appendix: Interview Protocol.....	223
Curriculum Vitae	225